

# ITALY New Tactics & Organization

## INTRODUCTION - Dan Georgakas

The hot autumn of 1969, when tens of thousands of workers and students demonstrated throughout Italy, let loose the frustrations and angers that had been accumulating since the end of World War II. During that period, Italy had achieved economic growth through planned development in the North paid for by planned underdevelopment in the South. The Southern workers who flocked to Northern cities were fairly conservative in the early years of migration, but the forced separation from their families, the contact with traditionally radical Northerners, and the poor conditions of life and work made them rebellious. The growing revisionism of the Communist Party during the same period had alienated many of its working-class supporters as the Party bargained for a place in government and for general respectability by offering higher productivity and industrial peace. Foreign commentators spoke of an Italian economic miracle, but in fact housing, education, medical care, and social services of every kind remained relatively inadequate, inefficient, and in many areas simply non-existent.

The French May acted directly as a catalyst upon the Italian ferment. Workers and students came together in Workers Committees and Base Committees which produced a wave of devastating demonstrations and strikes. The struggles within the factories and universities spilled into the streets and mobilized whole communities. Permanent contacts between workers and students were set up in important factories in Turin, Milano, and Porto Marghera (Venice complex). In April 1969

the southern town of Battipaglia erupted when a state-run tobacco factory was closed. Rioting continued for weeks, with one worker killed by the police. A year later three days of street fighting took place in Porto Marghera, with workers coming to participate from a hundred miles away. Demonstrations in the schools and factories continued in every section of the country right through to the present time. Unlike France, significant numbers of workers have refuted the leadership of the CP, and many more have adopted a fraternal attitude toward the extreme Left which has been able to maintain a situation of permanent tension and frequent crisis.

Much in the Italian events is particular to a national or at least a European context. But some aspects of the struggle relate directly to the American experience. The problems facing the Turino auto workers are not much different from those facing the Detroit auto workers. The techniques by which advanced capitalist management centralizes power, rationalizes resources, forces higher production, and sedates rebellion are all relevant to America. The CP and left unions cannot be absolutely equated with the liberal Democrats and the American unions, but there are striking similarities, and the trend seems to be for those similarities to grow. What can be valuable for American revolutionaries studying the developments in Italy is not so much the facts and circumstances of struggle, but the tactics employed and some of the new ideological positions being formed.

The most striking new development in terms of organization has been the formation of the extra-parliamentary groups. These groups are made up primarily of students, and they specifically reject the parliamentary road to power. Some of them have established a sizable national presence. Some are strong in specific factories or localities. Some are insignificant grouplets. Like the New Left in the US, the most important of these groups, Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle, or The Struggle Goes On) and Potere Operaio (Workers Power), represent a decisive break with the past. Others have put Standard Italian wine in new plastic bottles in much the same way PL and YSA are not truly New Left, but younger versions of the organizational theory the old SDS and SNCC were rejecting.

Lotta Continua has been the largest and most active of the Italian extra-parliamentary groups over the longest period of time. Its cadres are influential in various factories, especially in the crucial Turino area. The group has attracted young workers and agitates daily at the factory gates. LC has been distinguished as the most persistent and aggressive critic of the CP and the unions, arguing that the workers must reject these organisms as thoroughly as they reject capitalism. LC's attack on the CP goes beyond economic retreat in the factories to the question of making the Italian Revolution. LC points out the opportunistic hypocrisy of the CP in idolizing the Black Panthers while squashing any discussion of armed struggle in Italy. LC asks by what

logic the CP can mount national demonstrations for Angela Davis while doing nothing to publicize the murder of an Italian anarchist in the Milano police station. LC's own editorials and activities on the issue led to the imprisonment of its weekly's editor and considerable other repression.

One of the characteristics of LC has been an anarchic organization that allowed many local units to have different policies. This has also led to a situation where the national office sometimes has extraordinary power to speak for the entire organization. A recent convention of LC attracted 5,000 delegates, but a select group meeting weeks before had formulated the policy to be adopted, a situation which brought forth considerable criticism from within the ranks of LC and other groups.

LC attempts to intervene in any disruption which occurs in the Italian order. This has led to some over-extension of manpower and revolution-by-media. An example of this occurred around the failure of the government to name Reggio Calabria as the capital of its region. A mass protest developed that fell to the leadership of fascists. LC was the first group of the Left to support the struggle and to admit the masses had been correct and the Left wrong in not taking up the issue. LC further criticized the Left for leaving the field to the fascists. This public position, however, was not backed up by physical action, and many workers were puzzled by an apparent coalition of fascists and Marxists, a situation the CP exploited to the hilt.

The Potere Operaio group has a history going back through several important Italian journals, and its original members worked with the group which eventually became Lotta Continua. PO differs from LC in concentrating its limited strength primarily on the factories and in seeking a unified theoretical base. The workers' committee at Porto Marghera has a 10-year history of development and affiliates with PO. It is held up as an example of what the group seeks to create. In this sense it is like the old SDS, which felt that its community organizers had succeeded when they were no longer needed. PO has done considerable work on migrant labor problems in both direct agitation and research. PO extends the Italian experience to say that European development in general has been achieved through the deliberate underdevelopment of the South, which now extends beyond continental boundaries to take in Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Turkey, and lately some parts of Black Africa. PO proposes a social wage for all Italians — whether employed or unemployed, Southerner or Northerner — as a means to undercut the uneven development. This position has been attacked for being too easily diluted into the guaranteed annual wage proposed by American liberals.

PO strikes more unequivocally at capitalism when it poses NO WORK as the conscious goal of the revolution. This puts them directly at odds with the CP, which wants to tie wages to higher productivity, or MORE work. The NO WORK demand was developed from specific Italian

sources, but it is related theoretically to the writings of James Boggs and to the popular 20-30-and-out sentiments of rank-and-file workers in the UAW. PO also attempts to instill ultimate revolutionary ends into the present struggle. Thus, it likes to pose demands for free rent, free transportation, free education, and so forth to directly undermine the money economy from the earliest moments of the revolutionary process. More rigidly organized than LC and more academic minded, PO keeps up serious contacts with worker committees throughout the US and Europe. Where LC has given much exposure and support to the Panthers, PO has been more interested in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

While the tempo of struggle has not abated in the past year, the extra-parliamentary groups have not been able to grow substantially or to extend their power. Repression accounts only partially for this situation. The extra-parliamentary groups have proven their ability to lead mass actions by students, workers, and communities on a wide geographical and theoretical front, but the existence of so many bickering groups (dozens in Milano, for instance) has tended to diffuse their power and confuse sympathizers who do not belong to a specific group. Often workers will follow the extra-parliamentary leadership during wildcats and demonstrations, but will vote for the CP and use union machinery. In short, rather than transferring their support to the extra-parliamentary groups, workers seem to be using whatever tool seems best for the immediate moment.

The union and party functionaries have toughened their attitude to the corporations to check eroding support. This has been especially true of lower-echelon leadership which tends to be genuinely working class. Workers also have expressed certain reservations and mistrust of students. They don't like the know-it-all tone of many leaflets, the pat slogans, the cavalier dismissal of the CP. Some feel the middle class students were anti-CP before because they were bourgeois, and now they have somersaulted to be anti-CP from a left position, but in fact still want to dominate workers. This feeling is less prevalent in Turino, which has many worker-students and students from working families.

Another frequently voiced feeling is that the groups have yet to prove themselves, and proving themselves does not mean simply leafleting day and night. Italian workers want a structure to relate to. They know the gamut of repression they face in the factory, and they know they can get a minimal protection from the CP and the unions. They are not sure the extra-parliamentary groups can provide that minimum or even want to. The workers still are not sure the students may not just go home one day or become so frustrated that they refute the working class altogether and take the position that they can make the revolution alone.

