

RADICAL

Volume 7, Number 2

AMERICA

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Working Class Struggles in Italy

RADICAL AMERICA

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(Cover Photo: Occupation of Fiat Factory, Turin, Italy)

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RADICAL AMERICA: Published bi-monthly at 5 Upland Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140. Subscription rates: \$5 per year, \$9 for two years, \$12 for three years; with pamphlets \$10 per year. Free to prisoners. Bulk rates: 40% reduction from cover price for 5 or more copies. Bookstores may order on a consignment basis.

Second Class Postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts and additional mailing offices.



Introduction to the Revolutionary Left in Italy

by Jim Kaplan

In the last decade a revolutionary movement has emerged world-wide to the Left of the Communist Parties. In Italy, that movement has attained a political force, an organizational presence, and a theoretical coherence greater than those of any of its counterparts in the West. Most important is the depth of its break from the reformist program and mediating practice of the Communist Party; from the classic tradition of the Popular Front.

A new Popular Front was exactly what the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was preparing itself for at the beginning of the '60s. A successful anti-fascist mobilization in 1960 had broken the last Cold War cabinet of the Center-Right, that of Tambroni. Detente offered the prospect of new and expanded trade with Eastern Europe, already beginning with a major Italic-Soviet oil deal in 1960. And the Left party and

trade-union organizations had begun to regain strength after the fragmentation and decline of the Cold War. The Communist-Socialist labor confederation, the CGIL, exhibited new power in the triennial contract negotiations of 1963. Because the option of the Right had been defeated, because the option of the Left promised trade expansion, and because the working class was growing stronger, the PCI expected an opening for itself to Cabinet power.

The Communists' conclusive argument for their inclusion in the Government was that only the PCI could fulfill Italy's potential for accelerated economic growth. The Communists could mediate not only the international opening to the East but also the domestic revival of Italian working-class action. The terms of exchange would be industrial peace in return for guaranteed regular wage increases and modernized state welfare services. Even the "concessions" could be attractive to the most advanced industrialists. Moderate wage increases could be passed along to consumers by oligopoly corporations, but not by smaller companies in competitive industries. The resulting elimination of weaker companies could accelerate the process of industrial concentration necessary for the international goals of corporations like FIAT in auto, Pirelli in rubber, Montedison in chemicals, ENI in petroleum, and Italsider in steel. These firms would in their turn benefit from the increase in state power which an expanded welfare system would require. In the interest of the big capitalists, the state would expand its capacity to invest in economic infrastructure and subsidize the development of the major Italian multi-national firms; to co-ordinate the modernization of Italian capitalism despite objections from backward petty-bourgeois interests facing extinction; to transform itself into an effective and useful "state as planner", even "state as boss". With all this gain for Italian big business, the Communist Party saw simultaneous gains for the Italian working class: the elimination of the petty bourgeoisie, the class base of reaction and fascism; and the advance of income and welfare services guaranteed by economic prosperity.

The revolutionary Left saw that the Communist Party was seeking reforms not as a spur toward revolution, but as a substitute for it. By seeking to involve the working class in the process of capitalist accumulation, the PCI linked the interests of the proletariat to those of the bourgeoisie. It thus became a vehicle for "instrumentalization" — Italian equivalent to the American term "co-optation". How this came about became a key subject of debate. The nascent Maoist tendencies blamed PCI politics on the triumph of "revisionist ideology" resulting from "revisionist misleadership" at the top of the PCI. Rather than this facile explanation, an alternative analysis came from a journal named Quaderni Rossi (Red Notebooks). It focused on historical changes in the working class itself to account for changes in its political organization.

The Italian Communist Party had built itself during the '40s among skilled workers in the older industrial centers of Italy. These were the most advanced workers of the period both industrially and politically. Through their unions and Left-wing parties, the political objective of the skilled workers was domination of the work process in what was still largely craft production. Assembly-line production developed on a massive scale in Italy only with the investment boom of the '50s and early '60s — the "economic miracle". In the most modern and concentrated industries of Italy — auto, rubber, chemicals, steel — a new work force was created. This new composition of the Italian working class generated new political forms. Since the early '60s, the locus of industrial insurgency in Italy has shifted from the skilled worker to the "mass worker"; from the unions of the CGIL and parliamentary organizations of the PCI to the "mass vanguards" of the factory and community. The Communist Party has found itself challenged from the Left. A new revolutionary movement has emerged.

The main current of the Italian revolutionary Left has been called "operaisti" ("workerist") to distinguish it from the Trotskyists and Maoists. It has seen itself as the agency of the historic break of "mass vanguards" to the Left of the

Communist Party. The journal Quaderni Rossi began in 1961 as a theoretical voice of the new movement it saw emerging. Through the mid-'60s, its ideas were appropriated by the earliest circles of extra-parliamentary activists. By 1967 numerous local groups began to appear, generally taking the name "Potere Operaio" ("Workers' Power"). These local groups were in turn both harbingers and catalysts of far larger movements. From the rising of the student movement in 1968, the explosion of the industrial working class in the Hot Autumn of 1969, the insurrection of town after town in the South, and the beginning of a women's movement, Italian capitalism has been beset by massive, violent, and universal upheaval. Caught up by this mass upsurge, the small local groups expanded, mushroomed in new places, and finally in 1969 united themselves into two major organizations: Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle) and Potere Operaio (Workers' Power). Differences in major struggles, particularly those at the 55,000-worker FIAT Mirafiori plant in Turin, divided the groups chiefly on the basis of the types of demands they advanced. Potere Operaio has distinguished itself by its call for "political wages": guaranteed income for all as the unifying slogan of socialist agitation. Lotta Continua has attempted to develop unity in struggle through continuous and militant fights for precise objectives in every sector of daily life.

Without minimizing the differences between Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio, certain concepts are shared by this whole current of the Italian revolutionary movement. "Mass vanguards", defined in the article by Adriano Sofri, are seen as the insurgent groups inside every struggle whose unification is the purpose of the Left. Revolutionary unification occurs only when insurgent groups merge into a common struggle—through mass action, not through delegates. Today in Italy, delegation serves to check mass participation and transfer power from the working class to the agencies of class mediation: Communist Party or reformist union. But the revolutionary movement is going be-

yond these mediations. It will not permit itself to be used for the modernization of its enemy.

The class struggle is the mainspring of development of every social system. The interest of the ruling class is to make this spring work for the extension and reinforcement of its own power. And so workers' autonomy occurs when the class struggle stops working as the motor of capitalist development. (Adriano Sofri, Comunismo Number 1 by Lotta Continua)

The breakthrough into "workers' autonomy" happens when the working class fights for more than reformism can possibly concede. "Workers' autonomy" emerges when the working class fights for income gains beyond and finally detached from productivity gains. "Workers' autonomy" emerges when the working class unites itself, directly and universally, for all its interests in every sphere of life. "Factory, school, and community: The struggle is one." "Workers' autonomy" is the goal of revolutionary socialism in Italy!





The Italian Background

by Ernest Dowson

"Reconstruction" and "Economic Growth"

After the Second World War, the Italian ruling class, aided by the Marshall Plan, began the reconstruction of a capitalist economy. The parties of the Left, including the Communists, co-operated with them. The revolutionary hopes of the workers who had fought against Fascism were traded for a seat in the Government. All over the country anti-fascist groups, who had been armed since the time of the Resistance and were now preparing to combat the presence of the US, were persuaded to lay down their weapons. Once the threat of armed insurrection was out of the way, the bourgeoisie swiftly ousted the Communists from the Government and set about a program of suppressing working-class organizations. The trade unions, particularly the

militant metal workers' union (FIM) at Fiat, were broken up.

Conditions were now ripe for the exceptional growth of Italian industry, which lasted from 1948 to 1962. During this period, with considerable financial backing from the State, massive investment occurred, especially in export-based industries and automobile production. Industry was streamlined, and the most modern methods were introduced into the factories. This growth, far from benefiting the workers, was largely paid for by them through the low wages and lousy living conditions they endured. Since the new industry was highly automated it only very slowly created jobs, and unemployment remained high throughout the period.

The South

This industrial growth was concentrated in the northern cities and was based on a policy of keeping the South poor and underdeveloped. Southern Italy's position in relation to the North is very much like that of the North to the South in the US, or that of Ireland (North and South) to the UK. Predominantly an area of agricultural work, it has a long history of a client system based on large landowners. Jobs, homes, schools — everything — depended on the patronage of the local boss. This system was maintained after 1945, with the difference that control was no longer in the hands of the landlords, but was now in the hands of government officials who handled public money. Agriculture was "rationalized" into larger units and mechanized, and millions of people were driven off the land into the cities, especially Naples and Rome. Between 1950 and 1967, some 17,000,000 Italians, more than a third of the population, moved from one district to another. Although a certain amount of small industry and construction work did come to the South, it was not enough to prevent a massive migration to the North. This constant reserve of labor was exactly what the Italian bosses needed. It helped to keep wages down, even when the demand for workers began to grow.

The year 1962 brought the first halt to this murderous progression. The workers at Fiat came out on strike and demonstrated in the streets of Turin. The demand for workers, caused by the boom of 1959, was beginning to push wages up, while unemployment was falling. Italian bosses began to find it more and more difficult to make the massive profits to which the boom years had accustomed them. Investment began to tail off, and more and more money went abroad or into other more lucrative areas such as property speculation. Now, instead of pushing up productivity by the introduction of new machinery, as they had been doing, they began to put the squeeze on workers to work harder. Speeds on the production lines were pushed up and up, to become the highest in Europe. The years during which their organizations had been smashed gave Italian workers no chance, for the time being, of resisting this process.

Conditions in the Cities

The bosses managed to retain the upper hand, and conditions for the workers grew worse. Unemployment rose once more, and the prices of food, housing, and transportation shot up in an ever-growing inflationary spiral. Life in the cities became unbearable. The growth of Italian capitalism had involved a massive influx of people into the towns. From 1951 to 1961, the four largest urban districts (Milan, Rome, Turin, and Naples) and their outlying districts had a population increase of 2,000,000 — two-thirds of the total national increase in population. From 1951 to 1969, the population of Turin and its suburbs alone grew from 868,000 to 1,528,000.

The bosses and their State did nothing at all to make this forced migration less painful. Public housing was minute. The main State agency, GESCAL, built only 390,000 apartments between 1949 and 1971 — the same number that were built privately in one year. In 1971, GESCAL built 3,254 apartments and had a waiting list of 138,931 families. GESCAL gets its money from the workers and the employers.

The workers' contribution is 0.6% of their wages, and the bosses' is twice that. A good deal of this money disappears through corruption. The rest is invested either in industry or abroad, and will remain there, since it takes years for GESCAL to get planning permission for its projects. Moreover, GESCAL usually gets outbid for the little land that becomes available by private developers. Thus workers had to find accommodation where they could. People often had to sleep six to eight to a room, and shanty towns spread around the large cities. When apartments could be found, rents consumed up to 40% of a worker's wages.

Bosses' Crisis — Workers' Struggle

By 1968 the workers were beginning to fight back once more. The incidence of strikes and absenteeism grew rapidly, and in the South there were a number of violent riots. At this time the Italian economy was entering another difficult phase. Competition for markets was increasing between Italian firms and rival firms, especially from the US. In many cases there was direct competition between, say, Fiat and Ford, Pirelli and Firestone, or Italian oil companies and their US equivalents. This process was reflected also in an increasing antagonism between different sectors of Italian capital: between large-scale industry, Italian-owned and heavily subsidized by the State, and small-scale industry, relying on or even owned by US companies. The small firms were increasingly faced with either liquidation or absorption into one or another of the larger monopolies.

In 1969 many of the important three-year labor contracts in the metal-working industry were due to expire. Many of the large firms were eager to negotiate new terms and to settle with the unions as peacefully as possible, thereby avoiding large-scale disruptions of production. For their part the trade unions and the CP, and their parliamentary spokesmen, were ready to make a deal. They were hoping to strengthen their own position and to have their impor-

tance recognized officially. The CP had dreams of once more entering the Government. They were also worried by the existence of several unofficial workers' committees and "base committees" which had emerged during the previous year. In exchange for industrial peace they would ask for higher wages and the promise of social reforms. But to ensure their bargaining position they had to mobilize the workers, at least enough to show their strength. And this was their big mistake, because the workers had had enough. They weren't going to play the game of token gestures.

The "Hot Autumn"

Before the unions could sell them out, the workers were on the move. They soon went far beyond the control of the unions. For instance, when workers at Fiat were called out on a one-day token strike protesting the killing of a Southern worker during the rioting at Battipaglia, they refused to leave the factory, and started to take it over instead. Very quickly people began to develop aims, tactics, and organization which had nothing to do with what the unions were after. They didn't just want a wage increase — they wanted the abolition of the grading system, equal pay raises for all, and a drastic reduction in work speed. Rather than passively coming out on strike, as the unions wanted them to, they began to organize a struggle inside the factories, with mass meetings on the job, rotating strikes in different sections which brought production to a standstill, marches through factories involving a lot of damage to plants, and direct confrontation with management. New organizations began to take control of the struggle — base committees at Pirelli (Milan) and at the chemical works in Porto Marghera, and the worker-student assembly at Fiat Mirafiori (Turin). Factory newspapers began to appear. Links were established with groups of students, and meetings were held regularly at factory gates.

This explosion inside the factories demonstrated decisively that the "economic partnership" which the bosses

and the unions were interested in would not happen. The growing use by Italian firms of assembly-line production techniques had drastically changed the nature of work and the work force. The older, skilled workers, with pride in their work, who had been the backbone of the trade unions and the CP, had no place among a newer generation of workers whose individual skills were unimportant and who didn't give a damn about the "dignity of labor". Many of these young workers had come from the South, from agricultural communities with a long history of direct and violent struggle, where the burning down of the local town hall and the occupation of land were common happenings. They were part of a militant tradition, but not part of a trade-union tradition. So when the militancy of these workers came into the open, the unions were not able to channel the struggle into demands for higher wages and reforms, as the French unions did in 1968. In the hope of buying peace, the bosses desperately made big concessions on wages. Between 1969 and 1970 wages went up by 23.4% — compared with an average annual increase of only 9% over the previous 10 years.

The signing of the contracts was concluded only a few weeks after 16 people were killed by fascist bombings in the center of Milan. The ruling class were developing two tactics for dealing with the militancy of the workers — concessions and reforms on one hand, and open repression on the other. The continuation of the struggle inside the factories and its extension into the communities meant that the ruling class increasingly chose the second option. In the factories militants were sacked or moved into other jobs, fascists were planted to spy on militant workers, and many small firms closed down. At the same time, unemployment and prices rose sharply.

1969-1973: Four Years of Struggle

Since the "Hot Autumn" of 1969, the class struggle in Italy has spread from the factories to every area of peo-

ple's lives. The working class have fought against their rotten housing conditions with widespread and prolonged rent strikes and mass occupations of empty flats. People have fought against rising food prices, expensive transportation, inadequate schools and nurseries, and lousy medical facilities. They have begun to create within their communities a new way of life, outside the control of the bosses. What's more, Italian immigrants have taken the germ of this struggle beyond their national frontiers to other major European cities.

Rents: Throughout the country thousands of tenants have been on rent strikes, some lasting for several years. Tenants' slogans have been "The only fair rent is no rent!" and "Housing is a right. Why pay rent?" Independent organizations like the Milan Tenants' Union make sure that control of the struggle stays in the hands of the tenants themselves.

Occupations of buildings: Hundreds of people have been involved in taking over empty buildings. In Milan, during one series of occupations, 30,000 marched in a revolutionary demonstration through the city. In Taranto 182 families occupied a public-housing project in February 1973. The police came to throw the families out, but were forced to leave when the squatters were joined by hundreds of workers from Italsider, the steel plant, some of whom were squatting themselves.

Food prices: Militant women have picketed supermarkets. In Milan there were clashes with police. In Pisa, people organized a Red Market.

Transportation: In Spinea and Mirano (suburbs of Venice) workers and students stopped all busses from running as part of a campaign against high fares and bad service. They took some of them over and drove them all over the area. In Trento, workers commuting to factories refused to pay fares, saying that their wages were low enough.

Schools: There have been strikes and occupations of primary and secondary schools and universities in every major city. Since the autumn of 1969, when worker-student

assemblies were formed, there have been many occasions on which workers and students have fought alongside each other. In the schools, the kids have fought for free books, free transportation, an end to exams, an end to the class bias in education, the opening of schools to the community, and so on.

Health: In Rome a Red Health Center was set up to provide free medical treatment. It became a center for organizing struggles around living and working conditions, the real causes of ill health. Throughout the country, Left-wing doctors have become involved in fighting class-based medicine. For example they have given evidence in court cases involving workers whose health has been impaired by factory conditions. Their evidence has been essential in combatting the evidence of the bosses' doctors.

Prisons: Prisoners in many Italian jails have been fighting against their conditions. In prisons in Milan and Naples cells have been set on fire and prisoners have gone onto the roofs with banners. A Red Help organization has been formed to support their struggles from the outside.



Italy, 1973: Workers Struggles in the Capitalist Crisis

from Potere Operaio:

translated and edited by

Mario Montano, Silvia Federici

The spiraling working-class struggle which has characterized Italian society over the last six years has produced a crisis of major proportions for Italian capitalism — the most severe recession since the War. The crisis not only has affected the method of capitalist reproduction, but also has shaken capital's political control over the working class and has weakened the power of the institutions that mediate the class struggle — the trade unions.

Furthermore, it is a crisis that may be very hard to resolve, since at its root lies the main political outcome of a decade of struggles: the workers' generalized refusal of the capitalist organization of work. "Chaos," as the bourgeois press puts it, "has become an endemic feature of Italian society. The traditional tools of capitalist power are no longer capable of maintaining social peace." It is

during the crisis, says Marx, that the relation between classes becomes clarified. It is by "the universality of its theatre and the intensity of its actions" that the crisis reveals the unresolvable antagonistic relationship between capital and the working class.

The Italian crisis is first of all a crisis of the progressive reformist policies which capital, together with the official working-class movement, had attempted to apply starting with the first Center-Left coalition government of 1964. By 1970, following the struggles of 1968-69, it had become apparent that the advanced Keynesian policies promoted by the Center-Left coalition (economic planning, incomes policy, collaboration with the trade unions) could not contain the impact of a united and politically-homogeneous working-class struggle. Once again, the autonomous working-class demand for more money and less work, for a wage disengaged from the labor expended, hit the capitalist system's capacity to respond positively and to continue to deliver the goods.

As the wage boosts won by the workers in 1968 and 1969 easily exceeded the productivity ceiling, the working-class struggle for more wages ceased to function as an incentive to capitalist development and became a threat to capitalist production. Wages could no longer be made to work as "internal demand", purchasing power, Keynesian push for development, but, on the contrary, represented a renewed attack on the stability of the capitalist system. The basic Keynesian presupposition that class conflict can be integrated into the strategy of capitalist development revealed once again its political weakness. Capitalism proved to be incapable of satisfying the autonomous and collective needs of the politically-reunified working class.

Economic development is secondary to capital's need to politically control workers — that is, to maintain a dominant power relation. Where such control over workers has loosened, it must be restored at once. Capitalists, politicians, and union executives remind us daily that there will be no economic development until the "political premises"

are there. In other words, there will be no economic development short of a workers' defeat.

