

# “An Orgasm of History: 1977 in Italy Digression on the Thread of Memory by a former Situationist”

by Gianfranco Sanguinetti<sup>1</sup>

They think I'm severe?  
I know I am  
I force them to think . . .

Vittorio Alfieri, *Epigrams*, 1783

## **The catastrophe of the ideologies.**

There were two 1977s in Italy, one of which was nothing more than the final gasp, the death rattle of the illusions, lies and crimes of which the pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese bureaucracies and their local followers were the bearers and the beneficiaries, still constituting the dead weight and false consciousness of the purportedly extremist groups that arose from the ashes of 1968.

As early as 1969, the Italian situationists, in the editorial notes for the journal *Internazionale Situazionista*, affirmed that:

“The critique of ideology is the premise of all critique [...] However, we must accelerate the process of decomposition of ‘Marxism’ (workerism-bureaucracy-ism, theoretical underdevelopment-ideology of underdevelopment). [...] To become aware of its own content, the social conflict against modern conditions of survival brings to the surface all the carcasses of the past, which it takes pains to clear away. [...] The consumption of ideology must once again support the ideology of consumption. [...] There is only one step from ideas to facts. Actions will improve them. [...] But in the current movement, the SI simultaneously prefigures the future of the movement itself. When all the internal conditions are met [...] to abolish the division into classes and the classes themselves, the division of labor and labor itself, and to abolish art and philosophy by realizing them in the liberated creativity of life without dead time, when only the best will do, the world will be governed by the greatest aristocracy in history, the only class in society and the only historical class of masters without slaves. This possibility occurs today, perhaps for the first time. But it occurs.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator*: Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Un Orgasmo della Storia: Il 1977 in Italia: Digressioni sul filo della memoria di un ex-situazionista.” Published online by Francosenia Blogspot. Translated by Bill Brown and Molly Klein. 16 March 2026. All footnotes by the author, except where noted.

<sup>2</sup> *Internazionale Situazionista*, n. 1, July 1969, “Quando solo il meglio sarà sufficiente.” [*Translator*: When only the best will do].

### **The devastation of critical thinking.**

In the frightening and desolate landscape of the devastation of critical thinking brought about by hegemonic, dogmatic and arrogant ideologies that served the Left and the far Left and to which all the intellectuals conformed, the explosion of the 1977 revolt – later known as the Metropolitan Indians – was a disruptive and unexpected event, an uninvited spoilsport at the wedding of the Communists to the Christian Democrats, an embarrassing and inappropriate scandal, a public and brazen orgasm of history. It is therefore inappropriate to speak of it, and indeed almost no one has. This was the other 1977, the one that knew how to say a new word, in a new way, to borrow Girolamo Savonarola's expression. Despite the silence that still surrounds it, this movement of social revolt was the most modern of the postwar period.

### **The rejection of the ideologies.**

In its most genuinely subversive aspect, the 1977 revolt was a radical rejection of the voluntary servitude imposed by every ideology; it was a rejection of militancy, politics, representation, hierarchy, and irrevocable delegation, and a rejection of any compromise. It was also an explosion of creativity and imagination, open to every artistic influence, from the Futurists to the Situationists. The *langue de bois*<sup>3</sup> of vulgar Marxism had permeated, infected and poisoned not only its own doublethink, which was indigent and counterfeit, and the petty and miserable language of the mainstream Left, but also that of all those small groups of people who believed themselves to be extremists, from 1968 onward, almost without exception. The “social practice” of these militants, who later joined the Autonomists in 1977, was worthy of their bureaucratic language – confusing, pompous, threatening, apodictic and redundant, just like the totalitarian ideologies they propagated. Among them were many well-intentioned individuals, but not the leaders they had accepted. It was precisely these arrogant leaders, admirers of terrorism and armed struggle, yet cowardly and stupid, combined with police provocations and repression by the ICP [Italian Communist Party], who were the true gravediggers of that movement: no honest historian will contradict me on this point.

### **An execution in effigy.**

On 17 February 1977, the powerful leader of the Communist trade-union police, Luciano Lama, was mocked, humiliated and driven out of the University of Rome like a dog. This was the founding scandal of the movement, for it was the absolute novelty of a free assembly that managed, in actual practice, to own its own freedom and its own public square, driving out those who still hoped to muzzle and usurp it.

It was a veritable execution in effigy of the trade union and the Communist Party, and, in the same square, for additional ignominy, a derogatory effigy of Luciano Lama was hung.

Despising the intellectual dishonesty of many who retrospectively project their current judgments back onto a time when they showed neither for lucidity nor honesty, I will quote below what I wrote at the time, and what I still hold today. I am not among those who change their minds when the wind changes.

### **20<sup>th</sup>-Century “Communism.”**

The imposture of so-called 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Communism did not collapse in 1989 in the Eastern European countries (at that time, only the discredited regimes in power from which the

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<sup>3</sup> *Translator*: French in original: literally wooden language; waffling or doublespeak.

USSR had suddenly withdrawn all support collapsed). In fact, it collapsed in 1977 in Rome and Bologna, as well as other Italian cities. This deception had lasted 60 years, and that was enough. What was called “Communism” in countries like Russia, China and elsewhere was nothing more than a brutal system of expropriation and accelerated primitive accumulation of capital. It reproduced and concentrated all the horrors that capitalism had perpetrated in Western Europe from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onward, already described by Marx in the famous chapter in *Capital* devoted to this accumulation, which Marxist idiots, thanks to their ideological blinders, read without realizing that the same monstrosities were happening before their own eyes in Russia and China. Soviet and Chinese “Communism” were in reality a disguise for ancient Eastern despotism, which thus perpetuated itself under another name, as Wittfogel<sup>4</sup> and others have amply demonstrated. The “cunning of reason” had made generations of men and women live and die by building a work that had nothing to do with what they believed, wanted or deluded themselves into thinking they were doing. Instead of socialism, they built a capitalism without a bourgeoisie and without private property. Everything belonged to the State, that is, to the bureaucracy that directed it despotically, as in ancient Eastern despotism. It would be necessary, and perhaps even urgent, to call things by their real names. But that would be enough.

### **The role of the Italian Communists in 1977.**

The Italian Communist Party, already in a sexual frenzy [*in fregola*] at the time, when it was preparing to enter into the governing coalition, became even more hot and bothered [*s'incanagli e s'incattivì*], and began to fight the movement with every means at its disposal, in order to better establish itself as the watchdog of the ruling class. I wrote at that time: “For the first time in the West, a so-called Communist Party proposes not only to organize the defeat of the proletariat, thus running the risk of being defeated along with it – as happened in Barcelona in 1936 – but it also proposes to triumph directly over the proletariat, together with the bourgeoisie. It is useful to declare this simple truth precisely in Bologna, which is the Disneyland of Italian Stalinism, but which, precisely for this reason, is also the stronghold of revolutionary anti-Stalinism.”<sup>5</sup>

Luciano Lama’s expulsion from the University was also an unexpected and resounding slap in the face to all the neo-Leninist, Maoist, Castroist, workerist and other small groups of people who had never ceased to prostitute themselves for Stalinism and its crimes, of which they had always been followers. There’s no need to name names here because their leaders are too well known to everyone due to the publicity that capitalism has decided to give to the most backward and impotent of its apparent enemies – those, I mean to say, who would soon be rinsing their mouths out with the “geometric power displayed on the Via Fani.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Wittfogel, *Il Dispotismo Orientale*, translated into Italian in 1968, 1980. [*Translator*: Karl Wittfogel’s *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* was originally published in English by Yale University Press in 1957.]

<sup>5</sup> The manifesto “Benvenuti nella Città più libera del Mondo!” datelined Bologna, 23 September 1977. [*Translator*: “Welcome to the Freest City in the World!”]

<sup>6</sup> *Translator*: see Franco Piperno’s *Dal terrorismo alla guerriglia*, December 1978, which refers to the “geometric power” that was allegedly demonstrated by the military capacity of the Red Brigades during their ambush and kidnapping of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro on the Via Fani in March 1978.

### **Repression and poetic justice.**

To please the capitalists, and to get rid of a competing political force on their left, it was the orthodox Communists who had them [Piperno and many others] thrown in jail on 7 April 1979, which was a kind of poetic justice for these neo-Bolshevik Autonomist leaders. The trial lasted nine years, but the repression was unprecedented in scale, leading to over 25,000 arrests and investigations into 60,000 young people, which resulted in several centuries of pretrial detention and which, had they occurred in an Eastern European country, would have sparked worldwide outrage.<sup>7</sup> In Czechoslovakia during the same period, 200 arrests (plus a few more later) were made of supporters of Charter '77,<sup>8</sup> but these figures are incomparable to those of the coordinated repression perpetrated by the Italian Communists. The numbers of people subject to this repression are the best indicator of the depth and breadth of the revolt, and they also measure the infamy of both the Communists and the State, as well as that the subservient intellectuals who generally (with very rare exceptions) supported it. Because the complicity of the so-called “constitutional arc”<sup>9</sup> was so extensive, and because these facts were absolutely shameful, the order was given to censor the 1977 revolt completely. And this order was carried out. 1977 became taboo, one of the many shameful aspects of the Republic that was “born from the Resistance,” as they were then called, to cover them up.

The leaders of the Autonomists were then, after a few years in prison, welcomed with open arms by the French State, from which a farsighted Interior Minister expelled me as early as 1971 – this was a sign that these leaders were not so dangerous after all. Even today, refined and profound connoisseurs of history, they claim that the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 was “an event of sublime beauty” and that the terrorists themselves were “a bold handful of intellectuals.”<sup>10</sup> Probably educated in Hollywood.

### **The destruction of the younger generations.**

It was with the repression of the '77 movement that the Italian State began a systematic destruction of the younger generations, one after another, now replaced by young migrants imported as slaves from Africa. To carry out this destruction, the State has used terrorism,

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Rita Prette (ed.), *Gli organismi legali -7 aprile (inchiesta giudiziaria contro l'Autonomia)*, in *La mappa perduta*, 1 (Progetto Memoria), 2<sup>a</sup> ed., Dogliani, Sensibili alle foglie, novembre 2007, p. 265. [Translator: Maria Rita Prette (ed.), *The Legal Bodies - April 7 (Judicial Inquiry Against Autonomy)*, in *The Lost Map*, 1 (Project Memory), 2nd ed., Dogliani, Sensibili alle foglie, November 2007, p. 265.]

<sup>8</sup> *Translator*: drafted in January 1977, Charta 77 was an informal civic initiative, the distribution of which the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic considered to be a political crime.

