

## **ITALY: ANARCHIST EXPERIENCE AGAINST HEGEMONY**

### **LIVING THROUGH REVOLUTIONARY TIMES**

In the last years of his life my dad spoke frequently of his war experiences in Italy in 1943 to 1946. One of these stories at the battle of Cassino, crossing the river Rapido in May 1944, became a theme in *Crossing the River of Fire*. In those three years my dad had lived through an incipient but ultimately frustrated Italian revolution. On his first leave in Italy he went to Naples in early 1944 and always remembered this 'third world' city of slums (1). As a non-smoker he remembered Naples because he had ample supplies of one of the main currencies of war torn Italy - tobacco. But what remained with him, so much so that he wanted his funeral to be dominated by its music was the moving experience of going to the opera. Did the Naples opera speak to him somehow of that other workers subordinate culture that he had also known and left behind in Manchester?

As I write the last historical chapter of this second book, it is dominated by the political lessons from the Italian experience of the counter revolutionary twentieth century. When my son and I returned with him to Cassino 50 years later, we were not to know that my son's return to play football for a Manchester United anti racist team in Genoa was to pre date by a few weeks the Genoa G20 of 2001, which marked the renaissance of a part Italian inspired series of global anarchist protests. My son had been impressed by the anarchist collectives he had seen in Northern Italy, and especially Genoa, which had been at the heart of the protests and where one of the young Italians was killed by the police. It started him on a road that has led to a study of the community councils of Chavez' revolutionary Venezuela.

The Italian anarchists set in the context of Italian history are the major theme of this chapter. Like the Spanish anarchists they are not doomed for ever just to history books because their actions and critique – if not their tendency to insurrection - has more resonance today – not less. The reason that an Englishmen like me has pursued this Mediterranean theme is because there is more to the global case for an anarchist future than just history and or Spain and Italy. The role of Anarchist protest in Genoa in 2001 was to show the birth pangs of the possibility for building on the participative democracy we all need globally. This will have to be built on popular protest against the domination of ordinary people by Empire.

Like the Spanish peasantry, the history of the common people of Italy is of poverty cheek by jowl with wealth, repression fighting incipient democracy and up-risings against establishment power. Given their history, the Italian people have no reason to trust the powers that be. Negri's work on Empire is a remainder of the autonomist Marxist and revolutionary communist tradition of Italy that links further back to the Italian anarchist heritage. The anarchist critique and experience of the State – and against the Italian State in particular - is important again. As Italian and Global capital are now further developed than in 1878 or in 1945 the anarchist critique and experience needs to be harnessed again in the struggle against the Empire of Global Capital.

## **ANARCHIST ROOTS: RESISTING THE IMPOSITION OF ORDER**

As the Roman Empire went into decline, it was as if the surrounding new great powers implicitly knew that they must not let a new united Italian State rise from its ashes. A consistent theme of Italian history is the need to impose order; the dialectical other side is thereby of a localism that looks to resist or subvert in the name of autonomy and democracy. The conquerors of the old Roman Empire needed to impose 'order' on an unwilling people that they did not seek. The practice of anarchism - the resistance to frequently alien rule or that of their own wealthy elite - means that Italian history has much to offer to the experience of any new global potential for the liberation of Negri's 'multitude'. Martines' description of one poor Pope in 1121 sent through the streets of Rome on a camel backwards as a symbol of 'authority laid low' is also an apt symbol continued in today's anarchist clowns, making fun of the pompous vacuum of G8 Summits and of its 'border' guards, enforcing controls on people that are rarely imposed on the global free movement of Capital. It is allowed to move, we are not (2).

Since most of Southern Italy had been ruled by the Habsburgs Spain from the sixteenth century – it is no wonder that their aristocratic, church beholden social structures shared common features and a common anarchist tradition of alternative protest with Spain. The similar historical experience of both Italian and Spanish anarchists stemmed thereby from conquest. In the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, the Marches and Romagna there was either direct invasion and the subjugation of the common people or the subversion of local cities by imperial and or papal collusion. The danger of much analysis of the anarchist movements is to see only the ideas of its leading intellectuals whether Bakunin (in Naples 1865-7) or home grown like Labriola. The anarchist tradition had deep roots in Italy, especially from the sheer intensity of Southern and Sicilian peasant risings. The long lasting and murderous repressions that followed gave the appearance of a dormant peasant mass that was more the result of subjection than apathy. It cannot be a coincidence then that anarchism arose most virulently in the modern era when a new landed capitalism began to destroy indigenous peasant agriculture and where resistance to landlord power began intermingled with a regional or nationalist opposition.

In the more advanced sectors of the economy like Bologna the anarchist movement was also linked to early trade unionism. Although the anarchist socialist tendencies were a vital influence on the early Italian Socialist (PSI) and Communist Party (PCI) from 1870-1922, the fascist take-over nearly destroyed all such revolutionary movements until 1943. When the PCI re-emerged, the deal done with the ruling establishment in the Cold War played down the anarchist tendencies implicit in the Partisans in favour of the social democratic reformism of a renewed Italian parliamentary cretinism. What then emerged in the Italian left opposition to the PCI from the mid 60s was of an autonomous Marxist and independent workers movement that drew again on the libertarian movements symbolized by the take over of Fiat in Turin in 1920. The early assumption that the PSI and later the PCI could simply take it over the State's hegemony for the socialist cause is easier to see through now, but if the likes of Gramsci had learnt more from the anarchists maybe he could have seen its inadequacies in 1920-22 rather better.

## **GRAMSCI'S HEGEMONY AND TWENTY FIRST CENTURY ITALY**

The concept of hegemony, central to Gramsci's analysis of Italy also has old roots. For Gramsci the alliance between Northern industrialists from the Genoa-Milan-Turin triangle and Southern landowners lay at the heart of Italian unification and the Risorgimento, eventually completed for the first modern Italian State of 1871. Clark begins his explanation of the problems of modern Italy with the concept of its 'weak' State (ironically in 1984). Ginsborg (3) too accepted this form of analysis in 1990, while Sassoon in 1997 speaks of a governing party (the Christian Democrats, as they were) which no longer knew how to rule, as against an opposition (the re-named Communists) which had never governed (4). Clark argues that 'legal' Italy had failed to win the people's support. The Italian State precisely lacked Gramsci's hegemony and this stemmed right from the beginning of the 'Liberal regime' of 1871. As a consequence, the 'Liberal' state, as often too in Latin America needed very little push for the Fascists to seize power in 1922, as the masses enter the political stage. Clark sees the anti fascist resistance as the key to the success of the 'new democracy' (5). Duggan sees the major theme of modern Italy as 'nation building' - putting it on a par with today's Africa (6).

