NO. 252

November 17, 1977: "All the News That Fits"

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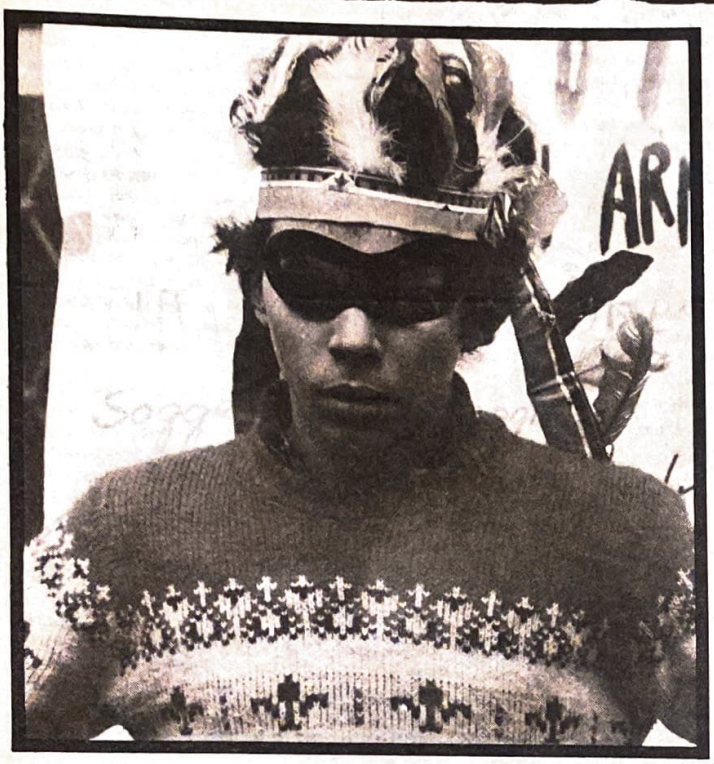


TRIBES

ITALY'S METROPOLITAN INDIANS SIGNAL THE VIOLENT PASSAGE OF A NEW CULTURE AND THE FIRST REBELLION OF 'IRREGULARS' IN MODERN TIMES

BY DONALD R. KATZ

The Eternal City had already smelled like an incinerator for a week. Carlo stuck a plume in his headband, smeared war paint on his face and walked into the moist tension of the afternoon, once again a Metropolitan Indian—an *Indiano Metropolitano*, an Italian Yippie. He strolled into the rage of March 12th—by all accounts the most violent and vicious day in Rome since World War II.

Some 100,000 young Italians were there—many wearing leather jackets bulging with iron pipes and Molotovs and carrying helmets for motorcycles they'd left at home. At strategic points within the huge mass of protesters, kids hugged transistor radios to their ears, all of them tuned to the same underground station, and periodically passed instructions down the lines. When the authorities later tried to close the station, Radio Città Futura, the directors said, "It was a phone-in program. If our listeners call in with reports of police positions and armored car movements during a demonstration, we can't stop them."

Carlo thought the march was beginning peacefully until he saw the kids with the transistors draw the signal of the P-38 out of their pockets like six-guns from their holsters. This signal, the salute of the uprisings of 1977, is less subtle than the old clenched fist. You make your hand look like a gun. Hundreds of people stuck out their two longest fingers and cocked the other two under their thumbs. They swung the signals around like karate chops. It spread through the march. Then Carlo knew it was going to get mean.

Suddenly groups broke off on all sides of the procession, wailing and dancing into the ancient Roman side streets. They slapped their puckered lips in blood-curdling war whoops. Out came the Molotov cocktails and steel bars, up went the scarves, masks and goggles. From tooled leather bags came very new and efficient-looking pistols. The air began to pop.

Carlo joined one of the contingents and bobbed from doorway to doorway until he reached the Via Giulia, where the shop windows were already broken and people were looting inside. People were rushing by with records and tape players. "Proletarian shopping" was a relatively new aspect of the Italian student movement. He ran into a gun shop where the owner had locked himself in a storeroom in the back. Young longhairs were piling rifles, pistols and ammunition into bags. He ran to another part of the store, grabbed a huge, white, floating lifesaver with a red flag sticking out of it, and yelled, "This is what we need! This is what the movement needs! We don't need that stuff, take these!" He spun around the shop in his war paint and feathers and tried to tell the others they were taking it all too seriously.

The élan of several weeks earlier seemed to have turned into desperation. Carlo and the other *Metropolitani* believed that guns were only necessary to defend the life of the movement. They were going too far in the gun shop. Some of the heavies laughed at Carlo as he stood in the

PHOTOGRAPH BY LIAISON

doorway with his lifesaver and war paint.

As he started to leave the gun shop, he could see cops dressed like futuristic gladiators rounding the corner at the end of the street and firing from behind parked cars. The boy standing next to him in the doorway began to make little panting sounds, stripped off his leather jacket and stuck his arm out in front of him. A bullet had entered near his elbow and left just above the wrist, leaving a slightly larger hole. The boy pushed his glasses to his tearing eyes. He just stood there staring at his arm.

Out in the streets the light was beginning to fade. Cars were burning everywhere; groups of rioters and police curled and dodged through the streets, shooting and then spinning behind walls and ducking into doors and alleyways. When a tear-gas grenade exploded, kids would run into the cover of the smoke, fire, then retreat before the mist had faded.