Underlying these doubts is the general problem of revolutionary

organization. Having rejected the Leninist party and having shown it is not needed to co-ordinate national struggles, the extra-parliamentary groups still haven't dealt with how a non-Leninist organization helps organize the revolution itself. Some groups advance the notion that the workers will create their own forms without outside tutelage. Others are content to lead by exemplary action eventually carried to the phase of armed struggle. Still others are pulled to some kind of formal party with the emphasis on democracy rather than on centralization. The problem confuses every action, yet it is rarely posed in mammoth meetings. Usually it comes in the thousands of discussions in working and living areas where people express their doubts about joining what still seems an extremely amorphous "movement". The CP has taken the position that the militants mean well for the most part, but are immature. The CP counts on the groups' tiring out dissident workers and thus eventually strengthening the Party by showing that it alone has the endurance and knowledge for the long-term struggle. With this strategy in mind, the CP exploits every extravagant statement and mistake that inevitably arises in struggle. The CP holds up the example of Communist Party participation in the governments of Chile and Sweden to show how its policies will eventually prevail even though they are less glamorous than Che Guevara's unsuccessful effort in Bolivia.

Nonetheless, the pressure of the extra-parliamentary forces has produced one serious break in the organization of the Communist Party itself. A group of long-time cadre, including members of parliament and the central committee, had to be expelled after publishing a series of theses challenging the basic direction of the Party. The group calls itself *Il Manifesto* and terms its politics extra-parliamentary, but in fact it is the stalking horse for a new party. The famous theses amount to a "good" communist party, a "revolutionary" communist party which includes many of the demands and tactics of the Italian New Left, but grafted onto a traditional party structure.

*Il Manifesto* hopes to serve a double purpose. First it seeks to unite the extra-parliamentary forces into one organization, and second it hopes to chip away sections of the CP. So far it has made dubious progress in both areas. Its biggest success is in establishing a national four-page daily circulating 100,000 copies. Unfortunately, the paper is dull in looks and content, more for intellectuals than for workers. The defections from the CP have been few and tend to include not worker sections but dissident intellectuals. Some of the extra-parliamentary groups in turn charge *Il Manifesto* with playing the old Italian game of let's-make-a-new-party-with-us-as-the-central-committee.

A second split at least partially triggered by the extra-parliamentary Left has occurred to PSUIP, the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, a party in close alliance with the CP. The entire left wing of the party, including all major worker sections, has split and created a

monthly-soon-to-be-weekly called Contropotere (Counter Power) with a circulation of about 30,000. The Left PSIUP is very close to the extra-parliamentarians in many theoretical areas, but feels strongly the need for basic organization. Its cadres are placed in the traditional cell, section, federation, regional structure which seeks to have daily contact with its members in their places of living and work. The Left PSIUP feels that many of the students are not close enough to workers as people, and so offer what are essentially romantic and unreasonable alternatives. The group split from the mother party because it felt that the national organization was simply a shadow of the CP without any individual personality or program. Its cadres hope to maintain their contact with workers enrolled in the CP while taking part in activities and debates of the extra-parliamentary Left.

What is so profound about the disputes and actions of the Italian Left is their mass nature. Positions and ideas are debated at a popular level — which is unimaginable in the US. The militancy of Italian workers is proverbial. In the decade of the Sixties they lost more hours due to strikes than all the Common Market nationals combined. They have dealt with the problem of clerical workers who would not strike by forcing them out of their offices. They have battled with fascists and police and even their own union bureaucrats. On a shop-floor basis, some factories are under rank-and-file leadership. Rather than the protracted strikes favored in the US, the Italians prefer the work stoppage of a few hours or a few days, a practice effectively destroying the routine of production without forcing economic hardship. Contrary to the generally non-violent nature of Italian society Italian workers have frequently employed elements of arson, sabotage, and personal physical violence. Struggles in other areas of the economy have increasingly matched the militancy of the workers. The struggle over education has spread from the universities to the high schools, and from the high schools to the lower schools. The occupation of deserted houses has gone on in all parts of the country, including the red cities of Bologna and Florence, forcing the CP administrations to take action against the very classes they are supposed to be leading.

One great contradiction in the revolutionary process in Italy is the lack of a strong counter-culture. Blatant male chauvinism is still the rule throughout society, even in revolutionary groups, even in those revolutionary groups producing the first women's liberation sections. Long hair and exotic dress are more likely to be the uniform of the upper bourgeoisie than that of the working class or of student militants. There is no underground press, no youth music, and no underground literature. Divorce has finally been legalized, but sexual oppression of every kind is still the norm. Although some cracks in the traditional ways are showing, even the innovators tend simply to copy what is coming out of Northern Europe and the US, and to copy the form rather than the substance. LC has taken the lead in using counter-cultural

material in its publications, and the extra-parliamentary Left at large has used obscenity and profanity in its leaflets, a practice that the CP frowns on. "Porco Dio" identifies a challenge to Catholic hegemony. An illegal ham radio station has sometimes disrupted the national network, but all such tactics still tend to be very much the exception.

The lack of a truly liberating counter-culture could become a serious flaw in the Italian revolution. Certainly the creation of a dynamic women's liberation movement is absolutely essential to carry out any Italian revolution, especially with struggles opening up in areas like Calabria, Sardinia, and Sicily, where Italian male chauvinism reaches its peak. One hopeful aspect is that the women's liberation movement in Italy, although still in its infancy, already puts a decided emphasis on the problems of working-class women.

The material which follows is only an introduction to events in Italy rather than a definitive evaluation. Very often the Italian movement is richest in just those areas where the American movement is weakest or only beginning to accumulate experiences. Americans seeking to re-establish a militant working-class movement in the United States can learn much from the struggles of our Italian comrades.

The Italian documents are the main body of a British pamphlet. Additional copies and information about other relevant pamphlets can be obtained from Big Flame, 78 Clarendon Road, Wallasey, Cheshire, England.

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# Main Events:

## ITALY 1969-70

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1969: 50 labour contracts in the public and private sectors to be renewed. The unions had a programme of escalating strikes, but the struggle went far out of their control. Wildcat actions, starting from FIAT (April '69) and developing through Pirelli, Alfa, Chatillon, Fatme, Petrolchimica and many others; led in many places by rank and file committees set up in '68.

The unions tried to control this wave by calling general go-home strikes. These got out of control: July 3rd riot in Turin was followed by resignation of government; November 19th strike became a street battle in Milan in which a cop was killed.

The strength of the workers' movement won big gains (December '69 and January '70). Ruling class counterattack followed: fascist bombings (Milan, December 12th) were answered by a massive police round-up of the Left. And 10,000 workers were awaiting trial after the events of the Hot Autumn.

More than this was needed by the employers to recoup their losses. They aimed to stop the wage struggles, eat up the gains of '69 with inflation and price rises, and introduce new controls over workers. Speed-up provoked violent strikes in many places: Alfa, FIAT, Pirelli, et cetera. Porto Marghera exploded into three days of street fighting (Venice, October '70). The government took a last resort: as in July '69, they stage-managed their own resignation, forcing the unions to call off a general strike (July 7th). The "crisis" cooled a few union heads, but did not stop the struggles in the factory and the community. The capitalists' attack intensified with a series of vicious tax measures aimed at workers (October '70: the "Decretone").

Through all this time the South had seen urban rioting, beginning with Battipaglia (April '79), through Caserta, Pescara, and finally Reggio Calabria, where government troops were kept on the alert for months.

The end of '70 saw a rising in the schools — strikes all over the country — and massive demonstrations against the repression and the Burgos trials.

1971 has continued at this level. Labour struggles are as widespread as ever, the South is no quieter, and the country is slipping into recession.



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TRANSLATOR'S

# Introduction

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Of the articles included here 3 deal specifically with FIAT. This does not mean that FIAT has been the only struggle in Italy over the last few years. It has certainly occupied a key position, but only in a much wider context of struggles in every sector and every area. We hope to deal with these in our later pamphlet.

In late 1968 workers in Italy, in some sense following developments in France earlier in the year, had begun to set up Workers Committees and Base Committees in many of the major factories. The most influential of these were the committees at PIRELLI (Milan) and in Porto Marghera, where workers and students had been in close contact from an early stage. Turin developed in another way, with the setting up of a Worker-Student Assembly, bringing together workers (mainly from FIAT) and students in regular meetings. It was this assembly that co-ordinated work in Turin, in and around FIAT, all through the contract struggles of the Hot Autumn.

In July '69 a conference of these Workers Committees was held in Turin, bringing together militants from all over Italy to discuss the experiences they had had in organizing their respective work places, and to work out a common (rank and file) strategy for the coming battle over the contracts. The main speeches were from FIAT Mirafiori, the chemical workers in Porto Marghera, the metal-workers in Rome, from OLIVETTI and from other FIAT plants.