The problem with some of this analysis is that it confuses a relatively superficial outward reality - the fact that Italian governance has needed an ever changing constellation of coalitions for most of its 140 years - and its apparent anti fascist ideology - with its actual economic power. For what appears as a political log jam has had a remarkable economic ability in the last 50 years especially to deliver on behalf of the Italian ruling classes. The growing economic hegemony of Capital within Italy - as elsewhere - can obscure its nature through the appearance of political indecision. For as Ginsborg later argues, Italy even by 1990 had 'changed out of all recognition'. By then its GDP was equal to Britain's. With the increasing move to an urban and secular culture, the transformation of Italy in the last fifty years has meant that the issues faced by Mussolini or Gramsci now appear much more directly as a problem of Capital - and less and less as a problem of the old peasantry. The nature of Southern underdevelopment however remains.

Under the 'Socialist' Craxi in the 1980s and then under Berlusconi's Third Republic Italy finally succumbed to the rule of global Capital. The Italy of Genoa protests in 2001 could finally sustain the blatant rule by a capitalist - Berlusconi - with a subservient and explicitly capitalist party. Under Berlusconi yet again since 2008 Italy now has a ruler who embodies economic, political and cultural power all combined in his person. This is not a fascist dictator, who had in some way like Mussolini to incorporate the peasant masses, but this was a man who could still celebrate his triumph over any radical or popular forces. It may not have convinced the Italian lower classes but their discontent can be incorporated, channelled or deflected. It is this triumph of Capital over the people that has made the recourse to fascist solutions as yet unnecessary. As in Germany, where the defeat of the Prussian Junkers laid the foundation for a German bourgeois democracy, it is the economic triumph of Capital that has underlain the strength - not the weakness - of global capital in Italy.

## **PUTNAM AND MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK AGAIN**

It is perhaps not surprising that much present analysis of the 'disaffected' state of the Western democracies - and the need for so-called Social or even Religious/Faith Capital - to help re-create social cohesion (a nice way of saying order) - emanates from US analysts who seem to have little idea of the real economic Global Capital that might just be the driving force of the problems they identify. The importance in the Italian case is that Putnam's Bowling alone work in the USA first came out of his assessment of the difference in the 'civic traditions' roughly comparing the North and South of Italy. This means that Putnam's first analysis of 'Making Democracy Work' could still be a useful Bible for the Pentagon or the State Departments as they struggle to make Iraqi democracy work - a sort of post 2003 equivalent of post 1943 Italy.

Putnam actually writes a useful history of Sicily in particular. His problem is more subtly ideological. Besides his complete misuse of the term Social Capital, his is an elite history written for the elite to learn how the elite can make us perform better as they go about managing our Economic (implied) and Social Capital. Putnam is good at showing how the ruling elite manages - or in the Southern case, manages without - a 'civic tradition'. Crucially, it misses the whole dimension of the real participation of the people in the 'democratic' exercise - except in a way that Putnam ignores till after 1970, when the new Regional Governments for Italy were announced (7). From 1282 when some of the first up-risings - the Sicilian Vespers - against the feudal nobility and clergy are recorded in the 'modern' era in Sicily, through the 1647 and 1707 Revolts (8), the 1820-1 'Constitutional Revolution' and the 1848 Revolutions (9) - the first of which across Europe was in Palermo in Sicily - are all omitted from Putnam's account. There is a huge blind spot to the actual participation of the Sicilian people in their own history, which before 1913 at least - and the modern franchise - could not by its very nature be what Putnam describes as 'democratic'. The attempt to create real Social rule - from below - (which is why the term Social Capital is a deception) is not an exercise that Putnam has here engaged with.

In the seventh century, Italy was divided between Lombard rule in the North and Byzantine rule in the South. The influences on the South were diverse from the old Greek civilisation to more recent Islamic settlement. In the North, Lombardy was further linked by Charlemagne's conquest of the ninth century to the Holy Roman Empire and the trade routes through Germany into Flanders and the Netherlands (10). By the eleventh century, the Normans had conquered Sicily and vast swathes of Southern Italy. It would be tempting historically to put the infamous Italian 'Southern Question' down to Byzantine bureaucracy, which might still describe the South until late in the twentieth century, and/or the feudal Norman conquests. But despite an equally savage Norman invasion in the North of England, this 'feudal' society generated eventually a vibrant capitalism while for all its size and wealth the 'Two Kingdoms' of Naples and Sicily did not (11). As late as 1860, when it suited Metternich's Habsburg Empire for Italy to remain as nothing more than a 'geographical expression' as disunited as it had been since Roman times. As late as the 1920s Gramsci could describe Italy as a 'rhetorical expression'.

## **THE 'SOUTHERN QUESTION', THE STATE AND THE ANARCHISTS**

Putnam was right on one thing in Italy. There is a Southern question and it does relate to civil society. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 had demanded universal male suffrage; the modern Italian Republic entered the world with a franchise for only 2 per cent of the population. Italian politics were about the hegemony of a tiny elite and exclusion for the masses. No wonder that the Italian people hardly saw the State as their own (12).

The creation of a centralised Italian State after 1860 was opposed in the South 'tooth and nail'. As in the creation of the Second Republic in 1943-5, 'unification' came on top of a civil war. As Piedmont's troops advanced into Naples all peasants carrying arms were shot. Naples' Camorra – equivalent to the Mafia – began. Peasants who had initially supported Garibaldi were shot or burned in their own homes when they wanted to keep the land or sought to evade conscription. The 'unification of Italy was more civil war than liberation' and in 1945 it was imposed again by the imperial power of others. This was the base and political reality that helped make Italian anarchism - and lay the roots for today's opponents to Global Capital.

