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Living Anarchy

Article in solidarity with **Alfredo Bonanno** and
Christos Stratigopoulos

Gustavo Rodríguez

October 2009

On the night of Thursday, October 1st, just a few minutes before the beginning of the 2nd — a fateful date, an indisputable symbol of repression and barbarism in Mexico — a dear comrade informed me that **Alfredo Maria Bonanno** had been arrested again in the morning hours. This time in the city of Trikala, in northern Greece.

The arrest occurred minutes after a successful expropriation of a bank branch in the center of the Hellenic city. With 46,900 Euros in the bag, Alfredo and his partner in thought and action, Christos Stratigopoulos, managed to flee the scene by car; unfortunately, they were intercepted at a police checkpoint after a gun battle with the authorities. Charged with armed robbery — after a nine-hour hearing — both were sentenced to “preventive detention”, a sentence that, according to Greek law, can reach up to eighteen months in prison.

Alfredo Maria Bonanno, editor in charge of the magazines *Provocazione* and *Anarchismo*, since the eighties; with more than

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twenty volumes and countless pamphlets to his credit,¹ he is undoubtedly the most important theoretician of contemporary anarchism. Known in our stores for his elaborations on the insurrectionalist project and his methodological contributions. Among his books stand out *Power and Counterpower*, *The Anarchic Dimension*, *Theory and Practice of Insurrection*, *Necessary Destruction*, *Affinity* and *Informal Organization*. Also noteworthy among his extensive production of pamphlets are *The Anarchist Tension*, *A New Turn of the Screw of Capitalism* and *Armed Joy*, the latter of which was banned in Italy, for which he was sentenced to 18 months in prison, accused of “apology for violence and subversion”.

He would visit prison again in 1989, when he was arrested together with his colleague Pippo Stasi, during a thwarted expropriation by the police of a jewelry store in Bergamo. This time, he would remain in prison for two years when all the sentences were reduced by government decree, in an attempt to even out the differences in the administration of justice resulting from the application of the new Penal Code. For Alfredo and Pippo, this would only be a matter of “good luck” and an excellent opportunity to “rejoin the struggle”.² In mid-November 1995, an anti-anarchist witch-hunt was unleashed in Italy. The repressive operation would be directed by the prosecutor Antonio Marini and would be sadly known as the “Marini Process”, exceeding the limits of infamy. Among the tricks of the prosecutor would be the invention of the ORAI (Anarchist Revolutionary Insurrectionalist Organization); a phantasmagoric organization that would put sixty-eight anarchists behind bars in

¹ L'Impulso, had begun to be published in September 1949, as the organ of the Interregional Committee for an oriented and federated movement. Vid, Téllez, Antonio. *La guerrilla urbana I. Facerías*, págs. 273–275. Ruedo Ibérico Ediciones, París, 1974.

² Its top leader, Pier Carlo Masini, joined the ranks of the Italian Communist Party. L'Impulso, was published until April 1957, when GAAP merged definitively with the “Movimiento della Sinistra Comunista” which had its own official organ “Azione Comunista”. Ibidem. p. 274.

SOLIDARITY with our comrades in struggle, with our brothers of ideas. That **DIRECT SOLIDARITY** that makes the powerful tremble and terrifies the “included”. That **ANARCHIC SOLIDARITY** that shakes the State-capital every time it takes shape. That **SOLIDARITY** that invites us to destroy the present because our hearts inhabit the future. **Let us demonstrate that on this side of the Atlantic we also live Anarchy!**

1996, among them **Alfredo Maria Bonanno**, accused of being the intellectual author and ideologist of that organization. The farce was allegedly supported by the pamphlet of his authorship “*A New Turn of the Screw of Capitalism*”, in which, according to the prosecution, the “foundational program” of the insurrectionalist organization is synthesized. The “Marini trial” culminated on April 20, 2004, with the conviction of eleven of the comrades arrested. Bonanno was one of them, sentenced to six years in prison for “apology and subversive propaganda” among other “crimes”.

