

known infiltrators, as well as the majority of the *agents provocateurs* at work today, did not invent the butter knife, but our clandestine militants aren't any more subtle than they are, as we have seen. And even if they were all Lenins, as they imagine themselves to be, one would still have to remark that the Bolsheviks were deeply infiltrated several times. Roman Malinovski, worker and Okhrana agent, made a part of the Bolshevik Central Committee, enjoyed the blindest confidence on the part of Lenin, and sent to Siberia hundreds of militants and leaders. To a suspicion expressed by Bukharin, Lenin (according to his wife, Nadiejda Krupskaja) responded that it was "unworthy of a conscious militant; if you persist, it will be you who will be denounced as a traitor." But the case of Malinovski is not an isolated one. Opening the secret archives of the Okhrana in 1917, Lenin was (not without good reason) stupefied to discover that, of fifty-five officially active and regularly paid professional provocateurs, seventeen "worked" among the Revolutionary Socialists, and a good twenty of them shared the job of surveilling the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and certainly not among the rank-and-file militants! And Lenin had the bitter surprise of discovering that the provocateurs were always those "comrades" to which he – the man who was so prudent and so expert in matters of clandestinity – accorded the greatest esteem and the greatest confidence because of their service and the boldness they showed on several occasions.

Today, the practices of the Okhrana, which were very sophisticated and refined for the times, are no more than primitive. The modern unofficial services of the State, of *any* State, dispose of a number of means and people of all classes and all social appearances, well trained in the use of weapons and ideas, and often much more *capable* than the naïve militants, who pay the price for it. The organizational form of the political party, which is always hierarchical, is in fact the one that is best suited for infiltration and manipulation, which is exactly the opposite of what the bourgeois press says. All the rank-

## On Terrorism and the State

Gianfranco Sanguinetti

1979

the expense of the necessary qualities of the heart,  
which is only too often the case.

The second thing to consider with respect to a strategy that is founded on provocation is as old as the world. It is noted by Seneca – and if I quote him, it is because, as Nero’s advisor, he knew about State terrorism and provocations – that it is “easier to not go along this road than, once one has begun, to stop.”<sup>66</sup> Like a[n addictive] drug, artificial terrorism needs and requires the administration of ever-larger and *more frequent* doses, *because any future seems evil and already is*, as Dante would say.<sup>67</sup> Redo your calculations, politicians and generals, and you will see that *they are wrong*.

If the State needs terrorism, as I have demonstrated, it also needs to avoid getting caught red-handed every time it uses it, so that its ministers can put up a better front than Rumor and Tanassi did at Catanzaro<sup>68</sup> (their only equals in this are Malizia, Maletti and Miceli<sup>69</sup>). And for the State what better occasion than that offered by a group like the Red Brigades, decapitated and available, with its former leaders in prison and ignorant of everything? Nevertheless, I must say that, even if its former leaders were freed – given that two infiltrators were enough to bring them down – a single one who was less crude than “Brother Machinegun” or Pisetta would have been enough to make them go where one wanted to make them go without arousing any suspicion. I know quite well that the currently

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<sup>66</sup> Though Sanguinetti also mentions this remark in his letter to Debord dated 1 June 1978, I have been unable to find its source in the works of Seneca.

<sup>67</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio*, XX, 85.

<sup>68</sup> In 1974, Catanzaro was the location of the trial of the alleged perpetrators of the bombing of the Piazza Fontana.

<sup>69</sup> General Saverio Malizia (born 1914) was the legal counsel to the Ministry of Defense and the Deputy Prosecutor of the High Military Court. He was convicted of perjury in 1979. General Gianadelio Maletti (born 1921) was the head of counter-intelligence for the *Servizio Informazione Difesa* between 1971 and 1975. He was convicted of falsifying public documents in 1979.

*ful conclusion* about the bombing. Giorgio Bocca’s book on terrorism<sup>64</sup> discreetly begins with 1970 [not 1969] and, as for the other Brahmins of culture, such as Pasolini and Sciascia, they have – in the blinding light of the Reichstag fire – preferred *to chase fireflies*, without even finding any, obviously, since they always discuss the responsibility of pollution for their disappearance and raise pleasantly “polemical” lamentations about it, but without ever denouncing *terrorist pollution*, of which they are both the accomplices and the victims.

I would like it if the unofficial services and the generals – who will read *Remedy for Everything*, or at least the chapter that concerns them, attentively – pay immediate attention to two things that I say to them about the fragility of their strategy. Dalla Chiesa, note, above all, what Clausewitz teaches you in the chapter that he dedicates to the stratagem.<sup>65</sup>

But however much we feel a desire to see the actors in war outdo each other in hidden activity, readiness and stratagem, still we must admit that these qualities show themselves but little in history (...) The explanation of this is obvious (...) In fact, it is dangerous to detach large forces for any length of time merely for a trick, because there is always the risk of its being done in vain, and then these forces are wanted at the decisive point. The chief actor in war is always thoroughly sensible of this sober truth, and therefore he has no desire to play at tricks of agility (...) In a word, the pieces on the strategic chessboard want that mobility which is the chief element of stratagem and subtlety (...) [Craftiness] does no harm if it does not exist at

<sup>64</sup> *Il terrorismo Italiano, 1970–1978* (1978).

<sup>65</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, “Stratagem,” Book 3, *On War*, as translated from the German by Colonel J. J. Graham (1832).

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theless knows perfectly well that terrorism is *the substitute for war* in an era in which large-scale world wars are impossible or, in any case, it is no longer permitted to have one proletariat massacre another in an exhausting and bloody battle. Our General and the upper-level strategists of the political police also know that spectacular terrorism is *always anti-proletarian* and that it is *the pursuit of policy by other means* (the pursuit of the anti-proletarian policy of all the States). And the fact that the State *needs* modern, artificial terrorism is proved by the fact that it was precisely here, in Italy, that the State *invented* this form of terrorism ten years ago. And we know that the Italian bourgeoisie has long used invention to replace what it lacks in power. It was the Italian bourgeoisie *that invented fascism*, which was so successful in Germany, Spain, Portugal and everywhere else it was necessary to crush proletarian revolution. And the spectacle of terrorism has already been immediately successful for the German government, which does not envy our situation, but envies our imagination, that is to say, the imagination of our secret services, which permits our government to navigate through shit without drowning in it, just as in the 1920s it envied us for Mussolini.

That this [Italian] State has need of terrorism is, on the other hand, something that each one of its representatives is now completely convinced of, through experience if not due to reasoning, and has been so ever since the immediately and miraculously fortunate outcome of the Piazza Fontana operation. The proof is that, *if there has not been* a “Dreyfus affair” where the Piazza Fontana is concerned, this is certainly not because the event was less scandalous, but because all the political parties have, for different reasons, understood that, if this bombing saved the State (which each of them defend in their own way), *the truth* about it was capable, by itself, of definitively *destroying it*. And if there has been no “Dreyfus affair,” this is also because, among our enslaved intelligentsia, no equivalent of Emile Zola has ever demanded or wanted to demand *a truth-*

because of the prudence of the other militants, who were no less naïve than their original leaders (who themselves fell into the very first trap set for them), but *because of the decisions made by their new leaders*. And why would the State, already in difficulty *for other reasons*, lose this opportunity to make use of a terrorist organization that had an autonomous appearance, although infiltrated and tranquilly directed from afar? I do not at all believe that General Dalla Chiesa<sup>62</sup> is the “warrior genius” of which Carl von Clausewitz once spoke, but he certainly read Clausewitz with more attention and profit than Curcio did and [in any case] had greater means to put at the disposal of his talents. General Dalla Chiesa – along with his colleagues at the SISDE, the SISMI and the CESIS<sup>63</sup> – had a good laugh at all the proclamations of the ideologues of armed struggle who intended “to bring the attack to the heart of the State,” because Chiesa knows that the State doesn’t have a heart, not even a metaphorical one, and because, like Andreotti and Berlinguer, he knows that *the only attack capable of killing the State today is the violent denunciation of its terrorist practices*, which is precisely what I am making here.

Although he is better informed about tactics than strategy, and although he confuses strategy with stratagem, thus substituting cunning for the art of war, General Dalla Chiesa never-

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<sup>62</sup> General Alberto Dalla Chiesa (1920–1982) was a high-ranking officer in the carabinieri. In September 1974, his “anti-terrorist” unit captured Renato Curcio. On 3 September 1982, he was murdered, allegedly by the Mafia.

<sup>63</sup> After the dissolution of the *Servizio Informazione Difesa* in 1977, the *Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Democratica* (“Intelligence and Democratic Security Service”) took charge of domestic intelligence, the *Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare* (“Military Intelligence and Security Service”) took charge of military intelligence, and the *Comitato Esecutivo per i Servizi di Informazione e Sicurezza* (“Executive Committee for Intelligence and Security Services”) took charge of coordinating of the activities of the SISDE and the SISMI.

## Translator’s Introduction

In early 1979, Gianfranco Sanguinetti was hard at work on *Rimedio A Tutto: Discorsi sulle Prossime Opportunità di Rovinare Il Capitalismo in Italia* (“Remedy for Everything: Discourses on the Next Chances to Ruin Capitalism in Italy”),<sup>1</sup> which was intended to be a follow-up to his *Rapporto veridico sulle ultima opportunita di salvare il capitalismo in Italia* (“Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy”). Published in August 1975 under the pseudonym of Censor, the *Rapporto veridico* had been a tremendous success. Not only had it received very positive reviews in the Italian press and had sold a lot of copies, but it had also caused a major scandal. No one had suspected that Censor (allegedly a conservative member of Italy’s ruling class) did not exist and that, Sanguinetti, an anti-capitalist revolutionary and a former member of the Situationist International, had written the book, which were facts that he revealed five months after it had been published.<sup>2</sup>

Sanguinetti had certainly been stung by the rebukes made of him in mid-1978 by his friend and collaborator, the ex-situationist Guy Debord, who had unsuccessfully encouraged him to go public with the truth about Aldo Moro while the Italian Prime Minister was still alive (allegedly kidnapped and murdered by the Red Brigades, Moro was in fact abducted and killed by Italy’s intelligence agencies).<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Sanguinetti

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<sup>1</sup> The title 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.

<sup>2</sup> See my translation of Gianfranco Sanguinetti, *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy* (Colossal Books, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> See 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.

was also motivated by the fact that, in February 1979, Debord had published his *Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of "The Society of the Spectacle,"* which in part discussed the Moro affair. In any event, Sanguinetti decided to publish the tenth chapter of *Rimedio A Tutto* as a book in and of itself. Originally titled *Terrorismo di stato e stato di terrorismo* ("State Terrorism and the State of Terrorism"), this text was published in April 1979 under the title *Del terrorismo e dello stato: La teoria e la pratica del terrorismo per la prima volta divulgate* ("On Terrorism and the State: The Theory and Practice of Terrorism Divulged for the First Time"). The first part of this new title was intended as an echo of *Del principe e delle lettere* ("On the Prince and Letters"), a revolutionary pamphlet written by Vittorio Alfieri in 1795.<sup>4</sup> The second part seems to be a dig at Debord, whose *Preface* had claimed to be the first text to speak truthfully about Italian terrorism: "Of these sad facts many Italians have been aware, and many more straight away took them into account. But they have never been published anywhere, because the latter have been deprived of the means of doing it and the former of the wish to do so."<sup>5</sup> This claim ignored the existence of Censor's *Rapporto veridico*, which had been published more than three years previously.<sup>6</sup>

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Sanguinetti's responses of 1 June 1978 and 15 August 1978 are included in Editions Champ Libre *Correspondance, Vol. II*, pp. 100–117. Moro was found dead on 9 May 1978, almost two months after he had been abducted.

<sup>4</sup> In 1989, Sanguinetti and Editions Allia published a French translation of this work under the title *Du Prince et des Lettres*. Email to me dated 2 October 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Guy Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle, 1988*, suivi de *Préface à la quatrième édition italienne de La Société du Spectacle, 1979* (Gallimard, 1992), p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> But even Censor/Sanguinetti had not been the first, a distinction that can only be claimed by the Italian section of the Situationist International, which published *Il Reichstag Brucia?* ("Is the Reichstag Burning?") on 19 December 1969.

ers (those who believe themselves to be "extremists") to fondle the idea that "one responds to State terrorism with proletarian terrorism." And this comes at the right time for our secret services. The first small, clandestine terrorist groups (the RBs and the Armed Proletarian Nuclei [APN]) had just been formed when the police, the Carabinieri and the detached units started competing to see which one could be the first to infiltrate these small para-military groups with the goal of preventing their attacks or masterminding them according to the necessities and *desires* of the moment and the powerful.

Thus everyone could see how the APN were radically destroyed, either [indirectly] by arresting their members and exhibiting them in a disgusting way at this or that trial, or directly by turning them into objects for target practice, a meticulously arranged spectacle in which the "forces of order" were exhibited for the pleasure of the most repugnant bourgeois.<sup>59</sup>

Things panned out differently with the Red Brigades. We know the names of only two of the agents who infiltrated this group, that is to say, Pisetta and the Christian Brother, Giroto,<sup>60</sup> who – despite being quite clumsy as *agents provocateurs* – were able to trap Curcio<sup>61</sup> and the other members of what can justly be called the "historical group" (the militants who had no experience with clandestinity and were hardly "ferocious" as terrorists). Despite this, the RBs were not dismantled after being decapitated [in September 1974], not

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<sup>59</sup> *Author's note*: this bloody spectacle was offered sparingly, but in a repeated fashion: when the police waited for Abatangelo in front of the Bank of Florence and killed two of his comrades; when Mantini's sister was killed in cold blood in her secret hideout in Rome; and dozens of other cases. Should one believe that it was by chance, and not due to infiltration, that "Italy's Finest" obtained such *successes*?

<sup>60</sup> Marco Pisetta (1945–1990), who knew Renate Curcio back in 1968, infiltrated the Red Brigades in 1972. Silvano Giroto (born 1939) was also known *Frate Mitra* ("Brother Machinegun"). Working with General Dalla Chiesa of the Italian Carabinieri, he infiltrated the Red Brigades in 1974.

<sup>61</sup> Renato Curcio (born 1941) co-founded the Red Brigades in 1970.

trigger a “Dreyfus affair”<sup>57</sup> concerning the behavior of our secret services, the leaders of which enter and exit prison on the sly, to the general indifference of all the privileged holders of the “sense of the State,” that sublime sixth sense with which our politicians are endowed, unlike common mortals, who are mutilated by it, such as those who were at the Agricultural Bank and not killed [on the day of the bombing], but by something else. Perhaps there is someone who is convinced that this mysterious “sense of the State” is something other than what I’ve said it is. “Moro had the sense of the State” and “Berlinguer has the sense of the State”: if these expressions do not mean what I’ve said they mean, then they are empty, which means that one could say that a young woman has “the sense of the cunt,” I have the sense of my balls, and Tina Anselmi<sup>58</sup> doesn’t have [much] sense even if she *causes* a sensation.

Since the extra-parliamentarians at first did not believe they knew, then knew without believing, and finally believed *without concluding* that *it was indeed the State that launched the terrorist attack in Milan*, the entire country has entered into a period of apparent madness and mad appearances. The entire question of terrorism has become the subject of academic diatribes and enthusiastic invectives that have led some (the bourgeois and the Stalinists) to hypocritically condemn terrorism “whatever its color” – as if they weren’t precisely the ones who have encouraged and covered it up, each time, by giving it *the color that best suited the moment* – and have led the oth-

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<sup>57</sup> i.e., trigger a national scandal such as occurred after Emile Zola published his *J'accuse!* letter. Cf. Guy Debord’s letter to Sanguinetti dated 21 April 1978: “There wasn’t a public ‘Dreyfus affair’ [over the bombing at the Piazza Fontana], not because the scandal was less great, but because no one ever demanded a true conclusion. Thus Italy, which has experienced a ‘creeping May [1968],’ has worsened its sickness by a ‘suppressed Dreyfus affair.’”

<sup>58</sup> A Christian Democrat (born in 1927) and the first female member of an Italian cabinet, first as Minister of Labor, then as Minister of Health.

Perhaps because it had been rushed into print, *Del terrorismo e dello stato* presented itself in a manner that was slightly confusing. The table of contents for *Rimedio A Tutto*, as well as Sanguinetti’s various introductions to it (a “Notice from the Author,” a “Dedication to the Bad Workers of Italy and All the Other Countries,” and a “Preface”), accompanied it. But the rest of the book was never published and, as Sanguinetti relates in his preface to the French edition of his book, *Del terrorismo* “was not reprinted in Italy because of several difficulties created for me by a stupid and crude judicial-police persecution.”

*Del terrorismo e dello stato* was quickly translated into French as *Du Terrorisme et de l’Etat: La théorie et la pratique du terrorisme divulguées pour la première fois* by two sets of translators: Jean-François Martos, a young man going to school in Paris, and Jean-François Labrugère and Philippe Rouyau, two young men living in Grenoble and working as a team. In the first half of 1980, these men published their respective translations, both of which included a new preface that Sanguinetti had written in January 1980. But unlike Martos, who produced a second, corrected edition of his translation, Labrugère and Rouyau only produced a single edition of theirs. On 13 August 1980, they wrote to Gérard Lebovici, the editor-in-chief of Editions Champ Libre, which had published a French translation of Sanguinetti’s *Rapporto verdico* in January 1976, and asked Lebovici if he would assist them in publishing a new edition of their translation of *Del Terrorismo*. Lebovici refused, in part because he didn’t think very much of the quality of Sanguinetti’s second book, and in part because he was offended by its subtitle, which ignored the fact that Champ Libre had published Debord’s *Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of “The Society of the Spectacle”*

two months before Sanguinetti had come out with the Italian edition of his book.<sup>7</sup>

At the time that Martos published his translation of *Del terrorismo*, he wasn't one of Guy Debord's friends. But when the two men met in March 1981, Debord immediately pressed him to join his disinformation campaign against both Sanguinetti and his book. In a letter to Sanguinetti dated 4 April 1981, Martos says that Guy "isn't angry with you, but he has simply 'broken off relations.'<sup>8</sup> He thinks that this attorney, of whom you have spoken a bit to me, and who is surnamed 'the doge'

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<sup>7</sup> To read the letters exchanged between Lebovici and Labrugère & Rouyau, see Editions Champ Libre *Correspondance*, Vol. II, pp. 69–72.

