

DOSSIER A PRISONER ON HUNGER STRIKE

THE STORY OF A POLITICAL PRISONER WHO IS NOW ON HUNGER STRIKE.

□ This article describes how, once imprisoned, the prisoners find new charges mounted against them.

In 1969, in Turin, MARIO DALMAVIVA, who worked for an advertising agency, coined the slogan 'Lotta Continua' ('The Struggle Goes On'/'Fight On'), a slogan which was to become the signature on the joint leaflets put out by the FIAT workers and the students, and which, together with 'We are all shop stewards now' remains part of the folklore of Italy's Hot Autumn of 1969-70.

On April 7th 1979, 10 years later, whilst attending an exhibition at an art gallery, Mario Dalmaviva was arrested. In Padova there is a magistrate, Pietro Calogero, who has accused him of being a leader of the Red Brigades. Mario Dalmaviva's political record stops at those struggles at FIAT in 1969-70, which he, a "white collar proletarian", had made his own with his extraordinary perceptiveness and intelligence.

Prosecuting Potere Operaio

Later there was his experience with the journal *La Classe*. Then, after the summer of '69, the birth of Potere Operaio. There is also the memory of the Rosolina split, Toni Negri leaving the group in the summer of 1973, and the closure of the paper at the beginning of 1974, leading to the dissolution of the group. This disillusionment was followed by the years dedicated to his personal affairs and the reconstruction of his career (Dalmaviva opened an advertising agency; thenceforth his role can only be understood separately, isolated from the old social solidarity).

In the hands and the rulebooks of the magistrates who imprisoned him, his political history has been transformed into a proof of guilt. During his first interrogation (12th April 1979) he was accused of having participated at the Rosolina Conference, where, claims Judge Calogero, acts of violence were planned, some of which were later to be put into effect by the Red Brigades. But above all, claims Calogero, after the "apparent dissolution" of Potere Operaio, Dalmaviva continued to play a militant role in the "unchanged leadership of the organisation". An organisation which, the magistrates obsessively repeat, had play-acted its dissolution in order to develop its clandestine activity. Even the Rosolina split, which everyone involved recalls as particularly painful and violent, was, according to Calogero, just part of the "scene-setting", acted out to permit an underground reconciliation. One of the witnesses held by the prosecution to be fundamental is one Romito, an ex-Potere Operaio militant who later passed

into the PCI. This witness, however, confines himself to describing Dalmaviva as "a leader" of the group.

In the months following Dalmaviva's arrest, he did not undergo further interrogation. In the meantime, the enquiry was transferred to Rome, a real piece of 'bag-snatching' of judicial competence by Gallucci, who challenged Negri with the most serious crime — the assassination of Moro — and dragged 7 others of the arrested comrades behind him to Rome. A hunger strike at Rebibbia Prison finally obtained a further interrogation for Dalmaviva on 15th May. Gallucci's



accusations were identical to those of the Padovan judge.

Recordings of a speech by Dalmaviva at a Potere Operaio conference in Rome in 1971, and notes taken at the time by Toni Negri, were the major exhibits, from which it turned out that during some meetings Dalmaviva had uttered such phrases as "It is necessary to privilege mass violence over models of conflict", or "The first knot to be untied is that of the relationship between the party and the mass levels of autonomy". Witnesses whose names and accusations are kept secret are continually cited. Dalmaviva is transferred from Rebibbia to Asinara Prison, a move which leads to a chain reaction of increasingly serious charges against him.

The Asinara Revolt

In the meantime, on 7th July, the prosecuting judge Gallucci puts out a new warrant against the accused Negri, Scalzone, Vesce, Ferrari Bravo, Zagato, Dalmaviva, Piperno and Pace. For the first time they are charged with insurrection, and the accusation of leadership of the Red Brigades is dropped. The accusation is inconsistent, and is challenged from various directions. But for Dalmaviva the most dramatic episode starts at Asinara, where the prison revolt of 2nd October was, by chance, to find him.

This revolt cost him a new charge — of attempted multiple homicide against a handful of prison warders who had been taken hostage by those involved in the revolt. "I never once moved from my

cell," he was to tell the magistrates interrogating him. "When I saw pieces of the ceiling falling down in my cell — he had previously heard shouting and an explosion — I showed my unequivocal intention to have nothing to do with the revolt. (My lawyer had just presented a petition for my release). The only refuge I could think of was to shut myself up in the lavatory".

Added Years of Imprisonment

When the revolt is over, Dalmaviva is alone in his cell, and from there he watches the detainees passing by. He hears the warders shouting, he sees the mutineers being cleared out. 50 warrants result from that day's events, including one for Dalmaviva. He is transferred to Trabucato Prison, halfway between Fornelli and Cala d'Oliva. He is kept in isolation, with his cell lights kept burning until 1.00am. The prison governor, Cardullo, hands him over to the section warders with the advice that, at the first sign of insubordination, they should "beat him up first, and then refer the matter to the Governor".

Dalmaviva asks for his family to be notified of his transfer. Cardullo answers, threatening to transfer him "to where only the vultures go" if he opens his mouth again.

This is the deepest moment of psychological collapse for Dalmaviva, the collapse of someone who has been through a bombardment of which he was the helpless victim, who can only become more and more helpless, more and more squeezed-under by the multiplication of arrest warrants, and by the multiplication of years of imprisonment.

From here Mario Dalmaviva was transferred to the "super prison" of Palmi, and then on to Termini Imerese, and finally to Fossombrone. In May 1980 his final appeal for provisional liberty (bail) was quashed. Even the words of Patrizio Peci, "column chief" in the Turin Red Brigades — the city in which Dalmaviva had lived over the last 10 years, and where, in the full light of day, he had carried on his political activity — are to no avail: "Regarding Dalmaviva," says Peci, "I have nothing to say."

■ Translated from *Il Manifesto*
18th January 1981

● Note: Dalmaviva's statement (opposite) highlights the problems of the *autonomi* in prison: that the prison system must be fought and resisted, but at the same time their forms of resistance must keep a political distance from the military/terrorist approach of the Red Brigades. Dalmaviva eventually won his transfer.

HUNGER STRIKE BY POLITICAL DETAINEE

I am a comrade arrested and imprisoned at a time when I had abandoned all political activism for years. Jailed in a Special Prison, facing a charge which has never been proved. I call myself a communist, without qualifying adjectives, and without a party. A communist because of my class choice; because of the reference points and methods which inform my political judgement; and by virtue of my standards of ethical behaviour.

A kind of "stateless" communist: the sort of figure who, I believe, makes up the majority of the movement in Italy today. One of those who, in order to place themselves politically, have to use the prefix 'ex'. I'm ex-Potere Operaio. During the 21 months of "preventive imprisonment" now behind me, with great care and effort I have been rebuilding a political perspective. I've found a demarcation line between solidarity and defence of my (in many ways uncertain) political identity.

That is the starting point from which I take up my position on the question which today represents the political watershed. Certainly it is schematic and crude, but it is unambiguous — because I believe that, today, ambiguity can only silence our voices, inside and outside prison.

In short, I am both outside of and opposed to the armed party. I am, and always have been, opposed, because I believe that the politically motivated subjective exercise of violence, if it is not to be a simple reflection of class behaviour

already present in the social confrontation, needs legitimisation. Not the formal legitimisation of the State, or of legislation, which is 'legitimated' by the ferocity of its adversary, but a class legitimisation. Such a class legitimisation comes about when a credible political project of "changing the status quo" meets with, roots itself in, and is recognised by, a significant element of the class. My judgement, and one that I stand by, is that this legitimisation has not been given.

It doesn't seem possible. On the one hand the magistrates have accused me, together with the other comrades of April 7th, of having been at the head of the insurrectionary project. They then prevent us from defending ourselves, and find us guilty without bringing us to trial. Time and the ferocity of the prison mechanism are being used to resolve the contradictions opened with the "April 7th affair".

On the other hand, the initiatives of the Red Brigades, "dialectically linked" with a considerable number of the political prisoners in the Special Prisons, forces the tiny grouping of which I am a member to choose. Either we give in, muttering ever-more feebly "I'm nothing to do with this". Or we support, de facto and despite the increasingly clear distinction between us, the Red Brigade initiative.

For me Asinara has posed a clear test, in the same way that Trani has for other comrades. Even the terrain of the struggle against prison conditions, in which I am and intend to continue to be active, turns out to be prohibited ground for those such as myself who conceive its direction and aims as lying outside of

the logic of militarism.

I believe that only a real break with this tragic game of war, an accumulation of social power expressed politically, can locate the political — and not militaristic — solutions to the very thorny question of the political detainees, in order to solve the question of the use of prisons, the "special laws" and the use of the legal system as a means of political and social repression.

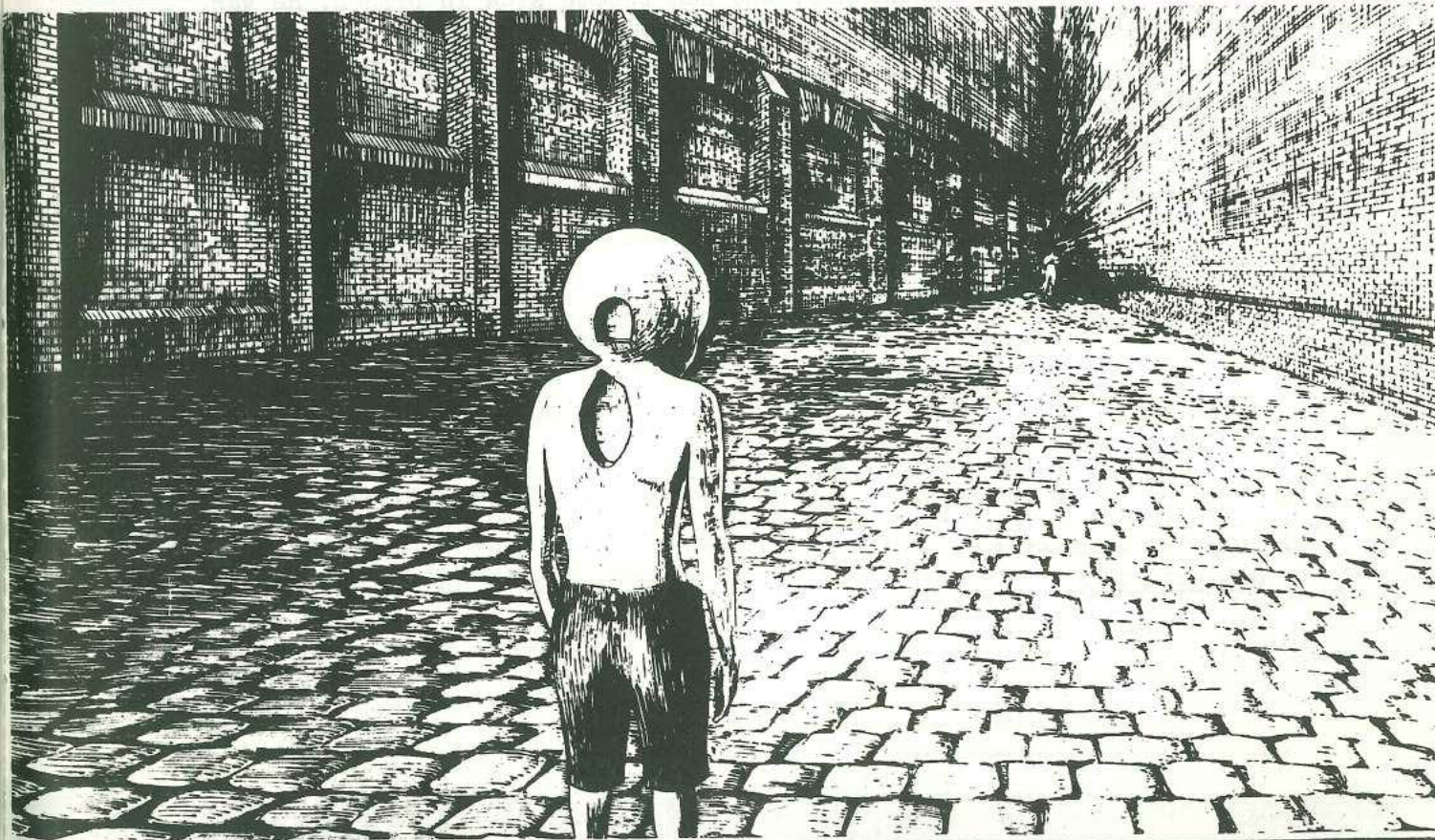
Today the absence of a credible external voice speaking up on these issues, and the minority nature of my position, have forced me to an individual form of struggle. Fully aware of the possible consequences, I have begun a hunger strike to the death.

My aims are the following:

1. To reaffirm that I am wholly innocent of the accusations brought against me. And to demand the right — both for myself and for all the other comrades arrested on April 7th — to demonstrate this publicly. In other words, we demand to be brought to trial immediately.
2. Having affirmed my political identity, I affirm my intention to defend it. I recognise myself to be in a collective situation, but I believe it to be impossible to do this within the confines of the Special Prisons. For this reason, in order to guarantee the possibility of my existing politically, I aim to obtain my transfer to a normal prison. And I intend to do this through a political struggle.

Mario Dalmaviva
Fossombrone Prison.

□ Translated from *Il Manifesto*
14th January 1981



DOSSIER 'AMNESTY' ON ITALY

● THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ITALY

The April 3rd 1981 edition of the Italian newspaper La Repubblica carried a report of a meeting of the Italian section of Amnesty International. That report included the following:

"A red-bearded Dutchman, Dowe Korff...the head of the European section of Amnesty's research department, dealt with the question of Italy. He said: 'We are very concerned at the possibility that the penal system in Italy may be being subjected to abuses of a political nature.!.

Amnesty's report devotes 4 pages to Italy.

'In Italy,' said Korff, 'there are problems concerning human rights, and we are trying to analyse them. There are laws which are formulated in a vague manner, which can be used in order to eliminate political dissent.

'The majority of these laws refer to acts of political violence, but they have resulted in the imprisonment of people who appear to have very slender links with violent organisations. This is the case for a number of the April 7th defendants.' The names of Carmela di Rocco, Massimo Tranonte, Sandro Serafini and Alisa del Re were cited. Later, in a discussion of maximum security prisons (Amnesty has been conducting an inquiry into the effects of these prisons, in West Germany) the names of Mario Dalnaviva and Luciano Ferrari Bravo cropped up.

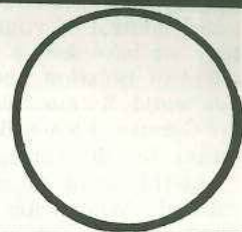
The names of Ivo Gallinberti and Alberto Galeotto also occur in the report. Amnesty has asked for both to be released from jail, on grounds of ill-health. They had asked also for the release of Alberto Buonoconto, arrested as a member of the NAP, who had become sick in prison. He was finally released. A few months later he committed suicide.

'I am not saying that there is absolutely no evidence against these defendants', said Korff, 'since, in such an event we would have considered them as "prisoners of conscience" and would have adopted them. However, there should be an obligation to provide public opinion with concrete evidence, and a fair trial within a reasonable period.

Translated from
La Repubblica
April 3rd 1981

□ Italy '79 Committee
April 6th 1981

RED NOTES



On April 3-4th 1981 a Conference was called in London, called "After Marx, April". It was planned as an act of solidarity, on the second anniversary of the "April 7th" arrests in 1979. It followed on from active campaigning by the "Italy '79 Committee" in support of the prisoners. It was also designed to introduce and promote debates on working class "autonomy" or "autonomies" – ideas that have been slow to take a foothold in Britain, but have an international dimension – especially in Italy, Germany, Switzerland and France.

The event was divided into 4 main sections: on Class Composition and the Restructuring of Capital; Criminalisation in Italy and Europe; Post-political Politics – Needs, Desires, Feminism and Sexuality and Practical Support for Italian Political Prisoners.

Contributors to the event included Franco Berardi ('Bifo') of Radio Alice, speaking of the emergence of "new social subjects" in Europe, and their autonomy in regard to capitalist institutions and culture; Felix Guattari on the subversiveness of desires when organised collect-

ively in an anti-capitalist sense; John Merrington (Italy '79 Committee) on the State's attack on the autonomia in Italy. There were also speakers who covered the situation of the Padova women's movement, the West Berlin squatters movement, and the movement in Britain.

Felix Guattari, representing the Paris April 7th Committee, presented an appeal document, and outlined their objective of persuading the Russell Tribunal on Human Rights to adopt the case of Italy. (See p.44) The case of Mario Ferrandi was also raised.

The discussion ranged far and wide during the 2-day event. Attendance at the meeting provided a good base for future solidarity initiatives, and these are now in the process of being planned.

One of the contributors to the Conference was a comrade from Lotta Continua per il Comunismo. Below we reprint the text of the speech he made, dealing with the reorganisation of prison and punishment in Italy.

COMRADES,

Perhaps I could best start with a joke. I have a proposal: why don't we change the title of this event? Instead of "After Marx, April" we should call it "After Marx, Jail" . . .

In short, I aim to speak of problems, of difficult and bitter experiences, such as the criminalisation, the imprisonment, and the transformation of the ruling power system, that apply in Italy today. This is the contribution that I want to make, in the name of our organisation, in the course of our debate.

For many – too many – comrades in Italy and in other countries of Europe, "April" has not yet come. They are still enduring a hard and cold winter of segregation, separation and persecution.

Twenty days ago in Bologna there was a strong and beautiful demonstration in memory of Francesco Lorusso, a comrade killed in March 1977 by the Carabinieri (a special police of the Italian state). In that demonstration, everyone was shouting a particular slogan: "Comrades out of the prisons, because Spring is coming". In Italian the slogan has a very beautiful ring. This slogan serves to remind us that we must intensify our effort via debate and political activity, for the liberation of all the comrades, of all the political prisoners and also of the whole imprisoned proletariat.

This discussion and activity *cannot be confined within boundaries of single nations and countries*. Nations are like prisons, where proletarians and revolutionaries are divided, segregated and shut up – especially today.

Information, debate and propaganda: these of course are really necessary. But we need to develop a particular understanding of what the prison is today. In short, the nature of the general transformation of Power we are experiencing today.

I would like to begin with some information, and an assessment of the situation in Italy today.

