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Cops Raid Anarchist Centers Across Italy

Mike Hargis

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On the night of June 19, 1997, Italian security forces carried out raids on anarchist centers and private homes all over Italy. The pretext for the raids was a bombing that took place at the Palazzo Marrino in Milan on April 25, 1997. The authorities claimed that an anarchist group took responsibility for the bombing; but, as the Italian Anarchist Federation pointed out in a press release issued June 25, the bombing could just as easily have been the work of fascists. Indeed, several bombings in the 1970s and '80s which were originally laid at the door of the anarchists later turned out to be the work of fascists carrying out their "Strategy of Tension" to provoke governmental repression.

The centers and homes raided by the police in their fishing expedition, however, were of anarchists whose public political positions and social practice tend towards the rank-and-file labor movement and whose libertarian practice has nothing to do with the logic of such spectacular actions as bombing. For this reason the Italian Anarchist Federation, through a communication issued by its Correspondence Commission, has denounced

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the raids as having nothing really to do with the investigation of this bombing but rather as a thinly veiled attempt to intimidate the anarchist movement.

These raids are coming at a time when the center-left government is increasing attacks on workers' rights and the social wage (health care, education, transport) and promoting militarism and "humanitarian" intervention (e.g., Somalia, Albania). It is no coincidence, according to the FAI, that among the materials confiscated in the raids anti-militarist and anti-conscription propaganda figured prominently, and that while these raids were taking place anarchist draft resister Michele Pircher was taken into custody.

They also come on the heels of raids and arrests carried out in September 1996 against anarchists in a government attempt to create public hysteria about an alleged secret anarchist paramilitary "organization" which is being held responsible for numerous bank robberies, kidnapping and murders over the past ten years. To justify this assault on the anarchist movement the authorities have made up a fantastic anarchist "organization," called by the authorities Armed Insurrectionist Anarchist Organization though no documents or manifestoes bearing that name have been produced. Supposedly this alleged organization exists on two levels: an underground army of terrorists protected by an above-ground milieu of squatted social centers and social movements.

The main "witness" for the existence of this gang is the testimony of a 21-year-old ex-girlfriend of one of the accused who, though never an anarchist, claims to have taken part in a bank robbery with three anarchists in Trento in 1994, although she could not remember any details. The authorities are also relying on surveillance that the powers-that-be have been conducting on the anarchist movement since 1976 and on the writings of Alfredo M. Bonanno, whom they have crowned the "Anarchist Godfather" for his insurrectionist politics. The structure of this

organization was supposedly set up in a series of anarchist-insurrectionist conferences held in Greece in 1993.

At least 29 arrest warrants were issued and at least 39 people were informed that they were under official investigation. Of these some were already in jail: Antonio Budini, Carlo Tesseri, Jean Weir and Christos Stratigopolus since September 1994 for a bank robbery near Trento; Orlando Campo, Gregorian Gargarin, Francesco Porcu for the Silocchi kidnapping; Horst Fantazzini (since 25 years) for many robberies and assault; and Marco Camenisch for bombings. In all it looks like some 68 people have been implicated by the police in this supposed "terrorist" gang. 21 anarchists were apprehended between Sept. 17, 1996, and the end of December, while 8 went underground. On December 18 two of those arrested were sentenced to 22 years in prison.

Also arrested in relation to the Milan bombing was Patrizia Cadeddu, one of the occupants of the Laboratorio Anarchico di Milano, arrested on 20 June for being the alleged deliverer of a supposed note claiming responsibility for the bombing by a group called Azione Rivoluzionaria Anarchica (Anarchist Revolutionary Action). In September Cadeddu was transferred to Rome to be interrogated, supposedly by Marini, as part of the investigation of subversive associations.

On July 17, 1997, the judge presiding over the preliminary inquiry of the Roman Tribunal, Claudia D'Angelo, read the following sentence: "Let us remind you that all of the defendants were accused of: subversive association (art. 270 of the criminal code); subversive association leading to terrorism and the destruction of democratic order (art. 270); formation of and participation in an armed band (art. 360). In addition, all are charged with receiving stolen goods (art. 648).

... Anna Beniamino, Mario Frisetty, Maria Ludovica Maschietto, Alfredo Cospito, Nadia DePascal, Raffaele Scapuzzo, Carmela Antonia Scopetta, Giuseppe Scarso, Bruno Palamara, Roberto Sforza, Pierleone Porcu, Constantino Cavelleri, Anna

Maria Sgarmella, Mario Anzoino, Maria Arenale, will be tried for participation in a subversive organization aiming to violently overthrow the economic and social order of the state (art. 270).” The judge has exonerated them of being in a armed band and of receiving stolen goods.

Loris Fantazzini, Pasquale Lorenti, Flavia Cannoletta, Roberto Gemignani, Marco Brizzolari, Maracino Domenico, Corrado Viola, Edoardo Massari, Giovanni Mario Sann and Bachisio Goddi are exonerated of all accusations.

Alfredo Maria Bonanno, Tiziano Andreozzi, Francesco Berlemmi, Antonio Budini, Marco Camenisch, Orlando Camp, Maria Apollonaria Cortimiglia, Luciano DiFazio, Liborio Falco, Horst Fantazzini, Antonio Gizzo, Franco Fonte, Gagarin Gregorian, Salvatore Gugliara, Christina La Forte, Angela Maria Lo Vecchio ‘ Guido Mantelli, Maria Marotta, Giuseppe Martino, Stefano Moreale, Mojdeh Namsetchi, Roberta Nano, Bruno Palamara, Fabrizio Pio, Francesco Porcu, Lorenzo Ricca, Giuseppina Roccobobo, Paolo Ruberto, Emma Sassosi, Rose Ann Scrocco, Antonio Sforza, Fabio Sforza, Massimo Sforza, Giuseppe Stasi, Christos Stratigopulos, Carlo Tesseri, Evangelia Tsioutzia, and Jean Helen Weir will be tried for participation in a subversive organization aiming to violently overthrow the economic and social order of the state (art. 270), subversive association leading to terrorism and the destruction of democratic order (art. 270), formation of an participation in an armed band (art. 360) and receiving stolen goods (art. 648).

These defendants will also be tried on various individual charges against them.”

The trials were to begin October 20,1997. As of this writing we have seen nothing new on the case except that, interestingly enough, Alfredo Bonanno and Emma Sassosi were released on provisional liberty on October 31, after 13 months in jail awaiting trial. Other defendants who were already in jail under other sentences remain behind bars.

Judging from the charges the Marini operation is a clear attempt to criminalize the anarchist movement in Italy. Our Italian comrades, however, refuse, to be intimidated and vow to carry on with their activity.