

**STRIKE ONE TO EDUCATE ONE HUNDRED**  
The rise of the Red Brigades in Italy  
in the 1960s-1970s

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## "Strike one to educate one hundred"

# INTRODUCTION

This work has a certain degree of difficulty and is intended for the serious student, who needs an understanding of repression. It is based on the key documents of the strategic debate within the Italian revolutionary movement as they approached armed confrontation with the State. That was the first stage of urban guerrilla warfare in Italy from 1970-1975, whose primary (although not only) expression was the Red Brigades. While many have heard of that organization, people know little but the name. The entire Italian revolutionary struggle was politically unknown to us save for the subliminal: effects of imperialist media, with all its censorship and untruths.

In general it is our internationalist duty to spread the lessons of all revolutionary movements, to strengthen ourselves as we defeat the isolation that imperialism strains to impose on all of us. Specifically, the struggles of the European metropolis, which take place in the urban-technological society, have special meaning for us. It is not just in Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau, and El Salvador that one finds the front-lines of battle.

The experience of forming the Red Brigades is not in our opinion a blueprint or an idealized model to be imitated. Situations within the U.S. Empire, within **both** oppressor and oppressed nations, differ greatly from the Italy of the 1960s-1970s. Yet the problems, pressures, errors and questions they faced in their formative stage were to some degree true here as well. The questions around beginning the process of revolutionary organization are important, since we, like our Italian comrades know that: **"To fight, to be defeated, to fight again, to be defeated again, to fight anew until final victory"** is the law of history.

What is essential now is that the Italian experience deepens and re-states questions that we must answer. Not facile answers but a more profound question.

In setting off on the still-unknown path of urban guerrilla warfare, the Red Brigades rejected the non-materialist conception of armed struggle as a voluntary tactic. That is, that armed struggle is supposedly something only done when the movement decides that it is ready to try it. The founding members of the Red Brigades pointed out that in Italy a truly mass revolutionary sentiment was forming, which the State had decided to militarily wipe out. So violent confrontation would take place whether or not the movement was ready or even willing. Nor was the timing completely up to the movement. The only choices were to give up, to suicidally pretend that violent repression wasn't happening, or to leap to the higher stage of revolutionary armed struggle, however hard that leap.

This study begins with two background chapters. The first gives a brief factual overview of Italian society and its political situation in the years being discussed. The second chapter tells the general history of the New Left, from 1960 to the coming together in 1969 of what would become the Red Brigades.

We have no secret sources of information. This study is completely based on publicly available documents, Italian newspaper and magazine accounts, books, and the Italian movement press. We are indebted to the former Information-Documentation Section of Red Aid, whose diligent work made this book possible.

# CHAPTER 1

## Background: Italy

In terms of geography, Italy is a long, boot-shaped peninsula that juts out of Southern Europe some 500 miles into the Mediterranean Sea. In area this peninsula is roughly the size of Georgia and Florida combined. And to the West and South respectively, the two large islands of Sardinia and Sicily (each the area of Vermont) extend Italy even further out into the Mediterranean. While its Northern border anchors Italy to France, the Swiss Alps, Austria and Yugoslavia, on its other three sides Italy is bordered by sea. There is less than 100 miles between Sicily and Tunisia, on the North African coast. So Italy is almost a bridge between Western Europe and the Arab world.

The Italian nation is sharply divided regionally between North and South. Northern Italy is completely European--urbanized, highly industrial, relatively prosperous, consumeristic. The way of life in such cosmopolitan cities as Turin or Milan differs only in details from that of Hamburg, Paris or London. By contrast, the South seems almost like the Third World. The saying that Southern Italy is closer to Africa than it is to Europe is meant as a social comment. Southern Italy has a hot, sunny, Mediterranean climate. There is little industrial development. Traditional peasant agriculture and fishing play a large role in the economy. Poverty and unemployment are widespread. In Naples, the major city of the South, there is 40% unemployment. Smuggling and other Mafia activities comprise the largest single economic sector in that city of 1.1 million people.

The per capita income in Sicily and Reggio Calabria, the two poorest South Italian provinces, is on a level with that of Greece, Puerto Rico or Venezuela, and is roughly one-third less than per capita income in Northern Italy.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, the South's main export has always been emigrant workers, who historically made up the bottom of the industrial and service workforce in the North; the cleaning women, factory assemblers, sanitation men and construction laborers.

Italy is the weakest of the major imperialist nations. In the colonial era it was almost completely left out as Italy was itself dominated by other Powers, and until very late - 1861 - did not have a national government. Italian capitalism attempted to take over nearby Tunisia in the 1860s-1870s, but lost out to French colonialism. The Italian army which invaded Ethiopia in 1896 was smashed, with Italy having to pay reparations to Ethiopia for the return of its captured soldiers. Italy began colonizing the Somalia coast in 1885, gradually expanding inland until it had taken all of Somalia by 1927. In 1912, Italy seized Libya from the dying Turkish Empire. Despite killing half the population, Italy was never able to stamp out Libyan guerrillas. Albania was captured in 1939, at the start of World War II. This meager colonial empire - Albania, Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia - was all lost by Italy in the course of the War (1939-1945).

Italy's weakness is manifested in uneven economic development. Although Italy is Europe's second-largest steel producer and FIAT is Europe's second largest auto corporation, the state had to assume the main role of industrial development due to the weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie. Italy's largest industrial corporation, IRI, and the major petroleum corporation, ENI, are both government-owned. Main industries are textiles, steel, auto, shoes, machinery and chemicals. Italy's main exports to the u.s. empire are shoes, textiles and foodstuffs (olive oil, etc.). In important capitalist sectors such as finance or advanced electronics, Italy plays only a minor role. While there is considerable natural gas in the North, petroleum must come from the Arab nations. Italy has historic ties to Libya, and is Libya's biggest trading partner (taking 24% of Libyan exports, mostly oil, and sending 30% of Libyan imports).

The Americanization or Coca-Colonization of Italy has been pronounced since the u.s. occupation during World War II. This is especially noticeable in the more prosperous Northern cities, where people have been better able to afford it. As in so many other nations, automobiles, Hollywood movies and rock music are basic elements in the mass consumer culture.

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<sup>1</sup> The per capita income in Southern Italy is still much greater than the per capita income of poorer oppressed nations such as Kenya, Haiti and Sri Lanka.

The living standard in Italy is at the low end of the major oppressor nations. In 1980 Italian per capita (i.e. per adult person) income was \$6,914 per year, while Japan's was \$8,460 and in the u.s. empire it was \$11,675. In 1982 the average Italian industrial working class family earned \$8400, while the average family of a white-collar employee earned \$10,200, and the average professional or small business family income was \$14,300. In compensation, the pace of work is more relaxed in Italy. Long lunch-hours, sometimes 1 1/2 or 2 hours, are not unusual. Italian workers are less convinced that hard work and "drive" will get you anything in the end. They have a saying: "Americans live to work, whereas we Italians work to live."

## **DISTINCTIVE HISTORY AS A NATION**

Italy is both similar to the u.s. oppressor nation and very different. Certainly its political history has been quite different. This is an ancient society with well-defined class lines and little upward social mobility. While the Italian society is old, the Italian national State is relatively new. Italy was first born out of the Roman Empire two thousand years ago. The Roman Republic, originally just one city-state, had conquered all of present-day Italy by 172 B.C.. Eighty years later, after widespread revolts, the republic granted Roman citizenship to the fellow slave-owners of other Italian regions and cities. Roman law, culture and language replaced local dialects and customs. A unified Italian society was created, based on a slave plantation economy and rule from a centralized Roman bureaucracy. After a series of long bloody wars with the powerful North African city-state of Carthage, Rome became the dominant military power in the Western Mediterranean and declared itself an Empire. This Empire came to dominate all of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and India.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, Italy went through a long period of political dismemberment lasting 1400 years. Northern Italy was held by foreign conquerors, first the Visigoths, Franks and other Germanic tribes, and later the French monarchy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and other feudal powers. During the long feudal period Italy was chopped up into many foreign colonies, independent city-states and local principalities. In Central Italy the Catholic Church ruled over its own nation, the Papal States, complete with papal armies and church-owned plantations. The Papal States were once as large as one-seventh of present-day Italy and had a population of 3 million people. The social effects of Italy's long feudal past are still evident in Italy's backward and archaic culture.

Italy became independent again only in 1861, when Garibaldi's nationalist legions unified the country around the banner of King Victor Emmanuel II of the Kingdom of Sardinia, who ruled Piedmont and Sardinia. The Papal States, which were guarded by French troops, held out until 1870. In the South, where rebellious peasants resisted rule from the North, Garibaldi's legions and the Piedmontese army forced reunification in a bloodbath of repression. The new Italian state was a constitutional monarchy, modeled after Great Britain. Although the new state was a bourgeois democracy, with an elected parliamentary government, at first only a small percentage had the franchise: all women, the entire working class and the entire peasantry were excluded from voting.

The new State had been created to nourish the weak Italian bourgeoisie, which had been stunted under foreign domination. Even more, Italian capitalism had been left behind as the bigger powers monopolized world trade with their growing colonial empires. The new Italian bourgeois state presented itself to the people as the patriotic opponent of foreign domination. From the beginning, the nationalism of the Italian oppressor nation justified itself by picturing Italy primarily as an underdog, as the victim of France, England, the "u.s.a." and the other Powers.

By the start of World War I, in 1914, the Italian industrial proletariat had grown into a political force. Some 2 million workers had joined the Socialist trade-unions by 1919. Although the capitalists, seeking to end growing strikes and street fighting, had granted all Italian men voting rights in 1912, the workers struggle grew more militant. Italy had entered the first imperialist World War as one of the Allied Powers (England, France, "u.s.a.", Italy, Czarist Russia and Japan) against Germany and Austro-Hungary. The war years, even for a winning oppressor nation, were a time of increased misery, of hunger and brutal overwork in the factories.

At the War's end in 1918 the class struggle broke out in an even sharper way. In 1918 there were many strikes and food riots. In 1919 socialist-led peasants both in the central Italian "red belt" and in the South staged armed land take-overs against the feudal

landlords and the Catholic Church. And in 1920 the Northern proletariat struck in a wave of factory take-overs. In the Turin auto plants, where the revolutionary movement had its stronghold, the workers formed factory councils modeled after the Russian soviets. Not only running the occupied factories was on the agenda, but seizing State power over the North. After two months of public debate and indecision, the Socialist leaders backed down and the soviets dissolved. The whole revolutionary movement collapsed under the violent counter-attack from the fascist gangs. While workers armed themselves and fought back, they were disorganized and no match for the fascists, who were backed by the army. Thousands were shot. The socialist union confederation lost 90% of its members, shrinking from 2 million to 200,000.

## **FASCIST PERIOD**

Still the Government in Rome was barely able to govern. Class struggle had moved beyond the framework of bourgeois democracy. Italian capitalism was faced with the question of holding State Power. In those circumstances the ruling class turned to fascism. On October 28, 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III officially asked fascist boss Benito Mussolini to take over the Government. Over the next decade Mussolini became the strongman of Europe. Every fascist movement in Europe, including Adolf Hitler's fledgling Nazis, were to model themselves after him.

His fascist movement initially pretended to be anti-capitalist. It had its class base in the rural petty-bourgeoisie and lumpen (Mussolini himself, who was in turn a poor schoolteacher, a peasant agitator, a socialist journalist, a police agent, and a pro-war nationalist, was a rural lumpen). Italian fascism also attracted the nationalistic wing of the Italian anarcho-syndicalist and social-democratic movements, whose best-known political leader was Mussolini himself. While the Italian fascists always like to pretend that their 50,000 "Black Shirt" legionnaires had seized Rome by force, the fact is that fascist dictatorship was installed by the army and politicians at the orders of the bourgeoisie.

The Italian people suffered through 20 years of fascist rule, ending with a year and a half of brutal German Nazi occupation and the rigors of becoming a World War II combat zone. After the u.s. Army and the British Army "liberators" captured the city of Naples, for example, many thousands of Neapolitans died from starvation and disease. The u.s.-British occupation refused to provide either food or medical care in the middle of a famine. Some observers at the time estimated that as many as one-third of all the women in Naples had been forced into prostitution for the Allied soldiers.

## **ARMED STRUGGLE 1943-45**

The bitter fascist years meant, among other things, that two generations of Italian workers prior to 1960 had participated in armed struggle. There were 180,000 partisan guerrillas in 1943-45, led primarily by Communists. The Italian Communist Party had been crushed in the 1920s by Mussolini (and never had the leadership for armed struggle), but with his fall in 1943, red partisans rapidly regrouped and reorganized. Many of these revolutionaries and democrats had just been freed from prison. Only under these circumstances did the PCI leadership begin to finally organize guerrillas. Protest strikes in Winter 1944 against German occupation lasted eight days in Turin, powered by close to a million Northern workers. On April 24, 1945, in response to a Communist call for "a national uprising", 60,000 workers revolted in Milan and took over the city. Workers councils ran public life. In Turin, red partisans overcame a stiff German Army rear-guard to liberate their city. People's courts throughout the North executed 20,000 fascists. But the partisans were disbanded by the revisionist PCI, which cooperated with the u.s. military occupation. While many revolutionary workers were dismayed and disoriented by the turn, expecting leadership to join the push to socialist revolution, the revisionist PCI chose to survive the world war and abandon the class war.

Such revisionism was identified and resisted. In Turin's Barriera di Milano, a working class neighborhood, the Italian Communist Party section rebelled against the PCI national leadership. They formed the Red Star Collective, which organized the refusal to surrender arms, called for guerrilla organization, and published a militant newspaper. But Red Star was before its time, and it was politically isolated. Discovery of communist arms caches, and occasional small clashes with police, continued through 1949. For instance, after the 1949 assassination attempt of PCI head Palmiro Togliatti, communist militants, fearing a fascist coup, dug out hidden arms, seized factories, built barricades and began patrolling the working class districts.

## ARCHAIC & BACKWARD CAPITALISM

This inheritance of feudalism, fascism and class struggle had given Italy a distinctive type of capitalist society by 1960. One very different from the "u.s.a." The Italian State has always been a bureaucratic mess. Hastily imposed, almost overnight, in the 1860s-1870s by a weak bourgeoisie, it was designed to forcibly hold together different regions. Thus, there are no local-regional "checks and balances" as in the "u.s.a." Italian government is highly centralized at the national level, with different bourgeois interests expressed in overlapping, competing agencies and bureaucracies. There are no local or municipal police; instead there are five different national police forces - ranging from the para-military, sub-machine gun toting Carabinieri (always commanded by an Army General) to the forestry police - with deep rivalry between them all. Instead of a C.I.A. there are numerous overlapping military intelligence agencies, who regularly expose each others' scandals to the press. One of the real contradictions within Italian capitalism in the last thirty years has been its unmet need to modernize and reform its own State apparatus without destabilizing everything.

Italian society is strongly influenced by bureaucrat fascism. Much of Italy's legal code and court structure are from the fascist period. Civil liberties are restricted. There is no "right to a speedy trial," for instance. Judges are in no way neutral, not even as a pretense, but are part of the prosecution. Many fascist business leaders, military brass, police officials and government bureaucrats were given amnesty after World War II and re-entered public life. This gave the Italian State a strong right-wing presence.

This rightward orientation is strengthened by the feudal-clerical force of the Roman Catholic Church. Italy is a Catholic country; 90% of the people are baptized and 30% attend Catholic mass. The Church is not merely a conservative religious force. In Italy the Church, which once held state power as a feudal society, operates as a secondary government. Under Mussolini the Church became the official state religion, in the fascist-Vatican treaty of 1929. The Vatican was a strong supporter of fascism. Most mass education has been in the hands of the clergy. Extreme authoritarianism, with corporal punishment (whipping and beating) and religious indoctrination typified Italian schools. Catholic indoctrination for all children was compulsory until the reforms of the 1970s.

Italy's bourgeois culture, shaped by fascism and clericalism, has been extremely reactionary. Both government and the Vatican enforced the open oppression of women. Ingrained class distinction and sexism is customary. The 1945 constitution has an equal rights provision that says: "all citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law without distinction as to sex, race, language..." These standard democratic promises were completely overridden by specific constitutional articles, laws and court rulings. The infamous "unity of family" provisions of the constitution banned abortion while giving men legal power over women. The 1942 fascist marriage code was incorporated intact into the new legal system. So husbands had supreme decision-making power over the family, women were legally obliged to follow their husband wherever he moved, and to seek his permission before taking wage employment. As late as 1967 the Italian courts reaffirmed the fascist laws giving the husband the right to control "his" children even after his death--instructions on how to raise them given in his will are binding on his widow.

Violence against women was normal and ever-present. If a man killed "his" wife or daughter it was usually considered only a minor crime or no crime at all. Article 587 of the legal code stated that "whoever causes the death of their spouse, their daughter or their sister upon the act of discovering that illicit carnal relations have taken place and in a state of anger caused by the offense to his or his family's honor is to be punished by imprisonment for 3 to 7 years." Rape and public harassment of women were condoned. Due to the power of the Vatican, divorce was banned until 1970, and abortions were illegal. In the 1960s there were an estimated 2-3 million illegal abortions every year, with Italian feminists estimating that 20-40,000 women died each year from the effects of illegal abortions.

In 1970 women were only 20% of the wage-labor force, concentrated in offices, retail stores, garment manufacturing, textiles, shoes and tobacco processing. One-third of all wage-employed women work in "home industry", most typically in knitting sweaters. Knit clothing was Italy's leading export product by 1967. To raise their profits the capitalists began shutting down older knitting factories during the late 1950s. Women workers were offered the "opportunity" to buy the old machines, and to produce goods on a piece-work contract basis in their kitchens. Of course there were no minimum wages, no security, no health insurance or other benefits - and isolation from other workers. In the South the

emigration of male-workers to the North and to other countries in search of factory and construction jobs, left much of the migrant farm labor to women, picking grapes and harvesting grain on the large farms. Women's subordinate and oppressed place in imperialism was reflected throughout Italian society, which still defined women as housewives. It was not until 1969-1970 that a women's liberation movement began, as an expression of the new revolutionary developments.

The Church's counter-institution on the Left, the revisionist Italian Communist Party (PCI), had by the 1960s become the center for modernizing and welfare-state currents in Italian society. For twenty years it dominated much of the local government in the Central Italian "red belt" (approximately the region of the old Papal States). In Bologna and other cities in the region the PCI controlled city halls, and ran a giant patronage machine. It ran a large network of agricultural and commercial co-ops that provided marketing and financial services for peasants, shopkeepers and craftsmen in Central and Northern Italy. Its union federation, the Central Confederation of Italian Labor (CGIL), while much weakened in the 1950s, was still the largest. The Party had a widespread cultural apparatus with a battery of newspapers, magazines, research and cultural institutes, and youth clubs.

While the PCI was more liberal and modern in its outlook, and at least paid lip service to the wage demands of the workers, it was itself very absorbed into the dominant capitalist way of life. Individualistic Western consumerism was encouraged by the Party, which remained a patriarchal organization in composition, leadership and outlook. To illustrate: in the 1970s struggle over women's right to abortion, the Party took the position that abortion should remain illegal except in medical emergency to save the mother's life.

The PCI always supported male supremacy and undermined women's struggles. During the 1943-45 partisan guerrilla period the PCI was forced by necessity to permit communist women to organize separate women's defense groups. These became mass clandestine organizations of young working class women. In addition to being a support network for urban guerrillas, the women organized food collections for prisoners, staged raids on government coal trucks and redistributed the coal throughout the community, and conducted anti-fascist propaganda. Feminist campaigns in the fascist-run factories for "Equal Pay for Equal Work" won much support, as did the defense groups' anti-rape activities. In one case the groups led a large factory strike that forced the fascists to punish soldiers who had raped several women. Just before the April 1945 general insurrection that liberated Northern Italy, the women's defense groups led hundreds of thousands of women in closing transit and mail delivery in Turin.

As soon as the fighting stopped in 1945 the PCI leadership dissolved the women's defense groups, replacing them with a sterile PCI women's auxiliary for housewives. In the immediate post-war period the PCI also backed the imperialist campaign to drive women workers out of the major industries and to suppress any women's liberation activity. The undeveloped political consciousness of communist women then emphasized subordination to "socialist" patriarchy, and lost all the gains of the women's struggle.

If the Vatican represented an embalmed feudalism, the PCI represented an embalmed European Social-Democracy of 1900. Thus, both right and left had become different expressions of the backwardness of Italian bourgeois society.

#### **BRIEF SKETCH OF ELECTORAL PARTIES**

Italy is a bourgeois republic with a popularly elected parliamentary government, similar in some ways to the U.S. Congress. However, the number of legislators each party had is based on proportion of votes captured nationally. The party or coalition of parties with the majority of seats in the Parliament becomes the executive, selecting the Prime Minister and Cabinet. There were eight major parties in Italian bourgeois politics, and a large number of minor ones. They were, in order of strength in the 1969-1970 Parliament (there have been changes since then):

1. Christian Democrats (DC)--formed in 1944, DC is the mass, conservative Catholic party. Similar to the right wing of the U.S. Republican Party. This is the traditional ruling party; from 1948 through the 1970s every Prime Minister was DC. Social base is middle-size capitalists, small shopkeepers, rural landlords, rich peasants. Uses Catholic Church hierarchy as its electoral machinery (before elections most priests preach sermons about voting DC). Biggest stronghold is in the South, where Mafia and Church are the party. Has been in crisis since early 1960s, losing popularity. **42% of the Parliament in 1970.**



2. Italian Communist Party (PCI)--formed in 1921, PCI is now a classic example of the European working class reformist party. Social base among industrial workers and poor peasant day laborers in the North and Center. Increasingly recruiting young petty-bourgeois professionals who want a modern welfare state. As a vestige of its past as an actual Communist Party, the PCI is nominally pro-Moscow and anti-"u.s.a." in world affairs. **27% of the Parliament in 1970.**

3. Italian Socialist Party (PSI)--formed in 1892, was once the first Italian mass party of socialist workers. Now pro-NATO social-democrats. (Present 1985 Prime Minister, Bettino Craxi, is PSI leader. PSI has become more like PSU/PSDI.) Lost most of its base and social role in the working class to the PCI. Once as strong as the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) in the late 1940s, the PSI repeatedly lost left and right wings in various splits. **10% of Parliament in 1970.**

4. United Socialist Party (PSU)--formed in 1948. Was then called Italian Social-Democratic Party (PSDI) and has now retaken that name. Nominally social-democratic, but rabidly anti-communist. Was formed by C.I.A. to split socialist vote and prevent united front with Italian Communist Party (PCI). Financed and operated with u.s. AFL-CIO assistance. Although small, they are the party of u.s. imperialism in Italy. Since 1950s has been in Christian Democratic ruling coalitions. **5% of the Parliament in 1970.**

5. Liberal Party--despite name is conservative party. Traditional 19th century bourgeois views, closer to fascists than to the present Christian Democrats (by 1980s had lost many members to the outright fascist groupings). **5% of the Parliament in 1970.**

6. Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP)--formed in 1964 as a leftwing split from Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Provoked by majority PSI decision to end their traditional workers' united front with the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and instead join DC Premier Aldo Moro's first Center-Left coalition government. Left wing of PSI refused to go along with that coalition, wanted to still ally with PCI while making entire Left more militant; split to form PSIUP. Many 1960s New Left theorists (such as the Red Notebooks grouping) were in PSIUP. Main strength in Sicily and Sardinia. **4% of Parliament in 1970.**

7. Italian Social Movement-National Right (MSI)--formed shortly after World War II in 1946. The legal "neo-fascist" party. Italian constitution forbids reorganization of the fascist party, but the MSI is the direct continuation of Mussolini's party. Was organized by fascists to give them a legal front after they were amnestied by then-Minister of Justice Togliatti (head of revisionist PCI). Most ex-fascists went into more respectable DC, so MSI represented the hard-core, ideologically-committed fascists. Prominent MSIers originally included Prince Valerio Borghese (the "Black Prince"), an infamous fascist war criminal in WWII (he headed a special unit that worked with the Nazi S.S. torturing and killing suspected partisans). MSI thugs parade in fascist Black Shirt uniform ala Mussolini. Program is reactionary anti-Communism: physically wipe out Left, eliminate women's right of divorce, and so forth. right-wing of MSI involved in terrorist mass bombings in 1960s; attempted fascist military coup in alliance with Italian Army elements in 1970s. Officially the terrorist wing left the MSI. Social base is petty-bourgeois and lumpen. Strongest in Naples, Southern region of Calabria, Sicily (since 1960s has gained much strength as Italian politics polarized). **4% of Parliament in 1970.**

8. Republican Party--formed in 1898, one of the first petty-bourgeois parties in Italy. Originally had an anti-clerical, anti-monarchist orientation. Small but influential in state policy; hold balance of power in coalition governments. Giovanni Agnelli, owner of FIAT corporation, is Party's most noted leader. Similar to Rockefeller wing of Republicans in "u.s.a." **1.5% of Parliament in 1970.**

NOTE: 10-12% of Parliament were unaffiliated political figures and minor parties. The monarchists, who favor the return of the aristocratic system, were 1% of Parliament in 1970. The anti-revisionist Maoist or socialist parties that run in elections usually get under 2% total. Voting is compulsory in Italy.

## CHAPTER 2

### New Left up to the formation of the BR

This chapter reviews the events that led at the end of the 1960's to the start of urban guerrilla warfare in Italy. We can see two processes at work. The first was the growth of political violence, both in the increasing militancy of the working class and in the military counter-offensive of the State. The second process was the influence of advanced ideas from the national liberation movements. Italy had produced a generation of young revolutionaries who turned for answers to communism in the Third World.

Armed struggle became the main issue debated within their movement, not only because of the models of guerrilla movements in Cuba, Vietnam and Uruguay, but because it was already an objective reality. The escalating clash between the mass movements and the Italian State had already carried the antagonists onto the terrain of armed struggle. The ruling class itself was divided (as we shall later discuss) on how to handle the crisis, and was forced on the defensive as the New Left advanced. Trying to repeat their successful repression of the post-World War I factory take-over movement, the imperialists began to use not only the police, but also fascist para-military groups to violently break up the 1960's movements. At the same moment, the revisionist Old Left parties were steadily pulling to the right, trying to drag the struggle back onto the terrain of legalisms and parliamentary reform. How to consolidate the renewed revolutionary activity within the masses, and how to deal with the militarized nature of the political clash, became the central question for the new generation of the 1960's.

Italy at the end of the 1950's was a society of growing contradictions. It had just gone through ten years of rapid industrialization and urbanization known as the "Italian miracle", following the heavy destruction and defeat in World War II. Masses of peasants from the impoverished South had been forced off the land into Northern industry. A middle-class consumer society--semi-american--had been created in the urban North on the backs of this new class of low-wage immigrant proletarians. The South itself remained the most backward and poorest region. Because of its position as the official State religion, the Catholic church still held Italian culture in a semi-feudal grip.

The conservative trend of the 1950's dominated the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which had become a legalistic, mass revisionist party. While the PCI-led unions remained the largest, their size had shrunk. In Italy industrial unions are voluntary political organizations, with various unions competing with each other for individual members within each factory. Different unions represent different politics and in fact represent the major political parties. By the end of the 1950's, company unions (often run by the fascists), Catholic unions, and Social-Democratic unions led by the right-wing pro-u.s. Italian Social-Democratic Party (PSDI) had taken over sizable chunks of the labor movement. Between 1955 and 1961 the Italian Communist Party's membership had dropped from 2.2 million to 1.7 million, a loss of 500,000 members. There had been much disillusionment among Italian workers following the 1956 revelations about Stalin's crimes and the reformist decay of the PCI.

The PCI-led union federation, the CGIL, had even lost control of the traditional stronghold of the Italian working class--FIAT's huge Mirafiori works in Turin. This had a larger meaning than we might see at first. In Italy there was a high degree of industrial concentration, on a semi-feudal pattern. Corporations concentrated production in a few urban centers, which also therefore contained a high concentration of workers, and which they dominated like an industrial fiefdom. In the "u.s.a." this was seen at the turn of the century at Ford's River Rouge works in Detroit, Michigan, and in U.S. Steel works in Gary, Indiana (a works is an industrial complex of many factories in one place). FIAT automobile corporation is the largest and most powerful company in Italy. Its owning family, the Agnellis, were and are imperialist royalty, the Italian equivalents to the Rockefellers.

FIAT's Mirafiori works employed 40,000 workers in 1968, with 80,000 more in other FIAT plants in that city. In fact, 80% of FIAT's total work-force then was concentrated in Turin, the 2nd largest city in Italy. Fully one-half of Turin's population was economically dependent on one company, FIAT, either directly or indirectly in smaller companies supplying auto parts to FIAT production. It was in Turin that the Italian proletariat had

its greatest social concentration and political cohesiveness, giving it a leading role within the entire working class, so the PCI's loss of mass support at FIAT Mirafiori, where they once had gotten 70-80% of the vote in union shop steward elections in the late 1940's, meant much more than losing support in one factory or one industry. It really meant that they had lost the confidence of the vanguard of the class.

## THE CONTINUITY OF RESISTANCE

A young Communist FIAT worker, Sante Notarnicola, was among those who resisted the mood of political demoralization in the late 1950's. Notarnicola hung out with some other rebels at FIAT. Among his comrades was an older worker, Danilo Crepaldi, who had as a teenager been a fighter with the Armed Partisan Groups. The Armed Partisan Groups (GAP) had been the most daring of the anti-fascist guerrillas during World War II, shooting it out with Nazi troops in lightning raids in the Northern industrial cities of Genoa and Turin. Notarnicola was part of a smaller group of FIAT rebels who started collecting arms and discussing armed struggle in 1956. Danilo Crepaldi reminded them how the PCI had sold out the revolution:

"He reminded us that while among us so many hopes, dreams and myths were crumbling, in faraway countries heroic fighters were holding high the banner of guerrilla warfare. In Italy instead the revolution had been postponed. In Turin, in certain factories, out of a workforce of 10,000, only 100 workers could be counted on to answer a strike call. SIDA [the FIAT fascist company union then--Ed.] persisted in its strike-breaking and corrupting maneuvers. Danilo ... thought about building a kind of Armed Partisan Group, with very vague goals to begin with. Once again he brought up the question of arms: the first objective was to find weapons, put them in working order, or to accumulate a certain quantity of them. Once this was done we could decide what to do with them."

Notarnicola and his two comrades were all in the PCI, and lived in the Barriera di Milano neighborhood. Barriera di Milano, one of many "red neighborhoods", was a closely-packed slum where 80,000 working class people always voted for "communist" or "socialist" politicians. There it was common for families to be loyal PCI members going back two or three generations. The Italian Communist Party ran much of the community's life, with their own community officials, coffee shops, and sports clubs. Notarnicola was a typical militant. Child of an emigrant, he had grown up surrounded by both FIAT and the PCI. He went to work at FIAT as most of his childhood friends and classmates did. While he was angered at the oppression, Sante Notarnicola was not a leader.

One of the others, Piero Cavallero, was the son of a Partisan fighter and was himself a minor paid functionary of the PCI. Cavallero took charge among the three. They became a clandestine unit of PCI members, but independent of the PCI and unknown to the Party. As we've discussed, the PCI had treacherously disbanded the Partisan guerrilla movement after Germany was defeated in 1945. But many Communist Partisans, although grudgingly going along with PCI orders under threat of death, didn't turn in their weapons as they were supposed to. As one of these ex-Partisans, Danilo Crepaldi still had his old sub-machine gun, and he taught Sante Notarnicola how to use it. Their first plan was to collect guns from old Partisans, repair them, and quietly train young PCI members to use them. While Cavallero was breaking with the PCI, Notarnicola still hoped the PCI would revitalize itself. They began making plans for actions in the spring of 1959. The group decided that the main thing was to get money, which would be hidden away to buy arms and support guerrillas when the time came. In May, 1959, they executed an expropriation where they worked, seizing the FIAT Mirafiori night shift payroll. The three guerrillas got away cleanly, but decided because of the intensive police investigation to lay low for a long time.

In January 1964 the armed group, which still had no name or more definite political plans, began doing regular expropriations. On a technical level the cell seemed to work well, and did 23 expropriations over a four year period. But they had gradually become more and more adventurous, attacking two or three banks within one hour. Civilian bystanders were shot. On September 25, 1967 the cell, which no longer had Danilo Crepaldi, but had recruited two more young Communist workers, became trapped by police after an expropriation at a Bank of Naples branch in Milan. The cell, which was armed with sub-machine guns, and police reinforcements got into a heavy fire fight on the street. Five civilian bystanders were killed, or died afterwards, in the rain of bullets (a student, a driver of a passing car, a woman and a man on the sidewalk, and an elderly war veteran). Six police and sixteen civilians were hospitalized with wounds. Only one of the cell was wounded and captured at the shoot-out, the others escaping temporarily.

These events were a national sensation, both in the capitalist press and within the Left. The authorities began a national manhunt, offering a 20 million lire reward for information leading to their capture (20 million lire then represented over ten years' wages for a factory worker). Piero Cavallero and Sante Notarnicola hid out in a forest near Turin, but were tracked down and captured after eight days. The careless taking of lives, the supposed "base motives" of robbing banks for money, were factors in the controversy.

It became known that behind Notarnicola's back all the expropriated funds, which were to have been hidden for future guerrilla use, had been ripped off. Danilo Crepaldi and Piero Cavallero had set up a small business to cover for the new flow of money. But the business lost money. Becoming politically discouraged, they began to argue between the two of them over whether or not to continue, and began spending the money on themselves. Danilo had died in 1966. Cavallero, who had come to enjoy the actions and the financially improved lifestyle, continued on for his own purposes. As guerrillas the cell was discredited.

The movement related to the trials mainly as a big scandal. Notarnicola was at first abandoned. Their cell was publicly denounced by the Italian Communist Party, the Social-Democrats, and the liberal press, as just thieves, criminals and murderers. Sante Notarnicola was given a life sentence. Misled by his few comrades, isolated by the movement, publicly labeled foolish at best, Notarnicola still believed in revolution. Although no leader or theoretician, Notarnicola refused to work for the State or to be crushed by his own heavy defeat. He never denied the many political errors he had made or the primitive level of the political understanding he and his comrades had started with, and used his trial to put forward a self-criticism.<sup>2</sup> He told the court at the end of his trial in 1971: "I don't regret having rebelled against the bosses. I regret having done it at the wrong time in the wrong way."

In prison Sante Notarnicola gradually became a symbol to the New Left of the search for revolutionary answers. He became a leading prison activist and later joined the NAP (Armed proletarian Nuclei) communist guerrilla group. Notarnicola was a public figure in Italy equivalent to George Jackson. His experience and the experience of other unsuccessful rebels during the lost years, was a reminder that Italy had an unbroken history of revolutionary armed struggle. Italian communists of three successive generations, in 1920, 1943, and in the 1960's, had fought their government and the fascists. In Italy, deep,

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## 2 STATEMENT AT SANTE NOTARNICOLA'S SENTENCING HEARING

"I will always be, and this time in the best, more correct and more difficult way, a communist, a revolutionary... I am not here to ask for leniency, I have come here before you, but not for the reasons that a common prisoner presents himself in court: to defend himself legally to lighten the penalty. I am here to criticize my past where it should be criticized, in a revolutionary way, from a revolutionary point of view.

"I turn to all who were exploited as I was, as I am: only with respect to the values that they represent can my past be criticized and condemned. If I robbed banks, if some men died against my will and not at my hands, I certainly do not have to justify myself to a society founded on robbery, fraud and violence. I made a mistake, it's undeniable. Just as I feel remorse for the dead, unknowing victims of a continuous and unstoppable struggle which we insignificant exploited men certainly did not ask for. It is up to my class, the proletariat, the exploited masses, to judge me, and it is them that I ask to understand that we wanted our action to be an answer - instead it was only a reaction - to a situation intolerable to human dignity, and that is the bourgeois system that is responsible for all this, the cause of every violence and injustice, the provoker of crime.

"I have rebelled against this state of things from the age of 14. At a certain moment in my life I expressed this rebellion in an absolutely mistaken way, when I decided to become a bandit: I confused the revolutionary struggle with individual rebellion, playing the game of the ruling class in this way... others better than me will follow, well-taught by my errors, to grasp the positive side of our experience. The struggle against you will continue, inside and outside the jails... All the common criminals, the lost, the rebels without hope, we will return them to you with a revolutionary consciousness. It has been and will be our task, as the vanguard inside the jails, to turn the prisons into schools of communism and replace opportunism with an always greater spirit of brotherhood and solidarity. This is my commitment and this is your error. You think you have won and instead, even with me, you have already lost the battle."

-Sante Notarnicola

bitter class hatred of the bourgeoisie was a reality in the 1960's. One traveler in Italy during those years reported:

"A young Italian railroad machinist I talked to this summer told me that he had joined the PCI-controlled CGIL union two years ago, but that he and his friends had quit in disgust. When I asked him and a 32-year old fellow railroad worker what they thought of the left wing parties they told me with very pointed, heavy irony that 'all the parties' were the same. They all bought votes, scratched each others' backs, robbed the public till, and lived like kings. 'The Communists, the Socialists and the trade union bureaucrats live off our backs, like everyone else,' the younger worker pointed out. What was the answer? 'Maybe a really honest Socialist party which will change things,' the older worker suggested. What should be done, I asked the machinist? 'Wipe them all out and start from scratch.' ...Finally the older worker, a quiet, almost timid railroad clerk-statistician, concluded with vehemence: 'If I had the power?' Then he quoted Dante, an old Italian poet: 'Se fossi foco brucerei il mondo. Were I a fire I'd burn the world.'"

The same outbursts of rage, even against the established class leadership, marked the start of the 1960's. In July 1960 the Italian Communist Party (PCI) organized protest strikes against the new Tambroni government, which represented the Christian Democratic right wing and had fascist backing. Quickly the protest got out of the revisionists control. After two weeks of violent street battles, largely led by young Southern immigrant workers, the Tambroni government fell.<sup>3</sup> The July 1960 street fighting, which took place all over the country, stunned and scared the revisionists and the Italian bourgeoisie alike. It signaled the start of two decades of social and political crisis for Italy.

In the summer of 1962 another violent revolt erupted in Turin. During a strike at FIAT, the Social-Democratic union and the Catholic union attempted to sell out the strike. Thousands of FIAT workers, in a spontaneous move, marched on the Social-Democratic UIL union headquarters in Piazza Statuto in downtown Turin and surrounded it. Workers burned UIL union cards in a bonfire. When the police attempted to disperse the crowd, fighting broke out. Three days and nights of violent street battles followed, as young workers held their ground against the police. Again, as in the July 1960 battles, young Southern immigrant workers were in the forefront of the fighting. Many Communist militants, PCI shop stewards, and rank and file members took part as individuals in the thick of the street battles. Top leaders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) rushed in to stop things and restore bourgeois order, but were physically chased away by the masses.

Sante Notarnicola, who was in the 1962 Piazza Statuto fighting, described what happened:

"In the summer of '62 the revolutionary base revolted openly against the party, telling the old party hacks to go get fucked. The battle lasted three days and *L'Unita* [the PCI newspaper--Ed.] called us thugs and lined up with the bourgeoisie. For many comrades it was the collapse of the last illusions of a revolutionary reform of the PCI. I remember Pajetta [a well-known member of the PCI central committee--Ed.]. He came there and he didn't know what to do; the great leader was no longer in front of an enthusiastic crowd, but in the middle of people who had lost their patience and who were tearing down the pedestal built for him because of his past as a partisan. When a volley of stones was thrown at him, he re-awoke and began to shout, 'Down with the bosses and the cops', urging us on to the attack. His partisan past had re-emerged from his subconscious. Then, in the cold light of the next day he called us 'fascists' in the pages of *L'Unita*!"

The Piazza Statuto fighting was the first, open mass defiance of the revisionist leadership since the late 1940's. It led directly to the first Center-Left reform government a year later by Aldo Moro, head of the moderate wing of the DC (Christian Democratic Party).<sup>4</sup> Moro, in alliance with the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), promised wide-ranging social

<sup>3</sup> Under the Italian legislative system, which is like the British parliament, any time that a government loses a vote on a major issue its term of office ends. Unlike the u.s. system, in which an administration has a fixed term of years, in Italy a government can last years or days. The Tambroni government lost its voting majority because some legislators felt it was not keeping order while other legislators wanted to use the Tambroni government as a scapegoat.

<sup>4</sup> Trying to cope with the steadily shrinking conservative vote, which was leaving the DC without enough power to pass legislation, Moro formed an alliance with a moderate "Left" party, the PSI. This gave the imperialists working class support in parliament. The PSI leaders gained by becoming part of the ruling government. They were also pressured by threats of a military coup and mass repression if they didn't join the DC coalition.

reforms and modernization of society. But he was unable to carry them out because of obstruction from his own DC party's powerful right wing, which had the backing of the Vatican and the fascists. Center-Left governments ruled Italy from 1963 to 1968, and their total failure to carry out any real social reforms set the stage for the mass student and worker revolts of 1968 and 1969.

### NEW POLITICS OF THE 1960s

From the beginning the Italian New Left gave an importance to political theory. It was only with this theoretical work that their young movement could assimilate the lessons of Mao, of the Tupamaros, of Carlos Marighela and other Communists from oppressed nations. Political journals prepared the way for a new revolutionary movement that would consciously unite factory, prison and university in class war. The earliest and most germinal of these journals was *Red Notebooks*, begun in 1961 by young intellectuals on the Left edges of the Social-Democrats. What they had in common was an agreement that the existing Left stood in the way, and was a reformist hegemony stifling struggles of the working class. Red Notebooks student activists pioneered by aiding Turin auto workers opposing the reformist trade unions.

In addition to *Red Notebooks*, some of the many New Left theoretical journals were *Young Critic*, *Piacentini Notebooks*, *Class & State*, *Hammer & Sickle*, *Workers Voice*, *New Commitment*, and finally in 1967, *Political Work*. The cadre from *Political Work* were to become an important part of the founding nucleus of the Red Brigades.

In this period intense debate and study began, centering on the question of new forms of working class resistance to advanced capitalism. It was clear that the old European answers--legal trade-unionism, parliamentary political parties, defense of bourgeois democracy until some distant hour when the final insurrection takes place--were sterile. While their debate drew on European experiences in Italy and elsewhere, it was especially internationalist. Peoples War in Vietnam and the armed party-building line of Mao Zedong were studied. Of special interest were the experiences of other movements that, like the Italians, were starting out again. For that reason the fledgling urban guerrilla forces in Brazil and Uruguay, as well as the Black Liberation Movement in the u.s. empire were studied as having special significance. The Italian movement had much admiration for the Black struggle. Rebellions in Watts and Harlem from 1964 on, together with the rapid development of Black Power and the Black Panther Party were closely watched in Italy. Emergence of New Afrikan self-defense groups with popular support, verified for Italian revolutionaries that new revolutionary potentialities existed even in the "urban-technological metropoli" of advanced capitalism.

An anti-authoritarian university reform movement had sprung up in Italy starting in 1966. Mass student occupations of campus buildings became a main form of struggle. In November 1967, a new student organization formed in Turin, the MS ("Student Movement" or Movimento Studentesco). All decisions of the MS were made in mass assemblies of students. MS and radical student activity in general quickly spread. As the numbers of student protesters grew into the thousands in each major city, and as their tactics and politics grew more militant, clashes with the police became increasingly violent and frequent. Those clashes then in turn further radicalized the mass movement in an upward spiral.

One of the key centers of this student movement was Trento University, in the northern-most region of Italy in the Alps, near the Austrian and Swiss borders. This is a conservative region politically. In March 1967, Trento students staged a week of mass demonstrations on the campus and in the streets of Trento in support of the Vietnamese revolution. Demonstrations were attacked by the police. Students reacted with a mass strike which closed the school. Police repression against the student movement only produced more resistance, and in the fall of 1967 the Trento University administration was unable to open the school in the face of a continued student strike. In October of that year the Trento student movement leadership issued a *Manifesto for a Negative University*, and organized counter-courses for the student body. One was on the Chinese revolution and Mao's politics; another was a study of the current phase of capitalist development, using the writings of Euro-american radical economists. The Manifesto put forward an anti-capitalist critique of the existing educational system, and saw the student movement at Trento as part of a revolutionary movement.

The most important fruit of the *Negative University*, however, was the emergence of a new magazine called *Political Work*. Among the editors were two future founders of the Red Brigades, Mara Cagol and Renato Curcio (who had met as sociology students at Trento in

1966). First published in the nearby city of Verona with left Catholic politics, *Political Work* was soon ideologically Marxist-Leninist and Maoist. The group was heavily influenced by the comparison between the Vietnamese revolution and the degeneration of both the "Communist" PCI and the "Socialist" PSIUP Left parties. Although *Political Work* had a limited distribution of only five thousand copies at its peak, it had great influence on the student movement as a whole. In collaboration with the *Negative University*, *Political Work* published a number of pamphlets for study groups—the first of which was on the Black Power movement in the "u.s.a."

The militancy of the student movement spread to the working class in 1968. In March-April 1968 a series of wildcat strikes broke out at FIAT auto plants in Turin. A joint strike committee of workers and radical students was formed, which issued a daily strike bulletin. Out of this committee the largest Italian New Left organization, Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*"), was born. That same strike bulletin grew into a national daily newspaper for the New Left, while Continuous Struggle itself grew into an Italian equivalent to the "u.s.a." SDS. During these spring months the political focus of the student movement grew from university reforms to building a broad anti-capitalist alliance with industrial workers.

1968, we must remember, was the year the Vietnamese Revolution had reached a decisive turning point after the victory of the Tet offensive in February. Imperialism was in retreat and political disarray. There was an anti-imperialist tide advancing world-wide. Everybody was watching everybody else and drawing strength from each others' example. Throughout 1968, the Italian student movement was deeply affected by and increasingly saw itself as part of this growing world-wide youth revolt against imperialism.

In May 1968 the ruling Center-Left coalition government of Premier Aldo Moro was voted out. The national elections had been conducted at the height of the worker-student rebellion in France, which had monopolized Italian news. In a spontaneous explosion, all the major factories in France had shut down in a general strike. The general strike was not over economic demands, but expressed an unarticulated anger at the social-political system. Street barricades went up in the heart of Paris. Thousands of militant French students took over school buildings and fought hand-to-hand against black-uniformed CRS security force for over a week. The French May 1968 worker-student rebellion had a big impact on Italian politics, speeding up the process of mass radicalization.

Throughout 1968 and 1969 the process of radicalization continued in giant steps. Two developments cast their shadow into the future: the New Left vanguard was being absorbed into a revolutionary sector of the Northern working class struggle; that class struggle itself was becoming militarized, with the state mobilizing its forces for a military "final solution" to their crisis. The question of a strategic line that could answer the critical problems of this militarized confrontation became the number one question for the movement.