1) It is perfectly understandable that ten glorious years of continuous class struggle in Italy, with the fear it has produced within bourgeois Power and the State, have also produced a hard, ruthless and enormous repression. *More than 3,000 political prisoners are today locked away in Italian prisons.* This is the fact from which we have to begin. The class character of this repression is clear: anyone who has fought in the factories, in the schools, the metropolitan areas etc, is persecuted. Police operation after police operation: a whole breed of revolutionaries has been criminalised.

The purpose of this general operation, however, is not only for the State to take revenge for the past. They don't

only want to hit whoever is guilty of all the various forms of struggles, be they peaceful or violent. The State is pursuing two important tasks. The first is to remove, for the younger militants and proletarians, what we call the "historical memory" of all the struggles, by removing the direct and concrete protagonists of those struggles, especially those who led them. The second and perhaps more important is to experiment with a new and "reformed" prison-institution, new shapes and kinds of social discipline to be applied to the whole population.

It is necessary to dwell on these two points a little, because they are very important.

2) The "historical memory" they want to erase. The State of the 1980s, much more authoritarian and disciplinarian than in the past, acts in two ways. On the one hand we have the fact that the militants are being isolated in the prisons (in Italy now you can stay for two, three, four years, locked away in a prison waiting for your trial and sentence, even though Italian law says that you are not "guilty" before judgement). On the other hand, the State makes every effort to create a false and damaging picture of the struggles from 1968 till now. With this second purpose, the State (but also the media and the whole party-system) wants to make people believe that everything that happened in that period has been only violence, common crimes, bloody terrorism, all without a reason. The revolutionary process is set up for judgement, like other times in history, to demonstrate not only that it was "mistaken", but also that it was "dirty", full of "crimes", opposed to the "peaceful interests" of millions of proletarians.

All the enormous imagination, passion, desires and needs of our ongoing struggle for liberation is portrayed as some sort of craziness. They don't want the younger generation to continue, perhaps in better ways, the experiences of their elders. With this in mind, there is much political and cultural meaning in the construction of a special type of person in these days: the "repenter", the *pentito*. We call this figure the *pentito di Stato*, the "State-repenter", the "Crown witness". People who, when imprisoned, completely sell out their own history, themselves, their comrades and friends, because they expect to gain some advantage from this sell-out. They buy their own freedom by selling the freedom of the others. This figure, the *pentito*, is a direct creation of the State. It is not accidental that a few days ago the Italian Parliament promulgated a new law to permit favoured treatment of "repenters".

Of course, we don't consider as "pentiti" all those forced to undergo special and difficult conditions, for example

torture or sensory deprivation, and who end up objectively helping the State. You're not a "repenter" simply by virtue of losing control of your mind and body. In the past year in Italy we have seen a real collapse of many comrades, as an effect of isolation, and the loss of all relation with the outside world. We must also point out that the Italian State (like the German, French, British, etc.) is developing new scientific means for the control and destruction of revolutionaries.

At this point we should add that there has also been a cultural phenomenon that has aided this State process of criminalisation: the mentality of "riflusso", depression, the sense that things are slipping away, an ideology of the crisis of revolutionary perspectives — all this has become very widespread recently. It has helped the State repression, objectively, because it has promoted a counterposition (sometimes a philosophical counterposition) between people's individual self-interest and political activity (albeit this counterposition was justified in the face of the old and alienating kind of political activity). For this reason we think that we also need a political and cultural struggle against this cultivation of depression, this *riflusso*, as well as against the destruction of the "historical memory" of the struggles.

3) *Prison as a laboratory of social discipline.* In the Italian movement, it is clearer now that the 1980s are really very different from the 1970s. The form of power has changed and is still changing. The old shape of the State is transforming in a new shape. This is also for international reasons that I won't go into here.

We cannot respond to these transformations in the old ways. So it is necessary to understand the present reality of the Prison, especially what is *new* in this process.

I have said that the State is not only seeking a revenge. I have said that it wants to erase the "historical memory" of the struggles. It seeks a new settlement for the 1980s: stable, safe and disciplined. This is the point. Well: the Prison as institution (a total institution) is being shaped specifically to this end.

It becomes more than ever a test-bed, a laboratory, and it must offer "useful" discoveries applicable to all other social structures.

The Restructuring of "Prison"

The Italian example is crucial to understand. While the number of political prisoners is growing continuously, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total, the prison population has shrunk considerably in recent years. What does this mean? The growth of the "politically guilty" has a clear political meaning which I have already outlined. The diminution in the numbers of the imprisoned proletariat, however, must be explained in a different way. It does not mean, of course, less State-punishment for the so-called "guilty". It means only that the State is able to punish more "efficiently" (more efficiently from its own point of view), with a different strategy, and in a more scientific way. This situation shows the emerging role of what we shall call the *diffusion of imprisonment* within society as a whole. This phenomenon is widespread and concrete. Let me describe it briefly.

First of all, there has been a change in the relation, the traditional liberal relation, between *crime* and *punishment*. Law, which in a traditional liberal system claims some relationship between "crime" and "punishment" ("the punishment to fit the crime") now changes its function. The repression which it must guarantee from the point of view of the established social order, now follows a qualitatively new strategy. For example: the overall quantity of so-called crimes in society (crimes of every kind) grows, but the State distinguishes more precisely between small and big "crimes", from the point of view of its interest, and responds in a different way to each. Many small crimes are now being written off, while others are being penalised more heavily. The State, for this purpose, constructs a *new and unwritten hierarchy of crimes and punishments*. At the top of the list is the crime of *political and social subversion*. For this reason, in Italy, there is a growing phenomenon of *garantismo* — a civil rights position, a democratic and reformist protest against the dis-

appearance of legal guarantees.

So, while punishments are diminishing in quantity, (especially in the context of the Prison institution), they extend their function to the whole society. Small crimes, even in the event that they are not completely written off, *are administered by different systems in the body of society*. In Italy we have, for example, the "confinement" (internment) of "dangerous people", we have part-time prisons, "controlled freedom", etc. Thousands in Italy are labelled the "guilty" people in this situation.

It is necessary to remember this fact, because criminalisation cannot be understood only as "more repression": it is a wide strategy, with many tactics, and already a direct extension into society. The new hierarchy of punishments I have described has the purpose of division and control. Its principle is: divide and rule. The State expects to bring about different behaviours with these different treatments, and especially the impossibility for those punished to unite and fight together. Of course this system is effective only under conditions of a wider social control and supervision. We can say: a wider control and supervision with the aim of a reduced but more effective punishment.

It is, however, necessary to say that *control and supervision* in this "diffusion of imprisonment" is not only a State operation. We think that a new shape of bourgeois state is growing up in Italy and in all of Europe: what we call the "Social State". It is not only the superstructure of an economic base, as in the traditional Marxist analysis, but is a State deeply penetrated throughout society. So many functions of the traditional State are worked out directly within the wider society as a whole. Direct control and supervision, for example. Everybody lives in a condition in which every action seems to be observed, controlled and supervised, because the disciplinary character of the capitalist mode of production now requires a deep-rooted molecularisation of life, a molecularisation which is a pre-condition for this control.

Prison has entered completely into society, within a whole system of "enclosures", even if this does not imply that struggle becomes entirely impossible. You can observe this process in every part of the society. Look at the transformation, for example, of the Taylorist system of production: the wide replacement of the assembly line with so-called "islands" of production. Look at the use of microelectronics inside and outside direct production. Once upon a time the Prisons were modelled on the factories. Now it seems that factories have their models in the Prison. We have a "social" prison — that is, "prisons without walls". This is the starting point also, for an understanding of the "prisons with walls".

The Prisoners Fight Back

In Italy there are 260 "prisons with walls": large, medium and small. A whole system of division. In Italy this system is known as the *circuit of differentiation*. Moreover, prisons are divided into various kinds: "special" prisons for the "very dangerous" (especially for comrades), "normal" men's and women's prisons, etc. The "special" prisons were built in 1974, for the purpose of the complete segregation of many political prisoners charged with terrorism. In these terrible prisons, which the whole of the imprisoned proletariat wants to see abolished, it is normal to suffer sensory deprivation and also physical torture. Their (real) function is certainly not what bourgeois law calls the "re-education of prisoners", but rather the *destruction of the prisoner*. Their "model" is the German prison of Stammheim, where, as you surely know, there have been many so-called "suicides". Some of the Italian prisons are even worse than the German ones. There are also "special" sections in the "normal" prisons, in every prison, because the division must be kept deep-rooted and articulated.

It is very important to point out the efforts being made by all prison administrations in separating the "common" prisoners from the "political" prisoners. From this point of view, in order to oppose this situation, we must consider every prisoner a political one, even those who don't have a liberation outlook. On this problem there has been a long

and serious debate in Italy, a discussion not yet resolved.

Regarding the "prison with walls", there are two things to be added. The first is that the disciplinary power of the prison is stricter and more wide-ranging than the law sets out: law stops at the door of the prison, because what happens inside is really a different matter. The second is the particular and special nature of jail as a mechanism. If you are put in a jail for a "crime", you soon *accumulate* other "crimes". This is not only true in the commonplace sense that "prison creates criminals", but also in the sense of a continuous growth of your punishment. If you are given a 3-4 year sentence, it's really difficult to get out before 5-6 years. This is not a joke. Everything you do — especially if you organise with others — counts as a crime for which you must pay. *For this reason many prisoners try to escape from prison, even if they only have short sentences to serve.*

4) I want to add something now about the political debate in Italy, especially regarding the struggles of the prisoners. Not a great deal, because it is not easy to give a "history" of the prisoners' struggle.

These struggles within the prison have provided the basis of the continuous restructuring of the prison-institution, even when there is not a direct intervention by Parliament and Government.

Prisoners fight for their immediate needs: survival, health, free association etc. But they also fight for political demands to break the separation between "inside" and "outside", and to assert their own identity as political subjects.

About the first point, as regards their living conditions and needs. These are important things, and are assuredly not "reformist" things, because if they don't defend their lives, it is impossible to talk about the destruction of the "total institution". We think that it is a mistake for people (including those in the prisons) to distinguish "small reformist struggles" from "big revolutionary struggles". It is not possible to divide a "minimum" from a "maximum" programme. Against the "social imprisonment" there are two conditions for victory — conditions that entail a long-term struggle: a wide and active mobilisation outside; and the consciousness and organisation of the prisoners inside.

Regarding the second point: it is very important that the prisoners fight for *general* goals that are important for everybody. It is not possible to discuss here all the various different political "lines" within the prisoners' movement in Italy. Regarding revolutionary strategies we are in a situation of open debate among revolutionaries, with strong disagreements among them. However, before concluding, we would like to say one thing: the liberation of all the prisoners requires a political outlook that demands the abolition of the whole prison-institution. The communist process, as opposed to the traditional historical experiences of socialism, is for a society without prisons.

We say: No more prisons! It is absurd, mistaken, or worse, to believe in "socialist prisons" or "people's prisons".

The (still embryonic) experience we are creating in Italy, still in development, is for a continuous revolutionary process. For this we ask for a contribution, both in theory and in practice, of all comrades, of many countries.

To the imprisoned comrades, to all the segregated sisters and brothers, for their and our liberation!

■ Lotta Continua per il Comunismo

London

April 3rd 1981.

● In Europe the *Italian political refugee* is now becoming a familiar figure. Earlier this year there was talk that the French Government would consider giving political asylum to Italian militants. Perhaps with Mitterand's new socialist Government this will become a reality, and we shall see one EEC country offering shelter to the political dissidents of another.



Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa: da Genova alla Francia, un colpo durissimo alle Brigate rosse.



L'ultimo garantista dopo l'approvazione delle leggi cosiddette antiterroriste.

ITALY 1981

- ITALY 1981 -

- 3,500 POLITICAL PRISONERS -

- WHY, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE? -

Meeting: Small Hall,
Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square,
London WC 1

Monday 6th April

7.30pm

On the second anniversary of the "7th April" arrests in Italy, a solidarity meeting/press conference is being called in London to publicise the plight of some 3,500 men and women being held without trial, on political charges, in jails in Italy.

Speakers from Italy, France, the USA and Britain will outline the charges being brought, the nature of conditions in prison, and the steps being taken to organise an international campaign of support.

An illustration of the gravity of the situation: many of the Autonomy militants are being charged with "insurrection against the powers of the State". This charge was instituted under Fascism and was never repealed. Communist Party magistrates have been to the fore in this persecution of the Autonomy and the Left. A new social and political structure of repression is being experimented.

We are particularly concerned to break the wall of silence that has descended on these matters in Britain. In short, the largest revolutionary communist movement that the West has seen in many decades is being destroyed, piecemeal, under our noses. And the British press - both Right and Left - stays silent.

As an example: In October 1980 two Italians were arrested in London. A passing note in the "Guardian" identified them as Fascists wanted for the Bologna bombing. Then....silence....until March 26th....when a London court heard the case for these people to be extradited. The extradition - for political crimes - was granted. And not one single word was heard in the Press, radio or TV. A comparison might be made between this Star Chamber approach, and the broad-based movement of protest that accompanied the Italian Government's attempts to extradite F.Piperno and L.Pace from France in 1980, or the campaign organised in this country in support of Astrid Proll.

We are sending you this Announcement in the hopes that your publication might see fit to cover the Meeting, this Monday.

*** We would also draw your attention to the fact that a conference is being held in London this weekend - "After Marx, April" - which will be looking at the development of autonomous movements and political repression in Italy and in Europe as a whole.

The Italy '79 Committee
March 31st 1981

DOSSIER END THE PRESS BLACKOUT

Anyone who has followed the fortunes of the mass Left movement in Italy is aware that a tragedy is taking place. That movement is being destroyed by imprisonment and judicial repression. And in the English-speaking world we are subjected to a systematic Press blackout regarding these developments.

The Press blackout is such that even people who should know better (and who have an active concern for Italian politics) have asked us questions like: "Is Toni Negri still in jail?"

Let us be clear: this ignorance arises only from the fact that the newspapers of both Left and Right are systematically censoring Italian news.

One example: while the Polish workers' struggle merited whole pages of analysis and comment in the British Press, the historic struggle of the FIAT workers in September 1980 warranted only one or two column inches.

Another example is the case of MARIO FERRANDI:

Extradition Proceedings against an Italian in London

In November 1980 the *Guardian* newspaper informed us that 2 Italians had been arrested in London, in connection (it said) with the Fascist bombings in Bologna. Then... silence... until March 21st 1981... when a London magistrate heard the case presented by the Italian Government for these people to be extradited. The extradition order, for political crimes in Italy, was granted by the magistrate. It then turned out that the prisoners were not Fascist at all, but were of the Left.

Marco Campari, and Mario Ferrandi (known as "The Rabbit", and alleged member of *Prima Linea*) are now awaiting their appeal against extradition, which is due to take place this week (April 9th, we believe).

The extraordinary thing is that Ferrandi has been kept in a top security wing of Brixton Prison for six months, under restricted visiting conditions, awaiting extradition. During all that time his case did not feature in the media. And the day after the extradition order was granted, not one British newspaper, of Right or Left, saw fit to publish the fact.

An unfavourable comparison can be made between this trial-in-silence and the broad-based movement of protest that accompanied the Italian Government's attempts to extradite Franco Piperno and Lanfranco Pace from France (again, on political charges), or the campaign organised in this country in support of Astrid Proll.

The charges against Ferrandi were outlined in *Corriere della Sera* of March 25th. They include the wounding of a personnel manager and a general manager of two firms, the killing of a drug dealer,

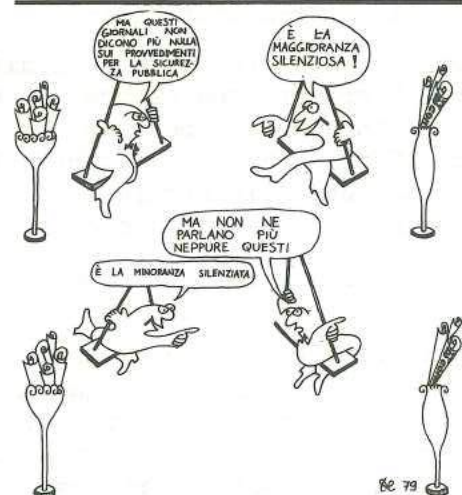
the killing of a policeman during a demonstration, an arson attempt against a prison administration office and an armed robbery. Ferrandi points out, first, that the charges against him are based on the evidence of a political supergrass ("pentito"), and second, that all the alleged crimes have quite clear political connotations. The charges against him are political, and thus in contravention of the extradition treaty (1873) between Italy and Britain.

Ferrandi's appeal against extradition will be heard this week.

Leaflet published by Italy '79 Committee: April 6th 1981

Teeth & Bones

The above-mentioned censorship exists partly at an official level. It is now a policy of the Italian media to censor out of existence the armed groups and terrorists. Since, for many of them, terrorism and the extra-Parliamentary Left are one and the same thing, that blanket censorship tends to cover the attack on that



THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS:

"But why do these papers no longer say anything about the Government's law and order measures?"

"They're the silent majority."

"But these ones don't say anything either."

"They're the silenced minority"

Lotta Continua December 1979

broader Left movement as well. In the same way that the British media attempt to censor the IRA and the Irish struggle out of existence.

The censorship also exists informally. For example, you might think that the *Guardian* newspaper might make good its claims to liberalism by publicising what happens in Italy (the repression, the destruction of this movement). But the *Guardian* newspaper reporting has been even more despicable than those who have simply ignored Italy. The *Guardian*, in the shape of correspondent George Armstrong, systematically trivialises Italy.

Armstrong did one honest thing, way back in 1979. He published an article just after the April 7th arrests, strongly

suggesting (as has been subsequently proven) that the "Red Brigade" charges were a fit-up. Since that time he has dropped the affair like a hot potato. And his articles now are like a modern-day version of the aristocratic Grand Tour: for him Italy is picturesque, comical, eccentric, artistic and, of course, basically bourgeois. As an example: the count who rings the bell of his palazzo every time he fornicates with his mistress, in order to upset his estranged wife who lives nearby. Or the burning issue of whether the bones of Victor Emmanuel III and his wife should be laid to rest in Rome.