The Fascist bombings of December 1969 were the first major signal of the repression to come. It was in 1970, however, that capital's anti-working-class offensive took definite shape along the following lines: (1) economic crisis, (2) institutional transformation, and (3) technological change and reconversion of the economy. The selections that follow deal with these three levels in that order. The role that the official working-class movement has played throughout the crisis is also examined.

(1) The Economic Crisis

Capitalists do not like crises. During crises, capital's accumulation slows down and stops. The premise and justification of capitalist civilization — economic development — must give way to a destruction of capital and of real wealth. Left to themselves, the capitalists would not choose a crisis. The days of crises as a product of intracapitalist competition in a vacuum of workers' activity are over — if they had ever existed.

The economic crisis was imposed on the capitalists by the working-class struggle. Throughout the 1968-1970 cycle of the struggles workers not only had stepped up their mass struggle against work at the point of production through increased strikes, self-reduction of work time, "absenteeism", and sabotage (all activities that do not reproduce capital), but also had expressed their determination to struggle against the capitalist State. Capital was left with a single choice: to accept the crisis as the new battlefield, to try to take it under control, and to make it backfire on the workers.

There is one thing we have learned. Crisis is no longer the catastrophic development of capital's "social anarchy", as in the collapse theory of the Second International. Rather the crisis represents a capitalist attempt to regain control over the workers' command of the business cycle.

In the first months of 1971, industrial production receded an average of 3.5%, with a flat -5.1% in the "leading sectors" — steel, machine tools, and construction. Once again, the traditional antagonism of wage and employment levels was exploited. Massive layoffs, expulsion from the labor market of marginal sectors (women, old people, and youth), under-employment, decreased work mobility — all such means have been used to destroy the unity of the working class, to play off the employed and the unemployed against each other, to separate the community struggles from the struggle at the point of production, to de-compose and to disorganize the mass worker.

Despite these efforts, the wage pressure was sustained throughout 1971. With productivity virtually stagnant, wage boosts averaged a fat 16.6% and cut deeply into profit margins. By the end of the year, the Bank of Italy (the Italian "Fed") revealed that a 670-billion-lira increase in the monetary value of production was swallowed by a 1500-billion-lira increase in the total payroll. Capital's income fell by 830 billion lira. There was no capitalist accumulation in Italy in 1971.

Capitalist development depends on current profits as well as estimates on future profits. When the capitalists see no future, they do not invest, no matter how "easy" money can be. Beyond a certain point of deterioration, easy money as such does not re-launch investments. In spite of the "expansive" fiscal policy pursued by the Bank of Italy, net investments fell by 17% in 1971. It was and is a political strike on investments. If capitalist development represents the basis for a working-class offensive, the only hope for a workers' defeat lies in the economic crisis.

(2) Technological Change and Reconversion of the Economy

Marx saw through technological change very clearly: "It would be possible to write quite a history of the inventions since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital

with weapons against the revolts of the working class." Since Marx, and particularly since the development of mass production and the scientific organization of labor, technological change ("progress") has become a major weapon in the hands of the capitalist class. By actually manipulating class composition technologically, capital has learned how to deal directly with the material existence of the working class as labor force, as mere commodity.

In the context of the Italian crisis, the capitalist strategy to base the overall political attack on a "technological repression" of the working class had to satisfy two fundamental political needs. First, it had to strengthen the attack on employment, for the purpose of enforcing work on the unemployed. Second, it had to produce major gaps in the homogeneous texture of a working class politically dominated by the collective behavior of the mass worker; that is it had to alter the class composition which had served as the basis for the political re-unification of the working class in 1968-70.

The following measures were attempted: technological innovations that reduce the number of employed workers (technological unemployment); demobilization of entire productive sectors (such as textile) and geographical areas (such as Quarto and La Spezia); decentralization of productive structures for the purpose of eliminating large working-class concentrations; restructuring of the work process in view of two major requirements: (1) a wider range of skills (an attempt at creating a pro-work professional ideology in a portion of the labor force), and (2) widened pay differentials. Once again, the workers' struggle had forced capital to attempt a technological leap.

Such technological repression, however, was carried out differently in different productive sectors. In fact, industrial sectors must be analyzed in terms of the instruments they provide for regaining control over the working class. From this viewpoint, every "sectoral plan" represents a particular strategy, a particular model of capital's command over production.

In this respect, the leading sector today is the chemical industry which, because of its high vertical and horizontal concentration and its integration at the international level, has wide margins of control over the entire cycle of production. Not so for the auto industry. The replacement of the assembly line in the auto plants has been on the capitalists' agenda internationally for quite some time — since the struggles of 1933-37 in the US unequivocally demonstrated the collective power of the assemblers, or the mass workers.

Yet, the "new way of producing a car" is not around the corner. FIAT's Agnelli has explicitly ruled out the possibility of any major innovations on, or substitutes for, the assembly line, since this would involve at once huge capital outlays coupled with a 25% cost increase. Plainly, the big multinational, FIAT, has become incapable of formulating a workable strategy of containment. 360,000 cars have been "lost" since 1969.

The ultimate solution in both the auto and chemical sectors lies in the search for safer areas of investment. Thus, Italy's South has come to occupy a favored position in capital's plan. The new Southern "poles of development" of Porto Torres and Gela, veritable cathedrals in a desert, testify to a renewed attempt to divide the working class along geographic lines.

(3) Institutional Transformations: The New Role of the State

The political institutions required by a government which must impose mass repression on the working class cannot be the same as the ones of a reformist government, which would be based on attempted collaboration with the working class. The 1948 Constitution, with its focus on the parliamentary life of mediating political parties and its emphasis on decentralized administrative structures, could not function as the institutional framework for a capitalist use of the crisis. The Italian Republic had been founded on the

principle of class collaboration in the name of economic development. Such class collaboration remained a dream. Economic development has ceased. Each new government since the fall of Rumor's (Summer 1970) was under pressure to carry out a gradual "emancipation" of the Cabinet from parliamentary parties and procedure, at the same time that it implemented a general strategy for the repression of the working class.

The first few months of the Colombo government (from Summer 1970 to January 1972) witnessed some uncertainty as to which strategy to employ. Initially Colombo preferred to attack the workers indirectly. A higher sales tax on mass consumer items like gasoline, introduced in the summer of 1970, was the first move of the capitalist offensive. Although a strong measure, it still revealed a major weakness in the capitalist initiative: a certain fear of attacking the workers directly at the point of production, and some hesitation about waging an explicitly political battle. But the continuous industrial struggles of 1971, and the dramatic decline in production that followed, demonstrated that fiscal policy alone would not be enough, that the only way to win in the crisis was direct, open repression.

Andreotti's Center-Right government of January to May 1972 was the first government to openly do away with constitutional bindings and practice large-scale systematic repression. A modernization, rationalization, and numerical increase of the police force; a strengthening of executive power, tested through mass anti-crime campaigns (against both "political" and "common" crimes); anticipated elections in May (with the Christian Democrats promising stability to the capitalists, law and order to the middle classes, and repression for the proletariat); the assassination of the revolutionary publisher Fetrinelli and the consequent increase in State terrorism against the mass vanguards and the revolutionary Left; the hundreds of comrades in jail — all of these different measures expressed the same political program: subordinating the need to resume production and economic development to a process of

completely restoring capitalist command.

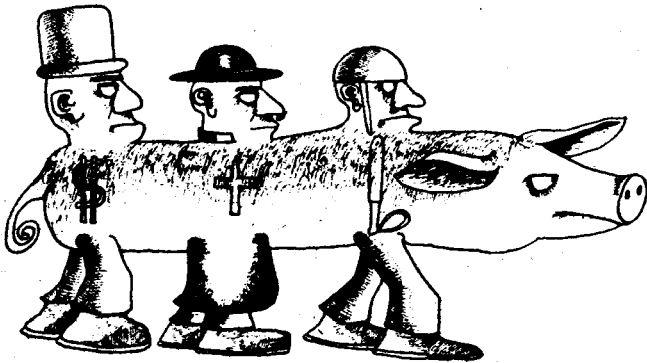
The May 1972 elections reflected the radicalization of the conflict in the only way the elections could offer : a parliamentary polarization and a growth of votes for the three major opposing parties, the Christian Democrats (DC), the Fascists (MSI), and the Communist Party (PCI) at the expense of all minor parties. The tactical reasons for the working-class votes going to the Communist Party should be clear to everyone : The electoral show of strength of the working class as a compact political body should not be mistaken for a show of support for the Party's political program. In fact, the Government understood the electoral results for what they were — a show of strength, a threat, and an anticipation — and it quickly stepped up repression after the elections with an eye to the next round of contracts (Fall 1972). The winning Christian Democrats' political platform did not provide a strategy for economic development — it provided a model for controlling the class. And this was implemented by changing the relationship between trade unions, political parties, and the State.

The unions were now told explicitly that their institutional function was to convince the workers to stop fighting — or else bear the burden of continued recession. A wage ceiling was set as a pre-condition to economic recovery, and strike regulation, though not formally ratified, was accepted in practice by the unions, in the form of both "self-discipline" and the search for new mediations to prevent strikes. As for the Parliament, political parties became organs of the State, and achieving law and order became a political priority for all. But the major transformation occurred in the role of the State itself.

It was the role of the State as a general economic planner that had come to an end with the crisis. Beginning with the first Center-Left coalition of 1964, capital had come to accept the historical trend toward the political re-unification of the working class, and tried to make use of this working-class unity to re-launch economic development. Through State planning, capital attempted to achieve a general con-

trol over the working class as a whole through the institutions of the democratic State, political parties, and trade unions. But when the mass consensus of the working class could not be secured, working-class unity became fully subversive in its impact. Consequently, general planning became impossible and had to be replaced by different sectoral plans for the different branches of production, in an attempt to tear major holes in the homogeneous texture of the working class.

The impossibility of a general plan and the consequent crisis of the State's role as general planner meant that business reclaimed the economic initiative and set itself up to manage the crisis directly and to respond to each class situation in a specific manner. The State was left simply with its commitment to the stability of capitalist power. This meant an obvious emphasis on the State's repressive functions — on institutional violence, the police, the courts, the secret service, and the democratic State's use of Fascism.



Yet it would be a mistake to interpret such institutional changes as simply a revival of State non-interference, laissez-faire, 19th Century non-intervention. In fact the State's emphasis on mass repression and institutional violence was a means to a very precise and advanced form of "State in-

tervention": the political determination of all market values (prices, wages, "incomes" in general), in order to have economic values meet political priorities. As "economic laws" ceased to function in the process of formation and distribution of income, they simply had to give way to open and direct relations of power. When the laws regulating the price of labor on the market no longer functioned and wages outgrew productivity (that is the price of labor became disengaged from the labor expended), the traditional socialist ideology of a "value of labor" collapsed. The price of labor could be determined only by relations of power, open struggle, and the strength of organization.

(4) The Communist Party and the Question of Fascism

Throughout the capitalist crisis, the CP intensified its campaign to join the Government in a coalition Cabinet (the well-publicized "Italian road to Socialism"). Yet, to the extent that reformism has been defeated, there has been little that capital and the Communist Party could offer each other. Capitalism has had no margin for reforms and economic development, and the Communist Party has been in no position to guarantee control over workers' behavior.

But then what has the Party had to offer to the working class? Only an anachronistic, ideological re-proposal of "reforms" (such as public expenditure and rationalization of the "social services"), and a campaign for a democratic struggle against Fascism which would include all the parties that accept Parliamentary fair play (with the single exception of the Fascists themselves). In the CP analysis, the threat of a Fascist take-over would be dispelled by a popular-front coalition.

A few words of explanation: The CP's alarmism notwithstanding, Italy is not presently on the verge of a Fascist take-over. True, after the failure of reformism, capitalist strategy has come to a political crisis, for it has not indicated a way to utilize productive forces in a manner which is adequate to the growth and autonomy of the work-

ing class. The Fascist solution, however, when applied to the problem that capitalist strategy must tackle today — containment and utilization of the workers' struggle at the highest level of socialization — is but a museum piece. A popular front in defense of bourgeois civil liberties is not a rear-guard solution; it is simply a solution for a problem that does not exist.

The problem today is not that there is a possibility of a Fascist take-over; it is collective capital's support of, and the democratic State's use of, Fascism. For capital, Fascist thugs are instruments of direct physical repression in the unions, on the picket line, in the streets. Their existence in the political arena, moreover, allows the State to play the role of mediator between "opposite extremisms" — revolution and reaction.

But who are the Fascists? That is, whose interests do Fascist organizations represent today? They express the interests of the most backward fringes of capital: small business — a social stratum that is doomed to collapse, haunted by the rising cost of labor, and that is progressively squeezed out of existence by the sharpening class struggle. The political strength of the Fascists, therefore, derives not from the stratum they represent (a fragile stratum indeed), but from the function they are called upon to fulfill as a weapon of the democratic State in the anti-working-class offensive.

Under these conditions, to "denounce Fascism" and at the same time to "defend the democratic institutions", as in the CP anti-Fascist campaign, is not simply political blindness; it is open collusion with capital in the attempt to disarm the working class.

(5) The Trade Unions Versus the Working-Class Struggle

The crisis of reformism has deeply affected the role played by the unions in the capitalist plan. Years of open, autonomous struggle have made it clear that the unions

cannot guarantee the collaboration of the working class. In fact, the formal signing of labor contracts has seldom put an end to industrial struggles. Capital has come to realize that collaboration with the trade unions makes little sense when it does not insure the collaboration of the working class. Furthermore, on certain occasions during the early years of the cycle, the trade unions, far from exercising control, have been used by the workers as one means of co-ordinating their struggle. Clearly, the unions in the "Keynesian State" of the '60s could fulfill their political function of mediation and containment only on the condition that they effectively "represented" the working class — that is, on the condition that they accepted (and mediated) its spontaneous struggles. Hence, we witnessed a "radicalization" of the unions' official platform in 1968-69 as well



A Strike Demonstration

as the emergence of a Left wing within the trade-union movement.

Things were quite different in 1972. In the 1972-73 round of bargaining there was no room for concessions. Reformism had failed and economic development had come to a standstill. There was only one function left for the unions to fulfill: open collaboration with capital in repressing the working class—that is, the “responsibility” that trade unions demonstrated throughout the negotiations. In the words of one union boss: “The Hot Autumn must not be repeated. The 1972 contracts must be bargained for at a very mild temperature.”

The unions’ strategy focused on one major objective: to contain the workers’ struggles through the paradoxical argument that one must stop striking in order to prevent anti-strike legislation. But the history of the last several months has dispelled any illusions concerning the possibility of trade-union control over the working class.

Once again, it has been the struggle of the auto and metal workers which has functioned as the occasion for the new major working-class offensive of Spring 1973. Once again, the situation at FIAT epitomizes the political features of a whole wave of struggles.

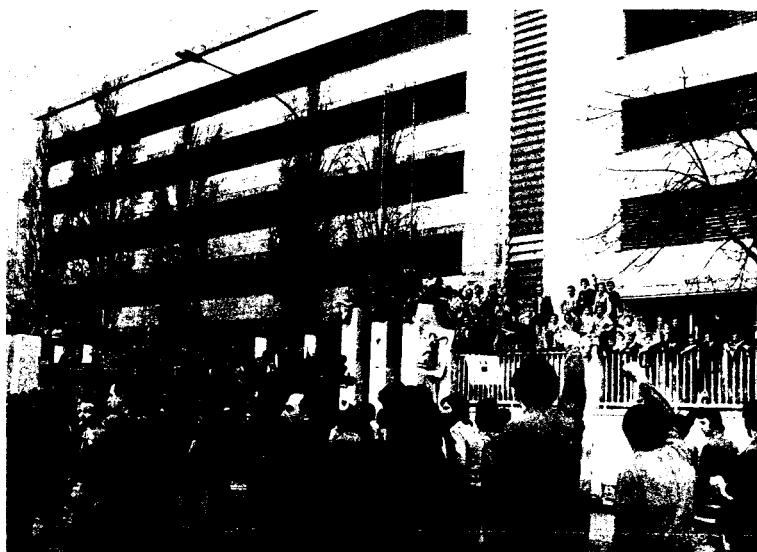
Since the Turin general strike of September 1972, the struggle has grown out of control in terms of both violence and generalization. Throughout the fall, the FIAT workers stepped up their cortei interni (inside-the-factory militant marches that proceed from shop to shop busting doors and gates and sweeping away foremen, strike breakers, and guards). On January 22, the Lancia auto workers launched a sit-down and battled with the police when the latter tried to enter the factory. (One worker was killed by the police.) On January 26, striking students joined picket lines and workers’ marches in Milan. (One student was severely wounded by the police.) On February 2, some 20,000 FIAT workers staged a one-day occupation of FIAT-Mirafiori that triggered a wave of factory occupations in the following months. By February 9, nearly half a million workers

had congregated in Rome for the largest working-class demonstration to take place since World War II. Their slogans were "Power to the Workers" and "Factory, School, Community — Our Struggle Is for Power".

Together with the cortei interni, mass absenteeism has become a major new form of struggle. Once again FIAT workers have led the way with an absenteeism rate of 28%. This means that each day 30,000 FIAT workers do not go to be exploited by the capitalist factory; that the average real work-week at FIAT has been self-reduced by workers to a little over 30 hours. Through their absenteeism and sick leaves, the 100,000 FIAT workers of Turin have re-appropriated 45 billion lira (\$90,000,000) — nine times the net profit that FIAT posted for 1972 — without work. And absenteeism, far from being a substitute for other forms of struggle, has been growing together with other forms of the workers' revolt — strikes, picket lines, factory occupations, and mass demonstrations.



On Thursday, March 29, FIAT-Mirafiori was occupied again. Early in the morning, a crowd of 10,000 picketers



Demonstration at Fiat

blocked all the entrances. To the workers' slogan "Occupy FIAT—No Truce", the unions responded with their own: "Strike for Two Hours". Inside the occupied factory, workers set up permanent political assemblies. FIAT's first move was a threat not to distribute the weekly paychecks and to call the police. Friday morning, however, paychecks were ready as usual—but for strikers only. "Workers' Courts" ruled that strike breakers would not be allowed to pick up their checks. At the carrozzerie (body shop), the workers held a mass trial of foremen and scabs. By Friday evening, most of Turin's factories were in the hands of the workers: Cortei, assemblies, and occupations started at Lingotto, Bertone, Pininfarina, Spa Stura, Ricambi, Lancia, Carello, Spa Centro, Ferriere, Grandi Motori, and others.

On Monday, April 2, the blockade at Mirafiori continued. This was not a factory occupation in the traditional sense. The workers took over the factory not to defend it or run it but to use it as an enormous resource of political strength. In the words of a striker: "If the police had come to the gates we wouldn't have attacked them there. We would have

drawn them inside the factory, on our grounds, where we're always ready for that sort of thing." Picket lines at hundreds of factories throughout the Turin area guaranteed that if the clash exploded, it would not blow up only Corso Traiano, as in 1969, but would blow up the entire city. Avoiding a battle was a major necessity for capitalists, unions, and Government alike. Monday afternoon it became known that bosses and unions had signed the new contract.