In June and July of 1968 a wave of wildcat strikes swept through many small and medium-sized factories where the unions had been too weak to stop them. In Milan, workers at Pirelli tire corporation's Bicocca plant set up a new form of organization called the C.U.B. ("United Rank-and-File Committee" or Comitato Unito de Base). The Pirelli C.U.B. was a joint worker-student organization and soon was leading strikes and other actions at the plant. Like the student movement, the C.U.B. made all its decisions in open mass assemblies. The very existence of the C.U.B. was a recognition that workers couldn't move forward within the unions. It was similar to the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in the Detroit auto plants in that regard. Within the next eighteen months the C.U.B. movement spread to over a hundred factories, in a push for class organization independent of capitalist domination.

The strike movement gradually spread to more and larger factories. Increasingly the tactic of mass factory take-overs and direct worker control of the struggle through open mass assemblies was adopted. Between

January and early April 1969 a series of important factory struggles broke out in the North with even more militant tactics. On February 4, 1969 striking Monfalcone shipyard workers near Venice occupied not only the shipyards but the town hall. This was the first time striking Italian workers had moved against the government. The strikers won their demands. Textile workers in nearby Marzotto di Valdagno had been on strike at the same time, occupying their factory and making decisions in a mass assembly. After three months of intermittent strikes, the textile workers mobilized the whole town through neighborhood committees. All the highways and rail lines into Marzotto were blocked. Angry

demonstrations were held against the TV news whiteout of their struggle. At the end of 1969 the strikers occupied the town hall. The government gave in. This was the militant strike movement that would continue to grow until reaching its peak during the "Hot Autumn" 1969.

### ARMED STRUGGLE ON THE AGENDA

The pivotal event of 1968-69 took place in the South, however, involving peasant day laborers. Pursuing their strike, farm laborers had taken over and blocked the main national highway at Avola in Sicily. On December 2, 1968, police were told to immediately restore order. They began firing at the unarmed demonstrators, who fled into the fields and took cover. For 25 minutes the police fired volley after volley of shots into the fields where unarmed families were hugging the earth. Two laborers were killed and others wounded. It was clear that the State was sending a message, threatening the workers with violent repression if they went too far and challenged the State Power.

For a week Italy was rocked by violent protests. The Italian working class and the student movement were enraged. In Milan, Genoa and Rome thousands of workers and students battled with police. In Milan, students and workers held a mass meeting inside the Alfa-Romeo auto plant (a future stronghold). In Turin students marched into the FIAT-"Grandi motori" plant and held a joint protest meeting with FIAT workers. The Avola killings and the demonstrations that followed were a key turning point in the mass revolts of 1968 and 1969. They marked the beginning of effective cooperation between student revolutionaries and workers on a mass scale. And for some New Leftists like future Red Brigades (BR) leaders Renato Curcio and Mara Cagol, then still student leaders of the *Negative University* movement at Trento University, it starkly raised the question of the movement's lack of preparation for military action by the State. Avola convinced them of the need to prepare for armed struggle, and this problem dominated their thinking from December 1968 and through all of 1969.

The militarization of the conflict was only further confirmed by the events of 1969. In February 1969 the government began more attacks on the student movement following the demonstrations against visiting u.s. president Richard Nixon. 12,000 police put Rome under a virtual state of siege and there were violent confrontations between students and police. 31 people were hurt and 300 arrested. Two days later 6,000 heavily armed police staged a pre-dawn raid on the barricaded campus of Rome University, but the students who had been alerted to the raid had evacuated the campus during the night. The Rome University assault was the beginning of an all-out campaign of police repression which the student movement was unable to resist. In the following 19 days heavily armed police staged military assaults on and seized every occupied university campus in the country. Italian Communist Party (PCI) members of parliament protested verbally against the repression of the student movement while at the same time PCI senators kept their political distance from the student movement by abstaining on a key senate vote on a university reform bill. In fact, as the State increased its repression of the student New Left during the winter of 1969, the PCI's line against "extremism" in the student movement also hardened. The PCI blamed the left wing of the student movement for provoking government repression. Instead, the PCI argued, students had to recognize that the PCI was the only force capable of solving the crisis of the student movement by winning legal reforms through electoral means.

The increasingly militarized nature of the clash only became more apparent when the struggle broke open in the poverty-stricken South. On April 9, 1969 police in the little town of Battipaglia, south of Naples, opened fire on demonstrators who had seized the town in protest over the closing of a local cigarette factory. Two people, a student and a professor, were killed by police. Battipaglia had been one of the government's regions of model development in the South. But despite government investments in the area, unemployment had continued to grow. In March of 1969 five small factories had shut down, and when the Santa Lucia cigarette factory was also threatened with a shut-down, workers occupied the factory. The entire town was mobilized to support the strike.

What began as a union demonstration turned into a violent uprising. The city hall was attacked and burned. Highways and rail lines were blocked and the police headquarters surrounded and besieged. Police and reinforcements were driven out of Battipaglia and the town was "liberated". It was while police were trapped in the police headquarters by demonstrators that they opened fire on the crowd. The next day the reformist union leaders tried to hold a meeting but it was broken up by townspeople. In Battipaglia and elsewhere in the South these uprisings took on a multi-class regional or semi-nationalist character, an explosion of rage against the neo-colonialist exploitation of the South.



The violence in Battipaglia in which 200 people were hurt, including 90 policemen and security agents, touched off violent support demonstrations in the rest of Italy in the following days. In Milan demonstrators battled police for 4 hours in an attempt to march on the Business Association headquarters. There were violent demonstrations in Rome, Florence, and other cities. In Bologna, a major city of the central Italian "red belt", where the PCI had controlled the city government for decades, the demonstration turned into a violent confrontation with the revisionists. PCI goon squads tried to defend "their" train station from being seized by the enraged demonstrators. In the FIAT plants in Turin southern immigrant workers went on strike in solidarity with Battipaglia struggles. This was an important political step forward for them and FIAT workers as a whole. The three major union federations of the PCI revisionists, the Catholics and the Social Democrats called a joint 3-hour general strike in protest on April 11, while the PCI called for a law to disarm the police: "to make the police defenders of democratic order and the people rather than the tool of the anti-worker struggle".

After Battipaglia popular uprisings of entire villages and towns spread throughout the South. Typically, city halls and railway stations were seized, highways blocked. Orgoloso in Sardegna rose, Castelvoturno and many other towns outside Naples were swept into the movement. Occupations took place throughout Calabria, one of the poorest southern regions. In Sicily, Palermo (the island's capital and a city with a revolutionary proletarian tradition dating back to the 1789 French Revolution) joined the occupation movement. In the rough mountainous interior of Sicily, one of the poorest regions of all western Europe, 25 towns were occupied. *L'Unita*, newspaper of the PCI, treacherously imposed a press whiteout and did not report any of these uprisings.

In June and July 1969 most of the Puglia region (Apulia) on the south-eastern Adriatic coast of Italy's "heel" was swept by insurrectionary town occupations touched off by a militant agricultural laborers' strike. The State chose to play a waiting game and did not attempt to openly repress the Puglia movement, which was the most militant and widespread of all the rebellions in the South that year. Instead the government waited until the movement had died down later in the summer to repress individual militant leaders. The government was particularly worried that open repression would have led to a link-up between struggles of Northern industrial workers and Southern peasants.

In the spring and summer of 1969 secret high-level government meetings were held to decide what response to take to the spread of Battipaglia-type uprisings. The governing Center-Left coalition, whose main parties were the conservative Christian Democrats (DC) and the Social-Democratic Socialist Party of Italy (PSI), was split into hard-line vs. soft-line factions. The hardliners in both parties argued for open "exemplary" repression to intimidate the masses and the movement. The softliners argued for a strategy of co-optation, using a cautious combination of selective repression and promises of social reforms. That softline faction, led by former DC Premier Aldo Moro, also argued that a "historic compromise" was necessary: bringing the revisionist Italian Communist Party (PCI) into the capitalist government as a partner. Only such a broad alliance, they said, would provide the government with a broad enough social base to make it politically stable. The hardliners in both the DC and the PSI, who were backed by the u.s. Nixon-Kissinger administration, argued that any alliance with "communists" would be treason.

Because of these splits in its own highest councils, the then-current government of DC Premier Mariano Rumor temporarily opted for a soft line in the South in the spring and summer of 1969. Hard-liners in the police and military security forces, however, encouraged the fascist New Order (Ordine Nuovo) movement to begin a "strategy of tension". This entailed violent terrorism against the Left together with random atrocities. Their plan was to create a public mood of panic, in which a military dictatorship would be welcomed.

The fascist strategy of public terror bombings began in April 1969. On December 12, 1969, a fascist bombing in front of a bank, in a downtown Milan square, killed 16 and injured 90, crippling, maiming some for life. The police quickly framed two anarchists for the bombing, throwing one to his death from the window of a Milan police HQ. A national symbol of the State-Fascist armed collaboration, the bombing is simply referred to as "Piazza Fontana".

## **ORGANIZATION AND STRATEGY**

The political crisis was no less a crisis for the New Left, which was faced with the challenge of jumping to a higher level of revolutionary organization and strategy--or of falling back. With the South in revolt and the dissident C.U.B. workers' movement spreading through factories in the North, many new parties, groups and collectives sprouted to try

and solve these pressing problems. On July 26-27, 1969, on the initiative of Left vanguard groups such as Continuous Struggle and Workers' Power, a national meeting of C.U.B.s was convened in Turin. Continuous Struggle's attempt to build the C.U.B.s into a revolutionary organization, national in scope and with anti-revisionist politics, failed, however. The direct democracy of mass worker-student assemblies making their own independent decisions in each factory was a strength at first, but had become an "ultra-democratic" barrier to higher forms of organization. There also existed a strong economist influence among both radical students and workers. Meaning, however militant or illegal or violent the tactics used (fighting police, sabotage, taking over plants, etc.) for many, the purpose was only the pursuit of higher wages, or other reforms within the bourgeois system. In this framework, real revolutionary strategy was unnecessary.

There were four main trends visible in the Italian New Left after Avola--with different strategies and different forms of organization:

*Reformist*: Those who took this as their main strategy spoke of how impossible revolution was without the working class majority--which was, after all, still loyal to or influenced by their traditional party, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Therefore, this trend said, the main strategy had to be takeover or reforming of the Old Left. Some, such as *Red Notebooks* co-founder Mario Tronti, implemented this strategy by leaving the New Left and joining the PCI, ostensibly to take it over from within. Others, such as the "Maoist" party PCd'I, established rival micro-parties to the PCI, building the same type of legalistic organization and running candidates against the PCI in the parliamentary elections. Their hope was to become the PCI of the future. This trend naturally believed that armed struggle by the Left was premature. Instead, they led a retreat in the student movement back to the terrain of bourgeois democracy, until that fabled future hour when the contradictions are overcome, and the Old Left parties are revolutionized from within.

*Spontaneist*: This was the largest trend within the New Left, dominating both Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*") and most of the worker-student factory assemblies. This trend was revolutionary, but saw revolution as coming spontaneously from the masses without "bureaucratic" mechanisms such as programs, parties or armies. Mixed together in the spontaneist trend were undeveloped young militants, anarcho-syndicalists, and those who were, in reality, reformists. The main thing to these militants was to radicalize the *form* of present mass activity, acting as a tactical vanguard to create more violence. In the factory struggles, their main answer was more and more sabotage. In demonstrations they started destroying property or even, after first quickly tying scarves around their faces, coming forward to fire pistol shots at the police before disappearing back into the crowd. While the spontaneist trend believed in the importance of anti-capitalist violence during mass demonstrations, it opposed urban guerrilla warfare as "separating themselves from the masses".

*Workerist* ("*Operaista*"): This trend was more developed, with a Marxist orientation. It interpreted the revolutionary role of the working class, however, in an abstract way. Workerism saw the revolution as being completely determined by struggles on the factory floor. In fact, revolution was seen as solely coming from the economic struggle in big industry between capitalists and factory workers. Workers' Power (Potere Operaio), one of the strongest New Left organizations, was the main workerist force. It was founded in 1966 out of a split in *Red Notebooks* magazine. Under the leadership of Tony Negri, an influential 1960s radical professor, Workers' Power spread from its original student base in Pisa to Pavia, Venice, Turin, and Padova. Workers' Power local student collectives were largely independent of each other but shared a common national newspaper with the same name. Although Workers' Power played an early role in turning the student movement towards factory organizing, the organization always remained primarily a student one. Only in the large Montedison chemical works at Porto Marghera outside of Venice did Workers' Power build a strong base among factory workers. The organization went through a crisis in late 1968-early 1969 over whether to remain a loose student structure or to become a revolutionary party. In September 1969, Workers' Power formally reconstituted itself as a Marxist-Leninist cadre organization. It was to reach its greatest strength in 1971-72, when it had 150 local sections and 4,000 members, 1,000 of them full-time militants. This trend was sharply divided over the question of clandestine organization and urban guerrilla warfare.

*Peoples War Based in the Working Class*: This trend, whose main organization was the Red Brigades, saw the modern struggle as protracted war between imperialism and the working class. In their view revolutionary organization was not the unarmed mass movement nor the would-be guerrilla "foco", but a combatant Communist party whose armed activities are

actively based in and a political expression of the most conscious strata of the working class. In the 1970s the Red Brigades demonstrated a strong class base and rapid growth. The BR's organizational strongholds were in certain key Northern Italian factories (FIAT, Alfa-Romeo, Sit-Siemens, etc.) where they politically controlled whole departments. The Brigades eventually had thousands of members, tens of thousands of active supporters, and at least hundreds of thousands of sympathizers.

These trends were not separated by iron walls, but shared people and ideas as they struggled together in a quickly-changing movement. They often referred to their movement as "autonomy" or the "autonomous movement". This word was used by the Italian New Left in the same, all-purpose way that 1960s movements in the u.s. empire used the word "liberation". Autonomy stood for changes far beyond the present system. Autonomy was the name given to the radical counter-culture and to the New Left itself. Autonomy was also used to designate groups and programs tactically independent of the Old Left parties and unions. And for some, proletarian autonomy was used to indicate the zone of communist ideas, culture and embryonic society of the new armed struggle.

In late 1968 the entire editorial board of the Trento university journal *Political Work*, including Mara Cagol and Renato Curcio, had dissolved *PW* and joined the Maoist party "PCd'I". But only two weeks later "PCd'I" split, with the *PW* group leaving the party as part of the more activist "red line" faction. By the fall of 1969 many of the *PW* cadre, including Cagol and Curcio, had moved to Milan to take part in another attempt to start a revolutionary organization.

Milan was the main center of the militant C.U.B. worker-student movement, which had first begun at the Pirelli tire factory. In several Milan workplaces, notably the IBM and Sit-Siemens electronics factories, communists had formed Study Groups of technical workers to "study and propose goals and actions to the employees...not from the outside like the union does...but from the inside through analyses and mass assemblies everyone can participate in." On September 8, 1969 the Pirelli C.U.B., the IBM Study Group, the Sit-Siemens Study Group, the former *PW* collective, worker-student collectives at the Alfa-Romeo auto plant, the State Telephone company and at other workplaces, merged to form the Metropolitan Political Collective (CPM) in Milan. This was the organization that gave birth to the Red Brigades.

## CHAPTER 3

### Preparation for a new resistance: C.P.M.

In the winter-spring of 1969-70 the CPM grew to be one of the key organizations in Milan. It continued to operate inside the factories where the C.U.B.s and study groups that had given birth to the collective were based. CPM consciously linked wage and working condition struggles to the larger struggle against world imperialism. Slogans like "Indochina- Italy: the same struggle" and "Imperialism-reformism: the same chain", were typical of their mass political line.

An important new element in the Milan situation was a movement of vocational students, representing the spread of student rebellion into the working class. There were 80,000 such vocational students in Milan, the most of any city in Italy. These young workers labored during the day and attended school at night to complete their technical training or apprenticeships. Their student/worker movement rebelled against the long hours, arbitrary and vindictive school discipline, and the high tuition fees. Led by CPM militants at the Feltrineli Technical Institute, thousands of vocational students had a large demonstration demanding an end to tuition fees. The slogans included: "The union=workers police", "Administrators + teachers--servants of the bosses", and "The bourgeois state cannot be changed, it must be destroyed!" CPM was a large political influence in the student/worker movement in Milan.

The collective was still only an intermediate stage of development. It was not in its own eyes the revolutionary vanguard, but only like-minded militants who had come together to consciously search out the path of transition from spontaneous mass movement to revolutionary organization. As an IBM study group paper put it: "Struggles on the factory floor must be integrated into the world-wide class struggle, particularly in its European expression."

The CPM found itself in disagreement with the extra-parliamentary Left groups over their assessment of the national labor-management contract fights of the "Hot Autumn" of 1969. These battles involving 5 million unionized workers began in September 1969. Most of the New Left had been overly optimistic about their potential results, viewing the wage struggles in themselves as "revolutionary" and the bourgeoisie about to "surrender unconditionally". But in December after the national wage contracts had been signed the reformist unions had come out of the fight numerically and organizationally stronger, and spontaneous mass struggle in the factories had not only ebbed temporarily but had been co-opted. Unprepared for this set-back to the rank-and-file C.U.B. movement, the mood of the New Left now swung from wild optimism to deep pessimism. CPM disagreed with the shallowness of the New Left's understanding. CPM, having reached a more political assessment of the shortcomings of the C.U.B. movement, now also saw its strengths more realistically than the rest of the New Left.

At IBM-Italy the revolutionary study group had taken a leading role in the "Hot Autumn" struggles. A manager had been fired at the IBM Vimercate factory "for having been part of a group politically opposed to management", and for thus having supported the workers' demands. When the unions defended the company, a spontaneous struggle broke out. The study group reported:

"The workers of IBM stop working and meet in mass assembly ... the decision of the Internal Commission is totally repudiated and the union body itself is pushed aside and denied any authority to lead the workers: the Internal Commission is forced to demand that management reverse its decision. It is decided by the workers to constitute themselves as a permanent mass assembly linking together the fight against repression with the contract struggle. It is a memorable day for IBM, and for the autonomy and the class momentum that the workers express in totally spontaneous forms; it is lived through in an atmosphere of high tension. The spontaneous strike lasts the whole day changing from a mass assembly into a parade which snakes through the entire factory and then reconvenes in mass assembly to decide the forms of struggle for the following days."

IBM management was forced to back down. The IBM study group concluded:

"The balance sheet is undoubtedly positive: the spontaneous strike and the achievement of the mass assembly ... constitute the new political base from which to move forward."

But "... political insufficiency and a certain dose of opportunism present in the group permits the unions to quickly reabsorb the movement within the channels of their contractual logic.

"The political vacuum in which factory struggle takes place is a sign of the progressive lessening of tension. From time to time some incident just happens, some big shock, such as clashes with die-hard scabs, or incidents involving destruction of their cars, to which no one knows how to give proper political weight and a proper outcome..."

Between November and December 1969, the group analyzed its own crisis, expressed by the contradiction between "the success of the general goal of mobilization of the working class, and the failure of the presupposition of autonomy which was to be its foundation."

According to this self-criticism: "To turn to all the workers ... has been to pretend not to notice reality, to not act to identify the Left in the factory and within it find a political space to constitute oneself as a point of reference.... At IBM we wanted to be the point of reference for all the workers and we weren't a point of reference for anyone. We won everyone's sympathy and we were considered a dissident fringe of the unions; we wanted to change the direction and the terrain of the struggle at IBM in opposition to the union's choices and we were almost always

the unconscious instrument of the unions. Errors were committed in mistaking for real political consciousness a generic opportunism of the silent majority type which monotonously sides with the winning proposition."

The study group concluded that there was a need to go beyond the spontaneous level of struggle in the factory, and to raise the level to that of the anti-revisionist and anti-imperialist struggle. To start this an exemplary action was carried out. During ceremonies IBM held to inaugurate a new computer model top directors of the Italian IBM affiliate as well as u.s. IBM management were present at the plant in Milan. CPM, which the IBM study group had just joined, put up banners inside the IBM plant with slogans like "IBM Produces War", "IBM in Italy, Imperialism at Home", "On Strike, Out With The Servants of Imperialism". As a result the u.s. IBM directors were forced to enter the building by a service entrance,

The IBM study group's radical self-criticism was part of their political interaction inside the Metropolitan Political Collective (CPM) with the Sit-Siemens and Pirelli groups, who were undergoing a similar crisis over spontaneism. The decision by the IBM study group to join CPM at this point came out of their understanding that to make this qualitative political leap to anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism, the factory movement needed to go beyond the political and organizational limitations of the C.U.B. and factory study group forms of struggle. The IBM study group described the problem as follows:

"The crisis of the Pirelli C.U.B. (which resulted from the collapse of the struggle after the contract was signed, and the failure to organize a working class vanguard within the factory), the impasse faced by the IBM, Sit-Siemens and other factory groups which have sprouted like mushrooms during the hot autumn contract fights some of which are just as rapidly falling apart, demands a fundamental change of the political assumptions underlying their actions and a radical rethinking to justify their existence outside of the trade union organizations and the left [electoral] parties."

The IBM study group concluded that the "Hot Autumn" factory uprisings had decreed the death of "groupism". From now on the factory struggle had to be seen in the framework of a wider class struggle on the European and world level. As far as the terrain of the struggle was concerned the study group concluded "above all, the class struggle in the metropolis is defined in revolutionary terms whose outcome is represented by PEOPLE'S ARMED STRUGGLE".

In December 1969 a small group of Catholic laypersons held a conference at a religious institute in Chiavari, a small port city on the Ligurian coast not far from Genoa. The "Catholic laymen" were disguised CPM representatives. The secret meeting discussed a proposal, put forward by Curcio, Cagol and others, that CPM prepare for immediate armed struggle. A military-political organizational plan was outlined. The debate that ensued caused sharp divisions in the CPM between those who wished to advance the struggle at that point primarily by violent mass "social confrontation" in strikes and demonstrations, and

those who wanted to begin a systematic plan of urban guerrilla warfare. There were also differences on timing, with some holding that a longer period of political-organizational preparation was necessary before forming guerrilla forces. This debate was to continue throughout 1970 until a second secret meeting in October of 1970, when the two groupings split and the Red Brigades were formally launched.

One interesting result of the Chiavari conference was a long theoretical document, entitled *Social Struggle & Organization in the Metropolis*, which systematized the political line of the collective. In it, the CPM comrades drew up "a balance sheet of concrete political experience and outlined plans for future political work". In this document a definition of proletarian autonomy is given:

"We see in proletarian autonomy the unifying content of the struggles of the students, workers and technicians which prepared the way for the qualitative leap of 1968-69.

"Autonomy is not a fantasy or an empty formula for those who, in the face of the system's counter-offensive, nostalgically cling to past struggles. Autonomy is the movement for proletarian liberation from the comprehensive hegemony of the bourgeoisie and it coincides with the revolutionary process. In this sense autonomy is certainly not a new thing, a last-minute invention, but a political category of revolutionary Marxism, in whose light the consistency and direction of a mass movement can be evaluated.

"Autonomy from: bourgeois political institutions (the state, parties, unions, judicial institutions, etc.), economic institutions (the entire capitalist productive-distributive apparatus), cultural institutions (the dominant ideology in all its manifestations), normative institutions (habits, bourgeois 'morals').

"Autonomy for: the destruction of the whole system of exploitation and the construction of an alternative social organization."

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is necessary today to redefine the very concept of revolution in the light of objective conditions and the real development of the

autonomous movement of the european proletariat....

"Revolutionary process and not revolutionary moment.

"The Brazilian revolutionary Marcelo De Andrade writes: 'Before the unification of world capitalism by yankee imperialism, the proletariat was able to arm itself by unarmed means, that is they could first organize themselves politically and develop the political struggle and unarmed violence up to a certain point, to then profit from the social, political and military disasters of the ruling classes of their respective countries to arm themselves and seize power.... Today, given that the possibility of an inter-imperialist war is historically excluded, an alternative proletarian power must be, from the beginning, political-military, given that the armed struggle is the main form of the class struggle.'

"Implicit in incorrect conceptions current today in Italy regarding the relationship between mass movement and revolutionary organization is the image of a process of this type: first we develop the purely political struggle, winning the masses to the idea of revolution, only then when the masses have become revolutionary we will make the armed revolution.... Intermediate objective: the construction of the Marxist-Leninist party.

"Reality itself pulls us away from suggestions of a false alternative. The social dimension of the struggle and the highest point of its development: the struggle against generalized repression, already constitutes a revolutionary movement.... When it is possible to get 4 years in jail for not having attacked a cop, a choice is imposed: either one hides in the marsh of renunciatory reformism, or one accepts the revolutionary terrain of the struggle.... The bourgeoisie has already chosen illegality. The long revolutionary march in the metropolis is the only adequate response."

#### **"SINISTRA PROLETARIA" - THE SHIFT FROM LEGALITY TO ILLEGALITY**

In July 1970 the CPM collective began publication of a theoretical magazine called *Sinistra Proletaria* (*Proletarian Left*). CPM had previously published agitational leaflets using this title, but the appearance of the magazine reflected a new stage in the ongoing struggle

inside the collective over the question of armed struggle. With the appearance of *Sinistra Proletaria*, the collective dropped the name CPM and took on that of Proletarian Left. This collective was the embryo of the Red Brigades.

SP/CPM pointed out that the struggle within the movement for a higher level of organization was the critical step:

"To organize ourselves is not easy, it's a struggle... it is a struggle, first of all against spontaneism and confusion, against the tendency to accept the frontal assault which the bosses would like to impose on us, we need an all-inclusive organization which is able to carry out the struggle we're engaged in, not in one factory or in one neighborhood, but in the whole society.... The proletariat has gone through the first stage of struggle: that of spontaneous clashes everywhere and anywhere, where it's go for broke, risking everything, and it now begins to understand that the class struggle is like a war. One has to learn how to strike without warning, concentrating one's forces for the attack, dispersing rapidly when the enemy counterattacks.... When the american army invaded Cambodia, it did not find even the shadow of a Vietcong, later it had to endure sudden attacks everywhere in South Vietnam, in the rear areas where it was weakest. This is the model to follow..."

"... whoever thinks they can attack us with impunity, fire us, beat us up, must meet with a hard answer. But not only that: we must learn to strike the enemy first, when it is still unprepared.... We must build workers cells for defense and attack, we must learn to protect our backs, to defend a comrade when they are assaulted.... The organization of violence is a necessity of the class struggle."

In addition to theory-battle against general backwardness in the wider movement, SP/CPM sought to deepen its roots in the factories and generalize the anti-capitalist struggle to Italian society as a whole. And they put special emphasis in the summer of 1970 on building a clandestine base in the key factories of Sit-Siemens, Alfa-Romeo, FIAT and Pirelli.

During this same period SP/CPM joined with Continuous Struggle and other groups to challenge the reformist PCI's attempts to co-opt the mass discontent with a legalistic program tied to a return of a Center-Left government. They ambitiously initiated an aggressive campaign called "*Let's take the city*" which called on workers "to take, not ask for" housing, transport, books, food, etc.

Between the summer of 1970 and February 1971 (when it ceased to exist as a public organization) SP/CPM led a series of mass occupations of abandoned housing in the Red working class neighborhoods like Quarto Oggiaro, Gallarate, and MacMahon which ring Milan's outskirts. The popular mass slogan "housing should be taken, don't pay rent" was put out in June 1970.

In these housing struggles SP/CPM emphasized the need for the masses to prepare themselves to militarily meet the violence of the State, pointing out that these struggles were part of a wider struggle for State power. The level of mass support for these housing occupations was very high, and women played a leading role in the many violent clashes with the police. The poor families in each building had to fortify it and organize themselves to fight off police attacks to evict them. Despite the PCI's denunciation of these occupation movements as adventurist' provocations which would only help the Right, a number of them were successful, such as one in September 1970 in the Gallarate neighborhood which won badly needed housing for 20 proletarian families.

This struggle took place under the leadership of a committee set up by Sinistra Proletaria (SP). The target was a 14-story empty apartment building, belonging to public housing authorities, in the Red proletarian Gallarate neighborhood.

"The committee nominated three household heads to take care of technical problems. Only the members of this small committee were to know the day of the occupation.... The overall problem consisted in carrying out the occupation by surprise.... The occupation of the apartment was decided for the night of September 24-25. Only the committee of three knew the exact day.... The families left in separate waves: this way if the police followed and stopped one automobile the others could still continue..."

"A comrade acting as courier was supposed to be stationed near the apartment building to relay a warning if the police were nearby.... The police were not there.... By 10:45 p.m. all the families were in the building.... The action had been very swift and silent.... A

rudimentary defense was immediately organized with... bricks and stones brought inside... The police only found out about the occupation the next day by reading the newspapers! During the night the walls of all the nearby houses were plastered with a special edition of the Sinistra Proletaria newspaper entitled *Who do our houses belong to?* and leaflets entitled *Housing should be taken, don't pay rent*. An enormous banner saying *OCCUPIED HOUSES*, festooned with red banners, made the police furious....

During the morning the biggest mistake of the action was made. Trusting a rumor spread by the police... the comrades ignored the problem of defending the building. The error is paid for... 300 police intervened in a very swift action.... They were able to break down the front door despite being bombarded with bricks and stones... from the windows. The police drove everyone out.... The response of the occupants, especially the proletarian women was immediate.... The will to struggle and win emerged clearly from the mass popular assembly [called to decide strategy--Ed.]. All those who spoke reached the same conclusion: struggle until victory, no retreat, mass encampment in front of the building until all the families were given housing. If the police intervened again they were ready to put up a violent resistance.... At 11 p.m., the police made their first charge, which was very violent. They met with an enraged response: a lot of cops ended up in the hospital, among them a police captain who was hit over the head with a bottle of milk by a mother. Violent police charges followed. Tear gas was used."

The next day, September 26, after seeing the resolve of the twenty resisting families and the solidarity shown them by the rest of the neighborhood, the public housing authorities gave in and granted them housing. The violent struggle had paid off! Sinistra Proletaria distributed a victory statement which concluded:

"They have won against the revisionists and all the other 'false friends of the people' who preached moderation, who wanted to rely only on negotiations, who accused the people in struggle of extremism and adventurism. Revisionists of all varieties said we would be defeated! And instead we won! The new law of the people has won!"

The changing SP/CPM organization also led a campaign in early 1971 to make transportation free, urging workers to seize buses during rush hours, and refuse to pay. This struggle did not take on a really mass character like the housing struggles, since shortly after SP launched the campaign they went underground. The seeds for a future mass struggle were sown however. Three years later mass struggles for free transport did explode all over Italy.

The one new sector of rebellion that the SP/CPM backed away from was the feminist movement. At that time the first women's liberation groups were forming in Italy. While composed of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, as is typical of new radical phenomena at first, feminism was a shock to the ingrained backwardness of Italian society—including the New Left. SP/CPM viewed women's oppression as a secondary issue, often as a petty-bourgeois diversion from the revolution. Their view was that women needed nothing except to join their husbands in overthrowing the government. Here is a CPM leaflet distributed for International Women's Day in 1970:

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### **Women's Liberation!?**

"But liberation in relation to whom?

From the husbands who are exploited 8 hours a day in the factory, who work in unhealthy conditions, workers whom the bosses' system makes believe they have some privileges?

Liberation so women 'can work'? Liberation so that women today 'can' go to a cafe or movie alone, buy some extra clothing or a necklace, or take the pill?

*In our society based on exploitation 24 hours out of 24 hours a day: Men have the privilege of being exploited in the factory to 'maintain the family' maybe by working overtime, when with the word 'maintain' the bosses mean they are also paying for the wife's housework(!!).*

Then in addition in the name of their liberation the bosses offer women the right to be exploited in the factory, what the bosses call: the right to work.



In this way women are exploited: First, because they have to enter the factory to pay the rent, to buy books for their children and send them to school.... Second, because they have to take care of the house, the children and perhaps 'struggle' for day care centers with gentle tactics! All this helps to keep the bosses system alive, in fact the system's way of proposing day care centers serves:

- to take away the so-called 'weight' of educating your children and to make you work when and how they want you to;

- ask you to 'delegate' to them the authority to educate your children from birth according to their interests. To struggle for day care centers means to struggle for our right to educate our children ourselves in day care centers and thus not permit the system to exploit us on all levels. Real liberation comes from the class struggle."

Metropolitan Political Collective

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The leaflet expresses some good ideas, particularly in the need to protect children from the State and the so-called educational system. But the male outlook and narrowness of the leaflet is evident. To belittle women's struggle for basic human rights, for the right to a job or the right to go out in public alone without fear of violence, is chauvinism. Remember that this was in a society where women were legally not allowed even wage labor without a husband's permission.

What was so incongruous about that was the leading role in CPM played by Margherita (Mara) Cagol. She was an exceptional woman in both senses of the word. The Italian New Left was still primarily male in outlook and composition, based in certain key factories in heavy industry. She herself came from a middle class family (mother a schoolteacher and father a small cosmetics store owner) in the far North. She had a very Catholic upbringing, and was thought to be a serious-minded person by her teachers. It was at Trento, as a student activist, that she first found the revolution. While her close comrade and husband, Renato Curcio, became the leading theoretician of the Brigades, Mara Cagol was a leading militant in her own right. During the *Political Work* period at Trento University, she had done social investigation on peasant conditions in the surrounding Trentino region, and had translated an abridged version of Karl Marx's *Capital* which was widely used in Italian New Left study circles.

In the Metropolitan Political Collective Mara was among the most radical. She took a leading role in organizing the new guerrilla formations, and was to become the political-military commander of a column of the Red Brigades. As Renato Curcio wrote of her: "For Mara imperialism was not an abstract concept but an enemy that you began to fight - in common with comrades - in your everyday choices." Mara certainly was exceptional in her commitment and abilities. But she was also the proverbial exceptional woman whose abilities even male chauvinists always depend on, and whom they single out for praise in part as a way to avoid facing the general oppression of women.

Mara was at the same time a pathfinder for other women who were coming to join the anti-imperialist armed struggle. As the radicalization of women in Italy grew, the number of women in the armed struggle rose. However, the women in the armed struggle and the women raising feminist struggles were not necessarily the same women. In Italy (as in the "u.s.a.") there was a profound division among radical women - where armed anti-imperialism and Women's Liberation were put in opposition to each other. Neither this nor the attitude of the BR were static situations, however. The practical effect this had on the movement will be seen in the national referendum on divorce in 1974.

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Beneath the public struggles led by "Sinistra Proletaria" in the summer and fall of 1970, a new organization calling itself the "Red Brigade" singular at first, and then the "Red Brigades", began to carry out small propaganda actions. This was a point where armed activity was also taking root even in the flinty soil of West Germany, with the appearance of the Red Army Faction (R.A.F.). In France, an armed organization had risen out of the ashes of the French May 1968 student revolt. The BR felt especially close to this French group, which began with the same name, Proletarian Left ("Gauche Proletarienne") and did

the same kind of illegal housing occupations, bus take-overs and other mass actions that SP used in Italy. European developments were encouraging. In its September-October 1970 issue SP wrote:

"Guerrilla warfare has now completed its initial phase... it is no longer simply a detonation... but has taken on the dimension of being the only strategic perspective that can historically replace the insurrectionary one, which is now inadequate, and... penetrate the metropolis, fusing the world proletariat in a common strategy and form of struggle. Capital unifies the world through its project of armed counter-revolution; the proletariat unites itself on a world scale through guerrilla warfare.

ITALY AND EUROPE ARE NOT HISTORICAL EXCEPTIONS."

## CHAPTER 4

### The Red Brigades appear: factory actions

The first stage of the armed struggle was one of propaganda actions, not directed to Italian society at large, but organically growing out of the existing workers' struggle.

The Red Brigades were rooted in the Italian working class. This fact, which imperialism has worked to conceal, was the explanation for their political strength and fearless militancy. At the first large trial of BR prisoners in 1978, the defendants issued a statement refuting all the misleading speculative gossip about their origins that had been slyly circulated by the bourgeois press, the intelligence agencies, and the revisionists:

"The Red Brigades were not born in the secret police office, nor in Moscow, nor in Washington, and not even in the University of Trento or in the Italian Communist Party federation of Reggio Emilia province. The Red Brigades simply sprang to life at the beginning of the 1970s from the advanced units of the working class.... more specifically, the Red Brigades were born in Milan in the Pirelli plant."

In the early days, the Brigades held many lunch-time rallies in front of factories. A "liberated" car would pull up, with loudspeakers temporarily mounted on the roof, and several masked comrades spoke to the crowd of workers that gathered. They passed leaflets. Company guards or foremen trying to get close to the car found their way blocked. Just before the pigs arrived the car would zoom off to cheers. A study of the "Historic Nucleus", the first, founding wave of the BR, revealed that the majority of them were young working class men from the ages of 22 to 33. Among the first 172 persons arrested or indicted as BR members, by the end of 1977, there were only 21 former university students.

To grasp why the Italian proletariat produced advanced elements that embraced armed struggle, we can look at the FIAT Mirafiori auto works in Turin. There, within the gigantic 60,000-worker FIAT complex that was like a small city, the stamping plant ("presse") became known as a BR stronghold. "Presse" was officially a department, but it was really a factory itself. 8,800 men labored there, feeding the huge hydraulic-powered presses that stamped out FIAT's steel auto body panels. It was one of the lowest-ranking jobs in the complex. Working conditions were hard, dangerous. Noise from the ever-hammering presses was so severe, that every year one-third of presse workers had to be transferred out due to deafness.

Those were unskilled laboring jobs, paying 3rd level wages (lowest at FIAT). Many of the stamping plant workers were Southern immigrants. Unable to both pay rent and send support money back home to their families, some FIAT workers bought cheap round-trip train tickets every night, to sleep in the trains. Other workers slept in the stations, or in illegal shelters. More lived in "hot bed" rooming houses, where 3 or 4 workers would share one bed in turns. It is not difficult to grasp these workers' understanding of imperialism.

On November 16, 1977, one Carlo Casalegno, deputy editor of the newspaper *La Stampa* in Turin (Italy's second-biggest newspaper), was executed by a BR unit. *La Stampa* is owned by FIAT, and Casalegno had eagerly taken up his bosses' special assignment to slander the emergent Red Brigades. He was notorious in turning out falsehoods and journalistic intrigues against the BR, who had warned him to either cease his dirty work or face the consequences. Casalegno's correction drew the ire of both the imperialists and the revisionists (who were engaged in Brigade slander of their own). The Italian Communist Party's (PCI) union called a brief, liberal protest strike in Turin to support "freedom of speech" and to condemn the Brigades for "terrorism". At the FIAT stamping plant, where the company even encouraged the PCI's demonstration, 90% of the men refused to stop work. This was a shock to the bosses, and revealed the BR's depth of support.

Brigades activity at "Presse" was ever-present. BR leaflets were hung in washrooms and coffee machines, and stuffed inside lockers. Six particular managers from "Presse", zealous oppressors, were knee-capped (in this favored BR tactic, an offender would be stopped by a BR unit and shot in the leg, to make a public warning without creating a martyr). In January 1976, the security police captured a BR unit which included a union activist from the FIAT stamping plant. This surprised the PCI, since the captured BR militant, Basone, had been in the PCI masquerading as a critic of the Brigades. It was clear that the

Brigades not only had considerable support at FIAT, but had infiltrated and won over people within even the opposing structures. As of February 1982 the State had convicted 26 FIAT workers of being BR members, with 3 others having died in firefights. Of these 29 workers, some 14 were union delegates in the Catholic, Social-Democratic, or PCI unions (an additional 32 FIAT workers were either awaiting trial or had been arrested and released for insufficient evidence). And what was true at FIAT was also true at other factories—at Alfa-Romeo, Lancia, Pirelli, Sit-Siemens and elsewhere.

The Red Brigades held their first public action in the spring of 1970: an unannounced rally in Lorenteggio, a proletarian neighborhood in Milan. At the end of August 1970, during a labor contract fight at Sit-Siemens, they distributed leaflets at the company's Piazza Zavattari plant. A week later, the Brigades distributed a leaflet at the Sit-Siemens Settimo Milan plant with a long list of scabs and others "tied to the bosses who had to be hit with proletarian revenge".

The first military actions of the Red Brigades took place, not surprisingly, inside the factories of Sit-Siemens and Pirelli tire corporation, where CPM and later SP held their strongest base. On September 17, 1970 the Brigades carried out their first armed action: a particular Sit-Siemens manager's car was set afire. The Brigades left their signature symbol, a five-pointed star, but no leaflet. However, no one thought it too significant: this sort of action was already common.

More importantly, in October and November of that year, the SP and BR led a pitched contract struggle at Pirelli. On November 27, 1970 and December 8, 1970, the BR set fire to the cars of the head of personnel and the head of security at Pirelli's Bicocca plant. This was to be Enrico Loriga's retribution, who as head of personnel, had fired a leading PCI union militant and ex-partisan leader, Della Torre.

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**COMMUNIQUE #3**  
**December 1, 1970**

Della Torre, mechanic.

A good comrade: one of ours, 50 years old, two sons. Leading trade-union comrade of the CGIL. 25 years of union activity. Partisan Commander (during the World War II Resistance--ed.). Led the struggles. They fired him. They did it together: first the bosses, then the unions. This firing has to do with all of us. It is not a private matter, it is a cowardly POLITICAL LINE which strikes all workers in struggle.

If it takes place without a firm answer from a united factory, if it takes place because of a cheap surrender by the unions and on our backs, then Pirelli and associates will have a free hand, from now on, to get rid of whoever raises their hand to demand their rights.

In the first communication we distributed, it said: "For every comrade they strike at during the struggle one of them will have to pay."

A comrade has been attacked.

And so one of them, precisely "the head of the list" (as many workers in the factory suggested) found his auto destroyed.

But it's not over.

We have said, in fact, "for one eye, two eyes..." and the Fiat 350 automobile of the spy **Ermanno Pellegrini**...is for us, much, much less than an eye. Without even considering that his real car is a white Giulia 1300 junior GT which he has for some time "inexplicably" kept jealously guarded in his garage.

But we are patient....!

If the spy Pellegrini were to FIRE HIMSELF then maybe the Peoples' tribunal will concede him a pardon. In any case Della Torre must return to work to continue the struggle of all the exploited against the bosses.

Collections, lawyers kindly offered by the union, gestures of "solidarity", these are not enough. So until Della Torre does not return the game between all us workers and the boss' servants and jailers must not and will not be closed. The list is long, imagination is not lacking.

For the communist revolution, Red Brigade.

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**COMMUNIQUE #4**  
**December 11, 1970**

In the second communique we said: "For every repressive action that the boss tries to carry out against the workers as a result of the struggle we are conducting we will answer according to the principle: for an eye, two eyes, for a tooth, the whole face."

Shortly afterward a comrade of ours, Della Torre, was fired. So:

--**Pellegrini** after having found his car burned up HAS NOT BEEN SEEN AGAIN IN THE FACTORY. This big spy seems to have accepted the sentence handed down by the People's Tribunal in a "disciplined" way.

If this is so we will pardon him. In the meantime we remind him that siding with the bosses against the workers is becoming more and more expensive.

Then it was the turn of:

--**Loriga Attorney Professor Enrico**, the executioner who signed management's letter firing comrade Della Torre, who even though he parked his Alfa Romeo 1750 far away from his house, did not escape the execution of the verdict which the People's Tribunal issued for him as well.

At 1:05 pm Tuesday, December 8, 1970 (and not at night as the "*Corriere della Sera*" wrote) nothing was left of that auto but a little scrap-iron.

Two million (lire) up in smoke.

This is not the first time that the workers have, in their own way of course, shown their "recognition" for this new personality, the new hardliner of the contract talks. In fact, once already when he was head of personnel at Carbosarda (plant in Sardinia) as a result of the great "proletarian" merits he acquired, our Sardinian comrades of Carbonia after having hung a nice sign around his neck (like the IGNIS workers did with the fascist provocateurs in Trento) put him on a docile donkey and took him to "visit" the countryside, guarding him with a long line of marchers so nothing would happen to him.

A beautiful proletarian festival, in other words, which only those like him failed to understand.

Now we will give Professor Attorney Loriga some advice.

If he should have trouble getting to work to earn his cake there's always the little donkey toward which we promise clemency.

Whereas for the ass...!

And now two news items. Management has **proletarianized** the managers cars. In fact, it recently advised all the managers at Bicocca to take their precious big machines out of the underground parking lot and park them next to the broken down "utilitare" (the cheapest model Fiats made for workers) of the workers on the streets.

Just as management promised in their "communication to all managers." Here are their "appropriate measures"! One more proof of the fact that **capital only protects its profits**.

The second news item regards the "second on the list," the big spy Palmitessa, who for some time now has "fallen sick". We wish him a quick recovery.

Finally two words on basic questions. The active struggle against the bosses' repression, in the form of a direct attack on the personified structure of power, must not let us forget that the power structure bases itself not only on its servants, but also on "things" and on "production".

It is worth thinking about.

To conclude: -- **Della Torre in the factory. Pellegrini at home.**

In the meantime accounts are not closed.

For the communist revolution. Red Brigade.

N.B.: The "*Corriere della Sera*" wants to make us think the auto suffered light damage.

Maybe Attorney Prof. Loriga is not of the same opinion! Red Brigade

With these actions, the BR introduced itself, became well-known, to the workers of Pirelli. But outside of Pirelli little notice was taken. The general level of factory struggle was already quite high: what was to distinguish these torched manager cars among dozens, except by their small BR calling card? And in reaction: armed attacks by fascist gangs, beatings by company guards, were common as well. Italian workers developed an arsenal of novel tactics. Marches across the factory floor were both mini-strike and a method to physically drive out fascist thugs. Workers regularly demonstrated their control of the factory floor. Sabotage mushroomed. And the practice of "proletarian justice" was very widespread. As Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*") described the situation in its January 28, 1971 issue:

"After every action, every procession, every blockade of products, or blockade of office buildings, etc. every department is turned into a proletarian court: those workers who could have participated but did not were made to leave the factory. An example that illustrates this point: in one warehousing department it is learned that people worked on Sunday, 4 workers and 3 supervisors. A discussion is held and the scabs are 'suspended': 2 days suspension for the workers and 3 days for the bosses. 3 days for the supervisors because they are bosses and because during the discussion one of them showed a lack of respect for the workers saying he didn't give a damn what they said... It is not only a matter of maintaining unity: the workers learn to exercise power and take pleasure in doing so."

The Red Brigades introduced themselves to the rest of Italy on January 25, 1971. On that date, a BR commando planted 8 timed firebombs under 8 trucks parked on the Pirelli tire testing track, in the Lainate neighborhood of Milan. Only 3 went off, but the next day Italy's leading newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*, ran a big 5-column article on the BR describing them as "a phantom extra-parliamentary organization". The PCI's newspaper *L'Unita* also ran its first article, attacking the BR as "provocateurs" and inciting the workers to take vigilante action against them. The BR left a leaflet at the testing track, reproduced below. It includes a self-criticism for technical errors, which caused the bomb malfunctions, but points out they still caused 20 million lire worth of damage (about \$25,000 in 1971).

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**COMMUNIQUE #6**  
**February 5, 1971**

- Della Torre in the factory
- contract
- pay cuts
- MacMahon

Piazza Fontana (the fascist terror-bombing massacre--ed.), Pinelli, cops who kill, comrades in jail, Della Torre and many others fired, gangs of fascist thugs protected by the police, judges-politicians-governors, servants of the bosses...

These are the instruments of Violence that the bosses turn against the working class to squeeze it more and more.