<sup>9</sup> *Translator*: the political parties that participated in the Constituent Assembly and played leading roles in drafting and approving the 1948 Republican Constitution: the Christian Democratic Party, the Italian Communist Party, the Italian Socialist Party, the Italian Democratic Socialist Party, the Italian Liberal Party and the Italian Republic Party.

<sup>10</sup> “ ‘L’11 settembre? Un evento dalla bellezza sublime,’ lo scrive Franco Piperno, ex leader di Potere Operaio. I terroristi? ‘Un pugno audace de intellettuali,’ ” *Corriere della Sera*, Cronache, 11 Settembre 2011. [Translator: “ ‘September 11<sup>th</sup>? An event of sublime beauty.’ An editorial by Franco Piperno, former leader of Potere Operaio, published in the online edition of the *Quotidiano di Calabria*, is a gut punch and is sure to spark discussion. It’s a long tirade against the United States in which Al Qaeda terrorists are described as a ‘bold handful of intellectuals.’”

unemployment, drugs, poverty, the police, the courts and prison.<sup>11</sup> But this destruction of Italian generations continues with impunity even today, with mass unemployment, immigration organized by the political Mafia, and the emigration of those young Italians who are forced to flee elsewhere to save themselves.

### **Refusal of compromise and obedience.**

1977 was also a reaction to Enrico Berlinguer's verbal squabbles about the "Historic Compromise" [of the Italian Communist Party] with the ruling class and against the working class, which was denied any opportunity to express itself, and to that other squabble about "parallel convergences" on the part of [Prime Minister] Aldo Moro. As usual, workers were asked to make sacrifices and remain silent, with inflation exceeding 20%, poverty rapidly growing, wages falling and youth unemployment at its highest, which has since become endemic. The 1977 that I knew and loved, however, was a rebellion so free that it's hard to imagine in today's domesticated society, in which there isn't even time to say "*Don't smoke!*" before everyone obeys this demand – a society in which everything that isn't mandatory is forbidden. Today, the world, as Giacomo Leopardi<sup>12</sup> would say, "has fallen into obedience."

### **An unforgivable movement.**

Against this monumental corruption and all those ill-conceived ideas, a radical and easygoing movement suddenly rose up, unforgivably, proudly and unexpectedly – a movement never before seen in Italy or anywhere else in Europe. It was a volcanic eruption of fire and lava, of bold and successful initiatives, that, with great care, blended together imagination, art, life, self-irony, sarcasm, politics, derision and subversion. Because it was unforgivable, this movement was never forgiven, but was instead slandered, vilified and repressed by all the powers that be and discredited by the intellectuals who were subservient to the Communist Party. And, even today, 40 years later, it remains scandalously covered over by a woolly, insincere veil [*un velo peloso*] of insolent censorious impudence that has been torn by the solitary courage with which Claudia Salaris, Pablo Echaurren<sup>13</sup> and a few other *happy few*<sup>14</sup> have treated it – people who were in fact among the protagonists of a movement that didn't need them, but which immediately aroused my enthusiasm.

### **First digression: Censor's prank.**

I must make a digression here into the book of my memory.<sup>15</sup> In 1977, I was 28 years old and had already been living in voluntary confinement for over two years, isolated on a carefully chosen Tuscan hill, because I was a constant target of the police, the Carabinieri and the anti-terrorism prosecutor Pier Luigi Vigna. Vigna had already had me arrested and detained, albeit for only eight days, in March 1975 in Florence, while I was heading for Milan, because I'd been accused of transporting weapons of war. These weapons had indeed been placed in my car – I

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<sup>11</sup> For the introduction and distribution of heroin in Italy in the 1970s, with the aim of crushing dissent, see "Operation Blue Moon," implemented by the CIA.

<sup>12</sup> *Translator*: a celebrated Italian philosopher, poet and essayist (1798-1837).

<sup>13</sup> *Translator*: Claudia Salaris and Pablo Echaurren (a married couple) have written extensively about Futurism and the movement of 1977 in Italy.

<sup>14</sup> *Translator*: English in original.

<sup>15</sup> *Translator*: *del libro della mia memoria* is a phrase that appears in Dante's *Vita Nuova* (1293).

don't know whether they were planted there by the Carabinieri, the police or the *Guardia di Finanza* [the Italian finance police], because at the checkpoint where I was stopped, all three of these police forces were, remarkably, on the scene. In reality, on that very day, I was carrying something more dangerous than weapons, namely, the manuscript of my book, which was later published under the pseudonym of "Censor." In that pamphlet, which was titled *Rapporto Veridico sulle ultime opportunità di salvare il Capitalismo in Italia*,<sup>16</sup> I pretended to be an old, ultraconservative, cynical and nonchalant<sup>17</sup> bourgeois who, of course, admitted the demonstrable usefulness of the State's recourse to terrorism, starting with the attack upon the Piazza Fontana,<sup>18</sup> in its attempt to defame and repress subversives and proletarians, and thus spare us a civil war, but who harshly criticized the subsequent police and judicial missteps [*dérappages*].

As for the Communists, Censor asserted that we, the bourgeois, had received from them all the necessary proof that we should bring them into the governing coalition in times of crisis, to fight against the working class – something at which they had demonstrated they were excellent everywhere in the world – only to then throw them out once the crisis was over. Which was what in fact happened and continues to happen today, only their names, but not their professions, have changed, and this happened despite the fact that the Communists' hand basket was upended by the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978, which was ordered by forces within the system that were irrationally hostile to the use of the Communists against the working class. These were the same forces that preferred to use, as a *deus ex machina*, the ineffable Red Brigades instead of the Communists, as, later on, they used Bin Laden after the collapse of the Soviet Union and, today, the Islamic State. These were, and in part remain, *inconceivable* things – things that will disturb anyone's false consciousness, in any case. My goal in "Operation Censor" was to use the enemy's methods, by creating a *false-flag* pamphlet, by making my enemies say the *unspeakable*. I therefore demonstrated experimentally and scientifically how easy it actually is to deceive the general population, and the enemy itself, with the same methods used in the staging of terrorism. In this way, I exposed the fraud and deceived the deceivers using their own methods.

### **Second digression: the Censor Scandal.**

The pamphlet was published shortly thereafter<sup>19</sup> in an edition of 520 numbered copies, in elegant monotype typography and on special paper for the bibliophiles, and was distributed by

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<sup>16</sup> *Translator: Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy.*

<sup>17</sup> *Translator: disinvolto* can also mean "insolent."

<sup>18</sup> *Translator:* there had been at least two terrorist attacks prior to the bombing of the Piazza Fontana: one targeted the Trade Fair and Railway Station in Milan (25 April 1969); the other targeted several passenger trains (8-9 August 1969).

<sup>19</sup> *Translator:* a letter from Guy Debord to Sanguinetti dated 20 May 1975 suggests that the original publication date was supposed to be early or mid May: "The unfortunate delay in all this pushes us back, concerning the translation [of the pamphlet into French], to publication in September, the beginning of June being the limit point for the Parisian edition." *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 5: Janvier 1973-Décembre 1978* (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 2005), p. 268. There were further delays, as indicated by a letter from Debord to Sanguinetti dated 24 July 1975: "Something was assuredly lost on 15 June, but it is true that the passing of this deadline means that there is a different and perhaps even greater advantage, *if the work is distributed well*, despite the season and if the wind remains strong." *Ibid.*, p. 286.

mail to the elite: bankers, politicians, journalists and even Pope Paul VI. Each copy bore a typographical dedication *ad personam*.<sup>20</sup>

I dedicated this *Truthful Report* to the memory of the humanist banker Raffaele Mattioli, who had passed away two years earlier, and with whom I had been a young friend, and this fact further muddied the trail that could have led to me. The publisher, Sergio Scotti Camuzzi, was later thanked in letters from Giulio Andreotti, Aldo Moro, Pietro Nenni, Giorgio Amendola, Guido Carli, Bruno Visentini, Gianni Agnelli, the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the Prefect of Milan and others. All the journalists, but especially the Left-wing ones, who were eagerly awaiting the “Historic Compromise,” augmented their flattery by weaving dithyrambs in favor of the wealthy and elitist Censor, whose favors they were already vying for, even before they knew who he was. They seemed unperturbed by his extreme cynicism concerning the use of terrorism and the Communists against the working class and, more particularly, against the poor in general, which certainly wasn’t very *politically correct*.<sup>21</sup> Senator Merzagora, the former interim president of the Senate and of the Republic, Guido Carli, the Governor of the Bank of Italy, who signed himself Bancor, and even Eugenio Montale, who later wrote me a letter about it, were suspected to be the author. The book became highly sought-after and aroused morbid curiosity. The publisher Mursia published five subsequent editions later that same year.<sup>22</sup>

### **In prison.**

My main concern on the day of my arrest was to hide the manuscript, which I immediately gave to my partner, Katharine Scott, who was headed to Venice, along with her violin and briefcase. When the police car in which we were being transported headed for the headquarters of the Florence police, I began singing (in French) a shortened version of Gilbert Bécaud’s famous song “Et maintenant.”<sup>23</sup> The words, changed for the occasion, became instructions to my companion to save the manuscript, defend herself and then hide. Thus did the manuscript, along with our baggage, enter the Santa Verdiana women’s prison in Florence, where it stayed for two days, without arousing any suspicion, before being released and taken to a safe place. My singing was so unashamed that a policeman asked me, “Excuse me, but we are arresting you. What reason do you have for singing?” The person who enforced the arrest warrant was none other than the famous police commissioner Giuseppe Impallomeni (P2 card no. 2213).<sup>24</sup>

If the manuscript had been found, I wouldn’t have been released from prison before being forced to reveal its provenance, and I already had to defend myself against the charge of weapons possession, which I did by very simply telling Pier Luigi Vigna, “You put the weapons

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<sup>20</sup> *Translator*: Latin in original: personalized.

<sup>21</sup> *Translator*: English in original.

<sup>22</sup> Censor, *Rapporto Veridico sulle ultime opportunità di salvare il Capitalismo in Italia*, Scotti Camuzzi Editore, Milano, July 1975. Reprinted several times, under the same title, by Editore Mursia.

<sup>23</sup> *Translator*: words by Pierre Delanoë, music by Gilbert Bécaud (1961).