Armstrong lives in Italy. He has contacts among radicals. He knows what is happening to the Left movement. But he chooses not to write about it. One of the most disgusting instances was in March 1981: Armstrong had gone to Padova on the self-same day that Judge Calogero re-arrested 5 comrades from Padova in circumstances that were scandalous and a considerable blow to the movement. His article that day consisted of a minute examination and dissertation on the exhumed remains of Saint Anthony — all couched in folklore and comic nuance. Would this man have served similar fare from Chile, or El Salvador, or Argentina?

Goodbye George Armstrong

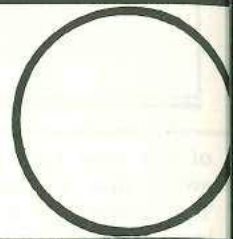
Unfortunately Armstrong's precision-reporting in the matter of counting St Anthony's teeth seems not to apply on the occasions when he deals in political matters. An example: shortly before the release of Judge D'Urso by the Red Brigades in early 1981, the Communist Party organised — according to Armstrong — "a large rally" against terrorism in Rome. It is only when one reads Rome's daily paper *Il Messaggero* that one gets the true picture of what happened. Only 2,000 people turned up for what had been planned as a "historic protest". The whole thing broke up after about 20 minutes and a rather embarrassing contribution of a single speaker. This is what in Italy is commonly called a "fiasco" — a big flop.

Even the *Times* newspaper, which regales us with the society witterings of their salon-correspondent Peter Nichols, recognises Italy as "the laboratory of Europe", in social terms. So why does the *Guardian* insist on feeding its readers this diet of condescending paternalism?

The *Guardian* could do worse than sack George Armstrong and replace him with a responsible journalist. But the *Guardian* is only one among many. The fact is that a constant political pressure needs to be applied on newspapers of both liberal and Left persuasion (and here we include the revolutionary Left) to ensure that this Press blackout is lifted.

There is too much at stake in Italy for this "laboratory of Europe" to be ignored.

RED NOTES



Translation

● THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE APRIL 7th DEFENDANTS

Following the Seminar held on 'Marx Beyond Marx' (at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 6-7th June 1980), a meeting was called for the participants to discuss in more detail the juridical and political aspects of the "Negri Affair".

A number of initiatives and positions have already been taken in France following the arrests of April 7th 1979, the extradition of Piperno and Pace, and the enactment in Italy of particularly repressive laws (viz. the Decree of 15th December 1979) in the areas of civil liberties and the right to legal defence. These initiatives laid the ground for a further initiative which has arisen from that Seminar.

Given the deeply disturbing nature of this "judicial process", and given the absurd position of Negri and the others who have been imprisoned, or are wanted, post-April 7th and December 21st 1979, now that the principle charges in the "Negri affair" have been dropped (i.e. the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro), the participants in the Seminar have decided to alert international opinion to this state of affairs.

They have decided to set up a committee. The aims of this committee are as follows:

1. To obtain the immediate release from prison of the April 7th and December 21st defendants, together with a guarantee, after these 14 months of imprisonment since the first arrests, that the charges that still hang over them should be brought to trial as soon as possible - or, if evidence to support them cannot be provided, that they be dropped.
2. To achieve this, the Committee intends to provide more information on the judicial, political and prison situation in Italy, as well as its ramifications at the European level in terms of extradition etc.

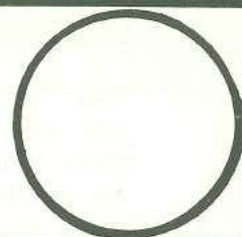
The Committee will launch an international appeal, on the basis of numerous international initiatives that have already been developed in France, Britain, Germany, Spain, Holland, Japan, Canada, Australia and the USA.

The Committee will collect and distribute information aimed at illuminating international opinion on one of the particularly emblematic aspects of the workings of the judicial machine in Western Europe.

The Committee will take all possible steps in this direction, by approaching groups, organisations, parties and authorities, particularly in Italy and in Europe. It will undertake political, artistic and fund-raising activities in order to contribute to the eventual release from prison of Negri and his comrades.

International Committee for the
Liberation of the April 7th Defendants.

RED NOTES



Document

● INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF PRISONERS

At the Press Conference "Italy 1981" called by the Italy '79 Committee, the following Press Notice was read aloud and distributed by a member of the audience.

PRESS NOTICE

While there are now some 3,500 members of autonomous and urban guerrilla groups imprisoned in Italy, the situation in other European countries is very similar. Political prisoners mainly in Spain, Turkey, West Germany, England and Northern Ireland are kept under conditions aimed to crush their political identity. The policy of criminalisation is opposed most fiercely by political prisoners in Northern Ireland and West Germany. Since the beginning of March 4 Republican prisoners are on hunger-strike for the demand of political status at the Maze prison in Long Kesh. In West Germany 26 prisoners of the Red Army Fraction are now in their 10th week of a hunger strike that began February 2nd 1981. In their hunger strike declaration they express their solidarity with the political prisoners of the IRA, INLA, Brigade Rosse and those who are carrying on with their struggle inside the prisons.

The demands of the prisoners of the RAF on hunger strike are:

- The minimal guarantees of the Geneva Convention be applied to the prisoners of the RAF and other anti-imperialist resistance groups; that is to say:-
 - * THAT THOSE PRISONERS BE ABLE TO ASSOCIATE UNDER CONDITIONS THAT MAKE INTER-ACTION POSSIBLE; THIS MEANS THE ABOLITION OF THE CONTROL OF ALL COMMUNICATIONS ELECTRONICALLY, ACOUSTICALLY AND OPTICALLY WHICH TAKES PLACE WITHIN UNITS OF ISOLATION THAT ARE SOUND/LIGHT/AIR CONDITIONED. (Note 1)
 - * THAT CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT ARE INDEPENDENTLY CONTROLLED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF PRISONERS AND AGAINST CONDITIONS OF ISOLATION.
 - * THAT GUNTHER SONNENBURG BE RELEASED AS HIS PHYSICAL RECOVERY FROM BRAIN DAMAGE CANNOT TAKE PLACE UNDER CONDITIONS OF ISOLATION IMPRISONMENT. (Note 2)
 - * THE RELEASE OF VERENA BECKER WHO WAS DIAGNOSED AS HAVING TB CONTRACTED DURING HER IMPRISONMENT.

Note 1: Article 75 of the Geneva Convention of 1949 lays down the fundamental guarantees to be accorded to "PERSONS WHO ARE IN THE POWER OF A PARTY TO THE CONFLICT" - that is to say Prisoner of War status. The 1949 Convention relates to prisoners who are captured as a result of an international conflict. The additional protocols of 1977 cover armed conflicts which are not of an international character. This means that the combatants of the anti-imperialist resistance movements of national liberation struggles & urban guerrilla warfare being waged in the 3rd World & the metropolitan countries should also be accorded such political status.

Note 2: The West German State applies special programmes of imprisonment only against those prisoners who come from militant anti-imperialist resistance groups. These prisoners are subjected to isolation torture in the silent cells of the new

"High Security Wings" - many for over 4 years. With no association periods at some with absolutely no exercise period either. The isolation cells are air-conditioned, sound-proofed, white-walled and constantly lit. Surveillance of the prisoner is total. Cameras and microphones are stationed in each cell, on wing, and around exercise yards. If prisoners do have association it is behind partition window of bullet-proof glass. Visits are for 1 hour per month in similar conditions, if permitted at all. Strip searches take place for prisoners and visitors before and after any visit or association. The State has acknowledged political content of their struggle by the methods it employs to try and crush it.

Note 3: Gunther Sonnenburg was arrested in 1977, and during the arrest was shot in the head. He sustained brain damage, and has been in isolation ever since. He does not get the medical treatment he needs to make a recovery. Since he is not fit to stay in prison he should be released immediately.

■ International Commission for the Protection of Prisoners

London, April 7th 1980



NOTE

The above article makes clear that both the methods of repression adopted by the State and the forms of struggle adopted by prisoners have a lot in common in the Europe of the 1980s. Prison regimes and systems are planned and modelled at an international level - but the resistance to them tends to be confined within national boundaries.

Our book tries to break across these frontiers, with an account of the modes of repression in Italy. In addition, for

readers abroad who may not have followed the campaign, we include the following two items related to the fight for political status in Ireland.

As we go to press, Joe McDonnell has died - the fifth hunger striker to give his life in the new wave of the campaign for Political Status. And still the British Government remains intransigent.

H BLOCK

Walls smeared with excrement, urine soaked floors,
H-Block graffiti that relates,

Waste matter, and we that the system has wasted, so
neither nostrils nor conscience can tolerate.

Our comments on the ruling class, yes, even in prison
we fight and condemn you, commitment's cup filled to
the brim.

Naked, save one stinking blanket, yet dressed in the
knowledge that you cannot win.

Sitting huddled in cells, surrounded by rank, putrid
odours, suffocating in its vileness true,

Unable to breathe or escape, any more than we can
escape the suffering our people are chained to.

Long matted hair, weighing heavily upon our shoulders,
bearded face, lined, deep hollow cheeks,

Sunken staring eyes, yet better able to see the root
cause of our suffering, class oppression reeks.

Wasting away on hunger's pain-filled path, sipping only
water, pushing back death one day at a time,

For each day we last, burns us into the hearts of Ireland,
that those who love will not forget what you have done,
invader slime.

We have killed, yes, we killed. For words do not reach
or touch you. Thus choice before necessity kneels.

Bullets, those friendless allies, now fight with us, that
you the ruling class and co. will do the dying and know how
it feels.

Let your families weep, as Ireland has wept for
centuries long — your sorrow singular, ours grows and grows.

Taste that rancid smell of death, feel its cold numbness,
as a child in the womb of Ireland knows.

That we will die, no doubt, remains in our minds, for
you the invaders of Ireland have murdered before, and will
again.

Our deaths will not go unnoticed, instead will highlight
your inhumanity to Ireland. Our war will not cease, till none
of you remain.

Partition of Ireland. For us death is a consequence, not a
choice. Blood flows in continuing streams.

Sham democracy, England's Vietnam, when fighting
injustice and oppression there are no extremes.

Our bodies carried out of H-Block in coffins, skeltoned
and cold,

Irish workers' history written in blood, repeated and
then in blood retold.

Ruling class invaders of Ireland, guilty of division,
murder and mayhem,

The system is a product of yours; we are the products
of that system.

This poem, reproduced from Big Flame newspaper, was written
by a comrade from the Ford-Dagenham factory.

BP
November 1980

DOSSIER SUPPORT THE HUNGER STRIKE

□ Bobby Sands, age 27, was first arrested when he was 18. He has spent 6 months in freedom in the last 8 years. He is now on hunger strike for the 5 demands.

Like most of the men in the H-Blocks and the women in Armagh, Bobby Sands was a young teenager when the Civil Rights movement marched out of the ghettos to demand by peaceful means, basic civil rights and an end to sectarianism where all the best jobs and housing went to the loyalist community. They saw these marches attacked by the RUC and in 1972 in Derry witnessed 14 protestors shot dead by the army on a peaceful march.

Bobby was 17 when a policy of imprisoning without trial large numbers of the nationalist community was begun. After a few years, internment had become an international embarrassment, and the Diplock Court system was introduced. This system dealt only with scheduled offences as opposed to ordinary criminal offences.

Sands was arrested in 1976, held for six days in the Castle-reagh interrogation centre and convicted by a Diplock Court. These courts have only one judge and no jury. 80% of the convictions are by confession alone. These confessions are often obtained in conditions of extreme brutality. (Amnesty International Report, Bennet Report, 1979). Prisoners convicted under this system were granted Special Category status in prison. Prisoners were allowed to wear their own clothes, organise their own recreation and education, and were not required to do prison work.

However, special category status was not allowed to prisoners convicted after March 1st 1976. This was as a result of a change in Government policy, which now attempted to deny the political nature of these offences.

Like other prisoners after this date, Bobby Sands refused to wear prison uniform and had only a blanket to wear. In an attempt to break the protest, prison officers began a campaign of harassment and beatings. Prisoners were refused radios, reading or writing material, and were only allowed visits if they put on prison uniform and endured internal body searches.

Protesting against their maltreatment, prisoners in the H-Blocks in 1978 refused to leave their cells. Because the warders refused to empty the slop buckets, the prisoners were forced to live with their own excreta and urine. The brutality was not as consistently severe in Armagh Jail, but in February 1979 the women prisoners were forced into a "dirty protest" of their own.

Despite concern at the extreme conditions the prisoners were forced to live in, the Government refused to make any changes in the prison regime. To break the deadlock 7 prisoners began a hunger strike in October 1980. They were joined by three women prisoners in Armagh Jail. Intense Irish and international support built up during the hunger strike, and the government was forced to come to terms with the prisoners.

In December 1980 when Sean McKenna was at death's door the prisoners were shown a 34-page documents and a statement to be made by Humphrey Atkins in the House of Commons of December 18th. These documents contained the essence of their 5 demands. The agreement between the prisoners and the Home Office was confirmed by verbal assurances of a generous interpretation of the agreement made by a priest acting as an intermediary. The prisoners called off their hunger strike.

3 Months of Government Deceit

December 19th: Hunger Strike Ends. H-Block prisoners continue on protest until the demands are implemented.

January: In Armagh Jail Governor Scott refuses to discuss self-education classes, contrary to the agreement. Prisoners remain on protest.

January 10th: The prison authorities met with Bobby Sands, a representative of the prisoners.

January 12/15th: 100 H-Block men move into clean cells and begin slopping out. A Governor's statement was given to them saying that those prepared to wear civilian-type clothing would be given the chance to wear their own clothes.

January 16th: A pilot scheme where 20 prisoners were to go through the step-by-step procedure agreed upon was to be implemented. However, Governor Hilditch asked for a week's grace. As an indication of goodwill the prisoners agreed to this. In Armagh Jail the women who were still on protest were awaiting the results of the pilot scheme before again requesting their own educational facilities.

January 23rd: The pilot scheme begins. 20 men washed, shaved, and slopped out their cells. They were now off the protest, as agreed in the Atkins document. They asked for their clothes, which had been brought by their relatives to the prison. This request was refused, in direct contradiction to the Atkins agreement.

January 27th: In H-5 prisoners smash their cell furniture in protest against the increasing harassment from warders. In response they were attacked by the warders, resulting in some serious injuries. Six men were subjected to a brutal anal search which the prisoners claim amounted to "a sexual assault". All prisoners who had come off now reverted to the blanket protest.

February 2nd: Prisoners announce a new Hunger Strike, to commence on March 1st.

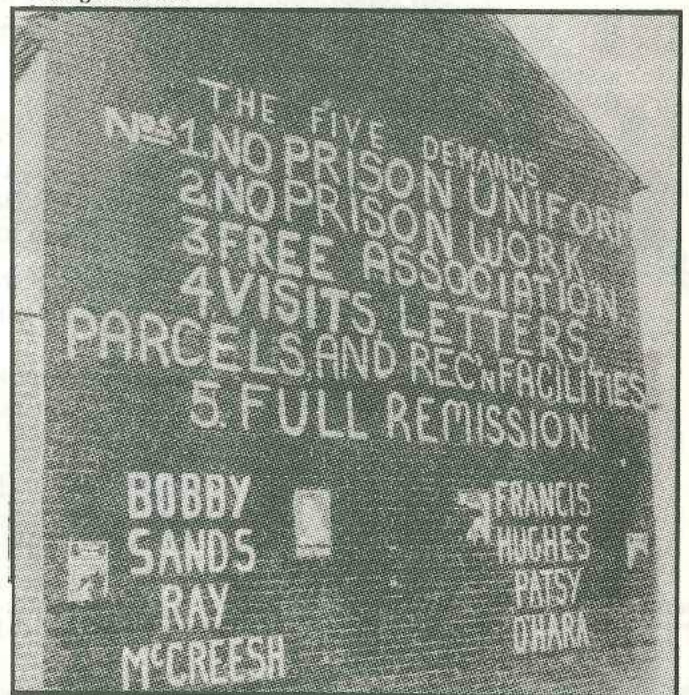
February 13th: Six former hunger-strikers, released from hospital, immediately begin blanket protest.

March 1st: Bobby Sands begins a hunger strike until death.

March 2nd: Prisoners cease "dirty protest" to concentrate attention on the main issue of the protest.

March 15th: Francis Hughes begins Hunger Strike.

March 22nd: Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara join Hunger Strike.



The Five Demands

CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE 5 DEMANDS

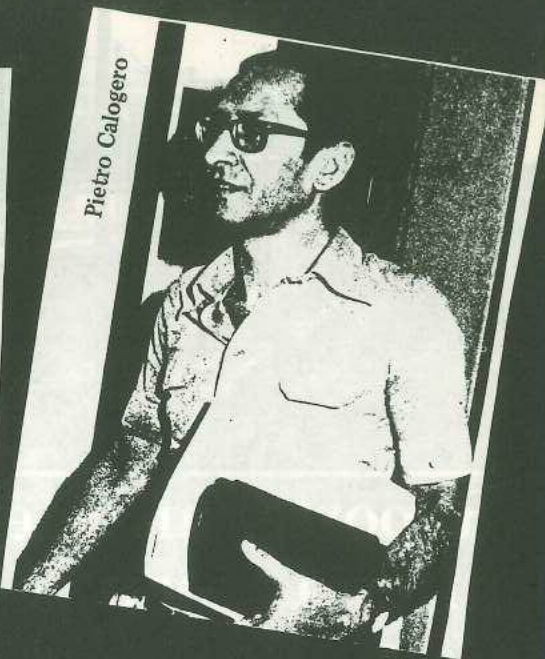
The Government has callously attempted to break the prisoners' spirit by reneging on the agreement. By using an almost complete news black-out they are trying to dampen support for the hunger strike. Large marches in Ireland and the choosing of Bobby Sands as a candidate for the Fermanagh/Tyrone by-election have illustrated the feelings of the Irish people. It is up to you to break the wall of silence in this country.

National Demonstration: London, April 26th
1.30pm, Kilburn Tube Station

Leaflet produced by H-Block/Armagh Committee, London



Flaminio Piccoli



Pietro Calogero



Carlo Fioroni



Carlo Casirati

• THE HOUSE OF CARDS WITH BARS OF IRON



General Dalla Chiesa



General Cappuzzo



Enrico Berlinguer

Reporter arrested after a scoop on Red Brigades

from DAVID WILLEY in Rome

AN ITALIAN journalist who thought he had a world scoop — an interview with the Red Brigades terrorists holding a Rome judge prisoner — has been charged with aiding and abetting the terrorists and giving false evidence to the police.