<sup>8</sup> It appears that this decision to break off relations was reached in October 1978. Cf. Debord's letter to Paolo Salvadori dated 12 November 1978, published in *Guy Debord Correspondance*, Vol 5, pp. 482–485:

"Thus I have telegraphed [Gianfranco], without explanation, that our meeting in Geneva has been canceled. As you know, I have shown him extraordinary patience on the personal level because he merits it for several reasons. And though I have interrupted all relations on that level for nearly three years, I would still like to think that there still remains a chance for him to manifest his talents in an autonomous manner in the general activity of 'our party.' The question can no longer be posed." The reason for this decision concerned Sanguinetti's manuscript, not his behavior or the people with whom he was associating: "Although there are several good pages and a generally acceptable intention, and certainly courage (if it is to be published soon in Italy), it is necessary to say that this book, when considered as a whole, constitutes an irreparable and monstrous disaster. Everything is lacking: in the strategy of the discourse, in the 'literary' construction of the text as a whole, in its very style, which is at once maladroit and pretentious in the extreme, in the figure that the author puts forth everywhere and that succeeds in being vividly antipathetic and, at the same time, completely ridiculous. To summarize the fundamental error of *the author*, one can say that he has, so as to surpass 'Censor,' stupidly reprised this glorious personality, with all of his idiosyncratic expressions, but in a *debased* manner because he has passed over to the side of the proletarians, with the result that the discourse takes on an aspect that evokes the beards of the old, autodidactic anarchists of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And to summarize the error of *the man*, it is necessary to say that the most lamentable sides of his personality, which once a month or so express themselves by inept comportment in a restaurant, are spread about without limits in the language of historical action."

the same way, and due to the same *guilty* ineptitude, all the extra-parliamentarians of 1978 merrily fell into the trap set by the kidnapping of Moro, "the work of comrades who were mistaken." You great oafs, don't you realize that, once again, you were the only "comrades who were mistaken"? Brave extra-parliamentarians, Dante already wrote your epitaph.

But you take the bait, so that the hook  
Of the old adversary draws you to him;  
And so check and recall do very little.<sup>54</sup>

Victims of their own false consciousness, which always expresses itself in ideology, the extra-parliamentarians could not for long elude the questions posed by spectacular terrorism and, from 1970 on, they began to consider the question of terrorism as such, in the empyrean of ideology, in a completely metaphysical way, completely abstracted from the reality of the thing. And when the truth about the massacre at the Piazza Fontana finally saw the light of day, after all the lies about it collapsed one after the other, neither the good souls of the intellectual-progressive bourgeoisie nor the scarecrows for sparrows at Lotta Continua and their consorts were able to pose the question in its real, that is to say, *scandalous* terms: *the democratic Republic [of Italy] did not hesitate to perpetrate a massacre* when it appeared useful for it to do so, because, when all the laws of the State are in danger, "there is only a single and inviolable law for the State: that of its survival" (Marx).<sup>55</sup> And this is *exactly* the famous "sense of the State"<sup>56</sup> that one made Moro assume and with which the philistines now decorate his corpse. In ten years, no one has wanted to

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<sup>54</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio*, XIV, 145–147.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Marx, "The Trial of the Rhenish District Committee of Democrats," speech delivered on 8 February 1849 and printed in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* #231–232, 1849.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*. Note that, in 1958, Giulio Andreotti published a book entitled *Il senso dello stato*.



had newspapers and other rags had no teeth, and they published nothing pertinent about the massacre, occupied as they were, and still are, with the search for the “correct strategy” to impose on the proletariat, which is only good for being directed and being directed *by them!*

Because of their incurable inferiority complex concerning the ICP’s ability to lie, which is indeed superior to theirs, these extra-parliamentarians immediately accepted the version of the facts accredited by the ICP, according to which the bombs were “fascist style” and *therefore* could not have been the work of the secret services of this “democratic” State that is so “democratic” that it never worries about is said by these extra-parliamentarians, although they are the only ones considered to be “dangerous” to the spectacle, for which they are badly compensated but indispensable walk-on actors. Their false explication of the facts perfectly matched the true ideology of their groupuscules, then infatuated with Mao, Stalin and Lenin, and now by Guattari, Toni Negri and Scalzone,<sup>53</sup> or by their miserable “private lives” and ridiculous whorehouses. Since these alleged “extremists” *do not want* to tell the truth, and do not know how to openly accuse the State of being *the* terrorist, they also do not know how to combat it with any tangible results. Because saying that the bombing was “fascist” was as mendacious as saying that it was “anarchist,” and all the lies – though apparently in contradiction with each other – are *always united* in the sabotage of the truth. And only the truth is revolutionary; only the truth is able to *harm* power; only the truth can infuriate the Stalinists and the bourgeois. And the proletariat, always deceived and betrayed by everyone, has learned to seek the truth on its own and is impervious to lies, no matter how “extremist” their authors claim to be. In

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<sup>53</sup> Pierre-Félix Guattari (1930–1992) was a French militant, psychotherapist and philosopher, perhaps best known for his collaborations with Gilles Deleuze. Oreste Scalzone (born 1947) is a Marxist intellectual and one of the founders of *Potere Operaio* (“Workers’ Power”).

– Mignoli? – is an officer in the secret services and that you should be suspicious of him.”

Martos would write to Sanguinetti again, on 3 June 1981.<sup>9</sup> “I have recently received two documents that you already know: one is the correspondence between you and ‘Cavalcanti,’<sup>10</sup> which Guy has made available to me and Michel [Prigent]. The other is Els van Daele’s ‘Postface to the Dutch translation’ of *Terrorismo*,” Martos wrote. “Given the critiques of you that are developed in these texts, *tacere non possum*, it is thus necessary that I give you my opinion of them, holding myself to the strict truth [...] As all of this is now discussed by several comrades, and so as to make precise to them what I think, I have also communicated this letter to them. And, awaiting your response, or better still hoping to see you if you come to Paris, I send you and Katarina my best wishes.” Sanguinetti didn’t respond to this letter, a fact that Debord interpreted as “a terrible verification: even more than I would have thought.” According to him, the “quite polite tone of the questions that you posed to Gianfranco had the merit of allowing him complete freedom to respond and offered no excuse for a cop-out.”<sup>11</sup>

Debord’s behind-the-scenes campaign against Sanguinetti’s *On Terrorism* continued into 1982. Daele’s “Postface,” which was either based upon materials that Debord had furnished or had been written by Debord himself, was followed

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<sup>9</sup> This letter was published in Jean-François Martos, *Correspondance avec Guy Debord* (Le fin mot de l’histoire, 1998), a book that was removed from circulation the following year after a successful claim of copyright infringement was lodged against it by Librairie Arthème Fayard and Alice Becker-Ho aka “Alice Debord.”

<sup>10</sup> A reference to the letters Debord sent Sanguinetti on 21 April 1978 and 29 August 1978. Cavalcanti was the pseudonym that Debord had used in this correspondence.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Debord to Martos dated 29 August 1981 and published in *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 6: Janvier 1973-Décembre 1978* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), pp. 178–180.

by Lucy Forsyth's "Foreword to the English Edition,"<sup>12</sup> which was a simple reiteration of the contents of Daele's "Postface." In the words of Sanguinetti's letter to Mustapha Khayati, which appears at the end of this volume, these translations of Sanguinetti's *Del Terrorismo* "are the most striking examples of schizophrenia in the history of publishing since *Anti-Machiavel* by Frederic II and Voltaire." Both of them "publish my text and, at the same time, launch an attack against my person [...] This gives the impression that the book was only published so that their suspicions about and censures of its author could be spread." To make matters worse, Forsyth's translation is overly literal and full of typographical and grammatical mistakes. Until now, it has been the only translation of *On Terrorism and the State* available in English.

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Though it was one of the very first texts to be published on the subject of terrorism in Italy during the 1970s, *On Terrorism and the State* is completely absent from "mainstream" discussions of the subject. The list of books in which it is not mentioned is truly extensive: Kenneth R. Langford's *An Analysis of Left and Right Wing Terrorism in Italy* (Defense Intelligence College, 1985); Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank's *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism* (Westview Press, 1987); Richard Drake's *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Indiana University Press, 1989); Robert C. Meade's *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* (Macmillan, 1990); Raimondo Catanzaro's *The Red Brigades and Left-wing Terrorism in Italy* (Pinter, 1991); Marco Rimaneli's *Waning Terror: Red Brigades and Neo-Nazi Terrorism in Italy* (World Jurist Association, 1991); Jeffrey McKenzie

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<sup>12</sup> Gianfranco Sanguinetti, *On Terrorism and the State: The theory and practice of terrorism divulged for the first time* (London: B.M. Chronos, 1982), pp. 6–13.

The final phrase of this manifesto – "Comrades, do not let yourselves stop here" – is, without exception, the only thing that has been challenged by [subsequent] history. The movement stopped on that precise day and it couldn't be otherwise, because we were the only ones who had full awareness of what the Piazza Fontana operation meant and *we said what it was*,<sup>52</sup> without any other means than a "stolen mimeograph machine," as was indicated in our manifesto. As the people say, "those who have bread have no teeth, and those who have teeth have no bread." All those courageous extra-parliamentarians who

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Bank). The direct and indirect results of the attacks *were their purpose* (...) But the Italian bourgeoisie is the most miserable in Europe. Incapable of making its own active terrorization of the proletariat succeed, it can only attempt to communicate to the majority of the population its own passive terror, that is to say, its fear of the proletariat. Powerless and maladroit in its attempts to stop the development of the revolutionary movement and, at the same time, [unable] to create a strength that it does not possess, the Italian bourgeoisie risked losing both battles on a single blow. Thus, the most advanced factions of power (internal or unofficial) have made a mistake. Excessive [social] weakness has brought the Italian bourgeoisie onto the terrain of police excess: it understands that its only possibility of getting out of its endless agony passes through the risk of the immediate end of that agony. Thus, right at the start, power has had to burn the last political card it has to play before [the outbreak of] civil war or a *coup d'état* of which it is incapable [of winning or defeating] – the two-faced card of a false "anarchist peril" (for the Right) and a false "fascist peril" (for the Left) – with the goal of masking and making possible its [counter-]offensive against the real danger: the proletariat. Moreover, the act with which the bourgeoisie has tried to avert civil war is, in reality, its first act of civil war (...) Thus, it is no longer a question of the proletariat avoiding or beginning it, but winning it (...) The proletariat now begins to understand that it isn't by partial violence that this civil war can be won, but by the total self-management of revolutionary violence and the general arming of the workers organized into Workers' Councils. It now knows that, through revolution, it must definitively reject the ideology of violence as well as the violence of ideology (...) Comrades: do not let yourselves stop here (...) Long live the absolute power of the Workers' Councils!"

<sup>52</sup> *Author's note*: the only exception to the general rout was "Bombs, Blood, Capital," a tract by Ludd, published in January 1970, that openly accused the secret services of the massacre.

that, if they had immediately told the truth, *the civil war would have begun on 13 December*, and today they know that those who try to be invited to eat at a corner of the State's table can certainly not say out loud that *the plates are dirty*, and so they say, quietly and secretly, "the plates are dirty, we know, but if you invite us, we will keep quiet about it," which is precisely what has happened.

Since the Stalinists kept quiet in 1969, this so-called "party of clean hands" had *to continue to keep quiet* and lie about all the subsequent provocations and assassinations perpetrated by the secret services of the very State from which, today, they want to receive recognition for observing the *omerta* and, as payment, a few crumbs from the Christian Democrats.

For a long period, the situationists were the only ones in Europe to denounce the Italian State as the creator and exclusive beneficiary of modern, artificial terrorism and its entire spectacle. And, to the revolutionaries of all countries, we identified Italy as the European laboratory for counter-revolution and the privileged field for experimentation with modern police techniques, and we did so starting on 19 December 1969, when we published our manifesto entitled *The Reichstag Burns*.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Author's note*: this is the occasion to cite, as an example of revolutionary lucidity, several passages from this manifesto, which one could find posted at the Piazza Fontana and the principal Milanese factories during the period when the repression was the worst.

"(...) Faced with the rise of the revolutionary movement, and despite the methodical recuperation undertaken by the unions and the bureaucrats of the old and new Left, power saw itself constrained (...) to play the false card of terrorism (...) The Italian bourgeoisie of 1969 (...) no longer needs the errors of the anarchists of the past to find pretexts for the political realization of its totalitarian reality, but instead seeks to manufacture such pretexts on its own by cornering the anarchists of today in a police machination (...) *The bomb in Milan exploded against the proletariat*. Intended to strike the least radicalized categories and thus ally them with power, and to give the call to arms to the bourgeoisie (...) It isn't at all by chance that there was a massacre among the farmers (at the National Agricultural Bank) and only the fear of one among the bourgeois (the unexploded bomb found at the Commercial

Bale's *The "Black" Terrorist International: Neo-fascist Paramilitary Networks and the "Strategy of Tension" in Italy, 1968–1974* (University of California, Berkeley, 1994); Paul Ginsborg's *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Daniele Ganser's *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation GLADIO and Terrorism in Western Europe* (Routledge, 2004); Silje Dalsbotten Aass's *State Responses to Terrorism in Italy: The Period 1969–1984* (S.D. Aass, 2005); Graeme Allen Stout's *Arrested Images: Discourses of Terrorism in Italy and Germany* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Anna Cento Bull's *Italian Neo-Fascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Non-Reconciliation* (Berghahn Books, 2007); Pier Paolo Antonello's *Imagining Terrorism: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy 1969–2009* (MHRA, 2009); and Richard Cottrell's *Gladio, NATO's Dagger at the Heart of Europe: The Pentagon-Nazi-Mafia Terror Axis* (Progressive Press, 2012), among many others.

It is possible that none of these books mention *On Terrorism and the State* because its author is virtually unknown outside of certain, very limited circles and because, over the years, copies of his book have been almost impossible to find. In the words of one of the very few authors who does refer to it – Philip Willan, the author of *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (Constable, 1991) – Sanguinetti's book, which is described as "maverick," is "rare" and "privately published." That is to say, virtually no commercial distributor carries copies of it; it is only available through anarchist or informal distribution networks. And yet, according to WorldCat.org, which describes itself as "the world's largest library catalog," three libraries have copies of the Italian original;<sup>13</sup> thirty-four have copies of Martos' translation; three have copies of the trans-

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<sup>13</sup> None of these copies are housed in Italy. The only library in Italy that has a copy of the book is the Johns Hopkins SAIS Bologna Center, which has a copy of the English translation.

lation by Labrugère and Rouyau; forty-five have copies of the English translation; six have copies of the Dutch translation; eleven have copies of a German translation;<sup>14</sup> one has a copy of a translation into Greek; and one has a copy of a translation into Spanish.

What about the Internet? Ever since 1999, my website ([www.notbored.org/sanguinetti.html](http://www.notbored.org/sanguinetti.html)) has hosted Lucy Forsyth's translations of the prefaces that Sanguinetti wrote to the Italian and French editions of his book, and, ever since 2004, it has hosted her translation of *On Terrorism* itself.<sup>15</sup> But with a handful of exceptions (see below), the Internet has paid virtually no attention to Sanguinetti's book. For example, no mention of *On Terrorism and the State* is made in the Wikipedia entries for "Operation Gladio," "Gladio in Italy," "the strategy of tension," "the years of lead," "false flag terrorism" and "state terrorism." Nor is Sanguinetti's book mentioned in any of the many articles devoted to terrorism, the strategy of tension, and Italy in the 1970s that are archived by [libcom.org](http://libcom.org), a website devoted to and administered by adherents of libertarian communism.

There is nothing new about this silence. In January 1980, in his preface to the French edition of *On Terrorism and the State*, Sanguinetti himself notes the existence of "the quasi-complete silence that has surrounded a book that deals with a subject that is spoken about every day, but always in the same mendacious way, on the front pages of all the Italian newspapers as well as on the State-sponsored radio and television stations"

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<sup>14</sup> This translation was published in 1981 by Edition Nautilus, a publishing house that, according to Martos' letter of 4 April 1981, was to be distrusted because "their translations are bad, without mention of origin, their catalogue contains anything and everything and, bizarrely, though they constitute a certain pole of attraction in Germany, they never seem to have enemies among the Teutonic police... And, without affirming anything with certainty, one could relate their fetishism of organization to the quasi-cop [*quasi-flicarole*] letter that they sent to Michel Prigent."

<sup>15</sup> This was before I translated all these texts from scratch.

that the RBs are masterminded, that Moro was eliminated by the unofficial services, or that they themselves are fucking idiots, good to throw into prison any time it is useful to do so.

The Stalinists, from the moment that they can be [justly] accused of not knowing what is fascist, or not being able to distinguish what is simply *police-related* from what is fascist, must be accused of lying when they say that the provocation of the Piazza Fontana was "fascist style," and they lied quite maladroitly, because they didn't say "this is fascist," but "this is fascist *style*." The fact that General Miceli,<sup>48</sup> openly fascist today,<sup>49</sup> was already a fascist when he was the head of the SID did not determine his actions back then: the secret services receive their orders from the politicians and do what the politicians tell them to do. Though maladroit, the Stalinists' lies about the bombing of the Piazza Fontana certainly had motivations behind them. Because they wanted to keep quiet about what they knew, and because they, too, were attacked (and quite violently) by the wildcat workers, the Stalinists had to give credence to the ghostly "fascist danger" of 1969, in the face of which they could try to reconstitute "the unity of the working class" under their control. A week after the bombing, metalworkers in the private sector, who were in the forefront of the [proletarian] movement and were its toughest part, were forced to give up their right to strike (starting with the one announced for 19 December) and to accept the contract imposed on them by the unions. Longo and Amendola<sup>50</sup> knew quite well

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<sup>48</sup> General Vito Miceli (1916–1990) was the head of the *Servizio Informazione Difesa* between 1970 and 1974. He was arrested and imprisoned in October 1974 on charges that he participated in the failed Borghese *coup d'état* of 8 December 1970. He was acquitted in 1978.

<sup>49</sup> He was a member of the Italian Social Movement, founded in 1946 by supporters of Benito Mussolini.