In April 1969 the Southern town of Battipaglia exploded over the closure of a state-run tobacco factory. There was rioting in the town for weeks, and a worker was killed by police "intervention".

The speech from Mirafiori, printed here, deals with the period from Battipaglia — when FIAT along with many other Italian factories struck in sympathy with the dead worker — to the battle in Corso Traiano. It explains how the workers organized inside the factory, the demands they were putting up, and how they planned the struggle over the renewal of the contracts in the Autumn of '69.

# ORGANISING AT FIAT

This is a speech made by a FIAT worker at the National Conference of Workers' Base Committees in Turin July 26th-27th, 1969 describing the build-up to the struggles of the Hot Autumn in Italy, reprinted from La Classe Number 13-14, August 1969.

COMRADES,

I speak to you as a worker from FIAT Mirafiori. I want to explain how our struggles started there, how they developed, and the lessons we feel they hold for all Italian workers.

Nobody could say that our fight at Mirafiori developed out of the blue. It was the product of everything that the working class had learned by their struggles of 1968-69, and at Mirafiori the way in which all these experiences came together marked an important step forward in our political growth and understanding.

In April 1968 the union called us out on yet another routine strike concerning hours, piecework, and speed-up. And this was where it all started. We realized immediately that our unity and militancy on the strike were much higher than we had expected, and that if we acted on our own strength we could really make something of the strike. But right away the union jumped in to keep us in check by calling for referendums, secret ballots, and the like. Everybody understood what the union was up to, but at the same time we weren't able to put this understanding into practice. We knew that it was time for us to take the leadership of the struggles into our own hands, and that this was something we would soon be in a position to do.

BATTIPAGLIA

It was during the strike in sympathy with the two workers killed in Battipaglia (April '69) that we took our next step in this direction. We are workers who come from the South, and we carry on our shoulders the full weight of the exploitation that capitalism allows in the South so that it can increase its profits in the North. We were angry, and instead of just going home as we would have done on a normal strike, we stayed inside. Just downed tools and ambled off the job, right under the noses of the foremen, to a mass meeting in the canteen. This was our first step toward internal struggle — keeping the struggle inside the factory — and the workers at Mirafiori were beginning to discover their own strength. It was a good experience.

After the strike, not surprisingly, many comrades thought that we should begin to push harder. But for the time being this was difficult, because there was nowhere they could turn for organizational support. The unions were out of the question, and the students hadn't yet arrived on the scene.

The strike for Battipaglia was a political strike. A factory in the North responds to and concentrates the immense drive of a city that revolts in the South. The revolt was against planned underdevelopment that drives young, able-bodied men and women from the South to seek work at FIAT and other factories in the North. But we can say that the struggles that began almost immediately after the Battipaglia strike were political too. They began in the Auxiliary Plant, and spread like lightning to the crane drivers, the trolley drivers, and the press shops, and in every case were dominated by the militancy and the drive of the immigrant workers. Immigrants from the South, showing their anger against the boss class, against the whole planning policy of capitalism, its government, its police, et cetera.

They arrive in Turin, hunting the big wage packets they have heard so much about, but find instead that FIAT is a slave camp. Naturally they rebel.

They refuse to work. Passively at first (with thousands of workers a day going off sick), but then more actively. They force the unions to call strikes, and really begin to make their presence felt.

#### UNION STRIKES?

The labor unions had 1969 all planned out as far as strikes were concerned. They wanted a whole series of strikes just involving a few people at a time, so that production would never be blocked completely, and so as to prevent large numbers of workers getting together. But we took the initiative and speeded things up, which meant an almost total stoppage of production, involving the great majority of workers.

When the union called a two-hour stoppage, the men made it four, and later stepped it up to eight. And different shops would stop work at different times, so causing maximum havoc. The presses weren't producing a thing, the cranemen and the trolley drivers had nothing to transport, and thus the production lines were virtually at a standstill.

This was dangerous for the unions. They had lost control, and they had to try to stem the tide of the workers' struggles. So they tried the same arguments that the foremen and the supervisors use: that every hour that the workers struck autonomously (that is, unofficially) should be penalized. But the threats didn't work, and the strike carried on. The very fact that the line was not running sparked off meetings and discussions among the men: first of all inside the factory, next to the stationary assembly lines, and then outside, together with the groups of students who had gathered at the gates. The strike spread down the

line, and political discussion followed it. Everyone was arguing and talking, and it was suggested that the demands of the Press Shop could be taken up by the assembly lines.

The strike had begun in protest against the speed of the line. But work speeds are decided from above in the factory, and are based on the whole way that capitalism organizes work — that is, gradings and wages. So our initial limited protest soon spread to all aspects of the work relationship.

## WILDCAT

For the moment, though, it was important to pass from words to action. There was one line still running, and we had to stop it, even though it was our weakest point in the factory. And this is where the Snake came in. For three days there were stoppages up and down the line, and we would all get together in big groups and march round the factory, pulling out anybody who was still working. This was how we stopped the "500" line. And we added demands for big wage increases to our initial protest.

At this point the union really tried to throttle our struggle. It reached into its box of tricks and pulled out a new disguise for itself: the line delegate. They said that the delegates would represent us, but in actual practice the delegates' only role is to negotiate with the boss the extent of our exploitation.

And just as we say NO to exploitation, we say NO to the delegate. If we really need anything like a delegate, then our attitude is that WE ARE ALL DELEGATES. When they try to speed up the line, we'll just stop working.

That's the way we organize internally, and naturally the union's game did not succeed. After two days of official union stoppages, and four days of truce for the negotiations, the unions mistakenly thought they had the situation back under control. But on the very day they informed us that they had signed the agreement about the delegates, the strike restarted, and once again all the lines were stopped.

The unions had called four days of truce, but we had used those four days to prepare our struggle, to clarify our demands, and during those days, in some shops, our thrust began to take on the forms of a real autonomous organization. This time there were hundreds and hundreds of us marching round the factory in the Snake, and we marched till we came to the big office block that houses the administration. We weren't going to avoid a confrontation with the management and the unions — in fact we went looking for it, determined to hit them where it hurts.

By this time things were no longer running on an ad hoc day-to-day basis. In Shop 54 we knew we would be able to last out about a week. So we organized with other shops so that they would relieve us when we'd had enough. And sure enough, at the end of a week, the strike is taken up by Shops 52 and 53 and once again the lines are at a standstill.

## ORGANIZATION

All this has needed, and will need, organization. We have begun to build organization at two levels — both inside and outside the factory. There are groups of workers who get together on the job, and they organize with the students into intervention groups outside the factory gates. Then there are the worker-student assemblies that we have been holding every day in a warehouse near the factory, where we come together to exchange and share news and information from all the different plants and factories in the FIAT complex.

But these assemblies don't just work at the level of co-ordination. On one hand we began producing leaflets to tell workers in other parts of the complex how our struggles were going, and we also began to take initiative in deciding what course the struggles would take. In fact it was in one of these oh-so-many assemblies that the workers and students decided to organize the demonstration for July 3rd of this year, which, as everybody must know, exploded into a great workers' battle.

At this point (July '69) we are now faced with the coming clash over the renewal of the contracts, and in the light of this, over the past few weeks, we have been restoring a strong degree of autonomy to the worker-student intervention groups at the gates. The aim of this has been to widen political discussion at a shop-floor level, and to put us all in a better position to begin to consolidate the organization of all workers at all points in all of FIAT's factories. When the official union strikes begin this is going to be crucial.

## WORKERS AND STUDENTS

There are some things that ought to be said about our relations, as workers, with the students, and about the relationship of the factory as a whole to the external political groups. Our reason for deciding to work with the students was, and is, political. The students with whom we work are people who fight, and who are ready to fight with us, and like us, against the common boss, right to the end. The unions and the political parties will not fight the boss to the bitter end: they stop halfway at compromises that only end up reinforcing the control that our employers have over us. Which means that they're always fouling up the works, trying to put the brakes on our struggle, trying to slow us down.

It's clear to us that if you're going to fight the employers right to the last ditch, you need organization and a clear political understanding of what you are going to do. It is a struggle that's going to last a long time, and you can't just improvise it from day to day. But we do not accept that we should be fed this organization and this understanding ready-made by groupuscules that come round advertising themselves

and who are far more interested in strengthening their organizations than in helping us in our fight. In the last few months we have seen so many of these groups coming round, particularly when the struggle's all over. But we have had nothing to do with them.

