

“Why I will not be attending my mother’s 100th birthday celebration”¹

Today, February 1st, marks the centenary of the birth of Teresa Mattei (Feb. 1, 1921 – Mar. 12, 2013) – known as “Chicchi” – a partisan, a fighter and, in her time, a remarkably young deputy in the Constituent Assembly, serving within the ranks of the Communist Party. Her son, Gianfranco Sanguinetti, has shared with Anita Ginella, a native of Genoa and a professor of contemporary history,² the reasons why he has declined to participate in the official institutional commemorations that have been organized in her honor.

Throughout her entire life, Teresa consciously defied convention, appearing equally at ease among the halls of parliament as she was among the school desks of the Tuscan children in Usigliano, with whom, in the final years of her life, she set up a pirate radio station. She earned degrees in Florence, defending her thesis immediately following a dangerous wartime operation. She also stood as one of the most courageous voices of protest in the wake of the massacre at the Diaz School during the G8 summit.³ She was the one who [in 1946] came up with the idea of adopting the mimosa flower as the symbol for March 8⁴ (a detail that explains the allusion in Gianfranco’s letter).

With unwavering passion, “Chicchi” constantly strove to make her contribution, dreaming of peace while simultaneously standing ready to fight for the principles of freedom.

Dear Anita,

I apologize for the delay in my reply.

Over the last year, the rhythm of time has shifted and space has been denied to us, ever since the Western world seemed destined to become the passive object of the daily diktats of those tasked with exploiting the [Covid-19] epidemic to steer the civic life of the major nations in a totalitarian direction. In less than a year, it seems as though our entire history has been erased: the Constitution, our civic and political lives, and the struggles that built and gave vitality to our country.

A new hysteria seems to have seized Italy. Relentless propaganda, aimed at stoking fear, anguish, and terror, consisting of diktats and omnipresent sanctions, and thus demanding obedience and submission, now drives all public action and media communication, while aggressively intruding upon the citizens’ private lives, which have, by now, effectively vanished. Having first been reduced to mere voters and, subsequently, to consumers, they are today treated like patients: infantilized, admonished, and subjected to an endless series of contradictory,

¹ Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Perché non parteciperò alle celebrazioni del 100° anniversario di mia madre,” posted to effimera.org on 1 February 2021.

² Her book *Chicchi “la resistente”* would eventually be published by ERGA in 2025.

³ During protests against the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001, the police attacked the Armando Diaz High School, injuring dozens of people.

⁴ International Women’s Day.

coercive and arbitrary rules, as well as to punishments and confinements that align with the new totalitarianism now imposing itself, *all without provoking revolt or even resistance*.

Under these circumstances, commemorating a figure such as my mother – a rebel par excellence who had made a virtue of disobedience – would mean either upending the framework in which current events are unfolding or else crafting a false, “acceptable” portrait of “the feminist,” a former member of the Constituent Assembly who was aligned with the dominant ideology, speaking only of mimosas, violets and other such *politically correct*⁵ pleasantries – harmless and reassuring – as has been the custom whenever she has been celebrated these past few years. *Pessimum inimicorum genus, laudantes*.⁶

This is why I appreciated your remark: “They do not fully grasp that I am a historian, and if they are expecting a sugar-coated family recollection, they are seriously mistaken.” For this same reason, I have never participated in any commemoration, nor have I granted any interviews, which can be manipulated, edited or inserted into a fraudulent context to lend a lie credibility. I do not wish to contribute to turning my mother into an icon of a regime she herself would have fought against.

As you know, my mother, after being expelled from every high school in Italy for protesting against the racial laws, took up arms as a young woman, and she did not fight for what Italy has become.

She never concealed from us children the actions in which she had participated, including, among others, the execution of Giovanni Gentile (15 April 1944); the execution in the Lungarno Acciaiuoli neighborhood in Florence of Colonel Italo Ingaramo, Commander of the 92d Legion (GNR), under whose authority fell the Special Services Unit led by the torturer Mario Carità (29 April 1944); and the sabotage and detonation of eight railcars loaded with TNT taken from the Nobel armory under a tunnel near Carmignano (11 June 1944), as well as others.

I had urged her to tell her story, starting with the much-debated execution of Gentile, a subject on which so many outlandish theories have been published. She never wrote her memoirs, but she did grant an interview to a mediocre journalist from the *Corriere* (a certain Carioti), who did not even submit the transcript for her review before publishing it. She subsequently wrote a letter of rectification to the *Corriere*, which I have attached for you.⁷ I do not know if the *Corriere* actually published it. It can be found on pages 267-268 of the publication of the Tuscany Region.

Via hypertext link I refer you to the autobiography of GAP member Cesare Massai (see p. 25),⁸ which notes that the bounty placed on the heads of the perpetrators of the attack on Gentile was one million lire, while the one for the killing of Colonel Ingaramo was 500,000 lire.

I hope, dear Anita, that I’ve been of help. I don’t think my mother would have been happy to see me speaking next to a mayor whose police officers rage against innocent Genoese who break the curfew or don’t wear masks.

Hugs,
G.

⁵ English in original.

⁶ Latin in original: “The worst kind of enemies are those who praise.”

⁷ Not part of the version of this letter published by *effimera.org*.

⁸ Cesare Massai, *Autobiografia di un gappista fiorentino* (Associazione Centro Documentazione di Pistoia, 2008).

P.S. Naturally, you are free to read this letter and let anyone you wish read it.