<sup>50</sup> Luigi Longo (1900–1980) was a member of the Italian Communist Party from 1964 to 1972. Giorgio Amendola (1907–1980), a member of the Italian Communist Party, was a writer and member of the Constituent Assembly.

ple, by ceasing to fraternize with the indecent and unspeakable Bernard-Henri Lévy?<sup>44</sup>

But I have already said the unsayable about the intellectuals, and it is useless to add any more.

As for the groupuscules with revolutionary pretensions, which have all thrown themselves headlong into theological dissertations about violence and the strategy of “revolutionary” terrorism, I will only recall here that they have long since proved the nature of their comprehension of reality, starting with [the bombing of] the Piazza Fontana, then on every subsequent occasion, such as when they applauded the assassination of Calabresi<sup>45</sup> without stopping to think that this police commissioner had been eliminated *by his own bosses*, for whom he had become cumbersome (he had been involved in the prosecution of Valpreda, the assassination of Pinelli, and something else: several weeks before he was killed in his turn, he had “recognized” Feltrinelli<sup>46</sup> in the unrecognizable cadaver found in Segrate, something for which all the newspapers celebrated “his memory, his shrewdness,” etc. without any of them wondering if he managed to do this thanks to his [keen] memory, his shrewdness or, on the contrary, *something quite different*<sup>47</sup>).

These alienated extra-parliamentarians always lose themselves in everything that the Stalinists say about terrorism because they do not know that the ICP can only *lie* and the only thing they can never believe is *the simple truth*: for example,

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<sup>44</sup> Author of *La Barbarie à visage humain* (1977), an anti-Marxist diatribe.

<sup>45</sup> Luigi Calabresi (1937–1972) was a high-level political police officer in Milan who was tasked with investigating the bombing at the Piazza Fontana. He was murdered on 17 May 1972, allegedly by members of *Lotta continua*.

<sup>46</sup> Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (1926–1972) was the founder of a publishing house and a member of the *Gruppi di Azione Partigiana* (“Partisan Action Group”). He was killed on 14 March 1972, allegedly while setting up explosives underneath an electrical pylon.

<sup>47</sup> i.e., he had received orders to lie.

and notes that the existence of his book has been “kept secret by the very people who are believed to have the obligation to speak about terrorism.” The reason for this silence is, I believe, easy to imagine. Sanguinetti didn’t simply assert what many people had refused to believe at the time, namely, that the Italian State had bombed, wounded and even killed some of its constituents, and had cynically blamed others for these crimes. He also denounced those who, through either stupidity or self-interest, adamantly refused to believe that such a thing could *ever* happen. And these people, and those for whom they spoke, never forgave him, even though – or precisely because – history has proved that Sanguinetti was right.<sup>16</sup> Such is the price for proving that the experts have lied: they lie about you; they deny that you even exist.

Among the exceptions is a man named Webster Tarpley, who is the author of *Synthetic Terror: Made in USA* (Progressive Press, 2005). It is clear from his footnotes and bibliography that he encountered Sanguinetti’s book through my website. Not only does he mention *On Terrorism and the State*, but he also quotes from it extensively (sometimes with proper attribution, sometimes without it). To him, Sanguinetti’s book offers support for the idea that Al Qaeda didn’t perpetrate the attacks carried out in the United States on September 11, 2001 – the CIA did. Sanguinetti agrees with this thesis, but, unlike him, Tarpley is not a libertarian communist. In fact, he is an anti-Communist zealot and a bit of a lunatic. For example, he thinks that the CIA created and financed the Situationist International.<sup>17</sup> Does he know that Sanguinetti belonged to the SI between 1969 and 1972? If Tarpley were told about it, would he

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Daniele Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies: Operation GLADIO and Terrorism in Western Europe* (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. interview with Webster Tarpley, Press TV, 13 October 2011: “[The] Situationist International was cooked up by NATO and the CIA back in the 1950s and 60s to overthrow General de Gaulle of France who was the target at that time.”

think that Sanguinetti's membership in the SI somehow undercuts the validity or usefulness of his critique of the CIA? I don't know. It doesn't appear that anyone has ever asked Tarpley these questions. But I have read enough of his writings to make an educated guess about how he would respond if he were told that an ex-situationist had written a book that denounced the CIA's machinations. He would call that book a "limited hangout operation"<sup>18</sup> and then claim that he was never fooled by it, not even for a second.

The other exceptions are those people who also believe that the CIA was behind the attacks that took place on September 11, 2001 but who, like Sanguinetti, are libertarian communists. A pair of them (Jeff Strahl and Tod Fletcher) have uploaded my translation of *On Terrorism and the State* to a blog called the "Daily Battle"<sup>19</sup> and have added footnotes that show the many parallels that exist between the terrorist attacks carried out in

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<sup>18</sup> This is an operation "in which carefully selected and falsified documents and other materials are deliberately revealed by an insider who pretends to be a fugitive rebelling against the excesses of some oppressive or dangerous government agency. But the revelations turn out to have been prepared with a view to shaping the public consciousness in a way which is advantageous to the intelligence agency involved. At the same time, gullible young people can be duped into supporting a personality cult of the leaker, more commonly referred to as a 'whistleblower.' A further variation on the theme can be the attempt of the sponsoring intelligence agency to introduce their chosen conduit, now posing as a defector, into the intelligence apparatus of a targeted foreign government. In this case, the leaker or whistleblower attains the status of a triple agent." Webster Tarpley, "How to identify a limited CIA hangout op?" Press TV, 18 June 2013. The reactionary nature of this obscurantist analysis can be seen in the fact that, for Tarpley, Daniel Ellsberg, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden are not genuine whistle-blowers, but "triple agents."

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.dailybattle.pair.com/2013/sanguinetti\\_state\\_terror.shtml](http://www.dailybattle.pair.com/2013/sanguinetti_state_terror.shtml). This excellent blog also hosts like-minded essays by Max Kolskegg ("9/11 in Context: Plans and Counterplans" and "9/11: A Desperate Provocation by US Capitalism") and an interview with Tod Fletcher ("9/11 in Context: The Strategy of Tension Gone Global").

about this passage and all of reality – he lost himself in this or that phrase from one of Moro's letters without discovering that no detail observed under a microscope can indicate or let one catch a glimpse of *the entirety* of the facts. And indeed, even today, Sciascia believes that Craxi and the others really had an interest or the intention of working with "the revolutionaries" [to free Moro] and, with the eloquence worthy of the best defense attorney, he is indignant about the lack of friendship shown for Moro by his "friends," which is an insignificant detail, instead of reserving his indignation *for what is essential*, namely, the facts that virtually the entire world was deceived by this provocation, [new] police-related laws were passed and, despite the hypocritical and despicable appeals from the intellectuals and the pope against "extremism," a hundred innocent people are now locked up in prison for a very long time. Tell me, Sciascia: what importance does it have for history, or even for the truth of the matter, that Aldo Moro had, among others, the misfortune of having such disloyal and dishonest "friends"? Perhaps it is a novelty that the Roman political world is made up of scoundrels and assassins? Sciascia, have you never read what Cardinal de Retz (a better pamphleteer than you) said three centuries ago? "There are many people in Rome who would be happy to assassinate those who are [lying] on the ground." You, the new Emile Zola, do not accuse the enemies of Dreyfus,<sup>43</sup> but his calumnious friends; not the criminals and the ones responsible, but those (they abound among the journalists for *Corriere della Sera*, for which you write) who have the simple fault of calumniating and dishonoring the victim, *after the fact* [Latin in original]. Sciascia, if you regret the fact that Moro had such "friends," why don't you begin by setting a better exam-

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<sup>43</sup> Emile Zola (1840–1902) was a French author. On 13 January 1898, the newspaper *L'Aurore* published his open letter, entitled *J'accuse!* ("I Accuse"), which concerned the conviction of Alfred Dreyfus, a French soldier falsely accused of espionage.

attributed the success of the Via Fani operation to the non-existence of the secret services).<sup>40</sup> Second, I thought of the passage in *Candide* where it is stated that, “in this country, it is good, from time to time, to kill and admiral to give courage to the others.”<sup>41</sup>

Sciascia,<sup>42</sup> who is the best known of the Italian readers of Voltaire, certainly isn't the most subtle one, since – forgetting

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<sup>40</sup> It is our duty to point out to the reader that these statements are not in accord with what Sanguinetti wrote in a letter to Guy Debord dated 1 June 1978.

“On 16 March, the day Moro was kidnapped, I was in Milan, where I had a meeting with the Doge in the afternoon. In the morning, when the news of the event in Rome echoed on all the streets of Italy, chance would have it that I met Pietro Valpreda, who I immediately asked if this time he could come up with a better alibi than before. Since he said that he didn't have one, and I didn't either, I told him that nothing could be better for me if we were seen *together* on that morning, because no one would bother me if I could prove – in any situation that could arise – that I was with a person with a completely *burned* reputation, and thus no one would dare to disturb me a second time. He then invited me back to his place to listen to the first news reports, and it was there that I proposed to him – since he is so well known in the entire world in connection with the provocation of 1969 – that we immediately make a public, printed declaration in a completely sarcastic tone that he cheerfully “claimed” responsibility for this new provocation, since it clearly came from the same people who placed the bomb in the Piazza Fontana. I even wrote a short text for him, but as you know he isn't the boldest man in Milan, nor the most lucid, and thus he refused it in a categorical manner, with the argument that he'd had his fill of prisons, police and provocations. He offered me a small bottle of Barbera, which, beyond an alibi, was the only thing he offered me (...) Italy's terrorists are not eagles, but its secret services are *nonexistent* (crushed under the weight of their 1969 attack, the arrests in Catanzaro, and the dismantling undertaken by Andreotti himself). (...) The Italian secret services have been *sure of being the only ones* to commit terrorist attacks for such a long time that, when real terrorism takes places, they've been taken completely by surprise.”

<sup>41</sup> Voltaire, Chapter 23, *Candide, or the Optimist*.

<sup>42</sup> Leonardo Sciascia (1921–1989) was a writer who later became a politician affiliated with the Italian Communist Party, from which he resigned in 1977. In the years that followed, he was elected to the European Parliament and devoted himself to investigating the kidnapping of Aldo Moro.

Italy in the 1970s and the attacks perpetrated on September 11, 2001 in the United States. Those parallels include the following:

1. Both sets of attacks were preceded by predictions that public opinion about the pressing issues of the day would not change unless some kind of major catastrophe took place.
2. Both sets of attacks were preceded by events that embarrassed the State (the inability of the unions and police forces to contain working class rebellion during 1969 in Italy and the success that anti-globalization protests had in Seattle in 1999 and Genoa in 2001).
3. Both sets of attacks were never claimed by any individual or group, but were quickly blamed on extremists.
4. Despite their limited means, these extremists were able to perpetrate spectacularly successful attacks against much stronger adversaries.
5. Both the Red Brigades and Al Qaeda were manipulated, if not actually created, by the intelligence agencies of the countries that were attacked by them.
6. Both sets of attacks were used as justifications for the quick passage of legislation that had been drafted long before these attacks and were used to criminalize completely legitimate forms of protest.
7. Left-wing intellectuals were quick to believe and repeat the State's statements about the identities of those who had perpetrated the attacks and to denounce those who didn't believe these statements as “conspiracy theorists.”

Though I am sympathetic with these efforts or, rather, though I agree that these parallels are significant, I don't believe that this analysis gets to the heart of the matter.

First and foremost, while Italian capitalism was experiencing a real crisis in the late 1960s and early 1970s (its working class was not only rebelling, but was also rebelling in a truly radical and quite effective fashion), American capitalism in 2001 was not. Questions about the legitimacy of the election of a particular president are not questions about the legitimacy of the system as a whole. Furthermore, protests against meetings held by the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund, even when they are massive, are quite anodyne in comparison to the sabotage of industrial production and participation in wildcat strikes. Second, while Italian capitalism officially proclaimed that it was menaced by and was fighting back against anarchist and Communist subversion (that is to say, something that threatened the country's class structure), American capitalism officially proclaimed that its enemy was Islamic fundamentalism (something that threatened its religious identity and its "democratic freedoms"). Third and last, Italian capitalism was defending itself with a weapon – Operation Gladio – that had been forged more than twenty years previously. The attacks carried out on September 11, 2001 took many, many years of planning; they certainly weren't set in motion just two years before they took place.

But this doesn't mean that people like Strahl and Fletcher aren't on the right track or that *On Terrorism and the State* isn't relevant to a critical analysis of September 11 and other instances of spectacular or artificial terrorism. In fact, it seems that there are more than mere "similarities" or "parallels" between Italian terrorism in the 1970s and the "global war against terrorism" that was launched in response to the attacks of September 11. They are, it seems to me, part of one and the same operation. In the words of one commentator, the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent global war against terrorism were part of "Gladio B": that is to say, the continuation and expansion of what the CIA and NATO were

the one whom you and your secret auxiliaries considered to be the most able to arouse popular indignation (no one would have raised an eyebrow if it had been Rumor or even Fanfani<sup>37</sup> who had been kidnapped), the one who was the most responsible for the current "political framework," which, as you can see, did not please *all* of the capitalist sectors that you and your military organizations are called upon to defend. In his circumstance, one can say that Moro was the Italian equivalent of Allende,<sup>38</sup> and behind the [false] accusation that Moro was serving the interests of the bourgeoisie and capital instead of those of the proletariat, there was in fact (and badly camouflaged) *the opposite accusation*, that is to say, the accusation that Moro wasn't serving capitalist interests in the way that certain capitalists had wanted.

On 16 March [1978], the day of the Via Fani operation, I could not stop myself from immediately thinking two things. First, I thought that the secret services had *finally* been reorganized and had recovered a bit from the affair of 12 December 1969 and the humiliations that followed from it<sup>39</sup> (here again and once more, reality is inverted in the spectacle: one

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<sup>37</sup> Mariano Rumor (1915–1990), a member of the Christian Democratic Party, was the Minister of the Interior in 1963 and between 1972 and 1973, the Prime Minister of Italy between 1968 and 1970, and then again between 1973 and 1974, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1974 and 1976. In 1973, Rumor was the target of a bomb that was set by Gianfranco Bertoli, allegedly an anarchist but actually an agent for the *Servizio di Informazioni delle Forze Armate* (SIFAR). Amintore Fanfani (1908–1999), a member of the Christian Democratic Party, was the Prime Minister in 1954, between 1958 and 1959, and then again between 1960 and 1963, as well as the Minister of the Interior between 1954 and 1955, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1958 and 1959, in 1965, and between 1966 and 1968.

<sup>38</sup> Salvador Allende Gossens (1908–1973) was the President of Chile between 1970 and 11 September 1973, when he was deposed and murdered by the Chilean military, with the support of the American Central Intelligence Agency.

<sup>39</sup> Formed in 1966, the *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* ("Defense Information Service") was officially dissolved in 1977.



1905. In any case, we must note that all powers in difficulty *always resemble each other*, just as their behaviors and manners of proceeding [in such instances] always resemble each other.

The logic currently followed by the strategists of this [terrorist] spectacle is simple, flat and ancient. Provided that we do not recognize their *real* difficulties or the irremediable contradictions with which this old society struggles, the masters of the spectacle of terrorism can flatly present to us the most contradictory things: the terrorism of 1978 is presented as the unavoidable consequence of the proletarian revolts of 1977 and [the bombing of] the Piazza Fontana is presented as the logical end of the “hot” year of 1969. Nothing is more false! The revolts of 1977 were [in fact] the consequence of the “hot” autumn [of 1969] and the kidnapping of Moro was [in fact] the consequence of the provocation of the Piazza Fontana. History advances through dialectical contradictions but, like the scholastic philosophers, the spectacle flatly proclaims *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this fact, therefore because of this fact): *the fault* is attributed to the fact. In 1977, the young proletarian generation rose up against its misery? Well, [that means] in 1978 these same enraged young people kidnapped Moro! And it hardly matters that the Red Brigades [RBs] had nothing to do with the revolt of 1977, which they, on the contrary, accused of “spontaneity-ism”: the young proletarians of 1977 were subversives; the RBs are made up of young people; [therefore] the RBs are the subversive elements of 1977. Not at all, gentlemen of the government! And you, the general officers of the unofficial services, *since you are always deceived*, you would like it if everyone were just like you! And whoever denounces your provocations is immediately accused of being the provocateur, because reality is always upside-down in the spectacle.

Gentlemen of the government, the truth is that, as in 1977, when your chairs shook under your asses, and the earth shook under your feet, *you* – yes, precisely you – went on the counter-offensive, only this time you killed one of your own, precisely

doing in Italy and the rest of Europe in the 1970s.<sup>20</sup> The central players are the same: one need only call attention to the continued presence of Henry Kissinger to see this.<sup>21</sup> The justification is the same: the State needs to guarantee “continuity of government”; it needs to have the same people in command, even if the thing that threatens that continuity has apparently changed (it used to be a Communist takeover, now it is a terrorist attack). And the ultimate goal is the same: control of the world’s supplies of oil and natural gas. The only difference is that while “Gladio A” used neo-Nazis to fight against the Communists in places like Italy and Belgium, “Gladio B” uses *mujahideen* to fight against the Communists in Afghanistan and the Balkans. In sum, the Cold War never ended; it simply entered a new phase.

If *On Terrorism and the State* is relevant today, almost 35 years after it was first published, this is because of its author’s commitment to the importance of historical knowledge and to seeing the continuity “behind” or “between” apparently unrelated or unprecedented events. The perpetrators of the attacks that took place on September 11 have been successful in their attempts to capitalize on those attacks because they have managed to convince people that, on that day, “everything changed.” It is only a detailed knowledge of history that allows us to see that, no, “everything” didn’t “change” on that day. In point of fact, “everything” remained very much the same: the rich and powerful remained in control, and they continued to want to make sure that they never lose their wealth, their power or their ability to control others. In fact, it is precisely change that they fear; they are especially fearful that, one day, “everything” might actually change. Of course, change is

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<sup>20</sup> Dr. Nafeez Ahmed, “Why Was a *Sunday Times* Report on U.S. Government Ties to Al Qaeda Chief Spiked?” *Ceasefire*, 20 May 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Other players were in power during both the early 1970s and 2001 include Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Cf. Kevin Ryan, *Nineteen 9/11 Suspects* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).

inevitable; it is impossible to forestall change forever. This is precisely why the rich and powerful are so dangerous. They grow more desperate every day.