<sup>24</sup> *Translator*: *Propaganda Due* was the name of a super-secret Italian Masonic lodge that was headed by Licio Gelli, a banker who was suspected of organizing the terrorist attack upon the Bologna train station that took place on 2 August 1980, and made up of thousands of influential Italian journalists, politicians, businessmen and military officers who planned to recapture Italy in the event of a Communist revolution.

there, and I'll prove it." If I remember correctly, conviction on charges of possessing and transporting weapons of war carried a minimum sentence of 12 years behind bars. The manuscript, on the other hand, constituted a subversive fraud, which was very dangerous for its bearer and, if revealed, would have been used against me even before it came to light. During the short time I spent in prison at Murate, I didn't know the manuscript's fate, but, as soon as I was released, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that it had passed undetected and unharmed through the bars of the women's prison. So, I was happy: I was free, I could still do harm, and I could take revenge on my enemies. A friend of Boccaccio, Paola da Certaldo, considers these facts the first two "joys" of being in the world: "The first joy is to take revenge [...] The second joy is to get out of prison."<sup>25</sup> I hid in Bergamo and set to work every day, preparing the edition, undisturbed in the Piazza Vecchia library, in front of the Palazzo della Ragione.

### **Proof of Censor's nonexistence.**

The scandal was such a success, and the secrecy of the operation was so impenetrable (no one knew except Guy Debord, Professor Ariberto Mignoli,<sup>26</sup> Professor Sergio Scotti Camuzzi, who was the second publisher of the pamphlet, and another accomplice),<sup>27</sup> that I myself was forced, six months later, to reveal the nonexistence of Censor. In any case, I could not keep the secret any longer, because, in November 1975, in Milan, intelligence officials had ordered Scott Camuzzi to reveal Censor's real name within 24 hours.

I then published another pamphlet, again in monotype, in 520 numbered copies, on 15 January 1976: *Prove dell'Inesistenza di Censor / Enunciate dal suo Autore*.<sup>28</sup> It was delivered first to Giorgio Bocca, who had been the first to be mistaken about Censor's identity, in his commentary in *Il Giorno*, and published at the same time in the first or second issue of *La Repubblica*, the new daily newspaper, in order to reach the maximum audience.<sup>29</sup>

This second pamphlet plunged all those who had lauded the first one into irremediable consternation and dismay, and because they'd given me the opportunity to experience their servility, infamy, ignorance and stupidity, I mocked them. The incipit set the tone for what followed: "Those who have until now regretted not knowing the identity of the author of the *Truthful Report* will now regret knowing it. Those who were scandalized by Censor's anonymity will now have reason to be scandalized by something else entirely. Those who praised Censor, believing they were currying favor with a powerful figure, will be ashamed [...]" etc.

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<sup>25</sup> Paolo da Certaldo, *Libro di Buoni Costumi*, §276, in Vittore Branca, *Mercanti Scrittori*, Milano: Rusconi (1986).

<sup>26</sup> *Translator*: also known as The Doge.

<sup>27</sup> *Translator*: in a letter to the Italian Situationist Paolo Salvadori dated 16 March 1975, Guy Debord refers to "a certain literary project that [Sanguinetti] had to hide from everyone *except you* and that perhaps has been presented discretely to you alone." *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 5: Janvier 1973-Décembre 1978* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005). p. 256.

<sup>28</sup> *Translator*: *Proofs of the Nonexistence of Censor / As Enunciated by his Author*. Guy Debord's translations into French of both the *Truthful Report* and the *Proofs of the Nonexistence of Censor* were published in a single volume by Champ libre (Paris) in January 1976 and reprinted in March of that same year.

<sup>29</sup> Gianfranco Sanguinetti, *Prove dell'Inesistenza di Censor enunciate dal suo autore*, Milano, January 1976.

I was never forgiven, and I never did anything to be forgiven. In fact, I did worse. An opportunity arose to do so, precisely because of the 1977 movement, as we will see later.

### **The movement's greatest weakness.**

One of the greatest weaknesses of the '77 movement was its lack of awareness of the phenomenon of terrorism, which, then as now, was used as a political tool. But Italy was, as I've written several times, the global experimental laboratory for modern false-flag terrorism. Saying so today is a banality, because this type of terrorism has been very successful and has been employed against the general population almost weekly by and in every country. It never targets banks, politicians or those in power: it always targets the poor. But back then, its deployment wasn't so obvious. The phenomenon's sheer novelty demanded attention that wasn't there, and I tried to attract attention to it starting in 1969,<sup>30</sup> then again in 1975 and 1977, and again thereafter. And so here I must make another digression on terrorism because it would be decisive in Italy for over 15 years, and subsequently in the rest of the world.

### **Another digression on terrorism.**

Most of the participants in the movement were younger than I was, and so they hadn't had the opportunity to experience firsthand the criminal use the State had, since 1969, been making of terrorism, which politicians, magistrates and journalists presented as the ultimate form of subversion when, quite the opposite, it was (and still is) the ultimate, cowardly and hateful bulwark of capitalism and the State's secret services against class struggle. The extra-parliamentary groups, in their irremediable poverty, generally fell for the deception and even foolishly and ambiguously admired the "comrades who make mistakes," and sometimes they themselves "made mistakes" and ended up like rats in a trap. The Communists knew everything about what was going on, but remained silent, as always, simply in order to profit from it. No other party had any interest in telling the truth. It was then that the game of threats and blackmail, of bargaining, collusion and corruption began in Italy – a game that has only spread and worsened. Living in Milan in the 1960s, I had seen firsthand what was happening, and I understood it more out of necessity than choice, because lives were at stake. And many people close to me, or my friends, died or were unjustly sentenced to long prison terms because of it.

### **The Reichstag burns.**

After having taken refuge in Switzerland following the bombing at the Piazza Fontana, the Italian Situationists delegated one of them to return to Milan and, on 19 December 1969, together with three trusted friends, published the manifesto that we had agreed upon, titled *Il Reichstag Brucia?* and signed by "The Friends of the International."<sup>31</sup> This manifesto claimed that the massacre was the work of the Italian secret services and that its purpose was to target and defame the proletariat in order to put an end to the class struggles of the "Hot Autumn" of 1969.

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<sup>30</sup> *Translator*: 1969 was the year in which *Il Reichstag Brucia?* was published by the Italian section of the Situationist International.

<sup>31</sup> The Situationist in question was Eduardo Rothe, originally from Venezuela. Cristina Sensehauser, Puni Cesoni and Filippo Orsini also participated in this meritorious operation. [*Translator*: the reader might already be aware that this tract was translated into English and widely distributed on the internet in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks that took place in the United States on 11 September 2001.]

Among other things, it stated: “The direct and indirect results of the attacks are their goal [...] It is Power itself that, striving for its own totalitarian affirmation, has spectacularly expressed its own terrorist negation.”

The Piazza Duomo, the Piazza Fontana and other symbolic places in Milan, such as the service areas of some large factories, were plastered overnight with copies of this manifesto, which were, it was made clear, generated by a “stolen mimeograph machine.” But no newspaper, no magazine, dared to quote from or reproduce the text, and this was understandable. It aroused distrust even among members of the extreme Left, who remained silent. It is curious that gullible people like the Italian extra-parliamentarians were distrustful when faced with the simple truth if it did not come some source that they considered to be “authorized.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Piazza Fontana trial.<sup>33</sup>**

As already mentioned, I decided to drop the mask regarding Censor’s pamphlet at the end of November 1975 because the police had summoned me to Florence in order to inform me of a summons to testify at the Piazza Fontana trial, which had been moved to Catanzaro, which was as far away from Milan as possible. Taking the utmost precautions, I disappeared from all the addresses with which I was associated, because several witnesses had already vanished, never to return. Traveling under an assumed name, I presented myself to Judge Gianfranco Migliaccio, a cultured young gentleman from southern Italy. On the advice of Guy Debord, I provided him with a very brief written statement, in which I reiterated that I had no judicial evidence to present against the Italian State, which was not my duty to provide. I asserted that I was merely the witness to an historic event, and I considered history the only tribunal worthy of respect. This judge had already read Censor’s pamphlet with enthusiasm. He expressed disappointment with this testimony, which was of little help to him, and he asked me why I had so little faith in the judiciary. But above all, he asked me what I would have done if I had been in his place, which was a question I never expected, but which demonstrated his sincere good faith.

I asked him if we could talk alone, and he ushered the clerk out. I told him there were two possibilities: either he wanted to advance his career in the judiciary, and then it would better for him to validate all the lies of the official version; or he could go down in history as a fair and courageous judge. “And what would you do in that case?” he asked. I bluntly replied, “I would start by arresting General Gian Adelio Maletti, the head of the Secret Service’s Section D, and Captain Labruna.” It emerged later that both were members of the P2 Lodge.

We parted on excellent terms, and I have always had respect for this man. No sooner said than done: in February 1976, the General and the Captain were arrested; they were convicted a few months later in Catanzaro. Among the other things, General Maletti, when cornered,

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<sup>32</sup> The only exception to the silence was *Bombe Sangue Capitale*, the leaflet published in Milan in January 1970 by the libertarian group Ludd – Consigli proletari. [*Translator*: in November 1969, this group, described by Guy Debord as “pro-situ students,” had published a “likable” tract called *Avere per fine il movimento reale* (“To have as goal the real movement”). See the letter from Guy Debord to Paolo Salvadori dated 24 November 1969, in *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 4: Janvier 1969-Décembre 1972* (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 2004), p. 162.

<sup>33</sup> *Translator*: the trial of the main defendants, Pietro Valpreda and Mario Merlino, both anarchists, began on 23 February 1972. On 18 March 1974, in Catanzaro, two more defendants were added: Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura. By 27 January 1975, a neo-fascist and journalist named Guido Giannettini had also been added to the list of those accused.

revealed the CIA's involvement in supplying the explosives used at the Piazza Fontana. Judge Gianfranco Migliaccio will therefore go down in history for having written the following in the indictment of Maletti and Labruna: "The subversive forces responsible for the attacks [of December 12, 1969] were part of the SID in 1969."<sup>34</sup>

### **In the Pythagorean places.**

When telling a story, even a dramatic one, there are always comical and sometimes paradoxical twists that put things back into a realistic perspective. And so here I will offer a digression on my trip to the Pythagorean places. Guy Debord, whom I had visited in Paris – illegally, having been expelled from France<sup>35</sup> – around mid-November 1975, in order to worsen the scandal concerning the revelation of Censor's identity, had anticipated my warning that the position of a witness is more dangerous than that of a defendant. He expressed his deepest concern about my trip to Calabria and the entire period preceding my testimony, as well as about the publication of my second pamphlet, the one in which I planned to cast aside Censor's mask, which he rightly considered to be the most critical of the two. He therefore urged me to organize my protection in a "military" manner. I abandoned the two houses in which I lived and took refuge in an unassuming 15th-century villa in San Domenico di Fiesole, which had been donated by Cosimo de' Medici to Marsilio Ficino – a place where an enviable peacefulness reigned, where there was a splendid garden and an exterior gallery with two high-reliefs that depicted Plato and Marilio, who was Plato's first modern translator and interpreter.