Mario Scialoja, of the weekly news magazine *L'Espresso*, was arrested on New Year's Day in Bolzano in the South Tirol and taken to Rome's Regina Coeli prison, where he has been interrogated for more than 10 hours. Scialoja has denied the charges.

Another journalist who worked on the story has also been arrested. Scialoja claims he was contacted by an emissary from the Red Brigades before Christmas and had several meetings. He drafted a list of questions and the written replies were handed over with a Polaroid colour photograph of the kidnapped judge, Giovanni D'Urso, during a final contact in St Peter's Square.

The case has split the magazine's staff over the ethics of the scoop. The chairman of the editorial board, a leading lawyer, has resigned, denouncing the interview — which the magazine has gone ahead and published — as 'improper'. The material includes what the Red Brigades claim is a confession by the judge of his 'crimes'.

A group of journalists on the magazine say they are standing firmly behind their imprisoned colleagues.

The Italian Press in general is making it clear that the journalists' right to pick their sources and publish freely in the public interest does not extend to interviewing enemies of the State who

are continuing to sow panic and disorder.

This is partly sour grapes, as the whole Press has been publishing the recent 'communiques' of the Red Brigades which are placed in litter bins in the streets, and then picked up by selected journalists alerted by anonymous telephone calls.

It has been an active month for terrorism in Italy, culminating in the Red Brigades' murder of a high-ranking police general at his home on New Year's Eve.

The carabinieri — general, Enrico Galvaligi, had just arrived home after attending evening Mass with his wife when he was shot dead by two terrorists disguised as delivery men who had been waiting with a gift package of wine and fruit.

General Enrico Galvaligi was buried with full military honours in an atmosphere of great bitterness after a funeral attended by President Sandro Pertini, who cut short his New Year holiday to return to Rome.

The Government virtually capitulated last month after the kidnapping of Judge D'Urso, to demands by the Red Brigades that the maximum-security wing on the prison island of Asinara, where many terrorists are serving sentences, should be closed for humanitarian reasons.

But the authorities moved swiftly and effectively to quell a revolt last week at Trani prison in southern Italy, organised by a group of convicted and suspected terrorist leaders.

It has still not been explained how the Red Brigades are able to communicate with accomplices inside prison. Destruction of the existing prison system is the declared objective of the Red Brigades.



•THE REVOLT AT TRANI PRISON DECEMBER 1980



1. An armed jeep outside Trani Prison.
2. Judge D'Urso under interrogation by the Red Brigades.
3. A view of the Press Blackout in Italy [Observer 4.1.81]
4. Policeman with flak jacket, dog, and gun, at the prison gates.
5. Paola Negri waits at the prison gates for news of the prisoners.
6. One of the injured prisoners is carried out on a stretcher.
7. Armed Carabinieri prepare for the assault.

DOSSIER THE PROSECUTION'S CASE COLLAPSES

The translation below has been produced by the Italy '79 Committee in Britain, for publication on April 7th 1981 - the second anniversary of the first wave of "Autonomia" arrests in Italy.

The article is by the lawyer and University lecturer Luigi Ferrajoli. He examines the inconsistencies of the case against the "Autonomy", the confused and contradictory "evidence" regarding the charge of "armed insurrection against the State", and the political use of supergrasses - the "pentiti" - against the defendants.

We hope that the publication of this document will help in breaking the "Press blackout" regarding the prosecution of the Left movement in Italy.

● THE PROSECUTION'S HOUSE OF CARDS COLLAPSES

An analysis of the judicial proceedings undertaken by Procurator-Substitute Ciampani against the April 7th defendants. A scandalous piece of bluff, a framework of charges wholly different from the original charges under which they were arrested - a framework which is extremely weak at the level of proof and evidence. For how long can the Italian Communist Party, the Press barons and the forces of power continue to keep this corpse alive?

"Two weeks ago Procurator Ciampani published the findings of his judicial inquiry on the April 7th defendants. This document has even been a surprise to those who have had doubts and reservations, who have expressed criticisms of the general outlines of these judicial proceedings. For 22 months Negri and the other defendants have had half the judges in Italy, and the whole of the Italian Press heaping monstrous accusation after monstrous accusation on their heads. It would have been reasonable, at this point, to expect at least some actual evidence to support at least some of these charges. But instead, what do we see? A scandalous piece of bluff, a framework of charges that is entirely different from the original charges - a set of accusations which on the one hand carry even more severe sentences, and on the other hand have very little evidence to back the charges against the majority of the defendants.

THE POSITION OUTLINED BY JUDGE CALOGERO: THE "CALOGERO THEOREM"

It might be useful to remind those who have commented on Ciampani's document (perhaps without reading it), and who have used phrases like "The Calogero theorem is confirmed" and "the link between Workers' Autonomy and the Red Brigades is proved" etc, what the accusations brought against Negri and his comrades actually were.

The charges brought by Padova Judge Calogero in the arrest warrants issued on April 6th 1979 were:

1) That Negri, Ferrari Bravo, Piperno, Scalzone, Dalmaviva, Vesce, Zagato, Nicotri, Marongiu, Pancino, Roberto Ferrari and Nanni Balestrini were the founders, organisers and leaders of "an organisation going under the name Red Brigades".

2) That, at the same time, they inspired and were the leaders of various "interlinked organisations, going under various names, but constituting the so-called Organised Workers' Autonomy". This was alleged to be the cover organisation for all remaining strands of the Italian terrorist movement which developed alongside the Red Brigades since the period of what the prosecution alleges was the "false" dissolution of Potere Operaio in 1972.

In other words, they were accused of being the secret brain and the equally secret leadership of all Italian terrorism, ranging from organised

and conspiratorial terrorism to the more diffused and localised forms. These were said to be divergent only in appearance, but in reality were inspired by a common motivation, programme and strategy.

On the same day another arrest warrant, issued by the Rome Procurator, and implicating Negri - along with Alunni, Moretti, Morrucci, Gallinari etc - in the Moro assassination served to supplement and support these monstrous accusations. He was also charged with single-handedly promoting an armed insurrection against the State. A few months later a new arrest warrant was issued in Rome, accusing Negri, along with various members of the Red Brigades, of the murder of Riccardo Palma and of the attempted murders of Valerio Traversi, Emilio Rossi, Reno Cacciafesta, Mario Perlini, Publio Fiori, Raffale de Rosa and Girolamo Mecholli, as well as dozens of other crimes.

These, then, were the original elements of the "Calogero theorem". We have been waiting for nearly two years for something else in the way of proof - something other than the constant references to what T. Negri has written. We have been waiting for some indication of the existence of concrete evidence, but what has happened instead is that the charges have been increasingly inflated and made more serious, with a hail of new arrest warrants, substituting for and/or extending one another. At the same time, the original charges, instead of being corroborated, have, one by one, been completely disproved.

This first part of this construction to collapse came about 3 months after 7th April 1979, when the most serious of the charges - that accusing Negri and the others of being the leaders and founders of the Red Brigades - fell. In the new arrest warrant of July 7th, which, as was stated in a footnote, "substituted" the one issued in Padova on April 7th, no mention is made of the Red Brigades. The defendants are accused of having organised something which was rather vaguely defined as "subversive association constituted of armed gangs going under various names". To make up for this, the number of charges was increased: All the defendants were charged with "armed insurrection against the State". In the subsequent warrant of August 29th - hastily thrown together to obtain the extradition of Piperno and Pace from France - the charges against these defendants were extended to implication in the Moro assassination. Negri was also charged with various other crimes (the Palma killing, the attempted killings of Traversi, Cacciafesta etc). All of this, except for two pages on Piperno and Pace, did not include so much as a single line of proof.

The second stage of collapse took place in the first few months of 1980, when, following Peci's testimony (tn: one of the "pentiti", or "repentant terrorists"), the charge against Negri - which had been dragged out for so long, what with overseas research into the famous telephone call to Mrs Moro - of involvement in the Moro assassination, also fell. Lastly, on November 19th 1980, during the judicial inquiry against the Red Brigade members accused of the Moro assassination, the Rome Procurator explicitly recognised that the April 7th defendants had nothing to do with the Red Brigades, and asked for Negri to be released and completely absolved of the Moro assassination and for him to be absolved of all - I repeat, all - the terrorist crimes for which he had previously been charged (Palma, Traversi etc), apart from "subversive association", "formation of an armed band" and "armed insurrection".

At this point, given the fact that not one single wall of the original house of cards remained, it is rather difficult to understand what was this "armed insurrection" which was allegedly promoted by Negri and his comrades. Nevertheless, an extraordinary problem now confronted the judges. The Roman judges realised that, since all of the charges under their jurisdiction (Moro, Palma) had now fallen that of "armed insurrection" - however unlikely - was the only crime that could justify Rome's continued jurisdiction and the extension of the pre-trial detention period. Although the Red Brigades

have never been charged with this offence, yet another arrest warrant issued in July 1979 - in the face of the collapse of all the supposed linkages between the April 7th defendants and the Red Brigades - the various defendants were all lumped together and both sets charged with "armed insurrection platted between them". Naturally, not so much as one word has been offered to explain what this mysterious plot was; maintaining the allegation of a connection between the April 7th defendants and the Red Brigades has meant that the Rome magistrates were able to retain their jurisdiction, even though this was only provisional.

So we come to the last act of this extraordinary legal process: the instruction-phase document issued by Judge Ciampani, in which the April 7th defendants, following the separation of their status from that of the Red Brigades defendants, are to be tried separately. We discover that the accusations have once again been modified, so that they no longer have anything in common with the original ones. The 150 pages of this document would require careful analysis which, unfortunately, for reasons of space, is not possible here. But we can point out a few essential points.

*** First, the charges against the defendants have nothing to do with the bloody terrorism that has raged through Italian society in recent years - if nothing else, because none of them relates to crimes occurring since 1975. Out of 78 defendants, at least 45 - in short, the entire April 7th group except Negri - are not accused of any specific action, but only of "crimes of association" (so-called "subversive association" and/or "participation in an armed gang" and/or "armed insurrection") for which one cannot see even the weakest of foundations of proof. The other defendants, starting with Negri (who is still billed as leader, inspiration and organiser of all this) are charged with crimes against property, for the most part committed between 1972 and 1975: 2 thefts (of a painting and of a stamp collection), planning 3 armed robberies (of which only 2 were attempted, both of which failed), 2 cases of receiving stolen goods, the attempted (or only planned?) kidnapping of the industrialist Duina, the arson at ITT-Face Standard, and finally (these are more serious facts, to which we will return later) the attempted Argelato robbery, during which Brigadier Lombardini was killed, and the Saronio kidnapping.

*** Second, No concrete evidence, no witnesses, no statements from "pentiti", no actual pieces of proof among the many cited in the course of this long drawn-out judicial inquiry had been gathered prior to April 7th 1979. This means that on April 7th, at the moment of the arrests, the inquiring judges (Calogero in Padova, Gallucci in Rome) had no concrete evidence against the defendants.... not even evidence worthy of a mention, let alone solidly grounded proofs. All they had was a series of fertile and suggestive political hypotheses. It also means that the judicial inquiry has been constructed around the defendants wholly after their arrest - and that thus their arrest was wholly without foundation. It also means - since both the sources of basic evidence, and the charges, have been utterly altered and transformed - that the defence has been developed along lines which are wholly different to those along which the defendants are now required to defend themselves. And finally, concretely, it means that what has for 2 years been presented as "the brains behind terrorism in Italy", as clandestine organisation, and as the strategic leadership of the armed struggle in our country was a kind of Fred Karno's Army, devoted at most (although even on this we are still seeking the actual proof against the defendants) to small-time thieving and failed bank robberies.

Regarding Conspiring to Destroy the State

*** Third, regarding the responsibility of the majority of the defendants relating to specific concrete crimes: in particular the Saronio kidnap and the Argelato robbery. The judicial inquiry has brought to light no evidence whatsoever - merely allusion and vague hints. The basis for this segment of the trial

consists entirely of the statements of Fioroni and Casirati (tn: two "pentiti") who were the people who carried out a large part of the above crimes. Negri is always accused as the prime mover of those crimes - sometimes by hearsay, sometimes (more often) by a process of "deduction" - by virtue of his stated position as "leader" who knew about everything, and whose word was law regarding everything that happened in the "organisation". In Fioroni's statement regarding the Saronio kidnap, Negri's name is not even mentioned except in connection with a "commission of inquiry" called by him after the event. But this very fact that Negri is not directly cited is seen by the legal authorities as "an indication of Fioroni's honesty. If he had really wanted to implicate his comrades in the crimes in question, he could have stated specifically that they had talked about it - whereas he remains totally silent on the matter."

Now, regarding the crimes of association - and in particular "armed insurrection" - the "evidence" consists wholly of the fact of membership of Potere Operaio, plus the subsequent relationship between Negri, Piperno and Scalzone. Not to mention a rich anthology of the writings of these three, singing the praises of armed revolution. For Luciano Ferrari Bravo the sole evidence for the charge is that he was an editor of Rosso and Autonomia, and that he had made notes in a notebook (taken from him) regarding outlines for articles or general directions for those journals. As for Alberto Magnaghi and Mario Dalmaviva, the "evidence", apart from their long-distant membership of Potere Operaio and their participation in the organisation's conferences, consists entirely of two items: (a) the accusation of having taken part in a meeting the day after the 11th December 1971 demonstration in Milan, during which the failure (!) to use Molotov cocktails on the demonstration was discussed; and (b) the fact that they had been sent a letter from Oreste Scalzone (19th January 1971), inviting them to a meeting on the subject of "organisation, civil war, political revolution and the abolition of the State".

As for Nanni Balestrini, there really is no evidence - unless you count as evidence these 8 lines from the report of the judicial inquiry:

"The accused, resident in Rome at the time, was telephoned by Fioroni and Scalzone, trying to track down Feltrinelli when he was held up and late for an appointment in Genova (end-December 1979). Balestrini's name also figures a number of times in Negri's 1975 diary, in relation to the editorial group of Rosso. The importance of Rosso magazine at the level of armed struggle has already been pointed out. These two elements demonstrate an uninterrupted continuity in Balestrini's presence and activity in the O (tn: "Organisation").

Fourth, and finally, "armed insurrection against the powers of the State". Until 2 weeks ago, the "armed insurrection" which the April 7th defendants were charged with was carried out "in conjunction with" Alunni, Moretti, Moruuci, Gallinari etc (ie Red Brigades). Now that the judicial inquiry against the defendants has run its course separately from that against the Red Brigades, the April 7th defendants are still being charged with armed insurrection - but no longer "in conjunction with" the Red Brigades. Thus we are presumably dealing with a different insurrection. We shall not dwell on the judicial absurdity of this modification, as regards proceeding on this specific charge. The problem is - what exactly was that insurrection? Obviously not the Red Brigades' one, but the "April 7th" insurrection - carried out, according to the judges, from 1971 onwards, and particularly between 1973 and 1974, to be evidence (in the absence of other proofs) in the conferences, books, journals, thefts of postage stamps and the attempted robberies. The weapons involved - the prosecution readily admits - were probably few. But the defendants allegedly made up for this shortcoming "by playing the card of incitement and propaganda" through "both a continuous string of conferences and meetings, starting with November 1971 in Rome - and also a

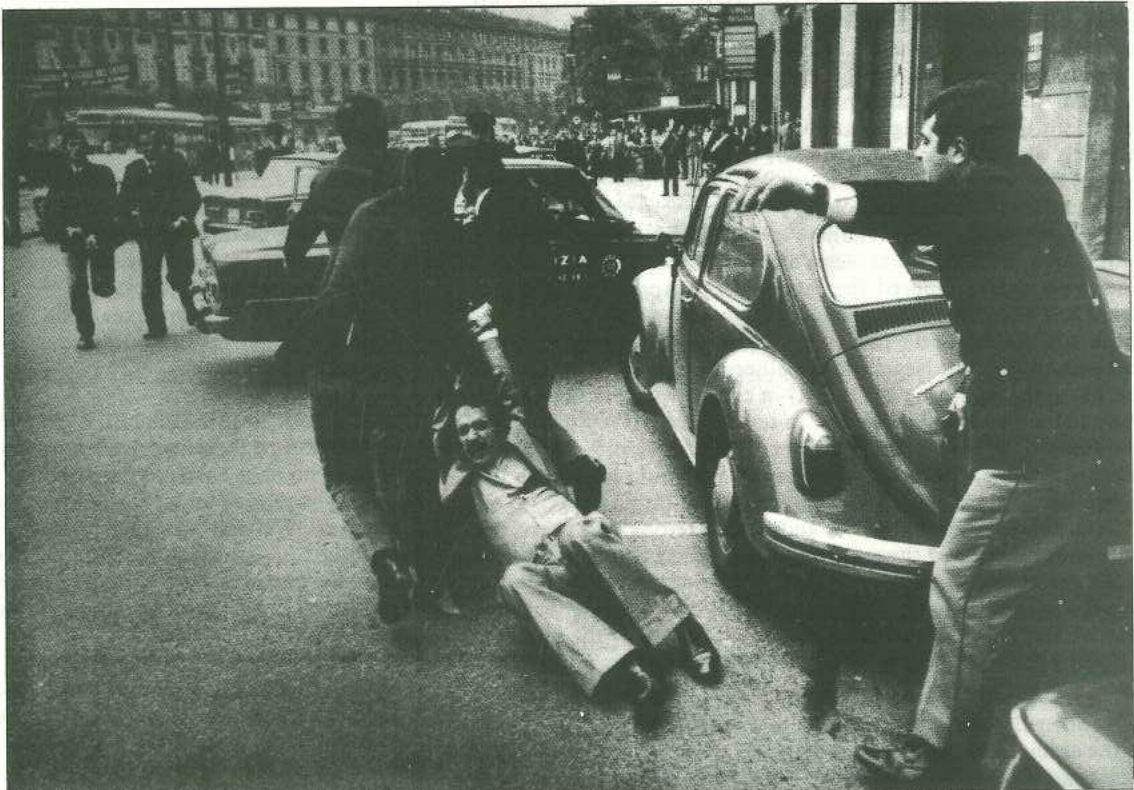
weighty publishing activity in the form of numerous publications."