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A few notes about the text and the book's design. Since I cannot read Italian, I have used Jean-François Martos' *Du Terrorisme et de l'Etat: La théorie et la pratique du terrorisme divulguées pour la première fois* as the basis for this translation into English. I have dropped the always controversial and now increasingly irrelevant subtitle. The original Italian edition included words and phrases from a number of other languages (mostly Latin, French and English). Martos was careful to preserve this multi-lingual richness as he translated the work as a whole from Italian into French, and I, translating from French into English, have tried to be careful, too. When Sanguinetti quoted from an Italian translation of something in English, I sought out and used the original wording. When he quoted from something in Latin, I consulted and relied upon the already-established rendering of it into English. All of the footnotes are by me, except where noted. Both Els van Daele's 'Postface to the Dutch translation' of *Terrorismo* and Sanguinetti's letter to Mustapha Khayati have never appeared in print or in an English translation before. Finally, this edition of *On Terrorism* is the first one to include an index of the important names, events and places mentioned in the text.

Bill Brown  
Brooklyn, NY  
February 2014

## On Terrorism and the State

The wily shafts of state, those jugglers' tricks,

umpteenth lie by the State. Both the extra-parliamentarians and the Leftist intellectuals certainly admit that the State always makes use of terrorism *after the fact* [Latin in original], but they cannot conceive that it would also have recourse to killing its "most prestigious" representative. And this is why I spoke of their ignorance of history: none of them know or, in any case, none of them remember the infinite number of examples in which States in crisis, in *social* crisis, have precisely eliminated *their most reputable representatives* with the intention and in the hope of arousing and *channeling* general indignation – generally ephemeral – against "extremists" and malcontents. Of a thousand possible historical examples, I will only cite the Czarist secret services, the formidable Okhrana, which – foreseeing with terror (and with good reason) the revolution of 1905 – killed no one less than Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, on 28 July 1904 and, when this didn't seem sufficient, killed Grand Duke Serge, uncle of the Czar, a very influential man and the head of military conscription in Moscow, on 17 February 1905.

These perfectly successful attacks were organized, executed and claimed by the "Combat Organization" of the Revolutionary Socialists, who had just come under the direction of the famous Azev, a truly ingenious engineer and Okhrana agent, after he replaced the revolutionary Guerchuni, who was opportunely arrested shortly before.<sup>36</sup>

I cite this unique but admirable example of provocation because five hundred pages wouldn't be enough to cite all the notorious examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and because Italy in 1978 had a vague but quite real resemblance to Russia in 1904–

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<sup>36</sup> *Author's note:* arrested thanks to Azev, Guerchuni heartily recommended to his comrades that Azev himself should be placed at the head of the "Combat Organization" due to the courage and daring he showed while transporting weapons, explosive and publications of the Revolutionary Socialists into Russia from Switzerland, where this party's Central Committee was in exile (specifically, in Geneva).

own inaptitude, on the one hand, and the intrigues of their enemies, on the other, and these enemies are much less inept and indecisive than they are, as the Via Fani operation, among others, testifies to and certifies.

The parties in favor of negotiation, on the other hand, survived their defeat, and drew some strength from the weakness of the parties opposed to it. The former were represented by Craxi for reasons of pure convenience and by Lotta continua<sup>34</sup> due to the extreme stupidity that prevented even these militants from perceiving that they are *an integral part* of the spectacle that they want to combat and with which they feed themselves with both hands. Naturally, in this party in favor of negotiation there were many intellectuals, whose perspicacity and depth of thought no longer need demonstration. In any case, these characteristics were supplemented by the crassest ignorance of history, which is even less pardonable on the part of those who have a comment to make about everything and make money from their alleged knowledge. Let me explain: that which above all unites bourgeois reactionaries, the good souls of the progressive bourgeoisie, fashionable intellectuals, the contemplative supporters of armed struggle and the militants who complain about it is precisely the fact that, apropos of Moro, they all believe that, for the first time, the State *hasn't lied* where an act of terrorism is concerned, and *therefore* the kidnapping was the work of revolutionaries, with respect to whom the lugubrious Toni Negri<sup>35</sup> has said, "we underestimated their effectiveness (...) We are disposed to make our self-critique" for having "underestimated their effectiveness." Thus, all these people, willingly or unwillingly, are the victims of this

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<sup>34</sup> *Lotta continua* ("The Struggle Continues") was a far-Left extra-parliamentary organization founded in 1969 and disbanded in 1976. Its self-titled publication continued until 1982.

<sup>35</sup> Antonio Negri (born 1933) is a Marxist sociologist and philosopher. He founded *Potere Operaio* ("Workers' Power") in 1969 and was a leading member of *Autonomia Operaia* ("Workers' Autonomy").

Which we call deep designs and politics,  
(As in a theatre the ignorant fry,  
Because the cords escape their eye,  
Wonder to see the motions fly) (...)  
Methinks, when you expose the scene,  
Down the ill-organ'd engines fall;  
Off fly the vizards, and discover all:  
How plain I see through the deceit!  
How shallow, and how gross, the cheat!  
Look where the pulley's tied above! (...)  
On what poor engines move  
The thoughts of monarchs and designs of states!  
What petty motives rule their fates! (...)  
Away the frighten'd peasants fly,  
Scared at the unheard-of prodigy (...)  
Lo! it appears!  
See how they tremble! how they quake!

Swift, "Ode to the Honorable Sir William Temple,"  
1689

All acts of terrorism, all the attacks that have struck and that strike the imagination of men and women, have been and are either *offensive* or *defensive* actions. Experience has long since shown that, if they are part of a strategic offensive, they are always doomed to failure. On the other hand, experience has also shown that, if they are part of a defensive strategy, such actions can hope for some success, which is nevertheless momentary and precarious. The attacks by the Palestinians and the Irish, for example, are acts of *offensive* terrorism, while the bombing of the Piazza Fontana and the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, for example, are *defensive* acts.

However, it is not only the strategy that differs depending on whether the act in question is an instance of offensive or defensive terrorism, but also *the strategists*. The desperate and

those suffering from illusions have recourse to offensive terrorism, while it is *always* and *only* States that have recourse to defensive terrorism, either because they have been thrust into some serious social crisis, as the Italian State has been, or because they fear such a crisis, as does the German State.

The defensive terrorism of the States is practiced *directly* or *indirectly* by them, that is, with their own weapons or with those of others. If the States have recourse to *direct* terrorism, it is directed against their own populations, as was the case with the massacres at the Piazza Fontana, on the *Italicus* or at Brescia.<sup>22</sup> If, on the other hand, the States decide they must have recourse to *indirect* terrorism, such acts must appear to have been directed against them, as was the case in the Moro affair.

The attacks directly realized by detached units or by the unofficial [or “parallel”] services of the State are not customarily claimed by anyone, but are imputed or attributed to this or that convenient “guilty party,” such as Pinelli or Valpreda.<sup>23</sup> Experience has proved that this aspect is the weakest point of this type of terrorism and that determines the extreme fragility of the political usage one wants to make of it. The results of this same experience show that the strategists of the State’s unofficial services seek to give their own acts much greater credibility or at least less improbability, either by directly claiming

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<sup>22</sup> The bombing of a bank at the Piazza Fontana in Milan took place on 12 December 1969. The bombing of the *Italicus Express*, a train operated by the *Ferrovie dello Stato* (“State Railway”), took place on 4 August 1974 and was at first “claimed” by *Ordine Nero* (“Black Order”), a neo-fascist group. The bombing at Brescia, Italy, took place at the Piazza della Loggia on 28 May 1974, during an anti-fascist protest.

<sup>23</sup> Giuseppe “Pino” Pinelli (1928–1969) was an Italian railway worker and anarchist activist. Accused of perpetrating the attack at the Piazza Fontana, he was murdered on 15 December 1969 by the Italian police, who forced him out of a fourth floor window. Pietro Valpreda (1933–2002) was an anarchist and writer who was accused and convicted of perpetrating the attack at the Piazza Fontana.

And, in fact, as everyone can determine, the Italian Communist Party [ICP] hasn’t ceased since then to experience the bitter consequences of its stupid dishonesty. During the kidnapping, the ICP was widely accused by the bourgeois press of definitively being the ones responsible for it because the so-called Communists had encouraged all sorts of illusions about the social revolution among its militants and obtained beautiful results from doing so. Then it lost the elections; then abject Craxi (who during the abduction had already had his eye on the side of those in favor of negotiation, which he knew was impossible, but which permitted him to differentiate himself from the others [in his party]) passed over to the offensive by accusing the Stalinists of everything, but dressed these accusations up under the cover of heated ideological quarrels that served as pretexts, which were all the more laughable because they came from a man of his intellectual and cultural stature. But each time the one who lost these quarrels was Berlinguer, and the ICP – because it had not wanted to be fought by its allies in the government – had also forgotten how to fight them. Upon each defeat that it suffered, one witnessed the passably comic scene in which Piccoli<sup>33</sup> and Andreotti caressed Berlinguer’s neck, and recommended that he not despair and continue on as before. And yet, despite all these reversals, even today the Stalinists stubbornly continue to feign to believe that Leftist extremists killed Moro. Thus one can say that the interminable series of failures that the ICP has incurred has been *truly merited*, since it is nothing as “the party of struggle” and nonexistent as “the party of government.” That which appears to me less comprehensible and more unjustified than all the rest is the fact that the Stalinists lament these failures without any modesty and always portray themselves as victims, but without ever saying *what* they are the victims of, that is to say, their

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<sup>33</sup> Flaminio Piccoli (1918–2000) was a member of the Christian Democratic Party.

unity,” paid the price just as he was bringing that enterprise into port. As Machiavelli said, “from which one draws a general rule, which never or rarely fails: that whoever is the cause of another becoming powerful is ruined.”<sup>31</sup> And it isn’t by chance that he makes this remark in the chapter entitled *De principibus mixtis* and that the current governmental majority is also mixed. With the disappearance of Moro, all the other political leaders who had been partisans of the “opening,” Democratic Christians and others, were *warned*, because those who decided upon and put into operation the kidnapping of Moro thereby demonstrated that, at any moment, they could do even worse. Craxi<sup>32</sup> was the first to understand this, but [eventually] all of the politicians did. And Berlinguer, instead of denouncing this immediately, instead of admitting that the blow struck his politics dead, once again preferred to keep quiet, feigned to believe all the official versions of the facts, played the zealot in the hunt for witches, incited the population to become informers (one doesn’t know about what or whom), continued to pad out his own lies, supported Christian Democratic intransigence and hurled invectives against the extremists in the naïve illusion of thereby reassuring the hidden sectors that had kidnapped Moro. But the strategists behind the Via Fani operation mocked Berlinguer’s abstract good will against subversives, because they knew that he knew and because they also knew that, when it is a question of real subversion, which harms the economy, Berlinguer could do nothing at all to prevent the actions of the wildcat workers. It isn’t enough to *want* to defeat subversion, Berlinguer: you must also demonstrate *that you can do it*. The leaves of abstract [good] will are made of dry leaves that have never been green, imbecile!

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<sup>31</sup> Machiavelli, Chapter III, “Of Mixed Principalities,” *The Prince*.

<sup>32</sup> Benedetto Craxi (1934–2000) was the head of the Italian Socialist Party.

them in the name of the initials of this or that ghostly group, or even by getting them claimed by an existing clandestine group, whose militants are apparently or believe themselves to be strangers to the designs of the State apparatus.

All the secret terrorist groups are organized and directed by a clandestine hierarchy that is composed of the militants of clandestinity themselves, who perfectly reflect the division of labor and the roles proper to the current social organization: those on high decide on what is to be done and those below execute orders. Ideology and military discipline protect the true summit from all the risks and the rank-and-file from all suspicions. Any secret service [intelligence agency] can invent for itself a set of “revolutionary” initials and carry out a certain number of attacks for which the press will make good publicity and from which the secret service in question will find it easy to form a small group of naïve militants, whom it can direct with the greatest ease. But in case a small terrorist group spontaneously constitutes itself, there is nothing easier in the world for the detached units of the State to do than infiltrate it and then, thanks to the means at their disposal and the extreme freedom of maneuvering that they enjoy, to substitute themselves for it, either by well-chosen arrests made at opportune moments or by the assassination of the original leaders, which, as a general rule, takes place during an armed conflict with the “forces of order,” informed in advance of such an encounter by the infiltrated agents.

From that moment on, the unofficial services of the State can dispose as they please of a perfectly effective organization, composed of naïve or fanatical militants who only ask to be led. The small original terrorist group, born from the illusions of its militants concerning the possibilities of launching an effective strategic offensive, changes strategists and becomes nothing other than a *defensive* appendage of the State, which maneuvers it with the greatest agility and assurance, according to its

own necessities of the moment or those that it *believes* are its own necessities.

From the [bombing of the] Piazza Fontana to the kidnaping of Moro, the only things that have changed are the contingent objectives that this defensive terrorism has achieved, but *the goal* of the defensive *can never change*. And the goal from 12 December 1969 to 16 March 1978, and today, as well, has in fact remained the same: to make the entire population, which had not supported the State or had been struggling against it, believe that it *at least has an enemy in common* with the State and that the State will defend the population on the condition that no one questions it. The population, which is generally hostile to terrorism, and not without reason, must then agree that, *at least in this instance*, it *needs* the State, to which it must delegate the most extensive powers so that the State can vigorously confront the arduous task of the common defense against an enemy that is obscure, mysterious, perfidious, merciless and, in a word, *illusory*. Faced with a terrorism that is always presented as *the absolute evil*, evil in itself and by itself, all the other evils, which are much more real, become secondary and must even be forgotten. Because the struggle against terrorism [perfectly] coincides with *the common interest*, it is already *the general good*, and the State that generously leads that struggle is the good itself and by itself. Without the cruelty of the devil, the infinite kindness of God cannot appear and be properly appreciated.

The State, extremely weakened by all the attacks it has suffered every day for 10 years – attacks on its economy made by the proletariat, on the one hand, and attacks on its power and prestige made by the ineptitude of its managers, on the other –, can thus silence both them by solemnly tasking itself with staging the spectacle of the collective and sacrosanct defense [of all] against the monster of terrorism and, in the name of this pious mission, it can take from all of its subjects a supplementary portion of their already limited freedom and thus reinforce

much less dangerous to them than alive, because a dead friend is much more valuable than a living enemy. Hypothetically, if Moro had been freed, which was impossible, the Stalinists and the Christian Democrats knew quite well that Moro would be three times more dangerous to them than if he were dead: his popularity would be reinforced by his adventure; he'd been discredited in every way by his "friends" when he couldn't defend himself; and thus he'd be an open [and popular] enemy of both his "friends" and his former Stalinist allies. Thus, given the situation, no one has the right to criticize Andreotti and Berlinguer, because they only acted in their own best interests. What one can reproach them for was having done so *so badly*, that is to say, for having raised more doubts and suspicions than applause through their sudden and unforeseen conversion to an inflexibility that obviously did not derive from their respective characters, their past histories, nor their alleged will to safeguard the institutions, which their deeds scorned at every instant, and so this inflexibility had to derive from their undisclosed [and true] interests.

As for Berlinguer in particular, he did not lose the opportunity to once more show himself (as if everyone had not already been convinced) to be the most inept politician of the century. In fact, from the beginning he was as clear as day that the kidnaping of Moro was above all a blow *against the "historic compromise,"* and certainly not dealt by Leftist extremists – who, in any case, would have kidnapped Berlinguer himself to punish him for his "betrayal" – but a group of powerful and interested people who were irrationally hostile to the "compromise" with the so-called Communists. I say *irrationally* because such a policy would certainly not undermine the interests of capitalism. But obviously diligent Berlinguer was not successful in convincing *all* the political sectors, military circles and powerful groups of this, despite the fact that he dedicated five years to this task and to this task alone. And so Aldo Moro, for a long time designated as the artisan of the government of "national

terrorist group. This is why, in the case of Aldo Moro, one had to stage a long, drawn-out kidnapping: to emphasize the sometimes pitiful, sometimes pathetic, sometimes “firm” character of the government and, when one calculated that the people were convinced of the “revolutionary” origin of the kidnapping and the responsibility of “extremists” for it, then and *only then* did Moro’s captors receive the “green light” to get rid of him. And you, Andreotti, who are less naïve than you are flippant, don’t tell me that all this is news to you, and do not feign offended virtue, if you please!

The cloud of smoke raised in the country, which concerned the question of knowing if one had to deal [with the kidnapers] or not – a question that still impassions many cretins –, was the thing that had to succeed the best and was, on the contrary, the thing that failed the worst. Here the artificial aspect of the entire machination, put onstage from just behind the scenes, appeared even more clearly than the staging of the kidnapping itself. The people who refused to negotiate, that is to say, the leaders of the Christian Democratic Party and the Italian Communist Party, refused to do so because they knew perfectly well that the staging of the drama foreshadowed the epilogue that was actually offered to us, and because they also knew that, given the situation, they couldn’t lose the opportunity to *for once* [Latin in original] appear inflexible at the expense of others. This is why we can admire Zaccagnini and Cosiga, Berlinguer and Pecchiolo<sup>29</sup> gargling unrestrainedly with the phrase “dignity of the republican institutions,” which had already been so well respected by then-President Leone.<sup>30</sup> The leaders of the parties that refused to negotiate also knew that they could not lose the opportunity to see Moro dead, and thus

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<sup>29</sup> Enrico Berlinguer (1922–1984) was the National Secretary of the Italian Communist Party from 1972 until his death. Ugo Pecchiolo (1925–1996) was the head of the Italian Communist Party’s National Commission.

<sup>30</sup> Note by Jean-Francois Martos: Forced to resign shortly thereafter due to charges of corruption lodged against him.

the police-related control of the entire population. “We are at war,” and war against an enemy that is so powerful that any other discord or conflict is an act of sabotage or desertion. It is only to protest against terrorism that one has the right to the recourse of the general strike. Terrorism and “emergency,” a state of emergency and perpetual “vigilance,” become the only problems, at least the only ones with which it is permitted and necessary for people to be occupied. All the rest doesn’t exist or becomes forgotten, and in any case is shut up, banished, repressed into the social unconscious because of the seriousness of the question of “public order.” And confronted with the universal duty of its defense, everyone is invited to become an informer, to be base and to become fearful. For the first time in history, cowardice becomes a sublime quality, fear is always justified, and the only form of “courage” that is not contemptible is the one that approves and supports all the lies, abuses and infamies of the State. Since the current crisis doesn’t spare any country in the world, there are no geographical boundaries between peace, war, freedom or truth. These borders pass through every country, and each State arms itself and declares war on the truth.