The new contract was no workers' victory, for two reasons: First, it incorporated very little of the workers' own material demands. Second, and more important, as the result of bargaining between capitalists and unions, the contract did not and could not reflect the political strength and militancy that the working class expressed throughout the crisis. The disparity between the political strength of the workers and the results that their strength can command at the level of bargaining is obvious.

On Tuesday morning the unions pushed for an end to the blockade. Unionists and foremen together urged the workers to go back to work, and managed to get a few shops going. But on the whole, production did not resume. The first back-to-work day was again a day of no work. At Mirafiori, 60% of the work force was "absent". Thousands of workers resumed picketing and blocking production. At Rivalta, the workers' assembly expressed the will to continue their struggle until all the people who had been fired during the strike were re-hired.

This demand for re-hiring the fired may trigger a new post-contract workers' offensive in the months ahead. As we are writing, the situation remains unstable and open.

What is then the main political characteristic of this wave of struggles? It is the workers' utilization of the struggle over the contract as simply a moment in the general confrontation between capital and the working class. Here we must learn a lesson of working-class strategy: Throughout the struggle the workers have left all bargaining in the hands of the unions and have shown little interest in the official platform, realizing that no bargaining can

win a victory in the midst of a capitalist crisis, and no union platform can defend the workers from the capitalist attack. They have concentrated on fighting the capitalists on a more advanced level — that is, fighting them over the capitalists' own demands.

In fact, the auto-industry and metal-industry capitalists, with Agnelli leading the way, came to the bargaining table with their own explicit demands: an end to "permanent conflict", regulation of absenteeism, no reduction in the work week, full utilization of productive capacity. Precisely these demands were rejected by the struggle at FIAT. After the signature, "permanent conflict" did not subside, absenteeism was not reduced, discipline was hardly restored, and production resumed with great difficulty. Signing the contract did not put an end to the struggles, for the workers' struggle has been beyond the contract all along.

Hundreds of mass picket lines, red flags, and "workers' courts" at all gates, blockades of finished products, "imprisonment" of managers, well-organized settlements of accounts with foremen and guards, systematic terrorism against strike breakers — all point to a new leap in the working-class struggle: "Taking power" at FIAT, and in all of Turin, contains an explicit allusion to the seizure of political power and to the revolutionary program of the abolition of wage work. In the words of a worker at Rivalta: "More than a struggle for the new contract, this has been an explosion of rage against work." Says a worker from Mirafiori: "This occupation is different from the one workers did in 1920. In 1920 they said let's occupy, but let's work. Let's show everybody that we can run production ourselves. Things are different today. In our occupation, the factory is a starting point for the revolutionary organization of workers — not a place to work!"



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Organizing for Workers Power

by Adriano Sofri;

translated by John Huot

The following article was written in 1968 for the local Il Potere Operaio group of Pisa, subsequently to merge into Lotta Continua. It was published in French by Les Temps Modernes in October 1969. This translation was made from the French for discussion by militants in Southern Ontario. It is presented here as a definition of the concept of "mass vanguards", not as a representation of the current position of its author or his organization.



Why has the problem of the party—understood not simply as the need for organization, but as the need for a general political leadership—not to this point been the subject of systematic discussion among us? In the past,

the problem of the party was posed only in terms of the numerical growth of subjectively "revolutionary" groups. We have clearly rejected this approach; instead, we have opted for direct and ongoing involvement with the reality of class struggle. This was a correct and important option on our part, which has already provided some elements for fruitful discussion.

We reject two types of conception of the party: the first, that which sees the consciousness of the necessity of the party, of an organized political leadership, as sufficient to create the conditions for the development of the party; the second, that which sees revolutionary political leadership, the party, as the linear continuation of a past revolutionary tradition (be it Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) which has been at different times in the past corrupted and regenerated. In this conception, revolutionary strategy is always seen as the "return" to the "correct" revolutionary tradition.

For us, the correctness of revolutionary leadership, strategy, and organization derives neither from past revolutionary experience nor from the consciousness that the party is necessary. Their correctness derives, in the final analysis, from their relationship to the masses, and their capacity to be the conscious and general expression of the revolutionary needs of the oppressed masses....

Does this mean that revolutionary leadership develops "spontaneously" from the masses, and that it coincides with the development of the struggle of the masses itself? Does it mean we can simply wipe out the distinction between vanguard and masses, and conclude that they should be one and the same thing? The answer is no. But it is precisely here, in the definition of our concept of "vanguard", that the heart of the problem lies.

According to Lenin, revolutionary consciousness is produced by the encounter between the "economic" struggle of the working class (which in Lenin's view was inherently trade-unionist and thus always within the capitalist system) and Marxist intellectuals who have broken with their bour-

geois class origins and allied themselves with the interests of the working class. Consciousness thus "comes to" the working class "from the outside". And it is the party, the organization of revolutionaries equipped with the tools of Marxist analysis, which embodies the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat.

In passing, we shouldn't forget the point correctly made by the anti-Leninist tradition: the "bureaucratic degeneration" which is inherent in the Leninist conception of the relationship between the party and the masses. At the same time, we should never forget that the history of the Bolshevik party is the history of decades of heroic, tenacious, systematic struggle to develop links with the working class and the oppressed masses of Tsarist Russia. The Bolsheviks' confidence in the masses, and their capacity to link themselves to the masses in circumstances which made the struggle infinitely cruel, can never be denied by anyone who really wants to understand the victory of the October Revolution.

But the Leninist definition cannot provide us today with a solution to the problems we have to confront in advanced capitalist society. The Leninist definition of "spontaneous" workers' struggles as inherently trade-unionist and "economist" leads to the posing of the question of revolutionaries' relationship to the working class in terms of ideological "conquest" and of "the injecting from the outside" of "political" consciousness. The spontaneous struggle of workers cannot be seen as simply specific, local, trade-unionist struggles of workers in this plant against their bosses in this plant: On the contrary, spontaneous rank-and-file struggles have attained a high level of political contestation of capitalist rationality. This is very clear in the great workers' struggles in recent years in the advanced capitalist countries (France, May '68; Italy, since 1968...). It is impossible to reduce these struggles to simply "economist" demands—as the unions have discovered, and it's no coincidence that the unions are now trying to put the brakes on these struggles and co-opt them

into the trade-union framework. All this should justify neither a metaphysic of workers' self-organization, nor the reduction of class consciousness to the consciousness of relations of production in the plant. But we have to recognize that consciousness is not "outside" the masses.

At the same time, we can no longer accept the validity, in advanced capitalist society, of Lenin's definition of intellectuals ("the cultured representatives of the dominant classes"). This definition cannot accurately fit the profound transformation in the class composition of advanced capitalist societies, as the student movement demonstrated so clearly (unless we want to continue to define the majority of students as "bourgeois intellectuals" who make the revolution by rejecting their own class). It is true that "without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement" (Lenin), but it is true in a new sense: Revolutionary theory doesn't "penetrate" mass movements from the outside, but develops within mass struggles, as the systematic knowledge of the needs of the masses and as their generalization, in an incessant dialectical process.

Anyone who wants to examine seriously the historical experience of the Leninist model has to come to grips with how the Leninist concept of the vanguard, while it was carried by Lenin and the Bolsheviks with an extraordinary revolutionary tension, later justified the most thoroughgoing arbitrariness in the relationship between the party and the masses. The problem is certainly not located in the absence of an "institutional", "statutory" control of the masses over the party, but is located in the type of mass-party relationship inherent in the Leninist conception itself.

The Leninist conception poses the problem of the mass-party relationship in the following terms: workers' struggles (inherently "economic"); "economic" organization of workers (trade union); party (external "revolutionary" consciousness) works within the trade unions (the "transmission belt" for injecting revolutionary consciousness) and thereby controls (or "represents") the working class. This conception is totally foreign to us.

The only correct perspective for handling the mass-vanguard relationship starts with the politicization and organization of the masses in order to arrive at the development and unification of a mass vanguard. It's not just a question of a subjective necessity for democracy at the base, but a question of an objective necessity: Revolution in the advanced capitalist countries is made possible or necessary not by the economic collapse of capitalism, but by the ripening of the political confrontation between capital and the proletariat. This implies changing from the perspective of insurrection to the perspective of protracted (eventually armed) struggle, even in the advanced capitalist countries

May '68 in France is a good illustration. Rarely have such idiotic interpretations been heard. They fall into two categories: The first, which correctly emphasizes the spontaneous and political character of the workers' explosion, draws lessons which justify spontaneist positions (rejection of organizational work and rejection of the need for political leadership). The second, which correctly notes the incapacity of the struggle to move toward the seizure of power, draws the lesson that the absence of a revolutionary party is the key factor. The first interpretation has been proven incorrect by events themselves. The second, interesting because it's more typical, suggests that to "seize power", it would have been enough to simply lead one of the mass workers' demonstrations to the President's palace. In this view, the party is seen as an external leadership, operating according to a logic autonomous of the mass struggle, which, in a context of acute social crisis, places itself "at the head" of a spontaneous movement and points the way to the seizure of power. Conclusion: The mass movement exists, but it has no head; let's build the party and attach it to the "body" of the masses.

Our position has been different. The problem in France was not the seizure of power, but power itself. The problem of bourgeois power was raised by very significant, spontaneous mass vanguards (the student movement, particular

sections of the working class — workers in the mass-production industries and certain more-technically-qualified strata such as technicians), and not by an external leadership. At the same time, the spontaneous, proletarian struggle of May '68 discovered in its lack of unification and in its own lack of organization the insurmountable limitations of its political and practical force. In this phase of the struggle, then, the tasks of revolutionaries are the organization and linking up of these mass vanguards, the extension and development of autonomous mass organizations at the base (for example in the plants and other work places, in the schools, and so on), and the bringing together, from the different fronts of struggle, of a revolutionary political leadership to guide and unify the struggle. This is the only way that general political leadership can mature, and a generalized class confrontation can lead to a situation of dual power and the destruction of the bourgeois state. The problem for revolutionaries is not to "place yourself" at the head of the masses, but to be the head of the masses.

I want to submit a new concept for discussion which has a quite concrete importance for our experience as militants in "Workers' Power" (in the period preceding the outbreak of mass spontaneous workers' struggles in Italy): the concept of external vanguard. "Workers' Power" is the product of the subjective initiative of a certain number of individuals who, having agreed on a certain political orientation, decided, on this basis, to do ongoing liaison, formation, and organizational work with workers and others.

Then isn't "Workers' Power" an "external" vanguard? In fact, in many instances, yes; but in principle, the answer is no, precisely because we see ourselves not as the embryo — however tiny — of the party, but rather as a group of militants whose objective is to accelerate the conditions necessary for the development of the mass revolutionary organization: a group of militants at the service of the development of forms of consciousness, struggle, and autonomous organization.

The history of our political work — a history with plenty

of detours, because of our own subjective shortcomings as well as what only our experience could have taught us — is rich in lessons, but this isn't the time to go over it. However, there is one central point which would be useful to recall. At a certain point in the development of our work, reflection on forms of base organizations ("base committees") became collective and assumed decisive importance in our work. But the problem of "workers' councils" posed itself to us in a new way, as the extension of the work carried on by militants in "Workers' Power" and as the result of our analysis of a certain number of fundamental experiences: the student movement, the May Movement in France, workers' struggles in Italy, and, in a broader framework, the Cultural Revolution in China and its lessons for revolutionaries in the advanced capitalist countries. These fundamental experiences clarified the two approaches we had oscillated between for a long time: on one hand, identification with the role of "external" vanguard, with all that implies; on the other hand, the possibility of acting, in and through the development of the mass struggle, as the first form of linkage between the mass vanguards.

What does this distinction mean? To what extent does this terminology correspond to a political reality and not simply to a play on words?

We have established a relationship with workers (I mean the mass of workers in particular struggles, and not individual "contacts") based on two closely-related principles:

- rejection of the delegation of powers to the bureaucratic workers' organizations (trade unions and Communist Party) and proposing of the alternative of autonomous base organizations directly controlled by the workers;

- a political line which begins with the daily problems of the working class (both inside and outside the work place), and gradually situates these problems in the more general context of the anti-imperialist struggle, and so forth.

We could have measured the "success" of our work either by the development of the creative autonomy of the masses in struggle or by workers' transferring to us the

delegation of powers they now give the unions and the CP. In the second case, we would have enjoyed the confidence of the masses, but in the worst possible way, because we would have reproduced, with a different political content, the same authoritarian relationship with the masses. In fact we would have become "the party", but the same kind of party we want to fight against. This was the inherent danger in what many many workers said to us in a variety of ways: "Start another union." "Why don't you call a strike?" "Why don't you start an organization?"

It may be true that workers have the "spirit of organization", but it would be wise to recall what Rosa Luxemburg said to Lenin: "Lenin glorifies the educational influence of the factory on the proletariat, which makes it immediately ripe for 'organization and discipline'. The 'discipline' which Lenin had in mind is implanted in the proletariat not only by the factory, but also by the barracks and by modern bureaucratism — in short, by the whole mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state." We should never forget that during decades of reactionary practice by the unions and the CP, organization was presented to the proletariat only in terms of the vote, of membership cards and blind loyalty to the party apparatus. In these circumstances, it's hardly surprising that the tendency toward external leadership keeps re-appearing among the proletariat itself. The answer to these problems is not the rejection of all organization, but the proposal of a new type of organization. When we say "It's not for us to call a strike!" or "We have no intention of starting a new union!", we don't limit ourselves to a simple refusal of principle. We do much more: We refuse to perpetuate a relationship of passivity; we refuse to allow workers to depend on us to decide something for them. That's also our answer to the suggestion "Start a new party."

If we were to define ourselves in the long term as an "external" vanguard, then the problem of the formation of the party would become simply a question of quantity. When the local "influence" of a group is sufficiently developed,

and when a sufficient number of politically-homogeneous local groups (also "external" vanguards) cover the whole country, then we will have the party. It is important to be clear on why we have rejected this approach.

The development of links with a whole series of proletarian groups and the development of the student movement create the conditions for going beyond the provisional role of "external" vanguard, which, though inevitable at a particular stage in the struggle, should not be considered a permanent necessity. This is why the experience of the student movement in 1967-68 has been decisive in clarifying these questions: It was the first mass struggle with a revolutionary perspective which was not controlled by the trade unions and Left organizations. What do we mean when we talk about a mass struggle? We are obviously referring neither to a "mass party" such as the Italian Communist Party nor to "mass organizations" of the trade-union type. When we use the word "mass", it is not the numerical size which counts (although it is an important aspect), but rather the qualitative aspect of the struggle: the fact that a struggle develops among a whole class stratum (in this case, students)—defined by its place in the social relationships of capitalist production—on the basis of the conditions specific to that class stratum.

The student movement provided the example of a contestation which, beginning with the specific conditions of a proletarianized class stratum, came to bring into question the whole structure of bourgeois power, thus situating its struggle on the terrain of revolutionary struggle. It's true that there is a vanguard in the student movement, but its logic is specific: It is a non-institutionalized vanguard which is internal to the mass struggle. In this perspective, such a mass internal vanguard has two problems to confront: (1) avoid becoming detached from the mass struggle, and rather seek to stimulate its development; (2) unite with other revolutionary class strata, particularly workers, to avoid eventual impotency and defeat. These tasks cannot be accomplished either "spontane-

ously or by joining some "external" vanguard. These tasks of political leadership and organization belong to the vanguards of the mass struggle, which are mass, internal vanguards. These vanguards intervene in struggles outside their own class stratum, not as an "external" leadership, but as the internal leadership of its own front of struggle. Although this perspective doesn't provide any ready-made solutions to the specific problems of revolutionary leadership and organization, it does allow us to recognize for the first time in the development of the student movement the verification in practice of the correctness of a revolutionary line. That's why the political leadership of the student is not "the Party", understood as an external revolutionary leadership. The present task of revolutionary political leadership consists not in developing a general revolutionary line, but in promoting the struggle of the masses and its autonomous self-organization.

Now we are seeing the massive development of workers' and peasants' struggles in Italy, but they are prisoners of the division and repressive control of the counter-revolutionary parties and trade unions as much as of their own lack of organization. In these circumstances, the task of revolutionaries is not to provide an administrative reference point, a new party, but rather to put themselves at the service of the autonomous organization of the masses. The formation of a general revolutionary leadership and organization must necessarily go through this phase After all the theories about the integration of workers in advanced capitalist society, France has given us an idea of what the masses are capable of doing, once liberated even briefly from the repressive yoke of their "representatives". At the same time, May '68 and its aftermath are clear evidence that the imprint of decades of deformations in the workers' movement can't be eliminated overnight.

What does all this mean in terms of organization? First, the rejection of organizational forms which claim from the beginning to be a general political leadership (whether they call themselves party or not), and whose centralization is

not the result of the political maturation of a mass struggle but rather the option of a cadre apparatus. Although the term "central committee" can mean different things in different contexts, it can mean only a totally-unacceptable conception of top-down political leadership in the precise context of the struggle in Italy today.

What are our tasks, then? Briefly, they are to create the opportunities and the means for links and communication among workers; to discover ways to have workers themselves participate in analyzing their own struggles and drawing lessons from them; to support as much unity in struggle as possible; to maximize the aspect of workers' autonomy in the choice of organizational forms. If we agree that our goal is the growth of mass struggles and their political polarization, we also have to recognize that this can be accomplished only by encouraging, rather than holding back, the autonomy and variety of struggle experiences, while at the same time promoting common discussion and decision-making among the masses about the significance and perspectives of their struggles.

Centralization cannot be a cover stamped on struggles from the outside, but must rather be the progressive result of their theoretical and practical co-ordination, so we can avoid the sort of formalism which makes direct relationships impossible (whether it be the exchange of information or political unity) with different groups, sectors of the movement, and isolated comrades. What is most essential is that the development of an overall revolutionary leadership must take place within the mass struggle, and not in a party external or parallel to the mass struggle.

I want to turn now to two important questions which are usually raised in relation to the problem of revolutionary organization. The first is the problem of repression. It can be asked: If we don't have a centralized organization, how can we deal with the repression which is bound to come? At one level, the answer is that the more centralized an organization is, the more it is exposed to repression. A decentralized organization, in the sense of more auto-

mous groups exercising initiative and responsibility, is the best guarantee against any eventuality. However, at another level, the problem of centralization takes on a different sort of importance when it comes to the question of how we can deal with the class enemy in situations of illegal forms of struggle and armed struggle. Here the argument in favor of centralist positions comes into play: "The mass line is correct, but there is also the problem of seizing power, and the problem of the direct struggle with the bourgeois state apparatus and its destruction." It is important to emphasize this argument against certain anti-authoritarian positions which, despite their value, often tend to overlook the specific problem of the struggle against the bourgeois state and the problem of the repressive apparatus of the national and international bourgeoisie. However, in dealing with this aspect of the problem, one general principle must be kept in mind at all times: the indispensable condition for the development of an effective and correct centralization of organization is the whole process of mass struggle and links between mass internal vanguards outlined above.