The battle raged through much of the night: through the piazzas, lit like the infield at a night baseball game by the carbon-arc floodlights on the tops of armored cars, past the stained statues and the beautiful fountains and the churches of the ancient center of Rome. Plainclothes policemen hovered at the edge of the *Centro* and reportedly beat students on their way home. Demonstrators rampaged through residential areas, knocking on doors and pleading for shelter from charging troops.

The police later reported that twelve cops had been shot on March 12th. They called the battle "an urban guerrilla offensive without precedent." The alternative paper, *Rosso*, declared that the "armed violence was carried out by organized groups who left the body of the march, struck selected targets and returned into the group. This military avant-garde," Rosso concluded, "was completely accepted by the demonstration because it was an integral part of it."

The minister of the interior warned that "the country may be facing political terrorism with mass student support." The Vatican proclaimed that the violence was yet another facet of "a vast campaign for subverting of traditional values." Giorgio Amendola, one of the Italian Communist party leaders, also condemned the violence and enunciated one of the widely held beliefs as to its cause—that insidious right-wing infiltration was to blame. Amendola said, "We are in Chile before we have even got into government." The prestigious *Corriere della Sera*—the *New York Times* of Italy—said that there was "a presentiment of endemic civil war...."

So went the second semester of the year of the counterculture, of the occupation of the universities, and the explosion—the result of ten years during which young people in Italy have been crowded toward the edge of what they believe to be a dead-end society.

Last year there were well over a thousand "politically motivated" major crimes in Italy. Bombs explode every few hours. At least one man breaks out of prison every day. Jail wardens have been arrested for helping right-wing groups and jail wardens have been arrested for helping left-wing groups. You won't find a single person in Italy who doubts that the reason the bombers are never caught is because someone lets them out of jail to plant a bomb, then they come back to prison when they are done, replete with a perfect alibi.

Nearly one hundred people have been kidnapped since the beginning of 1976 and over $70 million in ransom has been paid. In February, the first evidence of the long-suspected links between the kidnappings and political violence was discovered when ransom money was found after the arrest of a fascist extremist. Kidnapping is so prevalent that the police now try to freeze the victim's family's assets so that no ransom can be paid. Rich people carry pistols everywhere in chic little leather cases.

Though organized crime has always had political overtones in Italy, a series of recent incidents, including the inadvertent interruption of a Mafia conference in Sicily by two policemen, has shown that there are Mafia people near the top of the ruling Christian Democratic party and Christian Democrats near the top of the Mafia.

The same party and the same men have ruled Italy since the war. Though on average governments have lasted only ten months, the leaders of the Christian Democrats have simply taken turns at being prime minister. Most of them have been implicated or charged with accepting money from either the CIA or from a multinational corporation.

No one believes the official statistics in Italy, but it is safe to estimate that there are around 2 million young people already unemployed in Italy—some estimates say that there are over three. One million are between fourteen and nineteen years old. Most of them have high school diplomas and many have college degrees. There are thousands of unemployed lawyers, engineers and—believe it or not—doctors. All of them are young.

In Europe, unemployment is the most volatile of political issues. When the unemployed are also young and educated, the situation is ripe for chaos, as every dictator knows. Only one man has ever successfully made young people with an education settle for sweeping the streets—and that was Stalin.

In 1962 there were a quarter of a million people in college; there are now around 1.3 million students operating in precisely the same amount of space and with no corresponding increase in the number of teachers. Most corporations stopped accepting diplomas granted after 1968 because they didn't mean anything; this in a country where a university degree is traditionally far more important to a young person's future than in the United States.

Of the more than 1 million young people who are lucky enough to be registered at a university, only a small fraction have any hope of finding a job. In six or seven years, they've been told, it may open up a bit. So they hang around college as long as possible. The colleges are called "parking lots for the unemployed." The Socialist party leader, Bettino Craxi, calls these students the new, revolutionary "intellectual proletariat."

Just after the first of the year, the universities exploded. They were immediately occupied by people who'd grown up amid what they call the *fantapolitica*, the strategy of tension, or sometimes the "spiral of tragedy"—phrases emblematic of the collective paranoia and desperation that characterized another time in Italy, just before the days of Mussolini.

The colleges became forums for the frustrated, coliseums for the disillusioned. The protest finally burst forth out of the universities in an expression of rage against everything modern Italy has to offer—which isn't much at all. They turned the streets into battlegrounds.

You have to see the campus to believe it," Carlo had said as we passed the gates of the university. It is a lesson in brutality that teaches a lot about Italy.

The University of Rome is supposed to be one of the good things that Benito Mussolini brought to Italy; like making the trains run on time. Mussolini wanted everyone to go to his schools, so he built the university for 20,000 people. Now there are officially 150,000 students, although a recent survey reports that there are 180,000. No amount of graffiti could alter the intractable fascism of those buildings. The white walls adorned by strong mechanistic-looking figures are oppressive in their ugliness. Gutted old automobiles now sit behind the iron gates of the campus and posters and slogans are splattered everywhere. Hundreds of meetings and rallies are announced from the bleached walls. Huge posters charging the man who oversees the police, Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga, with premeditated murder are done in the "Wanted Dead or Alive" motif. Others portray him ominously as General Custer.