Someone doesn’t believe in the hidden power of the terrorists? Well then, he or she must change his or her opinion when confronted with cleverly filmed images that show three German terrorists at the moment of boarding a helicopter, and they are so powerful that they even manage to escape from the German secret services that are better at filming their prey than catching them.

Someone doesn’t believe that one or two hundred terrorists are in the position to deal a deathblow to our institutions? Well then, he or she will see that five or six of them are able to abduct Moro and his escort in a few minutes and will thus [have to] admit that the danger to those institutions (so loved by more than 50 million Italians) is real and terrible. Perhaps someone still believes otherwise? He is an accomplice of the terrorists!

Everyone will then agree that the State cannot go down without defending itself and, whatever the costs, this defense is a sacred and imperative duty for everyone. And this would be the case because the republic is public, the State is for everyone, everyone is the State, and the State is everyone, because everyone enjoys its advantages, which are equally shared. Is that not democracy? And this is why the People are sovereign, but watch out if they do not defend democracy!

Are you convinced? Or do you, poor citizens in the mood for critique, still believe – in the wake of the Moro affair – that it is the State that has launched such attacks, such as the one at the Piazza Fontana? Vile suspicion! The dignity of the State's institutions is sullied by it. Zaccagnini<sup>24</sup> is crying: look at this photograph. Cossiga<sup>25</sup> is crying, too: look at this television news-magazine, and once and for all stop making accusations against all those who do not hesitate to sacrifice the life of another person<sup>26</sup> in the name of the defense of our very democratic institutions! Or perhaps, poor citizens, you still believe that we, the government ministers, generals, and secret agents of “anti-terrorism” – to speak ironically – that we, in particular, would be disposed to sacrifice Aldo Moro, that remarkable statesman of elevated sentiments, that example of moral rectitude, our friend, leader, protector and, when necessary, our defender?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Benigno Zaccagnini (1912–1989), one of the founders of the Christian Democratic Party.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Cossiga (1928–2010), the Minister of the Interior at the time Moro was kidnapped and, in 1979, the Prime Minister of Italy.

<sup>26</sup> Aldo Moro (1916–1978), a member of the Christian Democratic Party, was the Prime Minister of Italy between 1963 and 1968, and then again between 1974 and 1976. On 16 March 1978, he was kidnapped on the Via Fani in Rome, held captive, and then murdered on 9 May 1978, allegedly by the *Brigate Rossi* (“Red Brigades”).

<sup>27</sup> Note by Jean-Francois Martos: Allusion to Moro's defense of the secret services to Parliament during its investigation of General De Lorenzo's failed coup d'état of 1964.

That is precisely what one would not want to be thought by each good citizen (who never doubts, always votes, pays up if he isn't rich and, in any case, keeps his mouth shut). Suspicions about the State's role in the massacre at the Piazza Fontana are permitted, because the victims were [merely] ordinary citizens, but one would surely not want the State to be suspect when the victim is its most prestigious representative! Kennedy? That kind of thing is a thing of the past.

This was precisely why the agony of Moro had to last for such a long time, so that each person, at his or her leisure, had plenty of opportunity to follow the spectacle of the kidnapping and the feigned discussion about the negotiations by reading the pathetic letters and merciless messages from the ghostly Red Brigades, which channeled the indignation of the simple people and the poor in spirit, and thus gave some weak probability to the whole story and a reason for it to manifest itself as a collective psychodrama. The general contemplation and passivity continued to hold, which was the most important thing.

If Moro had been killed along with his police escorts on the Via Fani, everyone would have thought it was just another settling of accounts between the capitalist *gangs* and rival centers of decision-making – *which is actually what it was*. In that case, the death of Moro would have been regarded like the death of Enrico Mattei,<sup>28</sup> neither more nor less. Yet no one has noted that, if some powerful group today found that it was necessary or in its own interests to eliminate someone like Mattei or Kennedy, this group would certainly not do it the same way that it had been done in 1962. Instead, they would claim the attack or have it claimed (in a secure way and with the greatest ease) as an assassination by this or that small and secret

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<sup>28</sup> Enrico Mattei (1906–1962) was the administrator of Italy's National Fuel Trust. He was killed in a mysterious plane crash that was originally investigated (and found to be an “accident”) by Giulio Andreotti, then the Minister of the Interior. The crash was reclassified as a murder in 1997, but no suspects have ever been identified.



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Gianfranco Sanguinetti  
On Terrorism and the State  
1979

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and-file nuclei, which are made up of clandestine militants, are kept separate from each other and in ignorance of everything, without any possibility for dialogue and debate, and everything functions perfectly due to the blindest [obedience to] discipline and the most expedient orders from an inaccessible summit, which is generally nested in this or that ministry or powerful group. And, if some provocateur ever arouses suspicion, he is always providentially arrested and made a star by the press, which removes him from danger and washes him of the suspicion. Thanks to an unbelievable and “heroic” escape, he can then be put back into action. And often these provocateurs do not come out unscathed.

Thus, here is *one more reason* why I would warn any subversive of good faith about organizing hierarchically and clandestinely in a “party”: in certain conditions, clandestinity can be necessary, while all hierarchies always and only benefit the world we seek to bring down. In revolutionary groups that do without militants and leaders, and that are founded *on the qualitative*, infiltration is practically impossible or immediately discovered. “The only limit to participation in the total democracy of the revolutionary organization is the recognition and effective appropriation by all of its members of the coherence of the organization’s critique, a coherence that must prove itself in the critical theory properly speaking and in the relationship between this theory and practical activity” (Debord).<sup>70</sup>

In several of the Red Brigades’ “hideouts,” and this isn’t news, abundant amounts of ultra-confidential materials have been recovered, and they contained the locations of police officers, police stations and even government ministries, which, strangely, have never been assaulted and sacked by the RBs. Confronted with such eloquent facts, [sources of] spectacular information have always pretended to explain them by once

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<sup>70</sup> Guy Debord, “Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations,” July 1966, printed in *Internationale Situationniste* #11, October 1967.

more emphasizing the ultra-efficient organization of the terrible RBs and, to strengthen this brilliant bit of advertising, they have added to it the “fact” that these clandestine militants – who are hunted, but so widespread – have infiltrated themselves everywhere, even into the police stations and ministries. Confronted with this explication of such a gloomy and maladroitly camouflaged reality, I can only laugh. Once more, the intelligence of fifty million Italians, who are not Germans ready to drink from the poisoned baby’s bottle of the television set, is being abused by the *Corriere* and *L’Unita*,<sup>71</sup> and those who attribute such stupidity to ordinary people in fact *only reveal theirs*, which, to surpass so many limits, certainly cannot be so ordinary. Once more, power speaks in counter-truth: it is not the RBs who have infiltrated into the police stations and ministries, but agents of the State, employed by the police stations and ministries, who have been infiltrated into the RBs on purpose, and certainly not only at their summit.

And if, during ten years, the merciless and great struggle against the “monster” of terrorism – a struggle that has been so glorified in words – has only resulted in the hypertrophy of this “monster”; if the trial [of the suspects in the bombing] of the Piazza Fontana has never truly *begun*, this derives from the fact – which is comic or repugnant, I don’t know – that those who have always been tasked with this merciless struggle are *the same secret services that have always directed and animated terrorism*, and certainly not because of alleged “deviations” or “corruption,” but *simply because they have executed in military fashion the orders that they have received*. And all the militants who have been exhibited in the public cages of the courts, as if they were ferocious beasts, [but who are really] naïve children whom one would like to see grow old in Italian prisons, are always and most assuredly *the least implicated*, even if they have

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<sup>71</sup> *L’Unita*, founded by Antonio Gramsci in 1924, was the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party.

been designated “the leaders” and “the strategists” (nothing is easier than making a naïve fanatic believe that he or she has taken part in this or that operation simply because he or she distributed the tract that claimed responsibility for it).

And our general officers amuse themselves by counting the medals and attestations of high merit that they collect, either by nourishing terrorism or by “discovering” the “guilty parties” at opportune moments.

In this phenomenon, which might arouse the virtuous indignation of hypocrites, there is really nothing new, and it has been repeated for centuries in the eras of corruption and decadence of all the States. For example, Sallust, who is the historian of the corruption and crisis of the Republic of Rome, reports that the censor Lucius Marcius Philippus denounced Lepidus, a general felon, before the Senate in these noble terms.<sup>72</sup>

I could wish, beyond all things, Conscript fathers (...) that mischievous plots should prove the ruin of their contrivers. But, on the contrary, everything is disordered by factious disturbances, disturbances excited by those whom it would better become to suppress them (...) While you, whispering and shrinking back, influenced by words and the predictions of augurs, desire peace rather than maintain it, being insensible that, by the weakness of your resolutions, you lessen at once your own dignity and his fears (...) What would he have received for good deeds, when you have bestowed such rewards on his villainies? (...) [He takes advantage of your inactivity] which I do not know whether I should not rather call fear or pusillanimity or infatuation (...) [Lepidus] thou

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<sup>72</sup> Sallust, *Histories*, translated from the Latin by H. G. Bohn (1852).

are a traitor to us (...) <sup>73</sup> You claim to reestablish through such a war the concord *that is rendered vain by the very means by which it is obtained*. What impudence!

The truth is exactly this: the social peace that terrorism can procure is “rendered vain by the very means by which it is obtained,” with the difference that, today, *the impudent ones* are the representatives of the Republic and all the orators who fulminate against terrorism in all their speeches, always feigning not to know what the entire country has been saying since the famous year of 1969. Listen a little to what is said by a modern Lepidus, the honest Leo Valiani,<sup>74</sup> who in the pages of the *Corriere* during July 1978 was not ashamed to regret the “too mild sentences” given to some underling.

[They] encourage the subversive to persevere, to dare to do even more. We do not ask the judges to condemn someone without being convinced of his [or her] guilt. But when the Republic is grappling with clandestine organizations such as those who sowed death at the Piazza Fontana, as it is at this moment (...) any indulgence concerning those who are active in such subversive organizations is suicidal.

And, in the name of God, what indulgence could surpass that of Valiani, an expert in Stalinist and bourgeois terrorism, fellow traveler of these two forms of terrorism and accomplice of all the lies about them, who still feigns to be ignorant (and he is not the only one in Italy to do so) of the fact that “the clandestine organization that sowed death at the Piazza

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<sup>73</sup> The next two lines do not appear in the 1852 translation of this text by H. G. Bohn, nor in the one made John C. Rolke (1921).

<sup>74</sup> Leo Valiani (1909–1999) was a journalist for *L'Espresso*.

Fontana” was none other than Admiral Henke’s organization, the famous SID, which for the sake of decency – that is to say, *indecenty* – today has a different name? And does one want to continue to listen to Valiani’s chatter for the next ten years, only this time with respect to the execution of Moro? What parliamentarian, what honorable bastard, among all those who reproach each other for their “indulgences,” talking nonsense about “safeguarding the Republic,” has dared to expose himself by accusing and *naming* the assassins of 1969?

The fact is that the task of safeguarding this criminal Republic *depends solely on these parliamentarians’ ability for cover for those assassins and the killers of Moro*, as well as the murderers of Calabresi, Occorsio, Coco, Feltrinelli, Pinelli, et. al. And all the government ministers and honorable parliamentarians know this very well: they continue to keep quiet so they can receive new remunerations that will complete their already substantial share.

Ever since the great fear of 1969, our regime has accorded an immense trust in its senior political police officers and their abilities to always find *technical and spectacular solutions* to all of the historical and social questions that face it. Thus, our regime is in the process of committing the same error made by the Czarist regime, which dedicated all of its attention and care to building the best and most powerful secret police in the world, which is what the Okhrana was at the time. This permitted the Czar to continue to survive day by day, without anything changing for another decade, but his [eventual] fall was only more violent and definitive. As a bourgeois thinker, Benjamin Constant,<sup>75</sup> has said:

Only an excess of despotism can prolong a situation that tends to dissolve and can maintain under class domination all those who conspire to sep-

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<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Constant (1767–1830). Quote taken from Chapter XIII, *L’Esprit de Conquête et de l’Usurpation*.

arate themselves from it (...) Even more harmful than evil, this remedy has no durable effectiveness. The natural order of things takes revenge against outrages that one wants to subject it to, and the more the compression has been violent, the more the reaction will be terrible.

And in Italy, [the effects of] ten years of political-police policy are beginning to make themselves felt, and that includes their harmful and uncontrollable effects. The State still exists, with more authority and a worse reputation than ever, but its real adversaries have grown in number, their awareness has [also] grown and, with it, the effectiveness and violence of their attacks. In the eras in which the police make policy, a complete collapse is always what follows.

Today, sinister Craxi seeks easy applause by feigning to discover that, in Russia, [mere] crimes of opinion are considered to be crimes against the State. Scandalous novelty! Poor Craxi, have you not seen that here in Italy *crimes against the State* are considered to be crimes of opinion? Is this not a fact more worthy of your virtuous indignation? Ridiculous man! Who do you want to convince that your soul is immaculate? You, who strut about with your worthy colleague Mitterand: do you believe that we have forgotten that Mitterand is a *gangster* who, several years ago, paid other, more obscure gangsters to fake an attack against him?<sup>76</sup> Craxi, no one believe you when you proclaim *I am without fault before the throne!*<sup>77</sup> And you, leaders of the [Italian Socialist] Party: you are just like Mitterand. When it is a rival, and not one of you, who command the attacks, you

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<sup>76</sup> On 16 October 1959, François Maurice Adrien Marie Mitterand (1916–1996) – the future President of France and leader of the Socialist Party, then a senator – was allegedly the target of an assassination plot that was in fact organized in cahoots with a right-wing deputy named R. Pesquet.

<sup>77</sup> *Book of Revelations*, 14:5. Latin in original.

I find, therefore, that, from the point of view of Editions Cham Libre, the useful truths in *On Terrorism and the State* lack a bit of freshness.

We would be able to quite simply adopt this excellent position if this volume also included the *Truthful Report*, the two translations of *On Terrorism* and so many other books that Champ Libre could and wanted to publish; in sum, if, in this aspect, the conditions here [in Holland] weren't so different from those in France. The valuable arguments and the useful truths gathered together in *On Terrorism* apropos of the machinations to which the Italian State has had recourse, the decree of its decadence, and what it has done have been almost unknown here, until now.

We can only congratulate ourselves with what will henceforth be available to all those people who read Dutch and, besides, with what – thanks to this Postface – are not only revealed State secrets, but also the secret of their revelation.<sup>115</sup>

(Published in Editions Champ Libre, Correspondance, Vol. 2, Editions Champ Libre, Paris, 1981. Translated from the French by NOT BORED! August 2012. Footnote #10 expanded in May 2013.)

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<sup>115</sup> *Author's note:* copies of this Postface have been sent to Gianfranco Sanguinetti, Guy Debord, Gérard Lebovici, Jaap Kloosterman and Jean-Francois Martos. [Sanguinetti responded to these insinuations in his letter to Mustapha Khayati (December 2012)]

keep your mouths shut, and you speak of the firmness of the State when it is confronted with your own provocations!

Here is another proof, in addition to all the rest, that in Italy crimes of State are considered to be simple crimes of opinion. In 1975, when, under the pseudonym of Censor,<sup>78</sup> I published *historical* (not legal) proof that it was the SID that perpetrated the massacre at the Piazza Fontana, all the newspapers and journalists widely reported my conclusions, but they were more scandalized by the fact that an anonymous person, apparently close to power, dared to openly accuse the SID than the completely believed fact that the State had organized and executed a terrible massacre so as to emerge unharmed from a very serious social crisis. The journalist Massimo Riva admirably expressed the thinking of all his colleagues when he wondered, in the *Corriere*, what mysterious maneuver among the powerful the Censor affair announced. “What is behind it? The fear of telling the truth? A warning to the regime’s big shots?” It wasn’t my scandalous statements or conclusions, but my anonymity that caused the scandal. To say it better: the fuss surrounding the identity of Censor only served to mask the scandal of what I denounced. Everyone preferred to advance maladroit conjectures about my identity and thus avoid speaking of what I said. “A warning to the regime’s big shots?” According to Riva and the others, this was the crux of the question, and what was scandalous was only *the end of the omerta* among the powerful, and not the crimes they had committed.

But, as always, the best was Alberto Ronchey, who will only astound us when he no longer manages to be astounding. With respect to my proofs, he said, “Whatever the respon-

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<sup>78</sup> *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy.* Note: Sanguinetti didn't merely write this document under a pseudonym; he also invented *the persona* of its hypothetical author. In what follows, he seems to forget this second part of his creation.

sibilities and intrigues of the SIFAR-SID<sup>79</sup> or other detached units,” *despite them*, “where the bombs [and] events are concerned (...) if one truly believes in a ‘State terrorism,’ we would be confronted with a criminal system of government and no one should have anything to do with it, neither the Communists, the Socialists nor the others.”<sup>80</sup> What is truly unbelievable is not State terrorism, but Ronchey’s manner of reasoning. Since he himself, the Communists and the Socialists in fact have “something to do” with such a government, *therefore* (according to Ronchey) we have a sufficient guarantee that State terrorism is not believable and indeed *does not exist*, “whatever the responsibilities and intrigues” of the SIFAR-SID. To reason as Ronchey does: God is believable, *therefore he exists*.<sup>81</sup> [In the contemporary discourses] on the subjects of terrorism and the State, one has the impression of being returned to the discussions about the existence of God and the Devil. Are they real? Do they exist? And, if they do, are they truly believable? Quite wisely, the poet says, *Certainly it was true, but not at all believable to those who weren’t masters of their reason*.<sup>82</sup>

I have not managed to understand where the Roncheys of this world hope to arrive with their theological logic. I have never said that the secret services have been behind every attack, given that, today, even a *Molotov cocktail* [English in original] or an act of sabotage against production is considered to be an “attack,” but I did say – and I have been saying it for almost ten years – that all the spectacular acts of terrorism have been masterminded or directly perpetrated by our secret services. And the reader should note that I didn’t say “by the se-

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<sup>79</sup> Originally formed in 1949, the *Servizio di Informazioni delle Forze Armate* (SIFAR) became the SID in 1965.