In the meantime, I had asked a famous gynecologist in Rome, who was a neighbor of mine in the countryside, if he knew anyone in Calabria who was powerful and capable of helping me out. He suggested a banker whose wife had had her uterus removed by him (so that she could later show off her body in a bikini, he told me) without ever asking for payment for the operation. In gratitude, the banker arranged for a truckload of sheep to be delivered to the gynecologist's farm every year. When I arrived in Calabria around mid-afternoon under an assumed name with my partner, I rang up the banker, saying I was a friend of a friend and needed advice. Within a half-hour, he was at my hotel, where we exchanged pleasantries and he offered us whiskey. Afterwards, he said, "Please excuse, Madame, but we men must talk alone." We two walked away. He quickly came to the point. He asked me from whom I needed protection and for how long. I replied that I needed his protection until the next day and all the way to Catanzaro, and that I needed to be protected from the police and the secret services, against whom I was going to testify. He didn't bat an eye. The courthouse in Catanzaro was more than an hour's drive away. He told me that there was no problem, that he would take of everything and that from now on I would be his guest. And so, later that evening, we went for a traditional after-dinner stroll down the city's main street. It was an immediately instructive experience: when we passed, everyone took off their hats, but never my host. The conversation was pleasant and light, at least until my partner had the unfortunate idea of asking our host about the Mafia situation in Calabria. I gave her a light tap on the shin. Our host stopped, turned slowly toward her and, with a surprised expression, asked, "Which country do you come from

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gianni Barbacetto, *Il Grande Vecchio*, among other accounts.

<sup>35</sup> *Translator*: on the orders of Raymond Marcellin, the French Minister of the Interior, on 27 July 1971, after Sanguinetti had returned from a trip to Portugal during which he delivered the typescript of a Portuguese translation of Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* to a publisher. No charges against Sanguinetti were ever lodged.

Madame?” “England,” she relied. I will always remember his comment. “Ah! I see you read a lot of newspapers in England.” Then, after this incident, the walk continued peacefully.

The dinner at his villa was magnificent. He asked me what year I was born and, learning that I was born in 1948, we drank excellent Cirò 1948 all evening. Around midnight, a car came to pick us up and, as he said goodbye, he told me that two large, dark Fiats would arrive at the hotel at seven o'clock the next morning and that we were to get into the first one. Indeed, at seven o'clock sharp the next morning, the cars were already waiting for us. The driver was in the first one, and four men were in the second. We arrived in Catanzaro in little over an hour. I said goodbye to my escort and entered the courthouse to testify before Judge Gianfranco Migliaccio. After my testimony, I felt much lighter, and I went with my partner to an old tavern in which a small barrel of Marsala hung behind the bar. “How much is in it?” I asked the innkeeper, and he said that there were only a few liters left. Since I needed a small barrel to store the Vin Santo I produced in Tuscany, I expressed my interest. “If it were empty, I'd give it to you,” he replied. “Then let's empty it,” I added and offered some to all the customers in the inn until the barrel was empty. And then I left Catanzaro, happy and with that barrel under my arm.

### **My second expulsion from France.**

A few weeks later, on 11 February 1976, I was recognized at the French border while riding a night train, pulled off it, expelled from the country and handed over to the Swiss police, who, after a brief investigation, released me. This incident, which occurred almost simultaneously with the publication of the French edition of *Censor*, outraged Guy Debord, who avenged me by having Gérard Lebovici buy a half-page of space in the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, in which Debord's “Declaration” concerning me was published. This statement remains a literary masterpiece of irony and Swiftian black humor. Because it was published as an advertisement, it was printed without the censors of that newspaper, which was being cheerfully and cruelly mocked [for not covering the story], taking any notice.<sup>36</sup> We were not bored.

### **The usefulness of digressions.**

This digression on some early signs of my 1977 is perhaps unnecessary, but it is useful for helping younger people understand the climate in which we then lived. Even today, after reading my book *Terrorismo e dello Stato*,<sup>37</sup> there are people who ask me why I wasn't simply killed. After all, I was hated, not only by the police, but also by all the Marxist-Leninists, the Maoists, the Communists, etc., and nothing would have been easier than to a fake a settling of scores in the subversive camp, without even inconveniencing the police who had in any case thoroughly infiltrated it. As in all things, Machiavelli would say, one can conclude that, if the worst didn't happen, it was partly due to luck and partly due to virtue, that is to say, prudence.

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<sup>36</sup> *Le Monde*, 24 February 1976. [Translator: this “Déclaration des ‘Editions Champ libre’” in part states, “Gianfranco Sanguinetti [...], having presented himself at the French border on 11 February, was turned back due to the application of a refusal-of-stay decision taken on 21 July 1971 by Marcellin, the Minister of the Interior. We know that this kind of administrative manifestation of national security requires no judicial approval, cannot be appealed and thus is permanent. Even though the political regimes in Europe want to make small changes in their continuity, this naturally does not have any bearing on those who contest all of those regimes equally.”

<sup>37</sup> *Translator: On Terrorism and the State* (1979).

### **The spirit of the times.**

The spirit of the times was very different back then from what it is today: life was dangerous, but people felt free. Neither I nor anyone else would have dreamed of talking about these events 40 years later. We didn't know if, come tomorrow, we'd be locked up in prison for 20 years or perhaps killed. We lived each day as if it were our last, and for many the last day came early. But at least they put up a fight. Today, however, people die even more often than back then, without having lived, when those who govern over and through terror – that is to say, politics and the Deep State – decide to perpetrate massacres in New York, Boston, Madrid, London, Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Istanbul, Manchester, Tehran and elsewhere, come tomorrow. Because it is with terror and fear that one governs everywhere in this world. These massacres cost little, but have a huge impact, changing the entire social climate, and they allow for the establishment of a perpetual and widespread state of fear, distrust and emergency, against which there is no revolt. The script is tried and tested, and it's always the same. After each massacre, the State immediately kills the person or persons it instantly designates as the culprit(s), without any further judicial formalities, and reassures the population that everything is now under control – until the next massacre takes place.

Back then people didn't succumb to fear. Every massacre, every war, every assassination, concerned us and was an occasion for new struggles. Today, after every new massacre, the masses remain silent. Those who speak, condemn and pretend to be indignant are only the hypocritical beneficiaries of those massacres – the government ministers who issue libertical decrees and the journalists whose function is to corroborate all the *fake news*<sup>38</sup> and to validate the official lies.<sup>39</sup>

### **Psychological operations and low-intensity warfare.**

Today, people think that massacres only affect others, those who get killed. But they are in fact committed against the living; indeed, in their submissive, perverse and nihilistic way of thinking, the survivors are now grateful to the States for having been temporarily “defended” from severe police measures and thus spared, at least for the time being. The crowds, offered as burnt offerings to Power, which has invented and fabricated all of the cruel, fictitious enemies that it needs and are well documented in films produced by propaganda agencies, are resigned like lambs at Easter. These are *Low-Intensity Operations*<sup>40</sup> and psychological operations (PSYOPS), which are well codified in military literature and which perfectly achieve their goal: to frighten and demoralize the populations against whom one always governs. Advertising, propaganda and politics all treat the populations as if they were small children. Terrorism is a child's tale told to instill fear, support the pursuit of security and enforce obedience.

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<sup>38</sup> *Translator*: English in original.

<sup>39</sup> See the following two texts: Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Paris 13.11: Morale Operation,” published online by Mediapart, 2 December 2015, and Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “De l'Utilité du Terrorisme, considérée par rapport à l'usage qu'on fait,” published online by Mediapart, 8 December 2015. These interventions were then translated and published several times in English, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Czech, etc. [*Translator*: “Paris 13 November 2015: A Moral Operation” and “The Utility of Terrorism, Considered with Respect to the Usage Made of It.”]

<sup>40</sup> *Translator*: English in original.

In the 1970s, such submission to arbitrary power would have revolted us. Today, however, we are witnessing a Leopardian massacre of illusions,<sup>41</sup> in which the acceptance of lies and deception concerning the latest massacre have become the norm, not cowardice, shame or complicity. People have become accomplices to the lies they listen to without reacting. They have not yet learned that they cannot allow themselves to be governed innocently.

### **Pavlovian experiments.**

In the 1970s, spectacular terrorism only existed in Italy and, to a lesser extent, in Germany. Because its experimental Pavlovian deployment against the deceived masses had, as expected, produced good results, it was then used everywhere. My amazement greatly increased when I saw that the 1977 movement was so defenseless against provocation, so naïve and imprudent when faced with the issues of weapons and terrorism – which were, in fact, effectively used to defeat it.

### **The importance of naming one's enemies.**

It was precisely about these topics that, in 1997, I spoke in Rome at assemblies that brought together many activists and published two manifestoes, which were distributed at demonstrations in Rome and Bologna. These manifestoes clearly demonstrated my high degree of concern about the movement's lack of theoretical and practical clarity on several crucial issues: the potential scope of repression by the Communists and the State, bureaucratic manipulation, the use of weapons and terrorism.<sup>42</sup> This pre-insurrectionary movement that had fought and named almost all of its enemies, *except terrorism*, was clearly destined to be defeated by it.

Everyone who participated these events knows that the atmosphere back then was one of great enthusiasm, generosity, creativity, friendliness, tolerance, optimism and good spirits. Trust in other people was still present. Many young people, even unaccompanied girls, could still be seen hitchhiking along the streets. Today, this is unthinkable. The public's mood has changed. Distrust reigns supreme, indifference and cowardice are fostered everywhere.

### **Remedy for everything.**

I often went to Rome and, just as often, [Metropolitan] "Indians" came to visit me in the countryside. I thought that the most useful thing I could do was to arm their minds. I began writing pamphlets that would eventually be compiled into a book, which would be called *Rimedio a Tutto*<sup>43</sup> and bring together around 15 thematic pamphlets, each organized as a chapter, each with its own title. The complex events of that year, the rapid decline of the movement, and

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<sup>41</sup> *Translator*: see Giacomo Leopardi, *Le Massacre des Illusions* (Paris: Editions Allia, 1993), for which Sanguinetti wrote a publicity flier titled *À l'église avec Manzoni, avec Leopardi à la guerre!* ("To the Church with Manzoni . . . With Leopardi to War!").