Asking us to struggle respecting the laws of the bosses is like asking us to cut off our balls!

But one thing is sure: **we will not turn back!** We will continue with more advanced forms of struggle on the road already chosen: **attack production**, lots of damage for the bosses, little cost to us.

We have already begun to take the first steps on this path.

Monday night January 26, on the tire testing track at Lainate, 3 Pirelli trucks were burned. 20 million gone up in smoke!

From a "technical" point of view this action was not good and 5 other trucks were left undamaged. But one learns by making mistakes and the next time we will know how to do better...

**The bosses have made their calculations poorly.** The intensification of their violence, cannot help but make the intensity of our attack grow. **Until they cancel the new provision** and reimburse us for the money they've stolen, **their accounts will not return...**

In Milan, Rome, Trento, Reggio Calabria the bosses are using police and armed fascists.

Processions, "solidarity" and various kinds of petitions can only lead us to defeat.

We have begun to strike persons and "things". We forced Pellegrini, one of the bosses' pigs, to fire himself. Some other pigs, seeing how things stand shit on themselves.

It must be made very clear: We will continue on this road!

#### **Why MacMahon as well?**

The boss that squeezes us in the factory is the same boss that increases the cost of living, who does not permit us to have a decent home without stealing back those few lire we extract from him through hard struggle.

Those families forced to occupy the houses on via Mac Mahon, which they've already paid for with their taxes, did it to remove themselves and their children from the unhealthy shacks of the infamous "centers for the evicted".

The bosses have answered them with the violence of tear gas and police truncheons.

At Lainate we struck the same boss that exploits us in the factory and makes our life insufferable on the outside.

#### **Who are the provocateurs?**

The bosses are always the provocateurs.

Provocateur is **Leopoldo Pirelli**, via Borgonuovo #18, tel. 651-421-Milan, who, kidding himself that he could stop the struggle which strikes at his power with ever growing force, set fire to the warehouses at Bicocca and Settimo Torinese.

He hopes to kill two birds with one stone this way: kill the struggle by blaming it for things it hasn't done and get the insurance company to pay for new buildings.

Provocation is a weapon the bosses will never stop using. But the bosses and their "useful idiots" should not fool themselves, because the working class by now knows how to distinguish clearly between the **just violence of the proletariat in struggle** and the dumb criminal violence of the bosses!

For the Communist Revolution. Red Brigade.

Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*"), the biggest of the extra-parliamentary New Left groups, was critical of the BR's first actions. In its newspaper, they criticized them as "not a mass action", as "only exemplary", said that BR actions were "objectively a provocation". The criticism argued that "the military organization of the masses is not built by some group carrying out military actions" but by "the creation of stable and autonomous mass political organizations". Continuous Struggle concluded that the BR's actions were only helping the fascists, were an obstacle to the growth of proletarian autonomy, and predicted that they would be isolated by the workers themselves and the revolutionary vanguards.

Despite this peculiar united front (the bourgeoisie, the revisionists, and the largest New Left group) against the early BR, the Milan working class rank and file openly approved of the sabotage at Lainate. Just as earlier they approved of the actions at Pirelli. And they were the voices that counted.



## CHAPTER 5

### The struggle for the line

The emergence of the BR coincided with, inspired, and encouraged the formation of more armed groups. During the first half of 1971, actions by independent armed collectives dotted the Italian map. Many groups took the BR as a direct model, some even referencing BR in their leaflets. Simultaneously, fascist groups carried out their own series of bombings, leaving leaflets praising the BR, as part of the strategy of tension.

The BR saw through the provocation early, and issued a leaflet repudiating the latter bombings. They warned the fascists, and the police behind them, that "nothing would go unpunished". The text of the leaflet is reproduced below:

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In these days we have witnessed a series of terrorist actions with a clear fascist imprint and also clearly inspired by the police.

In particular we want to mention those carried out against the **Rossari and Varzi** factory in Trecate in Novara province, the **Norton International** factory in Carsico (Milan) and the **Necchi** factory in Pavia, the actions against the army barracks of Riete, L'Aguila, Lamezia Terme and Vibo Valentia.

The bomb attacks were accompanied by leaflets in which, among other things, the "Red Brigades" are praised.

The fascists--the executors--and the Carabinieri, their superiors, by "signing" these

leaflets with the symbol of our organization, are attempting to achieve the following goals:

1. To link anti-proletarian, fascist actions with a revolutionary communist organization.
2. To make those organizations that have chosen the path of **direct action, partisan action** and **armed propaganda** hated and unpopular, removing all political meaning from their work and portraying them as criminal organizations that pursue aims contrary to the interests of the popular masses.
3. To terrorize the left; supplying "facts" to feed the theory that has for some time has been slyly circulated that the **Red Brigades** are provocateur organizations led by fascist intriguers and pigs of the various police agencies.
4. To create a climate of tension by carrying out terroristic and gratuitous violent actions that, in the name of the theory of the "opposed extremes," will justify a government attack on the revolutionary left and more generally the working class.
5. To lay the groundwork for a much bigger provocation to be carried out in some factory, attributing it to the left and to, why not, the Red Brigades.

In reality the fascists and the police want to strike, from its birth, at the roots of the strategic hypothesis which will bury them, along with their bosses, forever.

#### People's guerrilla warfare

The workers of the factories and the neighborhoods where we operate, know that the Red Brigades are communist organizations. They know because these organizations have never carried out an action contrary to the interests of the workers.

In the factories we have hit the despots, the servants of the bosses, those most hated by the working class, when this was made necessary because some comrades had been hit;

we hit the fascists because they are the armed forces that capitalism uses today against working class struggles and the proletarian demand for power;

we have always hit the enemies of the people and we have always hit them from within vast movements of struggle.

For this reason, if on the one hand we are convinced that no comrade will fall into the trap laid by these fascist actions, falsely "signed" with our emblem, on the other hand we give the forces of reaction a warning:

**Whoever plays with fire  
will burn their fingers...**

We are investigating to find out who are the individuals directly responsible for these provocations. Perhaps we will know soon, perhaps it will take us a longer time, in any case, you can be sure that:

**Nothing will go unpunished!**

To the police and the fascists we say one thing clearly: There will be no mercy as far as you are concerned. The fist of proletarian justice will fall with tremendous force on whoever conspires, intrigues and works against the interests of the proletarians.

**READ, CIRCULATE, TAKE ACTION**

**UNIFIED COMMAND OF THE RED BRIGADES**

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Within the movement, the BR had opposed indiscriminate bombings because they felt it spread fear among the masses. As well, bombs were associated with, and widely used by, the fascists. BR felt that more difficult, but more precise, tactics were necessary.

In this period of 1971, while BR actions were centered in Milan, an additional BR column emerged in Rome to confront the fascist threat. Milan BR accepted responsibility for the Rome column and its actions. Rome BR communicated with the masses through a hard-to-read mimeo newspaper called *Red Brigades, #2*. This paper detailed actions by both the Milan and Rome BRs, but devoted itself primarily to the fight against the fascists. Nearly all Rome BR actions consisted of setting fire to fascist headquarters, or other fascist property, when no one was present. The Rome BR did not connect any of its actions to factory struggles with the exception of the fire-bombing of a fascist union leader's auto.

In April of 1971, the first issue of *New Resistance* appeared. The old SP logo, the hammer and sickle and rifle, now a BR emblem, adorned the masthead. It published both BR and GAP (Armed Partisan Group) documents, plus those of smaller groups, and defined itself as a "communist newspaper of the New Resistance". The intended purpose of the magazine was to provide an ideological center for all emerging armed collectives. A second issue appeared the following month, and then it ceased publication. *NR was to be the Brigades' last attempt at legal forms of organization.*

*New Resistance* gave particular attention and analysis to the guerrilla experience in West Germany, Uruguay and Palestine. For instance, they reprinted a long German R.A.F. document, plus an old interview with a Tupamaro comrade that hadn't been widely circulated in Italy.

In a polemic with the Rome solidarity collective, Red Palestine, NR warns: "In all likelihood the time is coming for the end of solidarity committees; this work will be taken over by those who link the struggles of the peoples with the revolutionary struggle in their own country... While the solidarity committees serve revisionism or begin to decompose, the extra-parliamentary Marxist-Leninist forces should seek to find their moment of unity in a collective analysis of the concrete relations between the revolutionary struggle of our country and the people's wars and struggles."

The editorial in the first issue of NR explained "New Resistance" as meaning: "resistance to imperialism, resistance of oppressed peoples and nations, of the revolutionary China of Mao, of Vietnam and the revolutionary peoples of Indochina, of the peoples of Palestine and Latin America, resistance in the imperialist metropolis, in the Black ghettos and the white cities." It ended with a polemic against "conservative" and "often non-proletarian" tendencies in the movement "who not being able to recognize the first signs of partisan struggle" liquidate the question of armed struggle.

Intending to open debate among comrades who didn't object to violence in principle (this included both Continuous Struggle and Workers' Power, the two most important groups of the extra-parliamentary New Left), NR put forward the theory of the guerrilla-party. The guerrilla-party would be an evolution of the old European formula of the unarmed party and its "armed wing". The article went on to discuss the relationship between revolution and repression, quoting Marx and Lenin's observation that as the revolution progresses, it provokes a counter-revolution, and that "the progress of the revolution is... the capacity of the proletariat to acquire new instruments... in keeping with new tasks."

The article analyzed three main forces of violence: 1. *individual spontaneous violence*, "the worst way to express a just need", 2. *mass spontaneous violence*, such as demonstrations inside the factory, spontaneous factory struggle, and 3. *partisan actions*, the first moments of a proletarian will to armed political organization.

The debate within the class-conscious Left, they believed, was being held hostage by yesterday's successes and schemes. The classic European revolutionary theory of insurrection, the strategy of a long, legal preparation of the urban masses for a future insurrection was blinding many comrades to the important vanguard role that partisan actions were playing. It was necessary "to abolish opportunist distinctions between the party and guerrilla struggle, between political and military organization". "Partisan actions," NR concluded, "were correct in principle and necessary now."

The BR also engaged in debate with other armed organizations in New Resistance. In an article on the failed military coup led by fascist leader Prince Valerio Borghese, some fundamental differences with the GAP. (Partisan Action Group) emerged.<sup>5</sup> A fascist military coup was not seen as a real and immediate danger by NR. Fascist leader Borghese was declared unimportant, called the "2 of clubs". The GAP, on the other hand, considered a fascist military coup the main danger, and called on the rank and file of the major Left parties to join them in a revolutionary anti-fascist united front. New Resistance disagreed: the real danger lied with revisionists and the State, who opportunistically used the threat of a fascist coup to consolidate mass support for bourgeois democracy.

Partisan Action Group (GAP) conducted a series of bomb attacks on centers of bourgeois power in Genoa: the u.s. consulate, the headquarters of one Social Democratic party, the Ignis warehouse, the Garrone oil refinery. GAP broadcast class propaganda through pirate radio - "Radio GAP" - escaping detection by moving their antenna around in a van. GAP attempted to follow the old '40's clandestine partisan strategy, where the mountains and isolated rural areas were the terrain of struggle. All factions (GAP, Continuous Struggle, Workers' Power) published communiques.

New Resistance's second issue, dated May 1971, featured an analysis of a new State strategy for repression of the revolutionary movement, which NR referred to as the "criminalization of the movement". They pointed out that the revisionists and the State were co-operating in a strategy to outlaw or "criminalize" the revolutionary Left. The article was prophetic. It showed how BR saw much earlier than the rest of the movement that the State had decided, in collusion with the revisionists to repress all militant activity and all the organizations of the extra-parliamentary New Left.

The second issue of New Resistance also included articles on the struggle in the prisons and the Army. The New Left had been organizing draftees inside the Italian Army, much as the u.s. anti-war movement did during the Vietnam War. Soldiers in uniform were coming to rallies and marching in Left demonstrations. The BR was unhappy that as fast as soldiers

<sup>5</sup> The Partisan Action Group (GAP) was an armed organization that was formed in the spring of 1970. Its main units were based in Turin, Milan, Genoa, and Trento. GAP posed its task as creating a broad partisan army, which in conjunction with a reinvigorated PCI (Italian Communist Party) would make the revolution. Their major political leader was Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, millionaire, publisher and one of the central figures of the Italian New Left. Feltrinelli was killed while planting a bomb in March 1972. Within the next year the GAP died, with many of the surviving militants joining the BR.

were being won over, they were being wasted--and exposed--in public movement activities. In a polemic with Continuous Struggle and PID (Proletarians in Uniform), NR argued that the aim of revolutionary vanguards in the Italian Army should no longer be to simply mold opinion and create a mass movement, but should be the creation of clandestine political-military cells that would be capable of counter-posing themselves to the power of the State at a constantly higher level.

In an article entitled "Burning down the prisons is just", NR takes a position on criminality and the revolutionary role of the lumpenproletariat:

"The modern revolution is no longer a clean revolution... it gathers its elements fishing in muddy waters, it advances by side roads and finds allies among all those who have no power over their lives and know it.... In waiting for the revolutionary festival in which all the expropriators will be expropriated, the isolated 'criminal' act, robbery, individual expropriation, the ransacking of a supermarket are nothing but a sample and a hint of the future assault on the social wealth, 'the criminal breaks the monotony and the banal daily security of bourgeois life' (K. Marx). By his very existence he throws the ideology of capitalist society into crisis: he appropriates concretely what the bourgeoisie shows him to be abstractly available."

In September 1971, after a year in existence, the BR published its first systematic theoretical statement. The document was in the form of an interview, in the style of the Tupamaros, the Uruguayan urban guerrilla movement much admired by the BR.

The document systematized many ideas already expressed during earlier phases of the BR's political evolution. According to the BR, the bourgeoisie had only one possible response to its crisis: militarization, with a goal of not traditional fascism, but a Gaullist fascism like France, i.e. fascism with a democratic facade. The non-reformist Left was not prepared to meet this armed attack by the State. The movement could respond in one of two ways: 1. with a "3rd Internationalist" (i.e. insurrectionist) strategy with an anarcho-syndicalist variation (that believed in spontaneity and opposed organization); 2. link up with the metropolitan revolutionary experience of the current historical period. The New Left "groups" had chosen the first way, and BR the second.

The BR's discussion of the birth of "alternative" power in the factories and neighborhoods was similar to the theories on dual power of the Argentinian guerrilla organization ERP. Finally, as regards the PCI and the New Left "groups", the BR opposed sectarian ideological polemics and offered unity with all comrades who supported armed struggle.

The full text of this document follows:

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### FIRST THEORETICAL REFLECTION

September 1971

#### 1. How do you judge the current phase of class struggle?

It seems to us that there is a consensus of views within the Left on the current situation.

Neither the reformists nor the extra-parliamentary forces have failed to notice the bourgeoisie's plans for reorganizing society around a reactionary and violently anti-working class perspective. More generally everyone realizes that a decisive conflict has begun which on the one hand holds out the prospect of a new political and economic balance of power for the bourgeoisie, and on the other hand for the workers holds out the prospect of overthrowing existing relations of production. But leaving aside the reformists, whose strategy shows itself to be always more and more suicidal in the face of the attacks of reaction, we are interested in pointing out the state of unpreparedness in which the revolutionary forces find themselves in the face of the new level of maturity of the struggle. The revolutionary Left never understood that the cycle of struggles begun in 1968 could only lead to the present levels of violent conflict. Because of this the proper instruments were never developed to match the situation. Our political experience was born out of this need.

#### 2. What are the causes of the present crisis?

Today we find ourselves before a bourgeoisie whose political plans have been overturned. This is due to the failure of capitalism's plans for development and the failure of political plans of the reformist parties. In fact, faced with the initiative of the working class, which has repudiated reformism as a plan for stabilizing society and put the end of exploitation on the order of the day, and faced with the objective contradictions of imperialism which impede a peaceful planning of capitalist development in individual countries, the bourgeoisie has had to reorganize the entire apparatus of power along "right-wing" lines.

**3. In which direction do you think the political situation will develop in the near future?**

The bourgeoisie is now on a forced path: regain control of the situation through an ever more despotic organization of power. The growing despotism of capital over labor, the progressive militarization of the state and of the class struggle, the intensification of repression as a strategic fact are two inexorable and objective consequences. In the Italian situation we are witnessing the formation of a reactionary bloc, a bloc of law and order as an alternative to the center-left. This bloc prospers under the banner of the nationalist Right. It tends to re-insure its control of the economic and social situation, and thus to repress every form of revolutionary and anti-capitalist struggle.

**4. Do you think therefore there will be a new edition of fascism?**

The problem should not be posed in these terms. It is an incontestable fact that this repressive strategy aims not so much at the institutional liquidation of the bourgeois "democratic state" as fascism did, as at the most savage repression of the revolutionary movement. In France, DeGaulle's "Coup d'etat" and today's "Gaullist fascism" live under democratic appearances. In the short-run, this is certainly the least uncomfortable model.

It would be naive however to hope for a moderate stabilization of the economic and social situation with the presence of a combative revolutionary movement.

**5. What are your choices therefore?**

We were faced with two roads besides the reformist path which we, along with the rest of the revolutionary Left, refused to take some years ago: to repeat the past historical experience of the workers movement, according to the anarcho-syndicalist or Third Internationalist versions, or to integrate ourselves into the metropolitan revolutionary experience of this epoch.

Generally speaking, the groups of the extra-parliamentary Left have not given up the first perspective because they have not known how to subject the defeats of the post-World War I revolutionary movement to a critical analysis. They have taken up once again, in its essence, the theory of the two phases of the revolutionary process (political preparation, agitation, and propaganda first, then armed insurrection) and today they are retracing the steps of the first phase while the bourgeoisie is already unfolding its armed initiative.

The ruling class attack against the most effective forms of mass struggle, the political trials and the prison sentences against the most combative militants, the rebirth of fascist Blackshirt terrorism and the fascist attacks on worker pickets, the police attacks on small factories, evicted tenants and students, the house to house searches in rebellious neighborhoods, the hiring of undercover cop provocateurs and fascists in the factories; all these things are testimony to this armed initiative. The armed confrontation has already begun and it aims at liquidating the working class capacity for resistance. Hour X of some future insurrection will not come. And that which many comrades hope to see as the future decisive encounter between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie would only be the last and victorious battle of the bourgeoisie. Just as it happened in 1922, when the fascists took power.

**6. Specifically what is the ideological and historical tradition with which you identify?**

Our reference points are Marxism-Leninism, the Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and the ongoing experience of the metropolitan guerrilla movements; in one word, the scientific tradition of the international revolutionary and workers movement. This also means that we do not completely accept the theories that have guided the European Communist parties in the revolutionary phases of their history, above all in regard to the question of the relation between political organization and military organization.

**7. Can you spell out this point of view better?**

The Brazilian comrades hold that the origin of the retreat of the communist parties into the social democratic degeneration is to be found in the inability of their organizations to cope with the levels of military conflict which the bourgeoisie progressively imposes on the working class movement. It is not the "betrayal" of the leadership as much as the structural inadequacy of the weapon they use, that is, their organization, which is at the root of it all.

All the metropolitan armed organizations have taken this into account and from the beginning they have totally organized themselves to be able to confront all levels of struggle.

**8. The problem as you see it therefore is to begin the armed struggle?**

The armed struggle has already begun. Unfortunately, it is a one-sided struggle; that is, it is the bourgeoisie which strikes. The problem therefore is to create the class instrument capable of dealing with the conflict on the same level.

The Red Brigades are the first results in the process of transformation of the class political vanguards into armed political vanguards, the first armed steps in the direction of this building.

**9. Are you for a "foco-ist" conception of the armed vanguard?**

No. Our point of view is that the armed struggle in Italy must be conducted by an organization that is the direct expression of the class movement. Because of this we are working toward the organization of factory and neighborhood worker cells in the industrial and metropolitan centers, where revolt and exploitation are primarily concentrated.

**10. Are you therefore in a preparatory phase?**

From a general point of view we cannot help but be in this phase, in that the road we have chosen requires a long period of accumulation of experience and cadres. It is not however a phase separated from the class struggle but one carried out completely within this struggle.

**11. Does this mean therefore that the Red Brigades even in this phase are engaged in the conflict?**

There is a trend within the class movement which is not related to any of the existing extra-parliamentary organizations, which expresses the need for new organizational forms of revolutionary struggle: organizations of self-defense, first forms of clandestinity, direct actions... The Red Brigades have grasped this need and propose to pass from these first experiences, which constitute a necessary tactical phase, to the strategic phase of armed struggle.

**12. What are the conditions needed for this passage to occur?**

No armed revolutionary movement which struggles for power can measure up to the struggle without being able to realize two fundamental conditions: 1) measure itself against power at all levels (freeing political prisoners, executing death sentences against police assassins, expropriate the

capitalists, etc.) and naturally demonstrate the ability to know how to survive these levels of conflict; 2) bring forth an alternative power in the factories and workers neighborhoods.

**13. What do you mean by alternative proletarian power?**

We mean that the revolution is not just a technical-military fact, and the armed vanguard is not the armed wing of an unarmed mass movement, but its highest point of unification, its demand for power.

**14. What lines do you intend to move along in this phase?**

In the past months our fundamental preoccupation has been to root a strategic discussion within the class movement. We hold today that it is decisive to work for its organization. It is a matter, in other words, of rooting the first forms of armed organization in the daily struggles in the factories, neighborhoods, and schools which aim at breaking the tactical offensive of the bourgeoisie. Thus, it is a matter of fighting the bosses' terrorism in its objective and subjective aspects without separating the struggle against the Capitalist organization of work and social life from the struggle against the Capitalist organization of power; to confront the fascist gang violence (squadismo) and to strike with sufficient hardness at both the persons and the things of its political and military organizers; refusing to concede impunity to the cops, spies and judges who attack the interests and the militants of the class movement.

From an immediate point of view this action must allow us to maintain high levels of popular mobilization, blocking the spread of liquidationist and pessimist tendencies. More generally this clash will not end with the return to the preceding situation but will serve as the premise for the strategic conflict, for the armed struggle for power.

**15. So the Red Brigades are transitional organizations?**

No, because the armed struggle cannot be confronted with intermediary organs such as the rank-and-file factory committees, the worker-student circles or the extra-parliamentary Left political organizations themselves. It requires, from the very beginning, the strategic organization of the proletariat.

**16. Are you talking about the Party?**

Exactly. The BR are the first points of aggregation for the formation of the Armed Party of the Proletariat. Here is our profound connection with the revolutionary and communist tradition of the workers movement.

**17. What position do you hold in relation to the extra-parliamentary groups?**

We are not interested in developing a sterile ideological polemic. Our attitude toward them is above all determined by their position on armed struggle. In reality, despite the revolutionary definitions which these groups attribute to themselves, a strong neo-pacifist current flourishes within them. That is an attitude which we do not share in the slightest, and which we hold will constitute, at the opportune moment, a strong opposition to the armed organization of the proletariat. Yet surely some of their militants will instead accept this perspective of armed struggle. With them the discussion is open. Certainly this is not the only issue: fundamental questions remain relative to the timing and the tactics to follow, as well as the fundamental question of the proletarianization of the organization. We do not accept the mystification which tends to identify the existing vanguards as the vanguards of the class. The problem of the construction of the political and armed vanguards of the proletariat is still open. It cannot be resolved by following the path of facile group self-congratulation, nor with plans for the accumulation of forces that are not significant from a working class point of view.

**18. How do you view the accusations which several groups of the extra-parliamentary left have made against you?**

Here we have to distinguish two kinds of charges: one is, in substance, a criticism of our "adventurism" and about which we can only say that adventurism is confronting the conflict with the armed bourgeoisie without an adequate armed instrument. And even those who make this criticism of us in a militant spirit cannot escape this judgment.

The other accusation, which is a slander in which we are pictured as provocateurs or fascists, does not deserve a political response. That accusation constitutes an action which those who made it will have to account for at the opportune moment. More generally, going beyond these charges, we believe that with the progress of class struggle the Left will undergo a process of proletarianization in which the dividing criterion will inevitably be the position on the armed struggle. The PCI will be pulled into this process as well. For this reason we refuse every ideological sectarianism typical of the pseudo-revolutionary intellectuals, and reaffirm our strongly unitary position with all the comrades who choose the path of the armed struggle.

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## CHAPTER 6

### BR begin political kidnappings

The period from end of 1971 to March of 1972 in Italy saw repression sharply increase, in a context of very violent mass confrontations between the revolutionary Left and the police. At first, the movement focus was to expose the role of the State and the fascists in the Piazza Fontana terrorist bombing of December 1969, and to free Valpreda, the anarchist comrade framed by the State. Through a carefully organized campaign of movement "counter-information" the State was exposed, Valpreda's trial postponed, three of the fascist ringleaders in the bombing were identified, and two of them, Ventura and Freda, were arrested.

The State's attempt to politically isolate the revolutionary Left by blaming it for the Piazza Fontana bombing - and for the entire 1970-71 fascist terror campaign that followed - failed. This left the State politically exposed. Imperialism was forced now to rely on cruder tactics. This physical repression came down particularly against the two main groups of the extra-parliamentary Left, Continuous Struggle and Workers' Power. On March 15, 1972, Italian publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, leader of the GAP (Partisan Action Group), died via a bomb he was setting at the base of a high-voltage electric power pylon in the mountains near Milan. Speculation grew in the Left whether he had been assassinated, or somehow set up by the police.

The first BR political kidnapping took place in this tense atmosphere of growing polarization between the movement and the State. It was the first revolutionary kidnapping in Italian history. On March 3, 1972 three Brigadists kidnapped Idalgo Macchiarini as he left his office at the Sit-Siemens plant in Milan. He was put in a van, handcuffed, questioned as part of a political trial, and released 20 minutes later. Around his neck the BR left a sign that said:

*Red Brigades - bite and flee! - nothing will go unpunished -  
strike one to educate one hundred - all power to the armed people!*

Macchiarini was a fascist and one of the most hated bosses at Sit-Siemens, a personnel manager. The BR distributed a leaflet explaining their action and also a photo of Macchiarini while under interrogation in his temporary prison. The photo was captioned: "Milan, 3rd March, 1972, Macchiarini, Idalgo, fascist manager of Siemens, tried by the BR. The proletarians have taken up arms, for the bosses it's the beginning of the end."

The next day while Macchiarini was denouncing the "brutality" of his BR captors, the BR returned his wrist watch to him in a letter to the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* in which they denied using violence against him except while he was struggling to resist capture.

The revisionist Italian Communist Party (PCI) daily, *L'Unita* next day published a short article condemning the BR with the headline: "*Serious provocation at Sit-Siemens in Milan*".

The mass of the workers at Sit-Siemens, on the other hand, approved of the BR action. In fact, only a few hours before the kidnapping a large group of Sit-Siemens workers had tried to storm Macchiarini's office. A month later on April 13 during another shop floor demonstration, the workers paid him another "unwanted visit". The various business and management groups in Milan, of course, registered their "moral" indignation against the kidnapping.

The revolutionary Left's reaction to the Macchiarini action was mixed. Workers' Vanguard ("*Avanguardia Operaia*"), a large Trotskyist group in the New Left, savagely attacked the BR as police agents. This was not totally unexpected. Workers' Vanguard had formed out of the student movement in 1969, with the goal of becoming the "Leninist" party. Its primary base was in the Milan worker-student C.U.B. movement, where it had already succeeded in winning over part of the Pirelli C.U.B. (or United Rank and File Committee) and splitting the assembly into two competing mass organizations. Workers' Vanguard had earlier disassociated itself sharply from other armed formations. When the October 22nd GAP group was arrested in the industrial port city of Genoa, the WV publicly labeled these comrades "*fascists*". WV's

violent political attack on the BR in their newspaper was headlined: "*DIRECTED BY THE SECRET SERVICES...*" Their criticism was:

"The kidnapping was unexpected (at Siemens there is no struggle in this period). The gesture is completely demonstrative and seems to have been done for publicity reasons.... Around the neck of the kidnap victim a sign was hung with a message on it written in a style foreign to the workers' movement: '*Bite and run*', '*Strike one to educate one hundred*'. BUT ABOVE ALL THE KEY TO THE FELTRINELLI CASE MAKES ITS APPEARANCE: THE VAN!

"The public is being introduced to certain ideas: there are terrorists, they are Leftists and they use small vans for their crimes."

The first sentence of the Workers' Vanguard statement was of course false, since, as already mentioned, that same day there'd been a militant shop floor demonstration against Macchiarini. And while the two BR slogans were not familiar to the "Leninist" Workers' Vanguard, the first was used by Fidel and Che in the Cuban guerrilla struggle, and the second by V. I. Lenin himself (in his notes in 1905).

As for the reference to Feltrinelli and the van: since at that time there was wide speculation in the Left that the secret services had murdered Feltrinelli, Workers' Vanguard was attempting to imply that the use of a van by the BR in the action was somehow connected to the use of a 'van by the secret police in their supposed murder plot against Feltrinelli; therefore, the BR were run by police agents.<sup>6</sup> This strange logic revealed much more about Workers' Vanguard than it did about the BR.

In contrast, Continuous Struggle's reaction to the kidnapping represented a 180° change from their earlier strong condemnation of the Pirelli truck fire-bombings. The day after the action the Milan executive committee of Continuous Struggle issued a communique in full solidarity with the BR:

"Idalgo Macchiarini was captured Friday afternoon, tried and punished. During the morning a demonstration inside the factory had tried to reach his office to make him feel the weight of their strength and their class hatred. We hold that this action is coherent with the generalized will of the masses to also carry out the class struggle on the terrain of violence and illegality."

On March 9, 1972, while the Left in Italy was still debating the Macchiarini action, the New Popular Resistance (NRP) in France, the armed wing of Gauche Proletarienne (Proletarian Left), kidnapped a Renault manager, Robert Nogrette. Nogrette had fired many militant Renault workers and had organized a hit squad which assassinated Pierre Overnay, a Renault worker.

Continuous Struggle also enthusiastically supported the Nogrette kidnapping. In a daily news bulletin entitled The Valpreda Trial (dated March 10, 1972), distributed by their militants, a huge, half-page high headline read: "THE KIDNAPPING OF SIT-SIEMENS AND RENAULT MANAGERS: REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE BEGINS TO INSTILL FEAR - LONG LIVE REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE." In the article Continuous Struggle states: "The trial and punishment of the bosses is the constant practice of the workers' struggle and an important moment of opposition to the capitalist hierarchies inside and outside the factory. It is the essential condition for the defense of the conquests of the working class."

Continuous Struggle was to pay heavily for taking these positions. In Milan the police issued eleven arrest warrants against the Milan leadership, some of whom were top national leaders of the organization.

Just as heavy State repression was coming down against Continuous Struggle and Workers' Power (who not only supported armed struggle but were the strongest groups in the New Left), the Workers' Vanguard group opened up a sharp attack on them and withdrew from the movement united front against repression. This united front, the Committee of Struggle Against the State Massacre, had been set up to expose the State's complicity in the fascist bombing of Piazza Fontana in 1969.

After Feltrinelli's death in the accidental explosion, the bourgeoisie used his death to mount a heavy campaign to isolate and crush Workers' Power which had whole-heartedly

<sup>6</sup> Later the GAP and the BR revealed that Feltrinelli's death was due to the careless use of cheap watches as timers, and that he was killed while attempting a bombing action as part of a GAP unit. Their van was a GAP vehicle, one of many.

supported the BR's Macchiarini action. While much of the extra-parliamentary Left was disoriented by this campaign, Workers' Power attempted to fight back. They published an article revealing Feltrinelli's membership in GAP and defended him as a fallen comrade. The rest of the movement was taken aback by their boldness. An ex-Workers' Power member was implicated in the busted Feltrinelli operation and two current WP leaders were implicated as well. The bourgeois press launched a campaign claiming Workers' Power and GAP and 'the Red Brigades were one organization, with Workers' Power being the above ground arm. Rumors spread that the WP was about to be outlawed. Continuous Struggle attempted to rally the movement in defense of Workers' Power but the base of the extra-parliamentary Left failed to respond. Most of the movement ran for cover, some individuals even turning into police informers.

Workers' Vanguard ("Avanguardia Operaia") chose this moment to attack WP - accusing the organization of an "insane analysis of the Italian situation and the tasks of the movement that leads it to treat [the GAP and the BR] as comrades". It was also at that point that Workers' Vanguard chose to leave the movement's anti-repression united front. The anti-repression committee, for its part, charged Workers' Vanguard with opportunistically trying to save itself from State repression by distancing itself from the most persecuted Left organizations, thereby abandoning the anti-repression struggle and objectively aiding the State. The united front was breaking up. Earlier the Manifesto group, made up of "Maoist" intellectuals expelled from the PCI in 1969, had left the united front. Manifesto, which wanted to look "respectable" and run candidates in the May 1972 elections, had refused to comment on the Macchiarini action.

With the surfacing of these divisions and weaknesses in the movement, the well-known fascist prosecutor Dr. Mario Sossi (his position corresponded to that of assistant attorney general in the U.S.) boasted to the press that his forces had readied themselves to arrest 5,000 revolutionary Leftists in a few minutes. Sossi had taken charge of the arrest and prosecution of the Genoa October 22nd Collective.

On April 25, 1972 GAP announced they were abandoning their "foco" strategy and declared their political unity with the BR. After expressing their belief that "the guerrilla foco can achieve nothing against the armed power of the bourgeoisie and imperialism" they concluded: "It seems to us that this rectification eliminates most of the tactical differences that divided us from the Red Brigades."

Meanwhile the State opened up a drive to find GAP and BR safehouses and attempted to infiltrate the Brigades. Marco Pisetta, a lumpenproletarian and sometime police informer on the fringes of the movement was picked up during a raid on one of these safehouses. Pisetta signed a melodramatic false confession written for him by SID (the Italian military intelligence service) agents. This confession was later leaked to the right-wing magazine *Il Borghese* in January 1973. The SID confession linked the entire extra-parliamentary Left to the BR, claiming the Brigades were only 'the tip of the iceberg of a gigantic armed Left. Pisetta knew little and was only a minor propaganda gain for the State. He was one of only two successful infiltrators or informers against the BR in the early years.

Although the BR were repeatedly accused by the PCI, Manifesto, and many others in the movement of being a den of police spies, actually the early BR were almost impossible to penetrate. Even the PCI had to openly admit this in a 1974 magazine article.

In fact, the BR's ability to resist infiltration was much better than that of the rest of the legal Left including the PCI itself. In 1970 the PCI found out that it had two CIA agents, Stendardi and Ottavicino, on their own Central Committee. It was only with the outside help of the KGB that they were discovered, after hundreds of revolutionaries in Brazil, Portugal, Greece and Spain had been arrested because of them. These two maneuvered themselves into the position of running much of the Italian Communist Party's solidarity work with underground revolutionaries in Latin America and the Mediterranean. Information about those underground movements went straight to the CIA, who usually arranged for the local police to move on it. Hundreds of militants were killed because of this penetration.

The BR's views on the problem of infiltration were outlined in a May 1974 interview in *L'Espresso*: "The basic criterion for protecting oneself from infiltration is the level of political consciousness and militant practice. No criterion however is infallible."

After the raid on the Via Boiardo safehouse on May 2, 1972 the BR decided to go completely underground. Due to their tight organization BR emerged from the first wave of repression against them "only slightly grazed" as they themselves put it. Up to the May 2nd raid BR

had continued to be involved in semi-clandestine work. In an internal document captured by police later, BR described their situation: "The question of clandestinity was only posed in its real terms after May 2, 1972. Up to then, enmeshed as we were in a situation of semi-legality, it was only seen in its tactical and defensive aspects rather than its strategic importance."

For six months from May to November of 1972 the BR quietly built a logistical infrastructure, doing expropriations without using their name. An internal document on expropriations, written after 1972, shows their basic analysis of this area of activity:

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**EXCERPT FROM BR INTERNAL DOCUMENT ON THE QUESTION OF EXPROPRIATION**

...expropriation must not be considered simply for self-financing purposes, but must be considered one of the basic aspects of the struggle for the construction of proletarian power and as one of the required paths which the growth of the revolutionary movement must travel. Until now, for tactical reasons we preferred to avoid making expropriations the object of armed propaganda on a mass level, to avoid, as much as possible, giving the State the opportunity for repression and a political attack which, given our actual conditions of weakness, would have been difficult to ward off. Now, judging that in any case the State will be the one to take the initiative on this terrain (attempting to criminalize the movement they will race to paint us as a gang of armed robbers) it is necessary to reconsider the situation.

While we are of the opinion that it would be in our interest to "expose ourselves" under conditions of a better rooting of the BR in the mass movement, being forced to, we will have to take a position on this question. We hold that it is intellectualistic and politically infantile to hope to achieve a political victory on the terrain of expropriations simply by publishing a document that explains what we think on this question. To hold a dialectical position which has force in the movement, an expropriation action is necessary which has an unmistakable political meaning such as to constitute a general reference point. Only this way an eventual document would be effective on a mass level and not only for groups on the Left.

Everything depends on seeing whether we have enough organizational strength for an expropriation of this type, but if we do not try and we do not construct it we will not have it.

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They also performed social investigation in the factories where the mass struggle was taking place, deepening roots all the while. They accumulated a large body of information to be used later in a qualitative organizational leap: the Fall 1972 BR campaign against "FIAT FASCISM".

## CHAPTER 7

### Campaign against "Fiat Fascism"

Fall 1972: The center stage moved to the FIAT Mirafiori Works in Turin, where an imperialist counter-attack was mounting against the new workers' movement. Once again, as in 1922, the imperialists had brought in the fascists to do their dirty work. This time, FIAT had hired fascists to build a spy network in every department, fingering rank-and-file leaders for firing or arrest. The fascists also worked as fists, harassing the movement, and starting fights as pretext for the police. Outside the plant gates, police and fascists worked hand-in-glove to step up violent repression.

Mass firings, suspensions and transfers by FIAT management without union resistance led to demoralization. The PCI reformist union began to collaborate openly with the company. In the crisis, the Red Brigades began to rally FIAT workers to resist. The BR urged workers to see that a war had begun, in which it was now vital to gain hegemony on the factory floor by crushing the fascist network of repression.

In the Fall of 1972, the FIAT auto workers contract was up for renewal. Gianni Agnelli, the owner of the FIAT empire, and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) union leadership, both worried about limiting union militancy, formed a de-facto alliance. A joint PCI-FIAT conference was held on "the benefits of the new technology of auto production to both management and workers". The bourgeoisie had launched a campaign, spearheaded by the center-right DC (Christian Democratic Party) government of Premier Andreotti, to increase utilization of plant capacity and to raise worker productivity by limiting strikes and reducing sabotage and absenteeism. Italy's economic growth had fallen visibly between 1969 and 1972 because of three years of wildcat strikes, slowdowns and sabotage. The revisionist unions played their part by launching a parallel campaign against "extremist" workers' demands. On the shop floor inside FIAT plants in Turin, management unleashed a heavy propaganda campaign against "political strikes" through the fascist union CISNAL, and SIDA, its own company union. All these campaigns had a definite negative effect.

On the nights of October 21 and 22, 1972, the fascists set off a series of seven bombs in Turin against trains loaded with union demonstrators going to Reggio Calabria in the South for a union rally. When the revisionist unions called protest strikes and organized a mass protest march against the bombings, the response of the Turinese working class was very weak. Inside FIAT plants fascist company spies and thugs began operating with impunity. The inability or unwillingness of the reformist unions to mobilize Turinese workers against the fascists revealed the growing political disorientation and demoralization of the working class caused by the PCI's collaboration with FIAT.

On November 25, the Turin revolutionary Left held its first public demonstration in six months, to protest the criminal charges brought against 600 militant workers, and to denounce the Andreotti government and fascist violence. The demonstration was violently curtailed up by police and carabinieri, with the help of fascist provocateurs, who had infiltrated the demonstration to start fights. Thirty demonstrators were held by police, 11 of them arrested.

On November 26, early dawn, the Red Brigades counterattacked. Nine autos were burned, all owned by fascists in Agnelli's FIAT company police, the Guardioni. The next day at the big Rivalta FIAT plant, a BR leaflet announcing its tactic of exemplary punishment against the fascists was distributed. The text of the leaflet is reprinted below:

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**Let's smash the fascists at Mirafiori and Rivalta! Let's drive them out of our factories and our neighborhoods!**

The contract fight is in full swing and the response of FIAT to the first signs of struggle has been a declaration of war: Mirafiori has been encircled by massive and provocative deployments of police, there have been so many transfers, warnings, suspensions, and firings that we've lost count.

This is the way things are going in other factories too, like **Pininfarina** for example. The generally repressive climate created by the Andreotti-Malagodi

government is the same outside the factories, as exemplified by the cowardly police attack on the demonstration on Saturday. **Against the 600 criminal charges, against fascism, and against the Andreotti government.**

What are our bosses trying to achieve? It is simple: a new dictatorship. To do this, however, they have to strangle the mass struggle inside the factories, divide the working class, stop shop floor demonstrations and picket lines, in short, **THEY MUST INFLICT A POLITICAL DEFEAT ON THE METAL-MECHANICAL WORKERS.**<sup>7</sup> This is the first step toward a general political defeat of the entire working class.

We must answer this strategy. We must build ourselves an organization which allows us to go on the offensive in the factory and the neighborhood.

Now everybody knows that a secret army of scabs has been working for many months in our midst, in the shops, in the different departments, and on the assembly lines. Their miserable services make it possible for FIAT to identify and strike at those who propagandize for strikes, those who lead the struggle, those who head up demonstrations, those who picket -who doesn't know about the spies hiding behind corners or big crates who mark down the names of vanguards in the struggle? -or the security guards who film the marches, who block the streets, who attack the pickets? -who doesn't instinctively nourish a deep hatred for the fascist bandits of the MSI and CISNAL who are always ready to cause provocations, to organize the scabs and the goon squads, to sell the heads of the most combative workers to the bosses? -and those pigs from SIDA, from UILMD, from FEDERACLI of the Trade Unionist Initiative who for a quick promotion would sell their own mothers; who hasn't on at least one occasion despised them as one should? -and our foremen and assistant foremen who plan, cover for, and take advantage of all these machinations, are they any less responsible?

**These saboteurs and liquidators of workers unity must be hit hard, beaten and dispersed without hesitation. They are the legs on which reaction walks in the factories. It is those legs that we must crush!**

An old proverb says that fish stink from the head, but to gut them you must start from the tail. And the tail of our **fish** are precisely some fascists who saw their cars go up in smoke the other morning as a warning...

Note: Following this action the Fiat "500" auto of the worker Pasquale Di Fede was unintentionally damaged. We promise Mr. Di Fede that the Red Brigades will fully reimburse him for the damage.

Turin, November 26, 1972

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While the bourgeois press totally ignored this action, it produced immediate and heavy repercussions among FIAT factory workers. The BR had been silent for six months and had not been previously active in Turin. Their action gave the lie to rumors that they had been wiped out by police raids. It also put the fascists inside FIAT on the defensive. Someone was following them, keeping files on them, just as they had done to the most militant workers. A detailed report had been prepared on each one of them. They had been carefully evaluated and selected for retaliation.

The morale of the workers totally flipped. Three days after the BR action, in the course of a strike, a shop floor procession of 4,000 workers led by the revolutionary Left, all wearing red handkerchiefs, marched through every department of the plant, sweeping every scab and fascist before them. The assembly line shop foreman responsible for firing a worker was forcibly thrown out of the factory, along with another foreman - both with red handkerchiefs tied around their necks. There were marches everyday, and as they continued, scabs and foremen started to make themselves scarce. The defeat of Agnelli and the fascists was complete. Meanwhile, the PCI newspaper *L'Unita* continued to denounce "these actions extraneous to the workers' movement".

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<sup>7</sup> In Italy auto workers are known as metal-mechanical workers because FIAT is a vertically-integrated industry which produces its own steel and fabricates most of its own auto body parts.

Defeated inside the factory, reaction tried to win outside the factory. On December 9, 1972, the Turin police brought charges against 800 workers. Many of them were charged with "kidnapping, aggravated by the fact that more than 5 persons committed the crime". FIAT owner Agnelli additionally fired 5 workers (2 of them PCI union leaders) and threatened to fire 30 others. While FIAT was carrying out reprisals, FIAT and the PCI-led FLM union signed an "agreement of understanding" which the workers, in a play on words in Italian, quickly dubbed an "agreement of surrender". The FIAT-PCI agreement promised that the union would oppose all acts of violence by the workers in the factory. The PCI hoped that by guaranteeing Agnelli social peace, he in turn would have agreed to withdraw support from the center-right Andreotti government, and revive the reformist center-left coalition. Emboldened by this agreement, FIAT management expanded their firing and transfers of militants, exiling them to isolated shops where they couldn't carry on union activity. One PCI rank and file union leader was exiled to a shop with an active MSI fascist party cell in it.

The FIAT C.U.B. (rank and file factory committee) explicitly and violently denounced the opportunism of the PCI's "agreement of understanding". FIAT workers also forced the top national PCI union leader, Bruno Trentin, plus several other PCI union hacks, to cancel a public FLM union meeting, where they were to speak.

Continuous Struggle denounced the FIAT-PCI compromise while the PCI's *L'Unita* and the "Maoist" Manifesto group proclaimed a big "victory". While the union reacted to the firing of its militants with compromises, the BR went on the offensive against "FIAT Fascism". On December 17, 1972, six more autos of SIDA company unionists were burned. The next day a BR leaflet was distributed in the factory informing workers of the action:

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*Foremen-Fascists-SIDA-security guards are rifles pointed against the working class - Drive them out of Mirafiori and Rivalta. Hunt them down in their own neighborhoods! Make them feel the taste of our power!*

December 18, 1922: The fascists with the criminal Brandimarte at their head, in a blind rage at the heroic resistance the proletariat was putting up against the emerging fascist dictatorship, unleashed their bestial fury on the Turinese working class killing more than 200 comrades.

December 18, 1972: 50 years have passed but the new fascists in white and black shirts continue to offer their dismal services to the new dictatorship of Andreotti and Agnelli.

The sacks have been changed but the flour is the same: the shirts are no longer black but today just as in 1922, the bosses seek to push back and defeat the workers movement, its organizations and its struggles, with the force of the State and its "parallel militias."

Every day the attack becomes fiercer, it takes on the character of a war carried forward by a managerial front which extends from the last scab to the prime minister of the government in Rome.

We are all familiar with the phases of this war: they are the political firings (the last 5 were on Friday), the denial of freedom of movement to the union delegates, the criminal charges, the warning letters, the suspensions, the physical aggressions, the arrests on the picket lines...

Comrades, as a delegate from Rivalta put it, our strength is great and terrible and we have shown it in the struggles of these last few weeks, in the processions which have been a clear manifestation of **our power** in the factory.

But can we continue to advance against the machine guns of the bosses without organizing our defenses better? Without equipping ourselves for a more decisive attack?

For now these "machine-guns" are above all: - **The SIDA spies**; this school of prostitution whose membership cards are a license to scab! - **The provocateurs of the MSI and CISNAL**, anti-working class fascist militia whose functions are espionage, division, aggression. - **The foremen and assistant foremen who**

**organize the scabs**, tooth-gnashing hyenas from the private zoo of the Agnelli brothers. - **The security guards**; armed forces and cops for the bosses.