It was to this campus that they all came in February. The shooting of a student by a neo-fascist group in one of the classrooms sparked off the occupation of the buildings. All the thousands of Carlos, all of the "thems" in an "us and them" social framework, came to the university to talk about what they were going to do about their lives—all of the students, the unemployed, the freaks from the Campo de' Fiori, the homosexuals, junkies, immigrants from the South who thought they'd find the streets of the North paved with gold, the nostalgic students from the late Sixties, revolutionaries (old and new) and even the high school students (who came only long enough to learn the style of the uprising, then returned to take over their high schools). The movement was a coalition of outcasts, heretical Marxists, heretical Catholics and anyone else who was angry. The newspapers called them the "Immarginati"—the "marginals."

There were the young feminists. Their surging militancy in this most chauvinistic of societies has recently gained tremendous numbers of new recruits. Punitive feminist antirape squads patrol bad areas of some Italian cities and occasionally hunt down rapists privately. Though the various feminist collectives tend to play it down, there are also armed groups of militant feminists who believe that they quite literally have their own battle to fight. The young feminists flocked to the occupied campus and wrote "Hard Times for the Supermale" on the wall and the men visibly paled as they displayed their new hand signal—two fingers moving quickly together like a scissors.

The lecture halls were taken over as places of open assembly. Weeks of leaderless, agendaless and often surreal discussions ensued. Some political diatribes were heard, but mainly there was a succession of personal testaments. A gay student who'd come down from Milan took the microphone and talked about the nature of his unhappy existence. He was later to say that "it seemed like the only really political thing to do at the moment." In a country in which homosexuality is still closely associated with criminality, people actually showed up in drag.

"I had never talked to more than ten people at the same time in my entire life," Carlo said as we strolled into the back of a political meeting, "and that was to my family. Three weeks ago I addressed several thousand cheering and screaming people. They danced around and gave me joints. They were delirious."

The scene at the university during the winter was anarchic and utopic. People who'd never seen drugs began to consume them and, as the papers gleefully reported, people stayed there at night—in couples. A committee of students asked for certain reforms for their university. They asked for more space, for day-care centers and for "political control over all exams," which meant that a passing mark was to be guaranteed on all examinations. Parents all over Italy wondered what was happening to their children. "They want to tear down the system," many of them said, and wrote to the newspapers, "but they don't have anything to put in its place." Underground newspapers suddenly appeared proclaiming, "Everything! Now!" A banner was hung outside one of the halls at the Rome campus: "Let us face facts," it said. "We are asking the impossible."

Within this magmatic mutiny there were some very familiar appurtenances: hair to the belt, old-fashioned LSD and endless raps on Buddhism and various Indian philosophies. The dress, proliferating underground media, music, symbols and even some of the language was eerily reminiscent of America a decade earlier.

Italian kids all stutter now in vague Italian forms of "like, well ya know, man"—the laid-back new attitudes embedded in the tone. Every other word out of most young people's mouths is "Cazzo," a coarse pejorative expletive referring to the male genitalia and a troubling experience if your name happens to be Katz.

Interior Minister Cossiga's name is still plastered all over the walls of Italy. It is spelled "Kossiga" despite the fact that there is no "k" in Italian. Is it the long-lost "k" of "Amerika?" Most people I asked had no idea why it was written with a "k." When I asked Carlo, he said it was the "K" of Kissinger.

It was all different, too. There was no Vietnam War to cathect the energy against a manifest evil. They were reacting against a scattered, messy sort of evil. Universities all over Rome were occupied by people who'd given up trying to figure out who's responsible, who is to be hated or feared.

When we met, Carlo had said, "You're going to feel like you've seen all this before, but don't draw the parallel too far. The economic state of this country makes it all different. Italy is in a state of prerevolution. They'll never buy us off."

Postwar Italy was a capitalist's dream,

DON KATZ *is a staff writer whose last piece was on Monte Carlo.*

bouyed by American money, low wages and high productivity. America arrived in Europe as the ancient Romans arrived in Athens: offering untold wealth while foisting the gifts of an alien culture upon it (computers, Marlboros and blue jeans). There ensued an "economic miracle" of unprecedented proportions. Between 1950 and 1962, the gross national product of Italy doubled. Streets that were cluttered with bicycles were soon paralyzed by Fiats. Italy was dominated by the dollar and defended by NATO. America brought industrial power and the great corruptive powers that come with it.

The kids on the warpath thus grew up in a world of spanking-new middle-class values that their parents accepted as God's writ. Now there is a generation of "ungrateful kids" who "don't know the meaning of sacrifice." This generation gap is by no means restricted to the middle class. Many of the sons of the Communist party leaders run with the youth movement.

All over Rome, red flags hang from derelict buildings where young people like Carlo live in a variety of communal enclaves. Carlo grew up in one of the ugliest industrial suburbs in Europe. His description of his family sounds more like something out of a working man's *Ozzie and Harriet* episode than from Fellini's memories of an Italian childhood. Carlo's mother says she gave up on him when he quit college and went to live in a commune two years earlier. He says that she is a fat, bitter woman who "feels greater spiritual peace in a new supermarket than in a church." She voted, as have most women in Italy, for the Christian Democrats in every single election and the hulking figure of the church still dictates her fundamental view of the world.

Nearly 10,000 kids run away every year in Italy. One minor vanishes in Rome every week and is never heard from again. That sacrosanct unit of strength and warmth, the Italian family, an institution that increased in strength as a result of traditionally weak governments, is finally falling apart. Carlo never visits his family. They know what he's been up to, but they still send him money every once in a while. Carlo says that his parents' lives are built on work and accumulation and that he will probably never have a chance to work. He says he can't relate to anything about them. He says he loves them.