<sup>42</sup> *Benvenuti Nella città più Libera Del Mondo!* and *Avviso al Proletariato Sugli Avvenimenti Delle Ultime Ore*. [*Translator*: "Welcome to the Freest City in the World" and "Notice to the Proletariat About the Events of the Last Few Hours," both included in this volume.]

<sup>43</sup> *Translator*: *Remedy to Everything*, the title of which is a détournement of François-Joseph Lange de La Maltière's *Remède à tout, ou constitution invulnérable de la félicité publique* ("Remedy for Everything, or the Invulnerable Constitution of Public Happiness"), first published in 1793.

the extraordinary events of the following year, which included the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, meant that I decided not to publish that book, but only the chapter on terrorism, and a preface, because it seemed the most urgent thing to get done. These texts were rejected by the publisher Mondadori, and so I later published them myself, under my own name, under the title *Del Terrorismo e della Stato. / La teoria e la pratica del terrorismo / per la prima volta divulgate*.<sup>44</sup> My “Notice to the Reader” concluded with this statement: “To those who fear the truth, I want to offer several truths that will make them fearful, and to those who have no fear of it, I want to offer a reason that proves that the terrorism of the truth is the only one that benefits the proletariat.”

### **Free de Sade!**

A reminder of the events of 1977 comes from rereading my correspondence with Debord, which are part of my archives.<sup>45</sup> I can glean some relevant information from them, recorded in real time, which I briefly summarize below.

On 31 January and 1 and 2 February [1977], I was gratified by the conclusion of two trials and a case in Milan, which was ultimately postponed, against the weekly magazine *L'Europeo*, which had refused to publish my denunciation of a fake interview with me. In Florence, I was sentenced to a paltry penalty for the affair of the weapons of war, which were planted and discovered in my car two years earlier – a fine plus reimbursement of the court’s costs, which was a sign that the prosecution’s case had miserably collapsed. Regarding the events of February in Rome, I wrote that, for the first time, a young proletarianized generation had explicitly identified the Communists and the labor unions’ police forces, as well as capitalism, as its enemies. I reported that in Bologna, the Communists’ stronghold and showcase city, armored vehicles had been used to repress demonstrations, as had been done in Budapest and Prague. On the walls of Rome, I recounted having read this singular and admirable demand, among many others: “Free de Sade!” I discussed the phenomenon of free, “pirate” radio stations and their essential function as a communication hub: Radio Alice had already been shut down on 12 March. In Rome, people were shouting, “Tanks in Chile, unions in Italy!” and fleeing trade unionists responded with “Siberia! Siberia!” The conflict was constant, and the Stalinist bureaucrats were given no respite. The Communist Mayor of Bologna had sent a wreath to the funeral of the Francesco Lorusso, a student who’d been killed by the Carabinieri, but the wreath was refused and returned to its sender.

### **The Communists in full regalia.**

The Communists, already decked out for their announced marriage to the Christian Democrats, and smug and embittered by their electoral success, desperately sought to prove themselves worthy of the bride and to gain a seat in the government, and threw off their masks and repressed the movement, which, however, was beginning to spread to the factories. On 6 April, over 350 factory councils sent between 3,000 and 5,000 delegates to the Teatro Lirico in Milan, which was an assembly disavowed by the Communists. The workers argued for the need

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<sup>44</sup> Milan, March 1979; second edition, expanded, April 1980. [Translator: *On Terrorism and the State: the Theory and Practice of Terrorism, Divulged for the First Time.*]

<sup>45</sup> These archives are now located at Yale University, at the Beinecke Library, thanks to the tireless work of Kevin Repp, who collects and curates the archives of the postwar European avant-garde for this library.

to open a new phase in the conflict, no longer defensive, but counter-offensive. Thus the foundations of *dual power* were being laid. These delegates convened a national assembly of delegates at the end of the month, which, as I said, was in reality equivalent to a call to all Italian workers to elect their own recallable delegates and thus bypass the unions. The situationists had always been resolutely in favor of workers' councils in which each delegate could be recalled at any time by the rank and file. I pointed out that, because of the risk of the movement spreading further and becoming even more radical, violent repression and even police provocations could be expected. The "Historic Compromise" had suddenly become obsolete before it was even born, and, in any case, it could no longer be presented as a so-called victory for the working class. It is now known that the double game of the Communist Party, which had claimed to be independent from Moscow, was confirmed by the fact that on 31 March 1977, it received a million dollars from the KGB.<sup>46</sup> All suppositions that Moscow was opposed to the "Historic Compromise" were contradicted by this fact.

### **Censor's enemies.**

It is known now that Richard Gardner, the American Ambassador to Italy, later wrote that Eugenio Scalfari, the publisher of *La Repubblica*, had told him in April 1977 that, "only when Berlinguer takes control of the police will there be civil peace in Italy." Gardner also said that, "Leopoldo Pirelli did the same thing shortly thereafter, expressing the same opinion, which I was beginning to hear from a worrying number of Italian business leaders, namely, that to solve Italy's economic problems, there was no other choice than to let the Communists into the government."<sup>47</sup> The business community was siding with Censor, whose enemies remained Licio Gelli, the secret services and the police forces, which were completely infiltrated by members of the P2 Lodge, the Americans and the fascists, all of whom actively collaborated in the staging the spectacle of false-flag terrorism, both Red and Black, which was then called the "strategy of tension."

### **Sneers.**

I wrote to Debord to tell him that in Rome I'd seen a bookstand in front of the University that was more than half-filled with pirated Situationist editions. Various Situationist slogans were plastered on the walls. They included "The revolution will be a celebration or it won't be anything at all" and, in French, "Ne travaillez jamais!"<sup>48</sup> I told him that the Metropolitan Indians were the spearhead of the spontaneously formed groups that best expressed the spirit and modernity of the movement. Standing in front of a burned-out armored vehicle in Rome, while the police defended the trade unionists, I'd heard them chant these cruel, sneering words: "We don't want armored vehicles anymore, send us tanks, or we won't play anymore." In Bologna, there was graffiti that proclaimed, "Gasoline is expensive, make good use of it." I also told him that weapons had appeared among the Autonomists, who were mistakenly considered to be more radical than the Indians, and that this group, more structured than the Indians, was at great risk of infiltration and manipulation. I spoke at 8 o'clock in the evening of 5 April, two days after the repression began, at a meeting in the University's auditorium. The assembly was free but rather

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<sup>46</sup> See the chronology on the website of the Fondazione Cipriani.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. [*Translator*: see Richard N. Gardner, *Mission Italy: On the Front Lines of the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).]

<sup>48</sup> *Translator*: "Never work!"

weak. Bureaucrats and police officers were in the audience; they didn't express themselves but listened attentively. My remarks touched on three points: (1) how to avoid and discourage repression; (2) the need to send a delegation to Milan on the night of 5 April to attend the assembly at the Lirico the next day, with a specific mandate to establish direct contact with all the factory councils and to maintain in constant contact with everyone; and (3) after naming and insulting every bureaucratic group, I called for a demonstration the next day in the very center of the city, at the Campo dei Fiori.

### **Unassailable remedies against repression.**

My speech concerning repression was a slavish détournement, if not an outright plagiarism, of what Machiavelli puts into the mouth of an insurgent during the Ciompi revolt in Florence (*Istorie Fiorentine*, Book III, Chapter XIII). Since I don't remember my exact words, I will quote here the essence of Machiavelli's speech, from which mine was directly taken.

“We must now seek two things, and have two goals for our deliberations: one, that we may not be punished for the things done in the past; the other, that we may live with greater freedom and satisfaction than in the past. Therefore, wishing to be forgiven for old errors, we must commit new ones, doubling the evils, multiplying the arson and theft, and strive to have many companions in this, because when many err, no one is punished, and because small infractions are punished, while large and serious ones are rewarded; and when many suffer, few seek revenge, because universal injuries are borne with more patience than individual ones. Therefore, multiplying evils will more easily allow us to achieve impunity and will open the way to obtain what we desire for our freedom. We must therefore use force when the opportunity arises, and none is better than this, since our enemies are disunited, the government, uncertain, the magistrates dismayed. This course is bold and dangerous, but where necessity presses, boldness is judged to be prudence, and one never escapes danger without danger; and when one sees prison and death awaiting, remaining quiet is more dangerous than taking action, because in the first case the evils are certain and in the second case they are uncertain [...]”<sup>49</sup>

So much for the repression. I asked for an immediate vote concerning the delegation to Milan and the mandate to be given to it. The same was true for the demonstration the next day in Campo dei Fiori.

Despite the atrocities that I had described, I was never interrupted, and at the end there was applause. The assembly's weakness, however, was demonstrated by the facts that it did not immediately put my demands up for a vote, instead postponing such a vote until much later, when the delegates were already due to catch the train to Milan, and that it moved the demonstration on 7 April from Campo dei Fiori to the far outskirts of the city. There was a bureaucracy still in the making, which dared not express itself, but which was beginning to weigh in on the decisions. It was late, and many were leaving.

### **De Martino's provocation and kidnapping.**

Shortly afterward, toward the end of the same evening of 5 April, news spread of the provocation that I had feared – the highly unusual kidnapping in Naples of the son of Francesco

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<sup>49</sup> *Translator: The Florentine History, written by Niccolò Machiavelli, translated from the Italian by Ninian Hill Thomson, M.A., in two volumes, Volume I* (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Limited, 1906) pp. 188-189; translation modified to match Sanguinetti's quotation of the original.

De Martino, the former Secretary of the Italian Socialist Party. De Martino was on the verge of being elected President of the Republic; the then-President, Giovanni Leone, was implicated in several scandals and was about to resign. The real problem was that Francesco De Martino was a friend of the Communists, and thus he needed to be discredited and eliminated from the presidential race. The kidnapping was an attempt at political diversion, a poisoning of the public's mood, and a distraction of public opinion away from real current events, from the Milan Assembly of Councils, and towards other things, like the passage of repressive laws. It remains highly enigmatic and unexplained to this day.<sup>50</sup> First claimed by the NAP,<sup>51</sup> then by many others, the kidnapping ended when the family paid a ransom of one billion lire, which was an enormous sum. However, it was a botched operation, and a poor dress rehearsal for the kidnapping of Aldo Moro the following year. Years later, in 1980, a certain Vincenzo Tene, who had been charged and convicted of kidnapping Guido De Martino, wrote to me from the prison at Spoleto (he'd read my book on terrorism). "According to Justice," he wrote, "I was convicted as the instigator and executor, while the reality is very different."<sup>52</sup> But he didn't go into detail. The real instigators were in fact never discovered, and three of those convicted were murdered during a temporary work release from prison. Italians are the most refined people in Europe. Stendhal said that there are things [in Italy] that cannot be understood in countries where there is less need for precautions.