For Gramsci, a Sardinian from relatively poor but educated urban clerical workers, the problem of modernising Italy dominated his concern about any possible transition to socialism. His main concern was the potential nature of any alliance between the 'South' - largely a peasantry - and the North, by 1914-22 largely a proletariat, even if divided between the extremes of the landless day labourers of the Po Valley and the car workers of Turin. Gramsci was especially mindful of the way Sardinian peasants in arms had been used as a counter revolutionary force against working class trouble in Turin in August 1917.

Gramsci gives a top down analysis of Southern and Sicilian landlords but little of the detailed history and nature of peasant movements in Sicily. There was then a strong Marxist tradition of seeing the peasants as an easily manipulated counter revolutionary mass. After repression, the leadership of the 'South' came via landlord interests to which both the small rural Southern bourgeois, the professional middle class and the urban poor were often tied by patronage and clientelism. In the nineteenth century, the dependent peasantry did not provide the base for a rural anarchism - akin to that of Andalusia - so that the revolutionary anarchists were much more an urban movement in Italy.

Gramsci's critique of his contemporary Italian anarchists - some of whom in Turin he knew well - seems to be tactically loaded with sectarian in-fighting. His criticism of anarchism's insurrectionary and over optimistic tendencies is a critique that the anarchists could just as easily throw back at the communists. His advice to the anarchists on intellectual freedom is a remainder of the intellectual snobbery of the educated Croce-influenced middle class, that had dominated the leadership of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Nor does Gramsci consider that the working class anarchist's wariness of the Italian Liberal State might well be justified and that the Communists might learn something from it (13).

## REVOLUTION AND REPRESSION

The immense wealth of the City States always made them attractive to attempts at foreign conquest and or to control by powerful internal elites. By 1300 Italy had 23 cities with populations of more than 20,000; there was only one in England. After the French invasion of 1494, which some have marked as the start of the modern era (14), Italy had again been divided between the Imperial powers. Whereas in Spain, Napoleon's invasion had led to guerilla war, in Italy used to a low intensity Civil War, it led to a more conspiratorial response in a more efficiently repressive society. The British had encouraged the brigands to fight against the French in Naples. A secret society - known as the Carbonari - had come into existence as early as 1808. It continued against the Bourbon dictatorship. Led often by the agrarian bourgeois looking for constitutional reform and lower taxes, it had a substantial following in the Cities with 30,000 members in Naples who found Jacobin ideas appealing. When the Spanish rose up for the liberal Constitution in 1820 in both Naples and Palermo up-risings looked for the implementation of promises betrayed after Napoleon's defeat. Austrian troops were used to subjugate the poorly armed Carbonari in Naples; they moved onto Palermo's 'savage resistance'.

The series of 1848 European wide 'revolutions' began in Palermo in January. A franchise for all literate males was the demand. There was street fighting and 150,000 Swiss mercenaries sat in Naples. The Habsburg Army shelled Palermo. In Calabria guerrilla fighting went on for 2 months. In 1820 the fighting in the South had not found a sympathetic cord in the North. In 1848 it did for Milan and Venice were trying to rid themselves of Habsburg rule. They did succeed in getting rid of Metternich. The rising in Milan began with a tobacco boycott. Opium and tobacco - and the huge revenues attached - seem to have had the same role in creating low intensity disorder as opium and cocaine today. Rural discontent was enhanced by the Austrians use of conscription and their troops stayed in Turin until 1855. Milan's 'Five Days' of street fighting became a rallying call (15).

After a revolt in Genoa in 1857 and a further rising against the nobility in Tuscany and across Romagna, it was clear that the peasantry and cities were turning against their masters. They were to find their desires subverted by the Empire of Capital. In 1748, Italy still had 11 independent States; in 1859 it had seven. The British Empire could perhaps have annexed Lombardy and Sicily but holding down rebellious territory was not in its European plan. Piedmont - the most feudal of the territorial States - became the base for the unification of Italy. Piedmont's military spending in the eighteenth century was second only to Prussia and it fulfilled a similar historic task for Italy as Prussia had done for Germany. Under Cavour, Piedmont had tried to intervene against the Habsburgs but the peasants of Lombardy and Veneto did not welcome Piedmont landlords. When Piedmont adopted free trade British and French Capital's control of Italian capitalist development was all the more viable. A new North of Piedmont, Lombardy and Liguria increased trade three fold in 1850-9 (16).

## **CAPITALIST EXPANSION AGAINST THE BRIGANDS**

In the 1860s a Piedmont extension to the Centre and South as a 'modernisation' and under the cover of Italian nationalism was even better for capitalist expansion. Garibaldi's success in over-throwing the Bourbons in Sicily by 1862 – the thousand redshirts –linked to a peasant up-rising against hated landlords and the middle class wish for more local government. Garibaldi's march on Rome in 1867 had been halted by French troops. When they pulled out in 1870, the old imperial capital at Rome was re-created and the Risorgimento was complete. The greatest beneficiaries of this new Italy – that is the landlords and the new capitalist bourgeois still refused to pay for it. The normal Italian rule followed that of the feudal state (and increasingly like today's global capital) – those who owned most, paid least tax. The new State's fiscal deficit after the unification wars rose to 60 per cent of expenditure by 1866.

For Sicily and the South Italian unification felt like a Piedmont conquest. In 1861, the old Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was still the largest absorbed state in the new 25 million strong Italy, with a population of 9 million versus Piedmont's 3.6m and Lombardy's 3.3m. Southern poverty by the 1860s was not just a function of age old exploitation and low productivity and technology. The Southern peasant was to suffer from conscription and increased taxes of 40 to 50 per cent by 1865 to what appeared as a 'foreign' state. Tax was re-imposed on both grinding wheat and corn – the staple diet. Peasant struggles against the new State - the 'brigands war' - was severe enough to ensure that 90,000 troops stayed in Sicily. When troops were withdrawn in 1866 to fight further North, Palermo was taken over by 40,000 peasants. Riots in 1869 against the taxes turned into a full insurrection. The town was bombed by the navy and ruled by martial law and summary executions. The Southern peasants became the 'sullen host to new masters from Turin'.