In all of his twenty-four years, Carlo had never felt such happiness as he had during his short stint as a Metropolitan Indian. He wants no other description of himself than that he is a child of the movement. "The Indians helped open up the life to millions of people who were ready to deal with the culture," he said. "The Indian experience is a desperate struggle that involves our happiness. It is a war cry."

The Metropolitan Indians were at the center of the uprisings at the universities. In place of a political creed, the *Indiani* believed that the time was right for irony, for laughing at life, for serious cultural vandalism. They reacted directly to the *fantapolitica*. "Irony is revolutionary," they wrote on the walls of the campus. "Fantasy will destroy you," was scrawled over one entire wall of a university building. The Metropolitan Indians demanded unequivocally that all the animals be released from the zoos. It was a militant surrealism. Every time someone got up to speak in the assemblies about the "working class" they got the same treatment. The crowd would erupt into shouts of *"scemo, scemo, scemo"*—fool, fool, fool. At universities and high schools, in front of nuclear power plants, at almost any meeting of any organization, Italian-style Indians began to show up, war dancing into the scene in paint and headdresses. The leaders had names like Crazy Horse and Geronimo. Student meetings and rallies would often degenerate into wild dope-smoking parties, with everyone dancing around the lecture halls Indian-style, singing, *"Hai-yai-yai-yai-yai-yai-yai."*

When the Metropolitan Indians surfaced at the university, the *Time* and *Newsweek*-style Italian press said that they were a bunch of students who had been reading *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. In fact, the Indians were born outside the university sometime last year. They did university sometime last year. They did local political work in the neighborhoods in Rome and Milan where their communes were located. They gave street parties and tried to gain support for their demands for more open space for the people who lived in their areas. They also took a great deal of LSD. The idea of American Indians came from the local underworld tradition in certain sections of Rome where small-time pistoleros and Mafia types still refer to each other by Indian code names.

Italians are not known for their appreciation of satire, sarcasm, or irony. Even the Nazis felt that Mussolini couldn't take a joke. There are laws in Italy that protect politicians and all public officials from any kind of satirical criticism. Politicians must give their permission before being mimicked on television. Thus, the weapon of the Metropolitan Indians must be respected for what it is. By the time classes started up at the university, the Indians had honed the edges of their knives of sarcasm. The professors were greeted by a fifty-foot warning on the wall of the Faculty of Letters building. It said, "A Peal of Laughter Will Bury You."

Most classes began with a few Indians in full gear sitting in the first few rows. Sometimes they'd arrive dressed in bandages with feathers stuck on top. They threw flowers at professors. Twenty *Metropolitani* would burst into a lecture and dance in a circle around the professor, going, *"Ai-yai-yai-yai-yai-yai."* They'd sing, "You're the stupidest person here. Why do you treat us as such fools?" Nothing could be more brutal for many Italian professors, the most self-important members of the society.

The newspapers called the Indians intellectual terrorists and young people throughout Italy called them wonderful.

Then it got a bit more aggressive as other, more violent students got into the act. Professors were forced to give their lectures on their knees. There were reports of teachers being urinated upon and being "executed" with very real-looking squirt guns. Gay students humped and hugged several white-faced lecturers and people brought their dogs into classrooms to defecate. Students began to demand perfect marks on all their work—or else. In Florence, an entire exam review board was held hostage and were told that they would be thrown out of the window unless they passed everyone on a mathematics test. They did. Several teachers received telephone death threats and others were mugged. It was getting uglier and uglier.

The intensity of the violence built slowly as the movement attracted recruits.

One expected result of the proliferating incidents was the further cooperation of Italy's two largest political parties. Throughout the latter days of the spring carnival, after the violence set in, two monoliths—representing the bureaucratic incarnations of ideology and religion—began to gently grind together in the most bizarre of political dances. Leaders of the rival monoliths were at a loss as to the why and wherefore of the violent fury and new antipathy of their children. The Christian Democratic party that has ruled Italy since the war, heirs to a 2000-year-old religious subculture—a political party whose programmatic commitment to keeping the rival Italian Communist party out of government is not unlike the government of West Germany's strategic relationship to East Germany—began to look for help from that same Italian Communist party.

At the edge of the scene at the campuses stood the unhappy-looking members of the Italian Communist party's student groups, who braved physical attacks to even show their faces on the campuses. A child of the new generation joining the Communist party in 1977 is tantamount to a Berkeley radical going to Harvard Business School in 1967. But the faithful, the young Communist party militants who only months earlier had briefly been campus heroes, continued to come to the university and tried to hawk their newspaper. "How could they do this now," one of them said, "just when the working class is on the threshold of government."

It is possible to feel sorry for the Communists. They emerged after World War II as the most powerful political force in Italy and were members of the postwar government. Then came the Cold War. While the wartime fascists were rinsed clean, the Communists became the sinister arch enemy who was going to unlock the gates when the vast horde came charging from the East. They were identified with the Soviet Union, the destruction of Western civilization, and with the devil incarnate. They were thrown out of the government in May of 1947 and began a slow process of moving toward power as the party of change.