This brings us to the second question. We often hear in our discussions the position that the criterion of organization is its functionality. This position is the most dangerous of all. Functionality means nothing or everything until it is made clear in relation to what it is functional. For us, organization must be functional in relation to the political maturation of militants, to the growth of consciousness and autonomous organization in mass struggles, and to the idea of workers' power we are struggling for. For example, there are at least two conceptions we could have of base committees: either as a form of struggle through which the masses develop the capacity to develop and control their own struggle, or as a "more effective" means of mass mobilization for an external political leadership. The concept of mass vanguard is the only perspective which confronts in practice, not just in party rules, both the problem of the substitution of the party for the masses and the problem of spontaneism as a revolutionary

strategy of mass self-organization. We have to "believe in the masses", believe in socialism. We have to understand that power is not seized "on behalf of" the proletariat, but that the proletariat itself has to seize power. The new socialist man and woman will not be born after the smashing of capitalism creates the conditions for this transformation — they will be born during the struggle against capitalism.

Our task today is to build within the mass struggle an organized political leadership, not to "win" the masses to a pre-existing revolutionary leadership. The "cadre party", conceived as an organization of professional militants ideologically united around a programme and a strict, statutory discipline, is not what we're about.





FIAT U. S. REPRESENTATIVE, INC.
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June 4, 1973

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REF. No. 2840355

Radical America
5 Upland Road
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Attention: Order Department

Gentlemen:

We have received an urgent request from our Fiat Headquarters in Torino, Italy, to obtain a copy of the article of Bill Watson which appeared in the bi-monthly publication "Radical America - Vol. 5, issue no.3 - 1971 edition".

We have tried to reach your office by telephone but were unable to obtain your telephone number from the Telephone Directory Information Service of Cambridge, Mass. because of no listing under "Radical America".

Through the New York Library we were given this address and do hope we shall be successful in obtaining a copy of this publication or, in the event there are no back issues available, a photocopy of the article by Bill Watson.

Any charges relating to this matter will be paid immediately by our office upon receipt of your invoice.

We thank you for your kind attention to our request.

Very truly yours,

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Publication Department

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Against the State As Boss

from the Autonomous Assembly
of Alfa Romeo;

translated by Bruno and Judy Ramirez

INTRODUCTION

This is the day-to-day account of a struggle carried out by the Alfa Romeo workers from November 1971 to February 1972 on the occasion of contract renewal. The struggles narrated in this document took place in two of the five Alfa Romeo plants in Italy, the Portello and Arese plants, both located in the Milan area. Together, both plants employ 19,000 workers (including office employees), and a new contract is negotiated every three years. The Portello plant is the older of the two and has few production departments left. Soon most of its operations will be shifted to Arese. The majority of its workers are older people, still bound to trade-unionism by a long tradition of struggle. Arese is the newer plant, still in the process of completion. It houses

most of the production departments, and most of its workers are young and without a union tradition. Moreover, 65% of the workers on the assembly lines (as opposed to 25% in the non-production departments) are immigrants from the southern regions of Italy, and this element of the working class has been in the forefront of the struggles since '68. For this reason the level of militance and mass mobilization was greater at the Arese plant.

The document was produced by a group of militants which calls itself "Autonomous Assembly" (AA) and which during the struggles took on the role of a vanguard. The AA defines itself as "a rank-and-file organization, born as a communist cell with the aim of becoming a reference point for all the workers' vanguards within the plant, and of contributing to the building of the future revolutionary party". The goal of the AA during the four months of struggle was to become a permanent political reference point for all the workers, to take away from the union officials and the Italian Communist Party (CPI) the control of the struggles, and in this way to be in a position to "talk to the masses" — a crucial prerequisite for the task of total mobilization and direct participation of the workers in their struggles.

The value of this document lies in the many-faceted nature of the struggle it describes. The workers were fighting against a form of state capitalism in that Alfa Romeo, although officially classified as a corporation with "state participation", is in reality completely state-owned. This point is important because it explains the pressure felt by the CPI to act "responsibly" through FIOM (the CPI and Left-wing Social Democrat metal workers' union) in view of its possible future participation in a new Center-Left coalition in the Government. It also explains the co-optive strategy adopted by the union officials, their attempts to water down the more radical demands advanced by the workers, and, in particular, their determination to turn the councils of shop-floor delegates into channels of control over the ranks.

The date of the struggle is of special importance. Taking

place less than a year before the renewal of national contracts of 1972, it served as a testing ground for the bosses and the unions to help gauge the level of militance of the workers and what might be in store during the new wave of struggles only a few months off.

The key objective for the militants at Alfa Romeo was that of mobilizing the workers for an attack against the company's structure of job classification, to force management to alter it to correspond to the objective process of massification occurring in auto production. It also meant attacking the capitalist rationale underlying the whole system of job classification with its built-in mechanisms of selection based not on the actual expertise of the workers (which in any case is being undermined by the massification process), but rather on the workers' submission to managerial authority, goals, and values. (As AA puts it: "You will be 'selected' not on the basis of what you know or are able to do, but on the basis of your willingness to lick ass.")

The militants proposed, therefore, that the six categories which made up the company's job-classification structure be replaced with four levels of "classification" with automatic passage from one level to another (on the basis of workers' seniority and consent), under the supervision of the delegates' council. A similar proposal was advanced for the office employees. These demands, as the document shows, were only partially secured. The notion of "levels" was introduced, and automatic passage from the second to the third level was granted, but with management still firmly in control of the process of "promotion". However, even if the actual gains were meager, the struggles around this central demand served to mobilize the mass of workers and carry forward the attack against the capitalist ideology of work.

Finally, the value of this document lies in showing the concrete forms of struggle which the workers created from day to day, their ability to anticipate the bosses' and the unions' next move, and their success in analyzing their struggle in terms of its wider political significance.

NOVEMBER 12 (Friday)

The delegates' council decided today on six to seven hours of strike for the coming week. There was a struggle between two lines: that of the unions and that of the militant vanguards. The unions wanted to give the executive the power to decide how many hours to strike and in what way. Though this line was rejected, the unions were able to limit the duration of the strikes to six hours. The line taken by the militant vanguards called for at least nine or ten hours and a more incisive way of conducting the strikes, such as picket lines, marches inside the factory, and so on.

The union line is founded on the conviction that at present the will to struggle on the part of the working class is at a low ebb: "Reality is what it is; we may as well adjust to it, try not to run ahead of ourselves . . ." (The union "firemen" have gotten so used to throwing water on the flames that they now throw it even when there is no fire.) We of the Autonomous Assembly are not much more optimistic, but we feel that if reality is indeed what it is we must first of all try to analyze and understand this state of affairs and then try to change it by pushing for a broader and stronger mobilization.

NOVEMBER 15 (Monday)

Today there's a one-and-a-half-hour strike.

At the Portello plant: A general assembly is held in the cafeteria. An official of the UILM (the Right-wing Social Democrat metal workers' union) speaks for over 45 minutes. No one can figure out what he is trying to say, and he is loudly booed. As the workers begin to file out, an official from the FIOM arrives and makes an announcement that explodes in the assembly like a bomb: "The management," he says, "due to technical difficulties, was unable to complete the paychecks, and as a result, instead of receiving a regular bi-weekly check, each worker will receive \$50." Immediately a comrade seizes the microphone and yells



A march inside a factory

"Let's go visit the management." A procession immediately forms and begins making its way toward the building which houses the executive offices. A group marches into the president's office shouting "Luraghi, you fascist, you're the first one on the list!"

As the word spreads that the strike will continue, the procession makes its way through each department and office, pulling everybody out. Even the workers who usually scab walk off the job when they find out that instead of their usual paychecks they'll be getting only \$50. Union "firemen" are trying to put out the flames by appealing for a "democratic decision", but no one is listening. Many departments stay shut all day, and scores of workers go home, including those who arrived for the second shift.

At the Arese plant: Another FIOM official brings the news of the reduced paychecks, and all hell breaks loose in the general assembly. Amid shouts and jeers and total bedlam the official tries to explain: "Comrades, this is a calculated move on the company's part; let's not accept provocation. I propose that a delegation be formed and sent to...." To Management, he no doubt wanted to say; but we're already on our way, all of us together en masse. To hell with a delegation!

The long procession of workers making their way to the executive offices with raised fists gives me the feeling of being in Saint Petersburg during the October Revolution. About 500 of us crowd around one of the executives stating our demand: "We want the money — all of it — now." In the meantime, under the window outside, an assembly is being held to decide how to carry on the struggle: "Let's all march to Milan!" "Let's continue the strike all day!" But once again a union (FIOM) proposal passes: "Let's be calm, comrades; the struggle won't end today. Let's show some good sense...." Moral: The strike ends at 1 pm.

Luckily this decision is followed only in part. The upholstery and waxing departments strike for the rest of the day, and many workers, even those from the second shift, sit in front of their machines with arms folded. I have been

in the factory many years, but I've never seen such good assemblies where everyone feels free to speak and where we're finally beginning to discuss political situations.

NOVEMBER 16 (Tuesday)

At the Portello plant: Internal processions form, and for the first time a group of office personnel (about a hundred of them) enter all the departments, combing them for scabs. In the engine department some of the workers can't believe their eyes: "How is it possible?" they say. "Now the office personnel come to pull out the workers!" The strong participation of the office employees is one of the most important features of this struggle: Some of them, who until yesterday would leave the factory for the local cafe, are right here beside us in the plantwide procession. The slow and painstaking work, person by person, is beginning to yield fruit. The first signs of raised consciousness begin to show; even the office employees and technicians begin to understand that they are exploited: They are starting to rebel against their supervisors and bosses; they refuse to put in overtime. In short, they are discovering the class struggle and looking to the workers' vanguard for a reference point. Today, when with great excitement they went to pull out the scabs from each department, a technician approached me and said: "You know, until now I only came in here to see the machines; but today I've understood that there are men in here too. From now on it will be different for me."

At the Arese plant: This morning — at 6 am — we of the AA passed out a leaflet about the rent strike in a Milan district where a number of Alfa workers live. Then, on strike between 9:30 and 10:30. Even though one hour is too brief, we didn't pass up the chance for an in-plant procession: We marched along together, pulling out all the scabs. At the Computer Center everyone was working: We forced them all out and started discussing the contract proposals, how to carry on the struggle, how the bosses eat up our

salaries outside the factory, and how we must respond — namely with rent strikes, neighborhood struggles, and the like, and not by sitting in front of the TV all night like morons, because this is just what the bosses want. The discussion is prolonged because the workers want to voice their criticisms of the way the struggle is being handled — that is, with only one hour of strike at a time.

NOVEMBER 17 (Wednesday)

We found out that a meeting was held last night by management personnel. All of them are really pissed off because they can't work undisturbed in the factory. Well, we had a meeting too, and decided to form a picket line at the Portello plant until 10 o'clock, and this time the "firemen" could not pull back.

The picket line turned out to be really tough. The usual scabs who hang around the entrance are rather pathetic: They just stand there and don't have the guts to come forward, not even to talk. They form little groups, like bigots outside a church; they whisper, shake their heads, deplore, and so on. But they don't move; they wait for someone else to cross the picket line for them. As always when a picket line is formed, the comrades use the occasion to discuss political questions, to clear up doubts and encourage those who waver. The results of these discussions aren't always immediate, but in the long run they leave their mark; you find people beside you in later struggles that you'd never expect.

At the Arese plant: A strike is on from 9:30 to 11 am. There is no picket line, but a massive procession is held. There are more than 3,000 workers, and they make the rounds and clean out the whole factory. Leading the march is a giant banner with the three metal-worker union names (FIOM, FIM, UILM) and the phrase underneath "the delegates' council". Leading is also our Armstrong, a comrade who plays the trumpet and can belt out favorite proletarian songs like "The Internationale". Suddenly in the distance

we hear a deafening noise : A few comrades have managed to open up some vehicles in the last phase of production and are honking all the horns in unison !

For the trade-unionists the most important thing is that this "long walk" in the factory be "orderly and responsible" — but the comrades don't forget that their duty is to drive out the scabs, and at intervals they leave the procession and, forming separate groups, make their way into the departments.

NOVEMBER 19 (Friday)

At the Portello plant: The office workers strike from 3 pm on. They meet together and decide to comb the entire plant for scabs, because "It isn't right to just go to the same few offices." A number of offices are already empty because the managers — eyes of the boss — are absent. But scabs are not lacking. Those beginning their strike at 4 pm join the procession. To take the scabs by surprise we climb the stairs quietly, and then we open the door with a start, yelling and whistling in unison. The most common thing shouted, distinctly and with feeling, is "Vultures!"

In a few offices, hoping to remain hidden, the employees are in the dark, but one blow from our whistles is enough to scatter them like roaches discovered in the light. They congregate in small groups in front of the main door where two police commissioners are standing. We are all singing the "Ballad of Pinelli" (an anarchist murdered by the police in '69) and "Calabresi Assassin" (the police chief accused of killing him).

DECEMBER 5 (Friday)

Yesterday the police attacked the picket line in Milan, and here at Arese the response is slow in coming and inadequate. Today the workers read in the paper that someone at the Portello plant was hit in the face with a police rifle during an attack, and as they enter the plant angered

by this news, they see a huge union sign announcing "two hours of strike with a march around the cafeteria". By now the union has shown clearly that it prefers the in-plant processions to be "just walks" and not "scab hunting". Some tactic. The police are attacking and we're walking around the cafeteria like asses!

At 9 o'clock, when the two-hour strike begins, only two comrades from AA need step out of the procession that more than a hundred workers immediately follow suit and go hunting for scabs in even the smallest and most remote departments in the factory. During the afternoon, a few of us find out that in one of our departments five workers are scabbing. A special issue of Pasquino is prepared identifying the five scabs and promising "Pasquino will strike again!" (Pasquino is a news sheet which appears on the walls all over the plant, in the most unlikely places: the departments, the toilets, the cafeteria, and so on—and always when least expected. No one knows who writes it, but everyone fears it, and in this struggle it has become like the sign of Zorro. The Pasquino which named the five scabs had a devastating effect: For two hours they were booed and hissed at, and they didn't even have the guts to walk away; they were overcome with shame.

DECEMBER 9 TO JANUARY 9

As we look over our notes we see that between December 9 and January 9 the struggle remained even but uneventful. Among other things, this month has been full of holidays and the rate of absence in the plant has been very high. During the Christmas holiday, for example, many workers took special leave or sick days. There were days when the plant was operating with only 50% of the employees.

The strikes continued at a steady but sluggish pace—an hour or an hour and a half almost every day, like a drop in the bucket of the bosses' profits—preventing the re-launching of production, but at the same time demoralizing the workers.

A number of workers (and not only we of the AA) have understood that to really resist means to break the plans of the State-boss, to prevent "Papa" IRI, the State holding company, from doing as it pleases. These workers were by our side as we hunted down the scabs, as we marched in the picket lines, as we held discussions and denounced the political line of the unions and the CP, for whom the workers' struggle is only a tool to blackmail the Government. For them, doing politics means telling the assholes in power: "You see, this little flame might become a big fire if we weren't here to control it, so you better give us what we're asking for." We in the plants are on to this little game and have had enough of their bullshit; more and more workers begin to understand and organize.

JANUARY 10 (Monday)

Finally we have a breakthrough, like a reawakening after a long slumber. The in-plant processions at the Portello plant this morning were aggressive and combative. With renewed militance the marchers spilled over into the streets surrounding the plant and blocked traffic for miles. Inside the plant the second shift formed an internal procession to prevent overtime work from 5 pm on, and it too blocked incoming traffic at the factory's Gate Number 3.

At the Arese plant: A general assembly is held at 8:30 am. The union (FIOM) official speaks and proposes the usual two-and-a-half-hour strike. The entire company of workers boo and hiss, and he is forced to step down. Then a comrade from AA takes the mike and calls on the workers to join hands and occupy the plant, urging that the situation is ripe for such action. Everyone applauds enthusiastically while the FIOM official tries in vain to regain control of the assembly.

A comrade from the CPI's Communist Youth Federation who has co-operated closely with the AA takes the mike and proposes that the highway used to move the finished products from the plant be blocked until 3 pm. The assembly approves unanimously, and as the workers begin filing

out to plan the action the FIOM official manages to get hold of the mike. Amid the confusion, he starts his oration to the effect that we must stay within certain limits (Which?), not allow certain minorities to take over the struggle, and so on. But by now over half the workers are gone, and when only a fourth of them are left the "fireman" repropose the limited strike action with an in-plant procession. He asks for a show of hands, and about 30 vote "yes". Without any further ado he declares that the proposal has been accepted and closes the meeting with a historic phrase: "The workers' assembly is sovereign!"

In the meantime the workers from the second shift are blocking the highway, proving they don't give a damn about the union's directives. There are about 3,000 workers, and the line-up of stopped cars extends for many miles. The FIOM official is going around the plant saying that tomorrow we'll block the factory exits where the products are shipped out. (It's like saying: "Listen, boss, tomorrow I'm going to steal your cows." So he has the time to hide them. In fact during the night many cars will be shipped out from the plant.) He is also saying that the night shift should go on strike, while Management is asking in all the departments who wants to work the night shift, emphasizing the overtime pay. This society leaves hundreds of workers at home, while in both big and small plants those who work are forced to put in overtime, work night shifts, and tolerate speed-ups. It's a society based on profit, and therefore on exploitation. It's nothing new. But let's not just cry over it like the unions; let's get on with demolishing it.

JANUARY 12 (Wednesday)

While at the Arese plant the blocking of all plant exits continues to prevent finished cars from leaving the production areas, at the Portello plant an assembly is called for 9 am in the cafeteria. The level of participation is high — not to say total. There are 2500 to 3,000 workers, and the level of militance is high. As soon as the FIOM official

takes the mike, the hissing indicates that the workers want two things: the in-plant procession and the blocking of the highway traffic. The official tries to stall for time, proposing a simple strike until 11 am, but the hissing gets louder. He tries to explain that blocking traffic is a way of giving in to provocation, but they won't let him go on. Next he proposes a strike until 12, but the assembly shouts that that isn't long enough. At that point another FIOM official takes the mike and says that the nature of the strike action was decided yesterday by the executive: until 12 pm and with no outside procession, but if the assembly feels it is necessary, a brief march outside the plant can be held.

A huge procession forms, and after cleaning out the whole factory marches out the factory gates on to Viale Scarampo, one of the most deserted streets of Milan. As it moves along, already considerably dampened by the "firemen", it passes in front of the hospital for the terminally ill, where a funeral procession is forming. At that point the pace of the workers' march really slows down and looks like part of the funeral. As the procession cuts through a side street, the banner of the delegates' council which had been leading ends up in the rear.

As we reach Via Traviano the police are waiting in a scissor formation. The workers begin chanting "Fascists, sell-outs, servants of the boss!" while the scissor breaks in two under the impact of the forward-pressing procession. The police are forced to retreat as the workers continue shouting, while the trade unionists form a cordon to protect the police from the workers! A few punches fly between the more combative elements in the workers' ranks and the union "firemen" who accuse them of wanting confrontation and acting as provocateurs. (As if the police, parked in front of the factory gates every day, aren't a permanent provocation.)