At any rate, the judges add, it could not be otherwise, since one cannot, even at the level of logic, accept the hypothesis that men of the capacity, the determination and the leadership qualities of Negri, Piperno, Scalzone etc, had, since as early as 1971, begun to discuss armed struggle, and frittered around discussing the armed struggle for around 10 years without making the slightest preparations to bring about the armed crime under examination. Unless it can be shown that Piperno, Negri, Scalzone etc are merely inept word-mongers - contrary to the obvious and enthusiastic opinions of many who have described them".

I would not wish, with these comical quotations, to speak too much ill of the Ciampani inquiry. Regardless of all this, it is still the most honest prosecution document of the whole April 7th affair. While it is true that it contains not the slightest element that could decently be called an "element of proof", it is also true that was even more true of the other inquiries that, in the course of the past 2 years, have heaped these incredible mountains of accusations against the defendants. Compared with all these other arrest warrants, expressed opinions etc of recent months, it has at least the merit of having drastically reshaped the charges, demolishing the previous "house of cards", and making possible - even if very late in the proceedings - a concrete defence.

One burning question remains - a question which will never be completely answered. How did this trial come about in the first place - and how has it been able to survive? And - an even more agonising question - why, how has it been possible for the Italian Communist Party, the Left and the Press to have cultivated it - and to continue to cultivate it - without making any attempt at self-criticism, even now, when the only remaining substance of the case is a skeleton in their respective cupboards?

■ Luigi Ferrajoli
Translated from:
Quotidiano dei Lavoratori
February 6th 1981.



DOSSIER APPEAL FOR A DE-ESCALATION

□ As of April 1981, the final basis of legal charges against the autonomi was published in a 1,000 page document produced by Judge Ciampani. The following account is from the US CARI Bulletin, Spring 1981.

Following the release of the Ciampani document, the judge in charge of the case, Francesco Amato, reviewed the conclusions of the prosecutors and offered a revised statement of the charges. In a document of more than 1,000 pages, Amato made some modifications of the charges relating to specific acts—most importantly, the dropping of more of the kidnapping and murder charges against Negri—and he once again reshuffled the allegations of “crimes of association.” Otherwise, the bulk of Ciampani’s feeble structure was accepted as the basis for a trial that prosecutors say may begin later this year.

However feeble that structure may turn out to be, it is not all that the April 7th defendants will have to contend with in the coming months and years. The state has been building its case against them through the very fact of keeping them detained in the “Special Prisons” which have been established in the past four years, mainly for political detainees. These prisons—which were created solely on the basis of ministerial decree and never legislated, thus making them unconstitutional—are notorious for their inhuman conditions, including physical abuse and severe restrictions on visits, correspondence, and out-of-cell time. The BR inmates, who consider themselves prisoners of war, have been fighting against these conditions by staging revolts in coordination with attacks on prison and police officials by their members on the outside. By placing many of the April 7th prisoners in the middle of these situations, the state has sought to achieve two aims. First, to once again blur in the public’s mind the distinction between April 7th/Autonomia people and the Red Brigades, seeking to place them both under the rubric of “rebellious terrorist prisoners.” Second, to force the April 7th people into a position of having either to join forces with the BR or else dissociate themselves from the revolts and face retribution by the other inmates.

These dynamics were exhibited quite clearly at the end of last year at the Special Prison at Trani. On December 28th, imprisoned members of the Red Brigades, following the BR kidnapping two weeks earlier of the magistrate Giovanni D’Urso, joined with some “common prisoners” in overpowering guards and taking control of the jail. Negri and the eight other April 7th defendants at Trani refused to participate in the revolt, expressing some suspicions about its origins and in any event not wanting to collaborate with the BR. Nevertheless, as police were retaking the prison the next day with an overwhelming display of force (despite the fact that the revolting prisoners were not armed), the major newspapers of the country and all Europe were reporting with blaring headlines that Negri had masterminded the uprising. The press simply ignored the fact that the April 7th people at Trani had issued a public statement dissociating themselves from the revolt. Although the press soon withdrew that accusation, the prosecutors did not; Negri and the others were charged along with the BR with organizing the revolt—a charge which could add 20 years to their eventual sentences. In several cases of April 7th people accused of less serious “crimes of association,” these new charges will keep them in jail beyond what would have been the expiration of their periods of pre-trial detention this year.

In addition, when the police and guards retook control of the prison they subjected the prisoners—both those who participated in the revolt and those who refused—to severe beatings. After a five-day period in which all communication with relatives and lawyers was cut off, it was discovered that many of the inmates, including the April 7th people, had sustained serious injuries, including many broken limbs.

Another dramatic example of the way in which imprisonment in the special jails has been used against the April 7th defendants is the case of Mario Dalmaviva. Although the supposed evidence against Dalmaviva was among the most elusive of the April 7th

cases, he was sent to one of the worst Special Prisons in Italy: Asinara, located on an island off the coast of Sardinia. In October 1979 Dalmaviva refused to participate in a BR revolt, locking himself in a room instead. Nevertheless, after the uprising ended he was, like the April 7th people at Trani a year later, equally charged with participation, as well as attempted murder of several guards. Fearful of what would happen during future revolts (the BR had threatened his life), Dalmaviva demanded transfer to a regular prison. After that request was repeatedly denied, he started a hunger strike on January 12th of this year. Dalmaviva said this was the only way he could dramatize his situation and save himself in the event of a new BR uprising in the wake of the one at Trani. After two weeks of the strike the authorities relented and moved him to a regular prison.

The cases of Trani and Dalmaviva make it clear that the Special Prisons had become the means of last resort for the state in its obsession to punish the April 7th defendants regardless of legal or political obstacles. The charges brought against the defendants for BR revolts they had nothing to do with are designed to make up for the deficiencies in the original criminal case, and they ensure that the April 7th people will remain imprisoned indefinitely.

As a possible beginning of a trial grows nearer, the April 7th defendants and their families and lawyers have called for a renewed effort by support groups in Italy and abroad to publicize the scandalous way in which the case continues to be handled by the prosecutors and judges. The defense group in Paris, the International Committee for the Liberation of the April 7th Defendants, has already issued an appeal for an international commission of inquiry on the April 7th case and the general conditions of political prisoners in Italy. The text of that appeal, which was endorsed by the several hundred participants at an international conference on repression in Italy held in London in early April this year, reads as follows:

● APPEAL ON ITALY: FOR A DE-ESCALATION OF THE JUDICIAL SITUATION ●

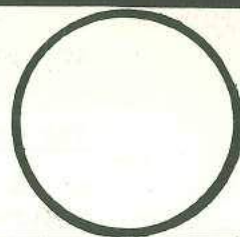
In the face of the repressive spiral in Italy, which creates the conditions for military escalation and a state terror which we totally condemn, there is an urgent need to open the way to a de-escalation to bring this process to an end.

For this reason we propose:

1) To call for the formation of an international Commission of Inquiry which will have the task of analyzing the general degradation of individual and collective civil rights in the Italian legal and prison system; and in particular to undertake an investigation into the case of those arrested April 7th, 1979, who have been used effectively as the hostages in an operation aimed at changing the political regime in Italy.

2) To call IMMEDIATELY for the CONDITIONAL RELEASE of those imprisoned on April 7th, together with those who have suffered the effect of the same mechanism of amalgamation under the general umbrella of “terrorist” charges. We call for this release immediately, without waiting for the opening of the trial, which has been continually postponed and which is likely to take place in a procedural context as irregular as that of the pre-trial investigation.

3) To orient public opinion, both Italian and international, towards a solution which halts the present military escalation and towards a basis for discussion of a general amnesty for political prisoners in Italy.



Translation

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● TRANI: A STORY OF STATE BRUTALITY

The following article is translated from "Trani: Basta coi Supercarceri", a pamphlet published by the Comitati Autonomi Operai, via dei Volsci 6, Rome, January 1978. It is an account of the revolt at Trani Special Prison, drawn up immediately after the event, on the basis of conversations with prisoners during visits etc.

"This is Trani, seen through the eyes of Giorgio Baumgartner, Luciano Nieri, Emilio Vesce and Toni Negri, reported via their comrades.

A difficult, fragmented account, drawn up only two weeks after the events, and highlighted by their bruised and swollen faces, by their bitter mood, by the disgusting conditions of prison visits - dividing glass partitions, communication via microphones, the confusion, the twenty short minutes of a prison visit.....

The Background

On December 12th 1980 the Red Brigades kidnapped the magistrate D'Urso, in order to "get Asinara closed" (tn: an antiquated prison island). Some days later at Palmi prison, prisoners held a brief stoppage during their association period. At Fossombrone prison only one section of prisoners backed the kidnap.

At Trani, up until the 28th of December, there was nothing.

In Trani Special Prison, the political geography has developed as follows:

- { a) The Struggle Committee (around the Red Brigades) - an organised structure.
- { b) The Autonomous Collective (around Prima Linea) - an organised structure.
- { c) The April 7th comrades - who do not recognise themselves in any existing organisational structure.
- { d) The comrades of the Policlinico Collective - ditto.
- { c) Other comrades - ditto.

The Special Wing is situated on 3 floors of a separate block. A stairwell divides each floor into two sections.

On the ground floor are "dangerous" criminals.

On the first floor there are Red Brigaders and Prima Linea members.

On the third floor (A-Section) there are single-room cells: these hold a number of Red Brigaders, as well as Toni Negri and others. In B-Section - cells holding 5 people in only 2 rooms - Baumgartner, Nieri, Ferrari Bravo and one other are held. Emilio Vesce is held in a separate cell.

The cells have double doors - an internal door, made of iron bars, which

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is closed all day, and an outer door, of sheet steel with a spy-hole, which is closed at night.

The Revolt

It is 3-3.30pm on the afternoon of December 12th. Most people have returned from the afternoon exercise period. Luciano, Giorgio and Luciano are already in their cell and the barred door is closed. A short while later our comrades gathered that something was up, because the guards started shouting. They came and locked the cell's outer door, and would not explain what was happening. Luciano manages to use a small mirror to see that masked men are moving around the wing. After an hour and a half their cell-door is forced off its hinges and broken open by the "masked" prisoners.

Prison warder Telesca was taken hostage, after being wounded with a makeshift dagger, by elements of the Struggle Committee. It was not clear whether this had happened during the return from exercise, or after they had returned to their cells (whose bars had previously been sawn through). Then, using his keys, the Struggle Committee released their associates from their cells. The other guards were taken hostage, and the whole wing was soon under their control.

From 5.00pm to Nightfall

The prison authorities' first act of retaliation is to cut off electricity, water and heating, and the TV. The Struggle Committee negotiates with the Governor via the internal telephone on the first floor. Luciano and the other comrades stay out of the way on the second floor. The guards are then taken up to the second floor and divided up between A-Section and B-Section.

Guard Telesca's Condition Worsens

The Struggle Committee telephone the authorities to come and take Telesca because his condition is getting worse, and they do not have the medical means to see to him. The authorities reply "Get your doctor to look after him" (referring to Giorgio Baumgartner). Only at this point did the Struggle Committee approach Giorgio. He offered first aid, and himself asked the authorities for antibiotics and other medicaments, along with professional opinion, and sedatives to calm the hostage guard. Giorgio also asked for the electricity to be switched on again so that he could see to the wounds. He received no reply. Our comrades spent the night in their cell.

The Statement by Scamarcio

This publicity-seeking Socialist Senator has stated various things about Baumgartner and Negri that are entirely false. Not only did Toni not lead the revolt, but he also dissociated himself from it. Furthermore, Giorgio never came down from the second floor, and never took part in any negotiation or delegation - which anyway all took place on the first floor, or the ground floor.

The Blitz

December 29th - the following day. The Struggle Committee had not foreseen the Blitz, since they felt safe, by reason on holding the hostages. All through the morning, and right up to the last moment, Governor Brunetti was asking the Struggle Committee to release the hostages in order to avoid the worst.

But the worst had already been decided on. The "political situation" required a certain type of response. Brunetti was over-ruled, and lost his job. The political parties put on their khaki!

4.30 PM

The sun is about to set. The dull noise of helicopters overhead announced

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to the prisoners that the solution was to be military. A general stampede, and cries of "They'll kill us all". The Struggle Committee withdraw to the first floor, and barricade themselves in their cells. On the second floor the guard-hostages cling to Giorgio, seized with hysteria: "Doctor, save us, we don't want to die". In fact they prevented him from seeking refuge in his cell. He stayed with the guards, and they all sprawled on the floor, sheltering from the grenades and bullets behind tables and washstands.

The air shakes with a tremendous noise of explosions and flying helicopters. The Assault Squad arrived via a trapdoor in the roof of the second floor. There is a blinding, deafening crash as they throw thunderflash bombs. More Assault Squad troops pour through, and shoot like madmen. All you see is their robot-shadows caught in shafts of light as their torches sliced through the dark of the prison cells.

The Sadism and Violence of the Assault Squad

- Vesce has two ribs broken by a kick.
- Baumgartner - who was sprawled on the floor - has his hand stamped on, breaking his fingers.
- Nieri has his arm dislocated.
- Negri is kicked in the head.

The comrades are in a state of terror. They are deafened by the din, dazzled by the light. When they hesitate in giving their surnames, the troops react even more violently.

Vesce's Account

"Ribs broken, a stabbing pain, loses his sight, struggles for breath, is sent crashing down the stairs. They pull his hair to raise his head. They ask his name. They make fun of him: "Are you afraid?". After pointing their guns in his face, they fire half an inch over his head. Then, after this mock execution, they send him tumbling down to the Mufti squad".

Nieri's Account

"Remembers one guard-hostage, who tried to identify himself, but the Assault Squad kicked him down. Nieri was made to get up, hands and face against the wall. They took him to the stairwell and put a gun in his mouth "Coward....are you afraid...". "Yes...I'm afraid" Then they fired a single shot over his head, and lumps of plaster from the wall fell on him. He was pushed and kicked from the second floor to the ground floor, where the Mufti squad were waiting".

Baumgartner's Account

"Giorgio didn't react. He was stunned by the deafening noise and the pain in his hand. They take him to the stairwell and put a gun in his mouth. Then they fired over his head, as if they were an execution squad. In the dark he was sent tumbling down to the ground floor. He thought he was now out of the "pogrom", but didn't realise that he was now in the hands of the Mufti squad."

The Mufti Squad Beat the Prisoners

In the corridor that led outside there were two lines of hooded men the Mufti squad, armed with clubs. (The hoods are part of their official equipment). It is thought that they were prison guards, because they knew the prisoners by name and by the case they were involved in.

Emilio Vesce: The Muftis shout "It's the Padovan". Emilio, in agony with his broken ribs, didn't manage to protect himself from the hail of blows. He was clubbed up and down the line twice before being dragged out into the exercise yard.

Nieri and Negri: Got off more lightly, because they were the first ones down.

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Baumgartner: "It's the one with the missiles". He receives an immediate blow to the stomach. His glasses fall off and he falls to the ground. They kick him. Half-fainting he tries to drag himself outside, but they bring him back for a further kicking. He glimpses a Carabinieri saying to the Muftis "That's enough...you're killing him". The Carabinieri try to get him away from the Muftis, but they drag him back, kicking and clubbing him. Then they hurl him bodily towards the cells. Semiconscious, all he feels is two hands dragging him into the cell. This was Negri and Nieri.

But this was not the end of it. In the cells the Muftis would come in to count them. Everyone had to stand up. Vesce and Baumgartner, in a state of agony, are told to stand up. They can't - so they receive a kicking - until an officer calls off the Mufti squad and shouts: "You can thank the hostage-guards...they say you didn't treat them badly....now you can go to the medical wing".

The comrades thought it was a trick, and didn't move. Eventually some put their names down.

The records show:

- 41 people given medical treatment.
- 17 broken limbs.
- 8 of the most severely injured are forced to spend the night in isolation cells: Baumgartner (broken fingers), Jovine (badly beaten up), Ricciardi (teeth smashed), Naria (many stitches) and others.

The Screws' Revenge

The prisoners were kept all night in the exercise yard, half naked and freezing. From the wing they heard noises of smashing and laughter. This was the orgiastic ritual of destruction - of the prisoners' personal things, of a large part of the wing. The barbarous war-prize of the victors over the vanquished, the reward for the State's "armed bands".

Everything is reduced to shreds - hardly a stitch of clothing survived the orgy intact. The wing was flooded, radiators were pulled out, toilets were smashed and windows broken, and the shoddy prison furniture destroyed. The prisoners' letters, lovingly kept, their books, their defence documents, were piled onto a bonfire and burned.

The Present Situation is Desperate

Since December 31st the prisoners have been transferred to the ground floor. They are being locked up 12-15 to a cell.

Their conditions are horrific. A mattress and one blanket to sleep with, An earth closet as a toilet, in front of everyone. Locked up for 23 out of 24 hours, lying down because they can't stand up. Given these terrible, sub-human hygienic/sanitary conditions they are protesting by throwing their excreta out into the corridors.

The reprisals are continuing. The atmosphere is very tense.

Before the Release of Magistrate D'Urso

- Woken at 2 in the morning, half naked and frozen, they were taken off for interrogation under a warrant from Judge Sica.
- A prisoner tried to punch a warder who called him a bastard. Not only was he charged, he was also taken to a basement cell, stripped and beaten by the Muftis. The prisoners had to organise a protest in order to get him back and stop the beating.

After D'Urso's release

- The night-search on January 21st, looking for arms, based on an "internal rumour". This was carried out in such a way as to provoke trouble and tension, and so allow further reprisals by the Muftis.

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STATEMENTS BY THE PRISONERS' FAMILIES AFTER THE PRISONERS HAD ACCEPTED VISITS "BEHIND GLASS" IN ORDER TO LET THE OUTSIDE WORLD KNOW OF THEIR SITUATION

Gabriella Vesce: "Emilio can hardly breathe, he was in a state of complete exhaustion. He has been within the Special Prison circuit since April 7th 1979: First Rebibbia, then Termini Imerese, Palmi and Trani."