The party's first substantive electoral gains coincided with the first student uprising in Italy since the war, in 1968. The PCI *(Partito Comunista Italiano)*—the Peachy, as it is known—was the great red hope for the students in the late Sixties and early

'AGAINST THOSE WHO ATTACK WITH WEAPONS THE STATE WILL REACT IN KIND.'

PHOTOGRAPH BY UPI

Seventies. The Communists could be trusted; they would purge the corrupt Christian Democrats; they were smarter, more democratic; they were revisionists whose overriding characteristic was humanism. The student leaders of 1968 took off their U.S. Army jackets, shaved their Guevarist beards and became functionaries of the party.

During the general elections last year, as every good American knows, the PCI came within a few percentage points of winning. Before the elections, the word had gone around to the campuses, the unemployment organizations, the extraparliamentary groups on the left and the shop-floor militants that all of the talk they were about to hear about a "historic compromise" with the hated Christian Democrats was just a ploy to gain the power to fundamentally alter Italian society. The youth flocked to them. Their rallies were like be-ins and their leaders like pop stars.

Now, Communist party leader Enrico Berlinguer and Christian Democratic Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti have worked out an extraordinary governing relationship in which the Christian Democrats pass legislation only because the Communist parliamentarians don't vote. The students call this the government of Berlingotti. "They are in the Palazzo now," the students say of the Communists in the corruptive halls of power. They feel hurt and betrayed by the Communists. Young people hate them and do not consider them a part of the left. The professors who received the brunt of the abuse dealt out by people like the Metropolitan Indians were ironically the Communist professors, known as the Red Barons. The Barons typify one of the students' main gripes with the Communists: in their studied paternalism, the professors are men who have a specific and protected place within a system to which they are in opposition. Many of the Communist professors brought to their knees were the radical student leaders in 1968. The students find this to be a fitting irony.

The Communist youth are a notoriously straight group of young men and women. Short hair, plain dress and a mimimum of extravagant extracurricular activity are the mode. "You know we have to see them shaking hands, too," one of the youth leaders said when I asked her about the PCI-CD alliance. She went on to confide that there are small groups within the Communist youth organization that have been affected by the outburst of the counterculture. There have been instances of groups of youth members secretly smoking pot.

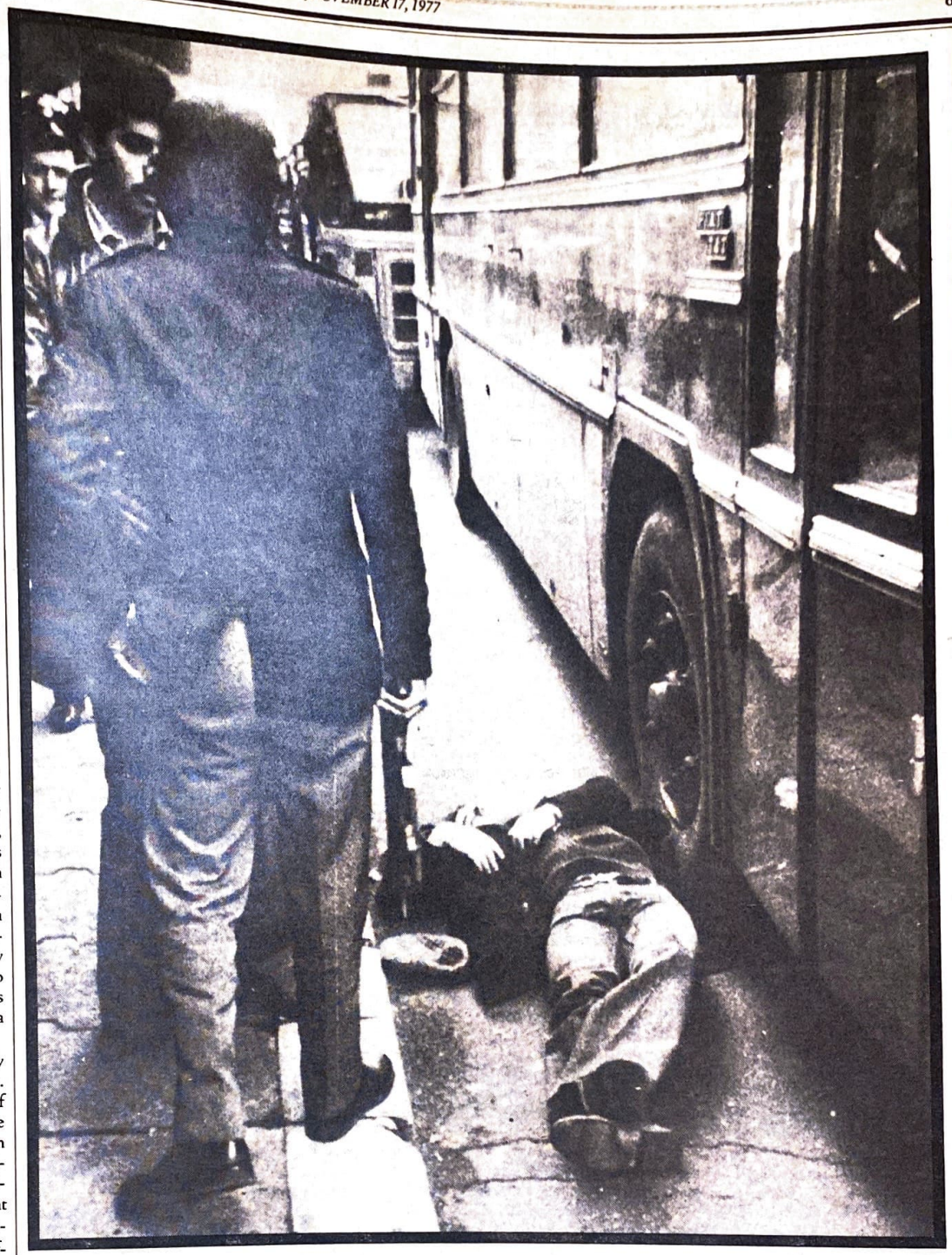
The Peachy leaders know that the millions of middle-class Italians who voted for them last year did so, in part, because they figure that the Communists can keep the workers and the youth under control. The party of change and hope has become the party of law and order.