Alfredo was born in the city of Catania, Sicily, in 1937. At the age of 13 he had his first encounter with anarchism; finding a totally polarized movement. At that time, it was strongly divided between “purists” and “revisionists”. In the first group, most of Italian anarchism was concentrated, organized within the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation); the second, was constituted around the current headed by Pier Carlo Masini, with rigid approaches in favor of “**tactical unity**”. This current, labeled as “Marxist revisionist” was a split within the FAI, led by Masini and animated by young people who came more from anti-fascism than from the anarchist movement itself, some of them members of *Gioventù Anarchica*. It was in those days that Pier Carlo Masini arrived in Catania to give a lecture; in it he called for the formation of a disciplined, oriented and federated movement, which would push the proletariat forward and be its vanguard; giving away among those present *L’Impulso*³ by way of presentation. Shortly after, during the Frascati Meeting, held on March 12, 1950, Masini’s group would separate from the FAI, not being admitted to that meeting, and would constitute itself as the *Gruppi Anarchici di Azione Proletaria* (GAAP). But, it would not be until 1953 at the “*Congresso Nazionale di Civitavecchia*” that the definitive rupture between the Gaapists and the FAI took place. From then on the GAAP would lose strength and would

³ Ibid.

be consumed, becoming part of different organizations of the authoritarian left and demonstrating their true intentions.⁴

Faced with this crude dichotomy, within the Italian specificism, most of the young people would choose to dissociate themselves, separating from *Gioventù Anarchica*. Not feeling identified with any of the competing currents, they would form a myriad of groups named according to the region or city to which they belonged (Milano I, Bologna I, etc.), thus differentiating themselves from the GAAP and the FAI.⁵ These young people turned their gaze to the history of anarchism and resorted to the practices of informal organization and direct action, setting aside the “laboratory anarchism” (and salon anarchism) of the FAI and the “libertarian” Bolshevism of the Anarchist Proletarian Action Groups. Without intending to do so, they were taking the first steps towards the path which, seventeen years later, would lead to the abandonment of the ill-fated “anarchism in transition”.⁶

Taking up anarchist practices and consistent with their theories, the *espropriazione* would soon become the ideal medium for these autonomous nuclei of young people who, through praxis, began to spread their ideal. In this way they appropriated the necessary means to edit their publications and also, they concretized the materials for the direct attack on the State-capital and its representatives. Thus, some of these affinity groups would decide to raise the funds required to hold the first *Campeggio Anarchico Giovanille*. In this way, they would come into contact with José Lluís Facerías, who was a refugee in Italy at that time under the pseudonym of

⁴ When we speak of “classical”, “transitional” and “post-classical” anarchisms, we try to offer an idea of sequence and periodization, based on the theories developed by Rafael Spósito (Daniel Barret), absolutely necessary when analyzing the development of anarchism, without implying, as Spósito points out, that this exhausts — far from it — the understanding of its theoretical and ideological frameworks.

⁵ Téllez, A, Op cit. p. 279.

⁶ Bonanno, Alfredo María, *A mano armata*, Pensiero e Azione -14, Edizioni Anarchismo, Trieste. 2009.

Alberto and would enthusiastically support the project which, under his impulse, would not take long to materialize as “*Campeggio Anarchico Internazionale*”. Facerías, although in theory he assumed himself an anarcho-syndicalist and staunch defender of the centralist organization, in practice he claimed expropriation and direct action and as an organizational method he recommended the minimum affinity group. This is how, together with another Spanish comrade, he formed an action group made up of two young men from Genoa and a Turinese, which achieved a successful expropriation to the detriment of the Bank of Turin. This action would be followed by an infinity of expropriations throughout the length and breadth of the Italian boot, which would make the first and subsequent camps possible.⁷ Undoubtedly, Facerías would have a determining influence on the young Italian anarchists of the fifties, among them Alfredo María Bonanno.

At 73 years old, with more than fifty years dedicated, in thought and action, to Anarchy, Alfredo Maria Bonanno, continues in the struggle, consistent with the praxis he preaches and his life project: LIVING ANARCHY. For this reason, in certain “dark” sectors of our stores he is condemned and, even worse, silenced. There is not the slightest doubt: Alfredo is a threat, not only for the clergy and the State-capital that he fights daily tooth and nail. He is also a threat to the “libertarian officialism” and a scourge for the immobilist reaction that disguises itself with its black T-shirt from the comfort of the Status Quo, calling for inaction and depositing its “hopes” in the eternal and parsimonious evolution of Humanity. Alfredo lives Anarchy, he does not abandon it to the laboratory nor — much less — does he limit it to the past by reducing it to the commemoration of ephemeris and the passive reading of history books.

Today, here and everywhere, **SOLIDARITY** with Alfredo and Christos is urgent. Not the prudish solidarity of the Discalced Carmelites in Communion with the Holy Anarchy, the **DIRECT**

⁷ Missing footnote