Paola Negri: "This is the second time that I have seen Toni in such a condition. The first was when he came out of solitary confinement 30 days after his arrest. He is really angry, and exhausted. The things that made him most angry were the beatings, and the destruction of their things. They destroyed one of his manuscripts that he had been working on for 5 years, as well as some books from the University of Padova."

Bianca Baumgartner: "Think of the wounds and injuries. Stitches in his head; a gash across his face; fractured finger in his right hand; a splint on his left hand; he's limping visibly, and suffering from dizzy spells. Despite everything he's been through, in two whole weeks he's only been able to send out one message - a telegram saying "I'm well. I hope to hug you soon".

Lili: Luciano was one of the first to leave Trani, for a trial in Rome on January 14th. The national TV made out that there was something sinister in this transfer, and that Luciano was a spokesman in the negotiations over D'Urso. Nothing could be further from the truth. Luciano was very happy to leave Trani and come to Rebibbia. Now the conditions in Trani are subhuman, and he is on the transfer list."

WHY HAS MARINI, THE TRANI PROCURATOR WHO CONTINUES TO LEAVE THE PRISONERS IN THESE APPALLING CONDITIONS, NOT OPENED AN INQUIRY INTO THE BEATINGS AND INTO THIS DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY? AND WHAT IS THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE DOING?

OUR COMRADES' ANSWER TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE PRISON REVOLT HAS BEEN TO BRING A LAWSUIT AGAINST THE WARDERS OF THE "MUFTI SQUAD", AGAINST THE PRISON AUTHORITIES, AND AGAINST THE PEOPLE WHO SENT IN THE ASSAULT SQUADS.

Police storm Italian prison

F.T.
30 DEC 1980

ITALY's anti-terrorist forces yesterday scored a spectacular success in storming a top security jail and freeing 18 prison warders who were being held hostage by jailed terrorists.

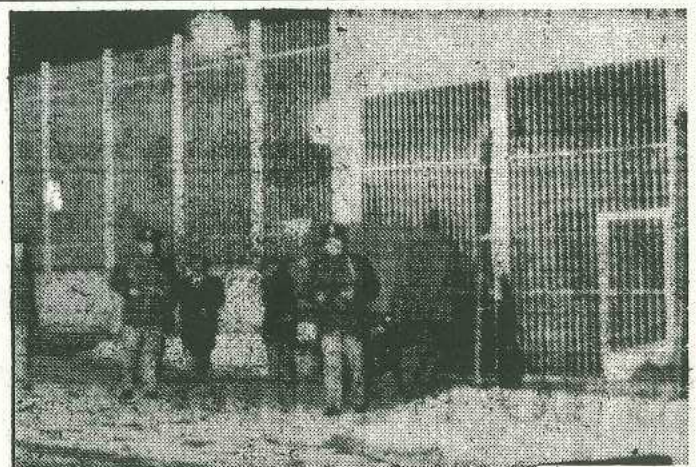
The operation, by the anti-terrorist squad of Carabinieri the paramilitary police, came almost exactly 24 hours after about 70 prisoners, thought to be mainly left-wing terrorists and detained terrorist suspects, seized the warders.

The Carabinieri landed three helicopters at different points on the roof of the modern prison at Trani near Bari in southern Italy, blew up a steel door separating them from where the hostages were being held and liberated all 18 warders.

The surprise assault on the prison ended a day of negotiations between the local state attorney and representatives of the imprisoned terrorists.

The terrorists issued a set of demands closely related to those of the Red Brigades terrorists holding Sig. Giovanni d'Urso, a senior magistrate in charge of terrorist prison arrangements. A communique from the kidnappers themselves, found after the storming of the prison, supported these demands.

The terrorists at Trani asked for the closure of the top security prison at Asinara, off Sardinia; the abolition of all other top security prisons; abolition of the police right of detention of suspected terrorists



Armed police guard the entrance to Trani jail

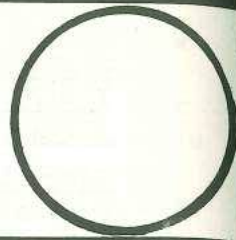
without trial; and improvements in the treatment of terrorist prisoners.

At the weekend the Government announced that it was already in the process of closing down the Asinara prison, but denied that it was doing so in response to the demand of the Red Brigades. The decision to close it had been taken on

humanitarian grounds before his seizure.

The transfer of the last imprisoned terrorist from Asinara has been held up by stormy seas. The Red Brigades, in a communication on Sunday night, indicated that they would wait for the closure before making any decision on Sig. d'Urso's future.

RED NOTES



Translation

Rome 8.2.81

Dear Felix,

I am writing from Rome, where I was transferred after a month of indescribable events at Trani. I am uncertain as to the reasons for the transfer. Events of all kinds: war of captivity, judicial war... ferocious, insensate, sadistic. One day I shall describe them. We shall recount them to the world. Life and death seized on the instant are not very gay. Every moment is problematical. But when the thought of death insinuates itself into the banalities of the everyday — day after day — in a political scenario dominated by the polarity of opposing, extremist initiatives (of resistance, of repression), which has lasted without interruption for a month now, at these moments the entire thing becomes absurd.

In addition, as soon as I arrived in Rome I witnessed a succession of atrocities in the prison. What sort of world is this? The whole story is leaden and absurd. The prison drama is unfolding apace with the judicial proceedings. The charges have been presented by the public prosecutor. Nothing has changed as regards the substance of the accusations which have been hanging over me for two years now. The basis of the accusations is flimsy, but their scope is menacing. They are clearly animated by the will to destroy. This trial is an integral part of a comprehensive political strategy of State repression. The accusation has been elaborated at this level. Which is why it isn't simply a case of a judicial accusation, but rather a public test through which the State is searching for an authoritarian legitimization of its political policies.

You understand very well how difficult it is, perhaps impossible and in any case ineffective, to fight against this over-determination. Personally, I am very, very tired. I don't know today where I am going to spend the months to come, whether in Rome or in another prison. I'm waiting for news. I hope to avoid being shut up in a special security prison. In the special prisons one ends by being crushed. Crushed between the violence of the prison authorities — the very face of the State — and the militarised violence of the resistance. The result is the loss of one's identity and the collapse of all autonomy — personal and political. I don't know how this horrible story is going to finish. But I see less and less clearly.

For the rest, life carries on — in the most dreary fashion. At Trani, after the revolt, all, or almost all, of my work was destroyed. To start over again isn't easy for me. I have always worked on accumulated material. To see it destroyed destroys a little bit of oneself. At the same time as the logic of my progression with research. However, I've been able to resume a certain working rhythm. I'm animated by good, rational intentions, but lack a certain dynamism and vital stimulation.

It's fairly grey today. Excuse me, I'm in bad form. But my temper is no worse than when the sun shines. After two years of prison, it becomes intolerable. One doesn't get used to it.

A propos. My book on Spinoza has come out. I hope that Sylvie has sent a copy to you and to Gilles Deleuze.

Ciao, dear Felix
Je t'embrasse tres fort,
Toni.

RN: 3.3.81

● Letter from Toni Negri to Felix Guattari
After the events of the Trani Prison Revolt.



•THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN ITALY
•TRIAL OF STRENGTH AT FIAT

INTERVIEW WITH LISI DEL RE

□ The following interview is with Lisi del Re, of Padova.

I'd been wanting to interview Lisi for some time: more, thinking back now, as a way of telling the story of the direct and physical repression of Left wing intellectuals in Italy than as a feminist thinker or as a way through to events that could have a special relevance for women.

Arrests, imprisonments, house searches and confiscations of documents and books. Probably more than 2,000 people are in jail in Italy now facing charges relating to the political, and with the exception of a handful of Fascists and terrorists, what they are really in jail for is because of their identification with an organisation called *Autonomia Operaia*. Some, including Lisi herself, are awaiting trial on charges under the Rocco penal code, dating back to the suppression of the Left under Fascism: charges like "subversive association" which have not been used for decades and which even the courts are not certain how to interpret.

The near absence of legal precedent adds to the feeling of fear and disorientation. There seems to be no limit to the powers of the State and police, no logic in the choice of who is to be singled out next, no way of knowing what their punishment may be. On the wave of public sympathy for a "tougher line" and wider police powers aroused by the growth of terrorism, and the kidnapping and assassination of Moro in particular, laws have been changed to facilitate "wild-cat" house searches and arrests, and to increase the maximum period in prison awaiting trial to 12 years. And actually, as Lisi pointed out, even this is a false limit, as it is renewed with each fresh accusation: only the word of some "repentant terrorist" is needed to start the whole thing again, with new charges and another 12 years to play with.

In the face of all this it first seemed to me impossible, even mistaken, to write about Lisi's case strictly as a feminist issue. The attack on her was part of a general and violent attack on the Italian Left, and to write about it as a feminist for a feminist journal would seem to make a false separation. Lisi is not only a feminist, unjustly imprisoned. She is also a Marxist under attack with many other men and women because of the role she has played as a Marxist thinker and activist.

Thanks to Lisi and Lucia and the long discussion we had one morning in Lisi's office in the Department of Social and Political Sciences here in Padova, I now do see why what is happening in Italy is an important question for feminists everywhere.

Lisi didn't much want to talk about

her specific experiences during her imprisonment. She feels there's a danger of becoming a special case; of the pathos which may be attached to the idea of a young mother arrested and imprisoned while seriously ill with pneumonia and denied adequate medical attention in prison.

Lisi was arrested along with 15 other autonomist intellectuals on 7th April 1979. The initial charge was "subversive association". On 6th June, to her horror, she found herself facing two further charges of participation in armed robberies: a "repentant terrorist", during his confession to the interrogating judges (his tongue no doubt loosened by the promise of judicial leniency) claimed that his cell-mate had told him that Lisi had been his partner on the robberies. The man was later to commit suicide. This second-hand story, which the principal witness was no longer alive to confirm or refute, was believed against Lisi's word. In October her alibi (she was luckily able to prove



● Lisi del Re with her children she was somewhere else at the time of the crimes) was finally accredited and the charges were dropped. Lisi remained in jail awaiting trial on the earlier charge until December 1979 when, after 8 months in prison, she was granted "provisional liberty" because of lack of evidence.

Her freedom was still, however, heavily curtailed: her movement limited to the province of Padova, required to be at home every night from midnight to seven the next morning and then to report to the police every day. She also had to live with the knowledge that the "privilege" of liberty might be withdrawn at any moment. Lisi was convinced that she would go inside again before the trial. She laughed and looked brittle when she said that. She was proved right.

It's probably still not very clear to you what is actually going on in Italy, why these people are in jail and how all of this is important for us as women and as feminists.

Let's start with 1977 and the appearance of a loose organisation called *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers' Autonomy) which claimed to represent a "new social majority of the proletariat" and which

denied the continuing validity of traditional Leninist party organisations in Italy. The events of 1977: the occupation of the universities, the demonstrations and festivals ending in riots and shoot-outs with the police, the riots of Bologna and Rome are already well documented elsewhere.[1]

What Was "The Autonomia"?

Undoubtedly the men and women who saw themselves as in "the area of *autonomia*" made their individual and collective mistakes. There are numerous stories of the clashes between its exponents and the more traditional organisations of the Left, the submergence of various groups into clandestinity and terrorism and even into petty criminality. 1977 was not only a high moment in a completely different form of struggle, it was also a period of political immaturity and disorientation. Both Lisi and Lucia, for example, whilst themselves in sympathy with the movement, agree that the women's movement in Padova has never really recovered from the disorientation of that period. Specifically feminist issues tended to get submerged as many women began to get involved in "the other movement" (for *Autonomia Operaia*, in the conception of its theoreticians, has the sense of otherness, separateness, independence from capitalist hegemony of the new revolutionary subjects.)

But despite its long and painful labour, the birth of *autonomia* is a fact that must be accepted by the traditional Left. Its period of gestation began with the decline of the industrial base and the beginning of large-scale, long-term unemployment. Hundreds and thousands of young people, particularly the young in search of a first job, discovered they were unneeded and practically unheeded by a society which listens only to those with a strong voice. Many young people continued on in further education (the universities here are open to all who successfully complete secondary education) without any hope that their qualifications might secure them a job. In the absence of a systematic welfare state (supplementary benefit for those who have never held a full-time job is unavailable here) they "get by" in an expanding "black" sector of the economy, working for minimal wages without the protection of the trade unions.

These people, abandoned on the margins of society, are the social base, the "new majority of the proletariat" among which *autonomia* developed. The movement of capital overseas to cheaper and more docile labour markets, the decentralisation of the big industrial sectors, the spread of forms of automation, have all combined to turn the largely male productive worker in the big factory and the trade unions which protect him

or her into a minority within the working class.

And this is the nexus of the question, and what makes it so important for feminists everywhere. For if the struggles of the factory proletariat, taking off principally from the question of wages and conditions in the factories, are no longer the central, the vanguard area of class struggle, what is? What can connect the individual oppositions to the capitalist system of those people who live and work outside of the immediate capitalist relations of production?

For Lisi and Lucia and the thousands of other women and men who sympathise with the "area of Autonomy", this had led to a concern with the area of *reproduction*: struggles around the production and utilisation of "services". These struggles which intimately concern women both because of the dominant role they play in the process of the reproduction of society and their strong presence in the service sector as nurses, teachers and so on, become, as Lisi says, a way out of the ghetto in which women find themselves and into the front ranks of the battle lines. In this conception public spending can be seen as a form of "wage" for the reproduction of society, and becomes the point of departure for a new form of class struggle.

The women's movement has long recognised the importance of such struggles: for many years we have been central in campaigns against public spending cuts and for the provision of more and better services.

Since the mid-1970s the women's movement in Padova has been involved in many hard struggles which have made this very clear. Lucia and Lisi described some of these to me to show how the largely 'autonomist' women's collective, the *Coordinamento Donne* (or Women's Combine) developed from a growing understanding of the connection between growing unemployment, the centrality of the service sector and the crucial role women have to play in all this.

The Sacking of the Marigold Women

In 1976 the local Marigold cosmetics and chemicals factory, which employed a mostly female work-force, closed down and moved its production abroad. The women laid off by the closure united in a long, hard struggle to keep the factory open, occupying the factory for a while and conducting daily picketing at the gates.

In the same period, the "Women of the University" combine (which included cleaning staff, refectory workers, female hospital workers from the teaching hospital, clerical and secretarial workers and a handful of students and lecturers) were engaged in a struggle for the reduction of working hours — a struggle which was conducted very much outside of the control of the male-dominated and often even obstructive trade unions.

Since the reduction of working hours would necessitate taking on new staff,

the "Women of the University" combine decided to launch the demand that the women laid off by Marigold should be given precedence for these posts. They forced the Unions to take up this demand and help in the fight for it. The objective was eventually largely obtained: the Marigold women were given extra "points" (in Italy applicants for public posts are chosen on the basis of a points system) and most of the women were taken on in the refectories. Although the women were not taken on "en masse" (which would have been a public admission of the women's victory), the struggle was an important and encouraging success.

Lucia and Lisi described to me how the largely 'autonomist' women's collective, the *Coordinamento Donne* (or Women's Combine) developed from an understanding of all this.

Formed in Padova in October 1977, the purpose of this loose organisation was to unite and coordinate women in struggle in all areas of the economy. It consisted mostly of women who by now identified themselves with the "area of Autonomy" and who saw their struggles as part of that huge sector "on the margins" of society.

The need to find some means of coordination had become apparent through a series of fights which had been taken up individually by a number of organisations in the years leading up to '77. One struggle was extremely important in uniting the women and giving them a taste of their own strength: that for the re-opening of a state-run centre for single mothers, their children, and children in care as a women's house/meeting place and nursery. Throughout September and October 1976, meetings were held to discuss both the closure and alternative ways in which the centre could be used. On 17th December the Women's Collective moved in with their children to occupy for a day. Lisi told me of the solidarity that developed between the occupiers, the women working at the centre and the single mothers.

The struggle was a success. The centre was in fact closed down and converted to other uses by the local council, but they first agreed to set up nursery schools in three different areas of the city, a promise which was kept. The nurseries are still operating today.

The *Coordinamento Donne* which grew out of this was a larger and more "social" organisation than its predecessors. It met every Wednesday night and was important as a source of solidarity and for the recognition of the community of interests of all the women involved. It included women working in the various hospitals, teachers and students, and fought for the provision of more and better services, particularly in the areas of health and education. For example, some women of the *Coordinamento* occupied the gynaecological clinic at the teaching hospital as part of the fight for free and accessible abortions. It was also

able to coordinate a series of struggles aimed at improving the wages and conditions of female nursing staff in the hospitals.

The *Coordinamento* was to disintegrate with the right-wing backlash of 1979, signalled by the arrest and imprisonment on 7th April of 15 people — virtually the entire teaching staff of the Department of Social and Political Sciences of Padova University, including Lisi and Toni Negri. Since then too many comrades to be counted have been arrested or had warrants served on them.

The Women's Movement: Organisation in Padova

The Left, including the women's movement, is in disarray. The imprisonment of such a large number of its important theorists and activists, the closure of many of its mouthpieces (free radios, newspapers and journals), the fear of attracting the attentions of the State, all contribute to the general failure of *autonomia* and the Left to organise to defend themselves against the backlash. Just watching Lisi's face when she talks about her own experiences of arrest and imprisonment were enough to tell me why.

The women's movement in Padova has been able to sustain some — albeit limited — levels of resistance against the heavy physical and psychological battering the Autonomous Movement has received. Women from the old *Coordinamento* joined with those from the bookshops, the counter-information centre and various feminist collectives and groups to organise and mobilise against the movement for the abrogation of Law 194, which permits legal and welfare-assisted abortions.

Profiting from the new climate of reaction and the weakness of the Movement, the Church and State had combined in an attempt to take back that little which had been gained through the years of women's struggle. Lisi came out of prison to take her place by our sides in the months of debate and initiatives climaxed last November (1980) in a demonstration of 3,000 women for free abortion on demand (no mean feat for a town of around 300,000).

But now Lisi is back in prison. The prosecution's appeal against her release and that of four other comrades from Padova was successful, and on Friday 23rd January 1981 they were re-arrested. Lisi was taken to the women's prison of Giudecca in Venice, where she remains today — still awaiting trial.

NOTES:

- 1 See, for example, *Italy 1977-78 — Living with an Earthquake*, published by Red Notes. For an introduction to some of the theories of Autonomy, see *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis* from Red Notes/CSE, and the special Autonomy issue of the New York magazine *Semiotexte*.