A few weeks into the uprising at the Rome campus the newly responsible party of change decided that the kids had had their fun and that it was time to take things into their own hands:

They sent Luciano Lama, a resistance hero, the leader of the Communist trade unions and one of the most powerful men in Italy, to diffuse the tension of the occupation. Lama is the archetype of the paternalistic, pipe-smoking, Communist godfather/politician. He came into the occupied university and began to talk to around 10,000 milling students and young people from behind a phalanx of PCI "order service" units in their blue outfits. Lama began a heavy liturgic lecture on the virtues of hard work and study. He spoke to a group of people who are guaranteed to be unemployed for what are supposed to be the best years of their lives about "parasites who do not want to work." Many of the parents of the kids in the crowd are members of the Communist party and their children are well aware that Communist trade union protectionism is one of the many reasons that they'll never find jobs. After an hour of listening to Lama's harangue, some Metropolitan Indians went to a wall and wrote, "Put Grass in Lama's Pipe." Other Indians threw flower balls at him while still others got a ladder out of the library and hung him in effigy. Lama's bodyguards were more accustomed to keeping adoring teenyboppers away from their boss than angry students. Pretty soon some rocks came streaming out of the crowd, then some wrenches and iron bars appeared. Suddenly all hell broke loose. Students and order service men bashed each other with pipes and wrenches for a half an hour before the police charged the whole crew. Lama snuck out without injury.

Lama later said that it reminded him of "the fascist strong-arm action squads" of another era. The Communist party paper called the incident "antidemocratic provocation...animated by a reactionary spirit." The students found this quite funny. People in the streets continued to try to figure out what was going on, and on one of the few remaining unmarked walls at the university, the Metropolitan Indians wrote, "Lamas Belong in Tibet."

The nature of the demonstrations that poured out of the universities all over Italy several times per week after Luciano Lama's expulsion from the Rome campus further terrified a public that has been consistently terrorized for several years. A pattern developed in which the body of a march would move up against the army of riot police, the signal of the P-38 would appear, a shot would be heard...then they'd all start shooting. Certain students became adept at treating their fellows' gunshot wounds. By mid-April, this new and fren-



PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD

zied style of demonstration had already claimed several victims. The university continued to be the haven for the counterculture, the protest and, increasingly, for the heavies of the "autonomous" groups, the hardliners within the movement, who began to control the assemblies and to map out street action. Though groups like the Metropolitan Indians preferred to fight with sarcasm, the longhairs with the guns were gradually accepted as an integral part of the movement.

On April 21st, the birthday of Rome, students reoccupied the Rome campus to protest the presence of the police inside the movement's sanctuary at the university. The police proceeded to encircle the four occupied buildings, leaving an opening for the students to get out as they closed the parameters of the circle. By the time the students had all been chased out of the university buildings, a young police trainee named Settimo Passamonti had been shot in the chest and was dead. The movement had been expecting something like this ever since the death of Francesco Lorusso, a medical student who was shot and killed in Bologna a month earlier. Passamonti became one of nearly seventy Italian policemen killed since the beginning of last year.

Interior Minister Cossiga felt that he finally had the support from both the public and the Communist party to declare war on the movement. He banned all public demonstrations until the end of May and laid down the gauntlet in parliament. He declared that "against those who attack with weapons, the state will react in kind."

At the edge of the huge bloodstain which marked where Passamonti had died, somebody wrote in chalk, "Here lay a cop—Lorusso has been avenged."

"It was on the 21st of April, when Passamonti was killed, that the Indians realized that we had to disperse," Carlo said. He was arranging reams of underground literature in the alternative bookstore that his graphics collective had started. "Things were different at the campus and in the meetings," he said. "We knew that the government's ban on marches was intended to provoke a major confrontation. We told people to go back into their holes like moles. We tried to calm things down…."

When things exploded at the universities, the Metropolitan Indians began to publish daily Dadaesque underground publications with announcements of activities. Now the movement depends on over one hundred new underground papers to keep in communication. The material runs from serious alternative bibliographies on housing, drugs and alternative education, to feminist literature on self-help and R. Crumb-style comix. It is mainly instant journalism written in a wild new code.

The youth movement has also made creative use of the traditionally conservative media institutions. Over a thousand pirate radio stations have sprung up in Italy during the past two years. There are some 100 stations in Rome alone—some of them operating from balconies in the Hilton Hotel. The most popular and most powerful of the underground stations is Rome's Radio Città Futura.

People at the station readily admit that they were involved in coordinated street action, such as that on March 12th. "This radio station is annoying to the powerful," one announcer said. "We are a movement inside the movement."