The Conquest of the South by Piedmont was best symbolised by the imposition of free trade. Naples was still comfortably the largest city in Italy and in 1857 it was still producing almost half as much cotton as Lombardy. Its rail system however was a fifth the size of Lombardy and its illiteracy was 87 per cent compared to 54 per cent. Yet on the Risorgimento almost overnight Naples textiles and engineering factories closed down and many small artisans were driven into the lumpen proletariat. In the end by shooting the peasants who had initially supported his invasion, Garibaldi (however much he later became a hero of the people against the politicians) had chosen against aristocratic Naples rule and in favour of Piedmont's incipient capitalism (17). The changes of rule were made with no reference to the Italian people in the South.

## **NORTHERN REVOLT AND RED ROMAGNA**

Alongside the conquest of the South, the working classes in the North also needed to be subjugated on behalf of capitalist modernisation. Italian industry was about textiles – especially silk and cotton. By 1860 rural silk mills employed up to 150,000 and brought in 50 per cent of foreign exchange. Italy had a third of the world market for silk. By 1873 after two years of bad harvest, high bread prices and in some places famine, major general city strikes – a precursor for the working class struggles to come – broke out in the Northern cities. General strikes lasted in Milan for 3 days, in Verona for 5 days and in Turin for 9 days.

The other power base of this early movement, celebrated in the Don Camillo stories, was amongst the landless agricultural labourers of the River Po. Even in the North 60 per cent of the population still earned their living from the land in 1871. The Northern plains supply to the cities provided the capitalist market enclave of the Italian rural sector before 1914. Elsewhere sharecroppers were granted a short term land lease of land in exchange for a 50 per share of the crop. Such peasants were usually in (the landlord's) debt. Male workers especially emigrated seasonally or forever to Argentina, the USA or cities.

The agricultural depression of the 1870s caused severe hardship. Protection pushed more areas into dependence on one crop – usually wheat – but declining rural incomes continued until 1914 while land prices halved in 1877-82. The migration of 6 million Italians in 1875-1914 meant that a balance of trade deficit was balanced by their remittances.

Increasing proletarianisation and poverty became the basis for a rural anarchism and radicalism in parts of the North especially which although defeated and subsumed has influenced the spirit of the Italian working class and peasant movements ever since.

Rule by the Habsburgs and the Papal States from the sixteenth century had left the land of Emilia Romagna owned by a landlord oligarchy with a large number of landless labourers – braccianti - who resented their subjugation. It became known as the ‘Sicily of the North’ (18). With the traditions of an old Etruscan city – Bologna has the oldest university in the world founded in 1088 - provincial autonomy, as in Andalusia, also played into the radical resistance. With his global authority based on clerical power, the Pope was hardly likely to allow lay authority in his own Papal State around Rome, nor in the surrounding territories in which he had so much influence. This often also meant protest in Emilia Romagna was anti clerical and atheist.



## THE ANARCHIST IWMA AS A MASS PARTY

When Piedmont's take over of Emilia Romagna had clearly provided no change by the late 1860s the anger of the landless re-emerged violently. Protests against the grain tax were repeated all over Italy – with over 250 killed - but were severe in Romagna. After a two day general strike in 1868, Bologna developed the first recorded ‘Fascio Operaio’ – fascio simply meant group or union. The Operaio were workers groups with an activist membership of 500 by the end of 1871.

Two of the major anarchist leaders of the late nineteenth century came from Emilia Romagna – Andrea Costa (who had attended Bologna University) and Amilcare Cipriani from Rimini. The anarchists had cells in most of Romagna's other cities - Ferrara, Ravenna and Forli. By 1914 after a new universal franchise in '13, there was a Socialist administration already in charge of Bologna. Benito Mussolini, was also from this area (19). An important inspiration to these young radicals was the Paris Commune and Marx's theoretical defence of it. Another future leader - Errico Malateste based in Naples had joined Marx's International Working Men's Association (IWMA) aged 18 as a result in 1871. As Costa put it: ‘before the Paris Commune, the International did not exist in Italy’. Costa could speak like a Biblical prophet – ‘woe to you, victors, exploiters’; ‘We have neither a penny nor a name. They imprison us, they exile us, they shoot us, they slander us’ . . .we want the abolition of the State. . .armies, banks and cults’. In language akin to Jesus in Mark 13 he concluded: ‘If we can manage that not one stone will remain above another’ (20).

Engels had objected to the Italian emphasis on the State as their enemies rather than Capital. But in the Italy of 1874-82 there was little modern Capital. The anarchists appealed to peasant and commune autonomy from an Absolutist State – and the so called Italian Liberal State was usually a veneer onto this authoritarian tradition. The anarchist critique and tradition therefore surfaced afresh in a different form in the ‘socialist’ struggles to come. Too much of the analysis on the Italian anarchists has likewise focused on Bakunin's time in Italy and his fall outs with Marx. Bakunin had arrived in Florence in 1864 and moved to Sorrento in 1865. He was certainly an inspiration to the young Italian radicals, but it also vital to stress the political economy and culture that gave the Italian anarchists a base.

Engels may have been reluctant to accept it, but the Italian anarchists were the first modern mass Italian political party. By 1874 the ‘Bakunist’ Italian wing of the IWMA had 32,000 members – in traditional centres of protest – 8000 in Tuscany, 6000 in Emilia Romagna (with 40 per cent of all branches), 4000 in Naples, and another 4000 in Sicily. The more developed industrial Piedmont and Lombardy, where Engels hoped to recruit, had only 2000 members each. Engels could fume about the déclassé intellectuals in the Italian IWMA, but the rank and file had the typical occupations – from bakers to waiters - of the largely non industrial working classes (21).