■ Reprinted from *Leveller*
February 1981

REVIEW A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

□ For some time now, in Italy, the Women's Movement has played an important part in holding back the tide of reaction in the country. This was particularly true in the case of the Abortion Referendum of May 1981. Here we reprint three articles that give the background, and the final results, of the Referendum - a battle in which the Catholic Church initiative was defeated.

In June 1978 in Italy, the "194" was passed, for the first time legalising abortions (although with a series of conditions) and making them available on the National Health.

In the Summer of 1980 the "Movement for Life" (the Italian equivalent of SPUC) launched a campaign for referendums for the abrogation of the "194". Only one will reach the public on May 17th: the so-called "minimum" proposal which, if passed, will permit abortion only in cases of extreme physical danger to the mother if the pregnancy is continued.

Profiting from the wave of repression which has filled Italian jails with more than 3,000 political prisoners and made all forms of political struggle extremely difficult for the Left, the forces of the Right, orchestrated by the Church, have thrown themselves wholeheartedly behind this attempt to take away the fruit of more than 5 years of struggle of the Women's Movement.

In every church the priests and bishops - powerful figures in this country with its dominating Catholic ideology - tremulously preach against "the carnage of the innocent", and from every street corner the Movement for Life hand out leaflets

which graphically "describe" fantastic horrors of abortion and paint ghastly pictures of screaming infants torn from the womb. Stuff for strong stomachs.

And what is the situation to which they would have us return?

Every year in Italy about 3 million backstreet abortions took place in conditions which ranged from the atrocious to the "merely" humiliating. Every year some 20,000 women lost their lives in consequence. Every year millions of women, on finding themselves pregnant, were faced with the "choice" between bearing and bringing up a child they were not ready for - with all the compromises and sacrifices this implies; travelling to England or some other country with more liberal abortion laws for those who were able to scrape together the money; or leaving their blood, and sometimes their lives, on some backstreet kitchen table.

The Struggle for Abortion

When the first feminist groups sprang up in the early 1970s they were faced immediately with a first, and fundamental battle to fight: for the right to children when they chose - for the right, in other words, to information on and access to free, safe contraception, and the right to free, safe, painless abortion on the Welfare State.

As a first step, the women realised abortion would have to be brought out of the obituary pages of the local newspapers and into the light of day. An opportunity to do just this soon arose.

In Padova, in Spring 1973, Gigliola Pierobon was arrested and charged with having procured herself an abortion.

Gigliola was not quite 17 years old when she "chose" to undergo the operation, which took place without anaesthetic or medical assistance on a kitchen table. She nearly died from an infection resulting from the abortion - and now risked paying again, this time with from 2 to 5 years in jail. The new-born feminist movement rallied behind Gigliola, deciding, with her approval, to turn the trial upside down - converting it into a condemnation of the State and Church for all the women's blood that had been spilt on the altars of Christian and civil morality.

In the months preceding the trial the few hundred women who made up the feminist movement at the time quickly learnt how to organise themselves - producing leaflets and documents and calling meetings and assemblies to publicise the case and the basic demand for a women's right to control her own fertility.

On June 5th 1973, the day before Gigliola's trial, women from all over Italy arrived in Padova to participate in a non-authorised march through the city. The following day the court room was crowded with women, shouting slogans such as "We have all had abortions", even as they were being dragged out by the carabinieri.

Despite her lack of penitence for her "crime" Gigliola was acquitted.

The next important engagement in the battle for abortion took place in Trento - the city where the famous Diet had, many centuries previously, pronounced women to lack a soul. Here, on February 15th 1974, 273 women who had all passed through the same backstreet practice - which had been discovered after the death of a woman - were

A Student Demonstration: January 1976



arrested; the charge, once again, abortion. The feminist movement, strengthened by the experience of Padova, reacted immediately. Although defence committees were set up and defence lawyers sought, the defendants and the feminists together decided this time to contest the trial itself: to deny that abortion is a crime.

In the meantime Italian women were showing themselves increasingly ready to publicise their growing rage at the pre-

Some Important Dates of the Movement

On December 6th 1975 20,000 women invaded Rome, paralysing the traffic and shouting feminist slogans and songs and at the same time combatting those of the male comrades present who wanted to "show the women how to do it".

of Women — close to the Communist Party).

On April 11th 1976 in Milan about 5,000 women demonstrated on the abortion issue. During the demonstration the windows of a bookshop selling religious publications were shattered.

On May 1st 1976 in Naples for the first time the women of the South joined in mass in the struggles of the Women's Movement, with a crowded demonstration through the centre of the city.

These were just some of the moments of organisation of the 5 years of women's struggle which led up to the passage through Parliament of Law No. 194.

The victory was great, especially given the strength of the opposition in a country where the Vatican wields not only an enormous ideological/religious power, but also more or less direct political power through the Catholic Party, the Christian Democrats (the majority party in Parliament).

The Defects of the Law

However, the law is still very unsatisfactory. Its most obvious defect is that doctors and "para-medical" personnel may declare themselves "conscientious objectors" and therefore refuse to facilitate abortions in any way. Since 72% of those concerned have used this loophole, it is often extremely difficult, even in the North of Italy, to find doctors and other personnel prepared to furnish the necessary certificates, do the various analyses and to perform the operation. For women in the South this is normally impossible. For this reason, backstreet abortions and abortions in private "golden spoon" clinics — which are often run by the "conscientious objectors" themselves — continue, and in fact are on the increase. (According to data provided by the World Health Organisation, out of the 800,000 abortions practised each year in Italy, 600,000 are illegal).

The Referendums

On May 17th 1981 the Italian electorate is being called to the ballot to vote on 2 referendums — amongst others — which if passed will change the law on abortion.

The referendum called by the Movement for Life would abrogate the law in such a way as to make legal abortion almost impossible.

The referendum called by the Radical Party would "improve" the law in a fairly minor way, but still leave intact gaping holes — such as conscientious objection; and would tend to produce a "free market" situation with the growth of a plethora of authorised private clinics.

The Impossible Compromise

The following, translated from *Quotidiana Donne*, a feminist newspaper, is a letter from a group of sisters from Padova illustrating the "impossible" situation in which the Women's Movement now finds itself.

● Demonstration: February 1980

sumption of the male politicians and priests who were denying them the fundamental right to self-determination, and at a situation which was causing the deaths of so many women (in ironic memory of the Church's anti-abortion propaganda the women referred to this as the "carnage of the innocent"). On January 12th 1975, for example, 5,000 women marched through the streets of Florence after 40 women there had been taken in for questioning by the police, suspected of abortion.

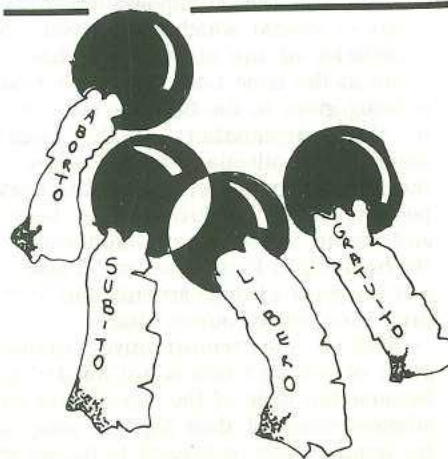
Little more than a month later, on the occasion of the "big trial", thousands of women from all walks of life poured into Trento for a national demonstration in solidarity with the 273 women on trial, and for a woman's right to choose. Refusing the back alley route which had been conceded to them, the chanting, singing, shouting women marched "straight as an arrow" to the court rooms. Here the loudspeaker van was driven right up to the doors blasting out feminist songs; and posters with a wording which matched the violence which could stand by while so many women died from back street abortions, were attached to the doors. A brief rally was held, and then the demonstration proceeded to the Curia. The walls of this edifice were covered in painted slogans like: *SATANA, LUCIFERO, BELZEBU — PAOLO VI, IL DIAVOLO SEI TU* (Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub — Pope Paul VI, you're the real Devil) and: "If priests could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament".

Over the 1½ years since Gigliola's trial the Women's Movement had grown enormously. The parties of the State were becoming aware of the "feminist peril" and in Parliament talk of reform was now beginning. Even within the Left parties women were beginning, independently from the men, to take a strong line on the demand for abortion. The women's movement went on growing and organising.

On January 6th 1976 (Epiphany — the night when, in Italy, a sort of female Father Christmas on a broomstick is supposed to ride the night, distributing presents to good children) the feminists of Padova left another sort of present: feminist slogans and posters appeared on church walls, in the university departments, the hospitals and gynaecological clinics.

On January 18th 1976, again in Padova, women demonstrating outside the Cathedral, where a vigil against abortion was being held, were charged by the carabinieri. Two women and a man were arrested. Six days later 4,000 women were marching through the streets in protest, and for the right to choose how many children to have.

On March 8th 1976, International Women's Day, women marched through the Political Sciences department at Padova University, demanding that the professors should publicly declare their position on abortion, following which they occupied the *Aula Magna* (ceremonial hall) for an assembly.



On April 3rd 1976 in Rome a demonstration for the Right to Choose brought 50,000 women onto the streets, including women from the Left parties and the *Unione Donne Italiane* (Italian Union

DOSSIER THE IMPOSSIBLE COMPROMISE

□□ This letter was written by women of the women's movement in Padova. It outlines some of the

positions adopted by the autonomia in regard to the Abortion Referendum. From *Quotidiano Donne*.

Dear Sisters,

We are taking advantage of the space opened in *Quotidiana Donne* to continue the discussion on the question of abortion, a discussion started in various large meetings held in Padova both before and after the mass demonstration of 3,000 women called on November 15th 1980 for the following demands: free abortion on demand; safe contraceptive methods; money for the determination of our own lives and to be able to decide to be mothers when and as we want; less work inside and outside the home; and the re-opening of political space as a necessary step in our response to the criminalisation of the class struggle.

During this debate, as far as the two referendums on abortion are concerned, a consensus emerged that:

(a) the political terrain of the referendum, just as the whole terrain of politics and legislation, is completely foreign to the directions, forms of organisation and mobilisation expressed by the feminist movement;

(b) an attempt is being made to oblige us to choose between the "blind alley" imposed on us by the Left (whether to vote yes or no at the Radical Party's referendum) and the provocation of the "declared" Right (having to vote no at the referendum promoted by the Movement for Life).

That is, we are being forced to choose between the defence — as the PCI would have us do — of a law which is backward, repressive, and anyway largely ignored, and a "minireform" — as the Radicals want — of this law, which would still leave our real needs largely unsatisfied. The State responded to our struggles — for free abortion on demand as a minimum aim, for safe contraceptives so as not to have to abort, for the right to choose to have the children we want, for the right to live out our sexuality free from any form of work discipline — with the "194", a law which is repressive and punitive, limited to the single issue of abortion, and anyway not even enforced.

The State continues to be elusive on the question of the realisation of Family Planning Clinics and nurseries, on the question of the promotion of research into safe contraception, and the provision of information on and distribution of such methods (after all their bleatings about the violence of abortion) and on the question of income for women (after all their bleatings on the social value of maternity they recognise it with such provisions as cuts in public spending etc).

It must by now be clear to all of us that these referendums on abortion do not constitute a possible terrain of mediation for the interests and struggles of

women which have made themselves felt over the last ten years. It is not enough to say that the party-state is playing the game of qualitative and quantitative decline. The referendum manoeuvre — not to mention the present situation of abortion at the level of both legislation and health care — is a travesty of our real needs and a demonstration of an inability to mediate our struggles politically. This referendum is a failed attempt at massacre: failed, because the feminist movement has responded to the proposal by deserting the battlefield.

The insoluble contradiction that all the men of the realm have been called on to vote on an issue which they are even less familiar with than the use of a pressure cooker, should also be underlined. This pretence of "democracy" is used to deny us publicly our autonomy from men — and through men — from the State.

These referendums on abortion are anyway taking place in a general political climate of reaction and repression, in which the various political forces precipitate into the arena just in order to secure adherence to one or other of the political programmes; programmes in all cases of violence and death, (not only, obviously, in relation to women). What the governmental political forces have been and are conducting is a general action of the suffocation and defeat of all the gains won in the last years of class struggle.

From real wage cuts to layoffs (both of which affect first and foremost women), to the attack on material living conditions — an attack which includes not only price rises but also the attack on prostitutes, the increase in the incidence of rape and so on — to the closure of the political space for autonomous struggle, to the criminalisation of all forms of dissent which step outside the boundaries of the institutional channels — this at the same time that ample space is being given to the Catholic crusades — to the reorganisation of the fascists around the collections of signatures for the referendum to bring back the death penalty, to the absolution of the fascists and of the state apparatus implicated in the bombing of Piazza Fontana. These are just the most obvious articulations of the present capitalist counter-attack.

Even if the "constructive" examination of laws and bills is not our terrain, because the logic of the amendment and administration of their laguidly progressive improvement is foreign to us, we are moving on to this terrain in relation to the "194" and the Radical Party proposal because the information provided around this in the run-up to the referendum has

been particularly distorted. As far as the "194" is concerned, this is a law which does not affirm a woman's right to choose, but regulates in a heavily repressive way how, when and where she can abort; which does not permit minors to abort (how many father-bosses does a young woman have? Parents... doctor... magistrates...); which imposes a bureaucratic formula designed exclusively to control and intimidate, in which: a) the doctor assumes the role of authority able to determine and influence the woman's choice, denying her the certificate and making her feel guilty; b) operations such as the scrape — which in every other case imply hospitalisation for only one day — imply at least 3 days in hospital for an abortion.

Above all, the "194" is a law which is technically "illegal", because it contains its own contrary, given that its application is delegated to the doctors, who have the privilege of deciding if they are or are not in agreement with a state law (the effects of which can be summarised by saying that it is a law which functions only where the doctors are "good"). The Radical Party proposal, in fact, does not even call "conscientious objection" into question, even in terms of the way in which it is applied. (This "loophole" is so wide that for example a porter can refuse to push the stretcher for a woman going for an abortion, and the lack of non-objecting anaesthetists, operating theatre nurses or even laboratory analysts blocks the operation.)

Furthermore the Radical Party proposals could have the effect of deresponsabilising the public health service by enlarging the free market for abortion (which is anyway alive and well at a clandestine level because of the deficiencies of the "194", to the disadvantage of minors and women who are unable to spend 3 days in hospital, and because of "conscientious objection", which is widespread in the public sector, but not in the private, where a lot of money can be made) with the proliferation of private clinics — a tendency which is anyway being realised throughout the health care sector thanks to the new health reforms.

It remains to be said, however, that the abrogations proposed in the Radical Party referendum might prevent the negotiation of the worsening of the law between the Catholic and the lay parties who take the position of a defence of the "194" with the "double no".

The real problem around which the struggle must be continued now, however, is to guarantee everywhere free safe abortion and a woman's right to choose, and at the same time to continue the struggle at all the various levels of our political programme.

DOSSIER THE ABORTION REFERENDUM

□ This article brings our account up to date as of our time of going to press. It deals with the Abortion Referendum, and the Freemason Scandal that felled the Government in May 1981.

Under Italian law a referendum is held, to repeal a law or parts of a law on the statute book, if over 5,000 legally-authenticated signatures of citizens requesting a referendum are gathered in 3 months. It was under this procedure that the Catholic church and the "movement for Life" had moved to severely curtail women's right to abortion in Italy.

The result of the referendum, on an 80% turn-out, was that 68% openly flouted directives from the Church hierarchy on a central matter of faith and morals: the abortion law (unsatisfactory as it is) will stay. This victory, or rather holding-the-line, was mostly thanks to the efforts of the women's movement, for which abortion has been one of the main issues since the mid-1970s.

In 1974 there had been a referendum, also promoted by the obscurantist party (the Christian Democrats) to abolish the recently-instituted right to divorce. This ended in a 59-41% defeat for the Catholics, Christian Democrats and MSI (neo-Fascists) who had supported the initiative. In the wake of the victory came the big electoral advances of the Italian Communist Party in 1975 and 1976, and the mass burgeoning of Italian feminism. In 1975 signatures were collected to hold a referendum to repeal the then existing Fascist law which forbade abortion completely. The present law was a result of a Parliamentary compromise reached by both the DC and PCI, in order to avoid that referendum, and to placate mounting street demonstrations by tens of thousands of women.

The political consequences of the abortion referendum are likely to be just as important: whereas in 1974 the Christian Democrat (DC) party had led the crusade to abolish divorce, suffering a humiliating defeat, this time they had left the Church to bear the brunt of the campaign, hoping thus not to have to pay the political consequences of a defeat, but to be in a position to profit from a victory. However, despite these precautions, the post-war equilibrium on which Italian capitalism rests is now seriously endangered.

Since the fall of Fascism, Italian capitalist interests have always clustered around the DC party, since it represented the only ideology (Catholicism) that was both suitable to capitalism and which had a mass appeal. In fact the DC has been uninterruptedly in the government ever since the War. And women have traditionally made up two thirds of its electorate. Italian voting patterns have always been very stable, although referenda can

upset them. In fact the fragility of this political equilibrium is now revealed in the results of the abortion referendum.

The Freemason Scandal

Moreover, the credibility of the present ruling-class personnel is now at an all-time low. A secret society — the Freemasons' Lodge "P22", constituting a virtual State within the State — has been uncovered. The heads of the secret services, two ministers in the present Government, top financiers and publishing magnates, the national secretary of the Social Democrats, Centre, Right-wing and Socialist politicians and MPs, Carabinieri, army and air-force generals, admirals and police chiefs, newspaper editors, top civil servants, diplomats, bankers, TV chiefs and University barons have all been disclosed to be among the membership of this conspiracy. According to the handbook provided with the membership card, the aim of this conspiracy is "to obtain more power", and members are all sworn to secrecy and to

"blind obedience" to the Grand Master, one Licio Gelli, a Right-wing Italo-Argentinian businessman who is now in hiding abroad.

This octopus-like organisation is heavily involved in most of the scandals of the past decade, including that of the fraudulent billionaire banker Sindona, and is strongly suspected of being behind the "strategy of tension" which resulted in the many Fascist killings from 1969 to the Bologna bomb of last year.