Radio has always had a potentially powerful political import in Italy. The first voice on Italian radio was that of Mussolini. Città Futura is listened to by hippies, office workers, bank presidents and can be heard blaring out of Ferraris. It is supported by public subscription and, it is said, by some famous film directors.

I asked one of Carlo's friends at Città Futura if he saw any similarity between the new counterculture in Italy and that of America in the Sixties. "I don't really know anything about the American counterculture," he said. "Whatever it was I know it died in 1970."

On May 12th, the tiny Radical party invited people to defy the government ban on demonstration and to celebrate the anniversary of the Italian divorce referendum victory of 1974 with them in tourist-filled Piazza Navona.

By two o'clock, the Piazza was an ordered mélange of plexiglass riot shields, policemen in chain-mail vests and endless rows of tear-gas grenade launchers.

Four hours later, tourists huddled in fear near the plaster Berninis in the shops off the Piazza. Outside, young people had built barricades and full-scale guerrilla warfare was in progress. The police had reacted to some jeering and shouts of "*scemi*" by firing their tear-gas grenades against peoples' heads and backs at close range. Groups of police surrounded anyone who ended up standing alone and beat them senseless. Middle-class liberals who support the American-style, civil-rights-activist Radical party tried to pull policemen off unconscious young people and were beaten to the ground. Shots were popping continually and people were falling wounded. War cries echoed through the tiny streets as the one-sided battle raged toward the river.

A high-school student from the north of Rome named Giorgina Masi could see the havoc from where she stood on the other side of the Garibaldi Bridge. The screams and shots were muffled because the bridge spans the Tiber where the river forks into a whooshing mist. It was quite obvious to the people standing near her that the police had no intention of losing this battle. When her boyfriend turned to her to say something about it, he saw her slumped on the ground with a bullet in her stomach. An hour later, she died.

The bullets on May 12th seemed to be coming from everywhere. It was more chaotic than it had ever been. The next day a photograph published in the Rome daily *Il Messaggero* showed why. The picture clearly showed a hip-looking young man in civilian dress extending a pistol. The paper identified him as a cop.

The Interior Ministry admitted that thirty plainclothesmen had been sent to help the riot squads on that day. Italian riot control has advanced only a bit since the recent days when they'd simply drive their Alpha Romeos through large groups of demonstrators at high speeds. Students had claimed for some time that one major change within the riot force was that it had been inundated with young Serpicos, Starskys and Hutches. On May 12th, they were finally proven right.

During the morning of the next day, bombs exploded and blew up parked cars in Rome. A police station in Genoa was bombed, as was a Christian Democratic party office near Florence. Government buildings all over Italy were attacked.

Five thousand students walked slowly to the point on the bridge where Giorgina Masi had been shot the day before. A makeshift tombstone had been set up in the middle of the bridge and hundreds of flowers lay on the pavement near the spot where she had fallen. The monument was guarded by a ring of feminists who sat cross-legged and silent. The student groups stood on one side of the vigil and the police faced off on the other. Once again there was the oppressive tension.

People among the movement crowd began to pull their scarves up onto their faces and many were waving the sign of the P-38. Student marshals managed to move most of the students back off the bridge before the police finally charged. There were only the fifteen young women and a little boy left sitting around Giorgina Masi's memorial, so the cops beat them for a while with long bowling-ball-rubber truncheons before destroying the mock tombstone.

The following day the clashes again grew savage. There were battles in Rome, Naples, Milan and Turin. Firebombs exploded in Bologna, Palermo and Como. Inevitably, on the third day after Giorgina Masi's death, a twenty-five-year-old policeman was shot and killed during a demonstration in Milan, the fourth cop to be killed in two weeks.

Two days later another haunting photo-

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD

graph appeared in the press of some masked males crouching and firing guns into the demonstration. The faceless figure in the foreground of the photograph held both hands out, one steadying the other. His weight rested easily on his right foot, the left ankle bent inward to balance himself—like a professionally trained marksman. "Finally," the students at the university said, "now we see Cossiga's masked provocateurs in action. No student could learn to shoot like that...."

A few days later, the gunmen in the photograph were arrested: three middle-class high-school students, one age nineteen, the other two seventeen years old....

A few days after the shooting in Milan, the heavies within the movement called a meeting to discuss the violence. It was getting hot in Rome. Outside the university buildings where the meeting was to be held there was a red flag at half mast. On the walls everywhere was written "Giorgina Lives."

Carlo sat stoned in the sun near the entrance to the meeting hall with other Metropolitan Indians. They signaled me over. The Indians had released a statement saying, "We denounce and refute with all of our strength and creativity" the new turn to the violence.

The meeting began, but the Indians stayed outside throwing plastic trash bags full of water on each other. I volunteered to the group that it looked like the violence was completely out of hand.

"The movement needs its own time," Carlo muttered. "You must see that P-38 is an indicator of the violence we have put up with every day of our lives."

"I can't even imagine why someone would bring a gun to a march," I said.

He looked at me with a half smile: "All of this tension and exasperation—call it violence—it must be horrible to you, *compagno*, but it's real. We've talked about the Sixties and the days of peace and love. I suppose it is horrible. But you see I can't simply condemn it. I am unable to look at the way things are in this country and accept that the fault is within the movement. And another thing," he said, " if you had a gun and you were Italian you'd bring it to the march."