Well comrades, if we want to continue to use the mass force of processions, picket lines and strikes; to block the restoration of the old levels of exploitation and the revival of a "Vallettian"<sup>8</sup> climate; to win a guaranteed salary and the contract we want we must reduce these enemies of workers' unity to silence, we must hit them hard, methodically, in their persons and their possessions, we must drive them from the factories and hunt them down in their own neighborhoods, we must not give them a minute of truce!

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The year 1972 ended with a temporary slackening in the mass struggle at FIAT. The fascists encouraged by the PCI-Agnelli compromise raised their hands again. The percentage of striking workers declined, and shop floor processions weakened. On New Year's Eve, the president of the Italian Republic, Leone, a Christian Democrat, in the traditional year-end message to the nation, made a big point of denouncing absenteeism on the job.

The struggle that the BR had launched in fall 1972 against FIAT fascism continued through January and February of 1973, and began to take on the character of a real war. On January 11, 1973 an armed nucleus independent of the BR spontaneously attacked the Turin headquarters of the fascist CISNAL union, beat up a fascist activist from FIAT, and destroyed a significant amount of stored fascist propaganda material. Less than a week later on January 17, 4 fascists armed with chains and steel bars attacked 4 workers outside the FIAT factory gates. Then the four comrades attacked were arrested by the police! On January 22 the mobile unit of the police fired on a picket line at the Lancia auto plant, wounding 4 workers. On January 23 the police in Milan charged into a group of students and shot and killed one of them, Roberto Franceschi. On January 27 police opened fire on comrades in Turin who were protesting Franceschi's murder. No one was killed, but 25 arrest warrants were issued against participants in the demonstration.

On February 2, 1973 FIAT suspended 5,000 workers and 20,000 workers marched inside Mirafiori beating up scabs and fascists and driving them out of the plant. FIAT management retaliated with more firings. On February 9, there was a huge workers' demonstration in Rome. After months of struggle, the militancy of the workers was still very high, but the union leadership was unwilling to take advantage of it to lead the workers to victory in the strike.

On February 12, 1973 the BR carried out their second kidnapping. This time, they seized Bruno Labate, the provincial secretary of the fascist union, CISNAL, in front of his home and took him away in a van. Labate was interrogated, his head shaved, and 4 hours later he was left gagged and without his trousers, tied to a pole in front of the entrance to Mirafiori at 1:30 p.m. during the change of shift. Thousands of workers passed by him refusing his muffled pleas for help, telling him: "Help you? Hell, they should have killed you!" It took the police 20 minutes to show up and release him.

A BR leaflet prepared beforehand was passed around by workers during the action and was received with enthusiastic approval. The leaflet's text:

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This is Bruno Labate, provincial secretary of CISNAL, the fascist pseudo-union which the bosses keep in our factories to divide the working class, to organize strike-breaking activities, to carry out aggressions and provocations and to infiltrate every type of spy into the departments.

We kidnapped him several hours ago to ask him some questions in regard to:

- his responsibility and those of several other FIAT managers in recruiting Southerners to be hired through CISNAL;
- his responsibility in the organization of provocations carried out by fascists in collusion with the Carabinieri or the police like the recent incident at gate 17;
- the organization of scabbing in which Agnelli's foremen and Almirante's<sup>9</sup> fascists divide up responsibilities;

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8 Valletta: reactionary, dictatorial head of FIAT in 40s and 50s.

9 Giorgio Almirante, top public leader of the fascist MSI party.



- his responsibility and those of CISNAL in the organization of the spy network in the shops which has led to the firing of many vanguards;
- his meetings with the Minister of Labor, seeing that CISNAL is secretly being allowed to take part in contract negotiations.

We have also kidnapped him to prove to him factually the falsity and absurdity of his statements to a rightwing weekly according to which there are supposed to be 12,000(!!) fascists inside FIAT and that CISNAL has influence at other factories such as at Lancia, Pininfarina, Cromodora, Aspera Motor, Frigo, Rabotti Viberti and at Westinghouse. We have seized him to make him feel with his own skin that the Turinese workers won't tolerate this bullshit and intend to crush every attempt by the fascist dogs to root themselves in the factories.

We freed him with his head shaven and without his pants to show both our absolute contempt for the fascists and the necessity of striking them hard everywhere with every available means until our city is completely liberated.

#### **WAR ON THE FASCISM OF ALMIRANTE AND ANDREOTTI! ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM!**

During his interrogation, Labate collaborated with his jailers, gave them "useful information" about the responsibilities of Cavaliere Amerio in the infiltration of fascists into FIAT.

The following days, the BR distributed a pamphlet inside Mirafiori entitled: "War on the Fascists in the Turinese factories", with excerpts from Labate's interrogation:

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#### **THE HIRINGS THROUGH CISNAL**

For many months now the Left has been facing the problem of the hirings jointly carried out by FIAT and CISNAL for the purpose of infiltrating a mass of docile laborers into the different plant departments to carry out a vast anti-working class design.

Seeing that Labate is one of the fascists responsible for this dirty "game" we asked him directly how this is done.

Here are the answers:

"The most important agreements are made through the party (the fascist MSI) and the MP Abelli Tullio (a member of Parliament) takes care of it himself. It's through his efforts that the questions are forwarded to the hiring office where Dr. Negri takes care of them. At the section level there are several heads of personnel who make sure that those workers we recommend are hired into the sections of FIAT we choose."

"Some names?... Well, Cavaliere Amerio:.. for body assembly there was Dr. Annibaldi and now Ragione Cassina; for engineering department Dr. Dazzi; for Rivalta Dr. Audino."

**Which of you in particular takes care of this matter?**

"It's the task of the company division heads."

**Who are?**

"Angelo Trivisano for Mirafiori; Ritota Piero for the body assemblies; Benetti Giuliano for engineering; Gabriele Mazza for auxiliaries; Antonio Barone for parts; Guicciardino Giuseppe for Rivalta; Domenico Polito for OSA Lingotto."

#### **THE FASCIST ORGANIZATION INSIDE FIAT**

**You stated to a rightwing weekly that there were lots of you at Mirafiori or at FIAT in any case. Are you really convinced about what you said?**

"Well... no, it's not that logically speaking I'm convinced of this... but try to understand that it's a newspaper... a newspaper always has certain propagandistic needs... and besides it was them, the ones from the paper who wrote those figures..."

**Agreed, so seeing that therefore there are not so many of you we want to know who are your activists and your leaders at FIAT. Let's begin with Mirafiori.**

"The leader at Mirafiori is Angelo Trivisano who works in body assembly. He's been the leader since he was elected to the commissione interna<sup>10</sup> in '68, which at that time covered one section: Mirafiori."

"Then... then there are Giuliano Benetti for engineering and Ritota Piero for body assembly who are the leaders of their respective section groups."

**And who are your activists in body assembly?**

"I don't remember them, I don't know if..."

**Make an effort, since anyway we have time! So, who are your activists in body assembly besides Trivisano and Ritota?**

"Well,... there's Cicilioni Giuseppe, then the two Dademo brothers... one is called Antonio and the other, Francesco... Then there's Obino Nicola... Romagnola Sergio... oh, yes, Conteduca and Migliaccio who were just nominated... there's Giacomini Pasquale, Manganiello... then there's Sant'Angelo Luigi... then there are other members..., but..."

**Then let's go on to the engine (engineering) division. Beside Benetti, who are the most important fascist activists?**

"In engines (engineering) there are about twenty of us. Beside Benetti there's Cavalier Ferraris, there's Cartosi Nunzio... then Tarullo Rocco, there's Sganuzzo Vito and Antonio Caruso... then there's Rega who I think is called Antonio... Barillaro I don't remember his name... I'd be lying... Del Sarto who was the group leader before Benetti... then there's Alderucci... Farmiggio Giuseppe."

**And Masera, that fascist who gives the roman salute when the processions pass?**

"I know a Masera who is head of the cleaning department, but he's not one of ours, he must belong to Iniziativa Sindacale."<sup>11</sup>

**Now let's go on to the stamping department. Here's that elite group of provocateurs who were responsible recently for a physical attack in front of gate 17. What do you have to say about that?**

"One of them was not one of ours..."

**Then tell us about the others, were they yours?**

"They were Greco, Mangiola and Meo. Greco is called Antonio, Mangiola, I think is called Saverio and Meo is called Cosimo."

**There's someone else in stamping, right?**

"Well, yes, there's Ragionier Festa and also Filippo Greco."

**Now let's talk about Auxiliaries. How many are you and who is your group leader?**

"Mazza... Gabriele is the group leader."

**And who are your other activists?**

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10 Shop floor grievance committee.

11 Trade Unionist Initiative--coalition of the social-democratic, catholic and company unions.

"In Auxiliaries there are only a few, really, practically only him; there are three or four, but the others don't carry out any particular activity..."

**Then let's hear who your representatives are at Lingotto.**

"... but I can't remember everything, how can I... Let's see there's Polito Domenico and also his son Filippo, then there is Serafino Oldano... there's Sarchimich Stefano..."

**And Scattaglia, have you forgotten him?**

"You're talking about Fabrizio Scattaglia... now he's not at Lingotto anymore, he works at the Marconi building in the personnel office..."

**And at Motari-Avio?**

"There there's Paolo Sissia, I don't know about any others."

**And how do things stand in the Parts department?**

"In Parts I already told you, there's Barone, I think, Antonio Barone. He's the group leader, but actually he does everything himself. There are only two or three in all. But the situation there is falling apart..."

**And in the Foundry?**

"In the Foundry, it's Sebastiano Palma who represents us, but there also..."

**Now let's talk about Rivalta.**

"There is a company group there of about thirty people, maybe a few less. I must say that I don't know them as well because our union, being decentralized, I only see them at our monthly meetings. They meet with the internal section. Guicciardino Giuseppe is the one who mainly keeps in contact with us... The others have less of an opportunity to visit our union because they live far away. I don't remember very many names... among the employees there's Ugo Ugolini... I don't remember any other names... Michele Tancredi, Enrico Di Loreto; then Mattana, Mattana is called Ugo... But Guicciardino is the one who knows..."

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The PCI daily *L'Unita* denounced the BR action as a "serious provocation", and accused the BR of giving the public a false idea of fascist strength in FIAT, claiming that the BR had spoken of "12,000 Fascists in FIAT". This, as the reader can see from the above BR texts, was a bald lie since the BR had proven the exact opposite: that the figure of 12,000 fascists was a fascist propaganda invention. The *L'Unita* article also carefully concealed the widespread worker support for the BR Labate action, and the fact that thousands of workers refused to lift a finger to help Labate.

Manifesto took the same line as *L'Unita* and even went further, suggesting that Labate had kidnapped himself!

Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*") opposed the kidnapping and pillory of Labate as "irresponsible and exhibitionistic", even though three years earlier in July 1970, it had approved of the pillory of two fascists by IGNIS factory workers in Trent as an "exemplary lesson".

Mass worker violence raged inside Mirafiori, as the contract fight dragged on. A FIAT company newspaper admitted that some 800 cars belonging to management and their sympathizers had been sabotaged between November 1972 and January 1973. A hundred people were wounded or beaten, there was damage to buildings, gates, office equipment and furniture, and a sell-out union headquarters was burned. The Brigades had both led, and been part of, this wave.

While class war raged inside FIAT's plants, on the outside, the revolutionary Left staged mass demonstrations throughout Italy to protest the holding of the January 1973 fascist MSI

party congress in Rome. The revolutionary Left also made plans for the mass disruption of the MSI congress itself. During the night of January 14-15, a bomb exploded in Piazza S. Babila, a well-known gathering place of fascists in Rome. And even more bombs were tossed against various other fascist headquarters.

## CHAPTER 8

### Against "White Shirt Fascism"

By the end of 1972, it was clear to the BR that it had to expand the struggle beyond shop floor confrontations with the fascists inside FIAT. While battles could be won on the factory floor, the war could not be won there alone. Even more, if the struggle were isolated in the factories it would be defeated. The struggle had to take on its full social dimension. In January of 1973 the BR therefore began a new political- military campaign to expose DC (the ruling Christian Democratic Party) or "white shirt Fascism".

On January 15, 1973 a 3-person BR commando raided the Milan offices of UCID, a right-wing Catholic management association, and seized personnel files, mailing lists, membership lists and other material. A UCID functionary was tied up. The UCID raid marked the beginning of the BR campaign to unmask the fascist character of the ruling DC (Christian Democratic party). Other raids followed in Milan and Turin. During the UCID raid, BR left a leaflet on the floor of the office explaining their action. And the next day, copies of it were distributed inside FIAT's Mirafiori plant.

The PCI and the reformist unions denounced the BR action as part of a fascist strategy of provocation. The Socialist Party (PSI) paper *Avanti* and Workers' Vanguard (*Avanguardia Operaia*) both ignored the action. Manifesto continued to question the existence of the BR and. Continuous Struggle flip-flopped from its pro-BR position of Spring 1972 to attack the BR action, accusing them of "substituting themselves for the masses". A month later, 3 days after the Labate kidnapping, Continuous Struggle again attacked the BR with a violent polemic against "their Don Quixotian-isolation", even slanderously accusing them of opposing the movement's right to self-defense against police violence during mass demonstrations.

The BR's insistence on pulling out fascism by its roots - in the ruling DC party, in the corporations - recognized the important role fascism was already playing. While fascist organizations alone were feeble and strategically unimportant, as a tool of the bourgeoisie they took on a larger political role. Fascist MSI party leader Giorgio Almirante had, in 1971, called for his followers to pick up their tempo of physical attacks to stop the Left. In Milan, this call had translated into daily beatings of Leftists on the street, raids on Left student hangouts, fire bombing of both the city PCI and PSI party headquarters, and actual sniper attacks on Left public meetings. Most of the fascist attacks came at night.

The threat was reminiscent of the 1920-22 fascist "squadristo" strong-arm tactics that drowned the revolutionary mass movement in a blood bath. In the Sesto workers' district of Milan, in 1972, the fascists began hit-and-run night raids. One night they showed up at the Italian Communist Party social club at Nuova Torretta on Via Saint Denis, a youth hangout also used by Continuous Struggle and other New Leftists. Two cars pull up outside and slowly cruise by. Rocks are first thrown, breaking the front windows. Then, through the gaps, they tossed Molotov cocktails. Curtains, furniture, paper catch fire. People inside save themselves by going out windows and other exits, but 5 people are burned, one quite seriously.

Year after year these blatant repressions grow. MSI youth squads and other "black vanguards" do the violence. The police and courts allow the fascists to act with complete impunity. FIAT and the other big corporations give the fascists job patronage, fund them, and give them respectable bourgeois cover. The secret police give the fascists their marching orders. Left unchecked the fascists would dismember the struggle. In March 1976, to pick one well-known example, Angela Rossi, who is the sister of October 22nd Group prisoner Mario Rossi, is kidnapped by a fascist death squad working with the police. She is raped and tortured, as a warning to stop denouncing police repression. Next, she is told, her children will be killed if she isn't silent.

In the face of this fascist onslaught, the revisionist PCI showed its total bankruptcy. In his address to the 12th PCI Congress in March 1972, party secretary Berlinguer outlined a strategy of nonviolent legal opposition to the fascists. The PCI should form an alliance with the liberal middle class to pressure the police to protect the movement! Militant New Leftists are already locked in daily street battles with the fascists. The spontaneist

leadership in the student movement and Continuous Struggle say that this is how the fascists should be fought: in mass public activities, to involve more and more people. For example, in retaliation for the fire bombing of the Sesto PCI club, Continuous Struggle wrecked a fascist cafe and fire bombed the fascist CISNAL union headquarters. The Red Brigades instead insist that the movement cannot win by concentrating primarily on the fascist street thugs because they are just the expendable pawns or tools. The masses also must be organized into an urban guerrilla party to deal with the key power centers of this fascist threat within the imperialist hierarchy itself.

During the 6-month period of silence between May and November 1972 the BR, in addition to doing expropriations and building an infrastructure, also prepared their second major theoretical document. Dated January 1973, and again in the form of a Tupamaro-like interview, the document was published in the Workers' Power newspaper on March 11, 1973. In this document, the BR defined who they were, analyzed and criticized major political trends in the revolutionary Left, analyzed the strategy of the State, and put forward their own strategy for advancing the armed struggle in Italy.

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## SECOND THEORETICAL REFLECTION

January 1973

### **1. How do you view the political choices of your organization after two years of work?**

It seems to us that the development of the Italian political situation has confirmed the basic choice we made in the first months of 1970.

The government crisis has not been resolved in a reformist sense at all and there are no prospects for solutions in the near future. On the contrary, the formation of a Center-Right government excluding the social-democrats, the relaunching of the fascists as a "parallel force," the frontal attack on the workers movement and the ever more arrogant militarization of political and social conflict, all this demonstrates that the bourgeois political front with increased doggedness pursues the objective of total restoration of its dictatorship and thus an unqualified political defeat of the working class.

### **2. On the contrary, doesn't the assassination of Feltrinelli and the attack against the Red Brigades demonstrate the weakness, or better yet, the immaturity of such a choice?**

The weakness of a political line does not derive from the relative correlation of forces that the organization representing this line is able to establish in an initial phase.

The attack unleashed against us by the bourgeoisie in May sprang from their mistaken conviction that they could neutralize the political impact of the strategic proposal of armed struggle for communism by exploiting the organizational weakness which characterized us.

This mistaken political evaluation is exactly what caused the police operation to fail and we strengthened ourselves.

In fact, by not accepting the terrain of a "frontal clash" between the Brigades and the armed apparatus of the State that was offered us, we had ample time to counterattack "in silence" against economic targets. As a result we reinforced our organizational infrastructure, showing at the same time the "political weakness" of this police state with its "strong" military structures.

### **3. The charge of "terrorism" has been made against you in many different quarters.**

"Terrorism" in our country and in this phase of the struggle is a component of the politics carried out by the bosses front, beginning with the fascist Massacre of Piazza Fontana. Its purpose is to force a general retreat of the workers movement and a wholesale restoration of the old levels of exploitation. The ruling class has specifically aimed at realizing three

fundamental objectives with this political policy: 1. encourage the growth of the reactionary bloc in power today, and in particular its most fascist components, with the perspective of regaining control of the situation in the factories and the country; 2. stamp out the revolutionary thrusts and channel the struggles that have matured in these years into a social-pacifist direction, raising the spectre of armed struggle as a "leap into the dark"; 3. discredit the revolutionary organizations and blame the Left for fascist and anti-working class provocations, following the formula of the opposed extremes and equating all manifestations of violence as being the same.

Our commitment in the factories and neighborhoods has been, from the beginning, to organize the workers autonomy for resistance to the counterrevolution in motion now, and to resist the liquidation of revolutionary thrusts being attempted by the opportunists and the reformists.

To organize the resistance and build armed proletarian power are the slogans that have guided and guide our revolutionary work. What does all this have to do with "terrorism"?

#### **4, Therefore, what is the guiding thread of your intervention in this phase?**

With the building of the Red Brigades we wanted to create a strategic center capable of posing the most urgent problems raised by the proletarian resistance movement.

We have not built a new group but have worked within every manifestation of working class autonomy to unify its consciousness around the strategic proposal of armed struggle for communism. Today we can say that the tossed stone has moved the waters: the problem of armed proletarian organization has been taken up by the whole revolutionary camp.

So now it is a matter of taking a step forward; imposing in struggle the political line of building armed proletarian power against militarist or in any case mistaken tendencies.

**Militarist** is the deviation of those who think that by armed action, understood only as an exemplary action, it is possible to "get the working class to move."

**Groupist** is the deviation that attributes the functions and tasks of the armed struggle to a nucleus of samurai.

Both these positions have a common denominator: lack of trust in the revolutionary capacity of the Italian proletariat.

We believe that armed action is only the culminating moment of a vast political work by which the proletarian vanguard, the resistance movement, is organized in a direct way relative to its real and immediate needs. In other words, armed action for the Red Brigades, armed action is the highest point of a deep process of self-organization within the class: its perspective for power.

Thus we are convinced that to advance on the road of armed struggle it is now necessary to carry out the task of political unification of all the political-military vanguards that move within the same perspective.

#### **5. Do you intend to work for political unity among the revolutionary groups?**

The groups are a reality of the past, surviving relics unequal to the objective development of the revolutionary process. The unity we intend to build is that of all the forces that move with a perspective of armed struggle for communism.

#### **6. Can you be more precise?**

Within the non-reformist Left three fundamental tendencies are operating at this moment:

- The first is a liquidationist one that takes for granted the political defeat of the working class. This tendency prepares itself for "party" work to lead the "retreat" during a long period of crisis.

Those who lead this tendency think of organizational development along internal lines and engage in a gross oversimplification, identify the growth of the revolutionary process with the growth of their own group. While the bosses have chosen the road of creeping civil war the liquidationists arrange their activity on the terrain of legal agitation and propaganda.

From this error flows the repositioning of a Third Internationalist model, which we consider a dull repetition of historical experience the working class has already gone through in the past and lacking in meaning for the future.

- The second is a centrist one that even though it does not concede the political defeat of the working class as a certainty, formulates its actions as a series of successive battles which are never seen as part of a unified plan of war. This tendency is represented by the autonomous factory and neighborhood organizations which exhaust their existence in tactical struggle, deluding themselves that they can build a consistent strategic alternative around "day-by-day" politics. Concretely, the problem these comrades must still resolve is contained in the following question: "autonomous organizations" or "organizations of the proletarian state"?

- The third is that of resistance which does not accept, in any way, the defeat of the working class as a foregone conclusion.

This is the tendency that knows how to grasp the new forms in which proletarian initiatives move, and works to project them along the strategic track of armed struggle for communism. On the terrain of revolutionary class war. The line of building armed proletarian power is based primarily on this last tendency.

The unity we intend to build is therefore, in the first place, that of all the forces that make up the camp of resistance: forces that since 1945 were always on the margins of the official lines of the communist workers movement, and younger forces of a more recent tradition who enrich the inheritance of proletarian autonomy with the struggles of 1968 and 1969.

#### **7. Up to now we have not heard any talk about the Italian Communist Party. Why?**

The Communist Party is a great democratic force that overall pursues a strategy exactly opposed to ours.

It does not seem useful, nor important to continue to attack it with volleys of words. On revolutionary terrain ideological struggle must also base itself on the capacity to make one's own political convictions live in history. Thus we are convinced that to the degree that the line of resistance, of proletarian power and armed struggle consolidates itself politically and organizationally in the workers movement, the communist elements that still believe in that party will certainly know how to make their choices.

#### **8. When you speak of resistance how do you see the development of revolutionary forces in the South?**

A revolutionary development in Italy is unthinkable without the active participation of the proletarians of the South. Unfortunately the revolutionary path of the Southern masses is presently distorted, largely due to the mass resentment over the failure of reformist strategy. The fascist bourgeoisie has temporarily succeeded in winning over popular strata of several zones of the South; organizing their "anger" around objectives that are in no way revolutionary. It is now up to the Northern working class vanguard forces to re-open the discussion of political unity with the South. It is an urgent task. We must dedicate the greatest attention to insuring that



the action of the bourgeoisie in the South is not turned against the working class of the North.

**9. But how is it possible to work along these lines given the fragility of the revolutionary political structures in the South?**

In the South revolutionary thrusts are certainly not lacking; in fact, from a certain point of view they express very advanced levels. The bourgeoisie knows well that if the mechanisms of social control ever broke down there the revolutionary tide would advance with great decision. For this reason the State, the government and the capitalists all encourage the "meridionalism" or Southern regionalism led by the fascists, who pose as a subversive/criminal tendency against the State. In fact, they are only subversive to the workers! struggles. (This passage refers to the Southern "mafia"--ed.)

Then the reformist forces also contribute to the confusion by defending Italy's "democratic state" - which for the South means only repression and exploitation by the North. This helps the Right establish hegemony over the Southern proletarian forces that do tend to move against the system.

**10. Given that things are like this, who can begin to reverse this trend?**

It is best to be clear: Certainly not those intellectual groups of the Southern Left who spend their time studying "the phases of capitalist development in the South" or "the historic difference between North and South"--which in the meantime continue to grow. Even those groups which have concentrated everything on agitation and political propaganda have little chance of providing a strategic path forward for the recurring revolutionary thrusts (in the South).

To unblock the situation it is necessary for the consolidation of an armed vanguard that knows how to unite the new working class, day laborers, unemployed and sub-proletariat in the struggle against the fascists, the local bourgeoisies and the repressive organs of the state.

**11. In what areas do you intend to develop your activity in the near future?**

There are two kinds of activity we are carrying out, at the same pace and with continuity and determination: the work of clandestine organization and the work of mass organization.

By clandestine work we mean the consolidation of an economic, military and logistical material base that can guarantee full autonomy to our organization and constitute a strategic rear base for work "among the masses."

By the work of organizing the masses we mean building the links of the proletarian state within the factories and popular neighborhoods: an armed underground state that prepares for war.

**12. Can you clarify this last point?**

The problem that we have to resolve is to give the revolutionary thrusts that come from the resistance movement a dimension of power.

This requires a class-wide organizational development that knows how to respect the various levels of consciousness that exist there, but which at the same time knows how to unify them and force their revolutionary evolution. within the strategic perspective of armed struggle for communism.

The Red Brigades are the first guerrilla nuclei that work in this direction. For this reason those communist militants who study the construction of the armed party of the proletariat are organizing themselves around them.

**13. What criteria guide your practice in the class struggle in this period?**

We move with a long term view of things; we know that this is not the phase of war and precisely for this reason we work to create its subjective and

organizational foundation. This is our criterion. All our actions aim toward this goal.

The popular resistance movement is in part characterized by a general desire to fight the bourgeoisie and by an equally general inability to carry this fight out effectively on the terrain imposed on it. Our practice moves in the direction of resolving this contradiction.

We do not seek the publicity of exemplary actions, but instead together with the proletarian vanguards we pose these problems:

- that of WAR AGAINST FASCISM which is not only the fascism of Almirante's Black Shirts, but also that of Premier Andreotti and Christian Democracy's white shirts;

- that of RESISTANCE IN THE FACTORIES to strike the enemies, saboteurs and liquidators of unity and workers' struggle, to combat hand to hand management's offensive seeking the political defeat of the workers for several more decades;

- that of RESISTANCE TO THE MILITARIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, which does not mean struggling for the defense of little bourgeois-democratic spaces, but for the destruction of the armed structures of the state and its parallel! fascist militias.

**14. A last question: do you think in terms of a national or continental development of the revolutionary process?**

The achievement of a European and Mediterranean dimension of the revolutionary initiative is a very important objective. It is imposed on us by supranational structures of capital and power. To work for its maturity means above all to develop the class war in ones own country, but also to be ready to sustain those initiatives of concrete support required by the revolutionary and communist international movement.

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After reprinting the full text of the BR document, Workers' Power criticized the BR's strategy of armed struggle. WP argued that it was not true that the bourgeoisie had decided to defeat the workers' movement on the terrain of armed struggle. Instead, they said, the State intended to use all its weapons: the army, the schools, the revisionist parties, the unions. And only if the proletariat had overcome the State would the bosses finally choose armed struggle. WP further denied that political leadership of the movement should flow from armed organization.

Continuous Struggle responded to the BR document with sharp criticism but did not reprint the document itself. *Lotta Continua* accused the BR of "focoism" and an ideological confusion which led them to put forward a strategy of "armed struggle for reforms". WP in turn published a polemic attacking Continuous Struggle for what it considered was an unprincipled, opportunistic attack on the BR and defended the BR as "...proletarian comrades who have carried out the struggles of the 'Hot Autumn' in the factories of the North, and who after long theoretical-political reflection have chosen the path of clandestinity, in the conviction that only this path will permit the construction of an autonomous organization for the armed struggle. One can disagree with the choice of building an autonomous organization for armed struggle; it is difficult. to argue that another path besides that of clandestinity exists to build it..."

*STRIKING AT THE FASCISTS*

The next major BR action in their campaign against "white shirt fascism" was the kidnapping on June 28, 1973 of Alfa Romeo manager Michele Mincuzzi, a time and motion study engineer. His file had been captured during the January 15th raid on the UCID office in Milan.

The Mincuzzi kidnapping took place against a background of great political tension in the country. The Center-Right Andreotti government had just been brought down by mass working class struggle and the capitalists had turned once more to supporting a reformist Center-Left government to end the social crisis. In the factories, the unions had just signed a sell-out contract. At 8:30 in the evening as Mincuzzi was getting out of his car, a BR

commando unit surrounded him, and after a brief struggle, he was pushed into a small van and blindfolded. Once out in the open countryside he was made to get out of the van and submit to proletarian trial. The judge, according to Mincuzzi, showed himself to be well-informed about the organization of work in the factory. Later Mincuzzi was quoted as saying, "they were very kind. I'm sure they had no intention of harming me."

The brief interrogation ended. Mincuzzi was released near the Alfa Romeo factory. A sign had been placed around his neck. It said:

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"RED BRIGADES--MINCUZZI MICHELE FASCIST MANAGER OF ALFA ROMEO--TRIED BY THE RED BRIGADES. NOTHING WILL GO UNPUNISHED--STRIKE ONE TO EDUCATE ONE HUNDRED--ALL POWER TO THE ARMED PEOPLE--FOR COMMUNISM."

A PR leaflet was left on the ground explaining the reasons for Mincuzzi's "arrest". The text is reprinted below:

Thursday June 28, 1973 at 8 pm an armed nucleus of the RED BRIGADES seized, questioned and tried MINCUZZI MICHELE a manager at Alfa-Romeo.

To understand who he really is we begin with some of his famous phrases:

"The abolition of work categories is against nature."

"Egalitarianism is inhuman."

These phrases are the pivotal point of the political aims of the training course for middle level managers he conducts periodically in the factory.

MINCUZZI is not satisfied with being the teacher of the torturers who impose the hellish speed up and work pace on us at Alfa, but he also imparts his fascist teachings to the managers of other factories, holding these courses at the UCID (Union of Christian Entrepreneurial Managers).

In the factory he is one of the top leaders of the Direction of Production (DIPRO) and he is the one who is in charge of organizing the speed and work pace of the assembly line.

He is always the one who decides who will be promoted from one work category to another.

Because of his "high qualities" he is considered an "expert" at Alfa on union questions and represents the company's interests in contract negotiations and meetings with the union.

There are a lot of us who remember his active collaboration with the COUNTERSTRIKE of the managers for the "right to work" and against "violence" which finally let us know who our State bosses<sup>12</sup> really were. And it's hard to believe in the sincerity of his sentiment "against every kind of violence" seeing that on December 2, 1971 he did not hesitate a second in smashing through a picket line with his car in coordination with the police who then charged the workers. Even more recently MINCUZZI distinguished himself during the maneuvers that management carried out against workers' autonomy and its forms of struggle, the shop floor processions, the quickie "chessboard" strikes<sup>13</sup>, etc.

The last event (1,000 workers suspended after the strike in the Paint shop) also shows that our State bosses intend to be in the vanguard of the anti-working class repression.

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12 Alfa-Roméo is a government-owned and run auto plant, which is why the BR calls Alfa's managers "State bosses." This is a dig at the revisionist theory that State-run capitalist industry is more "progressive" than private capitalism.

13 Quick, alternating strikes of one department then another.

MINCUZZI is therefore a fascist hierarch in white shirt. He is of the same breed as the MACHIARINIS and the many others who in the private and State-run factories try to make the workers pay for the crisis using the weapons of blackmail and high living costs, terrorism and provocation, in a word, anti-working class violence.

The hierarch MINCUZZI has many associates inside and outside the factory.

One of them is PIERANI LUIGI of personnel management, who while working behind the scenes is one of the most dogged executors of the bosses' repression...

PIERANI, it seems, is so conscious of his function that he has himself escorted by a "gorilla" loaned to him by the police, who also keep his house under constant watch with two police cars.

PIERANI has not understood one thing, that if the bosses have long memories, the proletarians have immeasurable patience, and that in the end nothing will go unpunished.

Comrades... let's learn how to recognize each of our enemies, one at a time, to watch them and punish them whenever they are directly responsible for anti-working class actions...

The terrorist politics of the bosses walk with well-defined legs, those of our managers and our foremen. This is the premise for advancing on the path opened up with the struggles of '69-'73, to develop the themes of the war on the capitalistic organization of work and the resistance to the anti-working class restructuration, to permit the mass movement to advance in the struggle for a communist society.

**Armed struggle for communism.  
RED BRIGADES**

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Italy's leading bourgeois daily, the Milan-based *Corriere della Sera* tried to get Mincuzzi to say that his abductors were fascists, but Mincuzzi refused. *Avanti*, the newspaper of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) advanced the theory that the BR were "illegal extremists" who had to be opposed in contrast to the "legal Left extremists" who had to be defended when the State attacked them. For the BR, said *Avanti*, there was only the penal code. *Avanti* went so far as to define anyone who used violence or violated the law as objectively right-wing. This definition was so broad that it included some of the PSI's own working class members involved in union activities like picketing, factory occupations, etc., that were still illegal under the old Rocco-Mussolini fascist labor laws, still on the books in Italy!

The PSI's theory of "good" and "bad" Left extremists was also the same line that Berlinguer, the head of the PCI, adopted two years later in 1975.

At this point an interesting ideological unity was also emerging between the Social-Democratic *Avanti* and Continuous Struggle who were now both denouncing illegal actions as inherently reactionary. Continuous Struggle, which had as late as the January 1973 BR raid on UCID defended the use of violence as a legitimate weapon of the class struggle, now began to move away from supporting violence, instead counter-posing "mass struggle for a guaranteed wage and against capitalistic organization of work".

In a June 30, 1973 article, Continuous Struggle attacked the BR Mincuzzi action as "lacking any connection to the needs of the workers' struggle", accused the BR of "refusing to face the task of building a mass organization, substituting itself for the masses by carrying out 'exemplary actions' and objectively aiding the fascists to relaunch the 'strategy of tension' in Milan."

Both Workers' Vanguard ("Avanguardia Operaia") and the PCI continued to insist that the BR were actually fascist provocateurs. The PCI even hinted that the BR were working for the Israeli secret service because someone had mistakenly used a six-pointed Star of David in an action instead of the five-pointed communist one.

"After Mincuzzi, Workers' Power was the only "historic" New Left organization that continued to support the BR. While criticizing the BR tactic of proletarian trials and calling on the BR to link their armed struggle to the workers' "mass refusal of work", Workers' Power ("Potere Operaio") launched a violent polemic against Continuous Struggle, exposing their flip-flop in opposing the BR and armed struggle. To drive their point home more graphically, WP reprinted the old Continuous Struggle article supporting the 1972 Macchiarini kidnapping next to their current article condemning the Mincuzzi action.

However by early summer of 1973, Workers' Power was weakened and isolated. Only a few years before, it had some 4,000 members and was a major factor in the Left. For over a year since the Spring of 1972 when WP had publicly defended the BR, Feltrinelli and the G.A.P., the State had carried out a heavy campaign of repression against them. And Continuous Struggle and other groups now refused to form united fronts with WP, to hold joint meetings with them, or even to march with them in demonstrations.

In the fast-moving polarization, in which the New Left middle ground found itself caught in the real cross-fire between the imperialists and the armed revolution, much of the extra-parliamentary New Left was not ready. Particularly in Milan, which had always been a revisionist stronghold, the majority of the New Left backed away from armed struggle in 1973-74. Continuous Struggle, which did contain revolutionary elements, had only 800 student members in Milan (it was stronger in other cities). The Trotskyist group Workers' Vanguard, which was concentrated in Milan, had 2,500 members there. And the strongest single M.S. (Student Movement)' tendency in Milan was controlled by the PCI, which led some 2,000 students in the city.

Incidentally, the original contention of the founders of the Red Brigades, that armed struggle was the real dividing line within the movement, had been amply demonstrated. Most of the supposedly "Maoist" groups had rushed over to crowd in with the pro-Moscow PCI, the Trotskyists, the pro-NATO Social-Democrats, and the supposedly syndicalist leadership of Continuous Struggle in opposing armed resistance to repression, praying at the altar of bourgeois democracy. For all their supposed heavy disagreements, these people had political unity. And on the other side, the armed resistance had acted as a magnet, drawing all the revolutionary-minded elements together out of the tumultuous mass of the Left.

The debate over armed struggle that had polarized and split the Left also resulted in a split within Workers' Power itself. At the WP convention held at the end of June 1973, one wing of the organization, called "autonomists" and grouped around Toni Negri, WP's leading theoretician, wanted WP to focus on anarcho-syndicalist mass organizing as a strategy. The other main grouping, calling itself "counter-power" wanted a tighter cadre organization. After the convention Workers' Power dissolved as an organization. A number of WP activists close to the "counter-power" faction eventually joined the BR, while Negri's "autonomisti" went into the loose network of revolutionary factory and student collectives that came to be known as Workers' Autonomy. Adriana Faranda and Valerio Morucci, two ex-WP activists with ties to top "counter-power" faction leaders, later became leaders of the Rome BR column, helping to carry out the Moro kidnapping operation in 1978.

Fall of 1973, the world imperialist system faced serious economic crisis. Battered by national liberation struggles and by the struggle of emerging nations to impose new relations of force in the world economy, imperialism was less and less able to control world events.

The October 1973 Arab-Israeli "oil war" forced up the price of crude oil causing an energy crisis in the advanced capitalist countries, including Italy. In the Mediterranean region, the crisis had the effect of further weakening the military dictatorships of two key NATO countries, Portugal and Greece, already weakened by the national liberation movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique and the struggle of the Greek students.

Because of new world-wide conditions created by the crisis, Italy, the NATO country at the center of the Mediterranean, now became the key to maintaining a shaky U.S. control of the region. And it was in Italy that the mounting contradictions of the imperial metropolis were also most acute. The auto industry, hit by the oil crisis, was the manufacturing cornerstone of the Italian industrial economy. At the same time, Italian workers were more combative than any others in Europe. A partial price freeze imposed by the Italian bourgeoisie to stop creeping inflation was unsuccessful. It only postponed the full impact of the economic crisis by several months, making it worse when it hit.

Imperialism at that moment could not afford big shocks to its system. The goals of the Italian bourgeoisie were: to make the workers pay for the crisis through lower wages, higher prices, more work, and more discipline. As soon as the temporary price freeze was lifted, prices of basic necessities--oil, flour, sugar, bread, pasta, etc.--jumped wildly. Rents were now eating up half of workers' wages.

In November of 1973 the government issued its Austerity Decree: not only higher gasoline and heating oil prices, but also a de facto curfew on businesses. All movie houses, bars, public places, etc. had to close by sundown. Even TV programming was cut back. Kerosene (for home heating) rationing hit proletarians hardest physically. But the ban on driving cars on holidays hit workers psychologically much harder. The decree was, in essence, psychological terror. The workers were being told they could not enjoy themselves, they must accept a war economy, they must suffer from the cold, they must bend, be humiliated.

Gianni Agnelli, the head of FIAT, through his wide influence over the Italian press started a propaganda campaign to get workers to accept the austerity program by romanticizing the "good old times" - poverty, modesty, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the poetic beauty of bicycle rides...

But to make proletarians pay for the crisis, a fundamental reorganization or "restructuration" of production was needed.

The central problem for Agnelli and the bourgeoisie remained how to silence the worker rebellion. To do this, Agnelli needed the help of the government, the unions and the Left political parties. Agnelli looked to the government to provide investment capital for shifting production to the poverty-stricken but more conservative South, and financial help to rapidly expand its markets in the Arab world and Eastern Europe. Agnelli offered the unions a "strategic plan" under which the reformist unions would get to help administer the new economic plan.

In the Fall of 1973, the PCI (Italian Communist Party), which had been flirting with Agnelli for a year since they had held their joint conference with FIAT on the new auto production technology, proposed their new political line: "the historic compromise". PCI leader Berlinguer decided that the historic lesson to be drawn from the military coup that overthrew the Left-wing Allende government in Chile in October 1973 was the need for an alliance with the Catholic church in Italy, and the moderate wing of the Christian Democrats (DC) led by Aldo Moro<sup>14</sup>. Agnelli quietly signaled his approval of the PCI's new line.

But for the "party of Mirafiori", for the "red handkerchiefs" who moved through the plants punishing scabs and company spies there was to be no compromise. They had to be beaten up. Agnelli began a new campaign of repression inside FIAT: mass firings, fines, warnings.

When auto contract talks opened in November 1973, the importance of the struggle was underlined when, for the first time, Umberto Agnelli and the three top union leaders personally led the talks. Agnelli began by threatening mass lay-offs unless the government and the unions agreed to his demands.

The working class was disoriented in the face of this attack. The fascist union CISNAL and the company union SIDA raised their heads again. The first protest strikes were weakly supported. The Left-led unions had no strategy for opposing the demands of the bosses. Only 25% of the workers supported the December 6th strike.

#### *THE AMERIO OPERATION*

On December 10th the BR kidnapped Ettore Amerio, the head of the FIAT personnel department. Bruno Labate, kidnapped in February 1973, had fingered Amerio as the main person responsible for seeing that fascists recommended for hiring by the fascist CISNAL union were given jobs.

Amerio was seized near his garage at 7:30 in the morning, put in a small van, taken to a "people's jail" and put on trial. His trial touched on the issues of FIAT fascism, firings and lay-offs. The BR did not threaten his life and Amerio cooperated with his jailers. That

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14 Moro had been Premier of the Center-Left Government that ran Italy between 1963 and 1968.

same day a BR leaflet was left in a phone booth explaining the reasons for Amerio's kidnapping and outlining the conditions to be met for his release:

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Monday, December 10 at 7:30 in the morning an armed nucleus of the Red Brigades seized Cavalier Ettore Amerio, head of personnel of the automotive division of FIAT near his home.

He is currently being held in a people's jail.

Any police investigation whatsoever may jeopardize personal safety.

The period of imprisonment of this planner of anti-working class terror depends on three factors:

1. The prosecution of anti-working class maneuvers (lay-offs, etc.) intended to take advantage of the "crisis" created and blown up by FIAT in collusion with the most reactionary forces in the country. The thrust of this crisis is a reactionary transformation of the entire political situation in Italy.

2. The progress of the questioning by which we intend to make clear - the fascist policy followed by FIAT in its post-contract offensive against the autonomous vanguards, working class organization inside the factory and their forms of struggle; --the question of firings used terroristically to break working class resistance to the incessant maneuvers to increase the workload. Cavalier Amerio will have to explain to us the quality and quantity of this attack which in the last few months alone has meant the expulsion of over 250 vanguards from the factory; --the organization of espionage inside FIAT, which is stronger than ever, as shown by the motives for some recent firings, after the collapse of the investigations begun by the police-magistrate Guarinello; --the practice of hirings carried out by fascists through the CISNAL and the MSI (the fascist party), since the secretary of that fascist pseudo-union (arrested and interrogated by us last February) has pointed to him claiming he has heavy responsibility in this matter.

3. The accuracy and completeness of the information that will be given of this action in particular and about our organization in general by Agnelli's newspapers.

Comrades, when fear spreads among large strata of the masses the bosses have already won half the war. These are the stakes in the game of the "economic crisis" we are witnessing. But all of us know that it's not so much the economy of the bosses that's in crisis as much as their power. It is their capacity to exploit, to rule and to oppress that has been strongly shaken by the workers struggles of these last years.

In this situation it is not we who must be afraid, just as we weren't afraid at the end of March when we raised the red flag against the bosses and the reformists over the biggest factories in Turin.

In this situation we must accept war...

Why not fight when we can win?

What we think is we will not get out of this "crisis" with a "compromise." On the contrary we're convinced that it is necessary to follow the main road outlined by the workers struggles of the last 5 years and that is:

Not to agree to truces that allow the bourgeoisie to reorganize itself.

To operate in such a way as to deepen the governmental crisis.

To transform this crisis into the first moments of armed proletarian power, of armed struggle for communism.

"Historic compromise" or armed proletarian power: this is the choice that the comrades must make today, because all middle paths have been eliminated.

A division is taking place inside the workers movement, but from this division the unity of the revolutionary front that we seek is born.

This choice, in any event, is forced on us every day inside and outside the factory, as we are confronted by the open aggression of the bosses, the government and the State and the deterioration of our traditional instruments of organization and struggle.

Defeat passivity!

Say no! to compromise with FIAT fascism!

Accept war!

These three things are necessary today to move forward in the building of proletarian power.

**Create, build, organize armed proletarian power!**

**No compromise with FIAT fascism!**

**The firings will not go unpunished!**

**ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM!**

**Turin, December 10, 1973**

**RED BRIGADES**

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One of the effects of the kidnapping was to encourage the movement to dig into Amerio's fascist past. The December 13, 1973 issue of "*Lotta Continua*" published some interesting biographical information about Amerio. He had, it turned out, been one of the prime movers behind Iniziativa Sindacale (Union Initiative) the trade union front that FIAT had created in 1967 to replace their completely discredited company union SIDA. Iniziativa Sindacale had in turn been dissolved in 1971 after Amerio was promoted to head of the personnel department at FIAT.

Massagrande, the police magistrate of Turin, was forced to publicly admit that Labate, the fascist union leader, and Amerio, had been in touch with each other over "matters regarding work".

While the bourgeois press was trying to build up public sympathy for Amerio describing his heart condition, etc., "*Lotta Continua*" pointed out that he was infamous among workers for the many people he had fired or given punitive transfers. It was also pointed out that his career as a fascist and a hatchet man for FIAT dated back to 1954 when he had worked for the reactionary Vittorio Valletta, head of FIAT in those days, helping him break the left-wing unions inside FIAT.

The State meanwhile unleashed a heavy campaign of repression against the Turin working class. For several days, the entire city was under a virtual state of siege. Whole working class neighborhoods were surrounded and subjected to police dragnets, which included the use of police helicopters. All the newspapers were given daily instruction by the Ministry of the Interior on what to print about the kidnapping. The Feltrinelli family's country home was raided by police, as were the homes of three left-wing intellectuals. The Turinese daily *La Stampa*, FIAT's house organ, called for reinstatement of the death penalty. The Christian Democrats on the initiative of Fanfani, a leader of the party's right-wing, proposed a new anti-terrorist law to deal with kidnappings - one which included a provision permitting the arrest of anyone who published news "prejudicial to the investigation".

In response the BR issued a second communique. It was left in the same downtown phone booth in Piazza Statuto where the first BR message had been left. The police who were turning Turin upside down looking for the BR were made to look like fools. The police put a heavy guard around the phone booth.

The second BR message:



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### The dismissals will not go unpunished

Of the three factors on which the detention of the director of personnel FIAT automotive division Ettore Amerio depends, two of them for now have been ignored.

That is:

--FIAT continues to use the threat of mass lay-offs in the contract talks;

--Agnelli's newspapers (but also those of his associates) with their stories about the "uncertain political color" of our organization render very poor service to one of the most loyal servants of their boss.

--on his part, instead, the prisoner Amerio is "collaborating" in a satisfactory manner.

--we restate also that the foolish behavior of the police forces are putting his safety in danger.