Prime Minister Forlani reluctantly disclosed the list of 953 names of members at the request of the Milanese judges who are investigating this ruling-class clandestine network. One ramification of this "scandal of scandals" is the arrest of top Milanese financiers of international renown at dawn on May 20th, on a charge of illegal export of capital. The Milanese Stock Exchange trembled.

All of this points to political upheaval in the near future. The forthcoming local elections on June 21st will provide a good thermometer of the mood of the country.

RESULTS OF THE OTHER REFERENDA

Together with the Catholic-promoted referendum on abortion, 4 other referenda (all promoted by the small, civil-rights Radical Party) were voted at the same time:

● A referendum to liberalise even further the existing abortion law, in particular to remove the present ban on private abortions. This proposal did not, however, alter the provisions for conscientious objection by doctors, which renders the present law inoperant in many hospitals and indeed in whole regions of the South. In view of the fact that this referendum was only supported by the Radical Party in total isolation (who have very limited access to the media) and was hotly opposed by all the others — especially by the PCI, who called for a "double No" vote on the abortion proposals — it did not do too badly, gaining 11% of the votes (which is treble the Radical Party's own vote).

● A referendum to abolish life imprisonment (which in Italy really does mean life). This referendum was supported by the PCI and PSI, and yet did rather poorly, gaining 22% of the vote.

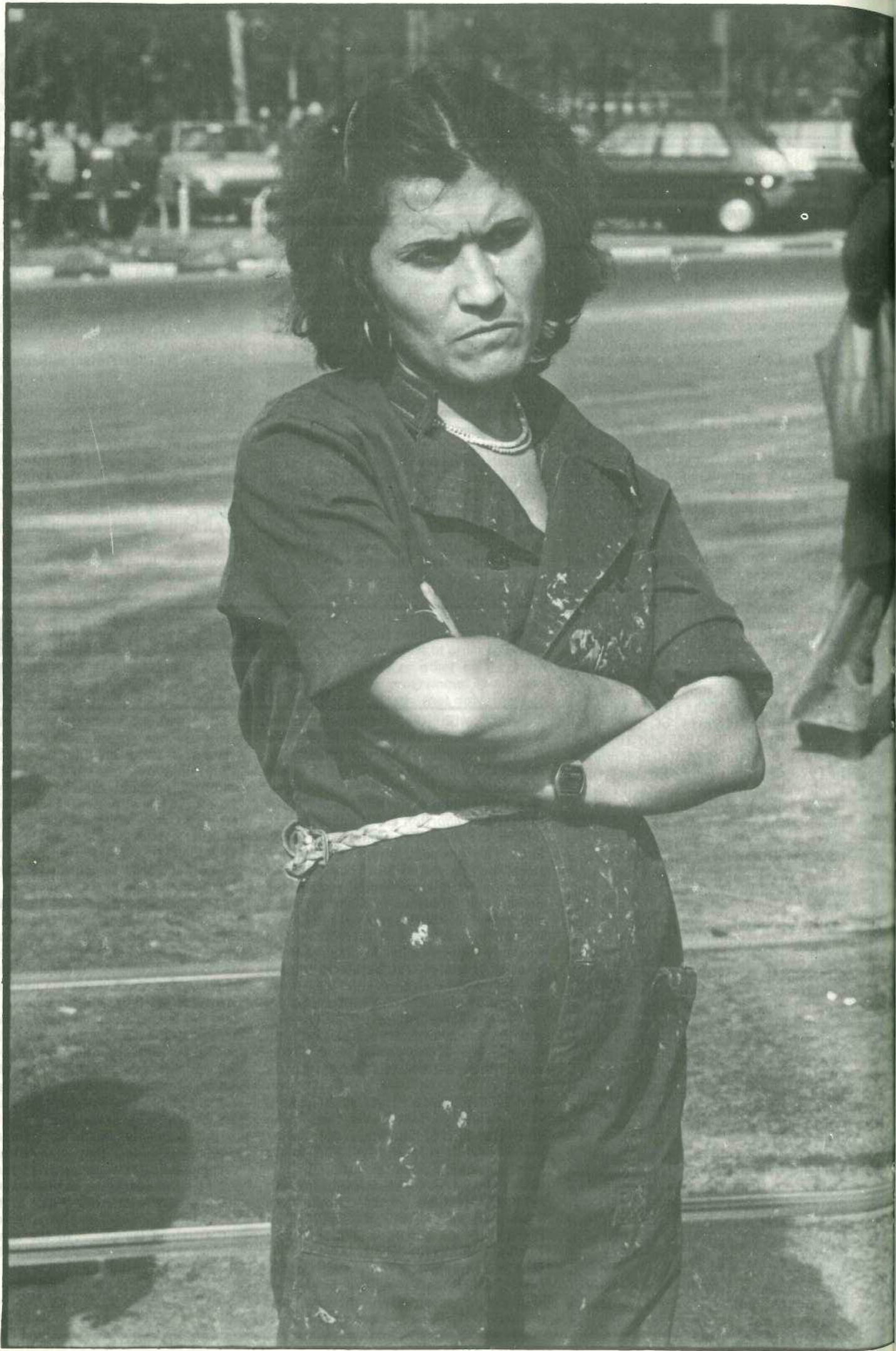
● A referendum to abolish gun licences (and thus prohibit private citizens from bearing arms). This one was opposed by virtually all the parties, and gained only 14% approximately.

● A referendum to abolish the "Cossiga Law", which entails police powers to hold people on suspicion for 48 hours; to search "adjacent blocks of apart-

ments" without warrant when hunting terrorists; the possibility that people accused of terrorism (like the April 7th group) may be kept in jail awaiting a definitive sentence for up to 12 years; and remittance of sentences for repentant terrorists. This referendum was opposed by all the parties with the exception of the Radicals, DP and PdUP to the Left of the PCI, and the MSI on the far Right. It polled about 15%.

The disappointing results of these civil liberties referenda may have many reasons. These include: a popular mood of "law and order"; the fact that the supporters of these referenda had almost no access to the media to explain their case; the fact that gun laws, life imprisonment and the Cossiga law are all issues that do not directly influence the average Italian's life; the media, the political parties, the Church and the people polarised all attention on the Catholic abortion referendum, which was seen by all sides as the only one with any chance of winning, and the only one with far-reaching political consequences; and the fact that the questions, as printed on the ballot sheets were so worded as to be totally unintelligible to anyone who was not a trained lawyer... in the resulting confusion many may have voted No on all 5 referenda just to be on the safe side!

□ Information supplied from
Leveller magazine.



DOSSIER FIAT: A HISTORIC TRIAL OF STRENGTH

□ The accounts contained in this pamphlet make no sense, except in the general class context. For this reason we include the following account of the September 1980 struggle against mass sackings at the FIAT motor company. The events raised many questions — and few answers.

In September/October 1980 all eyes in Italy were focussed on a crucial workers' struggle, whose outcome will define the future balance of class power in Italy. The FIAT motor company announced their intention to sack 14,500 workers. Their intention was to immobilise, to destroy a class vanguard.

The Vanguard Role of the FIAT Workers

FIAT represents something very special in the history of the working-class revolutionary communist movement. It means the Factory Occupations of the 1920s, the work of Antonio Gramsci and *Ordine Nuovo*, and the founding core of Italy's Communist Party. It means the anti-Nazi and anti-capitalist Resistance movement of World War II and after (the radical workplace organisation, the purging of the factories). It means the reality of France's "May '68" drawn out and spread into a political and revolutionary movement that has lasted for 10 years. It means the "Hot Autumn" of 1969-70, with its revolutionary demands for *equal wage rises for all, not linked to productivity; immediate reductions of working hours; abolition of compulsory overtime; moves to the abolition of all grading divisions; complete parity with white collar workers*; and the development of a ground-level shop steward structure (*delegati*), which partially transformed and democratised the Trade Unions from below.

In books, tracts, leaflets, theses and pamphlets the FIAT working class has been studied and understood better than any other industrial/political reality in the world today. Groups like *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio* were born there, and developed years of mass political work. Based on FIAT and the associated engineering industry, Turin has a radical and interventionist Trade Union structure, with big printing presses, educational courses, reams of educational handbooks for workers, and officers for culture, study and factory liaison.

In ten years the composition of that working class has changed. The explosive, volatile intake of raw labour from rural Southern Italy in the late '60s led to the spontaneous forms of action of the Hot Autumn. That raw labour was slowly integrated into factory life, while also providing many of the long-term militants. Then, the nature of the new labour-intake of the 1970s: this has been dictated by Italy's labour laws — the

FIAT Foundry workers remember their Resistance history



young unemployed of the North, the women, the second-generation immigrants — all with a far higher degree of education than their predecessors in the factory, and many with experience of the communist, feminist and youth movements behind them.

At certain points in FIAT's recent history, both Left and Right have been able to claim that "non-productivity rules at FIAT". The employers' Press has talked of "The Ungovernable Factory", of workers' insubordination and absenteeism at a mass level (at least up until the defeat of September 1980). At the same time, violence has played a role in the struggle. Inside the factory, individual hard-line foremen have been beaten up by groups of workers, or chained to railings, or marched round the factory at the head of workers' "internal demonstrations" (*cortei*). Outside the factory, armed political groups like *Prima Linea* and the Red Brigades have been involved — up to 1980 — in kneecappings, shootings and killings of FIAT management personnel: a campaign to strike fear into management. From subsequent arrests it appears that the armed political groups had members among the FIAT workforce.

Faced with abuse and violence inside and outside the factory, management was losing its will to manage. Perhaps with a "social truce", a "social contract" with the Unions, FIAT might have found the will to struggle on. But in 1980 the bottom dropped out of the car market. Their much hoped-for European market share plummeted. Their sales campaign in the UK, for instance, tried repeatedly to undercut the opposition, but with little success. Drawing a deep breath, and almost certainly (but not documentably) following Michael Edwards' model of action at British Leyland, the Company

launched their attack.

At the moment of writing it appears that the FIAT working class has suffered a historic defeat; bastions of working-class power in the North of Italy, such as Turin, have been dealt a severe blow.

FIAT's aim, in short, both for their own sake and for the Italian employing class as a whole, was to dismantle the structural and economic base which had underpinned the working-class political vanguards of Northern Italy, in the same way that the industrial and political heartlands of the British Midlands and America's Detroit have been dismantled and decentralised in the past 5 years.

An Outline of Developments: September/October 1980

To summarise: In late 1979 FIAT had sacked 61 workers for moral behaviour not consistent with the well-being of the Company. The Trade Unions were slow and divided in their reaction — not least because some of the workers were accused of using violence and abuse during strikes, and the PCI and the Unions were as concerned as FIAT management that they should be disciplined.

The way was thus opened for further moves. After the 1980 Summer shutdown, FIAT went for the big one: 14,500 workers were to be sacked from the car factories of the North. The biggest mass sackings in Italian history. There was uproar — but also great confusion. Tactics from the top, from the national Trade Union leadership were virtually non-existent. The initiative was left to the shop-floor worker, with old-time rank and file PCI members playing a mobilising role. Strikes and protests began at all FIAT plants in Turin (and there are many).

This rolling advance fast developed into all-out strikes. The massive 58,000-

strong FIAT-Mirafiori plant and others were picketed day and night, with mass pickets (sometimes weak, but sometimes up to 300 strong), with music, food, dancing, political meetings and discussion. The factories had red flags flying at the gates. Delegations of workers went to other factories — and direct to the citizens of Turin — to seek their support. The planned sackings at FIAT would cut into the economic heart of Turin, in a cumulative series of secondary effects. Support began to build. On September 24th, three mass demonstrations of workers, townspeople and students marched from the factories down the long boulevards into Turin's city centre, for a huge public rally. Again the red flags flew, and thousands sang the Red Flag and the Internationale. More and more insistently the call was spreading for the factories to be occupied — a direct challenge to the Government, to employers' property rights, to civil authority, and a direct recall of the revolutionary movement of the 1920s. In the local offices of the Engineering Union, seminars were organised on "The Factory Occupations of the 1920s". And, in answer to the workers of Poland's shipyards (with their factory-gate pictures of the Pope), the FIAT factory gates were hung with huge portraits of Karl Marx, Che Guevara and Antonio Gramsci.

Two days later, in a move pregnant with historical meaning, Communist Party Secretary Enrico Berlinguer came to Turin for a whistle-stop tour of factory-gate meetings with FIAT workers, organised by the local CP. The Party, after the dismal failure of the "Historic Compromise", was putting on a new oppositional face. The PCI knows that the balance of power within the FIAT factories is crucial for more general political calculations. Historically FIAT, and the historic role of engineering workers, has provided a base for the Party's membership and credibility. In the present case, said Berlinguer, the Party's intention was to get the sackings withdrawn, and to bring down the corrupt and inefficient Cossiga Government. The next day, for reasons not unconnected, the Government fell.

FIAT withdrew the sackings. Negotiations also began for a new Government formula. The Communist Party was temporarily in jubilant mood. But a fear and uncertainty hung in the air.

The Silent Majority Moves

The State, the judiciary, the Press, the employers and the "silent majority" of foremen, lower management and "moderates" among the workforce, all began to move. FIAT replaced the 14,500 sackings with layoffs (on 80% of pay for 18 months) for 24,000 workers... a list drawn up by FIAT's Personnel Department, and highly politically selective. (Eg most of the CP's cell in the Press Shop... many, many shop stewards, etc). The newspapers printed FIAT-financed adverts appealing to public opinion. Police and armed Carabinieri began to

appear in front of picket lines. The "silent majority" began legal proceedings in the law courts, for their "right to work" to be upheld. There were isolated incidents in which foremen, scabs and right-wingers tried to break the picket lines.

Then, in early October, an estimated 40,000 foremen, supervisors, middle management, "moderate" workers and scabs marched through Turin in a completely unexpected show of force. Their strength was undeniable — and the great fear was for a violent showdown on the picket lines, backed by armed police, and with the legal sanctions of the law courts. To the disgust of the FIAT workers who had carried through this struggle, the Unions, running scared, signed a deal that gave the workers not an ounce more

than what FIAT had already demanded weeks previously in their programme of mass, politically selective, non-rotating layoffs.

In short, the political movement of the FIAT workers had been defeated in the field of tactics. The Unions and the Communist Party, in a moment of (not unjustified) fear, had run up the white flag on what may prove to be a "heroic last stand". In a "return of the repressed", the various forces of counter-revolution had found a point of unity, a moment of joint response to the growing working class autonomy of the past decade. Sociologists are already talking of the organised industrial worker as being "relegated now to minoritarian status in society". And we are left with a mass of vital political questions. ●

SOME QUESTIONS ARISING

The crisis is a result of, and a response to, an accumulation of working class power. It is capital's attempt to redress the class/power balance. Thus it was at FIAT. Many points need to be examined. We shall shortly be publishing *The Book of FIAT*. This will be a collection of articles, leaflets, interviews, analyses, maps and photographs documenting the workers' struggle at FIAT from 1912 to the present day. The book will examine in detail questions and problems of class composition and class organisation in the present phase of the crisis. For the moment here are a number of "points arising" that we shall be examining in more detail later:-

1. Given that FIAT car production will presumably continue to exist as a major industrial sector, what are the Company's present strategic choices in terms of relocation of production, decentralisation of plant, restructuring of model ranges, transformation of product technologies and reorganisation of the workforce?
2. The "FIAT events" seemed like the heroic "last stand" of that historical militant vanguard, the "mass worker" of the motor industries. That vanguard has been a major political force in Western capitalism for the past 50 years. Is it now historically in decline? What are the signs one way or another, in relation to FIAT?
3. One model of workers' organisation is to advance, through participation and democratic processes, towards workers' control of the place and the means of production. This as a prelude to socialist revolution. Another is to refuse to co-operate with capital's mechanisms of planning and production, to reject work under capitalism, to pursue the material and other needs of the working class without work (the autonomists' idea of the "refusal of work"), and to bring about a structural crisis of capitalism. This also as a prelude to (communist) revolution. How have both of these options operated in the strategy of the political groups at FIAT?
4. The redundancies at FIAT were in part attributable to capital's use of the new-wave technologies against the working class. Some groups have proposed means to make the new technologies inoperable, both politically and mechanically. In what context has this sabotage been formulated and/or put into effect? In what sense does this strengthen or weaken the power of the working class in the present crisis?
5. Violence has played an important part in recent FIAT struggles, as practised by FIAT management on the one hand, and by workers' groups on the other — with the added dimension of intervention by external groups. How has this violence shown itself, on the part of management; in the programmes of the political groups; and in the everyday actions of the working class?
6. In the "FIAT events" the Communist Party opportunistically invoked the forms of militancy of the Polish workers — direct action; solidarity and communication; occupation of workplaces etc — to back its own model of organisation. What is the present relation of the Party to the working class, in the light of the Historic Compromise and later developments?
7. 24,000 FIAT workers are now laid off on 80% of pay for 18 months. What are the effects of this purge on workers' organisations inside the factory? And outside the factory, are new forms of class organisation being developed to meet the needs of those laid off and unemployed?
8. Further: the changing relation of the State; the effects of the crisis in the sphere of reproduction of labour; alterations in the nature of family and social relations; transformations in the sexual division of labour; the social force of needs and desires.

Other REDNOTES publications

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ISBN 0 906305 00 4

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ISBN 0 906305 05 5

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○ For copies of any of these publications, or for information regarding our other activities, write to Red Notes at:
Red Notes, BP15, 2a St Paul's Road, London N.1.

After the Moro kidnap... the most terrifying campaign of repression we have ever known was set into motion. 3,000 comrades have been thrown into jail in these last two years.

The repressive forces of the bourgeoisie, with the cooperation of those of the trade unions and the PCI, have swept the board clean of an entire generation of militants. The movement's political space has been enormously restricted. Practically all of its papers and journals have been banned. The space held by the comrades of autonomia inside the universities and factories has been closed. In the name of stamping out terrorism a great proletarian movement of an entirely new sort, a movement of young workers and metropolitan proletarians, a movement of resistance to work, has been struck a severely weakening blow.

I don't know if recovery will come about quickly. I rather doubt it. What is certain, though, is that the movement still exists, that it has not yet been beaten. Today the problem is the revival of mass struggle together with the reconquest of political space and the release of the comrades from prison.

Toni Negri, Trani Prison, November 1980

£1.00