It's for us to create our own organization and our own political understanding based on our own experiences of struggle continuously discussed and examined among ourselves.

The contact with the students is also useful in other respects, because we can pool experiences of struggles in other places, as the first step toward our unification with the struggles of all working people — farm labourers, peasants, white-collar workers, technicians.

## CORSO TRAIANO

And inevitably, the organization that we have created will have to come to terms with not only the problems inside the factory, but also the problems of the workers' life in the city — of our relationship with this dormitory city, this robber city of Turin. We have understood that FIAT controls this town, and that therefore it is not good enough to fight just inside the factory. We must also fight outside. The struggle must become generalized, massive, and social. And this is precisely what happened a few weeks ago, when the struggle spread outside, and we had the streetfighting in Corso Traiano.

By now everyone knows the story of Corso Traiano. After the battle we went back into the factory with our heads held high. We have not been defeated. We are not defeated. Anybody who says that the struggle has died down since Corso Traiano is forgetting two elementary facts:

First, that Agnelli (head of FIAT) has not managed to regain control over the speed of the line, over timings, over the whole way production is supposed to run.

Second, that he has not been able to do this because our organization is getting stronger and stronger inside the factory.

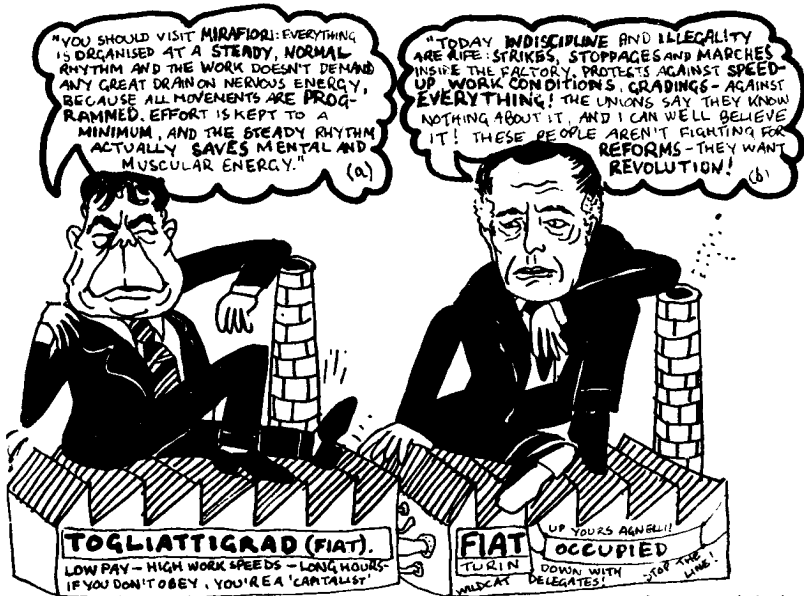
We say this so as to highlight a tendency: that is not to say that every now and then Agnelli finds himself unable to speed up the line, but to state categorically that from now on he is going to find it less and less possible. The workers of Mirafiori are no longer going to be trodden on. We have organization now, and not the sort of organization that is only strong during high points of struggle. The proof of this is that Agnelli has been forced to take back various people that he had sacked or transferred, because of the organized response from the workers in Shops 53 and 54 and in the Auxiliaries.

But this is not enough. We must go further.

The next stage will be the renewal of the contracts. In September the majority of Italian workers (metal workers, chemical workers, building workers, and others) are going to find themselves called on strike, all together, by their union.

We know what the contracts mean for the unions and the employers.

They are their way of ensuring that workers only fight once in every three years, and that after that they sit still and behave like good children. The contracts are a sort of cage, in which the worker is locked up, and the union given the keys and told to make sure that the cage stays shut. But in the last year, in hundreds of factories all over Italy, it has become clear that workers don't accept orders from bosses or from unions. The employers would have liked to come to the renewal of the contracts after a long period of social peace, and with a working class that was divided and weak. But the battles that workers have been fighting over the last year have smashed that plan in one factory after another.



(a) From an article in the Russian daily 'ISZVESTIA' (b) From an interview with Agnelli, head of FIAT.

Now, the first thing to be said is that we refuse to tie ourselves to the contracts. The employers and the unions have already planned out the strikes for the contracts, but we refuse to fight by their timetable. However we realize that we shall be able to use the renewal of the contracts for developing our own struggle. It will enable us to use the strength that we have developed, and unite the factories that have been in the vanguard of the struggle with those that have so far remained outside it. The employers and the unions use the contracts as a means to keep us down, but we shall transform them into weapons with which the working class will be able to organize and fight. We shall use them to develop the revolutionary political organization of the workers and all working people. We shall do this by consolidating and generalizing

the lessons that we have learned from the struggles of the past year. The workers have virtually expelled the union from the factory, and have begun to formulate their own demands, and carry them forward in a fight that is led entirely by themselves. During contract struggles we shall have to make this a permanent conquest of the working class, in every Italian factory, in every productive sector, exploding all the ways in which the contracts and the unions are designed to divide and weaken us.

During the struggles of the last year certain demands have cropped up repeatedly. We must take these and use them as our first priority to unify workers throughout Italy. They are:

Equal wage raises for all, not linked to productivity or any other employer's standard (like time and motion, incentives, plus payments, conditions payments, et cetera)

An immediate reduction in working hours, without loss of wages.

Abolition of compulsory overtime.

Abolition of the lower gradings as the first step toward abolition of all grading divisions.

Complete parity with the white collar workers.

We are organizing political discussion on these points by circulating a discussion document inside the factories.

'In statements to the Bologna newspaper 'Resto del Carlino' today the heads of Italy's two largest industrial groups, Sig. Gianni Agnelli of FIAT and Sig. Giuseppe Petrilli of IRI expressed their anxiety over the situation in industry, which is grinding to a halt because of the strikes. In describing the situation within the plants, Sig. Petrilli said bluntly that it amounted to anarchy.' (Financial Times 8th July 1970)

But it is not enough for us to know what we're fighting for, because we also have to know how we're going to fight. The age of passivity is dead. The old days are past in which we would wait for the union to call a strike from the outside, and then take a day's holiday at home. It is possible, in fact probable, that as the autumn progresses wildcat actions are going to start happening in the same way in other factories. And if, in any place, the union does call an official strike, then it will be used by the workers as a chance to move, united, into the fight.

#### OUR FIGHT: OUR POWER

The sort of strikes that the union intends to call for the autumn are the sort that cost us the most and cost the employers the least — the sort where the employer has plenty of warning of the strike, and can





organize himself so as not to be hit too hard — and the sort that gives us precious little help to get together and organize ourselves. But in the strikes at Mirafiori, and previously at the PIRELLI rubber factory in Milan, as well as in many other advanced struggles recently, we have been able to organize in new ways. We have understood that if the factory is the heart of the employer's power, then it can and must become the center of our power. We have understood that organizing and fighting inside the factory allows us to come together to discuss and organize much more than was the case when we all just used to go home for the day. And we have understood that if we use this sort of organization, arranging to relieve each other in our strikes, taking it in turns to strike, we shall hit the employers more effectively, and pay less of the cost of strikes ourselves.

This kind of autonomous organization already exists in many shops at FIAT, and during the strikes for the contracts this autumn we are going to have to spread it — both to other parts of the plant, and to other factories that it has not yet reached. For us the password is FIGHT INSIDE THE FACTORY, because it is only through fighting inside the factory that we shall be in a position to outlast a prolonged clash with the bosses and the State. We must put them in the weakest position, where they will have to pay the highest price, and not us.

#### THE AUTUMN

I need hardly say that all this does not mean that we should confine our struggle to the shop floor. But we must use the factory to build the strength that will mean we can move outside of the factory in a way that is not totally disorganized, and in such time as we ourselves may choose. This also means that when employers try launching particularly hard attacks on us inside the factory — like lockouts and reprisal sackings — we shall be in a position to respond equally hard with an intensification of the struggle inside the factory, to the point of actually occupying it if need be.