Inside, a discussion raged as to the role of the *Autonomia Operaia*, the hardcore of the movement. The "workers autonomy" group had come a long way since the days when they dumped garbage on rich people going to the opening of La Scala Opera in Milan. They had become strong within the incubator of the movement. Members of the group claimed that their role was to protect the movement from attacks and provocation from the police. I met some *Autonomia* members who were fifteen years old.

The violence surrounding the youth movement was rapidly becoming associated in the public mind with Italy's more premeditating underground revolutionaries—such as the South American-style Red Brigade and the Armed Proletariat Nucleus, organizations that assassinate policemen and magistrates and calmly splinter journalists' kneecaps with bullets.

The movement was becoming criminalized. Metropolitan Indians rarely appeared in war paint anymore, their liberating iconoclasm and infectious smiles seemed out of place now—like lifesavers in a gun shop.

Italy has run out of time, compassion and money. Everyone knows that something has to happen. The people who are too old or jaundiced or afraid to respond to the tension with overt anger have settled for despair. Nobody thinks it's going to get any better.

The culture continues to twist and turn and spin the excess toward the edge. It is in the throes of a systematic breakdown managed by a corrupted bureaucracy, where a few million angry and idle young people are deciding whether or not to react to the humiliation of their lives by shooting a gun. Europeans now thirst for news in Italy. It is considered to be a nation which reflects an advanced case of a European liberal democracy's current malady. Pundits look at the cascade of factions and at the violence to "decode the anger." One of the Communist professors who has experienced their rage first hand recently said that the youth are now a separate society on a collision course with everyone else. They have their own culture and their own values. He says they are an institutionalized enemy.

One week after Giorgina Masi was killed, Rome was under occupation. "Rome Paralyzed by Fear!" the headlines screamed. Shops and offices were closed, and traffic was lighter than it had been in years.

"The students have finally called for a showdown," people told one another. They had decided to march outside the university in defiance of Cossiga's ban. Everyone knew that a confrontation was coming. Both sides were angry and resolute.

Five thousand of Italy's most highly trained, biggest and meanest-looking riot troops were deployed throughout the city. Public buildings, party headquarters and most monuments were ringed by troops. Train stations and airports were full of soldiers looking for trouble. The highways into Rome were lined with tanks and armored vehicles and on all exit ramps from the highway cars were stopped and searched for weapons. Helicopters hovered over everything.

Young people all over Rome turned on Città Futura that morning and heard that plans for the march were off. Cossiga and various union leaders had begged the movement to call it off. While pointing at armored cars and machine guns, they'd pleaded with them. "It's off," Città Futura announced, "go to the university."

By about four o'clock they had arrived at the Rome campus. They milled restlessly in the plaza of the university complex. Small groups huddled around transistor radios and listened to Radio Città Futura begging them to keep cool.

In other parts of Italy there had been ten kidnappings during the week since Giorgina Masi died. Early in the morning of May 19th, in Milan, two bombs had gone off in the subway. In Seveso, just outside of Milan, where poisonous chemicals from a factory have infected thousands of inhabitants and where babies are already being born deformed, three youths had fired bullets into the local health official's legs. In Bologna, unemployed people had raided another unemployment office, and in Genoa, responsibility for an early-morning bombing had been claimed by the Women's Armed Communist Liberation Movement.

By five o'clock, thousands of students and young people were walking in the plaza of the university, walking and talking, milling and flexing their muscles uneasily. Indians and gunmen and fifteen-year-old feminists scratched and shuffled in the thick dust.

The last man to truly understand the power of this tension was Il Duce himself. Mussolini would never have allowed this aimless milling around. He made them all march instead. He used to make the nuns march. Mussolini loved the tension, he grew strong on the tension. In December of 1933, he described to the Fascist Assembly the three imperatives for rising to the heights of his new dawn: "...the third and ultimate, and the most important condition," he told them, "is to live in a period of the highest ideal tension."

The students had composed a telegram to Cossiga: "TO COSSIGA," it said, "THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR...UNABLE TO ACCEPT HEAD-ON COLLISION AS YOU HAVE SUGGESTED...WE CANNOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FURTHER BLOODY CLASHES...HEAD-ON COLLISION POSTPONED...WE ARE INCREASING OUR FRONT FOR THE FINAL SHOWDOWN...."

For six slow hours afterward, well into the night, they milled around the plaza, surrounded by thousands of hot and angry policemen. Some of them looked much too young, others looked very old. Sweating in their faded, too-tight, beltless, red-threaded imitation Levi's and Chicago Cubs T-shirts and khaki army book bags that are big enough for guns, they milled faster and faster. They'd sit on the grass for a minute and then get up for a minute, antsy, itching and tense. A loud shout would produce a sudden moment of silence. Then the milling would start again.

I walked next to Carlo feeling like an actor in a prison film. We went around to look at the huge piece of graffiti that he had helped paint on the walls during the euphoric days of the occupation. He looked up at it for a second and then walked away, still smiling. In huge letters it said, "WE TAKE BACK OUR LIVES."

By the end of September the harbingers of the new season arose out of the doldrums of the Italian summer. There was more unemployment. Only a week or two into the new academic year one young leftist was killed, a policeman and a civilian shot during demonstrations, and in Bologna and on the campus in Rome, the Metropolitan Indians resurfaced and again took to the war path.

VIOLENT PASSAGE OF A CULTURE: TEENAGER FIRING IN MILAN WHILE ROME BURNS.

PHOTOGRAPH BY UPI