## **TRASFORMISMO: THE ITALIAN 'LIBERAL' STATE**

With the masses off the political stage until the twentieth century and the radical rejection of the legal Italy of State power, the Italian State used techniques eventually borrowed by the so called left in the British Labour Party. These lessons were first learnt by the Italian Liberal State after 1876 and partly helped the fascist take over in 1922. Italy's rulers have often appeared to come from the 'left' but have usually operated on behalf of the Establishment. The classic exponents in Italy – which reached new propaganda heights in the ex-socialist Mussolini were the early Italian Prime Ministers of 'Liberal' Italy – Agostino Depretis roughly from 1878-87 and Francesco Crispi from 1887-96. Giovanni Giolitti, five times Italian Prime Minister from 1892-1921 – the old fox - continued the theme. It is worth noting that the first Italian leader not to borrow from the left (for even the Christian Democrats borrowed elements after 1945) but to be explicitly against the Corporate State has been Silvio Berlusconi. This is a sign of the relative maturity and success of Capitalism in Italy by the 1990s and its ability to incorporate the Italian masses in a new globalisation model.

With Depretis the acknowledgement is given for the Italian creation of 'Trasformiso' – akin to Spain and Latin America's all too frequent 'turnismo'. Depretis came to power when the violent re-conquest of the South had been completed. Then repression on the one hand in times of trouble – as in 1878, 1882-6, 1891 and 1894-8 – accompanied subversion and/or patronage on the other to maintain power for the small Italian political elite. It also came as the twentieth century Italian model of corporate State sponsored capitalism was unfolding. Helping to produce this new politics, came a new industrial expansion after 1880; almost entirely in the North. Industrial output rose by a third from 1876-1900, and then doubled again to 1913, aided by State subsidies for steel and shipbuilding from 1885 – a policy repeated by Mussolini in the 1920s (22).

Depretis, as a Lombardian from the left, who had nevertheless served Garibaldi in Sicily, seemed an excellent representative of the new breed, promising a wider franchise. Crispi had also fought with Garibaldi and was seen as 'extreme left' – that is on the republican radical end of the mainstream elite. Both chose to rule as their own Interior Minister as well as being Prime Minister. This stemmed from the need to repress the 'other' politically not represented Italy, whose recourse was to violent riot or insurrection. Depretis first put 'Trasformiso' together in 1882 – combining the two 'Liberal and Conservative parties' into effectively two factions of the ruling elite. His rule became a by-word for what Seton Watson calls the Italian Walpole – cynical, manipulative and full of intrigue (23).

## THE ANARCHIST SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES

After two failed up-risings in Imola and Bologna in 1874, anarchist hopes moved back to the revolutionary potential of the South's landless peasantry. Another came to nought in 1878 near Naples. Costa in exile argued that conspiratorial up-risings cut the anarchist movement off from the people. In 'Friends of Romagna' in 1879 he called for a renewal of Italian socialism and for anarchists to immerse themselves in the people's economic and moral conditions. This call holds true for today – globally. Costa's argument also stemmed from his arrest when in France, being caught in the counter revolution after the Paris Commune. In France it was clear – even in 1878 not 1968 - that the bourgeois were already too powerful to be overthrown by an insurrection. Garibaldi's tradition of the heroic thousand taking on the might of Southern Italian Absolutism still dominated the Italian revolutionary tradition – it still did for Mussolini with his March on Rome in 1922. What it overlooked was that the Sicilian success built on a discontented local nobility and a restive middle class as well as a restless poor. As Costa argued, no ruling class voluntarily surrenders. In the Italy of 1880 the Italian Liberal State was not going to be overthrown easily and it took a World War to fatally undermine it. From 1876 Costa, Carlo Cafiero and Malatesta had spoken of Anarchist Communism well before the CNT and FAI in Spain. As Malatesta put it 'we were Kropotkin-ists' before Kropotkin. Until then such anarchists did not use the term 'socialist' as much. Their understanding of anarchism subsumed the concept of socialism. Costa then worked for a party to include socialists of all colours united around a common short and long term programme. Costa opposed insurrectionism (as had Marx against Bakunin); he still regarded the anarchists as socialists, revolutionaries and a party of action.

Some anarchists argued that given the limited franchise before '82 – even that the franchise only expanded from 600,000 to 2 million - and the constant use of police powers against dissidents, the Italian State, as in Russia, gave no alternative but to conspiratorial ventures. The complex interlinks between radical republicanism, anarchism, socialism, nationalism and fascism stem from this era. The working out of such conflicting ideologies is reflected in Costa's 'defection' or 'svolta' – his 'conversion' to a more orthodox 'Marxism' – from 1879. Costa decided to participate in the 1882 elections and won a seat in Ravenna in the Romagna although he also ran in his home town of Imola. For Hostetter it turned Costa into the 'patron saint' of Italian socialism. By 1884 his Revolutionary Socialist Party of Romagna, founded three years earlier, had 4-5,000 members (24).

The continuing influence of anarchist action and thinking discredits the idea that the work of Italian anarchism had effectively ended after 1878. The anarchists are written off as 'irresponsible' 'extremists' throwing bombs or instigating riots (25). Costa still wanted an Italian revolutionary socialist party, but had avoided a trap that was to dominate the PSI - the extent of collaboration with 'bourgeois' parties, especially with those 'on the centre left'. This was the same dilemma that faced Gramsci after 1922, for Togliatti in 1945 and in the 'historic compromise' debates of the 1970s. It still runs for Prodi and leaders of the Italian 'left' today.

## **ANARCHIST REPRESSION – THE 1890s**

The emerging Italian corporate State capitalism of the early twentieth century gave rise to worker unrest in the Northern cities, on the land and from the Southern peasantry, especially in Sicily. The labour history of the era is symbolised by yet another Sicilian peasant rising in 1894 and the bloodiest General Strike to date in Milan in 1898. The anarchists in Rome played a leading part in 3 days of unemployed building workers riots in '88. This was the first major time revolutionary anarchists had led the unemployed – the only equivalent success for European revolutionaries being the Communist party in Germany in the late 1920s.

The Sicilian protests reflected the rise of organisations – the ‘fasci de lavoratori’ - after which the subsequent unrest has often been named. The first formally named fascio appears to have been founded in 1891 in Catania, the third town of Sicily on the West coast. Anarchists played an important start up role in Palermo but were expelled in '93, as they had been from Catania. In one area in the SE around Vittoria anarchists led. In May 1893 a Sicilian delegate conference adopted a socialist programme winning success in local elections. Demands included fair rents, increased wages, lower taxes and the redistribution of common land. After a peasant conference in Corleone in July 1893, strikes broke out across Western Sicily. By autumn 1893, in a sign of incipient revolution, peasants began to seize the land and burn the hated tax offices. The Sicilian ruling class panicked, being as usual ‘blindly repressive’ (26). 92 were killed in December when troops shot into a crowd. By January '94 martial law was imposed. Forty thousand troops were brought into Sicily and up to 2000 ‘troublemakers’ were deported. After 1894 the mass migration from Sicily began – the consequence of yet another military, political and economic defeat.