Now, the struggles in the autumn are going to be hard. Nobody is saying that we shall see the final frontal clash of the proletariat with the armed forces of capitalism for the conquest of State power. But over the last year Italian workers have revealed a certain revolutionary awareness that their problems are class problems, and that the only way to solve them is to mount an attack on the system that perpetuates them, with the aim of destroying capitalism and abolishing all classes. Our problem now must be to use the struggles over the contracts this autumn to translate this general awareness into organization — the general autonomous organization of the Italian working class.

# BATTLE IN CORSO TRAIANO

This article is taken from La Classe Number 10, July 1969. It is an account of a demonstration called by workers and students in Turin which developed into a running battle with police and spread to many other parts of the city.

THURSDAY, JULY 3RD, 1969

5:00 am Groups of workers and students gather at the gates of the Mirafiori and Rivalta plants for the strike picket. By 6 am barely a single person has entered the factory, either at Mirafiori or Rivalta. At Gates 1 and 2 of Mirafiori the police are out in force, with lorries and Black Marias. Police Chief Voria is doing his best to intimidate the workers and students: the picket lines are repeatedly being broken up and pushed back to the other side of the wide avenue that runs round Mirafiori.

A few scabs try to get in, and the police do everything in their means to prevent them being stopped. Despite this no more than five or six manage to get in, and at Gate 1 they are immediately met by workers coming off the night shift, who drive them right back out of the gates again.

1:00 pm Tension on the gates is rising. At every entrance the picket lines are growing. Whenever the workers try to stop the few scabs who are trying to enter the factory for the second shift, they are charged by the police.

2:00 pm In the area in front of Gate 2 the workers off Shifts 1 and 2 begin to gather, along with a few hundred students. There are already more than 3,000 people there, and people keep arriving. There are two big banners proclaiming "All Power to the Workers" and "The Struggle Goes On". A hundred, maybe two hundred police, in full riot gear, with helmets and tear gas, begin pushing people to the center of the area, deliberately provoking them and trying to isolate them in every way. The Police Chief announces that under no circumstances will the march be allowed to leave.

2:45 pm People are still standing there when the police make their first charge, brutal, with them using their rifle butts as clubs. From this moment on the charges follow thick and fast: the people disperse, regroup, scatter, and regather again. Police reinforcements arrive and begin to fire tear-gas grenades. They fire directly into the crowd. Nobody can breathe, and everybody scatters into the surrounding fields. The police start grabbing people. The response is immediate: the center of the street is won back again, and cobblestones gathered from the bed of the tramway begin to hail down on the police from all sides. They are driven back. By now the struggle is reaching mass

dimensions. Seeing that it is now impossible that the march should start from Mirafiori, a new departure point is proposed.

3:30 pm Around ten thousand people gather between Corso Agnelli and Corso Unione Sovietica. Then the march sets off. But when it turns into Corso Traiano the police attack in force, using jeeps to charge the crowds and tear-gas in incredible quantities. They try to encircle the crowd with a pincer action: with Carabinieri on one side and Public Security police on the other. Now a violent urban guerrilla battle begins which will last right on into the night. The police, with their violence and their tear-gas, are concentrating on preventing even small groups from re-forming. It is plain that they are absolutely determined to stop the march getting together again: they must foil any attempt at a repetition of the Piazza Statuto incident.

In the two hours that follow, the demonstration seems apparently to have dispersed. But in fact nobody has left the scene, and groups of people are reorganizing spontaneously, throwing rocks, and then dispersing, only to reappear somewhere else.

4:00 pm Workers from the FIAT plants at Lingotto and Rivalta start arriving. The workers and students are joined by people from the neighborhood around Mirafiori: young kids join the battle, women hand round damp handkerchiefs to protect people from the gas, and many local homes open their doors to comrades who are being chased by the police.

5:30 pm The real center of the battle is Corso Traiano. The wide avenue becomes the scene of a raging street battle: workers, students, and folk from the neighborhood return to the attack, construct the first barricades out of rocks, and almost succeed in capturing Police Chief Voria. Meanwhile groups of comrades have scattered and gone back to the University, where the Faculty of Architecture is occupied. Police arrive there with jeeps and lorries and make ready to surround the building. There is a moment of confusion and uncertainty. Some people are proposing that there should be a General Assembly inside the Faculty, so a couple of hundred people enter the building. The police promptly fire tear-gas grenades through the windows. For this they are attacked with a shower of rocks and bricks by the people who have stayed outside.

Outside the violence of the police onslaught and the violence of the rock-throwing increase. The battle spreads out of the courtyard into the street, into the arcades and the surrounding side-streets: there is tear-gas, hand-to-hand fighting, and some arrests.

6:30 pm The majority of the comrades set off once again for Corso Traiano, which by now is totally in the hands of the demonstrators.

People are still arriving. You can hear the steady rhythm of falling rocks.

The police have regrouped at the end of Corso Traiano. It's hard for them to surround and comb the whole area, what with the building sites,

the factories, and people's houses.

7:00 pm The sheer volume of the tear-gas forces the workers and students to withdraw. The police slowly regain Corso Traiano, but barricades are being built in all the sidestreets. People who are caught are beaten up and loaded onto Black Marias. Many police take a beating too.

8:00 pm The battle spreads. The most violent fighting is in front of the FIAT administrative offices in Corso Traiano, in Corso Agnelli, in all the side-streets, and in Piazza Bengasi, where the police are making absurd, insanely violent charges. The comrades respond to the charges by building barricades one after another. Three cars are set on fire, and they manage to halt a car-transporter loaded with FIAT cars, which become the target for well-aimed rocks. Meanwhile the behavior of the police becomes still more bestial: they are firing their tear-gas right into people's houses. Voria appears brandishing a grenade-launcher and telling people to get back from their windows or else.

10:00 pm In Piazza Bengasi the attacks and the rock-throwing go on. The police surround the square, enter apartment blocks, and even drag people out of their own apartments. Sporadic fighting goes on till way after midnight, with people shouting "Pigs!" and "Nazis!" as police drag people out of their houses.

Meanwhile in Nichelino, a working-class suburb of Turin some miles away from Corso Traiano, street-fighting has also been going on all afternoon. Concrete sewer pipes are used to build barricades across the streets. Via Sestriere, the big street that runs across Nichelino, is blocked by more than ten barricades, made from burning cars and trailers, with road signs, rocks, and timber. During the night they burn huge piles of wood and rubber tires, starting a fire on a nearby building site which lights up the whole area.

4:00 am The fighting is still going on. The police are slowly winning back the ground they lost, and begin house-to-house searches utilizing methods which are cruel and vicious. But still the people don't go away. By now the workers and the people of the neighborhood are used to the tear-gas, and they ignore it, taking it in turns to build the barricades. By now a hundred people have been stopped by the police, and thirty of these arrested. Every one of these thirty was a worker. Meanwhile, police reinforcements are converging on Turin from 80 miles away in Genoa, from Alessandria and Asti. The local police are just not able to cope.

At FIAT the struggle has been moving ahead. People are refusing to accept the conditions under which they work and live, both inside the factory and out. They are refusing the unions and the political parties any control over their movement and are organizing autonomously to fight for objectives that they themselves have decided on. Added to this they are coming out onto the streets.

It's been twenty years since the workers of FIAT have been able to show themselves in the streets fighting hand-to-hand with the police and coming away victorious. Once again the bosses and their minions have provided us with a chance to generalize the struggle. The police intervention meant that the inhabitants of Turin-South were ready to come down and join the workers and the students in their fight. But the struggle also spread to many other areas of Turin, involving many other workers in a way that a routine union demonstration would never have done.



# CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The atmosphere in Italy's factories is fast changing. Social peace is no longer the order of the day. This article describes some of the changes that are taking place. It comes from Lotta Continua Number 18 November 1970.

At this moment there are five million workers fighting in factories all over Italy. The struggle is becoming harder, and something important starts to happen in the minds of the workers, in their ways of seeing themselves and seeing the world. They are slowly beginning to free themselves. They are destroying constituted authority in the factory. They are taking apart the mechanisms that the bosses use to divide and control them, and are freeing themselves from the taboos that till now have kept them slaves. People are discovering that the power of their bosses is based on their own complicity, on the fact that, from fear or ignorance, or from lack of interest, the workers have up till now accepted as normal and necessary something which, in fact, they as workers have the power and the ability to destroy.