<sup>80</sup> *Author’s note*: A. Ronchey, *Accadde in Italia, 1968–1977*.

<sup>81</sup> Sanguinetti had previously made this point in *Proofs of the Non-Existence of Censor, By His Creator* (January, 1976), the document in which he claimed responsibility for “Operation Censor.”

<sup>82</sup> We have been unable to locate the author of this remark.

affirming in Italy a truth that the powers-that-be [*des forces*] want to hide by every means possible. And I am happy that his words have caused many echoes in France and in many other countries, and will continue to do so in the future.

But in January 1976 I published the first non-Italian edition of *The Truthful Report*, which is an excellent and exemplary book. Naturally I cannot envision publishing a weaker and poorer book by the same author.

Sanguinetti deals with “the theory and practice of terrorism, developed for the first time” and clearly adds that his text permits his readers to “read it here, and only here.” It seems to me that Gianfranco Sanguinetti’s current firmness doesn’t at all authorize his glorious tone on this aspect of the question. I myself published, in *February* 1979 a little book in which someone already said all of the truths that Sanguinetti published in April of that same year (this work was immediately sent to him and a translation of it appeared in Italy in May [1979]). What’s more, I have photocopies of a correspondence exchanged while Moro was being held, still alive, between Sanguinetti and one of his foreign correspondents. This correspondent put him on guard by exposing the entire truth of the affair, and advised him to reveal it as soon as possible. At the time, Sanguinetti responded by resolutely declaring his skepticism concerning this version of the facts, or he only pretended to be so for reasons that remain obscure to me. When one has lost several months before wanting to admit the obvious, there is something out of place in insisting on one’s avant-gardist originality.



to add Debord's *Preface* to Sanguinetti's *On Terrorism*<sup>111</sup> – the very *Preface* that Sanguinetti never mentioned, not even in the 1980 French edition of his book,<sup>112</sup> which I have made use of, and which was subsequently reprinted unaltered! This singular maneuver was further clarified by a letter from Gérard Lebovici (Editions Champ Libre), dated 12 September 1980,<sup>113</sup> on the subject of another French translation of *On Terrorism*<sup>114</sup> that was sent to him in the hope of having it reprinted (a copy of this letter was sent to Sanguinetti).

As for the possibility of republication by Champ Libre, the comforting fact that the text has encountered a certain commercial success (as you have told me) has no importance here. Editions Champ Libre is entirely indifferent to all economic considerations, whether it is a question of gains or losses. And this is very fortunate, given the current centralization of book distribution, the servitude of the newspapers, the indigence of the bookstores, the boycott attempted from all sides, etc. (...)

Moreover, I have previously seen the complete manuscript of *Remedy for Everything*. The part that has since been extracted by the author and translated by you is incontestably the most interesting. I know that Gianfranco Sanguinetti merits esteem for the unique courage he has shown by

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<sup>111</sup> *Author's note:* Debord's *Preface* would appear along with a Dutch translation of the film script for [Debord's 1978 film] *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*.

<sup>112</sup> *Translator's note:* see our translation of Sanguinetti's preface to this edition.

<sup>113</sup> *Translator's note:* see our translation of this letter.

<sup>114</sup> *Author's note:* There are two French translations of *On Terrorism*: one by Jean-Francois Martos, which I have made use of; and the other, which I haven't seen, was published in Grenoble. I only received a copy of Lebovici's letter a few weeks ago.

cret services," which could refer to those of a faraway or exotic country, but *ours*, yes, the secret services of Italy, whose touch and stench, cleverness and clumsiness, tactical ingenuity and strategic stupidity I always recognize.<sup>83</sup>

For example, observe how the SID came to perpetrate the Piazza Fontana operation: by successive attempts and approximations. It decided to perpetrate a massacre of the population and it prepared for it with two general rehearsals: the bombs at Fiore and the bank at the train station in Milan on 25 April 1969, and the bombs on the trains in August of the same year. The secret services thus prepared public opinion and prepared themselves technically with these *backgrounds* [English in original].

The kidnapping of Moro was also rehearsed in advance, because our unofficial services, even if they changes their targets, always have the same manner of proceeding, which is something for which Machiavelli would never pardon them. In April 1977, the kidnapping of De Martino<sup>84</sup> was one such rehearsal, and it took place without the spilling of blood, because our secret services never want blood to be spilled during one of their rehearsals. On both 25 April 1969 and later in August, no one was killed. Nevertheless, such rehearsals have *always indicated the target* to be struck: in 1969, it was the population and in 1977–1978, a politician. The *very day* of the kidnapping of De Martino, which was claimed by a hundred ghostly groups, I

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<sup>83</sup> We must point out that, to the precise extent that Italy was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has always been dominated by the United States and its strategic interests, the reader is justified in believing that the "masterminds" of Italian spectacular terrorism (the SID et al) were "masterminded" in their turn by NATO and the USA. It is certainly the case that the American secret services, i.e., the CIA, is also known for its "cleverness and clumsiness, tactical ingenuity and strategic stupidity."

<sup>84</sup> Francesco De Martino (1907–2002) was a prominent member of the Italian Socialist Party. On 5 April 1977, his son, Guido, was kidnapped, allegedly by the Mafia. In exchange for one billion lira in ransom money, he was released on 15 May 1977.

denounced it as a general rehearsal by the secret services in a poster that was printed and distributed in Rome.<sup>85</sup> The second rehearsal, which indicated the target that had been selected – that is to say, a politician – was the bomb at the office of Cossiga, then the Minister of the Interior, which assured this act of a lot of publicity.<sup>86</sup> Then came the attack against Moro, and blood was spilled, because it was not a general rehearsal.

Under the pressure of the menacing revolts of the beginning of 1977, the secret services, which had always been on their guard and never inactive for ten years, began to move decisively in a quite precise direction, and the two aforementioned provocations (which weren't the only ones made by those services) were, nevertheless, the ones that clearly indicated the target chosen and the events to follow.

Thus we can advisedly say that the kidnapping of Moro was *the least unforeseeable thing in the world*, since it was *the least unexpected thing* there where one can do what one wants, that is to say, at the summit of power. First of all, one feared that De Martino, a friend of the Stalinists, would be elected President of the Republic. By making him pay several hundred million lira to regain his son, one destroyed the reputation of this "Socialist." Moro was then publicly designated Leone's successor and, though he was less valuable as a target for ransom-demanding kidnappers than De Martino or Leone, he was the one responsible for the agreement with the Stalinists and, as President, he would have been even more so. Two plus two equals four, even in politics. And so, on *16 March 1978, the President had to die*, to parody the title of a book by Andreotti.<sup>87</sup> Six months after

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<sup>85</sup> *Author's note*: "Notice to the Proletariat About the Events of the Last Few Hours," Rome, 7 April 1977.

<sup>86</sup> Francesco Cossiga (1928–2010), a member of the Christian Democratic Party, was the Minister of the Interior between 1976 and 1978. On 7 April 1977, a bomb exploded outside of his personal residence.

<sup>87</sup> *Ore 13: Il Ministro deve morire* ("1 pm: The Minister Must Die"), published in 1974.

reasonable person, very up-to-date with the Italian situation until the day before these events, could entertain.<sup>110</sup>

The idea that true Leftists had kidnapped Moro was a belief that no one in Holland alerted by *Censor* and having the occasion to read a few foreign newspapers could entertain, either.

And yet the author of *Censor*, who said to us on 16 March 1978 that he "has not been able to keep himself from thinking" that the kidnapping of Moro was the work of the Italian secret services, managed to prevent *other people* from subsequently choosing to reject this idea – and [so] once again the spectacle obtained its [desired] effect and succeeded in hiding the truth for as long as was necessary. The spectacle isn't only effective when it hides a secret or when one believes what it says; it is even more so when it is considered as an enigma to be resolved or when one doesn't know how to combat it. When Moro was kidnapped, Sanguinetti failed to intervene. And, in its turn, the fact of keeping his error hidden determined the course of all his subsequent actions. No doubt it was his bad conscience that dictated this promise to him: "As long as your State exists, and I am alive, I will never stop denouncing the terrorism of your parallel services, and no matter what," but *post festum*.

It is certainly not by keeping such secrets that one obtains the position of fundamental superiority from which one "can attack and successfully combat all the forces of thoughtlessness" [and] *vanquish* them. And it is not by passing over in silence the fact that *someone else* had known these things, and known them so well, that one prevents the revelation of a truth of which one is ashamed. But what cruel irony it is that this revelation took place due to the fact that Dutch comrades wanted

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<sup>110</sup> *Translator's note*: for the rest of this letter, see our translation.

self *hardly practical* . . .) that Sanguinetti sets up as the *non plus ultra* of the revolutionary attitude that is not possessed by the ‘bad workers’ to whom his book is dedicated” (*Rien qu’on pion*). And yet the author loudly demands to be in the first position as *the* “specialist” in the denunciation of Italian State terrorism, today and in the future.

But it so happens that he was already not up to this pretention when he formulated it – because of what we can read in a letter written by Guy Debord to Jaap Kloosterman on 23 February 1981:

After the end of our organizational links in 1972, for several years I maintained a very close collaboration with Gianfranco on several projects and very good personal relations [as well]. But all this is over. At the moment that Moro was kidnapped, I wrote to Gianfranco and revealed the truth of this entire affair, advised him to reveal it [in Italy] immediately and, at the same time, go underground, since he was, in any case, in great danger, because the enemy knew that – having written *Censor* – he was probably the only one in Italy who *could* possibly reveal this truth at that very moment, that is to say, when the enemy absolutely didn’t want to run this risk, when Moro was still alive, etc. (To reveal what had taken place once the affair was over, almost forgotten, and other spectacles had taken the stage, would only express ‘an opinion,’ although a dangerous one, certainly.) For reasons that have remained very obscure to me, Gianfranco then responded that my thesis – which he subsequently took up – was brilliant and ingenious, but *he* believed that it was true Leftists who then held Moro captive. Nevertheless, this was a belief that no slightly

the Via Fani operation, while the anti-Stalinist policies of Craxi first showed themselves, Amintore Fanfani – who is called *The Ghost* in Tuscany – launched his first rigorous attack against the government, the secretariat of the Christian Democratic Party, the “emergency cabinet,” and the “agreement” made by Moro, by denouncing “the abuse of unanimity” and the inefficiency of the “equivocal” government of “national unity,” and by announcing the surpassing of “a political season” – all of which was applauded by the Craxians and “feared” by the Stalinists. Although Fanfani is, after Berlinguer, the Italian politician who has collected the greatest number of failures, he *is not* a cretin (more intelligent than clever and less shrewd than ingenious), *the Ghost* only drew *political conclusions* from the Moro affair, since it is true that terrorism is the pursuit of policy by other means.

As long as power exists separately from individuals, it will surely not be individuals who are in short supply. No functionary of power or capital is irreplaceable or indispensable for the maintenance of domination: neither Kennedy, Mattei, Moro, nor any of those who are still alive and active. In periods of trouble, the thing that is indispensable to a power that does not want to be replaced is precisely *the elimination* of certain men, either because they are too compromised or exposed, like Rumor, or because they desire a “replacement” (even a minimal one) that arouses the fears or suspicions of certain sectors of power, and one knows that the most reactionary sectors are always *the best armed*. Moro’s “overtures” [to the Stalinists] were thus perceived as opposed to certain interests and as a concession to “change” – and this despite the fact that, historically, it is precisely change that such overtures *try to prevent*, but without too much conviction or sufficient guarantees – that is to say, in a manner different from the one desired by a faction of power and certain military leaders.

In history, all powers have always behaved like all the other powers have behaved and, to the extent that the current police-

politics of provocation follows its course (and I have already demonstrated that it cannot fail to do so), its powerful, semi-lucid, semi-unaware and *completely* fear-dominated strategists find themselves with the *necessity* of getting rid (mafia-style) of certain men of whom they made use just the day before. There is nothing new in this, and it is a supplementary confirmation of the old [and previously mentioned] precept, according to which “he who causes another to become powerful ruins himself.” Neither Moro nor any of his colleagues prevented the political police from becoming powerful over the course of the last ten years; none protested against or combated a phenomenon that they all, on the contrary, nourished. Moro was the first victim of some importance mowed down by this politics, but he wasn’t the only one. The strategists of terror had already gotten rid of other, less important, but no less utilized people. We can cite several still-fresh examples: the liquidation of Calabresi; the distant and mysterious death of the fascist Nardi,<sup>88</sup> accused of assassinating Calabresi; the “suicide” of a good number of SID officers; the “accidental” deaths of several people who testified at the Piazza Fontana trial; the spectacular and simultaneous attacks against Coco and Occorsio [in June 1976], which were claimed – with the concern for symmetry that is always present in the spectacle of “opposing extremisms” – by both the Red Brigades and the fascists. It is thus worth remarking that both of these magistrates were more than a little involved in [the spectacle of] terrorism: Coco in the troubled and incongruous kidnapping of [Judge] Sossi; and Occorsio in the great spectacle of the prosecution of “the human beast,” Pietro Valpreda. Naturally, all the mendacious sources of information presented (as confirmations of the official versions of these events) facts *that precisely contradicted them*: Coco “did not give in” to the RBs and *therefore* they took

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<sup>88</sup> Gianni Nardi (1946–1976) alleged died in a car accident in Spain on 10 September 1976.

as a comrade in Paris has noted.<sup>107</sup> Without concerning himself with history, Sanguinetti banishes [from his analysis] the many forms of terrorism that, in our century alone, have been and are still employed, not only by the State or by the mafia, but also by the most implacable enemies of the State and political economy, as much offensively as defensively, as *one* weapon in the struggle.<sup>108</sup> By only implicating *State* terrorism in his critique (the ETA and the IRA want to conquer the State, while the RBs and GRAPO exist to defend it), and by presenting this critique as a *general* one, Sanguinetti – at the beginning of the 10th chapter of his *Remedy for Everything*<sup>109</sup> – places all armed struggle in a bad light, and, by further developing several nuances, he only manages to contradict himself and to unintentionally demonstrate that his schema is defective. “This schema cannot be vaguely imputed to an error in judgment. It finds its truth in an active policy of wait-and-see (‘I would consider my-

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<sup>107</sup> *Author’s note*: *Rien qu’un pion sur l’échiquier*, anonymous tract published in Paris, February 1981.

<sup>108</sup> *Author’s note*: Thus, in Spain, apart from the ETA and GRAPO (which fulfill exactly the same function as the RBs in Italy), one has seen at work many autonomous libertarian groups that do not at all fit into the categories of Sanguinetti’s [concept of] terrorism, but that have, all the same, dynamited railroad lines and attacked businesses and banks. These groups have conceived of their actions in the much more fecund theoretical framework of *the armed struggle of the proletariat*. They have undertaken their operations as a part of, and as support for, the offensive strikes of Spanish workers, which especially marked the years 1976-1978. And these are groups that, in general, have taken up the most advanced [theoretical] positions. “One must not forget that the major part of the workers’ movement still scorns theory, considering it to be the work of intellectuals. By contrast, we scorn the ‘intellectuals’ who don’t have the passion to put revolutionary theory into practice, and never take up theory – which we make use of – against themselves. This is what we call theoretical expropriation” (see *Appels de la prison de Ségovia*, Paris, Champ Libre, November 1980). Before giving up the ghost, the last Spanish government in place before the military coup of 1981 was forced to free the guiltiest of these comrades, who were all in prison.

<sup>109</sup> *Translator’s note*: we have translated the table of contents of this unpublished book into English.

longer, with the exception of the comrades who think on the basis of a proletarian perspective and who have nothing to lose and everything to gain in it. It is for them that I have translated this book.

And to please these comrades even more, to provide all suitable clarity to the theses that are defended here with so much verve, but not always with as much precision, we originally intended to introduce them with Debord's *Preface*, as translated by Jaap Kloosterman. Sometimes Sanguinetti's book gives the impression that its author needs to persuade himself of the validity of his own theses, which the author of *The Society of the Spectacle* did not need to do. As there are a large number of confluences between these two books, from the choices of historical examples to certain stylistic details – from which one could deduce a close collaboration<sup>106</sup> – the pages of the Preface that deal with the same aspect of the class struggle, on the same terrain, and at the same time, might seem to the reader to be a summary of *On Terrorism*, but the same disturbances are in fact analyzed in it with a method and a rigor that are lacking in Sanguinetti's exposition. By contrast, the *Preface* lacks – and this is very good – the laborious and abstract schemas in which Sanguinetti believes he must and can classify all terrorism. By limiting himself to speaking of the maneuvers of the Red Brigades, in general, and the execution of Moro, in particular, “Gianfranco Sanguinetti shelters *On Terrorism and the State* from all critique (...) To speak of the RBs as an extension of the Italian secret services indeed no longer appears well founded,”

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<sup>106</sup> *Author's note*: we recall that these two authors co-signed the principle text in *The Veritable Split* and that Debord translated Censor's *Truthful Report* [from the Italian into French]. – (*Translator's note*: “Censor” was the pseudonym under which Sanguinetti published the *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy*, (1975), which we have translated into English.)

revenge against him, even though one doesn't understand why they didn't take their revenge by killing Sossi. I take a hostage, and I blackmail you; if you do not give in, it is you whom I kill, not the hostage?! Illogical logic, but spectacular logic, just the same.

As for Occorsio, he spent his final hours investigating the fascists; *therefore* they are the ones who had an interest in killing him. But, for heaven's sake, let no one advance the least suspicion about this logic. Namely: if Occorsio was occupied with the fascists during his final hours, after being occupied with the anarchists, but with equally poor results, then *someone* suggested to him to make the switch so that the fascists could be made to claim responsibility for his death, thus giving it an explanation (one couldn't accuse Valpreda of killing Occorsio *as well as* perpetrating the attack at the Piazza Fontana: he is a “guilty party” who is worn out, burned and unusable; if one were to read tomorrow that he had killed his mother-in-law, no one in Italy would believe it).