At any rate, the police get back on their trucks and the procession returns to the plant. Having forced the police to retreat is a major victory. And the unions have shown their true colors: The useless assembly which lasted over one

hour, the procession at the rear of the factory, the fear of confrontation with the police as if the workers were kamikazes, the attack against the vanguards, the constant appeal to the executive as the only seat of decision-making power, the class struggle waged in white gloves — all these are different forms of the same coin, of the same old union tactic. It ignites the struggle just enough to maintain credibility, but is always ready to throw water on it as soon as the pressure from the base threatens to undermine its control of the situation.



JANUARY 14 (Friday)

During the evening we receive news that Frank Atzeni, a comrade from AA, has been suspended indefinitely, and as usual the accusations against him have been brought by a certain Calabritto of the personnel office. Frank is one of the more active and dedicated comrades in the AA, and he has struggled hard in the past few days against the problem of the night shift. As soon as the word starts spreading that he has been suspended, his fellow workers spontaneously put down their tools.

Later in the evening, a meeting is held in the office of the FIM (the Christian Democrat metal workers' union), and a new orientation for the struggle emerges: occupation of the factory.

JANUARY 15 (Saturday)

Even though it is Saturday and we're not working today, picket lines form from 6 am on at both the Arese and Portello plants to prevent overtime work. At Arese the 6 am



picketers relieve those who have been there throughout the night making sure no finished vehicles leave the production area. Later in the morning we of the AA meet to examine the situation, and we decide to support the occupation proposal because of several new factors:

(1) During the past week the struggle has been more aggressive and incisive. Even though the union has been trying to "put out the fire", several things have shown the willingness of the workers to fight: the clash with the police, the spontaneous strikes around the problem of the night shift initiated and conducted by the workers them-

selves, the immediate response to every attempt aimed at dividing the ranks. After two and a half months of struggle, the working class is very definitely not on its knees.

(2) The union has had to recognize that it can't impose light or diluted strikes, and that at this point we must take the bull by the horns. It is significant, for example, that the union (FIOM) official who has always clashed with Frank Atzeni is now openly in favor of the occupation.

(3) The struggle has shifted, now more than ever before, from the level of mere demands (the contract) to a more political level (the repression of "Papa" IRI and the renewed attempt to align those companies having partial State ownership with the Right-wing forces in power).

The occupation of the factory would function as a reference point for other struggles. Since 1947 there have been no occupations of major plants except in instances where bankruptcy was shutting them down.

The union knows that in the face of badly stalled negotiations and the suspension of Frank Atzeni, the working class will act forcefully and autonomously. It therefore decides to take charge of the situation if only to avoid the embarrassment of being sidestepped. In fact, in the afternoon meeting of the executive, when the occupation is formally proposed, the FIOM official immediately comes out in support of it and urges a series of actions such as open dialogues with the democratic parties and other popular forces, meetings with municipal authorities, dialogues with other delegates' councils and factories, and so on. Any decisions, however, are postponed until tomorrow, when the full factory executive will meet.

JANUARY 16 (Sunday)

The delegation returns from Rome, where the negotiations between the Government, the unions, and the company have been stalled for some time. It explains in an "open" executive meeting that there have been no further negotiations, but only a "series of meetings" which apparently haven't resolved a thing. The company insists that the pro-

posed automatic passage from category to category would injure the workers in the higher categories, and will only agree to automatic passage from Category 1 to Category 2 in order to eliminate the most glaring cases of discrimination. On this point the company is intransigent. In Rome, therefore, nothing worth mentioning has happened, but the delegation insists that there hasn't been a breakdown in negotiations, just a "postponement". What, pray tell, is the difference, with the negotiations "postponed" now for over two months?

The problem remains about what to say and what to do in the factory tomorrow. As soon as the local FIOM official begins to summarize the consensus which emerged from yesterday's executive meeting (occupation of the factory), the regional representative of the FIOM, who is higher up in the hierarchy, says: "The occupation of a factory is a serious thing not to be taken lightly. We can't just improvise and risk falling into adventurism. We must be disciplined." (Any discipline, it seems, is the responsibility of the working class.) "If we occupy, many of the workers who do not favor automatic passage will go home. Beware of spontaneism. We have no right to decide." (False democratism, since when the base push for something in the delegates' council, they are told that the final decision belongs to the executive.) "We must move gradually. Tomorrow we can begin with an extra few hours of strike, then we'll convene the delegates' council, and after that other meetings with the democratic parties, telegrams to... (et cetera, et cetera)."

This is a typical "fireman's operation" from beginning to end. There is even one official from the FIOM who pretends not to know what the word "occupation" means. According to him, we're all supposed to remain in the plant and work to show the bosses that we can work without them. Incredible! The local FIOM official who had come out in favor of the occupation does an about-face. The problem for the union is clearly not that of giving a militant outlet to the struggle, but rather that of holding it back so that it

doesn't explode and make a mess. What prevails, then, in the executive, is the idea of having a general assembly tomorrow morning, maybe an all-day strike; then, Tuesday, the delegates' council meeting, then the meetings with other factories with possible demonstrations, then maybe a quick trip to Rome with a lot of fanfare, then a demonstration in front of the mayor's office, et cetera, et cetera. In short, just so much "political tourism".

At this point, however, we must simply wait and see what the workers think of it tomorrow.

JANUARY 19 (Wednesday)

Today, with strikes between 9 and 11 am, several in-plant assemblies have been called for the office personnel at the Portello plant. In one of these, at which I am present, a comrade from AA takes the floor and insists on two themes which we consider crucial: the suspension of Frank Atzeni, and the occupation of the factory. Atzeni must be re-instated, says the comrade, because he has always been in the forefront of the struggles. By striking him the company has struck all of us in the front lines.

(Something a line comrade of Frank told me about him comes to mind: "Frank is worth more to us than a good agreement, and not just for reasons of friendship. We know that with him in the plant we've won; without him even the best agreement would be a defeat, because we would be more vulnerable: The bosses could strike us too the minute we raise our heads.")

The comrade then touches on the idea of the occupation as a "political moment which unites". The occupation would help us feel more united and part of the same struggle. It would allow us to discuss general political questions, to meet with militants from other plants and hear about their own struggles first-hand.

This assembly with the office personnel was really instructive. It showed that there are many people who are uninformed and never discuss political matters, but who —

as soon as they begin to form clear ideas — are right there with you in the struggles.

JANUARY 31 (Monday)

The unions have been systematically downplaying the idea of an occupation, saying that at the most we should have a "symbolic" one which lasts only one day. Meanwhile Frank Atzeni has been re-instated, and this is no doubt a significant retreat for the company and is greeted by the workers as a great victory.

This morning the AA distributed a leaflet at both the Portello and Arese plants. It tries to clarify the nature and importance of the proposed occupation, and celebrates the re-instatement of Frank Atzeni.

At the Arese plant the workers are really pissed off when they learn that there will be only one hour of strike to hold the general assembly. The assembly begins at 9 am, and there are tons of participants. When the FIOM official begins to speak you can sense the tension among the workers: The assembly feels like a bomb ready to burst. The official is explaining in minutest detail the negotiations in Rome; he obviously wants the whole hour to go by without giving the workers a chance to take the floor. But after half an hour a restless murmur can be heard which gets louder by the minute, and someone yells out that the meeting should be prolonged till 11. The official agrees, but rather haphazardly and with little conviction in his voice.

The workers insist that the meeting be officially prolonged, and as the official continues repeating himself, stalling for time, a comrade from the AA suddenly jumps up on the platform and yanks the mike away from the trade-unionist. The bureaucrats immediately turn down the volume so no one can hear a thing. Hell breaks loose as the workers begin to boo and hiss and yell out insults. Another FIOM official intervenes and tries to throw water on the flames, but almost immediately a few comrades from the

AA take the floor and the occupation proposal is accepted by the assembly. It will be discussed again tomorrow in the delegates' council, but the occupation looks like a sure thing at this point.

Also at the Portello plant the general assembly is very stormy. At 9 am, as I enter the cafeteria, people are banging on the table with their silverware, shouting and jeering. Many have read the morning papers and know that the negotiations are still stalled. As soon as the union official starts talking about the Rome negotiations, the assembly explodes and everyone starts yelling "Occupation, occupation!" The official is losing his temper, but tries to regain control of the situation by proposing a regional strike, or even a national one, of all the metal workers, with a train ride to Rome.... But the hissing continues, and he finally agrees to an occupation, but "just for one day". The reaction of the workers, who immediately answer "two, two, three, three...", makes him realize that he's fast losing his grip on things and losing face besides. He then says that meetings will be held in each department to consider the occupation further, with the results to be made known at the delegates' council meeting tomorrow.

At 10:15 an assembly is held which includes around 200 office workers, among whom are many habitual scabs. An FIOM official reviews the results of the Rome negotiations. A comrade from AA takes the occasion to clarify once again the strategic significance of the occupation: more militant struggle and a completely open factory. At 1:30 people are gathering in front of the cafeteria and talking about the way the meetings went in the departments. All the comrades are elated: In all the separate assemblies, including those of the office personnel, the occupation proposal has been accepted, in many cases unanimously. It seems that the idea has really caught fire, and everyone is discussing it as if it were an accomplished fact. Organizational details are being considered — such as constant vigilance against fascist reprisals, co-ordination of initiatives inside and outside the plant, and so on. It almost seems like something

too big and too good to be true, but if the union tries again tomorrow to pull back it will be completely discredited in the eyes of the workers.

FEBRUARY 2 (Wednesday)

At the Portello plant picket lines are set up from 7 to 10 am. At Arese strikes are on from 2:30 to 4:30. People are talking about the occupation as if it were starting today.

Since 7:30 the commission nominated yesterday at the Portello plant has been meeting to study the details of the occupation. As soon as the discussion focuses on the length of the occupation there is immediate polarization: on one hand the bureaucracy of the CP and the unions who fear the difficulties which might arise if the "day of struggle" is prolonged throughout the night, and therefore propose that it run from 7 am to 11 pm; on the other hand the comrades from AA, other comrades, and the FIM, who want the occupation to begin today and end at 9 am the day after tomorrow. The discussion gets rather heated; the FIOM is even afraid of the word "occupation" and prefers to refer to the event as "a permanent assembly in control of the factory". When one of the comrades says something about the workers' becoming "owners of the factory", the bureaucrats jump on him with words like "extremist" and "provocateur".

The FIOM insists that the occupation can't begin today because it would give the company a pretext for a lockout. In reality, it wants to keep itself within the rules of the union-boss game; it only trusts top-level negotiations, and does not want to present itself at the bargaining table in Rome tomorrow with the factory already occupied. By 11:30 word arrives that many workers in the departments and offices want to occupy immediately. In many offices, the managers are going around asking the personnel to take holiday time or special leave for tomorrow. They also announce that all services in the plant will be suspended. The commission finally reaches a compromise, and the occupation is scheduled to begin at 9 am tomorrow and last a full

24 hours.

At 2:30 an assembly is held at the Arese plant to inform the workers of the decision. The FIOM official chooses his words with such skill that his climb up the union ladder is virtually assured. He says that the decisions of the delegates' council must be respected (the assembly is no longer sovereign) and that caution must be exercised not to allow lapses into spontaneism, adventurism, extremism, and so on. A comrade tries to interrupt, but the bureaucrats from the CP who are guarding the microphones say "Let him be; he's the usual extremist — a minority of one!"

At the Arese plant the FIOM official clarifies to the assembly that we are having not an "occupation" (God forbid!), but rather a "permanent assembly". Occupation or no occupation, the strong picket lines continue at the point of finished production, the most vulnerable place for the boss. The workers know what they're doing.

In the evening the company advises the union brass that since they have behaved so "responsibly", tomorrow will be considered a regular work day and everyone will get paid. The game is fully within the rules: "I could kill you if I wanted to, but I'll only hurt you a little, and in return, boss, you'll give me a little something." This is the union, the champion of the march in reverse! It is so good at balancing the accelerator and the brakes that it always finds an "authorized parking" space. Born from the factory vanguards, the idea of the occupation was at first snubbed by the union, then fought against, and finally, because the mass of workers wanted it, approved — but only in order to immobilize it.

FEBRUARY 3-4 (Thursday and Friday)

Portello: There is a general assembly at 9 am, and absolutely everyone is present — even those who have never been on strike before. It is the highest point of the struggle so far. Those participating in the assembly include politicians, trade unionists, and various political groups. There

is even the CP, which as usual expresses its solidarity, leaves a \$160 check (Disgusting!), and splits. Even a representative from the Italian Socialist Party arrives, says a few words, and leaves without even sitting down: a formality like cutting an inaugural ribbon. If this goes on much longer the assembly is going to become a nice little stage on which everyone, from revisionists to bosses, can parade before the workers.

At the gates there are workers who "guard the factory". In reality, all gates have been shut down except Gate 5, which the workers have blocked with huge metal barrels, and Gate 1, because the union said the executives have to come and go unmolested. The militants decide who enters and who leaves. The bureaucrats from the CP and the FIOM union try to let in only the people and the groups they approve of, but we do exactly the same. As far as the students are concerned, the CP had tried to limit their participation to only three delegates from the student movement of Milan State University. We forced them, however, to admit three delegates from each factory.

The morning is fast coming to an end, and we're getting fed up with all the bigshots who speak and then leave. We propose that the assembly break up into smaller groups which can study specific issues more carefully, and proceed to form a group of about a hundred which sets up its own agenda. A few minutes later, a few bureaucrats arrive and with great alarm announce that all the executives have left the plant (Isn't that what we wanted!?!), that Alfa had discontinued all services (cafeteria, guards, and so on), and that we must ask all students to leave immediately.

What is really bothering them is that many have by now left the general assembly to join small discussion groups. There is real mass participation on the part of workers and office personnel, and it is really an occupation now that all the executives have abandoned ship and the factory is in the hands of the workers, who are guarding the gates vigilantly to prevent any fascist attacks. Contrary to the bureaucrats' expectations, everyone has remained in the fac-

tory, preferring to participate in group discussions and aware that this new form of struggle is a demonstration of the strength of the working class.

After a short break to grab a sandwich, the general assembly and the discussion groups reconvene for the afternoon. On the lower floor of the cafeteria a study group with about a hundred people is formed. Several issues are tackled — from the special problems of office personnel to the repression inside and outside the plant to the line of the CP and the current move to the Right by the Government. This was a lesson for the CP and the unions which tried to de-emphasize the political value of the occupation and had brought in only those people they approved of. (In the morning, for example, they had refused to give the floor to a group of militants from "Il Manifesto".)

Around 7 pm the union wants to close the plant to all outsiders, but the decision is made to allow workers from other factories to enter until 10 pm. Many people have gone home for the night, and the few hundred who remain are organizing the roster for guard duty throughout the night. While all the main gates continue to be picketed, inside the plant there is constant surveillance in all the departments, and outside there are groups of militants in cars controlling all people who look suspicious. At one point two men in a car are stopped and asked for their IDs. They really look suspect, and turn out to be two cops who hang around the area until 5 am.

A few of us go to sleep on desks, while others, better organized, have brought their sleeping bags. Even the back seat of a car is fine enough when you're really sleepy, and we're all dead tired and very cold. At the gates huge bonfires are burning to keep those outside warm.

Arese: The day of occupation of the factory: The security arrangements are handed over to an FIOM official who is careful not to give us of the AA the red armbands identifying all those involved in keeping order. With or without armbands, we're on the picket lines. There is a happy atmosphere because the plant is in the hands of the workers,

who are singing songs of struggle as they make the rounds in the various departments.

Throughout the morning delegations from political parties, municipal governments, other factories, and student groups enter the plant. The cafeteria is not in service, and by 2 pm we're all starving. Many have left to have lunch at home or at a nearby restaurant, and will return later in the afternoon. The militants from "Red Rescue" bring some wine, and around 2:30 some 3,000 sandwiches arrive, compliments of various neighborhood co-operatives.

One of the most exciting parts of the day was the performance given by Dario Fo's "La Comune" — a radical theatre group. The mimic, Vidal, showed the alienation that workers undergo in capitalist society, and did a mimic-drama about the demise of the present society. The show was widely understood and enthusiastically applauded by the workers. We sang songs of struggle led by Paul Ciarchi (also of "La Comune") until 1:30 am. When revisionism was attacked throughout the evening, you could see the bureaucrats squirming in discomfort. Finally some of us went to sleep and others went to picket the finished-products gate.

If asked for a general assessment of today's occupation, we would have to say that it wasn't all we had hoped it would be, but at the same time it did contain some very positive things. Above all it was a victory snatched from the unions by the workers at the base, and even in the way it was conducted, the unions were prevented from turning it into a platform for political parties and "big shots". We were successful in bringing into the plant workers from other factories, students from many schools, and militants from a variety of political groups — dealing with the unions from a position of power.

FEBRUARY 12-13 (Saturday and Sunday)

Thursday night a few workers tore out the train tracks running through part of the factory grounds to prevent a train with 250 finished cars from leaving. The union issued



Inside a factory after a march

a communique which was picked up by Saturday charging that forces "external" to the factory were responsible for this "typically fascist" action. It was the union's way of attacking the workers who insist that the picket against the finished products must continue at all costs because it is the only form of struggle which is hitting the company in the guts. (The dealers, both domestic and foreign, are pressuring for cars.) Already, a few days ago, a contingent of 200 police managed to get eight trucks (carrying about 60 new cars) safely out of the plant gates, and the union said not a word.

This evening (Saturday), while we of the AA are in a meeting, a few comrades arrive from Arese and explain that police re-inforcements are on their way to the finished-products picket area and are planning to help the train get by the picket lines, since the tracks have been repaired. We leave immediately for the Arese plant, where on arrival we find over 1,000 policemen. We're not sure whether they'll try to get the train out or whether they'll use the trucks.

About 1 am 30 trucks appear outside the gates. (At 7 pm about a dozen of them had entered through another gate, and the police themselves had loaded the cars onto them!) We start talking to the truck drivers: "Our struggle," we say, "is your struggle too. You are exploited just like we are. If you go in, all our sacrifices to maintain the picket of the finished products day and night will go up in smoke." After more than an hour of discussion, they are persuaded, and refuse to enter the gates.

A squad of policemen, stationed inside, go to the gates and try to get rid of a group of comrades who are seated on the ground near the gates. They shout "Rauss!" just like the Nazis. They say their job is to ensure respect for the law and the right to work, and that if we don't move they will drag us away. One of them, who is asked by a comrade if he has the proper authorization, answers that he doesn't give a damn about authorization, and that they themselves are the only necessary authority. They bellow orders to the truck drivers to come forward, but the drivers don't move. The officers are foaming with anger as the drivers openly defy them. After 10 minutes they retreat into the plant, closing the gates behind them.

Meanwhile, other comrades arrive after being notified of the emergency situation. (Even a CP senator showed up, but after looking around a few minutes, he left.) A comrade from Quarto Oggiaro had phoned everyone from his home phone, and by some strange coincidence the police blocked all the roads leaving Quarto Oggiaro. His phone was clearly being tapped. But our chief pre-occupation is the train:

Now that the tracks are in good repair, it won't be so easy to stop it. At about 3:30 am all the police take their positions, and after opening the gates they let out 10 trucks carrying about 75 cars. The police are brandishing their rifles and using them to keep back the workers, who are pressing forward and yelling "Fascists, fascists!" to the passing truck drivers. A few of the cops look stoned and unsteady, and their faces are angry and full of hate.