Comrades, up to now the interrogations to which we have subjected the head of personnel Amerio:

1. Have confirmed and detailed the existence, even now, of a FIAT espionage network \_ that is directly led by Cuttica, the same one who represents Agnelli at the bargaining table. He is about to be removed because FIAT does not want a chief of personnel who in the next few months will go on trial on charges of bribing functionaries of the State and organizing a mini-SIFAR<sup>15</sup> for the private use of the Agnelli brothers!

This spy network is directly run by Cavalier Negri, who as head of the central hiring office, is in charge of the infamous "general services."

2. Have confirmed the punitive and persecutorial character of the over 250 dismissals for "excessive social insurance payments" or for insubordination that have hit the political vanguards and the vanguards of the struggle after the national contract was signed.

3. Have confirmed the systematic, organized practice of checking on the political views of those who apply for jobs, a task which the FIAT "general services," to be more careful, has now given to a private investigation agency, the Manzini Agency.

4. Have confirmed the selective hiring of fascists, which as Labate, secretary of a fascist pseudo-union who we questioned, punished and whose hair we shaved off, has already told us happen with great ease since the head of the central hiring office at Palazzo Marconi is a fascist executioner; Cavalier Negri (who has been at FIAT and wore a black shirt since the '30s) the loyal servant in equal measure of Agnelli and Abelli.

The interrogations have also confirmed other important facts which we will document and publish as we did before.

These are questions, as you can understand comrades, that can only be confronted and resolved by a struggle for power, a struggle which as a result is political and armed. We do not think we can resolve these questions with our own private little war. On the contrary our action is strongly united with all the elements of the workers movement which act to build a real popular, workers armed power in the factories and the neighborhoods.

### RED BRIGADES

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15 SIFAR was the old Italian military intelligence agency that was abolished in the '60s because of scandals involving it in military plots against the government.

The BR launched a massive propaganda campaign in the factories throughout the North. Inside FIAT plants, BR members distributed leaflets in person. BR literature was additionally left at Ansaldo Nucleare shipyards at Sampierdarena, at the Sit-Siemens factory in Milan, at Breda plants in Porto Marghera, and the Milan industrial suburb of Sesto San Giovanni, at the Alfa auto plant in Arese and in Piacenza and Modena on the Milan- Luino railroad tracks. During the shift change at the Sit-Siemens and Breda factories in Porto Marghera, workers in two cars with loudspeakers outside the plant gates broadcast 45 minute speeches prepared by the BR. The program included the playing of the Italian working class national anthem "Bandiera Rossa" (Red Flag) and the "Internationale". Huge crowds gathered around the cars. At Mirafiori the BR conducted a similar program and FIAT management called in the police to stop it. Four FIAT workers were hauled into the police station and grilled about the identity of the workers who read the speeches aloud. Some regular shop floor union delegates who happened to be distributing union leaflets were also grabbed by police by mistake.

Meanwhile the police, the Carabinieri, and the judiciary all began to feud among themselves over the handling of the search for the BR. The police still had no leads after a week.

TV crews were sent to the gates of the FIAT plant hoping to interview workers hostile to the BR; instead, TV crews were greeted by workers who denounced Amerio with clenched fists.

Eight days after his abduction, on December 18, 1973 Amerio was released after Agnelli had withdrawn his threat of mass lay-offs. The BR released a message the same day summing up the results of their action:

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Today, Tuesday December 18, in the early hours of the morning the head of personnel of FIAT-Auto division Ettore Amerio was freed.

During the eight days of his detention he was subjected to precise interrogations on the questions of FIAT espionage, dismissals, the methods of hiring, the selection of fascists and more generally on the organization and history of the counter-revolution inside FIAT.

He "collaborated" in a satisfactory manner.

During his imprisonment FIAT withdrew all threats of mass lay-offs.

During these same eight days:

--the police forces were cleanly defeated, despite false statements and terrorism used against left-wing militants and in particular against some worker vanguards.

--Agnelli's newspapers were not able to hide the political character of our action and at the same time they revealed to everyone their unrestrained manipulations and their "bold" interpretations, reconfirming an old proletarian conviction: LA "STAMPA" IS A LIAR;

--The reformist newspapers went beyond manipulation. They invented slanderous stories out of whole cloth, stories that - let's make it clear - would never come out of the head of a communist, above all because they discredit the workers movement more than they do our organization.

Both carried out a significant "censorship" of the basic problems we agitated around: FIAT FASCISM and the QUESTION OF DISMISSALS. Are these the first fruits of the "historic compromise"?

Comrades, eight days ago by imprisoning Amerio we underlined one thing above all: WE ARE NOT THE ONES WHO MUST BE AFRAID. On the contrary WE MUST ARM OURSELVES and accept war because we can win.

By releasing him today we want to cancel an illusion: that one can win the war by carrying one battle to the extreme.

We are only at the beginning.

We are in the opening stage of a deep crisis of the regime, which is, above all, a political crisis of the State and is heading toward an "institutional break," toward a change in a reactionary direction of the entire political scene.

Our task in this crisis, comrades, is to build within the big factories and the popular neighborhoods the first centers of ARMED PROLETARIAN WORKERS POWER! CREATE, BUILD, ORGANIZE THE ARMED PROLETARIAN POWER! NO COMPROMISE WITH FIAT FASCISM! THE DISMISSALS WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED! ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM.

**December 18, 1973**  
**RED BRIGADES**

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After his release Amerio testified, to the displeasure of his employers, that he had been well-treated by the BR. Later the police accused Amerio of not co-operating with their investigation, and the Carabinieri actually put him at the top of their list of suspected BR members!

A concerted effort was made to discredit the BR in the eyes of the masses. Most of the nation's press, led by the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera* (the *N.Y. Times* of Italy), wrote in the wake of the Amerio operation that the BR were a secretly fascist group. Chiming in, the Social-Democratic newspaper *Avanti* and the pro-Moscow PCI newspaper *L'Unita* both suggested that the Brigades were a fascist front group. Both left parties called upon workers to assist the police in repressing the "fascist" BR (why the police would want to or could be trusted to break up a fascist group, neither explained). The Trotskyist Workers' Vanguard ("Avanguardia Operaia") group said that the kidnapping, just like earlier ones, was jointly staged by the "fascist" BR, Amerio himself, and SID (Italian secret service) to give the State an excuse to declare a state of siege in Turin. The Red Brigades' growing political-military presence was changing the nation's entire political situation.

At this point *Continuous Struggle* ("*Lotta Continua*") was the only Left newspaper that admitted the BR was a revolutionary organization. *Continuous Struggle*, however, continued its political polemic against the BR, accusing it of "petty-bourgeois militaristic deviations". According to *Lotta Continua*, BR's intentions were good but only mass workers' struggle - not "some surrogate Robin Hood" - could solve the problems of dismissals, mass lay-offs, increased exploitation and stolen wages. The BR program "seems to be to organize the proletariat in clandestine BR's". *Lotta Continua* concluded that "the choice has never been between legality and illegality, rather between a proletarian mass line and petty-bourgeois militarist one." *Lotta Continua*, however, said that it still defended the correctness of proletarian violence in principle and attacked the rest of the extra-parliamentary Left for failing to do so.

In Parliament the Undersecretary of the Interior, Pucci, gave a speech calling for the strengthening of the State's repressive apparatus in which he gave statistics on police repressive activity for 1972: 1.2 million police files opened on individuals, 4,252 arrests, 11,575 criminal charges brought without arrest. Pucci concluded by boasting that the police could do "even better".

#### WALTER ALASIA

On December 15, 1976 Walter Alasia, a member of the Red Brigades, was killed in a pre-dawn shootout with Italian police in the Milan working class suburb of Sesto San Giovanni. Fifteen members of the special "anti-terrorism" squad had come to arrest him at his parents' apartment in the projects where they lived. Walter traded shots with the police killing two, jumped out a ground floor window into the courtyard and was wounded in the legs by police machine gun fire. Then as he lay there bleeding a member of the "anti-terrorism" squad executed him. Walter was 20 years old.

At the time of his death, Walter had already led a BR raid on the right-wing Christian Democratic Party "New Democracy" headquarters. He was of the BR second generation; young proletarians who, too young to be part of the 1968-69 mass student and worker revolts, came to political consciousness in the early 1970's when the clash had already become

militarized. From the beginning of Walter's brief political life, the armed struggle was a dominant, life-and-death political question for him and his peers.

Alasia was the son of Communist factory workers. He grew up in Sesto San Giovanni, "the Italian Stalingrad", a tough Communist factory suburb of 80,000 workers on the outskirts of Milan. His father, Guido, was a skilled worker, a mold-maker at Ortofrigor, a Milan refrigeration equipment factory. His mother, Ada Tibaldi, was also a factory worker. In 1962 she had gone to work on the assembly line at SAPSA, a small rubber factory which was a subsidiary of the big multinational Italian-based Pirelli tire company. A Communist, she soon became a union activist, and took active part in the "Hot Autumn" factory revolt of 1969 when Walter was 13. She remained at SAPSA over 10 years.

Walter was a playful, high-spirited child. In school he showed artistic talent, but except for design, he got barely passing grades. Walter never adjusted to the academically sterile, authoritarian, 19th century atmosphere of the Italian school system of the 1960's.

At age 15, in 1971, because he showed real promise as a cartoonist, his parents enrolled him in the newly opened Itis Vocational High School for boys near his home in Sesto. His entry into Itis was a major turning point in his life.

The Itis student body was virtually all working class youth drawn from the Sesto neighborhood. Many of Walter's closest boyhood friends from Sesto were fellow students at Itis. They were soon swept into the high school student revolt that was spreading like wildfire through Italy's authoritarian vocational schools in 1971.

Walter and the others organized an "autonomous" student collective at Itis and within 2 years they had liberated the school. Teachers were forced to give everyone the same passing grade. Reactionary teachers and administrators were harassed and driven out of the school. The students turned their classes into political seminars on a wide range of topics. Regular class attendance ceased, the school administration having lost physical control of the school. Itis temporarily became a liberated zone (what the BR refer to as "zones of red power"), one of a whole series of schools in Milan and other Northern cities that became rear bases from which revolutionary student collectives moved out to fight the police and the fascists and do factory and community organizing.

Alasia was soon recruited into the collective's security force, and developed a reputation for reliability and having a cool head in a crisis. In 1973 the Itis autonomous collective became a part of Continuous Struggle (*Lotta Continua*). By now Itis had become one of the key strongholds of the revolutionary Left in Sesto. And in turn, the Sesto section of Continuous Struggle, with Walter's Itis collective at its head, was in the forefront of the running street warfare that took place between fascists, police and revolutionary Left throughout 1973 and 1974 as the State escalated its efforts to militarily smash the Milan revolutionary Left. Wherever there was street fighting, Walter and his fellow Itis revolutionaries were to be found in the thick of battle. Walter was 6 feet tall, and was said to have loved taking a punch and giving one back too.

The Itis collective helped to successfully defend one of the main Left strongholds, the Politecnico Vocational School, from a fascist assault in April 1973, during a big national mobilization of fascists in Milan. Five hundred "autonomous" students formed up outside of the Politecnico campus. Walter Alasia was there with the Itis group. At the end of the street the fascists appeared, heading toward the campus to beat leftists up. The defense force of 500 students began to link arms and move forward in a fast, rhythmic march. Quickly the pace turns into a mass running charge, with motorcycle helmets on, handkerchiefs over their faces, armed with clubs. The frightened fascists break up and take off, scrambling to get away. People in the neighborhood who were watching from their windows applauded the high school revolutionaries.

Alasia was very active in Continuous Struggle's Milan demos as a security marshal. Everyone remembers him as very controlled and level-headed in moments of tension. After the Brescia Massacre, when the fascists killed 8 people by bombing a Left demonstration, the New Left attacked the fascist headquarters in Milan. During the hand-to-hand fighting the Continuous Struggle Sesto section leader got lost in the chaos. Walter took over and directed the section's attack. He was 18 years old, with three years of experience in the struggle.

The Itis collective members had begun to question the nuclear family and traditional sexual roles as they wrestled with the question of building a new, non-oppressive way of living. Walter's favorite reading material in this period was a free-wheeling, counter-cultural

magazine called Bread & Roses. Walter distributed Bread & Roses along with the Continuous Struggle newspaper in his high school.

Bread & Roses was an irregularly published, youth-oriented magazine. It attacked the nuclear family mercilessly, criticized the revolutionary Left's failure to address personal problems of young people, attacked the careerism, egotism and oppressive behavior of macho male student leaders. It satirized the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of the student movement sub-culture which talked of revolutionary commitment but which continued to live out the lies and hypocrisies of the old culture.

Bread & Roses put forward the thesis that to really deepen one's political commitment it was necessary to rediscover the personal, the private. It was incorrect to separate personal behavior from social behavior. All of capitalist society's repressions and taboos were reflected in everyday life, in family and interpersonal relations. Bread & Roses was sharply critical of the proletarian family as a "vile money-relation". It called for economic independence for all members of the family, including children, as the only progressive solution.

The magazine also dealt with other issues, such as the underground economy, drugs, and sex. The problem of sexual roles and relations was a central theme it focused on in every issue. Bread & Roses was very popular at Itis and Walter kept a complete set of back issues in his room.

Walter was not interested in being a leader, making lots of speeches, becoming a movement "superstar". His political style was calm and to the point. His fellow student activists respected him. While he was all business in a crisis, he still liked to tease his friends with a subtle, ironic sense of humor.

His bedroom, which he shared with his older brother Oscar, was plastered with posters of Lenin, Che, Angela Davis, Stalin, and a smiling Ho Chi Minh. On his walls he also had pictures of Sacco and Vanzetti (two Italian-American anarchist immigrants executed by the State of Massachusetts in the 1920's), Italian WWII anti-Fascist partisans in combat, Vietnamese women with rifles on their shoulders, a picture of a laughing crowd surrounding a huge, headless marble statue of fascist dictator Mussolini, and a picture of Chinese Red Army soldiers in spotless "Mao" jackets.

Walter liked to wear his brown hair very long and sometimes kept it in a pony tail. He grew a mustache. Typical dress for him was white "chinos", sneakers and an embroidered Indian cotton shirt, tight at the waist. He liked rock music, Jimi Hendrix, Vanilla Fudge, Jethro Tull, and started learning to play the guitar. He often spent hours listening to music in his room.

By early 1974 it was becoming clear that the State was forcing the revolutionary Left to choose between armed struggle and passive extinction. Continuous Struggle, unable to give political leadership to the movement, split over the question of armed struggle. The whole Sesto section of the organization went with the "militarist" or pro-armed struggle faction. Walter and a small group of 4 or 5 friends did not participate actively in the faction fight, but just quietly dropped away.

After leaving Continuous Struggle and dropping out of his school, Walter, who had never been an intellectual, for the first time began to do some serious reading: selected works of Lenin, a six-volume series on philosophy and science (which he had to buy on credit), George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* and *Blood In My Eye*, and the Latin American novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Comrades who worked with him during this period said that the BR's highly successful Sossi action made a deep impression on Walter and many other student revolutionaries. The BR's communiques were the subject of long discussions between Walter and his friends. He had particularly agreed with the BR's analysis that the real dividing line in the movement was the question of armed struggle. Walter began to work with the Red Brigades some time after the Sossi action in late 1974 or early 1975.

His life underwent a change when he joined the Brigades. After brief jobs as a lathe operator turning out screws in a small factory earning \$150 a month, and as a telephone installer, Walter went to work at the main post office. He broke off with most of his old friends. Meeting an old schoolmate, Walter would tell them that he'd left politics. His family noticed he spent a lot of time at home reading *Soledad Brother* and *Blood In My Eye*.

His behavior changed, became much quieter and more disciplined – started helping his mother with household chores. Sometimes he spent the whole night out, hinting at a romance. His dress became more neat, and Walter even cut his beloved pony tail. His family also noticed that he avoided being photographed after he had his hair cut shorter.

In October 1976 police raided a BR safehouse in Pavia rented by Alasia under a false name. According to police accounts Walter's glasses were found there, and traced to his optician. But the police do not arrest him right away. Instead he is put under watch and his telephone tapped. After the December 1, 1976 BR raid on the right-wing "New Democracy" headquarters, right-wingers identify Alasia from photographs as one of the BR unit. Just before dawn on the morning of December 15, 1976, a special unit of police surround a building in the Sesto projects. Ten police guard the street, while cops with automatic weapons, bulletproof vests, and helmets break into the Alasia's home.

Overnight Walter Alasia became a folk hero to the working class youth of Sesto. Many people came to visit his grave in the local cemetery. The Red Brigades paid him the ultimate tribute and named their tough Milan column after him.

## CHAPTER 9

### Sossi Action

January 1974, there were widespread rumors of an impending military coup. Many left-wing trade unionists and parliament members chose to sleep away from home.

With inflation at 20% a year, the government announced a new round of price hikes on basic necessities. On February 27, 1974 the working class staged a massive general strike to protest the Center-Left government's austerity program. The next day the government fell as Cabinet Minister Ugo La Malfa, head of the small but influential conservative Republican party<sup>16</sup>, resigned his post to protest the Socialists' and the unions' "economic adventurism".

The government's political crisis was compounded by revelations of wide-spread corruption inside the government. Bribes by the Italian oil and chemical industries had gone to all political parties, except the PCI. In addition, cases of corruption within the judiciary, and growing conflicts between the executive branch and the judiciary, came out into the open.

The right-wing Social-Democrats, who were the party most closely aligned with the interests of u.s. imperialism in Italy, called for a continued tough economic policy and an increased military commitment to NATO. In March 1974, Mariano Rumor, the Christian Democratic (DC) Premier who had led the previous Center-Left government, formed a new DC government, this time much closer to the political right-wing. The PCI (Italian Communist Party) put up only a feeble opposition to this new right-wing government in parliament.

The new Rumor DC government's first actions were to revive the tough austerity program of the previous government. More price rises in basic necessities were announced. On April 11 parliament approved government financing of the political parties, which gave the fascist MSI a subsidy of several billion lire a year (several million dollars). Parliament also approved a new law extending the limit of preventive detention<sup>17</sup> to 8 years. On April 18 Gianni Agnelli was elected the president of Confindustria (Italy's equivalent to the u.s. NAM, National Association of Manufacturers), which signaled the emergence of a FIAT-Montedison<sup>18</sup> bloc as the dominant group within the ruling class.

In the meantime the DC right-wing, led by its party secretary, Amintore Fanfani, was mobilizing all right-wing forces across the country to win the upcoming May referendum to scrap the divorce law passed by parliament in December 1970. The fascists and the Catholic Right hoped to use the "culture war" issue of the divorce law to consolidate a right-wing, law-and-order majority in the country. The PCI, busy trying to form an alliance with the Catholic church, did not want to put up a militant fight in support of the right of divorce, for fear of antagonizing the Vatican. In fact, in 1973 the PCI had gone so far as to publicly oppose the legalization of abortions!

The political events of 1974 were framed in the context of the national debate over the divorce referendum. This struggle paralyzed the Rumor government for three months, preoccupying both Left and Right. The referendum was at the same time a political football seized upon by the parliamentary parties, and a watershed issue in the modernization of Italian society.

Prior to 1970, there had been no divorce in Italy, save for those with enough money and influence to obtain a marriage annulment from the Vatican (i.e. a church pronouncement that the marriage had never existed). The old laws denied women not only divorce, but also

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16 The Republican party generally follows the conservative line of FIAT corporation's Gianni Agnelli on economic and foreign policy matters. Most of Italy's long string of DC governments have had to include the Republicans in their cabinets, to insure themselves a voting majority in parliament.

17 In Italy under an old fascist law, the police can hold someone for years without charging them with a crime.

18 Montedison is a multinational corporation and the leading Italian Electrical industry company.

separation - neither wife nor children were allowed to leave the husband's residence. These feudal-clerical laws openly put the authority of the State behind the oppression of women. At that time involuntary marriages were both legal and common in the countryside. A man desiring a young woman - often a 13- or 14-year old child - would simply kidnap and rape her, then declare that he wished to marry her. The "dishonored" young woman's father and priest would usually force marriage upon her. Nor was rape legally defined as a crime of violence against a woman under the old laws, but rather as a public disorder (like "drunk and disorderly" violations in the "u.s.a.").

The backwardness and injustice of the old legal code chafed on even bourgeois women, and was seen by imperialism itself as a fetter on the social modernization of Italy. For that matter, many men who wanted to take new wives also welcomed divorce reform. For these reasons the Moderate wing of the Christian Democrats, the Republican party, the various Social-Democratic parties (PSI and PSU), and the PCI all supported the December 1970 law that legalized divorce (after 5-7 years of trial separation). In the first three years after passage there were 66,000 divorce decrees.

Opposition to the divorce law was whipped up by the right - the right-wing of the Christian Democrats, the fascists, and the Vatican. They believed that a nationwide campaign against the reform, culminating in a petition drive and then a popular referendum to overturn the new law, would re-establish reactionary ideology in Italian society, a grip which had been weakening since 1960. Divorce was linked in their propaganda to pornography, crime, breakup of the family, and the growing mood of "permissiveness" that they decried. The right believed that on this one issue - because of its appeal to both male chauvinism and loyalty to the church - they would command a majority of the voters. 500,000 signatures were needed, and the right brought in nearly triple that: 1.3 million in March 1974, to get the repeal referendum on the ballot.

The left broadly viewed this issue as a counter-attack. While the left parties all supported bourgeois equality for women (right to vote, own property, enter and leave a marriage), in no sense did that mean support of, or even understanding of, Women's Liberation. The referendum was a political football, in which the Left, which feared the repeal referendum succeeding, appealed to men to oppose it in order to block the Right. Questions of women's rights were generally secondary issues at best. Because a Right triumph was seen as a giant step towards fascism, much of the Left pushed for a united front to defend bourgeois democracy at the polls. There was in the Left parties a widespread belief, almost a hysteria, that most Italian voters would follow the Right and vote down divorce - with midnight police raids against radicals coming soon thereafter.

The hysteria to defend bourgeois democracy pulled much of the New Left in a conservative direction. A united front against the Right only meant channeling political energy into election campaigns and outright support for the Center-Left coalition schemes of former DC Premier Aldo Moro and PCI chief Berlinguer. The leadership of Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*") used the need for a united front against fascism as an excuse to support the PCI's election campaign and to oppose any armed struggle. Much of the New Left attacked the rise of the Red Brigades as a fascist conspiracy for scaring voters into supporting a law-and-order bloc, in the upcoming May elections. Turmoil and resistance to this new line began in the Continuous Struggle membership. In Continuous Struggle's local headquarters in the working class Sesto district of Milan, huge graffiti appeared on the wall inside - "No more phrase-mongering groups, let's arm the workers." Over the Continuous Struggle headquarters entrance someone had scrawled sarcastically: "Struggle used to be continuous!" There were many splits then, with new armed collectives and informal action groups being formed, as well as growth of the BR itself.

The Left considered itself, and so was, put off balance by this period. Even the BR spoke of "this gloomy atmosphere of the referendum" Their line was to oppose the movement's traditional type of anti-fascist united front, precisely because its only true end was loyalty to bourgeois democracy. They outlined an anti-fascist movement with revolutionary implications. It was true that the Red Brigades also posed the referendum primarily as a Left-Right test of strength and as a right-wing proto-fascist conspiracy. The issue itself, of divorce and women's rights in general, was largely overlooked. As we will later see, the struggle was not as either Left or Right parties thought.

The increasingly repressive political situation was the object of an analysis by the BR in a document published in April 1974 entitled: "Against Neogaullism, carry the attack to the heart of the State". The BR document analyzed the tactical strength of the revolutionary Left in the factories and their overall strategic weakness. The BR concluded that the



ruling class had temporarily shelved its Center-Left alliance with the PCI and had opted for a more repressive strategy whose central pivot was the "Neo-Gaullist" institutional reform of the State to create a stronger executive and weaker parliament, similar to what De Gaulle had achieved in France in the late 1950's. The BR concluded that the movement needed a strategy that went beyond traditional militant anti-fascism. Instead the BR called for a strategy which focused on defeating the hard-line NeoGaullist faction within the State by playing on contradictions and divisions within the ruling class. The partial text of the BR document is reprinted below.

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**AGAINST NEOGAULLISM**  
**CARRY THE ATTACK TO THE HEART OF THE STATE**  
April 1974

Parallel with the deepening of their own governmental crisis, a counterrevolutionary process is inexorably unfolding in which the entire owning class is united in the attempt to destroy the movements of struggle and the autonomous and revolutionary levels of organization that they have produced.

Now, while in the factories workers autonomy is strong enough and organized enough to maintain a permanent state of insubordination, and even to conquer for itself a growing zone of power, but outside the factory it is still too weak to be able to offer resistance to the attacks of the counterrevolution.

For this reason the forces of counterrevolution tend to shift the principal contradiction outside the factories. They commit themselves now to decisive battles in order to isolate our struggle for power inside the factories, to be able to control it more easily and then destroy it...

A revolutionary initiative inevitably generates its organized antagonism: the counter-revolution.

Marx has already made clear that this is a scientific law which regulates class relations: warning that "the revolutionary progress did not make its way with tragi-comic immediate conquests, but on the contrary it causes an adversary to arise. Only by fighting against this adversary can the party of the insurrection reach the maturity of a true revolutionary party..."

Nevertheless the counterrevolution in this period does not follow a linear path. Within it are two clashing political lines whose opposition to each other is of a tactical nature. One is the putschist tendency, the other is the NeoGaullist-type "constitutional reform" tendency. Both play their own specific role within the strategic process of the counterrevolution.

#### **The Putschist Line**

...one consideration is fundamental: so long as there is room in Italy for counter-revolutionary solutions that maintain the appearances and the form of bourgeois democracy, even while trampling on its substance, these solutions will prevail over putschist ones...

#### **The NeoGaullist Plan of "Constitutional Reform"**

The aggravation of the economic crisis, the inability to control potentially explosive social tensions and the pressing struggles of the Workers Movement... demonstrate ever more clearly that the unfolding government crisis cannot be resolved with simple changes of administration at the top.

Having discarded the hypothesis of the "historic compromise," the dominant groups of the bourgeoisie have but one choice left: "turn to the Right."

But the turn to the Right, this time, must provide the bourgeois guarantees of stability, organicity and credibility; it must confront all the problems of politics, economics, and security and public order at their root with precise

constitutional changes, which can create a new base for the whole institutional system of our country.

This plan which Premier Leone explicitly talked about for the first time in his speech at the end of the year in 1973, aims at the transformation of the republic born out of the World War II Resistance movement into a presidential republic. The fundamental points of this project are: the strengthening of the executive branch by giving greater legislative and administrative powers to the head of state and the president of the council; the progressive emptying of the legislative power of parliament; the recourse to direct legislation through popular referendum; the revision of the electoral law from proportional party representation to majority rule.

But to carry out such an ambitious plan requires solidly united political leadership, and, above all, an iron control of the movements of the various existing political and social forces.

For this reason the NeoGauulist plan for constitutional reform must be an armed project, and each phase of its realization must proceed at the same rate hand in hand with a growing process of militarization of power.

### **NeoGauulism Is An Armed Plan**

The principal objective of the NeoGauulist forces is necessarily the strengthening of their control over key points of the state apparatus.

The "separate bodies" of the state, which until now have operated independently and often in contradiction to each other, must now be brought under a new discipline...

Very revealing on this point is the process of reorganization which is unfolding within the judiciary. NeoGauulism is trying to achieve something that not even fascism was able to do: to build an exact identity between its power interests and the "law".

### **The Political Clash Over the Referendum**

The NeoGauulist plan for "constitutional reform" finds in the carrying out of the referendum, besides the first step of its realization, an opportunity to unite all the forces of the Right around itself, from the MSI to the DC.

Thus the referendum is a fundamental step for this plan, a first proof of the overall political strength of this new power bloc... The political strategy of the DC, in this phase is:

--to definitely invalidate the strategy of the center-left...

--to create a general climate of insecurity which permits the DC, at the head of the NeoGauulist forces, to present itself to the public as the only force capable of restoring political and economic order and tranquility in the country...

It is clear that if the DC were to win the referendum at the head of the NeoGauulist forces, the plan for "constitutional reform" would receive an enormous impetus. It would immediately become a "democratic" platform for "restoring" the state and reestablishing integral rule of the bourgeoisie... Up to now the revolutionary movement has opposed the Counterrevolutionary process on the restricted terrain of militant anti-fascism.

But because the Counterrevolutionary initiative is now being personally led by a power bloc internal to the State, it is, above all, against these forces that we must unleash our hardest blows.

It is time to tear away the cobwebs of the past and go beyond the traditional formulations of militant anti-fascism. To strike at the fascists with every

means and in every place is correct and necessary. But the principal contradiction today is that which opposes itself to the forces of the Counterrevolution.

Because while it is true that the crisis of the regime and the resultant birth of an organized and battle-hardened Counterrevolution were produced by years of hard popular and working class struggle, it is even more true that to win, the mass movement must now go beyond the spontaneous stage and organize itself on the strategic terrain of the struggle for power. And the Working Class will only conquer power through armed struggle.

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On April 18, 1974, the same day that FIAT boss Agnelli was being installed as the head of Confindustria, the BR kidnapped the assistant Attorney General of Genoa, Mario Sossi. This action marked a major shift in BR strategy away from a narrow focus on factory struggle to a direct attack on the State. The BR had decided to target the judiciary, which was widely understood as corrupt and self-serving, because they saw it as the State's weakest link. By going on the offensive against the State the BR sought to regain the initiative for the revolutionary movement.

The Red Brigades' operation against prosecutor Mario Sossi was much more than a simple kidnapping. It was one of the most successful political-military campaigns ever waged on the terrain of urban guerrilla warfare.

In a 35-day campaign the BR maneuvered the imperialists around, exposing the vicious and immoral character of the State apparatus while making clumsy fools of the police man-hunt. Further, millions of people watched enthralled as the various factions within the State involuntarily carried their contradictions into public view - as State officials exposed, assaulted, and vilified each other. The moral contrast between capitalism and the revolution was seen by the masses. At the end the fascist prosecutor Sossi was voluntarily making propaganda for the revolutionary Left. It was a stunning campaign, that demonstrated the creative potential of urban guerrilla warfare to the masses.

In their paper on neo-Gaullism, the Red Brigades briefly explain the importance of this action to them:

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Against every defensive and liquidationist tendency which uses the crisis as a pretext for renouncing the struggle and seeking a compromise, we, by striking at the figure of the assistant prosecutor Dr. Mario Sossi, wanted to strike a vital center of the Counterrevolutionary process. We have gone over to the attack right at this moment, in this gloomy atmosphere of the referendum, because we are convinced that the Working Class and the Revolutionary Movement are faced right now with a new phase of the class war. A phase in which we of the Red Brigades hold that:

--to the strategic encirclement of the workers struggles one answers by extending the revolutionary initiative to the vital centers of the state;

--this is not an optional choice but a choice which is also indispensable for maintaining the initiative in the factories;

--to the counterrevolutionary process which is a comprehensive social movement a strategic resistance movement must be counter-posed.

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Sossi was a mediocre judge and a secondary figure in the State's power structure, who had achieved a certain amount of notoriety in the press by leading the judicial repression of the revolutionary Left. In the Italian system, judges are also prosecutors and administrators. He was a member of the fascist organization FUAN, and also the UMI, the most right-wing of all the judges' organizations. He had a macho personality. In 1972 he had boasted of being able to round up 5,000 Genoa Leftists in a few minutes, and he had bought a gun, saying he would shoot anyone who looked at him cross-eyed. Sossi had been the government prosecutor in the recently concluded trial of the October 22nd group. He had asked for stiff sentences against them, totaling several hundred years of prison and four

life terms. Sossi had brought indictments against Dario Fo and Franca Rame<sup>19</sup>, left-wing playwright-actor and actress, for their prison support work.

During the October 22nd trial, Sossi had tried to claim that the entire Left was involved in illegal activity and that October 22nd was only the tip of the iceberg. He had a very Puritanical personality and had prosecuted dozens of news-vendors for selling "obscene literature". The revolutionary Left had nicknamed him "Dr. Handcuffs". He was widely hated by the Genoa proletariat. There were rhymed wall slogans all over the city saying "Sossi, you fascist, you're first on our list", and so forth. One of Italy's most popular weekly magazines, *Gente*, called him the "most hated man in Italy".

Continuous Struggle ("*Lotta Continua*") which had loudly led the Left's propaganda campaign against Sossi, reacted to the BR action with hostility and panic. Continuous Struggle decided that the BR kidnapping of Sossi was a made-up police conspiracy intended to justify State repression of their organization. Manifesto reacted with big headlines calling the kidnapers fascist provocateurs who were trying to influence the outcome of the divorce referendum.

At 7:45 a.m. on April 19<sup>th</sup> 1974, the BR issued their first message in connection with the Sossi kidnapping:

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**MESSAGE #1**

An armed unit of the Red Brigades has arrested the notorious Mario Sossi, assistant prosecutor for the Republic, and imprisoned him in a people's prison.

Mario Sossi was the leading pawn on the chess-board of the Counterrevolution, a fanatic prosecutor of the working class, of the student movement, of the small tradesmen, of the organizations of the Left in general and the revolutionary Left in particular.

Mario Sossi will be tried by a revolutionary tribunal.

Since his youth Sossi has put himself at the disposal of the fascists, appearing twice on the list of election candidates of the FUAN.

On becoming a judge, he immediately sided with the extreme rightwing tendency in the judiciary.

December 1969: Bombs in Piazza Fontana. Within the framework of imperialism's

strategy of creating enough social disruption to justify a coup, Sossi, the anti-communist plays his part and orders a series of raids on the Genoese Left. Using the old fascist laws of the Rocco penal codes, he has the entire executive committee of the Communist Party of Italy (M-L), about twenty comrades, arrested on charges of "conspiracy against the state." Not satisfied he has books of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao and even popular music records seized from the homes of comrades.

February 1970: the debate breaks out over the right to strike of public service employees. The Right wants their right to strike denied. Sossi loses little time and charges the entire grievance committee of the psychiatric hospital workers of Quarto and Cogoletto with "collective desertion of their work places."

These are the months following the "hot autumn." A fearful bourgeoisie loudly demands an attack on the right to strike. And Sossi, the submissive servant, delivers! It would take up too much space to list all the investigations of workers, unionists and political vanguards that were carried out.

October 1970: the struggle of the student movement does not halt. The watchword of reaction is attack the students. Sossi has three students

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<sup>19</sup> Both were very active with "Red Aid", the main movement legal support organization in Italy, and "Radio Radicale", the movement's radio station.

arrested on robbery charges for the crime of having let their friends eat free meals in a dormitory dining hall.

November 1971: It's the radical newspaper vendors turn. He has 9 of them arrested and has them railroaded on charges of "having displayed obscene publications." At the trial our moralizer declares: "We are not afraid of the mob and the unions. The movements of the mob do not scare us."

August 1972: on August 6 the newspapers leak the news of the imminent granting of provisional liberty to the partisan commander, Giovambattista Lazagna, jailed as a provocation to the Left after the Feltrinelli case. Sossi is on vacation, but is immediately called back to work by "someone" from SID who, basing himself on the infamous "testimony" of the provocateur Pisetta, asks Sossi to issue a new warrant for Lazagna's arrest.

November 1972-March 1973: Major trial of the revolutionary group "October 22<sup>nd</sup>." At the conclusion of our interrogation we will present our own version of the behind the scene events, political intrigues, and the various complicities of persons involved in this trial. For now it is sufficient for us to emphasize that Sossi, in harmony with all the forces of the Counterrevolution, focuses on the central question which is to be the purpose of the trial: it is not a matter of specific crimes, but the judgment and condemnation of the "crime" par excellence: having revolted arms in hand against the law and order of the bourgeoisie. We are facing trial by government!

March 1974: the comrades of October 22 yell: "Sossi, fascist, you're the first on our list" during their appeal trial.

He brings charges against all of them. But it does no good: all the walls in Genoa are covered with Red slogans which repeat the same idea. The revolutionary Left today has said: Enough!

Comrades, the basic contradiction today is between the working class and the revolutionary movement on the one hand and the dark forces of the Counterrevolution on the other. These forces conspire after the trial of the referendum, to carry out an institutional change, that is, a NeoGauillist-style "constitutional reform." And NeoGauillism is an armed plan against the workers struggle.

No compromise is possible with the executioners of liberty.

And whoever proposes and seeks compromise cannot speak in the name of the entire workers movement.

Comrades, we are entering a new phase of the class war, a phase in which the main task of the revolutionary forces is to break the encirclement of the workers struggles, spreading the resistance and the armed initiative to the vital centers of the State.

The working class will only seize power through the armed struggle!

Against NeoGauillism carry the attack to the heart of the State!

Turn the government crisis into armed struggle for communism!

**Organize proletarian power!**

April 1974

We warn policemen, carabinieri and various cops that their behavior may aggravate the situation of the prisoner.

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At this point the right began a deliberate series of provocations. The pro-fascist newspaper *Gazzetta del Popolo* and the weekly *Il Mondo* circulated rumors that the entire extra-parliamentary Left was about to be outlawed. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the fascists bombed the

railroad tracks as the Bologna-Florence express train was about to arrive from Turin. Automatic track switches stopped the train before it could be derailed, avoiding a major bloodbath. The bourgeois press, including the *Corriere della Sera*, tried to link the Sossi action and the train bombing together as part of a general fascist strategy to destabilize the country.

On April 23 'the BR in its second message denounced phony BR leaflets reprinted by the press to supposedly "prove" the BR's fascist origins. The BR announced that only BR releases typed on the same machine used to type Message #1 should be considered genuine.

The BR also reprinted a personal request by Sossi asking the police and the judiciary to stop looking for him. At first Sossi's request was ignored by Coco, a top-level Italian prosecutor for Genoa. Later chief prosecutor Grisolia announced that the judiciary police<sup>20</sup> were suspending their investigation of the kidnapping. The regular police continued their search however and a sharp public polemic developed between the judiciary and the police over whether or not to suspend the search.

Soon the debate spread to the rest of the political establishment and the country as a whole. Even the famed movie directors Federico Fellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini jumped into the controversy. Both strongly supported the police continuing to search for Sossi. The police accused the judiciary of being too soft on the 4 BR members they had recently released, and the judiciary accused the police of failing to do their job by not presenting solid evidence to build a case against them. The open split between the judiciary and the police alarmed the bourgeois press which began to openly admit that the BR were achieving their political objective of paralyzing the State.

At this point the GAP issued a statement urging the BR to execute Sossi unless the State released Mario Rossi, one of the October 22nd defendants.

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#### Genoa GAP Message to BR During Sossi Action

Comrades of the BR, oppressors and executioners do not need trials, their very foul existence in the service of Power dictates one sentence only...the immediate suppression of those who suppress us day by day. Mario Sossi does not need a trial... But in the prisons of the state... there are still locked up those who, for having rebelled against the exploitation of the bosses have been condemned to years and years of prison... We refer above all to our comrades of October 22 GAP. We must tear them from jail, return them to their work as fighters in the class struggle, we must therefore demand their liberation.

For this...we ask you that the only slogan be: ROSSI<sup>21</sup> OUT OR DEATH TO SOSSI.

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On April 26 the BR issued its 3rd message, in direct response to the GAP message:

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#### SOSSI MESSAGE #3 April 26, 1974

So far in the course of the interrogations 3 points have been explored with the prisoner Sossi:

- 1) Complicity and agreements between the police (Catalano and Nicolliello) and the Gadolla family;
- 2) Complicity and agreements between one section of the judiciary (Francesco Coco with his faithful servant Paulo Francesco Castellano), the police and the Gadolla family;
- 3) The contacts that took place between Sossi and two high army officials of Genoa SID.

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<sup>20</sup> In Italy the judiciary can co-opt police officers making them investigative agents of the court.

<sup>21</sup> One of the October 22 defendants.

The interrogations continue.

Those who have confused Mario Sossi's message, which he spontaneously wrote himself, with the position of our organization, have shown little ability to understand the heart of the political problem: the question of political prisoners.

Sossi is a political prisoner of the proletariat. As such any optimism whatsoever as to his gratuitous liberation is absolutely unjustified. In these last years many are the comrades who, breaking with the paralyzing pacifist Strategy of revisionism, have taken up arms once again to fight the bourgeois order and its laws. Fight for communism. Some have fallen or are now locked up in the public and inhumane jails of the state. They have been made to appear as criminals. An example of this is the government trial of the communist comrades of the October 22 group.

All these comrades are political prisoners. An irrevocable point of the political program of the BR is the liberation of all comrades who are political prisoners.

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The BR interrogation of Sossi took place for two hours each day during his captivity and focused on his leading role in the trial of the October 22<sup>nd</sup> comrades. From excerpts of his interrogation, it appears that Sossi completely broke down under the BR questioning and collaborated with his captors, admitting that he had been part of an elaborate government infiltration and set-up of the October 22<sup>nd</sup> group.

On April 28, a massive search for the BR and Sossi began again. *Il Messaggero*, one of Italy's leading dailies, admitted however that without any real leads the police were acting totally at random.

RAI-TV, the government-run radio-TV station and the press attempted to tie "*Lotta Continua*" and the Red Brigades together using some leaflets written by a *Lotta Continua* collective named October. The media deliberately confused October with the armed collective October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and therefore tied it in with the BR. The October collective had demanded the release of an anarchist comrade who was in jail. The press immediately began to speculate that this was actually an indirect BR demand through *Lotta Continua* for an exchange of Sossi for this comrade. Later this same anarchist comrade exposed the media's game and issued a statement declaring that his release would come as a result of legal proof available that he was the victim of a fascist frame-up.

A new polemic now broke out over whether or not to agree to an eventual BR request for a prisoner exchange. On April 28th, the day the search resumed General Della Chiesa, commander of the carabinieri brigade in Turin, held a meeting with the carabinieri in Genoa without, however, bothering to inform the chief prosecutor for Genoa. The next day 4,000 carabinieri staged a military dragnet of Genoa, raiding 50 homes, again without informing the chief prosecutor of their plans.

The April 29, 1974 issue of the leading newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, ruefully observed, "Ten days since the kidnapping of Sossi the BR seem to be winning all along the line. They are winning materially because the judge is still in their hands. They are winning politically because they are sowing disorder in the structure of the State."

On April 30, 1974 a second message from Sossi was delivered to the *Corriere della Sera*, which reprinted it in their May 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Without specifically naming names, Sossi in effect demanded that Coco, his boss, admit publicly Coco's own responsibility in the frame-up of October 22<sup>nd</sup>. He concluded with a warning that the search for him could endanger him. Sossi's wife, Grazia, gave an interview afterward clearing up any doubts about what Sossi was asking for: "My husband is a simple substitute. He proposes legal provisions that others have the power to decide." Tension at the palace of justice in Genoa mounted. The pressure on hardliners within the State, like Coco, to save Sossi by making some kind of deal with the BR, was growing. After Sossi's second message, the police and the judicial hardliners canceled their daily press conference and decided on a press white-out on all information about the Sossi case. Nevertheless the Sossi kidnapping continued to dominate the news in Italy.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the police, carabinieri and judiciary took another hit. Armed BR units simultaneously raided the Christian Democratic party Sturzo Center in Turin, and the Sogno Democratic Resistance Committee in Milan. A few days later the BR issued a leaflet explaining their choice of targets:

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**BR Message Explaining Action May 2, 1974 Against Centro Sturzo in Turin  
and Committee of Democratic Resistance in Milan**

Comrades, in the current struggle the State is progressively taking over those provocative, terroristic repressive tasks which in the past have been carried out by the official and the clandestine Right. It is indispensable to go on the attack against those forces and persons who advance this policy from within the State apparatus (as well as from within the political parties and the economic world). Today it is indispensable to single out, know and attack these enemies, so as to unmask them before the eyes of all proletarians. We must organize and arm ourselves today for this purpose.

We comrades of the Red Brigades, have sought to give a concrete example of the path to be followed by striking the Committee of Democratic Resistance (CRD) which currently is the most active center of USA imperialism in Italy and the Sturzo centers of the Christian Democracy, which are tied to the CRD but which "specialize" as a bridge to the MSI (the fascist party-ed.).

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Police dragnets of Communist working class neighborhoods continued. One of these neighborhoods, Sestri Ponente, was raided by 200 police after a fascist journalist told police he had deciphered a secret coded message in Sossi's second message. After 15 days the police search for the BR was going nowhere fast. The press now publicly admitted that the police were chasing their tails. The revisionist Italian Communist Party daily, *Paese Sera*, began to publicly speculate that maybe the State really wanted Sossi dead. The bourgeois press was now repeatedly referring to the presence of lawyers and doctors inside the BR, and an attempt was made to incriminate Red Aid lawyers and PCI doctors and members of parliament as BR members or sympathizers.

At this point, the judicial authorities transferred the handling of the investigation from the Genoa prosecutor's office to the Turin prosecutor's office, The head prosecutor in Turin was Reviglio della Vemeria, an old, long-time fascist and hard line judge.

Meanwhile the BR, as they had done during the Amerio kidnapping in December 1973, flooded the country with leaflets. More BR broadcasts were made on loudspeakers in front of factories. Once more revealing their total impotence, the police issued a reward of 20 million lire (\$25,000) for the capture of the BR. Rumors were also circulated, then denied, then recirculated and once more denied, that 50 arrest warrants were about to be issued for alleged members of the BR.

On May 5, BR Message #4 was released. The BR demanded the exchange of Sossi for 8 October 22nd prisoners:

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**BR MESSAGE #4  
SOSSI ACTION**

1) The interrogation of the prisoner Mario Sossi is over. We have heard his version of the facts, his self defense, his self criticism. Now it is time for some decisions.

2) Briefly there are three main points:

--He has admitted that the trial of the October 22 group was the poisonous fruit of a series of counter-revolutionary machinations, aimed at liquidating the armed struggle in our country at birth. These machinations were planned and put into effect by the police (Catalano-Nicoliello), by the investigative nucleus of the Carabinieri (Pensa), by the commanders of the SID (Dallaglio, Saracino) and covered by a section of the judiciary (Coco-Castellano).



--He has admitted to having relied on a cowardly method to implicate many comrades of October 22 without any evidence. The construction of his sand castle of accusations rested not on proof, but on hearsay gathered from petty artisans of provocation. (Mezzani, LaValle, Astara, Vandelli, Rinaldi) and on those with weak characters who were cynically blackmailed (Sanguineti).

--After having reconstructed for us their machinations, methods of operation, techniques and purposes of infiltration, and having recognized his own specific responsibilities in the government trial against October 22, Mario Sossi pointed the finger at the one who, protected by the great shadow of power, guided him in this miserable adventure: Francesco Coco, Procuratore Generale for the Republic.

3) The bourgeoisie, after having launched a repressive offensive without precedents, and without results, against our organization and against the people, is forced to admit now that they have lost the game both politically as well as militarily. Their reliance on offers of cash rewards is an almost ridiculous anachronism which reveals the total defeat of the most able men the police forces have available. And honestly, we find it hard to understand how anyone after having acted as a police informer can reasonable expect to enjoy this dirty money.

4) Mario Sossi is a political prisoner. As such he has been treated without violence or sadism. The principles of the Geneva Convention have been respected, as he asked. The interrogation was freely undergone by him and for this reason was carried out.