The judges who are currently occupied with the Moro affair are the least enviable people in Italy, and they must pay very good attention. They must take care to not lose themselves in their investigations or displease certain sectors of power; they must pay attention *to everything, always* because, for the State, the first opportunity to get rid of them will be the best one; and the RBs will soon after “claim” [responsibility for] their deaths, which will thus be explained to public opinion. And in Italy today, anything that can be explained *is thereby justified* and, if the explanation is improper (because no one can reply to it), it is an explanation that *cannot be appealed*, a lie that cannot be refuted and thus is no longer a lie. To speak as Ronchey does: if someone refutes it, it isn't refuted; if it is refuted, the refutation is not “believable”; if it is not “believable,” *the refutation doesn't*

exist. Few things that Orwell predicted in 1984 have not been verified. For example, read the following passage.<sup>89</sup>

In some ways she was more acute than Winston, and far less susceptible to Party propaganda. Once he happened in some connection to mention the war (...) she startled him by saying casually that in her opinion the war was not happening. The rocket bombs which fell daily on London were probably fired by the Government (...) itself, “just to keep people frightened.” This was an idea that literally had never occurred to him.

Several extra-parliamentarians, lost within their puerile illusions and fetishistic ideology of armed struggle, would perhaps object that, since they *believe* in the armed struggle, other people, more “extreme” than they are, *could actually practice it* and be responsible for everything, including the kidnapping of Moro. I would respond that I have never doubted, either in public or in private, the imbecility of our extra-parliamentarians as a whole; but it is fitting to observe that, where they are concerned, they never doubt what the spectacle says about armed struggle or they themselves. Brave, alienated militants, pay attention to this only: if Moro had indeed been kidnapped and killed by free and autonomous revolutionaries, as the State has told you and as you believe, then it also follows that, *for the first time in ten years*, the State *hasn't lied about a matter concerning terrorism*. But this, being unbelievable and absurd, can be excluded.

On the contrary, the sad truth is that you *have always believed* all the lies of the past concerning Valpreda, Feltrinelli, the RBs and the rest. Even the anarchists' official newspaper,

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<sup>89</sup> George Orwell, Part Two, Section V, 1984, quoted from the original English.

combat. It will certainly not be the militants who will make the social revolution, nor will the secret services and the Stalinist police be able to prevent it!

## Postface to the Dutch translation of *On Terrorism and the State*

**Written by the translator, Els van Daele, 1 May 1981**

In Holland, in a region among the least impoverished, the most moderate and the most “democratized” in this poisoned world, where one can get together to criticize the quality of the heroin, and where pneumatic drills that have chased away the inhabitants are subsequently displayed, with the graffiti that denounces them, in the city's subways like works of art – here in Holland as well as elsewhere the taste to follow the excellent example of our Italian comrades grows: “their absenteeism; their wildcat strikes that no particular concession can appease; their lucid refusal of work; their scorn for the law and all the Statist political parties” (Guy Debord, *Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of “The Society of the Spectacle”*). Here as elsewhere the conditions that render life impossible for us force us to struggle – to engage in the only struggle in which it is still worth the difficulty of investing our talents and in which the possibilities of deploying these talents are infinite. Therefore, if we want to bring this struggle to a good end, it is necessary to know the enemy's weapons, and their uses, so as to turn them against it, or at least reduce those weapons to impotence.

Dutch commentators aren't more innocent than their Italian colleagues, but they are completely indifferent towards the truth. And it goes without saying that, among us as well, all politicians and union leaders lie to the same extent that the industrialists make profits by selling lime as insecticide, and insecticide as food, because, here and there, the truth serves them so little. Moreover, no one knows how to discern the truth any

When our turn comes, we won't be lacking weapons or valorous fighters. We are not slaves to the commodity fetish of weapons, and *we will procure them* when they are necessary and in the simplest fashion: by taking them from your generals, police officers and bourgeois, because they already have enough of them for all the workers in Italy. "We do not have compassion [for you]; we do not expect any from you. When our turn comes, we will not embellish the violence" (Marx).<sup>105</sup>

A thousand repetitions of [the attacks at] the Via Fani and the Piazza Fontana will not benefit capitalism as much as a single anti-bourgeois and anti-Stalinist wildcat strike or a simple act of sabotage against production hurts it. Every day, millions of oppressed minds wake up and revolt against exploitation, and wildcat workers know perfectly well that the social revolution does not make its way by accumulating dead bodies, which is a prerogative of Stalinist-bourgeois counter-revolution (a prerogative that no [true] revolutionary has ever contested).

As for those who have joined up with alienated and hierarchical militantism at the moment of its bankruptcy: they can only become subversives *on the condition that they leave militantism behind*, and only if they succeed in negating in acts the conditions (set by the spectacle itself) for what is today designated by the vague but just term "dissidence," which by nature is always powerless.

From now on, those in Italy who do not use all the intelligence that they have to *quickly* comprehend the truth that is hidden behind each lie told by the State are *allies* of the enemies of the proletariat. And those who still claim they want to combat alienation *with alienated means* – militantism and ideology – will quickly realize that they have renounced *real*

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<sup>105</sup> Karl Marx, "The Summary Suppression of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*" (1849). Note that most translations from the original German render the last line of this passage "When our time comes, we will not make excuses for the terror."

*Umanita Nova*, hastened to protect itself in the wake of the [attack at the] Piazza Fontana by separating its "responsibilities" from those of Valpreda, thus proving a courage suitable for its intelligence.

Many extreme-Left militants believe that they are shrewd because they understand that Pinelli didn't fall on his own from the fourth floor of the Central Police Station, but they will never manage to surpass their *record* for perversity, since they shortly thereafter applauded our secret services when they killed Commissioner Calabresi. Our bourgeoisie and Stalinists, who have already proved their inaptitude so well, thus have reasons to be consoled when they consider the stupidity of all their allegedly "extreme" adversaries, who in a certain way compensate for their own stupidity, even if it doesn't annul it. And indeed, in ten years, no extra-parliamentary groupuscule has ever managed to harm the State in the least, because none of them have been able to help the practical struggles of the wildcat workers in any way or to contribute to the advancement of their theoretical consciousness.

Impotent and maladroit, militants today accuse the State of being morally "responsible" for Moro's death *because it didn't save him* (and not because it was the one who killed him), just as in 1970 they accused the State of "moral responsibility" for the massacre at the Piazza Fontana, certainly not for ordering it done, but for not ordering the arrest of several fascists who were implicated in the affair, at least on the legal plane. The [newly elected] politicians who please themselves by imitating the gestures of the established ones continue to ignore the fact that politics has nothing to do with morality, but, rather, with the ideology that justifies certain policies, that is to say, all the lies that all politics normally require. This is why they always and only speak of the "moral responsibility" of the State and thus become re-responsible for all of its lies.

But let's reason absurdly; let's try for a single instant to consider the idea that the kidnapping of Moro was conceived

and pulled off by subversives.<sup>90</sup> In such case, there would be several questions to be asked, and these are precisely the only questions that the contemplative militants have never asked, occupied as they are with admiring all that they are incapable of or with disagreeing with everything in which they do not participate. That is to say, *everything*.

Above all, one must wonder how it is possible that, over the course of two months, these subversives weren't able to accuse Moro of anything other than serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, instead of those of the proletariat, as if this was particular to Moro, as if there was no one in Parliament who was also "guilty" of this "crime"! The absurdity of such an accusation renders it perfectly unbelievable. Moro had never claimed or tried to make people believe that he defended the interests of the workers, despite what is said by the Stalinists or the extra-parliamentarians. To accuse him of such a "crime" is to accuse the rich of not being poor, or an enemy of not being

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<sup>90</sup> Once again, we draw the reader's attention to the letter Sanguinetti wrote to Guy Debord on 1 June 1978:

"Thus, the rest of the story of Moro and his death has led me to not exclude any hypothesis. And although what you wrote to me is completely probable and rational, [and though] it is as true as what I had thought, I will try here to envision this story in an inverted perspective: you will see that everything truly is possible (...) Thus, here is my reasoning and my hypothesis (...) The Italian Leftists are very stupid, obviously. But this same stupidity, on the one hand, isn't completely sufficient to render them all incapable of doing something and, on the other hand, is quite sufficient to convince them that terrorism can be a good thing. And you know that the Italian Leftist, unlike the French one, isn't a contemplator of theory, but a contemplator of practice (...) In fact, the same stupidity that had for a long time prevented them from understanding *from whence* came the attack of 1969 could very well have subsequently worked – when its provenance became *confusedly* clear to them – to make them "theorize" that one responds to State terrorism with "proletarian" terrorism. It is an unquestionable fact that there are many Leftists in Italy who have become terrorists in the last few years, and among them there are quite a few young workers (there are a hundred known groups). It remains to be seen if a similar blow is beyond their reach or not."

intention in mind. Furthermore, continually constraining the entire working class to come out against this or that attack, to which everyone except the unofficial services of the State are strangers, is what permits the union bureaucrats to unite under their anti-worker directives the workers of every factory in turmoil, where some mid-level executive is regularly shot in the leg [allegedly by the RBs].

In 1921, in the midst of the repression of the Kronstadt soviet, when Lenin famously declared "here or there with a gun, but not with the opposition of the workers; we have had enough of the opposition of the workers," he showed himself to be less dishonest than Berlinguer, who said, "with the State or with the RBs," because he had no fear of declaring that his only goal is the liquidation of the opposition of the workers. Well, from the precise moment that someone affirms that he or she is "with the State," *he or she knows that he or she supports terrorism*, which, in this case, is the most putrid State terrorism that has ever been deployed against the proletariat. Such a person knows that he or she supports those responsible for the deaths at the Piazza Fontana, on board the *Italicus*, and at Brescia, as well as the assassins of Pinelli and a hundred other people. Such a person should no longer break our balls because we have had enough of the crocodile tears shed for the "martyrs" of the Via Fani and enough of the provocations, the crude efforts at intimidation, the assassinations, the prison sentences, the brazen hypocrisy of the defense of the "democratic institutions" and all the rest.

As for us, the subversives, who support the opposition of the workers and do not support the State, we will prove ourselves to be so, above all and on every occasion, by continually unmasking all the acts of terrorism perpetrated by the secret services of the State, to which we willingly leave *the monopoly on terror*, and by making the State's infamy more infamous by publicizing it: by giving it the publicity that *it merits*.



has been completely frustrated by history, a Leninism that, between 1918 and 1921, also used the same anti-worker terrorist methods to destroy the soviets and seize control of the State and the capitalist economy in Russia.

All States *have always been terroristic*, but they are more violently so during their births and when they face the imminence of their deaths. And those today who, either due to despair or because they are victims of the propaganda that the regime creates in favor of terrorism as the *best example* [Latin in original] of subversion, and who thus contemplate artificial terrorism with an uncritical admiration (and even try to practice it on occasion), do not know that they are only *competing* with the State *on its own terrain* and that, on this terrain, not only is the State stronger, but *it will always have the last word*. Everything that does not destroy the spectacle *reinforces it*, and the incredible reinforcement of all the governmental powers of control that has taken place thanks to the pretext of [fighting again] spectacular terrorism has already been used against *the entire Italian proletarian movement*, which is the most advanced and most radical in Europe today.

For us, it is certainly not a question of “disagreeing” with terrorism in a stupid and abstract manner, as do the militants of Lotta continua, nor is it a question of admiring the “comrades who are mistaken,” as do the so-called Autonomes<sup>104</sup> (who thereby give the despicable Stalinists a pretext to preach in favor of informing on others systematically). On the contrary, it is a question of simply judging terrorism according to its actual results, who practices it and what usage the spectacle makes of it, and finally coming to *conclusions* about it.

*The true terrorism* is the practice of continually obligating everyone to take positions for or against mysterious and obscure events that are prefabricated with this precise

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<sup>104</sup> Who have been discussed in this text under the rubric of the “extra-parliamentarians.”

an ally. If these hypothetical “subversives” staged the “trial” of Moro to make such an accusation against him, they could have spared themselves the trouble and killed him along with his police escort on the Via Fani. But, as I have already said, behind this accusation was the opposite one. The abductors of Moro actually accused him of not sufficiently serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, and certainly not serving them too well.

Besides, the maladroit parody of “proletarian justice” clumsily staged by Moro’s jailers *didn’t even try* to get him to spit out the truth about the massacre at the Piazza Fontana or a hundred other, equally scandalous facts that any powerful man naturally knows, facts that would be highly instructive to the proletariat. Where this is concerned, we must remark that, if Moro in one of his first letters feared he would have to speak about “unpleasant and dangerous” truths, this did not worry anyone in the government, which shows that our ministers never feared anything of the kind, because *they knew* that they had nothing to fear. In their own proclamations, Moro’s abductors never knew how or even wanted to address themselves to the workers, to whom they had nothing interesting to say. After having stated with assurance, just after the kidnapping, that “nothing will be hidden from the people,” Moro’s jailers, through his mediation, immediately began a long and secret correspondence with all the powerful men in the Christian Democratic Party, to whom the attack was a *warning*, and the kidnapping lasted for as long as was necessary to convince them all. The first *proof* of their convictions that they had to give was precisely that of not “negotiating” and they all hastened to give it. The terms for the release of the hostage – whom the RBs would have freed, at least officially, if the State agreed to release fifteen imprisoned militants – seem to have been set *only to be rejected*, certainly not because they were unacceptable to the State, but because (not being of any interest to any sector of the proletariat) these terms could not claim the support of any spontaneous or violent

movement in the country – and Moro’s jailers did not even try to inspire any such movement. Where the abductors betrayed their identities as agents of power, and did so in the most maladroit manner, was in their strong desire to be officially recognized by the existing powers: everyone from the ICP to the Christian Democrats, from the Pope to Waldheim.<sup>91</sup> This fact, and it alone, admirably proved that, not only did the abductors recognize the legitimacy of these powers, but also they were only preoccupied with being recognized *by them*, and certainly not by the proletariat. For their part, the party leaders betrayed themselves when they admitted that the goal of the kidnapping was to divide the political forces of the government and added that it had failed to do so, when in fact it *succeeded*. The Christian Democrats and the Craxians quickly understood that they had to separate themselves, gently but resolutely, from the Stalinists. If Moro’s jailers had been subversives, such a division would not have interested them, because any subversive knows that the only division likely to create disorder is the one made between the exploited and the exploiters, and certainly not any division between the different political parties that, in the spectacle, only represent the different forces that are used to maintain the same exploitation, even when the beneficiaries of it change. Finally, if Moro’s abductors had been subversives, they certainly would not have given up the opportunity to release him, because Moro – calumniated by all his “friends” and betrayed by his recent allies – would have openly fought against all those whom he had previously protected. On the contrary, by killing him, the artisans of the Via Fani operation opportunely got out of difficulty all the powers, especially the Christian Democrats, for whom Moro was useful dead, but very harmful alive.

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<sup>91</sup> Kurt Josef Waldheim (1918–2007) was the Secretary General of the United Nations from 1972 to 1981.

*even more serious*, and that the most serious phenomenon is the one that everyone witnesses without ever denouncing. There is nothing secret in this phenomenon, which nevertheless remains *undisclosed* to the general awareness and, as Bernard Shaw said, “there are no better kept secrets than the secrets that everyone guesses.”<sup>102</sup> And consciousness *always comes too late*.

In such conditions, the first duty of all conscious subversives is to *pitilessly chase all illusions about terrorism from the heads of those called to action*. As I have already said elsewhere, historically speaking, terrorism has never had any revolutionary effectiveness, except when all other forms of subversive activity have been rendered impossible by complete repression and an important part of the proletarian population has been led to take part in terrorism silently.<sup>103</sup> But this is no longer or *still not* the case in contemporary Italy. Moreover, it is fitting to note that the revolutionary effectiveness of terrorism has always been *very limited*, as the history of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has shown.

In contrast, the bourgeoisie, which established its domination in France in 1793 thanks to terrorism, must have renewed recourse to this weapon (in a strategically defensive context) during a historical period in which its power is universally being placed in question by the very proletarian forces that its own development has created. At the same time, the bourgeois State’s secret services cover for their terrorism by making opportune use of the most naïve militants of a Leninism that

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<sup>102</sup> George Bernard Shaw, Act III, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1893).

<sup>103</sup> *Author’s note*: Cf. the manifesto entitled *Benvenuti nella città più libera del mondo* (“Welcome to the Freest City in the World”) and distributed in Bologna, Rome and Milan on 23 September 1977. [*Translator*: it seems to us that this is a very important but unacknowledged modification of the sweeping claims made at the beginning at this text: “The attacks by the Palestinians and the Irish, for example, are acts of *offensive* terrorism,” and “Experience has long since shown that, if they are part of a strategic offensive, they are always doomed to failure.”]

Minister of the Interior) and who didn't give in to Andreotti's insistence that he renounce his own personal ambitions – this superior officer who “has penetrated into the most secret of the State's secrets and those of the men who represent it” (as Roberto Fabiani has assured us) – is in fact *the new President of the Republic*. Moreover, Ferrara now possesses powers that no President of Italy has ever had. In fact, his position as “advisor” (an honorific title in appearance only) guarantees him more and better powers than any other official and, at the same time, a freedom of action whose limits are difficult to determine but easy to surpass. Faced with such developments, the proletariat can only combat them on open ground or get used to them by tolerating of all their serious consequences.