Although anarchists and socialists were important in the fasci, they were not usually the leaders or the dominant inspiration and were excluded if landowners or the middle classes took over. But they became excellent scapegoats, given the propaganda about the anarchist ‘terror’ campaign after 1878. It suited Crispi, himself a Sicilian, to blame everything on the ‘sinister forces’ of anarchism and socialism. In July '94 legislation was passed making it possible to imprison protestors by administrative procedure rather than by finding them guilty in a criminal court. The games being played by the present UK government to counter ‘terror’ and imprison without trial are nothing new. In 1894 Crispi cut the 1882 franchise to reduce the socialist vote; then the Socialist party was ‘dissolved’ and all its elected deputies arrested. For all the talk of the death of the anarchist movement after 1878, if anything it was to be more important in 1890 to 1914 (27).

## **THE PSI: BOURGEOIS INTELLECTUALS TAKE OVER**

When Lenin wrote of the 'bourgeois opportunists' who had taken over some Socialist parties he was probably thinking of the German SPD. Given the small numbers of the real owners and rulers of Italy there was also a possibility that a labour aristocracy of craft artisans and the growing but small industrial working class could be co-opted into the ruling coalition before 1914. The key founding Congress of the PSI was in 1892, after a basic agreement on what became known as the Genoa Programme. The foundations were also laid for the future problems that were to bedevil the Italian Socialist movement. The first was the exclusion of the anarchists while attempting to undermine the anarchist revolutionary tradition within the parliamentary party. Today's Negri's appeal to the global 'multitude' is an implicit rejoinder to this phase of Italian history and an appeal to this older revolutionary tradition, which the PCI often had also both neglected and marginalized.

The second problem was the domination of the leadership of the PSI and later the PCI by bourgeois intellectuals. Coming usually from the old political class this reinforced even within the left parties the division between the real Italy of the masses and the legal Italy of elite rule. The PSI was the classic ground for Michels' first classic study of the tendency of political parties to oligarchy. The PSI was nominally the polar opposite of the British Labour Party – by its apparent embrace of the 'Socialist' creed. The British Labour Party, built on Hardie's ILP and with its strong trade union role in the final incarnation had at its heart a refusal to make itself an explicit Socialist party in order to maximise possible support.

The vehement opposition of Filippo Turati, effectively the first leader of the PSI, to the anarchists – amounting to much of the party's self definition – meant that the early cordiality between the PSI and anarchists waned. The PSI became just another 'bourgeois' party (like New Labour) despite its 'socialist' name. What the PSI represented was the attempt to take over the old workers movement while excluding the anarchists on behalf of bourgeois opportunism. Turati was 'burying the workers party whilst it was still alive' (28). This was a parliamentary party that took cretinism to new heights in its elitist disdain for the trade union, syndicalist and labourist strains which had been contained and subsumed within the PSI. Yet the party had 21% of the vote in 1904 - when the British Labour party could only dream of such support.

Traditionally the opportunism of the reformists or the legalitarians has been set against the so called PSI 'maximalists' (like the old Labour left in Britain) who looked for a full 'socialist' programme in the shorter term. In Italy in 1914-22 this division had the important consequence of an almost complete divorce between the economic battle – in a myriad of General Strikes after 1900 ('04, '06, '09, '11 and '14) – and the political games being played as part of the Giolitti coalition. The PSI leadership, Fabian-like, preferred elite permeation and remained suspicious of any extra parliamentary movements (29).

## ANTI WAR PROTESTS AND RED WEEK IN ANCONA

Italian anarchists then took the lead in the greatest European anti war movements until 1914. Added to hunger, came anger over taxes imposed to pay for the 1896/7 Ethiopian war and the use of martial law. Crispi's government mindful of Sicily placed cannon in strategic places in Naples. The first major setting for worker discontent was in the Marches port city of Ancona. Malatesta had worked there since 1883 – and it had been the 'capital' of Italian anarchism from the late '80s. Malatesta spoke again in Ancona in the spring and summer of '97 and the next year a strike by the dockers, under anarchist leadership with the unemployed heavily involved led to attacks on government granaries. Two days of fighting followed ending with a military occupation and martial law. The biggest outbreak of fighting on the barricades – 3 days in May – then took place in Milan in 1898 and is still known as the May Days - Fatti de Maggio. The trouble was sparked over a memorial for the anniversary of 1848 and the closure of traditional places of protest. Up to 100 protestors were killed by troops who used artillery. The military, as before and since, was rolled out for internal repression after losing an external war.

For all its weaknesses, the PSI began to fill the radical electoral gap. The popularity of the 'centre left' had risen to 57 per cent in Emilia in the elections of 1904 and 1908 – with the socialists taking 40 per cent. In 1900-13 the region provided more PSI deputies than any other area. What Giolitti wanted was to pull in Turati's reformists, leaving a noisy but ineffective left. The wave of unrest that continued after 1911 thereby 'bypassed' the PSI. During the economic crisis of 1911-13, the creation of two union Confederations – the CGL of 1906 and the anarcho-syndicalist USI meant that employers' hostility to trade unions had become 'unrelenting'. Popular discontent benefited the CGL with its membership peaking at 384,000 in 1911. The Unione Sindacale Italiana, based largely on lower paid workers and in Emilia and in Liguria (around Genoa) rapidly reached 100,000 members (30).