5) With regard to the people, to the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Left, and to the revolutionary Left he has stained himself with serious crimes, which he has admitted to. For these crimes a punishment of 4 life sentences and several hundred years of jail, which is what he has asked for the communist comrades of October 22, would not be enough.

6) Nevertheless we are leaving a way out for those who have power and care about his freedom: an exchange of political prisoners. For Mario Sossi we want freedom for: Mario Rossi, Giuseppe Battaglia, Augusto Viel, Rinaldo Fiorani, Silvio Malagoli, Cesare Maino, Gino Piccardo, Aldo De Scisciolo. Nothing must be hidden from the people. Thus there will be no secret negotiations.

7) Here is the method of exchange. The 8 comrades must be freed together in one of the following countries: Cuba, North Korea, Algeria. They must be accompanied by people they trust. Mario Rossi must confirm their liberation once accomplished. Within 24 hours after confirmation of the liberation of the 8 comrades - 24 hours which must consist of a genuine general truce - the liberation of Mario Sossi will also take place.

This is our word.

8) We will only guarantee the safety of the prisoner until we receive an answer. In a war one must know how to lose some battles. And you have lost this battle. Accepting this fact can help avoid that which no one wants but which no one can exclude as possible.

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The general reaction of the bourgeois press was to denounce the BR demand as a direct challenge to the State. The split between hard-liners and soft-liners in the judiciary continued with Genoa Chief Prosecutor Grisola favoring negotiations to save Sossi, while Coco, the chief government prosecutor, and Taviani, the minister of the Interior (in charge of the police) were opposed. Most of the leadership of the Italian political establishment opposed negotiations with the BR. The PCI's *L'Unita* called the BR demand "...one more criminal episode of the fascist strategy of tension..."

At this point, Sossi's family entered the fray, mounting a campaign to pressure the State to negotiate with the BR. The State refused to negotiate however, and the only concrete result the Sossi family obtained was an increase in the reward being offered.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, *Il Messagero* published an article citing a number of recent precedents for the State "making concessions to terrorists". On the same day Genoa's three main union federations - CGIL, CISL, and UIL (the Communist, Catholic, and right-wing Social-Democratic unions respectively) - issued a call for a political general strike on May 10<sup>th</sup> to show worker opposition to negotiations with the BR. Colato, an assistant prosecutor, was one of the few judiciary members to argue that it was legally permissible to release the October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners. Meanwhile, the assistant prosecutor of Genoa, Marvulli, ordered a series of raids in Milan without notifying the local Milan police. The offices of the important extra-parliamentary Left magazine, *Contro-Informazione*, were among the places raided.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, two messages from Sossi were reprinted in *Il Messagero*. One was to the press, the other to his wife. Sossi called on the State not to abandon him, and not to make him pay for other people's mistakes. He urged the press to support his wife's campaign calling for an exchange of prisoners to save Sossi's life.

A complex legal and propagandistic battle now ensued between Sossi's wife and the divided State apparatus over whether or not to meet the BR demand for an exchange. Out of self-interest, some elements in the judiciary were now definitely moving toward the position of calling for independent judicial action to free Sossi.

UMI, the right-wing judges' organization, took a hard line against releasing the October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners while more liberal Genoese judges called for an exchange. Their group, Magistratura Democratica (Democratic Judiciary), issued a document criticizing the legal thesis of opposing all concessions out of a need to defend the prestige of the State.

\$360,000 was collected and offered to the BR as ransom for Sossi's life. The BR refused to even consider the offer.

The neighborhood in Turin where Amerio had been held was subjected to a police dragnet on the theory that Sossi might be found there. Grazia Sossi, despairing of any help from the government, attempted to make direct contact with the BR. In Genoa, a silent march took place, comprised of many distinct political elements, to "save" Sossi's life. The main point of agreement of the marchers was a criticism of the State's "passivity".

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, BR Message #5 was issued:

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**BR MESSAGE #5  
SOSSI ACTION**

**We don't negotiate with criminals!**

1. Why does Cabinet Minister Taviani want to turn Mario Sossi into a "dead hero"? Taviani is not a "strongman." He is a man who trembles, a man who is afraid. Behind his defense of the bourgeois-democratic State are not so much moral and political motives, but low motives of common criminality.

It is shameful for the "democratic institutions" that this is so; but it is even more shameful that so-called forces of the Left are silent like mafia gangs and gather around him. And now we will tell you why.

2. All the clandestine arms traffic in Genoa (and not only Genoa, because there are solid contacts with Milan also) is controlled, directed and supplied by Doctor Umberto Catalano. By means of this network which includes a series of Genoese arms dealers, such as the Diana company of Traverso Renzo and the fascist Lantieri, both of whom are agents and confidantes of the political police, common criminals are supplied and infiltration of revolutionary groups is attempted. It is also through this network that the attempt was made to entrap the comrades of October 22.

This traffic in guns permits Dr. Catalano and a series of lower ranking officials of the political police to make a nice living. The perfectly efficient "MAB" machine guns are supplied to the market directly from the Genoa police headquarters. There exists a legal case regarding this matter which up to now has been obstructed by the highest quarters of the judiciary (Coco and Castellano).

This fact is known to Cabinet Minister Taviani, who provides a very authoritative cover for this criminal activity of the Genoa political police. Now it is clear why in the much-publicized "operations to maintain public order" so many arms caches are found. It is also understandable why Taviani today would prefer to make a "dead hero" of Sossi; if necessary we will furnish detailed documentation about this lurid affair. For this reason we answer the minister of police: we don't deal with criminals!

3. Now is the time when everyone must accept their responsibilities. It is up to the judiciary to concede provisional liberty to the 8 comrades of October 22. In the current situation the Genoa Court of Appeals must decide. In a "state of right" founded on the separation of powers, the government cannot intervene even minimally. It is up to the judiciary to decide whether or not to make itself an accomplice of the criminal will of the Minister of the Interior.

We repeat: We want freedom for Mario Rossi, Giuseppe Battaglia, Augusto Viel, Rinaldo Fiorani, Silvio Malagoli, Cesare Maino, Gino Piccardo, Aldo De Scisciola.

4. Under fascism the communist comrades were also branded as delinquents, criminals and bandits. The working class of Genoa must strike not alongside Taviani but for the liberation of the 8 Comrades of October 22! For Communism.

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Of all the BR messages during the Sossi operation, Message #5 probably had the greatest political impact. Sossi had talked. What State secrets had he revealed? A cold fear gripped the judges and cops of Genoa. The May 11, 1974 issue of the *Corriere della Sera* quoted Judge Castellano, one of the judges fingered by Sossi, as saying: "I'm full of bitterness, I can't grasp what is going on, I can't take it any more! I come to the office now only to show that I'm not afraid." The *Corriere* concluded: "In truth, Sossi is not the only prisoner of the BR."

A few weeks later the BR sent a summary of Sossi's interrogation to the magazine *L'Espresso*.

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**BR SUMMARY OF FACTS REGARDING POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN ARMS TRAFFIC IN GENOA  
WHICH CAME OUT IN SOSSI INTERROGATION**

In April of '72 Angelo Costa, chief of the Mobile Unit of Genoa police, finds a chest

full of arms in a storehouse belonging to an employee of the "Diana" company of Lantieri, located along the Polcevera embankment. Checking the registration on the arms, he discovers that these were the same guns that were declared to have been lost in the flood of October-November 1970 from the "Diana" armory in Via Canevari. A search of the armory is made, and upon checking registration records, it is discovered that numerous cases of guns have disappeared (Note: the job of checking gun registration records belongs to the police). This case is assigned to Sossi. Sossi charges the two owners of the armory: Traverso Renzo and Lantieri Giuseppe (also owners of another armory in Via Donghi) with simulation of a crime and arms traffic. Investigating more deeply he discovers that the clerk in the armory, Alessi Ferdinando, 30 years old, is a friend of Carlo Piccardo, the brother of Gino Piccardo of the October 22 organization. In a search of the house belonging to Gino Piccardo, Scisciolo and Maino in connection with the investigation of October 22 several pistols and a machine gun were found which had been supplied by Alessi Ferdinando.

Another defendant in the arms traffic case is Bonafini Walter, 52 years old of Milan, whose job it was to sell arms in Milan. At this point Traverso's defense lawyer Silvio Romanelli interviews and tells Sossi: "Be careful because there are much higher authorities involved in this case than my defendant, you'd better cover everything up."

Sossi then interrogates Traverso in prison, who declares: "I once gave Catalano, the chief of the political police, a pistol in exchange for 4 MAB machine guns." This is an oral declaration. Catalano is called. Interrogated about these facts he denies everything, his face reddening. When he is shown Traverso's statements, he admits having made the exchange, but adds that the 4 machine guns were broken. (This is an oral statement by Catalano.)

Several days later a certain Profumo, a nightclub owner from Nervi, shows up and says *he* bought the pistol and gave it to Catalano. He tells a confusing, incredible story. Requestioned, Catalano admits that the two owners of the armory are trusted confidantes, that he was not the only one to have contacts with them (other lower ranking officials of the political police were in contact with them) and the arms traffic permitted him to infiltrate the Left. For this reason the whole matter had to be covered up.

At this point, Sossi turns the whole case over to the examining magistrate Castellano so that he will be in charge of the investigation. After several days Castellano releases all the defendants on provisional liberty. Sossi finds out that during that same time Catalano had gone to talk to Castellano. Sossi then goes to Castellano telling him that the matter is too serious to be covered up. Castellano answers him saying that if this episode were to become known before the trial of the October 22 group, it might destroy the whole investigation of October 22.

The Court of Assizes trial takes place and the matter is hushed up. Once the appeal process is also completed Sossi returns to the attack. First he talks about it with Lieutenant Colonel Franciosa (chief of the judicial police of the Carabinieri - ed.), then with the assistant district attorney, Meloni, then with the police prefect. The police prefect says he'll see what can be done and talks to Taviani about it. But the matter remains obstructed.

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BR Message #5 no longer made any reference to demands for safe passage of October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners to Cuba, Algeria, or North Korea, as #4 had. The PCI called the reference to the three Socialist countries a provocation. Later on when Fidel Castro refused to cooperate with the BR and offer the prisoners asylum in Cuba, the bourgeois press crowed: "... not even Castro wants these common criminals". But within some quarters of the Italian revolutionary Left the feeling was that, far from viewing the BR and October 22<sup>nd</sup> as "petty-bourgeois adventurists", "provocateurs", or "criminals", all things he himself had been called by the Cuban Communist party in the 1950's, Castro was really acting under pressure from the Soviet Union.

The BR later carried out a self-criticism which led them to "rediscuss the problem of the liberation of political prisoners" and to study other options which later were used to liberate Curcio from Casale prison. In an alleged internal BR document, captured by police in the Robbiano di Mediglia BR safe house in the Fall of 1974, the BR stated:

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**EXCERPT FROM ALLEGED BR INTERNAL DOCUMENT CAPTURED AT ROBBIANO DI MEDIGLIA  
DISCUSSING CUBA'S REFUSAL TO GRANT POLITICAL ASYLUM TO THE OCTOBER 22 COMRADES**

The refusal of Cuba to grant political asylum to the 8 must be interpreted as a general refusal of the entire social-imperialist area and of the non-aligned countries to accept the development of an armed revolutionary process in Europe which threatens the balance of power between the two great power blocs, the USA and the USSR. The PCI, national expression of the social-imperialist strategy, has as a result assumed an active role of total opposition to the success of negotiations with Cuba. The isolation we have experienced on an international level, for which there are no short-term solutions, is of a strategic character and must be carefully analyzed. To a certain degree in fact our experience is similar to that of the Palestinian fedayeen in the Mideast... The comrades are now engaged in rediscussing the problem of the liberation of political prisoners keeping this experience in mind.

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On May 10th the BR released a message from Sossi to his wife announcing his resignation from the right-wing judges association (UMI), because it had opposed his release in an

exchange. On the same day, reformist unions struck against the BR. The strike's main slogan: "oppose BR blackmail". The unions which pushed the strike showed their character again when they sent their thugs around Genoa, to remove pro-BR slogans, plastered on walls throughout the city. Union leaders claimed the strike was a success, but the class knew better: worker turnout was actually quite light. Continuous Struggle (*Lotta Continua*) judged the general strike a failure. They pointed out it only gave the right-wing Christian Democratic elements a chance to speak in the factories, and push for the defense of the State, two days before the divorce referendum. We can see how for the social-democrats in the Italian Left, events were to be seen through the prism of the referendum, and for the class-conscious and revolutionary left, through BR's very different political conversation.

The right-wing magazine *Tempo* (Time) gloated how the PCI, for the first time, had called for a political strike using the same slogans as the Right: for a strong state and law-and-order. And how it had abandoned its "knee-jerk worship of anti-fascist resistance traditions"!

Grazia Sossi, Mario's wife, sent the unions a letter of "thanks", upbraiding them: "Your struggle for democracy and justice is also mine... It is not democratic to cover up obscure plots and obscure interests of a small minority with the name of the people and with political ideals."

The sharpest reply to the anti-BR strike came from Workers' Autonomy comrades in the big Ansaldo shipyards in Genoa, from *Rosso* (Red) magazine. At Ansaldo (a big Genoese shipbuilding, steel and finance conglomerate organized during World War I), a group called The Autonomous Communist Workers' Group - Ansaldo Meccanica, Porto Italcantieri issued a leaflet denouncing the PCI and the strike:

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LEAFLET OF MAY 9, 1974 WRITTEN BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNIST WORKERS GROUP OF  
L'ANSALDO MECCANICA PORTO ITALCANTIERI SHIPYARD

**NO SOLIDARITY**

This morning's strike (by the PCI - ed.) was called to defend the so-called "democratic institutions" of the state. But what was not mentioned was that this state and these "democratic institutions" are the ones that permit the exploitation, the misery and the oppression of the many by the few; which starve us with low wages and continual price increases; which permit fascist plots and give protection to fascist criminals; which cause our deaths on the job. Let the bosses carry out these acts of solidarity, we have nothing in common with them. So don't ask the working class to make a sacrifice it does not feel (and which was not even asked of us for the massacre of the workers in Chile or for the assassination of Comrade Pinelli)... Strikes have never scared any of us workers but we consider this strike to be counter-productive and damaging.

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*Rosso* magazine, published by comrades in the Workers' Autonomy movement, ran an editorial along similar lines.

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EDITORIAL ON THE ANTI-BR STRIKE BY THE NEWSPAPER  
ROSSO #11, JUNE 1974

The PCI strike has not convinced the Genoese workers. Neither for the death of Pinelli nor for that of the Spanish anarchist Puig, who was garrotted by Franco,...was the Genoese working class called out in struggle (and they certainly would have answered the call). But it was the eve of the referendum, the eve of a showdown which the PCI had not wanted, an event which risked ending up as a contemptuous kick to the "historic compromise"... For that reason it was immediately necessary to offer a show of strength which demonstrated the full capacity of the-PCI's control over the working class to the point of reducing it to a pitiful slave to the bourgeois-democratic state.

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Meanwhile three different political lines had emerged within the judiciary: 1. A "no concessions" hard line pushed by UMI, 2. A softer pro-negotiations line of progressive

judges represented by Democratic Judiciary which also wanted to investigate the BR charges of police and judicial irregularities, 3. Sossi's friends who only wanted to see Sossi freed and didn't want to deal with any other issues. The latter two groups of judges came to an agreement and issued a document signed "Ligurian<sup>22</sup> Judges" calling for whatever initiatives were necessary to free Sossi.

That was a major crack in the State structure. The BR had forced the State to recognize its revolutionary political power.

On May 10, 1974 a prison revolt in Alessandria prison was crushed by General Della Chiesa's carabinieri troops on orders from the fascist chief prosecutor of Turin, Reviglio della Veneria. Seven people were killed in the State's prison assault, five of them police hostages caught in the crossfire. Posing in front of the corpses for the press, prosecutor Della Veneria commented with self-satisfaction that: "We could not allow the State to be trampled on. It was a marvelous action conducted in a majestic fashion." Later when the minister of justice Zagari, a PSI Social-Democrat, promised a "serious and rigorous investigation" of the circumstances of the massacre, he allowed the same fascist Della Veneria to take charge of the investigation!

The massacre took place two days before the big referendum vote. It had been organized by interior minister Taviani, carabinieri General Della Chiesa, and prosecutor Della Veneria, with intention to show that the State would not be pressured into negotiations with the BR, and that it now considered Sossi a sacrificial lamb (after all, it had just gunned down five of its own men). The day after the massacre, interior minister Taviani announced to prime minister Rumor that there would be negotiations "especially in light of the Alessandrian prison revolt". Finally, on May 12, 1974, the two days of divorce referendum voting began.

At this point both the Turin and Genoa assistant prosecutors, Caccia and Marvulli, asked all citizens receiving a BR message to immediately turn it over to the police. The ostensible purpose was to allow the police to check the documents for possible fingerprints, but of course the real purpose was to muzzle the press. Many journalists made an official protest to the government that this was a violation of freedom of the press and that a government attempt to impose press silence on the Sossi case might endanger Sossi's life, since the BR were demanding no secret negotiations.

On the evening of May 13, the results of the referendum were made public. It was defeated. The vote was 3 to 2 in favor of legal divorce in Italy, against repealing the divorce law. It was a big defeat for Fanfani, the Christian Democratic right-wing, the Vatican, and the fascist MSI party. Genoa and Alessandria voted heavily against repeal: 72% and 70% NO. The South, where the right-wing has always had more electoral strength, also heavily voted NO.

In one stroke, hysteria over a threatening right-wing victory had disappeared. Millions of women had overwhelmingly voted to preserve their right of divorce (Italian women comprise a majority of the actual voters), in all regions and across all party lines. The spontaneous mass movement to vote down the referendum was a major victory for women's rights. What both the Right and the Left had overlooked, in their posing the divorce issue as a test of strength, was that the masses of Italian women would throw the whole matter into the trash bin.

The other thing that had been overlooked is that the big bourgeoisie primarily were allied with the Left on this issue against the Right bloc of fascists, and Vatican-DC right-wing. A modern capitalist society needed not only to obscure the State's role in oppressing women, but could not tolerate an archaic legal code designed around religious doctrine rather than the capitalist market. The secularization of Italian capitalism was long overdue. Indeed, *La Stampa*, Italy's second-largest newspaper (owned by the FIAT interests), rejoiced in a banner headline over the vote: "ITALY IS A MODERN COUNTRY".

In terms of the Sossi kidnapping, some who had previously been convinced by the Left parties that it'd all been some fascist maneuver to influence the referendum vote, and who thought Sossi would be killed after the ballots had been counted, had to face the reality that BR were not just "provocateurs".

On May 14, Sossi, who now feared for the loss of his life, (not at BR hands, but at those of the carabinieri) sent a long message to President of the Republic Leone, urging him to make sure that the State fulfilled its responsibility to protect its loyal servants. Leone

22 Genoa is in the Ligurian region.

washed his hands of Sossi's appeal. He said: "The dignity of the State and the government's institutions must be safeguarded so that the citizens do not lose faith in the government." Grazia Sossi's reaction was: "I have been abandoned by everyone. The State has condemned my husband to death."

The defense lawyers of the October 22nd prisoners were now split as to whether they should support the initiative of the Democratic Judiciary judges, to legally exchange Sossi for the October 22nd prisoners. October 22nd member Augusto Viel's lawyer proposed that all the October 22nd prisoners should meet, renounce their desire for liberation and call on the BR to free Sossi, in return for a promise by the judiciary for a fair review of their trial.

On May 16, 1974, *L'Espresso* published an interview with the BR which explained their objectives and reasons for kidnapping Sossi. The interview also detailed the BR's analysis of the extra-parliamentary Left, and the current political situation, as they saw it:

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**BR INTERVIEW IN L'ESPRESSO**  
MAY 16, 1974

**Q.: Why did you single out Sossi from among all the representatives of the counterrevolution?**

A.: For these reasons:

1. Because the tactics and the counter-moves of anti-guerrilla warfare were used for the first time against the October 22 group. These operational methods of the State were of particular interest to us. As a "man of power" Sossi knew about them. Therefore he could tell us about them. And he did tell us.
2. Because Sossi is a judge and the judiciary right now is the weakest link, even if the most active, in the chain of power.
3. Because Sossi is a target of the proletariat's hate, because it was he who "fabricated" the proof and the charges against the communist comrades of the October 22 group, and because he has been a fanatic prosecutor of the revolutionary Left throughout his brief career.

**Q.: When did you decide the kidnapping? Was the operation prepared over a long period of time?**

A.: We worked for a year on this action. We waited however for the results of the appeal process before carrying it out, because within the Left there were some who still believed it was possible to do something legally. It didn't turn out that way. The judges did not even take into consideration the thesis of unpremeditated homicide; they did not want to go into the question of Gadolla. That is, they did their part in the first important government show-trial. Rossi and comrades were convicted for political reasons. The sentence was a deliberate response to the need of the State to discourage and terrorize whoever might have the heart to take the path of armed struggle. It was necessary to reverse the trend and we have done this.

**Q.: Why did you decide to act now? Only for technical reasons or specifically because of the referendum? Or like the Tupamaros do you believe that the best time to attack is when the credibility of the institutions has fallen to its lowest point?**

A.: Obviously an action like the arrest of Sossi, with all its consequences, cannot be decided on the basis of an exclusively technical criterion. We decided to intervene now because at this moment the maneuvers for a second republic are being prepared. And because today it is indispensable to carry the attack to the State to break the encirclement of the workers struggle. We have come to the conclusion that a plan is being prepared for the overturning of the republican institutions; a plan which, while maintaining the appearances of bourgeois democracy, aims at creating a NeoGaullist fascism in the period after the referendum. Our raids on the headquarters of the Sturzo Center in Turin and the CRD (Democratic Resistance Committee) center in Milan

must also be seen in this light. The basic objective of those headquarters was to begin a complete rebuilding of those right-wing forces, persons and organizations which in this moment are "clandestinely" creating the foundations of a second republic. Now, however, this plan requires a fundamental condition for its achievement: a strong concentration of all powers, beginning with political power. For the "party of the second republic" the referendum was to be an opportunity to test their ability to control and manipulate the opposition forces, and to assess their degree of subordination and acceptance. And this is the way it was. With the Sossi action however, our organization refused the "tactical" choice of the "compromise" adopted by the parties of the constitutional Left. We attempted to block the complete resolution of contradictions which had opened up within the government as a result of the repression of the workers struggles of these last years. If, as we maintain, the government crisis is above all a crisis of the bourgeoisie's hegemony over the proletariat, the task of the revolutionary forces must be to deepen this crisis and carry it to its furthest point, while at the same time building the political-military tools needed for a revolutionary outcome.

**Q.: How did the trial unfold?**

A.: We questioned the prisoner Sossi about the actions he took and the political significance of each. It was not so much a matter of a police-style interrogation, but of understanding how the men most exposed to power think and what agents those men least exposed to power use. Sossi is a good "technician," but he doesn't have a lot of political autonomy. He is an excellent tool for dirty maneuvers. With the interrogations we were able to reconstruct facts, persons and methods of the forces of the Counterrevolution.

**Q.: Will you make the interrogation public?**

A.: From time to time we will make information known which serves the struggle we are waging. In addition we will publish the names of the infiltrators and informers in the groups of the Genoese extra-parliamentary Left. Assuming these groups are interested!

**Q.: Will there be a sentence? On the basis of what criteria will you decide what to do with Sossi and what will you demand in exchange?**

A.: A sentence against Sossi presupposes another one against the powers that guided him, and in turn another one against the State. We have therefore asked the State to exchange the comrades of the October 22 group for the political prisoner Sossi. We will not accept counter-proposals. We will refuse any offer of a money ransom. The life of a man cannot be bought.

**Q.: Did you expect such a violent condemnation from the major groups of extra-parliamentary Left (Manifesto, Lotta Continua, etc.)? How do you explain this?**

A.: In '71, responding to another interview, we said: "We are not interested in developing a sterile ideological polemic. Our attitude toward the extra-parliamentary groups is above all determined by their position on armed struggle. In reality despite the way they define themselves politically, a strong neo-pacifist current exists within these groups with which we have nothing in common and which, in fact, we hold will at the opportune moment constitute a strong obstacle to armed organization of the proletariat. While on the other hand, another grouping of militants will accept this perspective of armed struggles with them the discussion is open." Today we can add that to the degree to which their role as forces subordinate to the parties of "compromise" has become more marked and obvious, the contradictions inside their groups have become more violent. The Sossi case has brought the depth of these contradictions out into the open.

**Q.: Don't you pose for yourself the problem, as the Tupamaros did, of maintaining good relations with the other revolutionary organizations?**

A.: Good relations with the other revolutionary organizations presupposes "other revolutionary organizations." Obviously this is not the case with the major groups of the extra-parliamentary Left. There is an area of genuinely



revolutionary forces, wholly internal to the big factories, with which we have established a political exchange with rich potential.

**Q.: Do you believe that armed struggle in an advanced capitalist country like Italy, with the strongest reformist "communist" party in Western Europe, really has a chance of developing and succeeding? Why?**

A.: The armed struggle today is a demand born in the big urban factories. It is a political necessity for those working class vanguards who have rejected reformism as a plan for stabilizing the system. It is these vanguards whose struggles have broken up the command structure of the bosses on the shop floor, have destroyed the mechanisms of bourgeois terror and hegemony, and thus have triggered and sharpened the crisis of the regime. Furthermore we are heading for a radicalization of the political and social struggle, and we believe that with the progress of this struggle the Left will inevitably undergo a process of polarization in which the decisive criterion will be the position on armed struggle. The PCI or at least its communist soul will also be caught up in this process.

**Q.: Do you believe, at any rate that the armed action of a small vanguard group separated from the masses is useful?**

A.: The armed action of a small group separated from the masses has no hope of success. The action of an armed vanguard even though very small is another matter. The BR are not a group. Our armed initiative is the fruit of ongoing work within the most advanced stratum of workers autonomy in all the largest factories of the North. Work that was begun 4 years ago at Pirelli. Work that was not very noisy but certainly decisive in the process of formation of a genuinely revolutionary vanguard.

**Q.: Do you think you can build an alternative to the existing unions?**

A.: It is not a matter of building an alternative to the union administration, but of building a different strategic political framework within which to orient the union struggle.

**Q.: What kind of clandestine factory organization do you seek?**

A.: Our militants in the factories work to help the growth of workers autonomy at all levels. We are convinced that this growth is heading in the direction of the building of organs of workers power.

**Q.: How do you answer those (and this is almost everyone) who on the basis of the reasoning "who benefits from these actions?" maintains that you are provocateurs because you objectively play the Right's game?**

A.: This criticism has been made of us simultaneously by the government, the opposition, the Right and the Left - almost everybody in other words! In general those who make these charges from the Left use the following reasoning: "You always intervene close to the time of major political events, therefore..." But can the timeliness of our intervention be the object of serious criticism? Certainly not. An untimely intervention would only be a mistaken intervention. In reality we are scolded for the fact that the armed initiative introduces an unforeseen variable into the institutionalized political game. To say that this plays into the hands of the Right is a completely undialectical statement. Those who play into the hands of the Right, and do so completely, are those who refuse to see that a Counterrevolutionary process is taking place; who pose only defensive tasks for themselves and who have given up trying to build an effective resistance movement with which to oppose the Counterrevolution.

**Q.: How do you answer those who while accepting your political placement on the Left maintain, however, that there is no possibility for the development of your revolutionary plan?**

A.: *We have made a bet with history* and we have not won it yet; this is true. But our experience of these last two years makes short shrift of pessimism. It

is above all the experience of working class struggles: just remember Mirafiori, the blockade of March-April '73, the "red handkerchiefs" in the last contract fight. It is these struggles, and the vanguard stratum they have given expression to, which are the basis of current revolutionary possibilities in our country.

**Q.: What measures do you take to protect yourselves from infiltration of your group by provocateurs?**

A.: The basic criterion is the level of political consciousness and practical militancy that the comrades who approach us have shown in the mass struggles. All our militants have worked in the mass movement for a long time. The social composition of our organization is precise: almost all our cadres are workers. No criterion is infallible, however, thus not even this one. But provocateurs and informers should know that it is not easy to escape our justice...

**Q.: It is often said that our ideological matrix is Marxist-Leninist, Catholic and workerist: do you recognize yourselves in this mixture?**

A.: Our ideological mold is communist. Our reference points are Marxism-Leninism, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the ongoing experiences of metropolitan guerrilla movements.

**Q.: Is it true that your political-organizational model is the Tupamaro movement?**

A.: No, that is not exact. No experience is repeatable and Italy is not Uruguay. However, from the experience of the Tupamaros we have kept in mind important principles of organization such as the organization by columns and compartmentalization.

**Q.: Can you outline your model of organization?**

A.: Our point of view is that the armed struggle in Italy must be carried on by an organization which is the direct expression of the class movement. The people are the origin of everything thus it is necessary to unite them, mobilize them and arm them. The development of a first phase of guerrilla war in the big European industrial metropoli seems possible to us, looking at the experience and true limits of the first German, French and Italian armed groups. There are two conditions: the growth of real moments of working class power in the biggest factories, in most important working class centers and in the poor working class neighborhoods where revolts and exploitation are mainly concentrated; the construction of a "regular strategic force" trained to deal with all the tasks which present themselves at different levels of the struggle from the point of view of the armed struggle.

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The only revolutionary Left group to give a serious political response to the BR interview was the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Group (Gruppo Comunista Revolutionaria). An article by Livio Maitan, a leading Italian Trotskyist theoretician, in their magazine *Red Flag* rejected the BR's analysis about "Fascist Neo-gaullism". Maitan argued that there was still space for a successful legal struggle by the working class in Italy: that the May 12 referendum had proven this.

Certain formulations about the growth of proletarian power in the factory, he continued, re-echoed certain ideas advanced by the Argentine revolutionary guerrilla organization, the ERP: "we are not confronting a militarist or focoist conception in its purest state, a la Debray in '67, for example", but this did not change the fact that the analysis was too general. In particular, some BR statements in his view seemed to imply "a gradualist conception: as if an alternative armed power could be built bit by bit beginning with some factory or some neighborhood.... The problem of the arming of the proletariat on a mass level cannot be posed other than in a revolutionary situation of dual power." Finally *Red Flag* concludes "in the context of a general crisis of the system, it is not at all excluded that small groups of militants carrying out armed actions will have some success... but, revolutionaries must have an overall strategic design, outline an overall alternative", which according to *Red Flag* the BR don't seem to have.

On May 18, BR Message #6 was released. For the first time, the BR explicitly speak of a death sentence for Sossi. The text of Message #6 is reprinted below:

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**BR MESSAGE #6  
SOSSI ACTION**

1). Mario Sossi has been our prisoner for one month. We have been staring you in the face for one month. No mask can hide your inhuman, fascist face. We have taken one of yours and you have abandoned him. He has admitted carrying on damaging intrigues and machinations against the communist comrades of October 22 and you have answered that he is a psychologically weak-minded person. He has denounced government personalities and charged them with responsibility for certain actions and you have called for censorship of the press and RAI Television just like the worst fascist regimes. Your slow-wittedness is repulsive and your cowardice does not even permit us to respect you as enemies. But above all you have demonstrated something else: that you respond to only one law, that of force. It is with that coin that we intend to pay you.

2). We have precise proof and photocopies of investigative documents regarding the already mentioned arms smuggling. Mario Sossi has provided ample testimony on all this. In addition he has written and signed a precise and documented accusation against those who today have abandoned him to his fate. We do not believe in your laws and we leave it to the "democrats" to have illusions about your justice. But for us, what he has written is like a big mirror in which well-known and not so well-known faces appear, faces we do not intend to forget. This battle is about to end, but not the war. Soon their turn will come.

3). Some of the lawyers for the October 22 comrades are creating all kinds of obstacles to their liberation.<sup>23</sup> We will not tolerate this behavior because among other things these people have sold out the comrades to the various police forces. If you want us to be more precise and explicit we can be!

4). To the law of force we answer with reason and force. Those who calculated that we would not fight it out to the end were wrong. We take full responsibility before the revolutionary movement in stating that, if within 48 hours - beginning from 12 midnight Saturday, May 18 - the 8 comrades of October 22 are not liberated according to the procedures of our message #4, Mario Sossi will be executed. He will be executed for the crimes for which he has taken personal responsibility.

5). We reaffirm that, no matter how this battle ends, the liberation of all comrade political prisoners is an irrevocable point in the political program of our organization.

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In the diary he kept during his imprisonment, Sossi bitterly noted:

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**EXCERPT FROM SOSSI'S DIARY**

Dr. Coco, why don't you take my place? Is or is not the Procurator of the Republic<sup>24</sup>, according to judicial law, responsible for all the actions (without distinction) of his assistants? Why have you refused to say so? Come on, Umberto Catalano, you are a man with guts, a man of honor. There's room for you too! Taviani, I believe in your "democratic and anti-fascist" toughness; we must not yield! Well then come take my place, or at least come keep me company. I await you! I should like to talk to you about some little details that maybe you already know about...but I could refresh your memory, yes?

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<sup>23</sup> Some of the defense lawyers publicly denounced the BR, pressuring their clients to reject any prisoner exchange in favor of a "fair trial" by the State--ed.

<sup>24</sup> In the Italian judicial system a Procurator of the Republic is a high-level prosecutor or district attorney, with power similar to that of an attorney general of a U.S. State.

...Opportunists, exploiters, accomplices, pimps and cowards live a comfortable life. No one kidnaps them. To top things off, some of these people are brazen enough to recite the miserable comedy of the "intransigent citizen"! I want to submit to a disciplinary proceeding: this way everyone will have to listen. It will be talked about in court, it will be discussed in parliament; and maybe finally some light will be shed on dark episodes of clientelism, provocation, corruption and irresponsibility. And then, willing or not, each one will have to admit their own responsibilities!

I have been used by the political powers through the organs of the police and through the same judicial apparatus which is, in reality, "led by the hand" by the political powers. Now in my moment of need, these powers, of which the leadership of the judiciary and the executive are a core element, toss me away like an old shoe, and try to undermine me. As in so many well known cases, they are exclusively preoccupied with defending their positions of prestige reached at the price of enormous sacrifice (by others!!!)...

Whatever happens, there is someone who in any case morally has already killed me. I do not intend to be a hero to please those who today cynically and in contradiction of themselves, wish only my death, my insanity or an endless imprisonment! Let them use their own skins for a "heroic" gesture, then I will also be willing to be a "hero."...

P.E.T. (Paolo Emilio Taviano, Minister of Interior - ed.): "Please, sit down, make yourself comfortable!" M.S. (Mario Sossi - ed.): "Please, your excellence, you first!" If you think that dying is a good thing, then please, you go to your death...

THOUGHTS. A selection of high powered psychiatrists and psychologists guided by the ineffable P.E.T. has issued the verdict that if I'm not crazy, I'm close to it; I'm crazy enough to falsify the meaning of the words I will speak if I get out of here... If my life is saved, I will owe it to the enemy who captured me; not to my erstwhile (I hope) assassins!...

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Meanwhile, more rumors and more denials were being circulated that the October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners and their lawyers were still not prepared to accept provisional liberty by judicial decree. Some newspapers raise the question: can a lawyer oppose his clients wishes and refuse to ask for provisional liberty? In fact, it was a false issue, because according to Italian law, a judge did not need a lawyer's formal request to grant provisional liberty to a prisoner. Finally Grazia Sossi's lawyer rendered the whole question moot by asking for the release of the October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners himself.

On May 20 after more legal maneuvers, two judges and six jurors in a sitting of the Genoa Court of Appeals conceded provisional liberty to the 8 October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners, as well as legal rights to get passports so they could legally leave the country on the condition of Sossi's release. This was recognized by all as a major political victory for the Red Brigades.

The almost universal reaction of bourgeois press, politicians and government leaders was condemnation of the judges' action. Only Pietro Nenni, the aged retired leader of the Social Democratic PSI and Italian Communist Party central committee member Terracini supported the judges' action on "humanitarian" grounds. Zagari, the PSI minister of justice, opposed the exchange and other government leaders stated they would not let any action be taken that would weaken the State. The PCI also took the same hard line as the government. Coco, the Genoa chief attorney, stated that though he disagreed with the judges' decision he was legally bound to uphold it, though he added he would try to legally challenge it.

On May 21 the BR issued Message #7, which included a brief note from Sossi, to show he was in good health:

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**BR MESSAGE #7**

We are asked to guarantee the safety and the liberation of the prisoner MARIO SOSSI. Our answer is that his safety and liberation will be guaranteed above

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all by the execution of the decree of provisional liberty, as well as the fact that the 8 comrades of October 22 will find asylum in the Cuban embassy in the Vatican. This is being demanded in order to guarantee their safety given the position that the Italian government has taken. We reconfirm that within 24 hours of the liberation of the comrades according to the procedures already indicated, the prisoner Mario Sossi will definitely be freed. This is our word.

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Coco was now the key to the whole exchange, and he began to stall on the release of the prisoners. Not able to challenge the legality of the judges' grant of provisional liberty, Coco tried to maneuver and play a delaying game, setting impossible conditions for the execution of the exchange. First you give us Sossi alive and in good health, then we'll release the prisoners. It was becoming clear to the BR that Coco had no intention of making the exchange, that he was really stalling for time, hoping that the Court of Appeals decision could somehow be invalidated and that the BR would either have to kill Sossi, or release him without winning any concessions from the State.

*On May 23, 1974, after having held him in a people's prison for 35 days, the BR released Sossi.*

In a BR internal document said to have been captured by police in the Robbiano di Mediglia safe house. The BR analyzed the State's strategy and explained their decision to release Sossi:

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**EXCERPT FROM BR DOCUMENT**

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The "Coco plan" was to stall us until the provisional liberty decree could be invalidated by the Court of Cassation. This was the meaning of his statement "We'll free those of October 22 only when Dr. Sossi is freed." In this situation the choices were obligatory: either free Sossi and force Coco to eat his promises thus showing that the law is purely a tool of the State, or hold Sossi prisoner, with the prospect of having to free him or execute him a few days later without any political gain... A decision to execute Sossi after the concession of provisional liberty would have been a mistake, because it would have helped to resolve the contradictions immediately along hard, rightwing lines, and it would have permitted a political realignment within the State capable of realizing such a rightwing front.

Taviani, in agreement with top levels of the Genoese judiciary and police was creating a situation which would close off every way out and force us to execute Sossi. Such a development would have permitted him to attack and isolate those forces open to a soft line and to negotiations - to unleash a campaign which by portraying us as pure criminals and assassins, aimed at the widest possible political isolation of us, to bury forever the scandals that the Sossi affair had brought to light (arms smuggling, the Gadolla arrest, the October 22 trial, black falcons, infiltration, etc.) Once the impossibility of an international resolution of the action was established, and having judged that executing Sossi in this period would have no doubt helped to resolve all contradictions in a rightward direction, the only responsible political choice left was to free him. A choice which ultimately would have increased the long-term political effects of the action. A choice which in addition, would have shown in a striking way how the law is a class reality: an instrument for the defense of the interests of the dominant class.

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After making him sit on a bench in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Milan, the BR put a train ticket for Genoa in his pocket and gave him a message to be made public. The message, #8, explained why they had released Sossi and briefly summed up the results of the struggle. The text is printed below:

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**BR MESSAGE #8**  
**WHY WE ARE RELEASING MARIO SOSSI**

First: the Genoa Assizes Court of Appeals has conceded provisional liberty to the 8 Communist comrades of October 22, conditional on guarantees of safety and freedom of the prisoner; these guarantees have been deliberately ignored by Coco, Taviani's and the government's faithful servant. Coco in this way would like to force us into a protracted arm wrestling match so that he can invalidate the clear political meaning of Assizes Court of Appeals decree. We do not intend to provide him with an excuse to play this game. By freeing Sossi we confront Coco and those who cover for him with a clear responsibility: either free the comrades immediately or ignore their own laws.

Second: In each battle it is necessary "to fight to the end." Fighting to the end at this moment means to develop to the maximum the contradictions which in these 35 days have surfaced within the State and between its various organs, and not to provide any pretexts for their resolution. This battle has made us learn how to know our enemy better: his tactical strength and his strategic weakness: his democratic mask and his bloody, fascist face. This battle has reconfirmed the fact that all contradictions in society are resolved only on the basis of precise relations of force. Now more than ever therefore the strategic character of our choice becomes clear: the working class will take power only through armed struggle. We reconfirm that the liberation of all comrade political prisoners is an irrevocable point in our political program.

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## CHAPTER 10

### Carry the Attack to the Heart of the State

The BR's release of Sossi took everyone by surprise. It was generally admitted that the BR had made the police look foolish and won a political victory showing their strength and the State's weakness. Even the right-wing magazine *Il Tempo* was forced to admit that while the police had had an easy time putting away October 22<sup>nd</sup> because it had been riddled with informers, the BR had taken over GAP's Genoese base but had eliminated its infiltrators, denying the police reliable intelligence sources.

After his release, Sossi behaved very strangely. His intense paranoia about the State's intentions toward him led him to take elaborate precautions to avoid the police until he had made contact with two lawyers and a doctor who were trusted friends of his. One of the lawyers commented, "maybe he wanted me there to shield him from a bullet, I thought about that later and it still makes my legs tremble". From the medical doctor Sossi got a certificate attesting to his sanity. Later, after he finally surfaced, Sossi insisted on having four finance ministry policemen, who were old friends, as bodyguards. He traveled with them in a blue Alfetta belonging to the finance ministry and they always went out of their way to lose the police cars assigned to tail them.

In his first public statements he spoke with respect of the BR: "No one forced me to write messages, I was the one who asked if I could do it. I was never coerced through violence to say things that were important to the BR. In other words I was not mistreated or tortured.... At the end, relations between me and the two brigadisti were if not cordial, at least civil. On one thing we were absolutely in agreement, the independence of the judiciary is a utopia... this the BR already knew. I came to understand it in those 35 days."

Sossi continued the attacks he had made on interior minister Taviani, Catalano and Coco while a prisoner of the BR, removing any question that his prison messages attacking them had been made only under duress. Coco tried to dismiss Sossi as being temporarily insane.

Meanwhile Coco, who had publicly promised to free the 8 October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners after Sossi was freed, maneuvered to avoid keeping his word hoping that the higher court of Cassation would annul the decree of the Genoa court of appeals. Coco also gave his own unique "legal" interpretation of the Genoa court order to free the 8 October 22<sup>nd</sup> prisoners: "the order for decarceration cannot be executed because the modalities of the exchange have not been respected. Sossi is physically free but not spiritually".

The refusal of the State to honor its word kicked off a public debate. On balance, most bourgeois opinion opposed Coco's intransigence. The revisionist Paese Sera supported Coco but even Giorgio Galli, a prominent Social Democratic intellectual, wrote a scathing attack on Coco and the hardliners in the State:

"This is the State that legally frees Mafiosi and keeps its citizens in jail for 8 years without proving their guilt; which to avoid giving in to blackmail allowed those who served it faithfully to be killed (the five police victims of Alessandria prison in addition to the two prisoners); and which would rather let Mario Sossi be killed to avoid negotiating with the mysterious BR, who have, nevertheless, leveled accusations at the minister of interior Taviani, at chief prosecutor Coco (who obstructed as best he could the investigators of the oil industry) and at the chief of the political office of the Genoa police department, Doctor Catalano, accusations of which the least that can be said is that they leave public opinion disoriented." With Sossi's release, the BR scored an additional means to prolong and deepen the split within the State and ideological establishment. In an internal document, the BR summarized the political results of their decision to release Sossi.

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## EXCERPT FROM BR DOCUMENT

With the concession of provisional liberty to the 8 from October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the judiciary has taken an autonomous position of being open to negotiation to save Sossi's life. The political powers, and in particular, the government solidly (from the DC to the PCI) expresses a clear refusal to negotiate and is prepared to sacrifice Sossi's life. This attitude clearly has implications that go beyond this specific case touching on a basic question: the relationship between the judiciary and the political powers.

The intention is, in fact, to base the plan for NeoGaulist restructuration on the subordination of the judiciary to the directives of the political powers...with the Sossi campaign we were setting ourselves the basic objective of making clear the deepening of the political contradictions within and between the various organs of the state apparatus. Through this campaign it was our intention to highlight the content of the NeoGaulist plan.

The demand for the liberation of the political prisoners was advanced therefore with two goals: - to push the contradictions within the State to their extreme; - to establish a path toward the solution of this problem.

### BOTH THESE GOALS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED.

The bourgeois press and the Left press, including that of much of the extra-parliamentary New Left, showed remarkable unity in their political line toward the BR after the Sossi action. Both emphasized the "criminal" character of the BR, and concern-trolled that their actions were only helping the fascists. This newfound unity was partly strategic and partly tactical. Strategically, it was a choice by the ruling class to look for allies on the Left to put down the armed struggle more effectively. Tactically, *Il Manifesto* and *Lotta Continua* (New Left), *L'Unita* and *L'Avanti* (Old Left), and *La Stampa*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Messaggero* (main bourgeois press) had all campaigned together for a NO vote on the divorce referendum. In addition, the bourgeois press did not hide this de facto unity but rather boasted about it. Arrigo Levi in *La Stampa*, FIAT's newspaper, commented:

“ ‘It is time that the country is informed and reassured that justice will see full light... that the organs of the State act with the maximum energy to prevent and root out the new criminal activities’... these are the words of the honorable Berlinguer [PCI chief-Ed]... It seems to us that they correctly express the anger of one who wants to defend this republic...”

In the May 4, 1974 issue of *La Stampa*, Andrea Barbato commented:

“Every so often it is possible to share the same opinion expressed by an extremist movement, that put forward yesterday by *Lotta Continua*. That group has three hypotheses:

- that the Red Brigades are being manipulated for reactionary ends;
- that they irresponsibly ignore the link between their actions and the divorce referendum;
- finally that their incorrect analysis leads them to aim for a defeat of the NO vote according to the old maxim ‘the worse things get the better it is’

“We don't know which of these three hypotheses is the most correct: in the end they are all similar. Whoever uses terror as a political weapon can only find themselves at ease in a totalitarian State...”

At this point, within the bourgeois press, only *L'Espresso* and *Panorama* magazines were giving the public factual information on the BR. And *Panorama* could not really be trusted either, since it had made a secret deal with SID (the Italian secret service) to help them penetrate the Brigades in exchange for exclusive inside tips and rights to future captured BR documents.

One of the major themes developed during this period by the *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's leading newspaper, in its propaganda war against the Brigades was that the people behind the BR were highly cultured, highly intelligent, but maniacally alienated people. The attempt was to psychologize the political. The *Corriere*, to this end, published endless interviews with academic "experts" in the fields of sociology, psychology, linguistics, philology, etc., to "prove" their thesis.