There are too few of us to resist effectively, but we manage to put it over on the pigs anyway. While a large group of us create an incident to cause commotion and keep the police busy, a smaller group quietly sneak over to an area where the trucks will be passing to leave the grounds. They succeed in damaging nearly all the cars on the last five trucks by throwing stones. The police are really embarrassed, and the truck drivers who had remained outside now realize that it would be impossible to drive out with undamaged cars for the rest of the night.

The policemen who escorted the truck drivers out of the factory gates are now clashing with a group of comrades near the exit. They wait for one of the trucks to barely inch forward, and then charge the workers. We return to the drivers to warn them that if they don't clear out, the responsibility for what might happen will be on their shoulders. After about five minutes they leave, and not long after the police leave also.

With 30 trucks and a train, they could have carried off about 500 vehicles. As things turned out, they took out only 75, and more than half of them were damaged. Despite the grand display of police power, out of all proportion to our meager numbers, we managed to win a victory (a) because we were able to persuade the truck drivers to come over to our side, and (b) because the police never thought that we could get so many comrades over to the Arese plant on such short notice.

FEBRUARY 18 (Friday)

Portello: This morning the delegates' council held a

meeting at which the FIOM official explained the text of the agreement finally reached this week in Rome. The "automatic passage" is there, but in name only. Strong limitations are built into it: There are more than four levels, because within the first level there are those who never go on to the second, and within the second and third there are discriminatory criteria between workers, not to mention the fourth level, which retains a coefficient amounting to another level.

For the office employees, there is precious little of what they wanted. The union talks about "areas to be delimited" in connection with passage from the second to the third, perhaps with the help of a special commission which, when translated, as we all know, means: Postpone the problem until there is no more mass mobilization, so that the company has a chance to maneuver however and whenever it wishes. The only new thing: a \$72 bonus for everyone, including the scabs.

The CP, with a triumphant tone, celebrates the contract by declaring it "a great victory", but then someone points out that the automatic passage is a farce, that the levels are more than four, and that the office employees have gained nothing. There is an air of general dissatisfaction, but the unions are saying that we can't go on with the struggle, that the working class is tired, and that therefore the agreement should be accepted as it stands. Even we of the AA know very well that after 150 hours of strike the struggle has come to an end, but we are not afraid to say that the agreement, far from being a great victory, is a bitter disappointment, especially for the office personnel.

FEBRUARY 21 (Monday)

Portello: There is a general assembly in the cafeteria from 10 to 11 am. Everyone is there: workers, office employees — about 3,000 people. The FIM official goes over the main points of the agreement. He goes on and on for over half an hour, and soon mumbling and restless whis-

pering can be heard all over the hall. Finally he says: "Now we will vote — a mere formality, but let's see: Who's in favor of the agreement?" About 60% raise their hands amid shouts and jeers. People are yelling "Sellouts, clowns . . ." For a further demonstration of support the union official asks slyly: "Those who favor continuing the struggle raise your hands." Despite this formulation (many of course object to the agreement but prefer not to continue the strike) about 40% raise their hands. The shouting grows more insistent, but the official declares with a perfectly straight face "The overwhelming majority approves of ending the struggle!" and then makes a quick exit.

The shouting and hissing continues as members of the CP brass stand there at a loss for words. They don't have the courage to engage the workers in conversation as the assembly breaks up into smaller groups to discuss the agreement and the manner in which the assembly was held. Many ask why no separate department meetings were held. Others say that if the automatic passage isn't reached with this agreement, the struggle will go on and set off a chain of wildcats in every department. These who are talking are not from the ranks of the vanguards, but just ordinary workers from the base.

Especially among the office employees dissatisfaction is high, and it will be important to avoid a swing to the right. We'll have to push hard for autonomous organizing at the level of the base. After the meeting is closed, a group of office employees come over and ask if they can join the AA because they've decided not to renew their union membership. We explain that the AA has no formal membership, but that they are welcome to the AA meetings any time.



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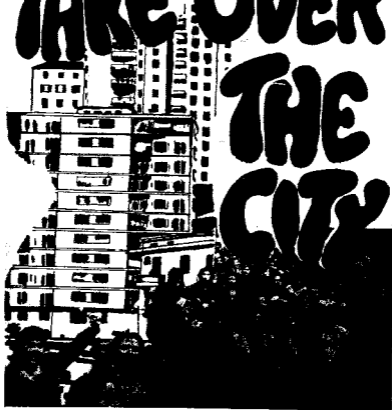
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TAKE OVER THE CITY



Take Over the City

from Lotta Continua;

translated and edited by Ernest Dowson

Translator's Preface

Community struggle in Italy has gone beyond the trade-union tradition which limits the class struggle to the fight for higher wages. The Italian working class have recognized that their needs for a freer and happier life cannot be realized by increasing the spending power of individual groups of workers. Any gains made inside the factories have been countered by the bosses' use of inflation and property speculation. Social services (housing, hospitals, schools, and so on) are determined solely by the needs of the large firms. In this situation the struggle in the community becomes crucial, and working-class people are forced to discover new forms of self-organization, tactics, and demands.

The rent strikes have developed not as symbolic acts of protest against government policies, but as a direct response to the tyranny of rent. Thousands of families, finding that they can't afford the rent or not being able to see why they should pay it when they are living in run-down tenements or in projects where there are no amenities, fall into arrears and are threatened with eviction. The rent strike binds them together and makes an active weapon out of a series of isolated protests.

The strikes are organized block by block, staircase by staircase, with regular meetings, newsletters, wall newspapers, leaflets, and demonstrations. In the course of the struggle people begin to take control of their project or building—asking themselves why they should pay rent, how much they should pay, if any, and what it should be used for. At the same time they make sure that the rent collector and the police can't carry out their jobs. Anti-eviction squads are set up, and contacts are established with workers in nearby factories who can be brought out immediately. Women play an essential role in the organization of the rent strike. During the day, along with their kids, they guard the project against the police.

Occupations in Italy have been mass collective actions involving hundreds of people. There has never been any question of legal rights, and there have been many violent clashes with the police, with people defending themselves from behind barricades. The buildings taken over have often been modern blocks of apartments left empty by speculators. In some cases the workers building the apartments have joined in the occupation. Control of the apartments and decisions about how the struggle should be fought are in the hands of general meetings. In the course of the struggle new, collective ways of living—day-care centers, communal kitchens, people's health centers—are developed. In this way people begin to live in the buildings in a way which is totally opposed to the idea of isolated, private units for which the architects designed them.

In Italy people have recognized that rent strikes and oc-

cupations are part of the same struggle. "A house is a right — don't pay rent!" has been a common slogan for both; and in a number of instances, for example in Milan, the same organizations have been used to build rent strikes and to prepare for occupations. This unified struggle around housing has been the pre-condition of the extension of the fight into other areas, such as transportation, health, and prices.

All these struggles have relied on direct action: "Legal" channels for registering protest or demanding reforms are seen for what they are: delaying tactics used by the ruling class to divide people and buy off their leaders. Appeals to politicians, petitions to Parliament, and the like have been rejected as irrelevant if people are prepared to fight to take now the things that they need. In the modern city the traditional working-class way of life has been increasingly destroyed and replaced by the anonymity of life in the housing project. In the course of their struggles the Italian working class have begun to create for themselves a new identity, a way of life which is more and more outside the control of the bosses. In defining and fighting for their own interests as a class working people have begun to take back everything that has been stolen from them, taking control of their own lives and taking over their cities.

MILAN

Milan is Italy's largest industrial city. In addition to large numbers of medium-size factories, there are several huge industrial plants — OM (trucks), Pirelli (tires), Sit Siemens (electrical goods), Alfa-Romeo (cars). Together with Turin it "attracts" 2,000 workers a month from the South. During the "Hot Autumn" struggles of 1969, these migrant workers were very militant. The most important aspect of these struggles was the lesson they gave people in how to organize on their own behalf and in their own way. At Pirelli, for instance, the fight was organized through the United Base Committee, set up with the support of students.

It was this kind of experience which was the pre-condition of the more-general struggles which were to develop outside the factories.

Milan can be divided into four areas :

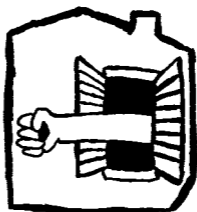
(a) The city center : banks, businesses, shops, hotels, and luxury apartments.

(b) Old working-class areas from which the workers are being pushed out. These areas are lived in by the traditional Milanese working class, pensioners, small shopkeepers, and post-war migrants from the South. Most of these people are eligible for the municipal-housing waiting list. The housing in these areas is a mixture of early, pre-war municipal housing, and very old privately-owned houses which have no amenities. Private owners — the biggest is Ceschini — collect millions in rent. These old working-class neighborhoods have traditions, history, and local community life which make them very different places to live in from the new working-class neighborhoods. In the older neighborhoods, the struggle over housing has developed around making the old apartments liveable, rent reduction, and the fight against eviction of tenants, which landlords are keen to attempt in order to be able to renovate the apartments and sell them off to someone with cash. In other cases landlords take in rents and service charges for years without doing any repairs. They let apartments become so run down that they can get permission to knock them down and build luxury apartments in their place.

(c) Areas of municipal housing where the working classes expelled from the inner-urban area are being rehoused — Quarto Oggiaro, Galaratese, Rodzano, and so on. Also living in these projects are migrant workers with children born in Milan, and a group of scabs — petty-bourgeois, police, civil servants, city guards — put there to spy on militant tenants and break down tenants' solidarity. Municipal-housing areas are the heart of housing struggles in Milan.

(d) Outlying areas : These are places like Bollage, Novate, Desio, Sesto, and Cinisella which have grown up

around factories such as Snia, Autobianchi, Alfa, Innocenti. They exist only to provide a place for factory workers to sleep. Even here rents are high (\$12.50 a week for a one-bedroom apartment, \$15.50 a week for a two-bedroom apartment), and there are no schools, hospitals, shops, or public transport. The housing here is either co-operatively owned apartments or shanty-town huts which are usually the only accommodation for recently-arrived Southerners.



The Housing Struggle

Housing struggles in Milan have centered on municipal housing. To get a municipal apartment you have to show that you have a steady job, and the waiting period is at least five years. A year's residence in Milan is also required before you can get on the waiting list. This immediately excludes recently-arrived Southerners, workers whose work is seasonal (for example, construction workers), the under-employed, the unemployed, and the thousands who don't know how to fill in the forms.

In 1964 5% of the families in municipal housing were in rent arrears. By 1971 this had risen to 18%. During this period the housing authorities lost \$8,750,000. Ten thou-

sand families received warnings, and there were 750 evictions. At the height of the struggle, 25% of the families in Galaratese were in rent arrears, 45% of those in Quarto Oggiaro, and 50% of those in Rodzano.

The struggle began in 1968. In Quarto Oggiaro, when 30,000 families in municipal housing were faced with a 30% rent increase, a Tenants' Union was created. In that year it made door-to-door contacts and organized public meetings. By June 1968, 700 families were on total rent strike. The Tenants' Union spread the struggle with the demand that rent be no more than 10% of wages. In September 1968 four people were arrested during eviction. Kids attacked police cars, and women blocked steps leading to apartments. The Union expanded, and the brutality of the police made people more angry. In April 1970, 500 police were needed to evict one family.

Rent Strike

On May Day 1970 about 2,000 people demonstrated in the streets of Quarto Oggiaro. This was a positive break with the tradition of "public processions" organized by the political parties and the trade unions. People were coming onto the streets of their own community. The march was an occasion for people to realize their growing strength and unity and to further develop their struggle. It culminated in a mass meeting held in a square in the center of the district, where a large number of people spoke about their experiences:

An elderly woman from the area: "We tenants began our struggle in January 1968. I was one of the first women to stop paying rent. Despite the many difficulties, our struggle has developed. The young people of the area have had a lot of trouble, day and night. But our minds are made up. If anyone goes on rent strike, nobody's going to be able to evict them. Every time the police come we'll be there, all together, in front of the door, to stop them from getting in.

"Not long ago 500 police were sent down from the Viale



Romagna — 500 police to throw the family of one poor worker out onto the street. How come, when hundreds of evictions used to be carried out with only one officer there, it now takes a whole army?

"It's because here in Quarto Oggiaro people have got together to fight. Because here in Quarto Oggiaro there's the Tenants' Union. We're using a new type of weapon to fight against the rising cost of living, against the bosses' exploitation of us in our homes. It's something really effective — a rent strike.

"I'm not speaking now to the young people, to those youths in the area who have been in the forefront of our struggle. I want to say something to the women who live here. Many of them still aren't involved and haven't realized the importance of this strike.

"In the two years and five months that I've been on strike, I've saved a lot of money. I feel healthier. I've had more money to give to the children, to the ones who really need it. I've had some money to give to a few old-age pensioners. I'm not saying all this to give you big ideas about myself. But just think for a minute. Rather than give your money to the bosses, keep it for yourself. Give it to the children. Give it to the workers who are struggling in the factories and who are exploited year in and year out.

"People talk about the Hot Autumn factory contracts. What did the workers gain? Nothing — absolutely nothing! I know what my family's finances are like. If you do the shopping, you see prices rising every day. I'd say we've lost out badly. They can laugh — the clever ones, the reformists, all those male politicians. But we're getting near election time, and we'll give our vote to those who deserve it — and that's none of them!

"Eat sirloin steaks . . . don't go handing your hard-earned money over to the thieves in the Viale Romagna!

"After those 500 police came to Quarto Oggiaro our struggle expanded a hundred times. Even the very next day. Anybody who's still paying rent just remember this: You won't get a penny of it back from the authorities. Follow

the example of the young people — even if you don't give them responsibilities a lot of the time, seeing as they're so young. They're much tougher and braver than we are, because after 50 years of struggle we can't get the same results we used to.

"Personally, I can say this. Since the time I first went on rent strike things have gone better for me. Long live the working class! And long live the struggle of the tenants!"



Milan: "The Only Fair Rent is No Rent"

A woman worker from Fiar: "After four months of strikes in the factories I was in trouble trying to live on a wage that just wasn't enough. I have three children, all of them very young and dear to me. And I just couldn't afford the rent I was paying to this private landlord. So they had me evicted. I didn't get help from anyone.

"Then I heard there was a flat empty in Quarto Oggiaro, and I decided to squat in it. Now the authorities have told me I'll have to get out in ten days' time. Well, the authorities had better learn this: I love my kids and I'm going to make sure that they've got somewhere to live. And I can show them a thing or two.

"A home is a right, and in the name of that right I've taken one!"

A worker from Quarto Oggiaro: "Comrades, the woman from Fiar who's just spoken... I think the gist of what she said is quite clear. Here in Quarto Oggiaro, there are dozens of families, apart from those on rent strike, who were in need of a home and have started squatting, without crying or begging for it.

"Now, the Council, those public-spirited men, have summoned the families to the Town Hall to tell them they've got to get out in the next 10 days. We haven't come here just to have a march to celebrate May Day. The sister who's just spoken mustn't be driven from her home. Because if we can come here today in such numbers, then the next time there'll be more of us. And we'll place ourselves in front of this house. The police won't kick them out because they won't have the strength to do it.

"Today, May 1st, has been decreed by the middle-class politicians as a day to be celebrated. But for us there's no cause for celebration, because we're still exploited, because they still kick us out of our homes, and because we want a festival that's really ours. All the people here know what I'm trying to say, what festival I'm talking about.

"We're the ones who build the houses. We're the ones who work in the factories. Without the working class there'd be nothing. Who is it who makes the goods? Who is it who does all the work? Who is it who makes it possible for everyone to benefit? Us!

"Houses are ours because we build them and need them, and for that reason we're going to have them!"

A speaker from the Tenants' Union: "In June there will be the elections. Before long all the parliamentary vermin will be putting a show on, even in this area. You'll see them come making a heap of promises, trying to buy our votes! Even though during ordinary times they treat us as second-class citizens and call the police in on us, when our vote is worth as much as Big Boss Pirelli's and they need it to boost their power, lo and behold they arrive here in person. What a nerve these gentlemen have to come here looking

for votes! Look them straight in the face and you'll see that they're the same ones who order the evictions and who pretend to be indignant when the evictions actually happen.

"In our area there are hundreds of people who have had rent reductions only because they've jumped on the bandwagon of this or that political party. Do we have to do the same? No! We say that housing is a right, built with our money and sweat. So we're going to continue the rent strike until we've beaten the bosses and the false friends who try to wreck our struggle. The bosses are doing everything in their power to break our will to fight — intimidation, attempted corruption, violence. There's nothing they won't stoop to to try and regain control. They've even given reductions in rent and rent rebates on houses built after 1963. But not one of these maneuvers has worked. Our struggle is still going strong.

"What the Tenants' Union is aiming at is to link the struggles in the local factories with those in the community. But, though a link-up of this sort would make us unbeatable, it's being obstructed right down the line by the unions. Because they're afraid of losing control over the people — afraid that they won't be able to check the thrust of the exploited to develop their own power.

"To make this clearer, let's look at one very concrete example. In February the Office of the Judiciary, together with the police, took advantage of the absence of one tenant to load his furniture out onto the street. Some local women told several comrades, who then began to mobilize. They went and told the workers in a nearby factory, who immediately downed tools and left the factory to protect this man's right to a house. In the space of an hour all the worker's furniture was put back in place, the door was closed again, and a new padlock was put on, right before the officer's eyes.

"So far, with the exception of the last time, when there were 500 police on the spot, not one eviction has succeeded. Because the people here are mobilized and united. In the

morning, when the man from the Office of the Judiciary comes around and most of the workers are at work, the chief role is played by the women and children. Once they slashed the tires of a police car, and the cops had to go home on foot!

"Comrades, let's carry the message of the rent strike into the factories; let's bring together the struggle in the factory and the struggle in the community. In that way we'll be able to realize our strength and our power — people's power!"

Occupations

It now became necessary to see the struggle in Quarto Oggiaro as part of the total working-class struggle, and to extend it to all other aspects of social oppression — prices, health, education, transportation. This led to the picketing of local supermarkets (the UPIM) and the strike of secondary-school kids over the price of books.

The people of Quarto Oggiaro have refused to allow their struggle to be diverted or taken over by political parties or other so-called "representatives" of the working class. The Tenants' Union is a mass organization independent of any party or trade union. The CP, which wanted to send a petition to Parliament, was seen as a joke. What's more, people have recognized that the housing struggle cannot be limited to the struggle of tenants and the rent issue. Relying on their own initiatives, they have brought together people on rent strike, people facing eviction, squatters and homeless families. After a number of isolated squats in Quarto Oggiaro and nearby Galaratese, where 10 families occupied a building in September 1970, people began to prepare, through the Tenants' Union, for the mass occupations which emerged at the beginning of 1971.

On Friday, January 22, 1971, 25 families occupied a modern block of apartments owned and left empty by IACP in Via Mac Mahon. All victims of previous evictions, they had been living in special centers set up for "Homeless

Families". At the centers anywhere from 5 to 11 people live, sleep, and cook in one or two rooms. Lavatories consist of cramped cupboards, too small even to stand up in. Vermin and disease are rife. Because local bosses regard people housed at the centers as "unreliable", the rate of unemployment is very high. Those who do have work have to travel miles to get it.