### **Notice to the proletariat.**

Having heard the news that morning on the radio, I immediately wrote "Notice to the Proletariat About the Events of the Last Few Hours," which I signed "Fast Pen." With my small group of Indians, I went to a printer, who agreed to print it clandestinely. But, out of prudence, he didn't want his typographical characters to be used, so I transcribed it in my own handwriting. Two hours later, it was printed up and ready for distribution at the demonstration in the suburbs planned for the evening of 5 April. In this manifesto, I wrote the following, among other things: "The only way we can prevent this repression is to extend the current movement everywhere, and first of all to the factories in all the cities in Italy. [...] Comrades! Beware of terrorist provocations by the secret services! Let us remember the Piazza Fontana and immediately denounce the hired terrorists. The kidnapping of De Martino is part of the strategy of the S.I.D."<sup>53</sup> [...] Terrorists acts, under the most varied labels, only serve power: they are spectacular events that only serve to hide and mask the real class struggle that we are fighting and that the so-called Communist Party would like to pass over in silence. [...] When the unions are no longer to dominate the struggle, it is normal for the police and secret services to take over."

For the first time, I realized the practicality of the new IBM-Heidelberg printing system. I mailed my manifesto to government ministers and powerful figures to whom I'd already sent the pamphlet that had been signed Censor (I'd kept my mailing list). I later learned that a manager at

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<sup>50</sup> *Translator*: abducted on 5 April 1977, Guido De Martino was held prisoner for 40 days. He was released on 15 May.

<sup>51</sup> *Translator*: the Nucleus of Armed Proletarians worked within Italy's prisons, inciting certain prisoners to take up armed struggle.

<sup>52</sup> See my archive at the Beinecke Library, Yale: volume 33.

<sup>53</sup> *Translator*: the Servizio Informazioni Difesa (Defense Information Service).

the Banca Commerciale at Piazza della Scala in Milan posted the manifesto on the bank's notice board, which angered the union representatives at the *Commissione interna*.

### **Indian perfidy.**

An imaginative initiative by some well-advised Indians also treacherously contributed to the botching and sabotage of the De Martino operation. A phone call from someone claiming to be a Catholic, a Socialist and a member of one of the secret services reached the radio stations and newspapers. In this call, the man, motivated by loyalty to the embattled Socialist leader [De Martino], relayed a heartfelt, plausible and resolute message that disassociated his own responsibilities from those of his colleagues in the secret services. The immediate and casual manner in which this call was conceived, disseminated and perceived ensured that this "virtuous" agent's denunciation was believed by those in high places and further disrupted the plans of the real perpetrators. I believe it also contributed to the disaster of that botched kidnapping, now become a farce and – who knows? – might even have saved the life of the unfortunate Guido De Martino. In any case, this time, the specialists in poisoning were themselves poisoned.

### **State of emergency in Rome.**

Returning from Rome to my farm in Tuscany, I had to leave that place immediately because I noticed the coming and going of unmistakably suspicious characters around my house in the open countryside, a fact that was confirmed by the Sardinian shepherd who lived on the same hill as I did. Without even finishing a letter to Debord, I left immediately. I finished it in and mailed it out from Milan, where the festive atmosphere of Rome was absent. This was a time when one never knew whether the precautions that had been taken were sufficient or inadequate, because, in many cases, there hadn't been enough of them. The repression that had begun in April worsened when, in May, I was back in Rome, where Interior Minister Cossiga had declared a ban on all demonstrations – a *de facto* illegal state of emergency. The movement that had begun in February had unleashed the most effective and violent attacks ever seen in a Western country on the reputations of the Communist Party and all the other institutions of the State. Recognizing all of its enemies, this pre-insurrectionary movement was destined to grow, but only on the condition that it also recognized terrorism as one of them. The airwaves were no longer a State monopoly. Free radio stations and a free press had played crucial roles, changing the very concept of information.

### **Theoretical truths.**

Certain theoretical truths, which the movement had transformed into a practical force, were certainly less numerous than the damages they had caused by imposing themselves. Among these truths, I list the following: (1) the society of the spectacle must be rejected; (2) the Communists must be openly denounced as the main police force of class society; (3) work must be refused, even by the unemployed; (4) the logic of militancy, of the leaderships and hierarchies of bureaucratic groupuscules, and of politics must be rejected; (5) real democracy and the revocability of delegates must be discovered; (6) *détournement* must be constantly applied in the streets, on free radio stations, in posters, etc.; (7) there must be the birth of a new, very modern spirit, full of self-irony, invention, black humor and sarcasm; and (8) the proclamation that the revolution should be a festival must be made. These ideas were, in fact, Situationist. Nothing was mediocre, up to a certain point. And everything headed towards disaster from the moment that weapons began to appear.

### **Counteroffensive and police provocations.**

The Communists had succeeded – almost everywhere, though not always – in preventing many workers’ struggles from merging with the movement. The workers’ assembly at the Teatro Lirico in Milan did not have the expected outcome. The police’s counteroffensive, which had begun shortly before the provocation of the De Martino kidnapping, continued with weapons and disguised police officers mingling with and shooting at the demonstrators, as has been documented by photographs taken by Tano D’Amico and others. There were many deaths, for which the movement was clearly blamed. Even the fascists, who are always useful to those in power at such times, were shooting people. Terrorism had returned, and we know who benefits from it, and we also know who uses it. The Red Brigades – that is to say, the secret services that led them – had not yet been unmasked. Wildcat strikes were spreading, as were the occupations of schools, vacant homes, factories, town halls and train stations. There were many acts of sabotage, prison rebellions and occupations of uncultivated land. But the repression progressed. There were many layoffs, the sliding wage scale was eliminated, the rate of inflation was 20 percent, and there were criminal complaints and convictions, searches without judicial authorization and instances of intimidation. “Provisional arrest” without the right to a lawyer was approved, as was prosecution for the crime of “possession of subversive documents,” which meant that anyone with a leaflet in their home could be arrested. Free radio stations were jammed and shut down. The movement was cut off from all credible information. On 18 and 19 May, the police occupied Rome. The movement was irremediably coming to an end.

### **A boa constrictor as a guard.**

Since illegal searches were becoming widespread, and conducted without a warrant or witnesses, and since I had been the victim of them several times, I bought a boa constrictor in Milan, let it loose in my country house and dutifully informed the Carabinieri. This caused quite a stir and even sparked great fear in the surrounding area, despite the fact that it was a gentle creature that limited itself to eating mice. Without entering the house, the Carabinieri came to question me about my initiative. I told them that criminals were not longer afraid of my three dogs and that bandits, some of them disguised as Carabinieri, were now breaking into homes.

### **“That louse Sartre.”**

In July, I warned Debord that “that louse Sartre,” along with other French intellectuals, were – in an appeal to stop the repression in Italy – pretending to acknowledge that the Communists were playing a role in the repression, as if they hadn’t always and everywhere played precisely such a role.<sup>54</sup> The Italian intellectuals, who were followers and parasites of the

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<sup>54</sup> *Translator*: this appeal took the form of an open letter signed by Sartre, Michel Foucault, Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Philip Sollers and others. It protested against the investigation and imprisonment of hundreds of Italian intellectuals, including “Bifo” (Franco Berardi) and Antonio Negri. An English translation appeared in *Italy 1977-8: Living with an Earthquake*, a pamphlet published by Red Notes in 1978. On 19 July 1977, in an article signed by Paul Hofmann, the *New York Times* reported that, “in a statement clearly prompted by the Paris manifesto, the Italian Government said yesterday that 263 leftists were under detention in Italy in investigations of 37 murders, 13 attempted murders, 48 robberies, 26 kidnappings and other crimes.”

Italian Communist Party, instead fully supported and justified the virulence of the repression. Sartre complained that the Communist Party was no longer Togliatti's. That was enough.

### **The infamy of Italian intellectuals.**

Today they're either dead or silent, but back then Italian intellectuals honked like Capitoline geese and wailed like mourners against the movement. It is worth recalling what I wrote about them at the time.

“The active servility with which the entire Left-wing of the intelligentsia first tolerated, and then adopted, the official accusatory theses about terrorism and the Autonomists' role in it might seem downright astonishing to anyone who did not know that it has always behaved in this way, every time it had the opportunity to behave differently. [...] It is, moreover, well known that, for half a century now, the role of the Italian intellectuals, most of whom are pro-Stalinist, has been irreplaceable in the spread of every lie about socialism and the revolution. Today, when they can no longer lie about Soviet, Chinese or Cuban 'Socialism,' they have been reduced to shamelessly spreading their lies about bourgeois democracy, for the sake of which they accept any and every sacrifice, even doing without it completely. [...] From now on, being indicted coincides with being convicted. [...] I know well that the Italian intelligentsia has a number of reasons to be cowardly and dishonest, I even know by heart the arguments with which it justifies itself, and I would never dream of refuting its freedom to be despicable. What I find annoying is that these intellectuals continually intervene on the subject of terrorism [...] as if some dark force compelled them to publish the proof of their own obtuse cowardice, and as if anyone still needed to be convinced of it. Instead, they would benefit greatly by keeping their interventions confined to their works, so that they would be known neither by posterity nor by their contemporaries. [...] Today's Italy and Stalin's Russia are perhaps the only States in the world that have been governed exclusively by the secret police. In Russia, 'counterrevolutionaries' were discovered everywhere, and every opponent was declared 'counterrevolutionary.' In Italy today, 'revolutionaries' are discovered everywhere, and every extraparliamentarian, however timid, is declared a 'revolutionary.' Negri, Piperno, Scalzone, etc, would be, according to judges and journalists, the leaders of the Italian revolution, its 'brains' and its strategists. I have defended them here [against criminal charges] because they are innocent, and I would never dream of defending them as revolutionaries, because they are neither guilty nor revolutionary. In reality these Autonomist leaders are nothing other than naive, imprudent and unfortunate politicians, even as politicians.”<sup>55</sup>

### **The announcement of the end of the movement.**

The end of the movement became clear and irreversible at the International Conference on 23-25 September 1977, which was supposed to lay the foundations for its expansion, but which the Autonomist leaders undermined by sympathizing with armed struggle. There is no more foolish attitude than that which “sympathizes” with armed struggle. Either engage in it and accept the consequences or don't engage in it – in any case, explain the reasons for the choice made. “Sympathizing” meant offering the enemy a stick with which to beat the sympathizers, and that is what the Autonomist leaders were foolishly guilty of. In the manifesto I published in

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<sup>55</sup> Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Prefazione all'edizione francese nella seconda edizione di *Del Terrorismo e dello Stato*” (Milano, Grenoble, Parigi: 1980. [Translator: see the “Preface to the French edition of the second Italian edition of *On Terrorism and the State*.”])