## The Struggle Against Hierarchy in the Factory

One means of control is the respect people have for their superiors. But now it's the foremen and the higher-ups who are beginning to be afraid of the workers. This began when we started what we call the internal struggles. Traditionally workers have been kept isolated in the face of their superiors. But now that we are fighting inside the factory, it's the foremen who find themselves isolated in the face of a mass of workers who are strong and confident in their own strength and the strength of an anger that has been nurtured for years. The workers are losing their fear.

There are thousands of stories that bear this out. Workers are beginning to feel confident enough to tell their foremen what they think of them, to refuse orders, to challenge foremen to carry out threats that they make. But they are going even further than this. At Miraffiori the foremen came out on strike demanding bodyguards during working hours! Some of them have been forced to walk at the head of internal marches, carrying red flags, and sometimes they're forced to stand up and make revolutionary speeches. In a lot of the shops, when a bit of tension brews the foremen don't dare start up the line, but run off to hide, saying that they have something else to do. In such a situation, the possibility of giving people harder work to do as a punishment, of transferring people to other parts of the factory, speed-ups on the line and the whole system of fines and penalties have all become impossible to operate.

## The Struggle Against the Factory Managers

But the workers' anger has exploded with greatest ferocity against the factory managers. At PIRELLI in Milan the decision to strike has usually gone hand in hand with a none-too-polite invitation to managers to leave their offices. They are not usually too willing, but in the event of hesitation the decision is often helped by judicious application of the boot — one form of struggle that Mr. Donat Cattin does not approve of. In FIAT the managers took a long time to learn obedience, and were several times forced to run the gantlet between two lines of furious workers. Onto their bald heads, beaded with sweat and spattered with gobs of spit, the workers showered five lire coins, which sparkled like confetti in the sun. At the end of this cycle of struggle it would be hard to count the managers who ended up in hospital (even if they only went there so as to have their injuries examined with a view to reporting workers to the police, as happened at FIAT Lingotto in Turin).

At INNOCENTI of Milan the workers don't soil their hands. Instead they pulled up a birch tree from one of the factory avenues, and used the trunk as a battering ram to smash one of the glass doors of the administrative offices in which managers had barricaded themselves. They sent in the Works Committee as a legal pretext, and then chased one senior manager out of the factory, ramming him up the arse with the tree-trunk as he went.

At BREDA in Milan the managers live on the "qui vive", literally with one ear to the wind. When the workers stage a walkout, they do it by surprise, marching through the various shops ringing a bell. For the managers this bell is the sign that it's time for them to run. But they can never tell in advance just when the bell is going to ring.



To fight managers is to fight the whole way the capitalist factory functions, and workers know this. Managers are part and parcel of the factory system — the means that link up the machines, the shops, the different sectors of the productive process. To chase them out means bringing production to a standstill. Intimidating them means reducing efficiency. Slowly, as the struggle grows, the factory system ceases to be an alien and mysterious force in the eyes of the worker. Its



mechanisms are uncovered, attacked, and hindered in their internal workings. Workers discover that they are only slaves to their machines insofar as they are bound to their managers.

### Refusal of Wage Differentials and Material Incentives

The first way that workers express their autonomy is in recognizing and attacking the means the bosses use to divide workers, to oppose the interests of one section to those of another so as to maintain their control over all. The workers, having freed themselves from the control of the unions, are refusing to be divided into organizational categories, refusing wage differentials, refusing incentives and every other attempt to involve them jointly in production.

### Relations Between Workers and White Collar Staff

The workers want equality. Not because they are good Christians and see themselves as "all God's-children", but because they know that the differences that divide them can be of use to the bosses. So they are trying to establish relations with white collar workers, not on the basis of a vague solidarity, but against the differences in the way they are treated, and against the idea that the staff are somehow more "valuable" than workers. Encounters between workers and staff have not always been peaceful affairs, but where there has been a clear perspective initial misunderstandings have been easily overcome. On the day that the scab tires were brought in from Greece, the workers at PIRELLI wreaked havoc in the salaried staff canteen (to the extent of using a pneumatic drill to break down a door that was in their way), attacking what they saw as a symbol of divisive prestige.

FIAT was the same. At first there was violence. The white collar staff who were scabbing (all of them) were forced to run the gantlet between lines of furious workers, just like the managers before them. The FIAT staff, at the mere mention that there were 5,000 workers in boiler suits approaching the offices, could be seen running like rabbits through a little hole between lines of four guards, scooting down the slope and out of the gates. They ran down the street in total panic for hundreds of yards. This really is emancipation. This is the capacity to re-establish a correct scale of values between social categories. But following this we began to see white collar staff coming to the Internal Assemblies of their own accord, joining in the marches that went round the factory hunting for scabs, attending workers' meetings and so on.

Throughout FIAT, as well as at PETROLCHIMICA (Porto Marghera), PIRELLI, and many other factories, the unions have manipulated white collar staff in Assemblies, trying to play them off against the intention of the workers to intensify the struggle. But in places where workers have come to understand their own position as regards the crucial

matter of wage differentials, this maneuver has totally failed. There was one white collar worker who came to a meeting at FIAT and tried to justify wage differentials between the staff and the workers on the grounds that he had spent more than 250 pounds a year on his studies, and was entitled to some benefit from his investment. But the workers said NO. He was already once privileged because he'd had a chance to study — the sort of chance that workers don't get. And therefore it was not right that he should be privileged twice over by earning more money than a worker, who has the same, if not greater, needs as any white collar worker. The problem of parity in wages and fringe benefits with white collar workers and the refusal of categories and "merit" bonuses are beginning to be faced as a fundamental political fact. They bring the whole factory hierarchy into question and challenge the ideas of career, promotion, and merit which employers have always played on to tie their own employees to the wheels of exploitation.

### Relations Between Workers and Students

Armed with the confidence they have gained from their own struggles the workers have begun an attack on the education system. The unions and Communist Party have been driven by the course of the struggle into proposing mass meetings of students and workers, and suggesting that workers march — or send delegations — to invade universities and schools. But there's no hope of lasting political links being made at these encounters, because the Party controls everything. They are usually reduced to exchanges of information: the workers talk about the latest union platform, and the students about the problems of their education. Then everybody goes home, and the only people who really profit from these get-togethers are the Party and the unions, outside of any control from the mass of the people.

However things are different when workers do such things off their own initiative, as they have done in Turin, Trento, Venice, and other places. Here the workers have attacked the school system directly, as the root of the divisions that weaken the working class, that divide workers from white collar staff, and that fragment the staff among themselves. In this way the workers' struggle has bound itself to the students' struggle, against a system of class selection and education, and the workers' point of view has helped give a better orientation to the student struggles.

### The Struggle Against Production

Nowadays a worker is just an appendage of a machine or production line: The only way people relate is via the flow of production. So that an important indication of the relative strength reached by the workers and the weakness of their employers is the extent to which workers

have been re-establishing real links of solidarity.

In the course of the recent struggles the factory has changed from being a place where the isolation and the weakness of the workers are at their strongest, and instead is becoming a place where the strength of the working class is being reconstituted, and where the links that are established can be used directly to organize and fight. This is the main meaning of the internal struggle, as the situation in which the workers can use their numbers as a source of strength, to isolate their foremen and overcome their fear of their superiors. And this goes, above all, for the internal marches, the assemblies, and the informal meetings and discussions both inside the factory and outside at the gates. As long as they're not dominated or taken over by the unions.

Capitalist production is based on the silence of its workers, on the systematic repression of their creativity and of their need to express themselves. When this silence is broken, workers begin to liberate themselves from their own chains and discover that the center of the factory is them and their own needs: their interest, and not the interests of the boss (machines, production...). This discovery has been at the root of forms of struggle that have been developing with a view to reducing production, like the go-slow. These tactics have been very successful in some cases — as at PIRELLI, where in some shops the workers have reduced unit output to such an extent as to bring the production almost to a standstill. This form of struggle sometimes costs the workers a lot, but it represents a fundamental conquest since it hits directly at productivity and can be practiced right where people work.