The apartments that the families moved into were supposedly built for working-class people. They cost 14,000,000 lira (\$23,330) in cash, or 22,000,000 lira (\$36,660) in installments (\$5800 down and just under \$120 monthly)—obviously way beyond the means of any worker, employed or not.

Once inside the apartments the families began to build barricades, hang out red flags, and string up banners. Across the end of the street was a banner reading "All Power to the People". It wasn't long before groups of journalists arrived on the scene, and long arguments started between them and the squatters. The next morning more families arrived. Collections to buy essentials were organized. Other people set out to gain support in the area, touring it with loudspeaker vans and stopping to hold street-corner meetings.

At 2:30 the police arrived — about 2,000 of them, armed to the teeth. They immediately surrounded the building and began to attack it from the rear, so as not to be seen from the street. They were very vicious. Cannisters of tear gas were fired directly at the people squatting. (This is common police practice nowadays.) About 65 people were eventually taken in for questioning, and 25 of them were arrested. Those who remained were offered transportation back to the "Homeless Families" center. This they scornfully refused: "I came on foot and I'll leave on foot."

Outside a big crowd began to gather. People were forming up to march in protest when the police charged again, using still more tear gas. In spite of this the march managed to form up, and people set off through the neighborhood to the local market. Here the families decided to oc-

copy the Social Center in Quarto Oggiaro rather than go back to the "Homeless Families" center. "Let the bosses go and live in the center; we're not going back."



Occupation in Via Mac Mahon, Milan

Over the next few weeks the Council offered the families a few houses right away and the rest as soon as possible. The families rejected this sop and stuck together until they were all rehoused. When the people arrested during the eviction came to trial, the courtroom was packed and the "case" against them was laughed out of court.

Via Tibaldi

The occupation at Via Tibaldi was a great step forward. A whole neighborhood was involved in it: factories, schools, housing projects took part in the organizing of the struggle. There was a victory at Via Tibaldi because everyone there was fully aware of the issue: There were 70 immigrant families who had been promised a place by the Council and had to be rehoused.

When the confrontation came, it was clear who was on which side: It was homeless families, workers, and students against the bosses, the unions, the housing officials, and the police. In the six days of violence the people occupied everything — houses, the streets, the town hall, police wagons, and the Architecture Faculty at the University. Thousands of police were mobilized against those involved in the occupations. In one day there were two attempts to evict everyone. The forces of repression attacked with tear gas, clubbing everyone who got in their way. Twice they were beaten back. After the third attempt to shift them, the occupiers agreed to be rehoused temporarily by a charity. This was a tactical retreat.

The mayor and his mob were forced to give in. Houses were allocated to the families who had squatted and to 140 other families who had been evicted and were "living" in hostels waiting to be rehoused. The alliance of workers, students, and tenants forged before and during "the taking of Via Tibaldi" shows how strong the working class is when it fights together. With this alliance the working class went on the offensive and won a famous victory in June of 1971.

The occupation begins on Tuesday morning. The squatters

are nearly all Southerners — workers at Pirelli and other, smaller factories, building workers, and unemployed people. Some of the people have been involved in other struggles: Before this occupation the families from Crescenzago were on rent strike.

The occupation is strengthened by a continual coming and going of workers (many of them from OM, a large factory only 150 yards away), students, and local people who support the action. They offer help, bring useful materials, and work alongside the squatters. The workers engaged in building this block of apartments also are sympathetic. The firm they work for is about to close down.

Because of the two months of organization which had led up to the occupation the whole of Milan knows about it. Aniasi, the mayor, and the officials of the IACP (the State building authority) know about it too. Almost at the same time they both start denying responsibility.

Barricades are built in the streets, particularly by the women and children.

Wednesday. A demonstration is organized to go to Porta Ticinese. It's the Festival of the Naviglio, and people figure Aniasi will be there. The families want to have a few words with him and let him know that they're ready for anything. The march is headed by a banner that reads "Homes Occupied!". There are dozens of red flags. The marchers move off shouting "We want houses NOW!", "Free houses for workers!", and "Long live Communism!" When they reach Porta Ticinese they find that Aniasi has left. So everyone climbs up onto the rostrum and occupies it for a while. Then, with more and more people joining in, they set off back to the apartment building.

Thursday. The families decide that the struggle must become more militant. Twenty or so people go to the Marino Palace, to a meeting of the Council. Once again they refuse to listen. A room in the Town Hall is occupied from 5 pm till midnight. When they get back to the Via Tibaldi there's a meeting of heads of families which de-

cides that the struggle must continue to the bitter end. Nobody so much as mentions the idea of abandoning the building. By now the whole of Milan knows that we are in the Via Tibaldi, and new families continue to arrive. The people who occupied and won the apartments in Mac Mahon come to give us support. There's also a lot of discussion about new forms of struggle. Over the next few days a huge demonstration is organized to show that we have no intention of giving in.

Friday afternoon. Catalano arrives, sent by the Town Hall and IACP. This official has a reputation for cramming workers into shanty towns after having promised them homes. Catalano wants a list of the families involved. He gets it, but he's also tried by a genuine People's Tribunal. People tell him what they think of him — that he's nothing but a lackey of the bosses, a rat and an exploiter. A crowd of workers surround him, shouting: "We're going to have the apartments, and you can get stuffed for the rents!" He was really swaggering when he arrived; but by the time he leaves, several hours later, he's pale and trembling. And he's had to give the squatters some solid commitments.

Saturday. The mobilization continues. In the afternoon another barricade is built in the streets.

Sunday morning. Two thousand cops arrive to clear out the Via Tibaldi. The Town Hall and the bosses have decided that they have to put down these people who, in six days of struggle, have become a reference point and an organization center for the whole working class of Milan. All the squatters know that they had a right to defend what they had taken and what was rightfully theirs. But it's more a question of building our strength and using it at the right time. On Sunday morning we are still too weak. After long arguments with the police the squatters decide to leave the building and move to the Architecture Faculty of the University, at the invitation of the students.

On Sunday evening 3,000 police arrive to throw everyone out of the Architecture Faculty. They think it will be as easy as it was in the morning. They couldn't be more mis-

taken. While the police squads take up their positions, a meeting of all the families decides that this time they have to defend themselves, and that they're strong enough to do it. And the cops are going to pay for the eviction from Via Tibaldi.



Once again all the organization comes from the squatting families. Women and children on the upper floors, all the men down below behind the gates, facing the riot squad. At 11 pm the cops charge. But they get their fingers burned. They hadn't expected the fierce and powerful reaction from the people inside the building, or the attack from behind by people who haven't managed to get inside. When they eventually manage to force their way into the building, the police find no one there. Everyone has managed to get out and is regrouping in the streets, ready to carry on the fight. Having run out of tear gas, the riot squad retreats, completely disoriented, charged by the squatters. We lose count of the jeeps demolished by stones. The whole thing lasts until two in the morning.

Monday morning. Members of all the families meet up on the university campus. They are all there. People decide to go along to a meeting of the architecture students. Here, in the afternoon, some of the squatters are chosen to explain the struggle in Via Tibaldi. A proposal is made that closer links be created between the students' struggle and that of the "homeless". On the basis of this proposal the meeting decides that the families should occupy the Architecture Faculty again later that day. As for the Faculty Board, they decide to initiate a permanent seminar on the housing problem with the people from Via Tibaldi who are "experts" on the subject.

At the Architecture Faculty, as always, decisions about how to carry on the struggle are made solely by the assembly of families, which meets twice a day. During one of these meetings a huge demonstration is suggested for the following Saturday. This will help to bring home the meaning of the struggle to those who aren't directly involved. This demonstration is to mobilize 30,000 people!

Wednesday — five o'clock in the morning. The police surround the whole university precinct in three high circles. Traffic is at a complete standstill. It's a trial of strength. 250 students are arrested. plus a dozen lecturers and even the Dean of the Faculty! The families are carried off once more in police vans. A few hours later, a general assembly held at the Polytechnic also is broken up by the police. Vittoria, the Chief of Police, De Peppo, the General Procurator of the Republic, and Aniasi, the Mayor, think they have finally beaten what was originally no more than a few dozen families, but what became the symbol of Milan's working class. They couldn't have been more mistaken!

Wednesday dinnertime. All the families eat at the canteen of the ACLI (Action Group of Italian Catholic Workers), where they have been given shelter. From now on no one can avoid the struggle in Via Tibaldi. The ruling class are caught in enormous contradictions trying to reconcile the demands which are coming from every direction — from a

section of the PSI and local councillors; from the CP and the ACLI, which they'd always thought were under their thumb; from the FIM (one of the metal workers' unions whose members are particularly militant). Some orders are coming from Rome, and others from local employers. The greatest danger is that the struggle will spread. This is what is giving them nightmares. And the families do everything in their power to make it happen — by organizing Saturday's demonstration, by going to the factory gates with placards and leaflets, by sending a delegation to the congress of the ACLI and to the general assembly of the student movement, where they are given a tumultuous reception. And before every action is taken, the assembly of families decides what should be said, what line to take, and what proposals to put forward.

As for Aniasi and Company — their goose is cooked. Catalano, the same messenger boy who'd come so arrogantly to the Via Tibaldi, now hurries to the ACLI with an offer. "Too vague", say the families. "Your words and promises won't be enough to solve the housing problem now. We want an agreement written and signed by Aniasi and the Council." Two hours later the agreement is there!

Before July 31 the Council will allocate 200 apartments, not only to the families from the Via Tibaldi, but also to 140 others in a similar situation. Each family will receive 100,000 lira (\$1,665) compensation, plus 15,000 lira (\$250) for each member of the family. There's no stipulation of three months' deposit before moving into the apartments. All evictions and all rent arrears are frozen by the Council.

During this fortnight of struggle none of the squatters has ever imagined that the workers' fight about housing would end at Via Tibaldi, nor that the only problem is how to get a new home. This struggle is only a beginning. Now the families want to help organize the struggle against rents, fares, and prices. A lot of work needs to be done circulating information around local factories. For this reason the assembly of families from Via Tibaldi has become permanent, involving people from every district in Milan.

ROME

Rome is one of the first stops on the route which takes people forced off the land in the South on to the industrial cities of the North. Between 1951 and 1969 the population of the city grew by an average of 60,000 a year. There are few regular jobs for these migrants, since apart from service industries and construction most of the work there is clerical and is handed out as a "favor" on the say-so of local politicians. There are 40,000 people unemployed, many of them young people.

Since it is ruling-class policy to make workers move to the industrial jobs in the North, hardly any low-rent municipal housing is built in Rome. There are 100,000 families living in the outlying slums. Construction workers, newly-arrived immigrants, unemployed workers, pensioners; they live either in shanty towns or in apartments shared by several families. Another 62,000 families live in private accommodations, paying rents of between 40,000 and 80,000 lira (\$650 to \$1300 a month).

The struggle for cheaper housing began in 1969 when people started to occupy luxury apartments in the city center left empty by speculators (Tufello : 125 families; Celio : 225 families; Via Pigafetta : 155 families; Via Prati : 290 families). The struggle soon spread to families living in tenements, who went on rent strikes and developed collective ways of fighting evictions.

Since the people from the shanty towns have nothing to lose, their struggles have often been direct and violent. Before leaving their huts they have often burned them to the ground, determined never to return. In recent struggles construction workers have played an important role. At Via Alboccione construction workers joined 205 families to occupy the houses they had just built.

The Peoples' Clinic — June 1971

In San Basilio, one of Rome's outlying ghetto areas, a movement has been developing of people fighting against

their lousy, inhuman living conditions. There are 40,000 people trapped in this slum district. In the past few months about 100 families have been on rent strike. This started as a spontaneous protest, and now it's becoming more organized. A real confrontation is building up with the IACP over exorbitant rents, arrears, and threats of eviction. The rent strike is becoming a major issue for the whole community, with mass meetings, protest marches, and demonstrations.

Last weekend there was a meeting to integrate the results of a large number of staircase meetings. About 800 families have been involved in these meetings, which were organized by the San Basilio Collective, a group of women and workers from the area, along with a number of students.

At this central meeting there was a discussion of new plans of action and ideas which had been put forward by local people. There was very heavy criticism of the lack of medical facilities in the area — no first-aid station and no clinic, with the nearest medical center being the clinic at the hospital in Rome. It was decided to start a fight to set up a clinic and a decent medical center in the area.

On Wednesday, after a deputation had gone to the Council for the nth time and still had not been received, a decision was made to occupy the neighborhood Ises Center. The occupation took place after a meeting and demonstration which had gone right around the neighborhood. The involvement of women, workers, and young people and the support expressed by local residents prevented any action or attempts at intimidation by the police.

The people who took over the Center formed themselves into a permanent assembly which stayed there all night. They sent out an appeal to all Left-wing doctors to get in touch with them. Meanwhile people talked about the inhuman conditions under which they live, which are the cause of many of their illnesses. They realized that if you're going to get rid of sickness you have to do away with exploitation in the factories where people breathe in smog and break

their backs on the production lines, and at the construction sites, where people work in rain, dust, and mud. For years now people have been lining up at the health-insurance clinics only to be given the usual pill and then told not to be a pest. They're fed up with taking pills and drugs which do nothing but make drug manufacturers rich. They're tired of doctors and others who live off their illnesses. They're sick and tired of being patched up so that they can carry on working and producing for the boss, then falling ill again and having to go back for further repairs.

People also want decent places to live where typhus and hepatitis aren't rampant because of bad drainage and sewers. And they want enough money to buy decent food. There aren't enough green spaces in the area, and as someone said: "These apartments were built for getting sick in, not for living in." San Basilio wasn't built to cater to people's needs; it was built to satisfy the plans of the bosses. "San Basilio is like FIAT's shanty towns in Turin," said one construction worker. "At least it has the same function — to keep the workers out of the way."

On Sunday there was a huge meeting of all the people in San Basilio, and a festival to inaugurate the "People's Clinic", which is by now fully operational. Eighty workers, women, and young people met with the doctors in the main hall of the center. A long banner was hung up with the slogan which sums up the way people feel: "The only way to get anything is through struggle."

At this meeting the role of the clinic was defined. As one woman said, "This clinic is more than something which responds to the real needs of the people here. It is a first step toward ending our exploitation."

The People's Clinic is run by doctors who lend their services to everyone free of charge, giving out free medicine and medical attention, particularly to the kids who are forced to play in the streets, which are full of broken glass and rubbish. The clinic is also a center for political discussion and for organizing other struggles which are being waged in the area — whether it's the fight against the fas-

cists and the police, or the running of the rent strike and the squatting. The task of the doctors is not just limited to lending their "services", in fact, but extends to participating in all the struggles in the area and to passing on their specialized knowledge so the people can start to control their own health.

San Basilio

San Basilio is a small working-class city outside Rome. A wave of housing struggles began here in April 1971. The local politicians attempted to contain the struggle by channeling it back into safe ways: upcoming elections.

On Tuesday, May 6, the first clash between squatting tenants and politicians erupted. From 9 pm to midnight the local population of San Basilio was mobilized against an election meeting held by the Christian Democrat mayor, Darida. The meeting had been called unexpectedly, without even so much as a poster on the wall. Obviously the idea was to wrap everything up in the space of half an hour. Just a visit, an appearance, and then a quick getaway from this area which could certainly not be expected to be friendly to a unionist who, only a few days before, had shaken hands with the leader of the Fascists, Almirante.

At the time fixed for the meeting there were already 100 to 150 people in the market place. The enormous number of police standing around was a sure sign that the Christian Democrats who were coming to speak were hostile.

So, this is what happened: Under the rostrum, an immense and pompous affair, there were roughly 15 electoral agents. Just behind was everyone else — all the working-class people, women, and young people of the area, as well as a few people from the CP. Groups formed, and people started to talk about the past 20 years of promises... the promises of all the mayors... the promises of this mayor.

People decided to interrupt the speech and get a woman and a worker from the area to speak. At last it got underway. But the Mayor hadn't had the nerve to come. Instead it was Medi, the professor, the one who's been so active in

the anti-divorce campaign, the guy that the whole of Italy have had the chance to "admire" on their TV screens as a brilliant commentator on the space exploits of the Americans.

Right from the start he began spouting a load of bullshit: "How fortunate you are to be living outside the city, in an unpolluted atmosphere." There was an immediate barrage of catcalls and slogans shouted at the top of people's voices. Medi reacted stupidly in front of this group of workers: "You're all barbarians, and the city of Rome will wipe you out . . . You've got no brains and can't understand what I'm trying to tell you."

It went on like this for an hour, until 10 pm, with women pressing against the rostrum and the police, in confusion, not knowing how to control dozens of kids who were going round and round the orator in a line, howling into jam jars and making one hell of a din. And the professor? He was still at it, shouting insults: "You're like donkeys . . . it's easy to see that you've never been to school." This remark was followed by a volley of eggs. Medi turned to the police and demanded that they take control of the situation. The cops put on their gas masks. People retreated. The police threw the first tear gas. The meeting ended. "Rome will sort your lot out, you barbarians; we'll win, don't worry."

People came down from the blocks of flats. By now there were more than a thousand people. The police had remained grouped in the market place and continued to hurl tear gas at the windows and at women. One moment people saw a cop setting off on a bike; the next the reinforcements had arrived. About 40 lorry-loads, more than 700 police in riot gear. Provenza, the Vice-Commissioner of Police, also arrived, to take command of the operation. The area was besieged. The police, foolishly, decided to go into a block of flats and start beating people up. They were met by a continuous and very violent volley of plates, bottles, and anything else that people could lay their hands on.

The police withdrew, and finally left the area. It was a little after midnight. In the market place, people set fire

to the rostrum. Groups formed. People worked out who had been arrested and who had been injured. People tried to find out news about those who had been arrested.

Don't Vote — Occupy !

By June 1971, with regional elections only a few days away, all the political parties talked about was "law and order". The CP was making vague promises about housing reforms: something people were very preoccupied with.

After an assembly in San Basilio 20 families decided to occupy a block of flats on Saturday, the 5th. The occupation was a failure, since the flats are privately owned and impossible to defend. The families decided to turn back and wait a few days.

On Wednesday, the 9th, there were occupations at Centocelle and Pietralate. At Centocelle, the police responded immediately: They tried to arrest an isolated comrade. The squatters reacted immediately, and managed to free him. A police car was smashed up, and another six or seven showed up with their sirens wailing. We woke up the neighborhood with megaphones, denouncing the police's attack. People came out of their houses shouting to the police "This is our area — get the hell out of it!" The police were forced to leave.

Meanwhile, at Pietralate, the occupation had gone off successfully, so we decided to go there and have one large squat. At the beginning there were 70 families. During the night 30 more arrived. The occupation got more organized. Doctors were found. Staircase assemblies were arranged and people were appointed to take charge of each staircase. During the night our assembly decided that if the police came to evict us, we would all stick together and regroup somewhere else to continue the struggle.

Early in the morning of the 10th the CP officials arrived. At first they tried to persuade us to go back home. (Where to?) Then they turned to insulting us by saying we were

gypsies and thieves. In the meantime the police had arrived and surrounded the block. When they entered the courtyard we all came down, trying to stay together. But 12 of us were separated off and threatened with arrest. At this point the women attacked furiously. They started pushing against the police cordons and demanded the immediate release of everyone. It was a great moment. The police didn't know how to react; they were being attacked by women and kids. At first they tried to push them away violently, but in the end they were forced to release everyone. We all shouted and cheered loudly.