Bologna on that occasion, “Welcome to the Freest City in the World,” I was very clear on this matter, but unfortunately my words went unheeded. It deserves to be quoted here.

“So far, all the repressive measures, from the minimum to the maximum, from slander to tanks, have not benefited those in power, because they have failed to prevent anything that has happened. But we must never forget that the smallest mistake made by the movement can harm us irreparably. A lack of theoretical and practical clarity on a strategic issue, such as the use of weapons, risks producing very serious consequences. [...] Weapons must be used when everyone is ready to use them. And everyone will be ready to use them when their use has become indispensable. The issue is not tactical but strategic. Whoever plays with weapons today plays with power, which is better armed than we are, and we must not play with power, we must destroy it. [...] From a practical point of view, using weapons during a demonstration of 20,000 people, when only 100 are armed is not only useless but harmful. Thousands of comrades who cannot defend themselves would be exposed to the police’s bullets. [...] From a theoretical point of view, those few who come armed to demonstrations want to constitute, and in fact do constitute, a new separate power within a revolutionary movement that precisely fights against every separate power. [...] And we must not overlook the possibilities for provocation that the improvised and reckless use of weapons offers to the police officers who are suitably disguised. If we truly want to fight repression, we must also fight that which can provide a pretext and a justification for repression. Just as we have no indulgence concerning our enemies, we must have none concerning ourselves, and we must mercilessly criticize the errors that could be fatal to the growth of the entire movement. The critique of weapons can never ignore the weapons of critique. Those who satisfy themselves with the foolish use of weapons are not the most advanced and toughest part of the current revolutionary movement, but the rearguard of its theoretical and strategic consciousness. As for terrorism, in Italy today it is absolutely devoid, not only of utility, but justification, too [...] starting with the bombing of the Piazza Fontana, it has always benefited the State, even when it wasn’t the secret services that sponsored it.”

### **Theoretical and practical underdevelopment.**

The grim Autonomist leaders, for whom the main goal was to gain hegemony over the 1977 movement, even at the cost of destroying it, today have no particular reason for pride. They believed themselves to be in Russia in 1917, and clumsily mimicked the Russian Bolsheviks, as well as their ideological errors and atrocities. Their strategic vision was nonexistent. They represented the sum of the weaknesses, misunderstandings, unforgivable cultural backwardnesses, gaps in historical knowledge and the theoretical and practical underdevelopments of the now hegemonic part of the movement, which, thanks to them, the Communists, terrorist provocations and repression, ended disastrously, just as I feared and warned about in my Bologna manifesto. An entire generation paid dearly, in the form of hundreds of years of pre-trial detention, for the perverse combination of Catholicism and Leninism that permeated the ideological DNA of the Autonomists’ leaders.

### **Debord’s detachment.**

The interests of Debord, to whom I’d written about the vicissitudes of this pre-insurrectionary movement and my own particular, somewhat Casanova-esque vicissitudes, had already shifted away from Italy and also away from the Situationist International’s work, which

had long since ended.<sup>56</sup> He'd found a film producer in Gérard Lebovici and was shooting his finest film, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, which would be released the following year. Our relations had cooled, although he did invite me to visit him in the countryside in October 1977, which ultimately did not happen. My impression is that he certainly watched the 1977 insurrectionists with interest, but that he failed to grasp the novelty and importance this movement represented, not only for Italy, but for the whole world, as well. It is surprising to me that, at the beginning of 1979, in his "Préface à la quatrième édition italienne de *La Société du Spectacle*," he made no mention of 1977.<sup>57</sup> I don't think he ever mentioned it in his subsequent

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<sup>56</sup> *Translator*: Debord only wrote to Sanguinetti three times in 1977: once on 21 January, before the 1977 movement had begun and at a time when their friendship was ending ("As you must know, after our last meeting in Venice, I arrived at the firm conclusion that I have *said everything* to you and that you yourself have *completely responded* to me. This is naturally why I have not written to you since then. Understand well that, when I say 'said everything' and 'completely responded,' I do not restrain myself from concluding these dialogues in the literal and limited senses of the term, but I have evoked the totality of our relations, in acts as well as in words, in facts as in absences. And, on the other hand, when I say 'our most recent meeting in Venice,' I do not want to limit these conclusions to this anecdote or this group of anecdotes: I only regard Venice as a moment, the latest, of a process that you know quite well."); once on 14 June, to simply acknowledge receipt of a copy of "Notice to the Proletariat About the Events of the Last Few Hours" and the "very remarkable [...] latest news from Italy"; and once on 12 September, to coldly reject the manuscript of *Remedy to Everything* ("Contrary to the project that you have described to me, concerning a book taking the title *Remède à tout*, I do not find the one that you have since then proposed to Champ libre to be very interesting. It seems to me that it would only compete with the dismal recuperationist collection titled *Indiani in città* [Indians in the City]. In any case, concerning similar themes, it is useless for us to insist upon the care, or the fatigue, of a meeting."). In a letter to Gérard Lebovici dated 2 September 1977, Debord wrote that, "the book *Indiani in città* [published in 1977 by Cappelli editore, Bologna] appears to me to gloomily confirm the journalistic evolution of Sanguinetti. He mentioned this book to me with interest – perhaps he never actually read it – and he offers us a Leftist version of it so as to engage in a certain kind of rivalry; whereas he simultaneously tried to excite me with the idea of a more serious project, which aimed at justifying a meeting between us! Although it includes several sympathetic inscriptions and more, this book (in its commentary) is an ignominious anthology of the worst recuperative thought." *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 5: Janvier 1973-Décembre 1978* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), pp. 409-410, 424, 435 and 436.

<sup>57</sup> *Translator*: translated into English by Michel Prigent and Lucy Forsyth as "Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of *The Society of the Spectacle*" (London: BM Chronos, Oct. 1979). Though this preface doesn't mention 1977, it discusses terrorism in Italy at some length. "But it is at this stage of the analysis that one is well-founded in calling to mind a 'spectacular' politics of terrorism, and not the 'fact,' repeated vulgarly with subaltern finesse by so many journalists and professors, that terrorists are sometimes prompted by the desire to make themselves spoken about. Italy sums up the social contradictions of the entire world and attempts, in ways well known to us, to amalgamate in one country the repressive Holy Alliance between class power – bourgeois and bureaucratic-totalitarian – that already openly functions all over the surface of the entire earth, in the economic and police solidarity of all States, although, in this too, not without some discussions and settling of accounts in the Italian manner. Being for the moment the most

writings, either. Perhaps he considered Italy to be “lost” to the cause for some time, and, in any case, he was alone, and certainly had no “troops” to send.

### **The young generations erased from history.**

Of the two 1977s I mentioned at the beginning of this text, the worse one had overwhelmed the better one, only to be defeated, in its turn, by its own shortcomings and mistakes and by the holy alliance of all the existing powers. The wounds left by this repression, which was extended to all veterans of previous movements and continued for 10 years, did not heal, and from then on, Italian youth disappeared, so to speak, from history. It no longer made history, but instead was subjected to it, and continues to be subjected to it, as it no longer shows any trace of virile virtue. Thanks to successive school reforms and to their families’ neglect of *paideia*, which, since the time of the ancient Greeks, has been at the heart of the formation of a young person’s character, young people were taught ignorance. Thanks to spectacular and digital distractions, Italian youth lost its identity, its curiosity, its true passion and its illusions, and embraced an infinite resignation to its condition, fearful and extremely fragile in the face of every risk, desperately taking refuge in the most comfortable, passive nihilism – that is, in Dantean cowardice. Concern for precarious survival drove out concern for life itself. The very being of Italian youth contracted and became defensive. Indifferent to the fate of the world, and experiencing an indeterminate but constant state of danger, youth today takes refuge in a narcissistic and desperate hedonism. Thus it has lost every conceptual, linguistic and cultural reference that it used to share with previous generations and that are indispensable to any true and historical dialogue; perhaps today’s youth even believes that the world has always been as it is today. The past and the future no longer interest it. There is little interest in the present. It therefore lives in an eternal, schizoid and paralytic absence. To alleviate the desperation of young people, some politicians in Italy are now proposing to grant the youth a so-called “citizen’s income,” which means preparing these young people to be corrupted into giving up their existence and their struggles, and finally disappearing from a society of old people with whom they no longer have any dialogue. Young people in Italy thus live in a state of siege, refusing to arm themselves against the adversities promised and heralded by a threatening and looming future, from which they seek to escape, often by taking refuge in the most comfortable and protected place – their families of origin. Incapable of forming passionate bonds and building long-term projects, intolerant of the inconveniences of pursuing virtue and knowledge, they cannot see beyond their own precariousness and so retreat into sterile victimhood. Without having fought, they apathetically experience a sense of defeat, lacking all the critical tools and even the curiosity to investigate the reasons for that lack. Of course, I hope that I’m wrong, indeed, I’m certain that I’m wrong because of this simple fact: the younger generations in Europe, America, Russia and China will have no other choice. By necessity, not choice, they will be forced to avoid succumbing to the development of capitalism, now transformed into a new despotism. Or else these generations will be decimated, more radically than a century ago, during the great new war that is brewing. To return to Machiavelli’s reasoning here, if these younger generations do not revolt, evil is certain, and if they do revolt, it is evil that is uncertain.

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advanced country in the slide towards proletarian revolution, Italy is also the most modern laboratory for international counter-revolution.” Translation modified.