### The Struggle Against "Things"

Another way in which this is expressed is in innumerable episodes of violence against machines and production, from the destruction of the scab Greek tires at PIRELLI to the systematic way in which the FIAT workers have been damaging productive machinery. The workers have transformed mute sabotage at an everyday level into a liberatory act performed collectively and consciously by all the workers against that production that keeps them everyday screwed under the rule of the boss. The same is happening with the leaflets, posters, and graffiti that are beginning to cover the walls of Italian factories; these are beginning to spread from the toilets to the cloakrooms, and from there onto the shop floor, where they are put up right under the foremen's noses.

The workers of PIRELLI do not forget that the truncheons the police use against the Italian people are made by them, and that they can always make them for their own use. In many factories the internal telephones that the foremen use to transmit orders to different parts of the factory are being used by workers to organize and communicate the struggle to the different shops.

## The Struggle Against the Unions

The unions were born a hundred years ago, and claim to be free associations of the workers to defend themselves against the bosses. But today, in every country in the world, they have become one of the main instruments that the bosses have to maintain their control over the working class, to keep workers in a state of mutual isolation and disorganization, in a subordinate position which finds a voice only through union delegates. They have become the principal obstacle to the emancipation and the autonomy of the working class. For this reason, whatever factory you may care to choose, you can say with certainty that the unions are strong when the workers are weak, and that they are weak when the workers are strong. The more isolated the workers are, the more they are divided and impotent, the more they have to take a stand against bodies which put themselves forward, or at least function in real life, as their collective representatives, the "guardians of their interests".

As the workers gradually begin to emancipate themselves, getting together and overcoming their isolation, any attempt to define their interests from outside the development of the struggle comes to be seen for what it really is: an obstacle to the development of their own autonomy, a means of oppression in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

## The Struggle Against Authority

The stories about the ways people have been fighting the unions in factories all over Italy are too numerous to mention. They go from people trying to grab the union megaphone at factory-gate meetings (as at FIAT Rivalta) to full-scale punch-ups. At mass meetings inside factories the union leaders have been booed and jeered at, and often refused the right to speak. Once at FIAT Mirafiori the entire Central Committee of FIM, the Catholic metalworkers' union, was isolated and attacked verbally and physically by workers who were coming out of the gates after one shift, and who demolished every argument they put up. The tactics that these gentlemen usually come up with consist of agreeing with everyone and never taking up fixed positions on anything. They are consistently attacked for this.

In other factories, the main obstacle that the workers have come up against is the argument "We are all the union." As one worker from PIRELLI put it: "That's well and good. We might all be the union. But when it comes to it, all the decisions are really made in Rome."

## The Struggle Against Delegation

The unions, however, have tried to make a comeback, and it's not yet clear how this will turn out. Particularly the attempt to introduce line delegates and delegates' committees into the factory. When delegates were proposed to FIAT workers, they replied "We are all delegates." By this they meant two things:

First, they refused to accept the unions' position on piecework, on rates and transferrals, et cetera, and the instrument (the delegates) by which the unions were trying to impose their position, because the workers' position on these things is radically different from that of the union. Workers say these things are non-negotiable.

Second, the discovery that the only point of strength that workers have in their dealings with employers or unions is when they don't have representatives, but rely on their own strength exclusively, on their own numbers, their own unity, and their own ingenuity.

The workers have always refused to speak of the formal and abstract "need for organization", counterposing the content of organization, the reasons why they feel they need organization — the form and objectives of struggle. The unions say that we need delegates. Why? All formal discussions about delegates are, and have proved to be, blank checks to be signed by the union.

A worker from one of the most militant plants at PIRELLI said at a national meeting: "I would like all the workers of Italy to be on their guard against this trap of the Delegates' Committee. With these committees they're trying to turn vanguard militants into union activists, and when they're not doing that they are turning what could be an instrument of shop-floor co-ordination into a little parliament where the workers, instead of coming to say what their comrades on the shop floor feel, merely stay to hear what the union has to say, then report back to their comrades. Here the representatives of the more militant shops are drowned in the swamp of the more indecisive (or passive) delegates. And situations that could well develop into hard struggles all too often peter out into useless argument."

## The New Organization

The union bureaucrats and the spontaneists are going round saying that all we are describing represents a total refusal of organization. But this is not true. It is a refusal of the unions. The union is by definition the organizer of the particular interests of workers, of their interests in the factory, in their category, in their sector. In other words it is the organization of those interests through which workers are isolated, divided, and kept as slaves. But workers in Italy today are demanding a new organization, a general and political organization which will link every aspect of social life.

# AN INTERVIEW

Three workers from FIAT Mirafiori describe the experiences of the Southern immigrant coming to work in the industrial cities of the North. The conversation was recorded in Turin during December 1970.

Q. It was only after the summer of 1969 that people in Britain began to hear of the struggles at FIAT. Was there a tradition of struggle before the middle of 1969, or were these clashes the beginning of the revolutionary movement of FIAT?

LUIGI. You mean was it that they broke the lethargy of the last 20 years here? Yes, it was. Of course, there were struggles before this time, but all were dominated by the unions. And they were struggles that came around at fixed intervals when the unions set them. So every two or three years, when the contracts were about to expire, we would have the classic sort of struggle — you know, two or three days of strikes, all kept within union channels, and then the boss's repression would begin all over again. And the little politicization achieved through those two or three days would be blocked for the next three years of boss's rule.

But then, in about 1966, the immigrants from the South began to arrive. And the whole social situation in Turin blew up, what with the shortage of housing, lightning price increases, building speculation, and so on. All of a sudden there were 15,000 to 20,000 people arriving in the city, and quite apart from the way the prices rocketed, there were not the facilities to cope with them.

Q. When did the three of you arrive in FIAT?

LUIGI. These two are young. For my part, I've been at FIAT for twenty years. This lot are the new generation, who've broken with everything that we've become used to.

TONI. I've been here for two years. I joined FIAT right at the time that the struggles started.

Q. When you two arrived in Turin, what was it like for you?

NINO. I've been here for a couple of years now. For most of the time I've worked in small places — you know, sweatshops — always inside Turin. And then I was taken on at FIAT. In the beginning I didn't know anything about anything. But the political work there was already well under way, and there were students doing leafleting at the factory, explaining a few things to people, like what the union was all about.

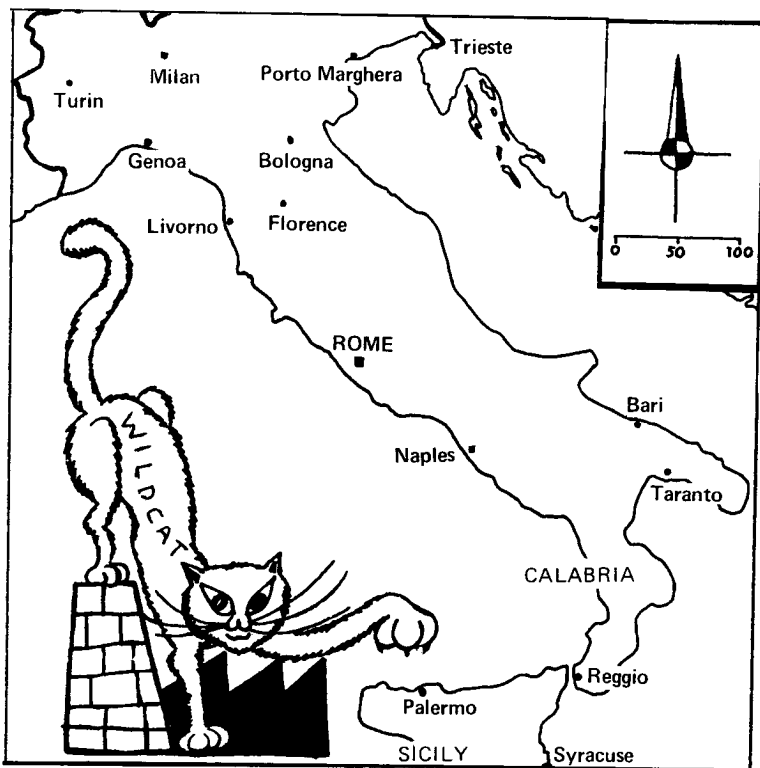
Then we had that whole big explosion during 1969. Everything went up. Boom!

TONI. I'd never seen anything like this in all my life. Because, as you know, I come from Calabria, and my town's a pretty small place. It's ruled by God, you might say: Three or four priests, who were all a bunch of shits, brought us up to be boy scouts and the like, and told us all about what they thought democracy was. Then there were the four or five Communists and the seven or eight fascists, and that's it. Really Calabria is still a region that's in the hands of the counts and barons that ran the place in the time of Mussolini, and who did very well out of him, what with their power, their villas, and so on. That's the way Calabria is.