One of the few exceptions among Italian intellectuals was the Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia (a PCI member of the Sicilian regional parliament) who wrote about the BR in *L'Espresso*:

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**EXCERPT FROM SICILIAN LEFTIST WRITER LEONARDO SCASCIA'S ARTICLE ABOUT BR IN L'ESPRESSO**

"...According to revolutionary orthodoxy, there is no doubt that the action of the BR in the Sossi case was absolutely unexceptionable both as to its timing as well as its effects. If a revolutionary movement does not know how to infiltrate and widen the cracks offered to it by the society, the regime and the state which it is fighting; if it does not know how to act in such a way that the contradictions internal to that society, that regime and that state are sharpened and explode, one fails to understand why and in what sense one can call oneself a revolutionary. And yet in the nominally revolutionary sector of our country the action of the BR has been understood and explained in many ways, except the most obvious one: that is, as the method to prepare for or begin to make a revolution, The most benevolent interpretation was that it was infantile extremism in a sense that does not seem to me to be what Lenin meant..."

Is not the failure to recognize the BR action as a revolutionary one a symptom of the changed relationship between the proletarian and revolutionary classes, as they are today represented and represent themselves, and Power, and the State? Is it still possible to speak of revolution if the revolutionary gesture is feared in the very ranks of the forces which should generate it - not only because of the counterrevolutionary gestures which might easily and disproportionately answer it, but also because the gesture itself is seen as intrinsically counterrevolutionary? Is this not something to think about, to reflect on?

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Reprinted below are the reactions of various groups of the extra-parliamentary Left to the Sossi operation.

The Italian anarchist movement was generally positive, while also emphasizing their political disagreements with the BR. They violently attacked the rest of the Left for their opportunism.

The anarchist paper *Umanita Nova* sums up the political effects of the Sossi action:

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**EXCERPTS FROM ANARCHIST "UMANITA NOVA" ARTICLES ON SOSSI ACTION**

1. Experience teaches that violent, clandestine struggle has the right to exist if it is placed in an already conscious political context... Right now, with the smugness of triumphalists...the Italian people...is a long way...from having developed a revolutionary consciousness.

If this is the correct analysis, we ask ourselves whether the BR really believe that a symbolic action is enough to reverse this trend...

These are our basic objections. Don't ask us to condemn them however...

We will not unite...our voice with the general and highly suspect outcry against the Sossi kidnapping. Nor are we concerned about the risks to the country's institutions, which we don't believe in, and whose fate leaves us indifferent. Reprinted from *Umanita Nova*, May 4, 1974

2. The State above all comes out of this in pieces. Incapable of conducting serious investigations, it could only invade Genoa and the entire surrounding region with several thousand police and carabinieri who, in combat gear and with machine guns in hand put that city under a state of siege that lasted without interruption for 35 days. Sossi was not found, the ridiculous stage spectacle was a complete failure, and if it served any purpose at all it was

probably to bring down the hatred of the population not on the Red Brigades but on the police and the carabinieri. The State also failed miserably in another area which is one of its specialties: infiltration and spying. The thousands of informers which the SID, the finance police, the carabinieri and the police, etc. have at their disposal were not able to produce the slightest result...

But the State was not the only institution involved in this shipwreck: what is to be said of the political parties, of our parliamentary Left, extra and ex, of our unions, all of them united in their "horror against this unheard of provocation"? The spectacle is distressing: no attempt at a serious, argued analysis, no interpretation of the facts in the light of the principles they claim to uphold. On the contrary the opinion (if you can call it that) expressed was dull, opportunistic and without imagination. Provocation, "who gains by it," fascists, strategy of tension, using the referendum as a tool for their own ends, and then, after the referendum was passed, using something else as a tool for their own ends. What meanness of spirit, but above all what extreme poverty of ideas in people whose followers number in the millions! We are not, in principle in agreement with the strategy of the Red Brigades. We know well that the day on which the smashing of all Power is in discussion, we and they will not be on the same side (just as we were not in the Ukraine, in Spain and so on).. But we do not mean by this to unite with the chorus of laments which have accompanied this action.

Reprinted from June 1, 1974 Umanita Nova.

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The anarchist magazine A put their fingers on the absurdity of so many "Marxist-Leninist" organizations having heart attacks at the first signs of illegal and violent struggle:

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**EXCERPT FROM ANARCHIST MAGAZINE "A" CRITICIZING  
IDEA THAT BR ARE FASCISTS WHO PUSH "STRATEGY OF TENSION"**

Fighting street demonstrations, even wildcat strikes; every extra-institutional political action increases tension, But is the purpose of revolutionaries to lessen tensions? It is funny that we anarchists must defend a group of Marxist-Leninists from their own brethren. At this rate everything illegal will be a provocation. And we would also say the revolution is, roughly speaking, illegal.

Reprinted from June 1974 issue of "A".

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Of particular importance are the positions taken by Workers' Autonomy toward the BR. This was the movement the Brigades themselves came out of. Many different viewpoints emerged from this movement because of its politically amorphous character. Some of them revealed a hurried reading of the BR documents, for instance, in mistakenly attributing the theory of building an armed wing separate from the political party to the BR (which was the exact opposite of their position).

From Policlinico Collective and ENEL Political Committee (Rome):

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**POLICLINICO COLLECTIVE AND ENEL POLITICAL COMMITTEE (ROME)**

Everybody is talking about "autonomy" thanks also to the BR. We thank the BR and the referendum for having cleared up where real workers autonomy stands today, which is a political force and not just something spontaneous capable at most of pushing union demands in the factory further to the left. This is the type of clarity that the comrades of the BR have been able to create within the so-called extra-parliamentary left with regard to the ability to be a political force consistent with proletarian needs.

Reprinted from issue #11, June 1974 of Rosso magazine.

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**EXCERPT FROM CONTRO-INFORMAZIONE**

(From an interview with a worker from Porto Marghera, a member of the "workers autonomy" current): "While the Sossi case has heightened a whole series of contradictions, there was a failure to tie it in with the immediate day to day situation of the Genoese working class... The real danger is not NeoGaulism but a social-democracy with machine-guns, where the union completely assumes the role of a state institution."

(Letter from a militant of the revolutionary Left): "Don't the comrades of the BR think they should have explained in a deeper and more complete way the motives that led them to choose the political period of the fight for the referendum... The comrades of the BR have spoken of explosive documents on the various illegal trafficking and various crimes committed by big and small pigs. Wasn't a great opportunity lost by not documenting these crimes in a precise and timely fashion?"

Reprinted from *Contro-Informazione* #3-4, July 1974.

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**FROM "RIVOLTA DI CLASSE"**

That the Brigades are red there is no doubt, they are the focus of all the attacks of the whole bourgeois democratic system... The Sossi kidnapping has meant this, putting the proletariat on guard against a State which despite its stealing of the symbols of the World War H Resistance, has remained emphatically fascist in its structure and its actions; it has presented a warning against any adventures damaging to the workers movement. .

Reprinted in *Rivolta di classe*, single issue June 28, 1974

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**FROM "ROSSO"**

The Red Brigades and their "violent" actions force the Left to take positions with regard to violence, to come out in the open. As far as we're concerned this is good. For too many would-be revolutionaries a few weeks of gold chained detention by a judge have been enough to make them forget the detention of the working class in the factories, deaths on the job, the dead from the blows of the police, the assaults and the fascist bombs, and make a complete retreat to "democratic" politics in the form of condemning the BR. What we don't like, however, is violence which is also clandestine from the masses. Our disagreement is completely and only political: there is no NeoGaulist coup to confront; the enemy to be crushed is the party of labor which ties together bourgeoisie and reformists.

The theory of the armed wing of the party beyond and outside the practice and the political leadership on the part of organized workers autonomy is an impotent perspective in the face of the demand for organization which the activity of the class and the vanguard express today. It is ineffective to put forward the perspective of the use of revolutionary violence on anything other than a mass level, such as became possible this year at FIAT and at the height of other struggles.

Reprinted from #11, June 1974 issue of *Rosso*.

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The Red Brigades emerged from the Sossi campaign with the image of "gentlemen bandits" who paralyzed the entire State without spilling blood.

On May 28th, 1974, only five days after Sossi's release, a time bomb hidden in a plastic garbage bag exploded in the middle of an anti-fascist rally in Brescia, an industrial city 60 miles north of Milan. Eight people were killed and 92 wounded. The Black Order, an underground fascist organization active in the Milan-Brescia area, had already been under inquiry. had been underway at that time. The Brescia massacre, the first bombing of a peaceful public meeting in Italy since World War II, touched off violent nationwide demonstrations and physical attacks on fascists and fascist headquarters by the revolutionary Left.

Three weeks after the Brescia massacre on June 17, 1974, two fascists were found dead in the Padova MSI fascist party headquarters. The next day Paese Sera printed a message signed by the BR which took responsibility it, explaining that the two fascists had been accidentally killed while resisting the BR unit raiding the MSI party offices. This became widely known on the Left as an "Accident on the Job":

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**BR MESSAGE, JUNE 18, 1974 THE PADOVA "ACCIDENT ON THE JOB" INCIDENT**

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On Monday June 17, 1974 an armed unit of the Red Brigades occupied the provincial headquarters of the MSI (the fascist political party - ed.) in Padova on Via Zabarella. The two fascists present having violently resisted were executed.

The Padova MSI is the forge from which anti-proletarian groups and personalities have emerged in these last years. Freda and Fachisi learned their trade as assassins there and the leaders of this federation (Luci, Switch, Marinoni) have directed the fascist conspiracies from the massacre of Piazza Fontana on. Their most recent crime was the Brescia massacre.

Christian Democracy and Taviani wanted this massacre so that they could resolve the sharp contradictions opened up within their ranks by the clear defeat of the referendum and the "Sossi case." And more generally to relaunch the NeoGaulist plan with "special laws" to maintain public order. The eight comrades murdered in Brescia cannot be wiped out of the consciousness of the proletariat with the wipe of a sponge. Their death represents a decisive stage in the class war, both because for the first time the Christian Democratic powers have through their fascist hired assassins unleashed savage terrorism directly against the working class and its organizations, and also because after Brescia the revolutionary forces are justified in responding to fascist barbarity with the armed justice of the proletariat.

Those who continue to struggle against fascism seeing it as an autonomous political force which can be defeated in isolation without involving the State which produces it are off the target. Those who do not move against the fascists using the excuse that they are "only servants" are completely off-base.

We must oppose the counter-revolutionary plan which aims at encircling and defeating the working class with an armed revolutionary initiative against the State and its armed detachments. An armed revolutionary initiative which is organized starting from the factories. The headquarters of the MSI are no longer inviolate fascist fortresses! No fascist can any longer consider themselves safe! No fascist crime will go unpunished! Carry the attack to the heart of the State! Armed struggle for communism!

Tuesday, June 18, 1974  
Red Brigades

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There was some confusion about the exact circumstances of this raid. And there was some question even among Leftists sympathetic to the BR about the authenticity of the message. In any case, circumstantial evidence indicated that the raid may actually have been carried out by an independent armed collective close to the BR and that it was not an action planned by or approved by the strategic leadership of the BR itself. The action did not fit into the BR strategy initiated in January 1974 of focusing on the struggle against the

Christian Democratic "white shirt" fascists. The BR however never repudiated the message or the action itself.

The Workers' Autonomy magazine *Contro-Informazione* also commented on the Padova incident. Reprinted below are excerpts from the *Contro-Informazione* article:

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#### "CONTRO-INFORMAZIONE" ON THE PADOVA INCIDENT

As far as leftwing opinion is concerned it was disconcerted: believing the BR were responsible meant destroying a cherished image, it meant admitting that the BR were also capable of interrupting their "gentlemanly tradition" with armed violence... There were even those who hypothesized the BR overcome by a militarist line: **alongside the colonels sprout the samurai**... Only a few put forward the only hypothesis that seems acceptable: that the BR communique was aimed at avoiding the unleashing of a red witchhunt. The BR, submitting themselves to an inevitably untender general judgment, have admitted their responsibility for what happened in the MSI headquarters. Neither an acceptable challenge to public opinion and to the consensus of the Left "vanguards," nor an underestimation of the historic situation, but the recognition of what we hold was a mistake. This appears to be the case from a careful reading of the communique: admit your mistakes... To those who thought it possible to go on forever with innocuous, friendly armed propaganda actions a la early Tupamaros, the BR have answered that when you act for real incidents always wait in ambush. Despite all this the BR have not tried to transform an action whose purpose was not to execute the fascists into a new political direction.

Reprinted from *Contro-Informazione* #3/4 July 15, 1974

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Whatever the true facts of the Padova raid were, it changed the BR's image, and they inevitably lost sympathy in liberal quarters.

Summer of '74, the State went on the counter-attack against the BR underground and extra-parliamentary Left. By combining repressions, they attempted to link the entire Left to the armed struggle in the minds of the public. There were many police raids, many stop-and-frisks of Leftists, and there were many arrests.

During this period, SID finally managed to infiltrate the Red Brigades in a clever operation using Father Giroto, an ex-convict turned Franciscan monk and a long-time CIA agent. Giroto, also known as "Frate Mitra" ("Father Machinegun") and "Frate Leone" ("Father Lion") had been very active in the Catholic Left in Italy in the 1960's. Growing suspicions that he was a police agent led his bosses to move him. He spent the next 4 years (October 1969 to November 1973) in Latin America masquerading as a "revolutionary priest-guerrilla fighter" in Bolivia and Chile, working for the CIA. Giroto had infiltrated the Bolivian revolutionary underground organization MIR for the CIA. He was instrumental in the destruction of that organization, the capture of a top MIR leader, the assassination of revolutionary Monica Erte in La Paz whom he had worked closely with for a long time, and the death and imprisonment of many other comrades. Later Giroto had turned up in Chile during the last days of the Leftist Allende regime in the Summer of 1973, and continued his deadly work as a police infiltrator in the Chilean revolutionary movement. By the time Giroto left Chile for Italy in November 1973 he had been completely exposed as an agent by the Bolivian and Chilean comrades. This was not, however, known in Italy.

On returning to Italy, he used his old contacts in the Catholic Left from 1969 and a carefully orchestrated media campaign by the Italian secret service, SID, to re-establish his revolutionary credentials as a Latin American "guerrilla fighter" in exile. In magazine articles and TV talk shows Giroto expressed his desire to help the BR. He spent the period from December 1973 to July 1974 attempting to infiltrate the BR without much success. In August of 1974 he was able to finally make face to face contact with BR leaders Curcio and Franceschini. Giroto, according to his own testimony, held two meetings with Curcio in August and a third one on September 8, 1974, all in the Piedmontese countryside outside Turin at a small town called Pinerolo. The September 8th meeting turned into a police trap in which Curcio and Franceschini were captured by the carabinieri.

Although the carabinieri and the press crowed over their "brilliant" triumph in trapping the two BR leaders, the police operation was really a partial failure. According to an article in *Contro-Informazione* #5/6, 1975 written by comrades of Red Aid, the actual goal of the carabinieri operation had been to ambush and kill both Curcio and Franceschini, rather than take them alive.

At the beginning of September, while SID was busy priming their trap for the BR leadership, General Miceli, the head of SID, was arrested. SID's role in helping the extreme Right to prepare a fascist military coup to take over the government was exposed in the press. Miceli's arrest apparently forced SID's hand. They needed favorable publicity and they had to spring their trap against the BR prematurely.

In an interview with Curcio published in *L'Espresso* in 1975, Curcio explained what happened:

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#### EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH CURCIO

During that period (September - Ed. note) the men of General Della Chiesa's counter-insurgency force, using a guide and exploiting an error of judgment on my part had brought to culmination an infiltration maneuver which led to the trap and the arrest.

But beyond a simple police operation there was another plan: a plan to point to the danger of the Left to justify a fascist preventive counter-coup. And secondarily, to propose a plan to counter the attacks on the fascist plots which were becoming more and more consistent. SID (military intelligence - ed.) was heavily implicated in these dark affairs and it was necessary to distract attention from them. The BR entered into this design insofar as they could be pictured as the emerging armed tip of a many-sided iceberg, present not only in the big factories of the North, in the cultural world, in the judicial apparatus, in the most quoted newspapers, in the armed forces and even in the ministries of interior and defense. After the Sossi operation the idea-force which the BR represented had become dangerous because it was attracting consensus and sympathy in ever larger strata of vanguards and the movement. Thus the counter-insurgency force had to strike urgently and noisily to demonstrate that this organization was not invincible, to dirty the organization's image with low tricks, and to anticipate its probable autumn initiatives.

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The September 22, 1974 issue of *L'Espresso* carried a BR message denouncing Giroto's role in helping the police capture of Curcio and Franceschini. Its text:

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#### BR MESSAGE DENOUNCING GIROTTO'S SPYING ACTIVITY

Comrades, on Sunday September 8, comrades Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini fell into the hands of SID. The communications which SID issued and the manipulations of the Press induce us to state certain facts: the capture of Curcio and Franceschini did not occur, in the most absolute sense, as a result of a betrayal by or defection of members of our organization, much less by the work of infiltrators. But neither can it be credited to the much bandied about investigative skills of the Turinese Carabinieri and police, who were never able to follow the movements of the two comrades.

Their capture occurred following an ambush set for them through Silvano Giroto, better known as "Father Leone," who exploiting his fame as a supposed revolutionary, artfully built up in Latin America, sells his infamous work of provocation to counter-insurgency services of imperialism.

But even if the powers succeed in striking one of our militants with a "brilliant operation" they will not succeed in neutralizing the political force of our strategic proposal: armed struggle for communism.

Comrades, if the bourgeoisie uses massacres in public meetings and on trains, unleashes the police more and more against proletarians, relies on

international counter-insurgency forces, this is not proof of strength, but shows their fear and inability to resolve the crisis of Power which, today, more than ever, is the crisis of its hegemony over the proletariat.

To the demand for power which arises from the struggles of the proletariat our own servants of USA imperialism respond with bombs, police, and unemployment.

The movement has only one way to respond: organize itself on the terrain of armed struggle to carry the battle to the heart of the State.

### Red Brigades

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A month later a veteran Communist ex-partisan Giovanni Lazagna, a PCI member, was arrested by the police and accused of being a member of the BR. Lazagna had been skillfully set up by Father Giroto, who had met with him in mid-1974, and later claimed that Lazagna had been the one who had finally put him in touch with Curcio in August of 1974. With Lazagna's arrest and frame-up as a BR member, the hard-line faction within the State had its story to implicate the entire Left in the armed struggle, including the PCI.

In BR's shadow, the PCI mounted a major political campaign to convince the ruling class they could not survive the revolutionary threat without a political alliance with their party. Therefore the frame-up of Lazagna and SID's overall activities must be seen as part of this sharp struggle within the ruling class, over whether or not to accept the PCI's proposal, and allow them into a new Center-Left coalition government. Incidentally, during this same period then-u.s. Secretary of State Kissinger and Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin of "Israel" met and publicly expressed their alarm at the fact that Italy was about to "go Communist". Kissinger went out of his way to denounce the idea of an alliance between the PCI and the Christian Democrats. This marked the beginning of a concerted campaign by u.s. imperialism and its closest allies within the Italian ruling class, the Agnelli family, owners of FIAT auto company, to block the PCI from entering the government.

More raids rained down. In addition to Lazagna's arrest, police discovered a number of BR safehouses, and with them, BR documents. During one raid against a safehouse in Robbiano di Mediglia, a shoot-out wounded one BR member, and led to the death of a carabinieri marshal. The State counter-offensive was mounting.

In jail, the BR prisoners behaved with dignity and followed traditional Communist discipline. They refused to answer any questions, and appealed to the Geneva Convention as prisoners "of a war that has been declared by the bourgeoisie" (from the statement to the court by Roberto Ognibene before being sentenced to 28 years in jail).

The BR continued the struggle from the jails. In a letter to comrades of the revolutionary Left, BR member Paolo Ferrari wrote: "The jails have always been a revolutionary terrain. Therefore I certainly will not fail to be at my place of battle, strengthened by the political experience I've gained in jail."

Renato Curcio wrote to Mara's sister, Milena Cagol, from prison:

"What happened to me is not a misfortune but an inevitable stage in the life of every man who in this society fights for freedom. I am not the first nor the most unfortunate... prison for Communists has never been a tragedy. See, Milena, a great fighter for freedom, the Afro-american Eldridge Cleaver, once said that the revolutionary is a condemned man; if he is not able to come to terms with the prospect of prison and death, then he absolutely does not have the right to challenge, or confront, or contest the system. I have come to terms with these prospects and I am no longer afraid. You must try to understand me and accept all this, because perhaps there will be worse moments. But you must be serene because at the end of this war a new society will come."

Other BR members showed their open contempt for their jailers. Franceschini slapped the "Leftist" judge Caselli who tried to question him without a lawyer present. Franceschini also refused to take part in a trial "without any evidence, in which a guilty verdict has already been decided on", He declared in writing to the judges: "I'm not interested in answering your slanders, it would mean accepting your evil logic. Besides, I don't have to explain to your 'distinguished excellences' why I'm a *Communist fighter*."

Curcio produced two important documents in jail. The first was in interview form:

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CURCIO'S INTERVIEW IN PRISON AT CASALE MONFERRATO  
DECEMBER 1974

**Q. Has the plan for a military coup been postponed?**

A: The Moro government cannot hope to resolve the power struggle taking place in the country. The macabre counter-revolutionary trend which has been uncoiling since 1969 has only been disturbed, but not liquidated in these last months. After all, this counter-revolutionary trend could not be eliminated because in fact, it is part of the deep crisis that the capitalist countries are going through and is a response to their need to maintain the existing political shape of the Western bourgeois democratic system. In particular, in Italy the crisis-recession-restructuration cycle cannot be managed with ordinary administrative political instruments.

The crisis of the State, of the majority political party and of the economic development model are now such that they require a "historic break" rather than a compromise.

The situation is evolving toward a breaking point beyond which the rules of the game are no longer valid for anyone. Or else they will have to be made valid for everyone.

I do not believe that the pessimism of many intellectuals nor the revisionists' proposal for a compromise are justified.

The conditions and forces exist to transform this crisis into a "historic turn toward socialism." But it is necessary to prepare the proletarian masses in all ways for the new tasks, or to put it another way, for the inevitable confrontation with the plans and forces of the national and imperialist counter-revolution.

Socialism is not inevitable, but what is inevitable is that the entire Left will be required to define itself in relation to this confrontation.

**Q: There are those who maintain that the BR experience has suffered a perhaps decisive blow with the arrest of a certain number of comrades. In other words, what is left of the BR?**

A: It is true that the arrest of several comrades has caused certain sects on the Left to heave a sigh of relief. These sects, no longer knowing how to justify their parasitic and subordinate position, have not hesitated to make themselves accomplices of the counter-revolution in an all-out attack on the young guerrilla experience.

It is also true that these people's disappointment will be as great as their sigh of relief.

The arrest of several comrades does not mean the defeat of the need for class war. Nor of the need for its organization by the proletariat. This is demonstrated by the continuation of offensive activities; for example the two recent armed takeovers of the spy nests of SIDA at Mirafiore and Rivalta.<sup>25</sup>

Guerrilla war is now an objective reality of the Italian and European Situation, a political requirement for the proletarian vanguards. Its development can be delayed but it cannot be stopped.

Vanguards exist in all areas of concentration of the class that, having gone beyond the stage of protest, have adopted the thesis - sustained by the BR - that in Western Europe the current inapplicability of the classical insurrectionary strategy does not mean renouncing class war but instead means its development in the form of urban guerrilla warfare.

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25 The two big Fiat auto plants in Turin.



The movement "groups," the various forces of the Left, must understand, regardless of even important differences of opinion, that the weakening of the BR experience is not in the interest of the Left movement.

The attack on the levels of clandestine and armed organization, the attempt to relegate the fighting units to the pre-political sphere of criminal marginality, are only signs of the bourgeoisie's need to destroy every political basis of organization of proletarian violence, to annihilate every antagonistic insurgency, to progressively limit every form of struggle and finally to channel and control the clash between classes.

It seems to me that this is too high a price to pay for the satisfaction of some polemical whim or some tactical need.

**Q: *L'Unita* writes: "There are some who have theorized armed action with hatred for and in struggle against the communists." What do you think?**

A: It is a phrase said maybe for effect, but it is meaningless. In the meantime it establishes an improper identity between the communists and the PCI. Then it counter-poses "armed action" to the communists. Finally it presumes a hatred toward the "PCI-communists."

Let's see if we can unravel this mess.

First: Communism is more than a party, it is a conception of the world. In this sense, even in Italy there are many communists who are not members of the PCI (and some members of the PCI whom it is hard to think of as communists).

Second: some Italian revolutionary communists do not share the strategic line of compromise and have chosen to fight for the different perspective of a historic turn toward socialism.

Third: This does not mean or presuppose any "hatred," rather a political struggle between two divergent strategies. Not, I repeat, hatred, not insults, but a political struggle because, whether Mr. Berlinguer likes it or not, the forces that have theorized the passage to urban guerrilla war as the specific historical form of class war today are an integral part of the Left movement.

**Q: In Florence and Bologna, just to mention the most notorious incidents, there have been episodes of "criminality" which some define as "common," others as political. Deluded? Desperate? Guerrillas?**

A: I don't share the opinion of those who liquidate the question by calling it "aberrational provocative madness." There is nothing provocative, aberrational or crazy about what those comrades did. There were instead some errors of political structure and military technique. To transform these defeats, these errors into a small victory, we must identify the political lesson that comes out of those events so that errors, as an accumulation of experience, also become part of the positive inheritance of the Left movement.

One lesson - which is after all the confirmation of a thesis always sustained by the BR - is this: Class war does not mean "taking up the gun" but interpreting in organizational and political-military terms the antagonism raging in the great industrial and urban centers beneath the pacifist and egalitarian crust of the official Left.

Because I believe Mahler is right when he maintains that with respect to reality European comrades have an idyllic image of capitalism and as a result the methods of anticapitalist struggle they theorize are also idyllic. While actually this idyllic reality doesn't exist - from which is born the contradiction, the political space and the social base of the revolutionary tendency.

**Q: In other words, what are the boundaries between "common crime" and robbery for political ends?**

As Bertolt Brecht puts this kind of question in the mouth of one of his characters: "Who is the real criminal, he who founds a bank or he who robs a bank?" For well-to-do people the answer is predictable: those who rob banks are common criminals; those who found them are respectable gentlemen!

Expropriation stands outside this dialectic of misery. In other words, it cannot be defined as "robbery for political purposes."

As paradoxical as it may seem, expropriation is not determined by the subsistence needs of the guerrilla organization which carries it out, but rather by the effective offensive capacity which it has reached. The more solid the organization, all the more incisive its expropriation activity.

For this reason, it is said that expropriation is a strategic (not tactical) component of every guerrilla war. Even in an initial phase, it is already practiced as a tax the revolutionary movement imposes on the bourgeoisie; while, at the conclusion of the process, it will assume the form of a general expropriation of all property which is used as a basis for building exploitative, parasitical and oppressive relations.

Expropriations are objective expressions of revolutionary morality and legality, which under "normal" conditions emerge with clarity also in the form they are realized.

**Q: The fact remains that within the working class the majority or at least many do not share the choice of going over to the armed struggle.**

A: The working class is not a myth. The wisdom of the "conditioned proletariat," whose consciousness is manipulated and expropriated, cannot be used as evidence. It is a teleguided, teledirected proletariat. Or if you prefer, in more traditional Marxist terms, "a class of itself, but not for itself."

Today, the message which the armed vanguards spread is aimed at and can be understood primarily by the vanguard proletarian strata who do not need predigested suggestions to define their own real interests. The deepening of the crisis and the development of the class war will place the conditioned proletarians face to face with the reality of their class interest. Then their judgment will be genuine.

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The second document Curcio wrote while in prison was a letter written on the occasion of the death in prison of the RAF militant Holger Meins. Excerpts from this letter:

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**CURCIO LETTER FROM JAIL ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH  
OF RED ARMY FRACTION (RAF) MILITANT HOLGER MEINS**

The RAF has raised a political question: proletarian revolution in an urban-technological society... On the one hand, the RAF has forced the German bourgeoisie to reveal its ferociously counter-revolutionary nature without any reticence. On the other hand, it has taken on the function of strategic politico-military nucleus of the resistance movement and of the point of concentration for the scattered revolutionary forces.... No one has ever made a revolution in a highly industrialized, highly urbanized technological society... The RAF militants... fighting in the heart of the metropolis, where few thought it still possible to do so, have put the paralyzing mechanism in crisis: this is the historic breakthrough they have achieved and it is their first and most important victory. This is why the German counter-revolution's openly confessed, obsessive goal is to wipe out the RAF... The counter-revolution in West Germany expresses better than other places the essence of imperialist, technological fascism... The RAF has opposed all this and not only with the arms of criticism...it has had, in other words, that intellectual, political and military courage that, unfortunately, many lack and have lacked.

It has "dirtied its hands" by taking up arms; but it is as if, more than a revolver, a great mirror of truth it has been placed before the German bourgeoisie and its voluble, frustrated "intelligence"; a mirror which reflects the chilling outlines of a new fascism... Among the worst comments that have appeared in the readable press of our country there is a more or less explicit common denominator. It is the following thesis: the RAF has attempted an impossible and isolated political leap in the heart of European Capitalism. There has been the recital of a clash between a few isolated extremists and the state. The seeming obviousness of these arguments hides their substantial falseness. Those who sustain them in good faith must admit to not having understood a very important question: a revolutionary mass line is only built around revolutionary war and revolutionary war is never a "natural" spontaneous product of the class struggle but the conscious plan and intervention in history of a fighting party...

In my opinion, the most important limitation of the RAF... is the structure of its political-military relation to the State on the one hand and its political-organizational relation to the German worker and revolutionary movement on the other. A tactical and organizational limitation... Then there is the question of political-organizational relationship with the movement. In substance the criticism advanced is this: the RAF has begun to build its organization on lines external to the movement. Absent from its work has been any indication, even embryonic, of the road to follow for the construction of a non-delegated and popular proletarian power. Does this mean, perhaps, that, for the RAF, the "worker question" is not posed? That at the root of its choices there is an irremediable pessimism about the revolutionary potential of the German industrial proletariat? Does the RAF, perhaps, want social revolution without the working class?

I do not believe that the tactical choice of the RAF, in the first stages of its guerrilla war, to carry out actions to strengthen themselves logistically and to attack on the limited terrain of the counter-revolution means the refusal to confront the worker question. Their choices must be judged against a German situation undoubtedly very different from the Italian and French one. It is a fact that the "potential consciousness" of the West German industrial proletariat today does not go beyond the defense of its immediate cash interests.

By indicating the principal contradiction to be the counter-revolution directly organized by the State, the RAF certainly does not deal with all remaining real needs - but then it does not pretend to do so.

The battle the RAF is fighting inside and outside the German prisons is not only heroic, but is exceptionally important to the revolutionary forces of the whole European continent. It is our duty to support it with every means. The strengthening or the weakening of the revolutionary war in Europe depends on its outcome.

It is necessary that the idea that Berlin and Stuttgart are closer to Rome or Milan than Frascati or Vigevano become familiar to us.

In the European metropolis, the counter-revolution assumes a specific shape which is different only in intensity and form, not essence. Thus the resistance must be continental and begin in the great centers of oppression and exploitation, because these are the crucibles of metropolitan fascism and the points from which it radiates. Metropolitan fascism is the answer which the European ruling classes, teleguided by the USA, are preparing to give to the demand for power which is at the root of the "movements" of "communist forces" which are emerging in the various countries.

William Colby, the infamous director of the CIA, speaking of the situation in Europe said recently: Certainly we do not say **"it doesn't matter if the communists share power."**

The political face of Europe is changing. The Yalta agreements are more and more unstable. The need to work out a new compromise is inevitable and will be painful. The alternatives are not an autonomous and neutral 9-nation Europe or

a Europe servile to the USA. The contradiction is internal to each country. It is called socialism. It is called communism.

This is the main trend. The counter-trend is the new fascism. In the middle there is the slow but irreversible crumbling away of what is left of the "Western democratic system"... Italy is the weak link of the "Western democratic system." West Germany is its strongest.

Therefore, while in Italy the tasks of the armed vanguards are by now posed within the context of an open struggle between the proletarian movement and a dying regime, in West Germany it is still a matter of wearing out the brain, to open up the contradictions in the "Strong State," and to involve a growing number of proletarian vanguards in the perspective of class war by means of a careful stage of armed propaganda.

It seems to me that a single continental strategy must be the basis for the actions of the different organizations that are fighting the last war in Europe: the war for communism.

Letter from Casale prison

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During the second half of 1974, many new armed groups emerged, carrying out a series of armed actions and sabotage. Some of these actions were very effective such as the fire at the Face-Standard<sup>26</sup> factory, which caused 8 billion lire worth of damage (\$10 million), an action claimed by a group calling itself Without Truce for Communism. Other actions were unsuccessful with tragic results, such as the police ambush and murder of NAP (Armed Proletarian Nuclei) leaders Luca Mantini and Sergio Romeo during an attempted expropriation, and the fire-fight at Argelato in which Bruno Valli was killed.

On December 11, 1974, the BR carried out two simultaneous raids on the SIDA FIAT company union headquarters in both the Mirafiori and Rivalta FIAT plants. These raids effectively squelched police rumors that the BR were dead now that Curcio and Franceschini were in jail. During these raids a new slogan was launched: "*BUILD ARMED CLANDESTINE CELLS.*"

The most important BR action of this period was, however, the liberation of Curcio from Casale minimum security prison by a small BR commando unit led by Mara Cagol, on February 18, 1975. The success of the BR prison raid led to new infighting between the various Italian police agencies over who was to blame for Curcio's escape.

The BR message issued after the raid contained a violent attack on the DC. The text of the BR message:

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#### BR MESSAGE AFTER LIBERATION OF CURCIO

On February 18 an armed unit of the Red Brigades attacked and occupied the Casale Monferrato prison liberating Comrade Renato Curcio.

This action is part of the war of resistance to the growing counter-revolutionary forces which today are carrying out a "white coup," following the instructions of the imperialist superbosses Ford and Kissinger. These forces, using the smokescreen of "democratic" anti-fascism, are trying to make people believe that the big danger is the revival of traditional fascism. By this means they blackmail the Left while they put into effect modernized fascism. We have reached the point, in other words, where the dramatic threat to bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat triggers the terroristic use of the entire repressive apparatus of the state.

This is demonstrated by the campaign for law and order skillfully organized by the DC in the last few months. There are two basic features to this counter-revolutionary campaign:

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26 Italian subsidiary of u.s. multinational ITT.

1) the attempt to reduce the labor movement and the left to neocorporative functions, 2) the practice of annihilating every point of resistance by military means.

The crisis of the regime is not moving toward a catastrophic dissolution of bourgeois democratic institutions in a coup, but on the contrary - the element of dissolution is the nationalistic and militaristic reorganization of the entire State apparatus from within. The terrain of resistance to the Counter-revolution thus becomes the principal terrain for the development of the workers struggle.

The workers movement, in fact, is faced by the problem of transforming its political hegemony, which today it clearly exercises in all fields, into an effective use of power. It must, in other words, place on the order of the day the need for a historic break with the DC and the defeat of the strategy of the "historic compromise." It must place the question of power: the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the order of the day.

The task of the revolutionary vanguard today is, to fight white putschism in all its manifestations, beginning in the factories; at the same time to defeat the armed repression of the state and the neocorporatism of the trade unions.

The liberation of political prisoners is part of this program.

Let us liberate and organize all the revolutionary forces for resistance to the white coup. Armed struggle for communism.

Red Brigades

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In general the Left could not believe that the BR were capable of carrying out the prison raid. Avanguardia Operaia (Workers' Vanguard) and *L'Unita* insisted that the secret police (SID) itself had freed Curcio. *L'Unita* actually spun out an imaginative fairy tale about Curcio the spy from early youth, with ties to the fascist terrorist group Ordine Nuovo, the CIA, SID, KYP, and even to the now dissolved OAS (the French settler fascist organization of the 1950's Algerian war period). This was a new low for revisionism, in peddling what it knew to be lies and fantasies to slander revolutionaries. Even Continuous Struggle (*Lotta Continua*) protested this, saying only those who believed in the myth of the all-powerful State could have a problem in believing that Curcio's liberation was genuine.

Amidst heated discussions and recriminations the police searched for Curcio but without success. Almost overnight Curcio became a media star appearing on the cover of four weekly magazines in the space of one week.

Barely eight days later on February 26, with the police hunt for Curcio at its height, the BR struck another blow in their struggle against "white shirt fascism". They raided the offices of the IDI, the Institute of Italian Managers, leaving behind a message explaining their action. Below is the text of the BR message:

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**BR MESSAGE FEB. 28, 1975 ON IDI RAID**

On Wednesday, Feb. 26 an armed unit of the Red Brigades occupied and searched the headquarters of the IDI foundation (Institute of Italian Managers) on Via Charavalle 2.

This foundation, tied to the managers' associations, contributes to their training and specialization in the politics of exploitation and repression of the working class.

Comrades, by the restructuration of the factories, the firings, the lay-offs the bosses seek to restore their rule and destroy the organization and struggle of the workers movement.

The restoration of hegemony and control by the bosses also takes the form of retraining of managers and the restoration of their "authority," which our struggles over these years have thrown into deep crisis. For this reason while

on the one hand management carries out anti-working class maneuvers in the factories, while it decrees layoffs for thousands of workers, while it denounces and fires the worker vanguards, while it restructures the factory along anti-working class lines, on the other hand management seeks to cover up its real role, to pass itself off as just another category of employees and build itself an image of neutrality. In substance the managers try to hide their true role as the bosses' command structure and the planners of the anti-working class assault behind so called purely technical and neutral functions, unconnected to relations of exploitation.

In reality these maneuvers are an attempt to block the workers' struggle against the factory command structure, to restore the hegemony and control of the bosses to a new level, and to wipe out the conquests and the points of power of the workers.

In this situation the redefinition of the role of the managers is part of the strategy of the reactionary forces. It is part of the creeping armed coup which these reactionary forces are carrying out in the country by means of the economic crisis, the militarization of the popular neighborhoods, the jailing of the revolutionary vanguards, to break the resistance of the workers and crush their struggle.

We have to respond to this reactionary offensive by organizing armed resistance units in the factories and the whole national territory. STRIKE THE ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS! ORGANIZE ARMED CLANDESTINE UNITS EVERYWHERE! ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM!

Milan Feb. 28, 1975  
Red Brigades

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After Curcio's liberation, reprisals against BR prisoners grew. In response, the BR authorized its members in jail to publicly proclaim their BR identity to avoid individual isolated struggles with the prison authorities. This also made it easier for the BR to struggle for a unified political trial of the whole organization rather than individual trials. The BR, in a document dated April 11, 1975 explained the situation facing their members in prison and outlined their strategic response:

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#### BR MESSAGE APRIL 11, 1975

##### The prisons

Many militants today are shut up in the regime's prisons under the same general accusation: Red Brigades. The comrades of the BR, to neutralize the maneuvers of the State against the comrades unjustly jailed and not part of the organization, have been authorized to publicly assume their proper political identity.

The treatment of our comrades in the prisons has gone through two phases: before the assault on the Casale prison, and after the assault.

Before: our militants were dispersed throughout the various peripheral judiciary jails for the purpose of stopping them from carrying out political activity among the imprisoned masses of the major institutions.

The desire was to formally avoid, in other words, a German-type isolation that would have given rise to a movement of struggle damaging to the regime by the imprisoned comrades.

In the outlying prisons each of our militants has been subjected to a regime of "special surveillance." This happened to Curcio, at Novara as well as Casale.

If, despite this, he was liberated it is because the liberation unit carried out a scientific plan, concentrating sufficient and well-trained combat forces. After our militants were transferred to "penal institutions" (Porto

Azzurro, Saluzzo, etc.) and despite this they remain for all purposes "waiting for judgment." This means that the judgment has already been carried out without the need for a trial. In addition very serious provocations were staged against some militants while others were subjected to an unjustified regime of total isolation.

We must believe that these measures, obviously persecutorial, are willed by the Minister of police and justice (so-called) rather than just the usual general and the usual prosecutor. Reprisal? In answer to reprisal, reprisal!

### The trials

The militants of the BR refuse and will refuse every attempt to break up the whole of the political initiative of the organization into a thousand separate episodes, which taken out of their context are presented to public opinion as "common crimes", "criminal acts". The purpose of the regime is to divide our comrades from one another to weigh them and judge them separately. We do not accept this method of proceeding.... Therefore there must be one trial. No comrade, captured or not, has greater or smaller responsibilities in the face of the class enemy because each has placed, according to the instructions of the organization, their membership card in the great mosaic of the proletarian revolution.

The liberation of the political prisoner comrades is an irrevocable point of our program. Nothing will go unpunished! Build proletarian power! Armed struggle for communism!

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In April 1975, the BR published their fourth and most comprehensive theoretical document: *The Resolution of the Strategic Leadership*. The document covered six major questions. The first of these was Italy's social and economic crisis. In this section, the BR saw the crisis of Italian capitalism centering on three problems: overproduction, the rise in the cost of raw materials (oil), and the fall in the average rate of profit.

The BR analysis concluded that "in the economic field the State takes on the functions of a large bank serving the large multinational imperialist groups.... The State becomes the direct expression of the big multinational imperialist groups at the national level.... The State becomes, in other words, a specific function of Capitalistic development in the phase of imperialism of the multinationals, it becomes: IMPERIALIST STATE OF THE MULTINATIONALS; that is, the attempt is to follow the German-american model in Italy too." The other questions covered by the document were: the right-wing political strategy of the Christian Democrats as put forward by its party leader Amintore Fanfani; the "corporative pact", or social truce, between the classes proposed by Agnelli, the head of FIAT, which the BR saw as complementing rather than contradicting Fanfani's right-wing strategy; the PCI strategy of the "historic compromise"; the BR strategy of attacking the heart of the State; and urban guerrilla war and the autonomous assemblies, probably the section with the most important political implications for the Italian revolutionary movement. The partial text of *Resolution* is reprinted below:

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#### BR RESOLUTION OF THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, APRIL 1975 (Partial Text)

The sharp fall in the average rate of profit produces a sizable reduction of the labor force used in relation to the total population. All this produces and will produce definite changes in the fabric of social classes which can be outlined as follows. With respect to the **total population** there will be:

a) a continuous reduction of regularly employed wage earners b) an increase in the reserve army of the unemployed, that is, of irregularly employed wage earners; c) an increase of "marginalized" (that part of the population which will be definitely expelled from the capitalist production process).

With respect to **class behavior** we can thus theorize:

a) **regularly employed wage earners: one section** reflects the immediate consciousness of defense of their living conditions. They form the material

base of reformism. **Another section**, and they are the most productive strata (the assembly line worker), develops a revolutionary consciousness of the need to abolish wage labor.

b) **marginalized**: are used by consumer society as wageless consumers. "Criminality" is born from this contradiction. The "economic" use of criminality by capitalism consists in the fact it contributes to the destruction of goods which is necessary for the continuation of the cycle. To be clear: it would be very easy to build theft-proof autos, but this is not in the interests of FIAT. One section of marginalized workers, on an immediate level, reflects bourgeois consciousness: extreme individualism, aspirations for ever larger consumption. Another section reflects the revolutionary consciousness of the need to abolish their marginalized condition, from which also the recognition of the need to abolish society based on wage labor.

c) **reserve army**: the levels of consciousness are determined by the intertwining of the levels of consciousness to be found among regularly employed wage earners and marginalized workers...

### **Christian-Democratic political plan**

If the years 1970-74 were characterized by strong contradictions within the bourgeoisie (for example the clash between Montedison and FIAT), contradictions which split the structure of the state, the parties and the unions vertically, the current period seems to be characterized by a period of "truce" among the various Italian capitalist groups: that is, in the face of the sharpening crisis, the various capitalist groups have closed ranks...

Truce does not, however, mean the end of contradictions within the bourgeois front, it simply means the momentary freezing of these contradictions...

In any case, it would be an error to think that the contradictions which divide the bourgeois front are antagonistic ones. They are simply tactical variations of the same plan: the construction of the Imperialist State of the Multinationals... :

The political plan of the DC, whose most authoritative interpreter at this moment is Fanfani (ex-Premier - ed.), aims to make the DC the driving force of this plan of the imperialist state.

By putting itself forth at every moment as the manager of the "truce" achieved, the DC seeks to be the element of continuous dialectical mediation between the interests of the various capitalist groups...

It is clear, however, that this process will not take place peacefully, but will take on more and more the characteristics of a "civil war"...

More specifically, the Christian Democratic political plan, also openly supported by Tanassi, Sogno and Almirante, is to use the Integralist bloc in the DC as the foundation for building a bigger, more highly organized, openly reactionary and counterrevolutionary "historic bloc" in support of the Imperialist State...

In this regard, the question of "public order" and the war on "political criminality" are symbolic. These campaigns are aimed at the preventive militarization of the national territory and the class struggle more than at gaining votes. Alternately they serve the purpose of recreating a mass public opinion which will permit the reorganization and concentration of all the powers of the State with a view to conducting a counter-revolutionary civil war...

What the DC wants is an open struggle between the revolutionary and progressive forces and the counter-revolutionary "historic bloc"... It proposes to guarantee to the owners of the imperialist multinationals:



- 1) reinforcement of the structures and staff of the military both to better integrate it into NATO planning and to create specialized anti-guerrilla units against internal subversion;
- 2) the creation of a "government judiciary" and the stiffening of penal provisions relating to those parts of the law that deal specifically with class war, from laws on possession of weapons, preventive detention, to police stop-and-frisk, internal exile, and exemplary sentences for revolutionary militants;
- 3) the adoption of "preventive" measures such as the stepped-up military security of the big cities, the institutions and for most exposed men of the government.

More generally, precisely to carry out these goals with the minimum number of contradictions, they aim at a specific constitutional reform, the direct election of the president of the republic and a definite increase in the powers of the executive: in brief, their goal is the so-called "Presidential Republic."

Reorganize the State to defeat the workers movement on the terrain of civil war: this is the essence of the Christian Democratic political project.

### **Corporative pact**

The attempt to build corporative ties between the managerial class of the regime and the union organizations of the workers is more critical to the formation of the Imperialist State than is realized.

Agnelli, (the owner and Chairman of FIAT - ed.) in his role as spokesperson of the entire owners class, had anticipated this in his first speech as president of the Confindustria<sup>27</sup>, when he argued for the necessity to "arrive at a social pact which thirty years after April 1945, would redefine the national objectives of the Italian people for the 80's and 90's..."

What interests us is that the "social pact" is being justified not as an "anti-recession" measure, that is, a tactical agreement, but as an essential necessity for advanced industrial society and therefore as a plan for social stabilization in the 1980's!

The entrapment operation that this presupposes can be defined: organic incorporation of the working class within capital and within the State. It follows the logic that the working class to save itself, must save the boss; to save the boss, it must save the State; to save the State it must take on the economic costs of reconversion of production and the sacrifices of imperialist restructuration. It is a pitiful logic and is only worth considering because it is being advanced by the union and "Communist Party" leaderships.

### **The historic compromise**

There is no understanding within the official Left of the deep political and structural changes which the DC and the Confindustria are carrying out within the overall imperialist counter-revolution.

Above all, the PCI demonstrates its inability to put forward an alternative class strategy. The line confirmed by the 14th Congress of the PCI is a clear example.

The "strategy" of the historic compromise is based on a lack of understanding of two critical questions: the warmongering character of imperialism, and the reactionary and imperialist character of the DC.

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27 The association of industrialists.

