

'accidental' death of a movement

You are about to see "Can't Pay? Won't Pay!" by Dario Fo. Although a brilliantly funny farce, this play has its roots in reality. The events derive from the real activities of working-class people in Italy in the 1970's. A political movement grew up which gave expression to these events, as well as other activities. The movement was generally known as Autonomia, or autonomy. In 1979 the Italian state moved to crush this movement and imprison its leading theorists. This leaflet hopes to show what has happened since.

On April 7th 1979 the Italian state set out to smash the popular left in Italy, as it existed outside of the Italian Communist Party. The autonomists, known as Autonomia, were becoming a threat although only organized in loose local groups with many differences between them. The autonomist viewpoint, reacting against the pressures of capitalism, was arising from the needs of the people and in opposition to the interests of the state.

The reaction of the Italian state was to have serious consequences for those academics and journalists who had given expression to the autonomist movement. Thus we find people accused of murder, jailed and tortured simply because of their political beliefs.

Since this time, Toni Negri, Professor of Political Science at Padua University, Areste Scalzone, a leading left-wing journalist, Alisa del Re and 20 others have been held by the Italian state in appalling conditions on very serious charges including armed insurrection and leadership of the Red Brigades (the Italian terrorist group responsible for many armed attacks in the 1970's and 1980's).

THE CHARGES

The charges have never been supported with evidence and as each charge became totally discredited it was replaced by a more serious and ridiculous one: Instead of producing evidence or witnesses, the Italian judges (including members of the Communist Party) have been leaking sensational and often contradictory stories to the press in an effort to hide their illegal proceedings under a cloud of emotional anti-terrorist fiction.

The charges brought by Padua Judge Calogero according to warrants issued on April 6th 1979 were:

- 1) that Negri, Ferrari Bravo, Piperno, Scalzone, Delmaviva, Vesce, Zagato, Picotri Pancino, R. Ferrari and Marni Palestrini were the founders, organisers and leaders of "an organisation going under the name of the Red Brigades".
- 2) that at the same time, they inspired and led various interlinked organisations going under various names but constituting the so-called workers' Autonomy.

In other words, they were accused of being the secret brains behind all Italian terrorism.



Basically we feel as if we've been buried alive, in the sense that we can't get information out to the outside world. The problem of the press is one that I have already referred to: the Press upholds the regime and its versions of reality. For them, the blanket term "terrorist" can be used, and is used, to cover all forms of political opposition in Italy.

April 7th defendant, Padua, Oct., 1981.

On the same day, warrants were issued in Rome by the Procurator for the arrest of several Red Brigade members, charged with the Aldo Moro kidnapping and assassination. Negri was charged along with these people. He was accused of being behind the whole assassination plot; yet the only "evidence" produced by the state prosecution was a series of tapes, supposedly of telephone conversations between Negri and members of the Moro family.

It is important to note at this point that in many Western countries, taped telephone conversations are inadmissible as evidence because IT IS NOT POSSIBLE to prove the identity of the speaker from his or her voice on the tape. In fact, the tapes relating to Negri's case were not examined until 50 days after his arrest and only after protest from Negri's lawyers. Thus we can see that the main evidence on which Negri was being held had no more foundations than a house of cards.

Moreover, during proceedings against the charged members of the Red Brigades the charge against Negri was dropped. Unable to produce witnesses or evidence, but desiring to hold Negri in jail, the state turned to Negri's openly published work and used his ideas and political beliefs as 'evidence' against him.

Ignoring the fact that, in his writing, Negri openly condemned the Red Brigades, the judges persisted in insisting that he was deeply involved with them. The following extract from an article in Rosso dated May 29th 1978 shows Negri's real opinions:

"The line of the Red Brigades is a total strategic and tactical failure. In 10 years of combat they have never succeeded in making one correct political analysis. They fought 'fascism' thinking it consisted in and could be identified in individual Blackshirt pigs on street corners. They depend on a concept of 'destabilization' of the state that destabilizes nothing, a concept of 'vanguard' that represents nobody; a delegation of power which does not exist, vis-à-vis the movement; a method that swallows uncritically the old relation between mass-struggle and élite programmes ... while the mass movement accepts no delegation, is only unmediated self liberation."



JUDGES CREATE EVIDENCE

Despite the obvious declaration against the Red Brigades, the Italian judges STILL insisted that Negri was guilty. They claimed that this statement from Rosso was simply another sign of his brilliance in that he was covering up his work using such articles.

The Italian judges care nothing for factual evidence and even one of the 'fairest', Judge Ciampani (who has published a 150 page report admitting that there is no connection between the

Red Brigades and the April 7th defendants) resorts to the making of assumptions to keep the political detainees in prison. The following is a quotation from Ciampini's report:

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

The Italian judiciary's record in the use of informers and police provocateurs is particularly awful. It has been proven that in the case of Valpredes, an anarchist framed for a bombing, a 50,000,000 lira bribe was given to a key witness. Prior to the April 7th arrests, a new law, Fioroni's Law, was enacted designed to give huge rewards to repentant terrorists in return for information. Fioroni, a self-confessed murderer, was to be a key witness against the April 7th defendants until his statements were totally discredited by another repentant, Peci. Unfortunately for the state, Peci's statements were found to be true by the disclosure of the Red Brigades hideouts etc.

NO-ONE CARES

The Italian press has worked consistently to build up the image of Negri and the others as terrorists and 'Red Brigade leaders'. This has included not only the papers supporting the centre and right-wing parties, but also Unita, the paper of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Indeed the PCI has been one of the prime movers in the whole affair. It seems that they are trying to prove to NATO and the EEC that they too are responsible politicians who can safely be left in charge of Italian capitalism - that this means smashing the Italian left seems to have worried them little.

If you feel, as we do, that this situation is totally intolerable, you can help by sending letters of support and donations to:

April 7th/December 21st Association,
via Tomacelli 103,
Rome, Italy.

Money orders should be made payable to postal account Conto Corrente Postal (CCP) No. 23235005. (The defence campaign is urgently in need of funds for the forthcoming trial. Also, individual prisoners would greatly appreciate letters and correspondence, in whatever language - sent c/o the above address.)

Letters to the British Press who have, as yet, failed to give the affair more than a couple of lines coverage, would also help those incarcerated in the Italian jails.

Further information and various published articles can be obtained from:

The Italy '79 Committee,
c/o John Merrington,
Middlesex Polytechnic,
White Hart Lane,
London N 17.

If you would like a copy of our new free newsheet CARELESS TALK, then send a 15p stamp to our contact address.

printed and published by a group of Libertarians living in the Potteries. We can be contacted by writing to
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