Anyway, down there, even if I only had 50 lire I could always buy myself a cheese roll or something. But I come up to Turin and fuck it: I find I'm paying out 200! It was all crazy to me. Then I began to pick up on the politics that Lotta Continua were into. At first, you know, I really didn't understand too much. I used to read their leaflets, but only in a sort of informative way, so as to know what they were saying.

One day one of the student comrades from Lotta Continua hunted me out and began talking to me. He really attacked me because I was still in the union. Before I worked at FIAT I'd worked for a few months at other little factories, and all that I'd heard was that the unions were there to defend the workers. Of course, down in Calabria we don't even know what a union is; people don't know that they exist! But gradually I began to understand what they really are. There are so many things I've learned that I didn't know before, and I hope to be able to pass them on to all my workmates in the factory, and help them understand for themselves what I've learned....

At the beginning, when we were few, we started our struggles going round the factory in huge processions that you would think were never going to end. We used to call them "Snakes". One time there were three hours of official union strike called. This was about the time that all the big strikes were happening, in Autumn 1969. A few of us got together with other militants and asked ourselves what we were going to do. We decided that the best thing would be to have a Snake — a big march round the factory, pulling out everyone we could. So there we were, with the three-hour union strike, and the two of us got together with five or six other comrades and contacted a few people from Lotta Continua. Then we set off; just the seven of us. And by the time we got to the head offices where all the staff hang out, there were about seven thousand of us! Bloody beautiful it was. The staff were all looking out of the windows, and saw us down below. They didn't know what to do. And the few guards on the doors were terrified, Beautiful! Now when the next lot of contracts comes along...well...this year we started with seven of us and ended up with seven thousand. Next time we'll



start with seven thousand and end up with seventy thousand, and that'll be the end of FIAT. Goodbye, Agnelli!

There's another time that I remember was really fine. We'd been in and out on strikes for a couple of days, and then we were having one of those marches inside the factory. And people started saying: "Let's kick out the supervisors. They've been around giving orders for about a hundred years now, and we've had enough!" So we went down and started routing them out. People were looking at them, jeering, spitting on them, and they looked back as if they wanted to kill us, but there wasn't a thing they could do. They just didn't know what was happening. There's them who've worked their arses off to become supervisors, and there we were treating them like shit.

LUIGI. It was these young people who began the fight, spontaneously. And we, logically, found that this was a sort of alternative to the usual union struggles. An alternative which went along with the contacts growing at the same time with the students. As you know, from 1967 the university movement joined up with the struggles of the workers.



Q. What has been the relationship between the revolutionary workers and the militants from the student movement?

LUIGI. It's been a sort of team effort really. Them outside, and us inside. At the start we would work on all the antagonisms inside the factory, using them as a lever. For example, say FIAT hadn't provided some work clothes. We would kick up a fuss, and the students would support us from the outside with loud-hailers, gate meetings, leaflets, big posters, and so on.

Usually what we do is find out the facts of the situation, write them out in rough form, and give them to the external militants to print, because they're good at that sort of thing — and they have more time than we do to work right through the night. We hope that later on we shall begin to do the leaflets ourselves, and already we are starting to do more of the work — like typing and so on, as well as some of the distribution outside the gates.

Once upon a time it was the ex-students that held the leading role in Lotta Continua, and we were the ones that carried out programmes. Now we are beginning to take the leadership. There's a bit of confusion about this at the present, as to whether we should have the leadership of the organization, because they still control a lot of the apparatus, like the national newspaper, the duplicators, poster printing facilities, and so on. However I'd say that by now there's really joint leadership.

Q. So you can really say that the new wave of struggle arrived with the immigrants and the students?

LUIGI. Yes. Italian students understood very early on, first with the Movimento Studentesco (Student Movement), and then with the ultra-left groups, that the only way they could expect to have any life at all was by allying themselves with the struggles of the workers. So that was really how it all started. Apart from very early factory leafleting in isolated areas, like Pisa from 1964, it was in 1967 that the really massive work began in front of the factory gates. And this was exactly when all the new workers began to be signed on, all the workers from the South, cut off from their own roots, who had burned their bridges behind them and come here to Turin to find themselves without houses fit to live in, with sky-high prices and so on. Add to that the students outside, who were focusing on these problems, pushing them toward eruption, and of course everything exploded. But it exploded in ways that were sometimes very disorganized, very unconnected, sometimes a real mess.

Now the spontaneous struggles are over. I'm convinced of it. Now, when the struggles start again, they're going to have to be struggles for organization. Last year we were fighting seven or eight at a time, limited to single shops, all of us at Mirafiori, linked through Lotta Continua because we'd had enough of the unions. But now we're moving

# LA CRISI DEI PADRONI



**E' UNA VITTORIA  
DEGLI OPERAI !**

toward a situation in which we'll have the factory co-ordinated shop by shop. When we decide at a certain point to launch a strike, we'll start with an assembly in one shop, say Shop 55. Then we'll begin the roundup, setting off in a Snake toward, say, the Varnish Shop. Before we used to waste two or three hours getting everyone together. And by that time, as we were going round collecting the comrades, the anger would somehow melt away. To co-ordinate the struggle inside the factory means that when we decide on a Snake, it no longer takes half an hour to get it moving. Every group, every shop moves together. And when we start, we can come to a certain point where we can decide on what objective we are going to be heading for. We can decide to leave the factory grounds and tie up with other area factories, radicalizing the struggle outside the factory so as to involve other places.

Q. What has been the role of the unions during these struggles?

LUIGI. The unions are there to make sure that workers are kept inside the system, and have less possibility of beginning to challenge it. The unions are the political extensions of the sicknesses that exist inside the government; the "long arm inside the factories" of political parties. Every group, every political party has a little hand inside the factory. The Christian Democrats have CISL, the Communists have the CGIL, SIDA are the Fascists, UIL is the Social Democrats, even some Republicans... every one of them has a certain presence inside the factory to control the situation.

Now a lot of workers understand this. However they don't as yet have an alternative. Inside FIAT the unions don't count for anything, and everyone's well aware of where they stand. But at the moment they are the only organization with a voice, they are the only ones that can say anything when it comes to dealing with management. So what's really necessary at the moment is that we begin to create inside the factory agitational nuclei, or revolutionary committees, that are so strong and so well-rooted among the workers that they are an alternative to the internal commissions and the delegates that the unions have set up. Thus we can begin to create a point of reference in the factory to which the less politicized workers can look, so that they can escape from the control of the unions, can talk together, and can politicize themselves further. That is exactly what we're engaged in at the moment: to form nuclei, to come to some agreement among ourselves, to study and understand the situation, and to provide inside the factory a focal point. These agitational nuclei are composed of normal workers inside the factory, but the best of them — the activists. It must be said that these nuclei are being formed not only from members of Lotta Continua, but also from workers who are not members but who have understood this need and who come along with us because of that.

Q. What are your aims with these agitational nuclei inside of the factories?

LUIGI. With the nuclei, and with the revolutionary committees if we manage to create them, we are trying, not to be another union, but to provide a political, revolutionary perspective for the workers. We must not fall into economism, into parochialism. We must not say "Look, we must fight for five lire more, or for ten lire more, or to work one or two hours less." We are fighting — and of course we are not going to achieve it tomorrow — for power, because the working class without power isn't worth a thing. Of course we won't dissociate ourselves from the economic struggles, because for most workers the economic struggles are the beginning. However, the economic struggles must go hand in hand with a revolutionary development of understanding, of politicization, of awareness on the part of the mass of workers. Only thus can we hope for the taking of power, because that's what we're aiming at. The point is to take the factory, because it's the factory that creates value, and it's us that should have it, and not them.



THE REVOLUTION WORKS METHUENICALLY (Karl Marx)

I have been in this factory for twenty years now, and I've seen people make so many mistakes. All the time fighting for handfuls of rice, you know. And it's never done us a scrap of good. But now they are starting to understand that it's no good fighting for scraps, that the struggle now is to have everything. In the factory either you have everything or you have nothing. There can't be any half measures.