After 1898 there was a particularly strong Italian anti imperial and anti militarist tradition in the socialist movement, as revealed again in 'Red Week' in June 1914. Anti War protests in Turin ended up in street battles during the General Election in 1913. The biggest national protest since 1898 began again in Ancona, against more recruitment for Italy's war in Libya. The movement had 20,000 members, with a strong anarchist influence – by far the largest anti military organization in the West. It also pursued militant direct action. Protestors led by the anarchists took over the town for 10 days and it took 10,000 troops to overwhelm them. Italy was back in the 'age of Bakunin'(31). Much of the trade union rank and file pressed for a General Strike and even the reformist CGL led it for 2 days in May 1915 – just before Italy entered the Great War (hoping to win Trieste and the Trentino) - inspired by those like Mussolini who had changed their minds. Here was an Italian peace movement forty years before CND in Britain. On the other hand, the war split the PSI. It was finally reflected too in the PSRI (the explicitly named Reformist Socialist Party) that hived off from the PSI and supported both the imperial ventures in Libya in 1911 and then against the Habsburg Empire in 1915 (32).

## **TURIN: THE ITALIAN PETROGRAD AND TWO RED YEARS**

By 1914, the dying Italian Liberal State has been increasingly unable to fulfill the needs of Italy's ruling classes. As with Spanish capitalism during the war, Italian manufacturing Capital began to dominate the economy in a way it never had before; this modernization again did not include the labour movement. By 1918 Italy had more artillery output than Britain; steel output had increased 50 per cent and much of the benefit went to a small number of leading firms – including Fiat and Pirelli. By 1918 Fiat had become the largest truck maker in Europe. The Italian corporate State advanced and grew larger with the war as the old 'liberal' political class could no longer roughshod over an increasingly divided country. As the cause of Italian Capital advanced, workers going hungry were well aware that huge profits were being made out of their suffering (33). The war had created a 'new Turin' and the number of industrial workers in doubled from 75,000 to 150,000. Protests broke out in Turin in May and August 1917 – with the slogans Petrograd like - for peace and bread. When troops intervened it led to 5 days of street fighting with 2 churches sacked. Up to 400 were killed and 800 socialists and anarchists arrested. Outside Russia it was the biggest anti war protest in Europe.

The unions also grew quickly and started to flex their new muscle. The CGL had grown to 1.25 million by October 1919 and 2 million by the autumn of 1920; while the USI numbered up to 500,000. The CGL campaigned for a 48 hour week from early 1919 and the FIOM won this for its metal- workers in March. The Turin workers came out to defend the Budapest Soviet. In June 1919, Gramsci published his first articles on workers soviets – on the factory councils. In August and September Fiat workers voted for elections to their own factory councils. In the anarchist tradition, they were not paid and not allowed to give up their factory job. Gramsci had been arguing that the new socialist State already potentially existed within the social life of the exploited working class. Legal Italy was increasingly represented through capitalist power that was mediated through financial and commercial power; the workers countervailing power against it was industrial.

The November '19 election showed to the old rulers that the Socialists had garnered more popular support in the Red Years of 1919-20. PSI deputies rose by over 100 to 156 with 1.84 million votes and a third of the deputies. In 1919 many of the strikes used the sit-in as a tactic; this came from the extensive lock outs of the period before 1914. In February 1920 repeat strikes in the shipyards of Liguria involved a 4 day occupation of the plants. This was then copied in Turin. The tactics of factory occupation taken by the FIOM metalworkers was not new; both Government and employers were ready for it. Troops had already been sent. The 'Great Piedmont Strike' of April 1920 shut everything in Turin. The workers gave in after 11 days when it became clear that Turin and Piedmont strike would not spread to the rest of Italy. This was still unusually long for a General Strike, which normally lasted a day. Williams calls it the 'most remarkable event in Italy's working class history'(34).

## **1920: THE WORKERS AND THE DEADWEIGHT OF THE PSI**

The confrontation between big Capital and big Labour went on to reach new heights in the rest of 1920. The immediate economic and political circumstances of the Turin workers' occupation and their relationship to the wider movements was symbolic of the issues of Italian socialism. Conventional industrialists would not supply the occupiers and it was difficult to keep production going even with parts and raw materials from other occupied factories. 100,000 FIOM workers in 185 Turin factories did not have wages for a month and it was difficult to obtain credit. The co-operatives stepped in but the workers could not use the scrip issue of factory co-ops for goods. In April, the economic situation meant that the Turin workers needed outside help; the political situation required it even more. No help came either from the PSI or CGL. The PSI regarded the strikers as hardly more than 'hooligans' while the trade union leaders had 'no stomach' for a confrontation with the Italian State.

In June the army mutinied in Ancona against an Albanian expedition. When workers occupied factories in Turin again on September for 4 weeks they were no longer so isolated. 400,000 workers were involved in Florence, Genoa, Naples, Palermo and Rome. But again there was no national co-ordination. Major industrialists had asked Giolitti either to re-occupy or to bomb their own factories. Then his strategy had been to surround them and starve them out. This time Giolitti pulled in the industrialists and trade unions and agreed with a deal for more pay, with paid overtime and holidays, which was presented to the workers in a referendum. It won narrowly – with the tiniest majority in Turin. With troops surrounding major factories with barbed wire, one worker eloquently explained the vote for the miserly deal: 'If we say yes, we move out of the factory, if we say no, they boot us out'. The final shout on departure was 'long live the Soviet'.

Within a year any gains from the new deal had been economically obliterated. Gramsci later complained, in true Leninist fashion, that the PSI was reformist to its core. The failure of the PSI to intervene on the workers' side was the key which fatally undermined the workers' case to the rest of Italy, especially with the peasants. When strikes in the Po Valley broke out in December 1920, the Turin workers had effectively been defeated. The PSI had become a deadweight sinking the workers movement. The trade unions were essentially defensive instruments which had been 'shackled and domesticated'. The CGL leadership feared, as Togliatti did 25 years later, both a civil war and a famine if they fully supported the strike. In 1914 industry still only accounted for 17 per cent of Piedmont's GDP, and although this had risen substantially by 1920, it still left the militant Italian factory workers as a small – if important – lake surrounded by a much larger less militant landmass. Unlike Russia there was no Lenin to stage a coup for the proletariat and hold it against all comers. The attempted Italian revolution had failed. What was lost in 1920 was crushed by 1925 with Gramsci in jail. Malatesta, who had been greeted with cheers when in Turin in 1920, back from yet another exile, argued that the Italian people would pay with 'tears of blood' for this defeat. They did (35).