### **Normalization and manhunts.**

1978 was the year in which widespread repression deepened and expanded, and there was a more narrowly focused manhunt of all those in open conflict with the system, for which Moro's kidnapping was the pretext.<sup>58</sup> In 1979, at the same time as the 7 April trial, all of the other magistrates involved in the Communist Party racket, as well as various journalists and intellectuals, distinguished themselves through their zeal, efficiency and determination, if not through their intelligence. They took this moment as an opportunity for a generalized settling of scores – a real Stalinist-style normalization, worse than that in Prague after 1968. For years, a variety of accusations and charges continued to rain down on my head: subversive association, the possession of weapons, participation in an armed gang, terrorism, smuggling, etc. And this rain became a hurricane after the publication of my book *On Terrorism and the State*, at the beginning of 1979. Not satisfied with the gaffe of arbitrarily arresting me in 1975, prosecutor Pier Luigi Vigna investigated me again after the kidnapping of Aldo Moro. The investigation extended to Milan and involved Prosecutor Armando Spataro, who claimed – in an unheard-of philological extravagance – that, based upon “the content of the documents of the Red Brigades, connections emerge between the ideology of that group and that of the Situationist International, of which Sanguinetti is an exponent.”<sup>59</sup> To which I replied that the Situationist International had dissolved in 1972, and therefore I could not be its “representative,” and that the SI never had “an ideology, because it fought all of them, including the ideology of armed struggle.” And, after noting that Situationist publications were widely known in Italy and accessible to all, I took the liberty of advising the impertinent prosecutor that he should educate himself before bringing charges.

### **Undercover asymmetrical provocations.**

At the same time as this public persecution by the authorities, shady and vile figures were operating undercover, for example, by setting fire to my farm several times over a period of years. For the most part, these fires didn't start from elsewhere and reach my farm, but started right there.<sup>60</sup>

Shortly after the publication of *On Terrorism*, a strange man, a car dealer, showed up at my house, declaring his desire to buy an old 1950 Bentley coupé of mine. In 1971, I'd smuggled the manuscript of a Portuguese translation of *The Society of the Spectacle* across the Portuguese

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<sup>58</sup> *Translator*: the reader of other texts in this volume will be aware that here Sanguinetti has skipped over an important exchange of correspondence concerning Aldo Moro. This correspondence includes Debord's letters to Sanguinetti dated 21 April 1978 and 29 August 1978, published in Editions Champ Libre *Correspondance, Vol. II* (Paris, 1981), pp. 97-100 and p. 118, and in *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol. 5, Janvier 1973 – Décembre 1978* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), pp. 455-459 and p. 473. Sanguinetti's responses of 1 June 1978 and 15 August 1978 are included in Editions Champ Libre *Correspondance, Vol. II*, pp. 100-117.

<sup>59</sup> Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Preface to the French edition of the second Italian edition of *On Terrorism and the State*” (Milan) and *On Terrorism and the State* (Grenoble, Paris 1980). The original indictments are in my archives at Yale, as is the unpublished manuscript of a pamphlet against Judge Pier Luigi Vigna, which was to be published in the event of my arrest.

<sup>60</sup> *Translator*: in an email to me dated 29 April 2013, Sanguinetti referred to a fire that had been set at his house in mid September 1978 and included a photo of it, which showed that the fire had come within 90 meters of the building.

border without arousing suspicion of that country's shrewd dictatorship, which was intent on censoring books. I pointed out to this man that the car still had French plates on it and needed to be cleared through customs first. He said he would take care of it. Since he was offering a considerable sum of money, I sold the car to him. Shortly thereafter, the Finance Police stopped him, the car was confiscated and I was charged with criminal and administrative offenses for smuggling. I later learned that the buyer was the son of a Carabinieri and a close friend of Licio Gelli's daughter.

Because of all these vicissitudes, and many others like them, I wrote the following: "If there were any doubts, from now on there are none: I have told the truth [about terrorism]. And from the harm that is intended for me, I understand that my work is good, and certainly I would not have aroused such hatred if many people had not listened to me."<sup>61</sup>

### **The end of the rule of law.**

From that time onward, all of the "constitutional arc" parties agreed to put an end to any semblance of the rule of law in Italy, without arousing any protest among the virtuous souls who still claimed to exist within this most virtuous "constitutional arc." From then on, Italy became the home of the most blatant lawlessness, prey to boundless corruption, institutional crime, oppression, arrogance, and insatiable pecuniary debauchery, all of which continues to feast on the flesh of the Italian people, already torn apart by terrorism, with the impunity guaranteed by the law.<sup>62</sup> The new legal nihilism has allied itself with the new financial nihilism, and together they collaborate harmoniously in the general disaster. These were also the consequences, and not the least of them, of the defeat of the 1977 social revolt. In this, Italy was once again the international laboratory in which the tools were tested that, thanks to false-flag terrorism, have now spread throughout the neoliberal world, headed towards a new and unprecedented despotism, which has already subjugated all of Europe and the United States. To distinguish it from Eastern despotism, I call it Western despotism.

### **A new kind of coup.**

While the Communist Party was fully engaged in crushing the movement of young proletarians in 1977, it failed to notice that someone else had already seized the State that the Communists also coveted, using a completely new, silent and previously untested technique. In 1969, Longanesi published *Tecnica del Colpo di Stato*, an ingenious little book written by Edward Luttwak, who argued that, "a coup d'état consists in infiltrating a limited but critical sector of the State apparatus and using it to wrest control of the remaining sectors of the government."<sup>63</sup> Licio Gelli's P2 Lodge simply implemented Luttwak's analysis. It had infiltrated many critical elements of the Italian government: a Party secretary, three ministers, 44 parliamentarians, 12 Carabinieri generals, five members of the Guardia di Finanza, 22 officers in the Army, four officers in the Air Force, and eight admirals, as well as magistrates, publishers of

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<sup>61</sup> "Preface to the French edition of *On Terrorism*," op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> The Italian State had promised to compensate the victims of the massacres of the 1970s and 1980s through a specific law that was never implemented on the grounds that such compensation "costs too much." This refusal was renewed in May 2017. The relatives of the victims of the Piazza Fontana massacre were ordered to pay the costs of the litigation.

<sup>63</sup> *Translator*: Italian translation of Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

newspapers and journalists, bankers such as Roberto Calvi and Michele Sindona, businessmen such as Silvio Berlusconi, all the heads of the secret services and many other figures within the State apparatus. Once infiltrated into that apparatus, P2 gave rise to the “strategy of tension” and, together with the Gladio organization,<sup>64</sup> was able to carry out massacres that bloodied Italy with impunity.

A secret American Army manual on unorthodox warfare from 1970, signed by General W.C. Westmoreland, includes the following instructions for destabilizing or stabilizing the governments of different countries: “Terrorist activities are particularly useful in gaining control of the population. Terror can be used selectively or indiscriminately. [...] There may be times when the governments of the host nations show passivity or indecision in the face of Communist subversion and, in the interpretation of U.S. intelligence services, do not react with sufficient effectiveness. [...] U.S. military intelligence must have the means to launch special operations that will convince the governments of the host nations and public opinion of the reality of the danger posed by the insurgents. To achieve this goal, U.S. military intelligence should try to infiltrate the insurgency by means of agents with special assignments who are charged with the task of forming special-action groups among the most radical elements of the insurgency. [...] If it has not been possible to successfully infiltrate such agents into the rebel command, it may be useful to instrumentalize the far-Left organizations for one’s own purposes in order to achieve the above-described objectives. [...] These special operations must remain strictly secret.”<sup>65</sup>

Today, this new type of silent coup – executed through cooptation and infiltration, destabilization and stabilization, and first used in Italy – is enjoying great success worldwide and has spread to almost all Western countries, not only in counterinsurgency operations, but also in finance, banking, the mass media, politics, the military, the judiciary and so on. Today, it is no longer concealed and has established its own institutions: the European Union and the European Central Bank.

### **Exult, Italy. . .**

Our peninsula – after having invented the Church, the papacy, capitalism, banking, public debt, promissory notes, the Counter-Reformation, the Mafia, fascism, false-flag terrorism, the “Historic Compromise,” Gladio and the P2 Lodge, after artfully erecting the spectacle of political assassination – continues to make history by concocting and exporting all of the worst that can be inflicted on humanity. “Exult, Italy, for you are so great, that on sea and land you beat your wings, and through Hell your name spreads.”<sup>66</sup>

For many reasons, it is clear why 1977, that critical and decisive year, has been silenced and removed from public consciousness, just as the indomitable revolts of the Greek people against the imposition of the despotism of the European Union have been shamefully censored

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<sup>64</sup> *Translator*: Operation Gladio was the codename for a clandestine network of “stay behind” forces charged with resisting a Communist invasion of Western Europe or, failing that, fighting and repelling the Communists after they’d invaded and taken over.

<sup>65</sup> Field Manual 30-31, with Appendices FM 30-31A and FM 30-31B, now published by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the P2 Masonic Lodge, annexes to the report, volume VII, pp. 319 et seq. [*Translator*: this Manual was translated into Italian and published in October 1978 by *L’Europeo*.]

<sup>66</sup> *Translator*: a détournement of Dante, *The Inferno*, Canto XXVI, verses 1-3 (“Florence” replaced by the word “Italy”).

for years. Today it is Greece that has become an experimental laboratory for Western despotism, amid universal indifference.

1977 should instead be remembered for its crucial importance. It was a widespread revolt, albeit in a single country, against a new universal disorder then imposed everywhere by force, by the violence of spectacular terrorism, in tears and blood. After the defeat of that revolt, every law was trampled on, every acquired right was progressively abolished, and all the gains achieved by the exploited classes in the West over a century and a half of class struggle were nullified. Now the model is the slavery that reigns in Chinese factories, where workers, often children, commit suicide every day out of desperation – factories used by the entire world, without asking any further questions. We live in societies ready to wage war for “human rights” – “humanitarian” wars, of course – and even the slave trade occurs for “humanitarian” reasons: the suicide of workers, reduced to desperation, is also part of these “human rights.” The Italian Institute of Statistics has solved the problem radically and definitively. Ever since 2010, it simply no longer takes suicides due to economic causes into account.

### **The monstrous realization of the “Historic Compromise”**

Today China is the monstrous yet paradigmatic realization of the “Historic Compromise” between Communism and capitalism, which was invented by ingenious and extremely dishonest Italian Communist leaders. This project, which combines the worst of both totalitarian systems and already marks the present and future of the world, also defines the foundations of the new despotism that is asserting itself everywhere with impunity. Total freedom of expropriation for the rich, and total slavery for the poor.

### **The glory of 1977.**

The Italian 1977, which fiercely opposed the wicked project I’ve just described, was thus truly an orgasm of history: its intensity, as well as its brief duration, proves this to be true. It is precisely this fierce opposition to the perverse “Historic Compromise” that is the fundamental and unforgettable legacy that 1977 has left for the history of class struggle, lest humanity “fall into obedience.” That this was not enough certainly cannot be blamed on the movement. The simple facts of having existed, and of having fought against that project of enslavement, was instead its glory, for there have not been many other attempts as modern and as explicit anywhere in the world.