Berlinguer, this third-rate Kautsky, claims the policies of "coexistence" and "cooperation" to be a world-wide trend, even discovering confirmations of this in the behavior of the USA, and goes so far as to predict "a system of cooperation and integration so vast as to progressively go beyond the logic of imperialism and capitalism and to encompass the most varied aspects of the economic and social development of entire humanity."

For Berlinguer, there is no antagonism between imperialism, social-imperialism and revolution, but only contradictions that are finding "peaceful" and "civil" solutions.

Reality contradicts him.

The general trend in the world today is that which the Chinese comrades indicate: revolution.

Western Imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism are more and more in open contradiction with each other, and the popular liberation wars are achieving new victories. This is the case in Vietnam, in Cambodia, or, for that matter, in Portugal...

...The historic compromise does not correspond to class political needs, but more narrowly to opportunistic advantages for an aristocratic section of the working class which achieves a few miserable gains from the reinforcement of the imperialist system.

The PCI today violently opposes the revolutionary movement and the class forces from which this movement draw strength and sustenance.

For this reason the revisionist designs will certainly be defeated. Nevertheless, one must not underestimate the ambivalent role which, over the short haul, the line of "historic compromise" plays within the crisis of the regime. - on one hand, it constitutes a powerful element of the regime's political crisis; it instills terror and accelerated contradictions in the most conservative and reactionary centers; on the other hand, it keeps the country from being ungovernable, and this blocks the development of the class war.

Because this means that, while the conservative or reactionary sectors, preoccupied with the turn of events, plan and feed fuel to strategies of openly counter-revolutionary repression, large sectors of the workers and popular movement remain captured in the paralyzing trap of the line of "the compromise." This line by freezing class forces, retards and blocks the growth of the masses' consciousness of the need for war, and this precisely at a time when the situation is highly favorable for the revolutionary forces.

#### **The BR's Line: the assault on the heart of the State**

Within this general framework of plans and contradictions our line remains to unify and raise every partial expression of proletarian antagonism in a convergent assault on the "heart of the State."

Its starting point is the all-too obvious consideration that it is the Imperialist State...that imposes the overall plan for restructuration...and that, therefore, there is no revolutionary struggle outside the relation of the working class to the State.

The intermediate goal is the collapse and definitive crisis of the Christian Democratic regime, the necessary premise for a "historic turn" toward communism.

Therefore, the main task of revolutionary action in this period is the maximum political disruption of the regime as much as the State. The maximum possible development of political contradictions, in other words, between and within the institutions; between the various tactical plans for the solution of the crisis and internally within each of them.

The transition to a more advanced phase of military disruption of the State and the regime is premature: and therefore mistaken for two reasons:

- 1) the political crisis of the regime is very advanced, but we are still not close to the "point of collapse";
- 2) while the accumulation of revolutionary forces on the terrain of armed struggle has greatly accelerated in the last two years, its expansion throughout the national territory and its political and military maturity is not such as to permit the passage to a new phase of the war.

The destruction of the enemy and the political and military mobilization of the popular forces must go hand in hand. The strengthening of proletarian power is, in other words, condition and premise of the passage to the more advanced phase of military disruption of the enemy regime and the state.

### **Urban Guerrilla Warfare and the autonomous assemblies**

Urban guerrilla warfare plays a decisive role in the political disruption of the regime and the state. It strikes the enemy directly and smooths the road for the resistance movement.

It is around armed guerrilla warfare that the resistance movement and the area of autonomy is built and linked together and not vice versa.

To enlarge this area thus means, in the first place, to develop the organization of guerrilla warfare, its political capacity and its firepower.

All those positions which see the growth of guerrilla warfare as a result of the development of the legal or semi-legal area of the so-called "autonomy" are mistaken.

It is best to be clear on this point. Within what is defined as "the area of autonomy" many very different positions and strata are piled together. Some, who define their position within the class struggle in a "subjective" way, consider themselves part of this area more to impose on it needs and problems extraneous to it, that is "to win it over to the terrain of politics" rather than to encourage its strategic, tactical and organizational definition along progressively revolutionary lines. In our judgment the whole question must be approached beginning with the class stratum which more than any other experienced the intensification of exploitation as a result of capitalistic and imperialistic restructuration plans...

The workers! "autonomous assemblies" in the factories are not the vanguard of this class stratum... When these assemblies arose they constituted a decisive factor in the process of overcoming "groupism," but today they themselves run the risk of ending up in the blind alley of that same political approach.

What leaves them open to this danger is the "fetishism of legality": the inability to escape from the false dichotomy between "legality" and "illegality." In other words, the autonomous assemblies are not able to pose the question of organization based on real political needs and thus end up restricting these needs to the limits of the type of legal organization they have created for themselves.

They cut the foot to make it fit the shoe!

Some of them, more conscious of this contradiction, reach the point of admitting the need for dual organizational and thus repropose the theory of the legal party and its illegal "armed wing," of the old, failed 3rd Internationalist logic.

But, in this new situation, on pain of extinction of their revolutionary role, they must make a dialectical leap if they want to hold onto the basic assumption of organizing the antagonism of the "objectively" revolutionary stratum on the terrain of **class war**.

Outside this perspective there is nothing but to be a permanent minority or to be subservient to revisionism.

Urban guerrilla warfare organizes the strategic nucleus of the class movement, not its "armed wing."

In urban guerrilla warfare there is no contradiction between thinking and acting militarily and putting politics first. It carries out its revolutionary initiative according to a political-military **mass line**.

Mass line for guerrilla warfare does not mean, as some interpret it, "organize the mass movement on the terrain of armed struggle," or at least it does not mean this right now.

In the immediate future, the main aspect of the question remains the building of the **Fighting Party** as the real interpreter of the political and military needs of the "objectively" revolutionary class stratum, and the development of fighting organizations on a class-wide level on the various fronts of the revolutionary war.

This is not a small difference. It is worth spelling it out because it contains a disagreement on the organizational question which is not secondary.

The substance of the disagreement is that the first thesis degrades the organization of the "movement" to the point of dissolving it; at the same time that it is blown up to reach mythical proportions; the second thesis conceives of organization and movement as distinctly separate realities in perpetual dialectic with each other.

The Fighting Party is a party of fighting cadres. It is thus an advanced, armed detachment of the working class and therefore both distinct from and organic part of the class.

The movement is a complex, heterogeneous reality in which many different levels of consciousness coexist and compete with each other. It is unthinkable and, above all, impossible to "organize" this multiplicity of levels of consciousness on "the terrain of armed struggle." Be it because this terrain, while it is strategic, is not the main one; be it because the nucleus which builds the Fighting Party, that is the BR, certainly has not achieved the political, military and organizational skills needed for this purpose.

It is not a matter of "organizing the mass movement on the terrain of armed struggle" but of rooting the organization of the armed struggle and the political consciousness of its historical necessity in the class movement.

This remains the main goal of the Fighting Party under construction in this period.

For all the reasons we have discussed, the level of conflict proper to this period remains that of **armed propaganda**.

The principal aims of armed propaganda action are three:

- create the maximum possible number of political contradictions within the enemy ranks, that is dismember it, make it non-functional;
- clear a path for the resistance movement using as yet unknown, but no less essential, methods of struggle;
- organize the advanced class stratum into the party and into class-wide fighting organizations on the various fronts of the war.

Armed propaganda achieved by guerrilla action is a phase of the class war and not, as some hold, a "form of struggle." This phase is followed by the phase of open civil war, in which the main task of the armed vanguard will be to dismember and destroy through armed struggle the bureaucratic and military machine of the state.

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The verbal attack on the ruling Christian Democratic party contained in the February 20 BR message, issued after Curcio's liberation, and in the April theoretical document, was put into practice on May 15, 1975, in a series of spectacular actions carried out in three different cities. In Mestre, a DC headquarters was raided. In Turin, nine autos belonging to "yellow" company unionists were burned. But the biggest action took place in Milan, in a raid against the headquarters of Democratic Initiative, a right-wing group closely tied to the Christian Democratic leader Massimo De Carolis (a leader of the "silent majority"). This raid was the first BR "knee-capping".

The BR document issued after the action also included a postscript denying any organizational ties between the BR and the NAP (Armed Proletarian Nuclei - a primarily Southern proletarian and lumpenproletarian armed organization born in 1974), but expressing Communist solidarity with them. The NAP had been in the news a lot recently because of their kidnapping of Judge Di Gennaro, and Di Gennaro had spread false rumors about the presumed operational ties between the BR and NAP. The text of the BR message issued May 15, 1975 is reprinted below:

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**MAY 15, 1975 BR MESSAGE AFTER RAID  
ON INIZIATIVA DEMOCRATICA HEADQUARTERS IN MILAN**

An armed unit of the Red Brigades has searched and destroyed the Christian Democratic nest, on Via Monte di Pietà 15, headquarters of Iniziativa Democratica, a group of anti-communist provocateurs, better known as the "De Carolis gang."

The Christian Democracy is the main political leader of the plan for imperialist reorganization of the state. It is the center of unity for the grouping of reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces which united Fanfani to Tanassi, Sogno Pacciardi, Almirante and the terrorist groups.

THE DC IS THE MAIN ENEMY OF THE MOMENT: it is the organic party of the bourgeoisie, the ruling classes and imperialism. It is the political and organizational center of reaction and terrorism. It is the motor force of the overall counter-revolution and the driving force of modern fascism: imperialist fascism. We must not let ourselves be fooled by its "professions of democratic and anti-fascist faith" which from time to time come from some of the leaders of this party. These professions are made because they respond to the tactical need to keep alive the dialectic between "fascism" and "anti-fascism" which permits the DC to collect votes, making people believe that, as opposed to the "fascist" danger, "reformed democracy," that is, the imperialist state, is better. The problem of the revolutionary vanguards is to make this whole game clear, striking at hidden nests, connections, connivances and plans. The DC is not only a party, but the dark soul of a regime which for 30 years has oppressed the popular and laboring masses of the country. It does not make common sense to declare in words the need to defeat the regime and in fact propose a historic compromise with the DC. It makes even less sense chattering about how to reform it.

THE DC MUST BE LIQUIDATED, BEATEN AND DISPERSED. The undoing of the regime must drag down this filthy party and all its leaders; as happened in 1945 with the fascist regime and Mussolini's party. Liquidation of the DC and its regime is the indispensable premise for reaching a real "historic turning-point" in our country. This is the main task of the movement. Iniziativa Democratica is a reactionary, counter-revolutionary center closely linked to the political and economic structures of the Milanese metropolis. The men of this center, which, according to its leader Massimo De Carolis, today represent "the most important force in the citywide and regional DC and the numerically strongest group in the city council" are all openly and nakedly compromised with the most sinister reaction....

In these days the De Carolis gang is in its lair preparing for an electoral campaign aimed "at bringing Milanese votes to the DC and particularly to the most trust-worthy candidates of the party." With this action we have anticipated the judgment that proletarians make of him, his associates and his foul party. But this is only an appetizer. The rest he can collect directly in

the proletarian areas if he tries to set even one foot there. The special laws for public order desired by the Christian Democracy encourage the use of arms against "political criminality." We have, for once, followed this advice, shooting in the legs one of the most convinced supporters of these liberticide laws.

Certainly he deserved more, but in these matters there is no hurry. We can quickly raise our aim and also single out the real "criminals"!

CARRY THE ATTACK TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LAIRS, CENTERS OF POLITICAL AND COMMON CRIME, REACTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION. RED BRIGADES May 15, 1975

We specify that no organizational or operative ties exist between the Armed Proletarian Nuclei (NAP) and the Red Brigades. Long live the struggle of the Armed Proletarian Nuclei!

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Once again, the response of both the left and the right-wing press to the De Carolis action was very similar: the action was a fascist conspiracy timed to influence upcoming elections. A new variation on this old and tired theme was advanced however. Allegedly, Amerio had kidnapped himself, Labate had shaved himself, and De Carolis had shot himself! All kinds of crimes were attributed to the BR, and Curcio was sighted everywhere.

Following the same pattern of provocations carried out in West Germany against the RAF lawyers, intimidations and provocations were also carried out against the lawyers of BR militants. The police repeatedly raided the offices of BR lawyer Costa, and notices warning of criminal indictment were sent to two other leftist defense lawyers. A large, 2-pound plastique bomb was set off in the offices of one defense lawyer and attacks and threats were made by the carabinieri, the judiciary, and the reactionary press against some bourgeois newspapers, above all *L'Espresso*, which were still printing BR communiques. For the first time since the fall of fascism virtually the entire editorial staff of a publication - *Contro-Informazione* - was either jailed or incriminated. One judge, Di Vincenzo, was accused of being a BR sympathizer by carabinieri General Della Chiesa, the head of the new "anti-terrorist" unit formed in the Summer of 1974.

On June 4, 1975 during a search for Chianti wine magnate Vittorio Gancia, kidnapped a few days earlier, a carabinieri patrol surprised Mara Cagol and other BR comrades in a farmhouse near Acqui. A brief firefight broke out in which Mara was badly wounded, captured, and then executed on the spot by the carabinieri. At first Mara's identity was not known by police but BR quickly acknowledged that the Gancia kidnapping was their operation and that the woman comrade killed at Acqui was Mara. On June 5, 1975, the BR published a brief message honoring the fallen Mara, who had been the political-military commander of the Turin BR column formed in early 1974 and co-founder of the BR. The full text of the BR message:

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#### BR MESSAGE ON THE DEATH OF "MARA"

To the comrades of the organization, to sincerely revolutionary forces, to all proletarians. MARGHERITA CAGOL, "MARA," communist leader and member of the executive committee of the Red Brigades, has fallen in combat. Her life and her death are an example that no fighter for liberty can ever forget. Founder of our organization, "MARA" gave an inestimable contribution of intelligence, self-denial and humanity to the birth and growth of workers autonomy and the armed struggle for communism. Political-military commander of a column, "MARA" was able to victoriously lead several of the most important operations of the organization.

The liberation of one of our commanders from the prison at Casale Monferrato speaks for all of them. We cannot permit ourselves to shed tears over our dead, but must learn from them the lesson of loyalty, consistency, courage and heroism!

War, in the last analysis, decides the question of power: revolutionary class war. And this war has a price: a high price certainly, but not so high as to make us prefer the slavery of wage labor, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in its fascist or social-democratic variants. It is not the vote that decides

the question of power; freedom is not conquered with a ballot. Let all sincere revolutionaries honor the memory of "MARA," reflecting on the political teaching which she was able to give through her choice, her work, her life. That a thousand arms may reach out to grasp her rifle! We, as a last salute, say to her: "Mara, a flower has bloomed, and the Red Brigades will continue to cultivate this flower of freedom until the final victory!"

#### ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM

June 5, 1975  
RED BRIGADES

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*Il Manifesto*, in what was perhaps a first for them, defended "Mara" against charges that she had been a criminal or a KGB agent. *Lotta Continua* treated her as a militant revolutionary who had fallen in battle and should be honored even though they had disagreed with her over strategy. *Lotta Continua* in their June 8, 1975 issue wrote:

"We read with disgust the words of open exultation or pietistic deploring - and even racist: a fragile woman, petty bourgeois, caught up in the destiny of her man - that are dedicated to the death of Margherita Cagol. We read with respect, but with an even firmer political dissent, the words with which her comrades saluted her, words which speak of heroism and of victory."

In their internal bulletin, *Armed Struggle for Communism*, the BR noted that the first women revolutionaries to fall in the current struggle were "the new witches", whose meaning must be denied by the imperialists:

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The revolutionary movement has lost two militants, Margherita Cagol, "Mara" and Anna Maria Mantini. Mara was one of the "oldest" militants of the Red Brigades. Her commitment to the organization was one of a total militance which she made the priority in her interests... Anna Maria, who the NAP describe as an exceptional comrade, was one of the founders of the October 29th group. We have witnessed dismay and amazement (and not only among the bourgeois) at the killing of two women. But the amazement displayed over the role that these two comrades played in the armed struggle is simply amazement that two women had chosen to do what many comrades do not even dare think about. To be amazed because two women comrades had an active role in the class war, were political subjects, is simply to be amazed that women can be anything other than more or less left-wing sexual objects. Dismay at the new image of woman as a rebel subject: the new witches... The state naturally cannot permit itself the luxury of finding dangerous symbols above all when the corpses are of the female sex. Thus Maria becomes Mrs. Curcio in the press, a department store dummy without a brain who followed her man for the sake of love (as is expected of every woman)... And then there is Anna Maria whom everybody has described as a mild girl dominated by her older brother. No sooner does a woman demand not only economic autonomy and the right to choose one's own kind of life, but also she recognizes herself as part of the exploited class and begins a class struggle, then the state settles accounts with a bullet in her face...

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Mara's death and the first losses of BR safe houses and units produced extravagant claims from the police and the bourgeois press that the BR were dying, mortally wounded. The pro-Moscow newspaper *L'Unita* hoped in print that "this incredible story of the Red Brigades finally is coming to an end", But the servants of imperialism were to be surprised. For even as they wrote, the BR and other armed organizations were starting a large-scale attack on the State that brought Italy to years of near civil war. We close abruptly here. The full story of the first generation of revolutionary war in Italy is still waiting to be told. It has been our intention to explain its beginning.

**The End**

## AFTERWORD

For more than five years, starting in 1975, the struggle in Italy rose to the intensity of a civil war. The revolutionary Left not only attacked the State, but set itself up as an alternative "counter-power" within society. The seizure of State power was seen as coming "soon".

Statistics show how all-pervasive urban guerrilla actions were. Ministry of Interior reports set the number of "acts of terrorism" in 1975 at 702, in 1976 at 1,353, and by 1979 at 2,514 (some of these were fascist, but overwhelmingly the Left). That is, the revolutionary Left was doing armed actions at the rate of five or six per day; these were hit-and-run attacks on carabinieri patrols and barracks, punitive executions of prison wardens and guards who had abused prisoners, knee-cappings of bosses and right-wing government officials, expropriations, torching cars, and bombings of right-wing centers. And such police statistics did not count the full number of popular actions of resistance-sabotage in factories, beating up fascists and scabs, and so on. In the "popular neighborhoods" the phenomena of "proletarian holidays" involved masses of people. When food money got low, families of workers would march on the local store in a group, take everything they could carry, and leave without paying - shouting "proletarian holiday". The store personnel knew that calling the police would subject them to reprisals. This became so widespread that criminals began doing robberies that way.

A 1978 study on the urban guerrillas prepared by the unhappy Italian Communist Party (PCI) estimated that there were over 10,000 armed militants: "700 to 800 terrorists living clandestinely and approximately 10,000 other individuals who use arms in arson, pillage and other violent actions." The size of the "autonomous area", the active community that sustained the armed struggle, was commonly estimated at 250,000 persons or roughly 1% of the adult population. Sympathizers and those who took a neutral stance were an even greater number. While there were three major organizations - BR, Armed Proletarian Nuclei, and Frontline - many military collectives and temporary action groups representing varying political views and strategies sprang up: Armed Watch, Communist Combat Units, Revolutionary Action, Armed Communist Front, and so on. By October 1978 the Ministry of the Interior had counted some 135 armed Left groups which had performed actions.

The public began to recognize the Red Brigades' remarkable style of fighting - very professional, very audacious, always guided by superior intelligence work and preparation. Almost every BR action was stamped by this "trademark" style of fighting. One example was the June 8, 1976 execution of Francesco Coco, who was the equivalent to the Attorney-General in Genoa. Coco was the unrepentant rightist who blocked the promised release of the October 22nd Group prisoners in exchange for Sossi. This official was also singled out for his protection of various corrupt business interests. He had refused to prosecute the construction companies whose shoddy work led to the collapse of buildings in a working class district, killing 18 people (he said the deaths "did not constitute a crime"). As one of the most "wanted" men in Italy, Coco was never without guards.

On Tuesday, June 8, 1976, Prosecutor Francesco Coco was returning home for lunch. It was 1:30 pm; most people were already eating lunch and the street was empty. Coco's car drove by a carabinieri trooper guarding his street, some 300 feet from his door. His driver, another carabinieri trooper, remained in the car while Coco and his bodyguard, a plain clothes cop, climbed the long stone steps of the old side-street going up to his doorway. As they were halfway up the steps, three young men came out of an archway and began walking up the steps ahead of them. Suddenly the three men spun around, guns in their hands, and began shooting at point-blank range. Pig Coco and his bodyguard were killed on the spot.

Meanwhile on the street below a BR shielding unit killed the carabinieri trooper sitting in Coco's car. This prevented him from interfering with the main unit's getaway, and for good measure prevented the trooper on foot down the street from using Coco's car to give chase. The BR fighters escaped with cars which other units had parked beforehand right around the corner. The Coco action had originally been set for Friday June 4th, the anniversary of Mara's death, but an irregular schedule on his part had given him four more days of life.

The professional planning and execution of the action caused comment. Even the marksmanship had been near-perfect - five fighters emptied their guns, killing three pigs, and only one bullet had missed. The Italian bourgeois press started conjuring up fantasies of "foreign



hit-men" (German R.A.F. or the Russian KGB), since everyone knew that Italians were never that efficient or disciplined!

This professionalism became the known style of the BR. In the Casale prison raid to free Renato Curcio, two workmen in blue coveralls of the State telephone company climbed the nearby electric pole and disconnected the prison's telephone lines - they were BR of course. Months and sometimes years of preparation, including much intelligence work, went into each action. It was standard procedure for shielding units to take over streets, sometimes even blocking them with trucks, to ensure that the main unit wasn't surprised "on the job" by police. The BR had almost no busted operations, and took very few casualties during actions.

The BR structure had a complex division of labor. Their basic unit was a 3-5 person cell, with the usual security filters so that only one person knew how to reach the next higher level. The entire organization was divided into large columns, which were self-reliant and had security insulation from each other. These columns were said to be up to 1,500 persons in size. Columns existed in Turin, Milan, Genoa, Venice, and Rome. Supposedly organizations were being built up to the column level in Naples and Sardinia in the South. There were units active in 60 cities. Within each column there were a number of Brigades, usually specialized for mass work, logistics (safehouses, I.D.s, arms, medical care, etc.), the factory struggle, dealing with the courts and police, and dealing with the political parties. Specialized services, such as internal document archives or police radio monitoring, were set up in their own safehouses. Some operations, such as printing presses, were set up as dummy small businesses. On a "horizontal" level, all logistics work and all mass work was coordinated by national bodies (mass front and logistics front). For instance: most BR work was coordinated and controlled "vertically" within columns, going from primary cells up to the political-military commander. But everyone who ran safehouses for the different columns also had their work coordinated nationally by the national logistics front which set general policy in this area for the whole organization. An executive provided overall leadership, while all BR elements were represented on the highest body, the Strategic Directorate, which set the political line.

The Red Brigades were using armed struggle to transform Italian society, teaching new norms of behavior. "Proletarian holidays" and guerrilla actions were connected. Prison guards were not hit at random or in general, for example, but some of the most fascistic were punished as a lesson, to help convince their colleagues to be more neutral, to be less eager to do the dirty work. In one expropriation the BR unit didn't even bother with guns-- just the "counter-power" it had. One day a well-dressed man appeared at a branch bank and asked to see the manager. Once seated he opened his briefcase and handed the bank manager a BR communique. The dumbfounded manager then got a lecture with details on his personal habits, residence and family. The BR militant then explained that it was less trouble for both sides if the manager just filled the briefcase with money and let him leave. Otherwise, the BR would definitely execute the manager - whom they knew all about. Knowing that the BR kept their word (as Coco discovered), the manager complied. On leaving, the BR militant got a signed letter from the manager giving the exact amount expropriated - BR accounting reviews of unit finances wanted such proof that the amount expropriated and the amount turned in balanced.

The "counter-power" was so strong that for almost four years the State was unable to complete trials for arrested BR members. Trials were postponed over and over. Stating that the trials were a farce, a mere propaganda exercise, the BR asked that they not take place and warned people against helping the State conduct them. Many judges, officials, attorneys and jurors bowed out. And after Fulvio Croce, the hard-line president of the Turin bar association, was executed by a BR unit on April 25, 1977, everything stopped again. 36 of the 42 members of the jury port said that they couldn't participate in the BR trial for "health reasons".

By late 1978 the tide of battle had begun to turn. March 16, 1978 the Rome BR column kidnap DC party president Aldo Moro, twice before Premier, and the next Premier-to-be. Moro is one of the most heavily guarded men in the country, with five armed police guards. All five are killed. On surrounding main streets, trucks driven by BR militants are idling their engines, ready to block the road if police reinforcements appear. All telephone lines in the immediate area have been cut. In a bigger replay of the Sossi operation, Moro is held in a people's prison for 54 days against an exchange of 13 prisoners. The whole country is turned upside down. At the end the State decides it wants Moro, who is writing messages and is increasingly bitter, to be killed, and refuses to deal. The BR execute Moro.

State repression climbed to new highs. Aldo Moro had not been a fascist or a Fanfani-type Rightist; he had been head of the Moderate wing of the DC - a famous politician whose stature was like a Senator Teddy Kennedy. All the political parties and the varied factions of the State itself united behind the program of repressing the urban guerrillas. In April 1979 the police began raids against Workers' Autonomy, charging that it was the above-ground wing of the BR. *Contro-Informazione* magazine and Red Aid, the invaluable support network for political prisoners, were banned. Within the next several years the revolutionary Left was crushed. No above-ground organizations or publications survived. Even many who had opposed armed struggle were imprisoned or fled into exile. It became illegal to print BR communiques or political statements, and the editor and reporters of *L'Espresso* (a big news magazine like Newsweek in the "u.s.a.") were arrested for refusing to go along. 3,000 BR members and 7,000 other leftists are in the prisons. The story of the State's counter-insurgency drive is an extensive one, and one we cannot go into here.

We would like to briefly talk about "restructuration", imperialism's strategy for "drying up the sea" of people that sustain revolutionary war. As applied to Italy it was a counter-insurgency operation, but also something larger, a re-engineering of a backward human society to better fit into the world system of the multinational corporations. The 1970s saw a tremendous modernization of Italian institutions, with particular reforms in industrial organization, education, women's equality, regional autonomy, and the full incorporation of revisionism into the system. Every one of these changes absolutely parallel the "restructuration" that went on in the u.s. empire in the late 1960s and 1970s. And just as in the "u.s." in Italy they had an effect on social discontent, particularly within the middle class.

The material basis of "restructuration" is changes in the organization of production, and therefore in class relations. If we look at FIAT, these changes are dramatic. There was repression of the revolutionary infrastructure on the shop floor. Not only selective arrests, but the wholesale purges, guided by the dossiers compiled by the fascist spy network, that fired, laid off or transferred away thousands of the most militant workers. The Mirafiori workforce shrank both due to technological production changes and due to subcontracting more and more production away to Spain, Greece, and the Third World. The "sea" of the factory that sustained (and hid) the revolutionary forces was to some degree dried up.

Many more youth were let into university education. In a few years in the 1970s, the size of the university system tripled, and liberal reforms took effect. Just as in the "u.s.a." the 1970s saw a wave of bourgeois democratic reforms in Italy. New legislation in 1975-78 adjusted or reworded much of the old patriarchal family laws. "Equality" for women was pushed by the ruling class. Birth control had been legalized in 1971; abortion was legalized (first trimester only) by Law 194 in 1978. This reform primarily benefited women of the privileged classes, since without money, abortion is hard to arrange. Additionally, in many areas the government-funded women's health centers that are the only source of free birth control and abortion are run by the Catholic Church. Consequently many working class and peasant women still resort to illegal abortions. Rape and involuntary marriages are illegal, although killing of women still goes on. In general the old feudal-clerical culture has been pushed back, again, especially for the petty-bourgeoisie in the major cities.

An effort was made to iron out some contradictions within Italy's bureaucratized State. In a 1971 de-centralization, regional governments were granted control over government-funded social services. This was also a pay-off to the revisionist Italian Communist Party, whose job patronage sharply increased in the Central Italian "red belt" where it controlled most of the regional governments. Traditionally, Italian government welfare funding was a subsidy for the Church, which operated the orphanages, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, nursing homes, etc. with public tax money. PCI officials threatened to start public services and replace all the nuns with workers who supported the PCI. Secret negotiations ensued between the Vatican and the PCI. In late 1973 an agreement was reached.

In the words of the New York Times (February 3, 1974):

"Last Christmas Cardinal Poma in a pastoral letter urged his clergy to 'take part in the life, the tasks and the structures of society'. This was interpreted to mean that the Church wanted priests to cooperate with the Communist-controlled regional and city governments.... It is believed that the Communist Party has indicated willingness to let

the Church have a relatively free hand in social welfare affairs in exchange for cooperation in other fields."

This detente between the PCI and the Vatican, and between the State and the PCI, brought Italy's largest "Left" party into the ruling structures and ended the historic antagonism. It also strengthened the Vatican's hand in isolating the Catholic Left (anti-Capitalist Catholics were politically active throughout Italy, including many within the BR). Revisionism, which had proven so necessary in opposing guerrilla warfare among the masses, was being funded and nourished by imperialism.

Imperialism's aim in pushing through all these changes has been to end Italy's crisis by transforming Italian society into a full-blown, "advanced" oppressor nation. Today we note that even in Italy, traditionally the poorest of the major imperialist nations, trends are seen similar to those already firmly established in the "u.s.a.", West Germany, Britain and France. There is no need to detail them here, but this "restructuration" is evident in the growing importation of undocumented North Afrikan workers, who even in the impoverished South are becoming the majority of unskilled laborers in construction and other industries. Thus the question confronting the Italian revolutionary struggle, which has never died despite serious setbacks, include questions posed by imperialism for all oppressor nations.

# EXCERPTS FROM A BR TRAINING MANUAL

*Translation of excerpts from BR training manual. This manual was found by police in a December 1975 raid of a BR safehouse in Pavia, a medium-sized city not far from Milan.*

## A. SYSTEMS OF COMMUNICATION

**Telephone:** Avoid using it. Start from the assumption that it is tapped. In case of necessity: speak with a natural voice but without explicitly mentioning names or meeting places. Agree on the use of conventional phrases (number the meeting places, use the date of the following day and falsify the appointment time). If a telephone call is made from a private phone keep the call as brief as possible (if the line is tapped directly from nearby rather than from the main office it takes almost 15 minutes to trace the phone number from which the call is being made).

**Written messages:** Avoid using them, never use the regular mails (mail can be checked very, very easily). Never trust third persons with compromising messages. Do not keep them in the house or on your person any more than necessary. Destroy them after reading them.

**Contacts with Comrades:** In the case of comrades who work in the same place or who regularly see each other the best method obviously is to communicate verbally. In the case of comrades whose homes are known avoid being seen at their home.

## B. CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A MEETING PLACE AND HOW TO BEHAVE.

Avoid places that are near police stations or other similar places and in general avoid places in the city habitually under surveillance by the forces of order (financial districts, high crime areas). Remember the Reale law: don't stand in front of banks, post offices, headquarters of various public service facilities.

## C. HOW TO GO TO A MEETING PLACE

The most important thing is to avoid bringing a tail with you.

Keep in mind that a tail can be old or young, a man or a woman, and in any case be quite ordinary-looking. In case a comrade realizes he is being tailed, it is best not to show that you've noticed and above all **don't** try to lose the pig: it is useless to confirm for him that you're carrying out illegal activity! Take him for a ride around the city, in the opposite direction of the meeting place, do some shopping and then go home.

## D. GROUP MEETING PLACES

**Public Places:** are okay for small groups of comrades and for meetings for discussion purposes only...

**Legal private homes:** are useful for bigger meetings and indispensable for very long discussions. Best are homes of comrades unconnected to the organization and to all political activity and who are in a relationship of trust with one of our comrades.

**Illegal private homes:** are stable structures of the organization, indispensable for the riskiest illegal and material activities. They are buildings acquired with false names and in any case not traceable to a comrade. Every illegal house must have a person who is responsible for it who, besides looking after it from a legal point of view manages it, that is they appear as its tenant and maintain a minimum of relations with neighbors.

True work of gathering information must above all: lose all character of irregularity or improvisation, in other words it must become a methodical labor, which is carried out in a planned fashion, with established goals and priorities. It must not be a separate activity; its reason for being must be connected to the overall political initiative of the organization. This means one must also assume a military knowledge of the terrain on which one acts.

## E. SEVERAL AIMS OF INFORMATION GATHERING

**In the factory:** 1) An accurate knowledge of the factory's physical structure (planimetry, dislocation of the installation's control centers), 2) a study of the production cycle, 3) a deeper understanding of the functioning of the assembly lines and the machines, of the exits, etc., with enough detail to be able to develop methods of sabotage, 4) a study of the flow chart of the power structure in the factory, 5) a reconstruction of the control hierarchy from the foreman to the personnel office and their political attributes, 6) a reconstruction of the repressive network (guards, police, spies), 7) a knowledge of yellow unionism (scabbing).

This investigative work makes use of particular methods which must guarantee the **absolute certainty** of the information and the **absolute precision of the facts**. The successful outcome of the illegal initiative and the safety of the comrades depends on these two requirements. The instruments to use in these investigations and which already imply some risks are: **surveillance, tailing, infiltration, raids and interrogation**.

**Surveillance.** Consists of watching a house or a headquarters to study the schedules of a person, the comings and goings from a house, the situation on a block, etc. It is a **static** control which requires staying in one place often for hours. The biggest risk consists of making store owners or residents of the area suspicious, or allowing oneself to be noticed and remembered by too many people.

1. The choice of an observation post (or better yet several posts) more or less sheltered or which provides you with a good alibi (a cafe with a window that gives you a good view of the position; a telephone booth where you can carry on endless conversations; a park bench, etc.). If this is impossible alternate stopping at a quiet spot with walks along the street. Avoid prolonged stops in a car (you make their job easier: its easier to write down a license plate number than to describe a person).

2. Switch off so that one comrade is not in the same place for hours, or work as a couple.

3. Never ask nearby store-owners for information: they may be on good terms with the target of the investigation, or worse, with the police...

**Shadowing someone.** It is useful to know the habits, schedules, routes, places frequented, and sometimes the actual home of the object of investigation. It is a **moving** observation that requires much attention. The obvious risk is that you will be noticed by the person you are following, to put him on his guard or worse yet to get your cover blown (and allow them to call in the police).

Some rules to follow:

1. Follow at a distance not too great that you lose sight of them and never too close.

2. In more isolated areas increase the distance. If the neighborhood becomes semi-deserted, redouble your precaution; you may want to give up and have another comrade tail the next day.

3. If you are on foot dress so that you are anonymous-looking and change your dress style somewhat. If the tail is done with a car, use a very common one which does not stand out.

4. In the case of an investigation, keep changing comrades and cars.

5. In the case of important persons or those who are too worried about their "health" make very sure they are not already being followed, but for opposite reasons: in this case give up tailing them.

#### **Another later BR Manual: excerpts**

##### **INVESTIGATION**

The achievement of any goal, be it propagandistic, be it a high level military one, must be preceded by a preliminary inquiry (investigation) which establishes the conditions for its success in relation to the minimum risk the freedom of the comrades.

The conditions for carrying out an action are not always the best for purposes of disengagement: the decisive question in deciding what risks to take is the importance of

the objective. In general, despite the progressive tightening of nets of the repressive structure (plans for citywide and regional roadblocks by the special police corps) it holds true that for a specific objective and for a definite period of time (which it's true, is becoming shorter and shorter) the organized force put in the field can be superior to the force of the enemy. It is this possibility that must be confirmed in all its particulars by the investigation. The investigation must, in other words theoretically comprehend the whole terrain of the action; mentally go over all the phases of the action and the disengagement that follows and sometime go through a test-run of these phases where the complexity of a specific action requires it and where the succession of phases of action, and within each of these phases the movements of the action groups must be perfectly synchronized. The comrades who carry out the investigation are also those who must carry out the action.

**REPRISAL AND SEQUESTER** It is a good idea to have a picture of the person (take it from the newspapers or have a comrade get it) and start from the work place which in general is known since it's there that the individual regularly carries out his notorious activity which has made him guilty. Often the home of this type of person does not officially appear in the phone book nor is it traceable from the car they use since it often is a government car. In such cases the home must be directly located by tailing them. If the person in question moves by car the tail can be done by car, but in general it is dangerous to wait for a long time near closely guarded public buildings. In this case you can resort to tailing on foot over successive portions of the route. You must wait for their car, whose distinguishing marks you learn well, until it comes to the first intersection and you wait to see what direction it takes. The next day you wait for it at the second intersection, and so forth.

If they leave work in too irregular a pattern, then it is necessary to establish surveillance starting from their home, keeping in mind that the comrades can only wait in one place to carry out the reprisals or the sequestration for a very limited period of time, one hour at most. Once a certain regular pattern of behavior has been established, it is a matter of deciding the place of the reprisal or sequestration in the immediate vicinity of the home or the place of work or on the way to or from work. The same approach (though simplified) holds if the person is on foot or takes public transportation and it is therefore possible to maintain a continuous visual contact; in this case it is best that the tail be carried out by several comrades to avoid arousing suspicion. If it is decided to carry out the action on the road, carry out the ambush right after a curve in the road, or simulate an accident or street work in progress or even dress up as policemen...

**KIDNAPPING TECHNIQUE** ...While the reprisal ends with the arrest of the person who will be left in their car without keys, under the conditions desired, or accompanied for a brief tract of road to a more secluded place (during reprisals the threat of use of weapons naturally leads to their use and the eventual rebellion of the person only escalates the situation), a sequestration is carried out against a person on foot or behind the wheel of a car, requires the literal carrying of the person to a van or a car and for this operation two comrades are required (three get in each others' way).

If the person arrives on foot, approach them in such a way as to cross their path in the immediate vicinity of the waiting van or car. While one comrade passes them, the other paralyzes them with a blow to the stomach. The first comrade takes them by the shoulders, the other by the legs, and together they load the person into the vehicle. If the person is in a car, immediately open the car door and stun them with a blow to the head so they will let go of the steering wheel. While two comrades carry out this operation, others instead must have weapons in hand to hold passersby at bay or dissuade them from intervening. In the van two other comrades seize the person, immobilize them, tie their hands and feet with small chains and then put them in two jute bags that have been cut and sewn together so as to make up an approximately 2 meter (6 2/3 feet) package. They put a gag in the person's mouth and a blindfold over their eyes. The van should cover a short stretch of road; then carry out the transfer of the sack on a street that has already been chosen, dark if possible, where another vehicle is waiting where the package will be placed between the front and back seats and kept under constant control by a comrade.

Just as the support unit must watch and act with the sole purpose of making sure the sequester or reprisal goes smoothly, so during the transfer the support unit which follows the van must stop it from being followed and must therefore stop any car that tries to follow, insuring in this way that the transfer is not observed.

Once the transfer is carried out the comrades of the support unit must also change cars and insure that the third stage of the operation is completed, that is reaching the base. The base must be such that it guarantees the maximum secrecy for the last operation, the transfer from the vehicle to the base itself. To this end one can consider enclosing the person (for a few days only) in a cell made out of a box, building an easily simulated double wall, of the air raid defense type, on the bottom. For long imprisonments an apartment is needed, in which a sound-proof cage is built in any one of the rooms using styrofoam and fiber glass and directly accessible from the box.

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But we are fighters and we know how to learn from the errors, delusions and defeats which the struggle inevitably brings with it. We are Marxist-Leninists and we know that "to fight, to be defeated, to fight again, to be defeated again, to fight anew until the final victory" is the law of history.

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**Brigate Rosse**

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# TYPICAL DAYS

By early 1976, barely 6 years after the formation of the Red Brigades, the armed struggle in Italy had reached a high level of intensity. Listed below are armed actions by the revolutionary Left and the State's repressive response over a period of ten days in March 1976. Most of these actions were part of the BR's armed offensive "Attack on the Heart of the State".

## March 2 – March 12, 1976

### March 2

MILAN. Traffic police begin special training, to check people for drugs, arms and identification. Italian traffic cops (traditionally unarmed and more like our crossing guards) "now become vigilantes".

ROME. Carabinieri vehicle burned in courtyard of carabinieri barracks.

FLORENCE. Another carabinieri vehicle. burned inside barracks.

NAPLES. Another carabinieri vehicle burned inside barracks.

GENOA. Three bombs destroy 4 carabinieri vehicles and break all the windows in the barracks.

RHO. Molotov cocktails thrown and shots fired at carabinieri barracks.

All these actions claimed by NAP and BR in a joint leaflet.

### March 3

MILAN. Time bomb set off in front of a cafe in Porta Romana neighborhood. A leaflet found in telephone booth explains attack is part of a broader campaign aimed at places used by drug dealers to sell hard drugs heroin, morphine and cocaine. Milan is like Algiers.

### March 4

FERMO. BR claim responsibility for machine gun attack on carabinieri barracks.

LIVORNO. Two bombs explode in Innocenti car sales room—heavy damage to building and cars inside.

### March 5

MILAN. Jaka Book publishing house and Super Milano Radio both tied to right-wing Catholic group "communion and liberation" attacked.

### March 6

BOSTO ARSIZIO (va). Another "communion and liberation" office raided. 5 people inside, one of them received light wounds.

### March 9

Angela Rossi, sister of Mario Rossi, one of the October 22<sup>nd</sup> Group comrades sentenced to life, is kidnapped, raped and tortured by death squad in collusion with the police. Angela's crime: publicly denouncing police repression. Lives of Angela's children and brother also are threatened in attempt to silence her.

### March 10

MILAN. Adriano Colombo factory worker comrade who owned apartment Renato Curcio and Nadia Montovani lived in arrested. Roberto Serafini militant arrested on weapons charge. Large demonstration on streets by collectives and neighborhood organizations belonging to "autonomy" movement.

### March 11

MILAN. Two PCI members arrested for illegal possession of weapons. 2 comrades, 21 year old electrician and 20 year old Anna Toraldo arrested for allegedly distributing joint NAP-BR leaflet outside ITT subsidiary Face-Standard electronics factory. Giuliano Isa 24 year old Sit-Siemens factory worker arrested on charges of belonging to an armed group, possession of weapons and explosives. Police came onto Sit-Siemens factory floor to arrest him to intimidate other militant workers.

ARONA. 10:30 pm armed attack on Catelletto Ticino carabinieri barracks.

### March 12



ROME. Comrade Alvaro Isnardi knifed and shot by fascists and left badly wounded in the Tuscolana neighborhood.

NAPLES. While NAP comrades trial taking place police arrest two comrades one the brother of the NAP defendants.

MILAN. For four days now a force of 50 carabinieri with radio cars have been conducting a dragnet of "criminal hotspots" in the city's cafes, hotels, public places, parking garages, subway stations.

ROMAGNANO SESTO. Attack on carabinieri barracks.

NAPLES. Molotov cocktails thrown at headquarters of fascist "New Popular Party" on Via Pisanelli. A FIAT model 500 full of explosives blown up in the afternoon in front of main entrance of the courthouse where in the morning the trial of the NAP comrades was taking place.

There has been a completely mistaken evaluation of the relations of force existing between proletariat and bourgeoisie, that is of the phase of struggle we are going through which is certainly a phase of proletarian offensive but definitely not a phase of military struggle.

Here our political analysis is clearly different from that of those who have advanced the above view.

We hold that the phase the class struggle is going through today is that of the conquest of the instruments of organization and the accumulation of the revolutionary forces capable of sustaining the conflict; preparing the offensive in the face of the growth of a reactionary movement consciously aiming at an armed counter-revolution.

We hold that we are in a period of transition from a spontaneous, mass, even though violent, response, to an organized attack, which chooses its own pace, calculates its intensity, decides the terrain, and imposes its own power.

**RED BRIGADES**  
**April 1971**

# FOOTNOTES

## Chapter 4

1. Re Nudo, #4, April 1971.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

## Chapter 5

4. Red Aid, Red Brigades, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976. pp. 85-87.
5. White Panthers, April 1972.

## Chapter 6

6. Panorama, June 29, 1975.

## Chapter 7

7. Contro-Informazione, #Zero, October 1973.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

## Chapter 8

11. Workers' Power, #44, March 11, 1973.
12. Il Borghese, #33-34, August 20, 1975.
13. Contro-Informazione, #1/2, February-March 1974.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

## Chapter 9

16. Giornale d'Italia, May 13, 1974.
17. Ibid.
18. Il Messaggero, April 20, 1974.
19. Il Tempo, April 28, 1974.
20. Contro-Informazione, #3/4, July 15, 1974.
21. Il Tempo, May 6, 1974.
22. Paese Sera, May 10, 1974.
23. L'Espresso, #27, 1974.
24. From Government Prosecutor Bruno Caccia's Bill of Indictment.
25. L'Espresso, #20, 1974.
26. Paese Sera, May 19, 1974.

27. Il Tempo, May 22, 1974.
28. Bruno Caccia, op. cit.
29. Il Giornale d'Italia, May 24-25, 1974.
30. Caccia, op. cit.
31. Paese Sera, June 19, 1974.
32. L'Espresso, #1, 1975.
33. L'Espresso, #38, September 22, 1974.
34. L'Espresso, #1, 1975.
35. ABC, #9, March 6, 1975; Rosso, #15, March/April 1975.
36. Brigate Rosse, Rivoluzione della direzione strategica, in-Gente magazine, #40, October 6, 1975; L'Espresso, #41, October 12, 1975.
37. Corriere d'informazione, February 27, 1975.
38. L'Espresso, #21, May 25, 1975.
39. Brigate Rosse, Risoluzione... op. cit.
40. Corriere della Sera, May 16, 1975.
41. Corriere della Sera, June 7, 1975.
42. Armed Struggle for Communism, 1975.

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**FIRST BR MESSAGE ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR AN EXPROPRIATION ACTION**  
(AT LONIGO, JULY 14, 1975)

On Monday, July 14 an armed nucleus of the Red Brigades occupied and expropriated the central headquarters of the Popular Bank of Lonigo (Vicenza). In the course of the action some documents on the activities of the bank were requisitioned and 42 million lire were expropriated. The president of the bank is a certain Enrico Della Grana, national vice president of the Popular Banks and hatchetman for Rumor<sup>28</sup> in the zone. The vice-president is a certain Guglielmo Cappelletti who presides over the "Nicolo Rezzara" Center of studies in the Vincentino. This center of studies is the transmission belt between the economic power (represented by this and other banks) and the swamp of the Piccoli-Rumor-Bisaglia highway lobby. Completing the circle of mafia control that this gang exercises over the whole region is their controlling stock ownership of the newspaper "Gazzettino" which has achieved a monopoly of anti-proletarian lies and provocations in the Triveneto.

Comrades, the bourgeoisie has readied a series of tools and organizations on a political, military and economic level, through which it exercises its savage dictatorship over the proletariat. The banks are the pivot of their economic apparatus and they manage the fruits of the continuous and systematic robbery that the bosses have organized to the damage of the working class. To attack, search and expropriate these institutions is the task of every revolutionary organization. To search because the authors of the speculative maneuvers and clientelistic swindles must be identified and struck. To expropriate because the class war for a communist society will lead to the complete expropriation of all the means of production currently in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and today the economic costs of this war must already fall on them, through the taxation which the revolutionary forces are capable of imposing. All power to the armed people!

**ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM**  
**RED BRIGADES**

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28 One of the major DC leaders nationally.