At an assembly in the afternoon, people had a go at the CP and all other reformists. We decided to occupy again so that the struggle wouldn't lose its momentum. That evening we occupied in the Magliana district — 70 families and their friends. A police car that got in the way was smashed; the police fired in the air; a police car that came toward us was stoned. At three in the morning the whole area was surrounded by riot police. We held an assembly in the courtyard and decided to march from the houses toward the police lines. This decision was not unanimous. Some of us wanted to stay and defend the flats. In the end we all marched out shouting slogans. People came to the windows. When we got to Via Magliana the police charged. Fighting was violent. There were 60 arrests. Many of us were kept in jail for hours.

After this eviction, we decided to hold meetings in different neighborhoods of the city. Many people decided not to take part in the elections and to make sure the struggle goes on.

THE SOUTH

Since its beginning, Italy's economic development has been uneven — the North growing faster than the South. High unemployment and low wages have forced millions to migrate. During the boom years, 1959 to 1963, almost a million people traveled north. This process has been ac-

celerated by the mechanization of agriculture. Between 1951 and 1970 the number of people working the land fell from 7,200,000 to 3,800,000 — out of a labor force holding nearly constant around 20,000,000. As in other Common Market countries, only the larger farmers prospered.

To stop this migration, the Government set up the "Cassa del Mezzogiorno" (Bank of the South). Initially its function was to provide subsidies to agriculture and help create social infrastructures (houses, roads, schools, hospitals). Its failure to make any significant change led to its role's becoming more and more to provide investment for factories. The factories that were built were all state-owned: Alfa-Romeo in Naples, Italsider (steel) in Taranto and Naples, chemical plants in Bari and Porto Torres on Sardinia. The building of these factories provided the first job for many of the workers coming off the land. But since it takes far fewer workers to run these ultra-modern factories than to build them, unemployment in these Southern cities has risen quickly in recent years and will remain high, since no other industries can develop to complement the few existing factories.

Very little has been done to build enough schools, houses, and hospitals to cope with the growing population of these cities. The working class is controlled by a mixture of overt repression and political corruption, and the only hope of a place to live lies in becoming a member of a political organization. Frustration erupts in angry, violent outbursts — for instance in Battipaglia, where days of rioting followed the closure of a local factory.

Over the past few years there have been a growing number of housing occupations (Salerno: 80 families; Torre del Greco; Messina: 328 families; Carbonia: 130 families). In Syracuse, where houses are usually allocated to the "clients" of local political bosses, people's anger became so great that new tenants had to take possession of their apartments under heavy police protection. Other projects which had been walled up before they were finished had their entrances smashed open by violent demonstrators.

TARANTO

Occupation of GESCAL apartments

In December 1970, 200 families occupied apartments belonging to GESCAL (the State housing authority) in the working-class district of Tamburi. They had been living in the slum tenements in Via Lisippo. Police threats and vague promises from the Council had no effect on them. People had gotten it into their heads to take direct action. They took the initiative themselves, going around from tenement to tenement, organizing and bringing people together.

One of the activists said: "We have abandoned all faith in politicians, people who come round every five years asking us to vote for them. They say they'll give us work and homes, but every time they just leave us where we are, in the cold and damp. We hate them all, because they live off our slavery. And they do everything in their power to make sure people don't rebel and take what is rightfully theirs.

"Because we've behaved ourselves, because we've listened to their promises, dozens of children have died in the slums where we live. We have all had illnesses, and we have all suffered. We shall bear these marks within us forever. The people who have our suffering on their consciences will be made to pay dearly — pay the whole price.

"We organized the occupation the evening of December 2. Within a few hours the slums were empty, but the GESCAL apartments were full. Now the apartments are OURS. We haven't got water or electricity yet, but we're already getting water from down in the courtyard, and we're trying to organize the provision of supplies for every apartment. And as far as the electricity is concerned, we'll see about that too.

"Meanwhile, we've begun cleaning the place up. It's never very nice wearing yourself out with this sort of work, but at least it's a bit more satisfying than sweeping out the rat-holes we were living in before. We're happy. We're con-

fidant in ourselves and our own strength. We've organized in each building and made links between buildings. We intend to keep these apartments, and we need to organize to keep the police out.

"We've had a couple of meetings every day to talk over any problems, to clarify our ideas, and to decide what has to be done. We're keeping in contact with other people in the area, and trying to spread the word to people in the factories. On Sunday, December 6, we had our first general meeting. This was important because it meant that we could all get together, and we could also talk to workers, women and children, and unemployed people from different parts of the city.

"It wasn't just the people from the slums who organized this occupation. The initiative came from there, but it quickly spread to other parts of the city. The people in the old part of the city—the street cleaners, the fishermen, and the unemployed—were particularly quick to act. Today there's not one apartment left empty in all these buildings. But we know that there are many other buildings empty around here and in other parts of the city. We've got to find out where they are, because the whole city is in ferment, and all the working-class people want to occupy houses."

PALERMO

Red Flags over the IACP—April 1971

The NEZ (Northern Expansion Zone) is an IACP estate about 10 miles outside Palermo. About a thousand families live there, mostly unemployed building workers, clerical workers who occasionally work on the land, and fishermen. These families are mostly earthquake victims from the Western Sicily earthquake disaster of June 1968. They took possession of the houses after they had been requisitioned by the Prefect. Many people simply squatted in them. Of course the IACP regards this occupation as "illegal", and it has started sending out injunctions for the payment of

arrears : 30,000 lira (\$500) per flat.

On Thursday, March 27, there was an occupation of a block of flats that were still being built. The police came to evict people, but the houses were occupied again, and this time the people stayed there.

Since the building was still not finished, the squatters themselves organized to get the drains working and set up electrical supplies and so on. On Sunday there was a mass meeting to discuss the problem of the injunction. There were 300 people there — mostly women, who are the most active and determined people in this fight. A strike of the whole area was scheduled to begin the next day, and a platform was approved including flats to be provided officially for everyone; cancellation of all arrears of rents; building of roads, schools, and all the amenities which are totally lacking in the area; and self-determination of contributions. The people of the NEZ area don't want to talk in terms of rent, because they don't agree with the idea of paying rent. But they are prepared to provide a small contribution, according to what they can afford, for the building of new homes.

The next day (Monday), beginning at 4:30 in the morning, the whole area was at a standstill. There were pickets on the street corners, as well as a large contingent of police. People gathered in the Central Square, and at 8:30 am a march set off in the direction of Palermo. Women and children rode in cars and trucks, and men walked. Throughout the march the police continually provoked people. The marchers arrived at the IACP offices in Palermo. The police set up a cordon across the road, but the marchers broke through the lines and about 50 demonstrators managed to get into the building. Others got in over the balconies and through windows. Inside the IACP there was a huge commotion: For once the tables were turned on the people who govern our lives.

When the women came into the building all the officials beat a hasty retreat. The President of the IACP appeared, pale and trembling, and agreed to speak to some sort of

"delegation". He tried to evade their questions and give nothing away. But the demonstrators decided to occupy the Institute. Meanwhile the people who had stayed outside began to mobilize other people in Palermo. The Base Committee from the shipyards arrived, and also a number of working people from other parts of town.

This struggle became a reference point for everyone. For the bosses and bureaucrats things were getting too hot. Two hours later the President returned and announced that he was going to withdraw the injunctions for rent arrears. For the time being people decided to leave the Institute (by then it was 6 pm), but the struggle for these objectives was to go on.

The most active of all the people were the women — the true militants of this day of struggle and clashes with the police. Among other things, they succeeded in freeing a comrade who had been arrested by the police.

Palermo, 1973

Early this year building workers took over a block of luxury flats they have just finished building. They moved in with their families and other working-class people. Police were called by the local CP administration, but could not gain access to the barricaded block of flats.

NAPLES

The local capitalists have hardly invested in industry, finding it more profitable to make money in real estate and tourism, as well as through Mafia-run industries like prostitution and smuggling. The main sources of employment are various forms of hustling. Children, who are particularly successful at this, play an important role within the economy of the family. Unlike other cities, in which schools are places where kids are accustomed to the discipline of work, in Naples working-class children are systematically discouraged from attending school. In this situation, the

struggle to keep a school open takes on a wholly-different dimension: Parents are refusing to allow the system to put their children on the streets.

February 1970. Secondiglio is an Ina Casa housing development on the outskirts of Naples. It's one of the many dormitory suburbs into which the bosses shove all the people they don't want around the city center. Go back 10 years, and it wasn't so bad...at least on the map. But it wasn't long before it became clear that the map was only for show. No one had any intention of making it a reality by making the area a pleasure for people to live in. A dump of a flat was enough — there were no decent streets, no services, no schools, no parks.... (These things aren't profitable for the investors.)

There are about 14,000 people there. About 2,000 of them are people who, having waited 10, 20, or even 30 years in hovels, have now been rehoused in apartments without adequate windows, without water, without drains, without furniture, without light.

The first struggle in Secondiglio was for a primary school. People wanted a prefabricated building to hold a thousand children, and the promise of a proper building before too long. About 40% of the children attending school are at least a year behind the normal. Another 30% are two years behind the normal. About three months after the beginning of the school year at least a tenth of the kids are demoralized and stop coming. And then comes the "motherly" advice of the schoolmistress: "School's not for you. Why don't you get a job?"

The worst crime of all is the way kids are made to believe that school only runs up to the 6th grade (primary) level. Local industry couldn't supply itself with cheap labor otherwise. As a result, 90% of the "educated" have only a primary-school certificate, and 30% are illiterate. What's more, the children are highly vulnerable to all kinds of illnesses. Large numbers of kids have rheumatic fever, heart conditions, bronchial pneumonia, and so on. School is a place to catch diseases — just one more reason for not

going.

The kids spend the whole day hanging around the area in a freaked-out state. But they're still not too young to learn how to hustle . . . so many families have someone in Poggioreale prison or Filangeri juvenile prison.

After nine years of demands, a miniature school was opened. From the outside it looked beautiful, but inside there was no electricity or heating, and the children shivered with cold. They had to go to school wearing hats and scarves. After two weeks the new school was closed, and the kids went back to their old shanty hut of a school. But now there were too many of them, so the school had to be run in two shifts. The results are exactly the same as before. Few kids go to school, there's a high turnover of teachers, and no one studies. No one does anything.

It wasn't long before people had had enough. So they began to organize and prepare for a fight. They held a meeting and organized marches in the neighborhood. The kids came out on strike. They felt that they had to carry the struggle beyond the area. So groups of parents went to the center of Naples, to the Department of Education and to the Town Hall. They shook up the bureaucracy: "We've had enough of rubber stamps and promises. We want the school reopened immediately, with the electricity turned on."

The various officials responsible were really scared . . . but it still wasn't enough to get them off their backsides and make them finish the building. People realized that they were in for another swindle, and immediately began organizing again.

They cordoned off the school with chains, and a large number of people went to the Town Hall to put pressure on the officials. They forced the authorities to come to the area the next day so they could see for themselves what things were like. The headmaster and the teachers joined in what was going on, though they'd accepted shoddy treatment for years. From now on the school will be run on different lines, because the community is taking direct control over every aspect of its running.

Interview with Guido Viale

interview and translation

by Bruno Ramirez

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Guido Viale, one of the founders and a national leader of Lotta Continua, was arrested on January 28, 1973 with nine other comrades and charged with attempted murder in connection with clashes the night before in the streets of Turin between revolutionaries and neo-fascists. The police fired at the militants, seriously wounding five, and arrested many others. The arrest of Viale was clearly a police frame-up and was part of a wider repressive design to strike at Lotta Continua and other revolutionary organizations. It came in fact at the end of one of the most intense weeks of workers' and students' struggles, after the metal workers' contract negotiations had reached an impasse and a new wave of strikes and factory occupations had shaken Turin. The po-

lice intention was to curb the influence of the revolutionary movement in these struggles.

Viale and other comrades were released on May 10 for lack of evidence. His release followed a major international campaign of solidarity with the targets of Italian state repression: The voices of the revolutionary Left in Italy cannot be stifled. The following material is excerpted from an interview with Viale conducted immediately prior to his arrest in January.

What are some of the key developments since the 1968-69 workers' struggles which may have the effect of altering the political organization of the Italian working class?

First of all, there has been a widespread circulation, among various sectors of the working class, of the "struggle against labor" — meaning a radical negation of the capitalist organization of work and life. You may recall that this was one of the main components which characterized the workers' struggles in 1968-69. At that time its impact was shown primarily among the immigrant, mass-production workers in the large plants, and was often much opposed by the specialized workers, upon whom the bosses counted to break the unity of the working class. In the course of the last three years this component of workers' struggle has spread not only in the smaller plants, but also among specialized workers, and is therefore contributing enormously to bridging the gap which has traditionally existed between these two sectors of the working class. It is important to emphasize that such a circulation has also encompassed the South and has contributed to altering drastically the traditional relationship between North and South. Today we cannot talk any more of a highly-politicized Northern working class and a de-politicized Southern working class. The politicization of mass-production workers in the Northern industrial centers has been paralleled

by the growth of a subversive potential among the proletarian masses who populate the numerous urban centers in the South. It is still difficult to sociologically characterize these masses. But the political contradictions which these people are living is having the effect of unifying the various components of the Southern working class among themselves, and in turn of unifying the latter with the Northern working class, even if the fascists are trying at all costs to keep them divided.

Judging from these new developments of the last three years, would you maintain that the balance of class forces is changing in favor of the working class ?

Undoubtedly. We feel that those who draw their conclusions by looking only at the capitalist class end up with a limited and distorted view. It is definitely true that today the bosses are armed, while three years ago they were not. But it is also true that the links of unity within the proletariat have made great leaps ahead and are bringing to-



gether more than ever before the Northern and Southern proletariat, old CP workers and new workers, student masses and masses of workers. We therefore maintain that at the present stage the workers' struggle is stronger than during the "Hot Autumn" of 1969.

What role does the Italian Communist Party (CPI) play in this context of changing relations of force among classes?

The place the CPI has in the political alignment of the country has been, and remains, very important, not only on account of its close relationship with the labor unions, but also because the CPI is the party that officially represents the workers' struggle: it receives most of the working-class votes, it exercises an enormous influence on the masses of workers, it has a formidable power of mobilization. (Think of the CPI rally called last September by the Party's daily paper l'Unita, which saw the participation of about half a million people!) In the current process of politicization occurring among the masses (and their ensuing move toward the Left) the CPI occupies a crucial role; hence the steady increase in new members during the past months. Now, what matters most for the revolutionary Left is that as the crisis deepens, as the fascistization of the Italian state consolidates itself, the ambiguous and contradictory position of the CPI becomes increasingly apparent. For, if on one hand the CPI aligns itself against the present government and against the capitalist forces, on the other hand it is committed to joining those forces in "controlling the crisis" in favor of a climate of social peace, and thereby chokes the autonomous thrust of the mass of workers. This difficulty in which the CPI is caught vis-a-vis the working class opens many spaces among the CPI ranks. It makes its workers live the contradictions of the revisionist line and increasingly opens space for direction by the revolutionary vanguards. The massive demonstrations of last December 12 commemorating the Piazza Fontana victims

of fascist terrorism of 1969 in all major cities of Italy, which was called by the revolutionary Left and which saw a large participation of CPI members, shows how a division has begun to develop within the CPI.

How does the current round of labor negotiations affect the ongoing process of class struggle which you have discussed thus far? What is really at stake in these negotiations?

In our view, what matters is not so much what the workers could gain on a merely contractual plane. What matters is our ability to anticipate the capitalist project, which wants to use this occasion in order to contain the development of the workers' autonomy, and to launch a process of



capitalist re-structuration which would fall entirely on the working class, not only in material terms (reduction of the level of employment, reduction of real wages) but also politically, since it would have the effect of breaking the unity that the working class has achieved in these last years. The contract recently ratified in the chemical sector has been a clear example of this strategy, which the bosses could impose on the workers thanks to the collaboration of the unions. What therefore becomes a priority for us is to wage a struggle against the power of the State and against its fascistization; against the political use of the crisis which — as the past months have shown — manifests itself in the bosses' attempt to eliminate the workers' vanguards. These objectives require a harsh class struggle, a struggle which is not waged by signing a new contract. This is why



for us it is crucial to strengthen the workers' autonomy so that the working class does not allow itself to be sucked into the bosses' system and logic. Massive wage increases, guaranteed wages, total parity between industrial workers and white-collar employees — these are the decisive slogans of workers' autonomy against the crisis, of workers' ability to direct the struggles of the unemployed, the underemployed, the students, the proletarians in the community against the cost of living. These are not contractual demands, but they use the contracts for the circulation, the organization, the practice of struggle. The generalization of these demands is a basic necessity if we do not want the workers' struggles to fall into isolation and corporatism, and moreover if the social struggles against the crisis, the unemployment, the cost of living are to grow around a center. This is the ground for our action.

(Rome, January 2, 1973)

TELOS

An International Revolutionary Theoretical Journal

Number 14

Winter 1972

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For Further Reading

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Glossary

MAJOR CORPORATIONS: FIAT: Largest Italian and European automobile manufacturer, based in Turin, owned by Agnelli family. Pirelli: Milan-based Italian rubber manufacturer, linked to Dunlop's in Britain, owned by Pirelli family. Montedison: Italian chemicals manufacturer, based outside Venice, dominated by state ownership vested in IRI, ENI, and Banco d'Italia. ENI: Italian state petroleum corporation. Italsider: Italian steel manufacturer, dominated by state ownership vested in IRI. IRI: Italian state holding company with stock portfolio covering Italian industry. Banco d'Italia: Italian central reserve bank.

POLITICAL PARTIES: DC (Christian Democrats): Largest party based among Catholic voters, governing Italy with changing coalition partners since World War II. PCI (Italian Communist Party): Second largest party, chief opposition to DC. PSI (Italian Socialist Party): Main Social Democratic party, vacillating between alliance with PCI in the unions and DC in the Cabinet. PSDI (Italian Social Democratic Party): Right-wing anti-communist labor party originating in Cold War split from PSI, member of governing coalition. Republicans: Small party of liberal urban professional and white-collar workers. Liberals: Traditional laissez-faire-capitalist party with anti-clerical heritage. MSI (Italian Social Movement): Neo-fascist amalgamation of old fascist and monarchist parties, based largely in the South.

LABOR ORGANIZATIONS: CGIL (General Confederation of Italian Labor): Largest trade-union confederation, led by PCI and PSI. CISL (Italian Confederation of Free Labor): Second-largest trade-union confederation, originally DC union for Catholic workers which has moved leftward. UIL (Italian Union of Labor): Product of Cold War anti-communist split from CGIL, currently collaborating with other confederations, led by PSDI and PSI. FIOM: Metalworkers' union of CGIL. FIM: Metalworkers' union of CISL. UILM: Metalworkers' union of UIL.

HOUSING AGENCIES: GESCAL: State agency for planning development of public housing. IACP: State agency for the building and managing of Italian housing. UNIA (National Union of Italian Tenants): Traditional national tenants' organization led by PCI.