If one truly wants to know it, this is the precise purpose of outfitting the Presidency of the Republic with a man “beyond all suspicion”: it serves to hide the Republic's *end* and its “painless” transformation into a police State, all the while maintaining the spectacle of “democratic” appearances. The Honorable Pertini – since he has always remained at the margins of his own political party and, as he is the only politician who (never having had real power before) has always been a stranger to the practices of the unofficial services – is thus the man who *knows the least of these practices* and who offers the best qualities to be manipulated by hidden powers without realizing it. The detached units of the State, having reached their current level of power, can only continue to make use of the same tactics of *infiltration* that were used with success on the RBs, but this time they will be extended *to all of the State's institutions*. In these conditions, not only will terrorism not cease, but it will *grow* quantitatively and qualitatively; and one can already foresee that, if a social revolution does not put an end to this tragic farce, Pertini's presidency will be *the most dire* period in the history of the Republic. And so that someone doesn't come to tell me that what I say is “very serious”: I know that perfectly well, but I also know that to keep quiet, as all the others do, is

In any case, if Moro's abductors had been subversives, they certainly would not have chosen the freedom of Curcio and the others as the terms in the negotiations, because such terms would have given an excellent pretext for power to send the RBs packing and thereby not “lose honor.” If his abductors were going to choose to pose unacceptable terms, they should have demanded *something other* than the liberation of only fifteen prisoners, and those who set unacceptable terms are always attentive to the fact that they should not be too easily rejected, as was the demand concerning those few brigadists. But in reality, Moro's abductor's did not want any of what they officially demanded: they knew that they could not openly demand what they really wanted without unmasking themselves. Today, *they have obtained* what they wanted. And, shortly before Moro's jailers did away with him, all the real terms of the blackmail *were inverted* with respect to the spectacular and official terms set for the Christian Democrats, and those real terms became this: either you change your policy or we will free Moro and you will see that *it will be him* who changes it. Things being what they were, the Christian Democrats and the “Socialist” leaders wisely preferred that *they be the ones* to change the policy at the expense of Moro, instead of risking a situation in which Moro changed it *at their expense*. Thus goes the world, despite all the flapping of the wings of the Capitoline geese, who claimed the opposite.

All of our incapable extra-parliamentarians, dazzled like primitive peoples by the technical success of the Via Fani operation, were not able to see beyond it by realizing that those who disposed of so many means and tactical capabilities surely would not put them at the service of a strategy that was as poor and unbelievable as the one attributed to the RBs, but, rather, at the service of a political design of much greater scope. But the extra-parliamentarians, faced with the operational efficiency on display at the Via Fani and in what followed it, naturally preferred to attribute it to “comrades

who were mistaken” and not to enemies *who do not make mistakes* and calmly fuck people over. Here as well, our poor Leftists have taken their poor desires for reality, without suspecting that reality always surpasses their desires, but not in the manner that they desire. And if they were less ignorant, they would not have neglected the abilities of the unofficial Italian services so much and so wrongly. For example, they would know that, for Italy, the only war operations that were truly successful in World War II were the *commando* raids carried out by the Navy. It seems to me hardly necessary to recall how this brilliant tradition was admirably transmitted from the Navy to the secret services, first by Admiral Henke, who has never been an imbecile, and then by Admiral Casardi,<sup>92</sup> who is even more capable. Between them came the ignominious interregnum of Vito Miceli, an unskilled general who has in fact succumbed to his own ineptitude and Andreotti’s prudence, which was not late in perceiving it. In fact, Andreotti did not have General Miceli arrested because he was responsible for the SID’s “deviations” – which began well before Miceli’s tenure, as Andreotti knows – but because Miceli’s clumsiness threatened to blow the lid off the secret services’ pot. Once more, Andreotti showed himself to be a finer politician than he wants to appear: he passed off his attack on Miceli as a concern for loyalty to the Constitution and thus won the predictable sympathies of a part of the Left. Andreotti’s only error was, as usual, his false modesty and vanity. He rejoiced too much after Miceli’s arrest, tried too much to appear naïve and declared on several occasions that, due to prudence, he had never wanted to occupy himself with the secret services, which was a scandalous declaration for a government leader, but necessary for someone who – having been occupied with them [out of necessity] – saw

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<sup>92</sup> Rear Admiral Ferdinando Casardi was the commander of the Italian 2<sup>nd</sup> Cruiser Division during the Battle of Cape Spada on 19 July 1940.

ecutives, they knew exactly what they wanted to accomplish, which was to frighten that part of the bourgeoisie that doesn’t have sufficient class consciousness (because it doesn’t enjoy the advantages of the big bourgeoisie) and to win it over to the side of the latter with the upcoming civil war in mind. The fragility of such artificial terrorism lies in the fact that, when one adopts such a tactic, it becomes known and thus judged; as a result, everything that gave this tactic its force now weakens it, and thus the great advantages that it assured its strategists become a major inconvenience.

The current President of the Republic, Pertini,<sup>101</sup> who is a naïve man, always and only fears fascism, because he only fears what he knows. But from now on, what he must do is fear *what he doesn’t know* and *know what he must fear today as quickly as possible*, that is to say, not an overt dictatorship, but a formidable, hidden despotism of the secret services, one that is all the more powerful because it uses its strength to vigorously affirm that it doesn’t exist. It is not at all by chance that, in September 1978, Fanfani [almost] imperceptibly invented a new and important cabinet post that has no precedent in our institutional history: Advisor to the President of the Republic for Problems of Democratic Order and Security. And it was not at all by chance that, to fill this position, Fanfani called upon Major General Arnaldo Ferrara, who is considered – where military matters are concerned – to be one of the best officers in the carabinieri and Europe as a whole. By putting on old Pertini’s side a young general like Ferrara, “a man with eyes of ice and refined tastes,” Fanfani has not only institutionalized a *de facto situation* by sanctioning the power attained by the unofficial services, but he has also taken the first step towards crowning his old dream of a presidential republic. Arnaldo Ferrara, an intelligent and refined officer, who recently refused to become the head of the SISDE (the secret service attached to the

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<sup>101</sup> Sandro Pertini (1896–1990), a member of the Italian Socialist Party.

theory and practice, to reducing capitalism to its current conditions and, without exception, *none of them* have ever practiced or even applauded modern spectacular terrorism, which is a fact that appears obvious to me. *There are no secret affairs of the revolution*: today, everything that is secret belongs to power, that is to say, to the counter-revolution. And all the police forces know this perfectly well.

Gentlemen of the government, it is fitting that, from now on, you have a calm conscience on this point: as long as your State exists, and as long as I am alive, I will never stop denouncing the terrorism perpetrated by your unofficial services, whatever the costs, because doing so is *the primary concern of the proletariat and the social revolution* at this moment in this country. And this precisely because, as Courier says, “known politics is politics lost.” And if this criminal State continues to lie, kill and provoke the entire population, it will henceforth be constrained to take off its “democratic” mask, act against the workers in its own name, abandon the current comedic spectacle in which the secret services display themselves (thereby supporting the illusions of naïve militants about the “armed struggle,” which are in turn used to render those services’ provocations plausible), and throw into prison hundreds of people, while the police forces train themselves for civil war by shooting at sitting ducks.

Ever since 1969, the spectacle, to continue to be believed, has had to attribute *unbelievable* actions to its enemies, and, to continue to be accepted, it has had to ascribe *unacceptable* behavior to proletarians. As a result, the spectacle has generated enough publicity that the people who allow themselves to be frightened will choose “the lesser of two evils,” that is to say, the current state of things. When *the real leaders* of the RBs ordered that unarmed people be shot in the legs – something that is only worthy of police-like cowardice and certainly not worthy of revolutionary courage – and when those leaders ordered such attacks, which struck second-tier industrial ex-

“things of which it is well to say nothing,”<sup>93</sup> things that were *so scandalous* that one could only keep quiet about *by feigning to not know about them*. And Andreotti knows that the scandal of ignorance is the price he must pay to feign ignorance of certain scandals. Nevertheless, he remains comical, like the fable in which the fox disguises himself as a lamb so as to be better accepted by the wolves.

Setting aside the admirals, we must note that, in Italy, there are excellent superior officers among the carabinieri, because not everyone is like Miceli or La Bruna,<sup>94</sup> and only the Micelis and La Brunas get caught in the trap. On the other hand, there is a deeper and more dialectical argument that works in favor of the leadership of our secret services: if this era demands that certain men practice terrorism, it is also capable of *creating* the men who are needed by terrorism. Furthermore, one need not believe that the Via Fani operation was a super-human masterpiece of operational abilities. Just yesterday, even Idi Amin Dada<sup>95</sup> could pull off certain technical successes, about which the poor militants of Lotta continua will never cease to be astonished.

A great number of workers, many of whom I have encountered in the most diverse situations and who are much less naïve than the extra-parliamentarians, immediately concluded that “*they* kidnapped Aldo Moro,” and by this they naturally meant those who have power. And to think that as recently as yesterday such workers voted and generally voted for the ICP!

The irreparable split that exists in this country between all those who have the floor (the politicians, the powerful and their servants, some of whom are journalists), on the one hand, and those who are deprived of the opportunity to speak, on

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<sup>93</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, IV, 104.

<sup>94</sup> Captain Antonino La Bruna worked in the domestic security branch of the *Servizio Informazione Difesa*. His superior officer was General Maletti.

<sup>95</sup> Idi Amin Dada (circa 1925–2003) was the military dictator and President of Uganda between 1971 and 1979.

the other, expresses itself perfectly in the fact that the former – who are far from the ordinary people and protected by the barrier of their bodyguards – *no longer know* what the latter say and think in the streets, restaurants and workplaces. As a result, the lies of power have become tangential; they have entered into a kind of autonomous orbit due to centrifugal force. And this orbit *no longer touches* any part of the “real country,” in which the truth makes its way so much more easily because no obstacle hinders or intimidates it. In contrast, the spectacle has *become autistic*, that is to say, it is suffering from a schizophrenic psychopathological syndrome in which the ideas and actions of the sick person can no longer be modified by reality, from which he or she is irremediably separated and is thus constrained to live in his or her own world *beyond the real one*. Like King Oedipus, the spectacle has gouged its eyes out and continues blindly in its own terrorist delirium. Like King Oedipus, it no longer wants to see reality and, like President Andreotti, it says that it wants to know nothing about the secret services; it even proclaims that they were dismantled several years ago and no longer exist. If, like King Oedipus, the spectacle no longer wants to see reality, this is because it only wants to *be seen*, contemplated, admired and accepted as everything that it pretends to be. Thus, it wants to be heard, without ever hearing, and it even doesn’t worry too much about not being heard. What seems to be the most important thing to the spectacle is that it can pursue its endless paranoiac voyage [undisturbed]. At the very moment that the police claim to make history, all historical facts are explained by power in a *police-related* way. The Hungarian psychiatric researcher Joseph Gabel<sup>96</sup> says that, according to what he defines as the “police conception of history,” history

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<sup>96</sup> Joseph Gabel (1912–2004) was a Hungarian-born French sociologist and philosopher. His book *La Fausse Conscience: essai sur la reification* was first published in 1962.

for “armed struggle” and clandestinity, as does the unspeakable Giorgio Bocca under the pretext that all this reminds him of his epic struggles as part of the Resistance. Men like Bocca are, so to speak, “legitimate” when, under the influence of fear, they declare that they feel sympathy for terrorism, because they earn four or five million a month, and because they feel that the existence of terrorism guarantees them that this income will continue. But those who have nothing are *deceived* by these men, who always lie with the goal of perpetrating their dirty tricks easily and at the expense of others. People like you, Bocca: one doesn’t kill them; that would be showing them too much respect! No one wants to see you die, but, for my part, if I ever encounter you on the street, be certain that *I will teach you how to live*, you idiot.

On the other hand, there is the attorney Giannino Guiso, who tells us about the ideological subtleties of Curcio, the sociologist Sabino Acquaviva, who expands upon grandiloquent “explanations” of terrorism, and the pedant [Mario] Scialoja, a journalist for *L’Espresso*, who pretentiously discourses about the “strategies of armed struggle”; and all of them feign to be “in the know” about the secret affairs of the social revolution by seeking to give credibility to artificial terrorism as a prelude to revolution. But

You will be surprised, when you come to the end,  
That you have not persuaded us of anything.<sup>100</sup>

Respected hoaxers, I have only one thing to say to you: unlike you, for the last thirteen years I have known a large number of the revolutionaries in Europe – they are also known by all the police forces – who have contributed the most, in both

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<sup>100</sup> Note by Jean-Francois Martos: A quotation from a work by Paul-Louis Courier, in French in the original Italian version of this text. Note that this quotation slightly modifies a line in Moliere’s *L’Ecole des femmes* by replacing “persuaded me” with “persuaded us.”

prayers *for hearth and home* [Latin in original] made by power in trouble. History is full of examples. According to Paul-Louis Courier,<sup>99</sup>

As scandal is necessary for the greater glory of God, conspiracies are necessary for the maintenance of the political police. They produce them, smother them, change their look, reveal them – this is the great art of government ministers, the strong point and goal of the science of statesmen, the *transcendental politics* that we have recently perfected [here in France] and that the jealous English want to imitate and infringe, but crudely (...). From the moment that one knows what they want to do, the ministers cannot do it or no longer want to do it. Politics known is politics lost; affairs of State, State secrets (...) Decency is necessary for a constitutional government.

Courier wrote this in 1820, at the height of the Restoration. Today, fearing a new and more frightening revolution, the State uses the same practices as before, this time at a much higher level, to obtain a *preventive* Restoration. The “transcendental politics” of the past is the imminent politics of the spectacle, which always presents itself as “the adversary of all evil,” as Dante said of God; thus, according to the spectacle’s autistic logic, all that is opposed to the spectacle itself *is evil*. And faced with this pitiless, preventive Restoration – this despicable series of provocations, massacres, assassinations and lies that seek to camouflage a crystal-clear reality – there are growing numbers of sociological “studies” and enslaved and progressive journalists who, having a better grasp on their [financial] security than on the simple reality of the facts, compete with each other in their expressions of a “certain sympathy”

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<sup>99</sup> Author’s note: Paul-Louis Courier, *Pamphlets politiques*.

is no longer constituted “by the entirety of objective forces, but by good or bad individual actions”; every event “is placed under the rubric of miracle or catastrophe.” The interpretation of an event no longer involves its historical explanation, but the determination of its cause by either red or black magic. Thus, for power, the bombing of the Piazza Fontana was the *miracle* that made the unions renounce strikes and allowed the State to avoid civil war. In contrast, the death of Moro announced a mysterious *catastrophe* that, thanks to the skill and inflexibility of our politicians, spared us. But this has no importance to the large number of “plebian people” – to make use of an expression favored by the Stalinist Amendola – who have said, “If they kill Moro, it doesn’t interest me at all: that’s *their* affair,” which is something I’ve heard thousands of times. “The country resisted; it knew how to react.” What a good joke! The only reaction from this “mythological” country was (quite wisely) *to not believe* anything that one said to it.

Parallel to the catastrophic or miraculous explication of history, the spectacle comes to *no longer know* what it dominates, no longer grasps hold of the reality and thoughts that it urgently must master. As Machiavelli says, “when one knows the least, one has the most suspicions.” The entire population, and the young people in particular, become suspect in the eyes of power. At the same time, if artificial terrorism claims to be *the only real phenomenon*, all the spontaneous revolts – such as those in Rome and Bologna in 1977 – become, in accordance with the “police conception of history,” a *conspiracy* that has been artificially plotted and conducted by forces that are “hidden” and yet “quite identifiable,” which is what the Stalinists believe even today. Everything that power cannot foresee, because it hasn’t organized it, thus becomes a “conspiracy” against it. On the other hand, artificial terrorism, since it is organized and conducted by the masters of the spectacle, is a *real* and spontaneous phenomenon that these masters continually feign to combat for the simple reason that *it is*

*easier to defend oneself against a simulated enemy than a real one.* And power would like to refuse the very *status* of enemy to its real enemy, which is the proletariat. If the workers say they are against this demented terrorism, “they are for the State,” and if they are against the State, “they are terrorists,” that is to say, enemies of the common good and thus *public enemies*. And against a public enemy, everything is permitted, everything is authorized.

Gabel goes on to say that “the police conception of history represents the most extreme form of political alienation (...): unfavorable events can only be explained by external actions (the conspiracy) and they are experienced (by the sick person) as an unexpected, ‘unmerited’ catastrophe.” And this is why any spontaneous strike must be an insult to “the working class,” which is so well represented by the unions, and any wildcat struggle is “provocative,” “corporative,” “unjust” and “unmerited.” All this goes back to the clinical framework of autistic schizophrenia. “The *syndrome of external action* (...) is the clinical expression for the irruption of the dialectic in a reified world that can only accept the event as a catastrophe” (J. Gabel, *False Consciousness*). The irruption of the dialectic corresponds to nothing other than the *irruption of struggle* in a reified world, which, more exactly, is the spectacular-commodity world, which cannot accept struggle, *even in the domain of thought*. Thus, this spectacular society is no longer even capable of *thinking*. Those who reason logically, for example, can only accept the identity of two things when it is based on the identity of subjects. In contrast, the spectacle, which is para-logical, establishes identity on the basis of the identity of predicates and thus says: “the devil is black; that which is black is the devil,” or “the Jew is bad; that which is bad is Jewish,” or “terrorism is catastrophic, the catastrophe is terrorism.” Aside from terrorism, everything else goes well. Unfortunately, there is terrorism: what can we do about it?

If I say, “a police officer must have a legally unblemished record; Mario Bianchi<sup>97</sup> is a police officer; therefore he has a legally unblemished record,” the schizophrenic will say, “Mario Bianchi has a legally unblemished record, *therefore* he is a police officer.” Thus the spectacle, when it has reached the point of autism, says, “those who kidnapped Moro are terrorists; the RBs are terrorists; Moro was kidnapped by the RBs.” No identification is improper to the spectacle, except for one, which is the only one not made. Namely: the State has proclaimed for years that it is combating the RBs; it has infiltrated them several times without ever trying to dismantle them; *thus the State makes use of the RBs* as a cover, because *the RBs are useful to the State*, thus RBs = the State. Power has confessed in a thousand different ways that it fears the making of such an identification: for example, when it invented the neurotic and maladroit slogan, “Either with the State or the RBs,” which means “Either with me, or with me.”

A long time before the advent of the spectacle, religion – which has always been a functioning ideological prototype for all the old forms of power – had already invented the Devil, the first and supreme *agent provocateur*, whose role was to assure the complete triumph of the Kingdom of God. Religion projected the simple necessity of concrete and real power upon the metaphysical world. Thus Cicero *needed* to amplify the risk constituted by Catilina to magnify his own glory as savior of the fatherland and to multiply his own abuses in this way.<sup>98</sup> For any power, the only real catastrophe is being swept from history, and each power, once it has become weak and senses the imminence of this real catastrophe, has always tried to consolidate itself by feigning to fight an unequal battle against a convenient adversary. But such battles have also been the final

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<sup>97</sup> Mario Bianchi (born 1939), an Italian filmmaker.

<sup>98</sup> Cicero (106–43 BCE) was the Consul during the conspiracy organized by Lucius Sergius Catilina.