## FROM ITALIAN LIBERALISM TO FASCIST CAPITALISM

The lost opportunity of the workers occupation movement set the scene for the industrialists fight back. The managers had to walk back into Fiat while the Red Flag flew and the drums played. Using a popular base amongst the smaller industrialists, a threatened peasantry who worried about their land being nationalised and heavily populated by middle class students and army officers being paid by the Government, a new fascist party backlash could be orchestrated. Cammett calls it a 'movement of armed reaction'. Snowden, 'the armed militia of monopoly capital' (36). It was Italy's version of the Freikorps. In the Italian case the socialists did not organise it – but an ex Socialist inherited. The big capitalists quietly pulled the Establishment strings to enable Mussolini to be incorporated into the ruling hegemony. By 1922 the threat of a fascist March on Rome – borrowed from a suggestion by the USI anarchists in 1920 became an excuse for Mussolini to be brought in to hold the growing corporate State together.

The rise of Mussolini from being a leading member of the PSI was initially the PSI's own answer to opening the movement out to the new forces that were appearing in Italian mass culture. It is ironic that the legal strategy that the PSI employed for its own future was taken over and pursued more violently by much of the Italian ruling class after 1915 and 1919. Mussolini had become a new Giolitti holding the ruling hegemony together. The PSI had even given the clues to Mussolini for his later fascism – beware the dangers of all New Labour style movements. It was Craxi's Socialists who set the example in the 80s for Berlusconi's more explicit version to follow. Both the mafia, which we have not pursued here and fascism arose out of the same repressive Italian State. Both emerged to subvert and suborn popular movements against it – both kept their power by criminality. He who complains of mafia corruption automatically implicates the Italian State. It is no wonder then that the anarchist critique and on a global scale should have a particular resonance for and by Italians.

The changing hegemony of a fractious and divided but increasingly capitalist ruling class provides the context for the rest of this chapter's history as a brief description of the background to today's Italy. It is in the nature of this ruling hegemony that it has consistently excluded the radical left, apart perhaps from the vital period between 1943 and 1947, when the PCI was included in the grand coalition because of its vital role in the resistance. This exclusion has provided the potential for the radical Italian left to continue with a more anarchist style of politics than has been possible in Spain since 1937. The Italian political Establishment has engaged in 'trasformismo' for over a century where possible new power bases are bought off and incorporated. This has been true for the Italian Socialist Party PSI in the 1950s and for much of the leadership of the PCI in 1946-7 and again in the 1970s. The radical Italian left has been excluded from this process and pushed into its own communities – and literally jailed in Negri's case. This has provided a base for a vibrant anarchist and anti capitalist movement, which is probably the most radical by far in Western Europe. Following the history of this radical left in Italy reads more like today's anarchist movements in Argentina or elsewhere in Latin America than it does even for Spain after 1937.

## **ANOTHER WAR WITHIN A WAR**

For McCarthy, there has been four 'regime crises' for the modern Italian State: 1861-71, 1919-25, 1943-45, and in 1992 (37). The crisis after 1943 has been a major determinant of the shape of post war Italy. As it was in 1919-20, it was the economic driving force of early twentieth century Italy - Turin - where the key events taking Italy out of the war on the German side unfolded. For it was Turin in March 1943 that hosted the first mass strike against a fascist regime (38). Claudin argues that the Turin strike alerted the richest parts of the Italian bourgeois, who had acquiesced if not supported Mussolini, to the dangers of a mass movement taking over at the end of the war. For Morgan, the populace were fed up with the war by the Summer of 1942, and the generals joined them in the Winter of '42/3. From this point Mussolini himself was doomed, as the Italian establishment worked out new ways to contain or incorporate the masses. They looked to both the German and British rulers to collude with them to prevent this 'red peril'. The monarchy's coup against Mussolini in July 1943 was based on the premise of excluding the masses (39). For 45 days – until September 1943 - there was a regime gap as the monarchy negotiated a peace treaty with the allies.

By mid 1943, as in Russia in 1917, the workers and peasants were clearly anti-war, driven by food shortages, rising prices, unemployment, high taxes, conscription into the army and German factories, plus a nasty US and UK bombing of cities like Milan and Naples. Demonstrations against the war in Milan, Bari and Naples were put down by the military dictatorship. You wonder why Italian youth today attack the riot police? The Italian war machine may have proved monumentally inefficient - the army at this point was happy to train its machine guns on Milan workers at the Alfa Romeo factory to prevent them going on a demonstration. The final turning point came with another strike in Turin and Milan in mid August; the armistice was signed on September 3rd. The king fled and the army effectively dissolved. Into this power gap in Turin and Milan moved the 'resistance'.

By the spring of 1944 there were three governments in Italy - Hitler had re-established Mussolini in the Republic of Salò in the far North, while the Resistance Soviets ran the rest of the North especially Milan and Turin and the British and American forces ran the South. Italy in 1944 had reverted to its 1860 divisions. Churchill talked openly of British colonial rule continuing in Italy after the war. The British Administration under future Prime Minister Macmillan admitted it was difficult to know which of the two processes - German occupation or Allied 'liberation' - were more painful to the locals. Morgan calls it a 'dual occupation'.

There were no free trade unions and strikes were illegal. Real wages in the North even in 1939 were still below those of 1921. Fascism, as Ginsborg puts it, had been used as both 'cudgel' and 'hidden persuader' (40). If fascism had attempted to dissolve much of working class culture, the war generated a new solidarity; in March 1944, 300,000 were on strike in Milan and a million workers all told with the strike spreading to Bologna and Florence.

## **THE PARTISANS, THE COMMUNISTS AND TOGLIATTI**

Armed partisan forces, which contained 25-50,000 PCI members, had risen to around 80,000 by the summer of 1944. Like today's Iraq militia, each fought according to their political affiliation. In late March 1944, Palmiro Togliatti the leader of the PCI, who had fled for Moscow in 1926, returned. By April he was already one of the five ministers without portfolio in the provisional Italian government. Togliatti inherited a resistance - and a growing communist movement - that he had not created. In 1944 - on Stalin's behalf - he now attempted in true centralist style to control and contain. Traumatized by the disappearance of the Italian left in the 1930s and later by the crushing of the Greek Communists he effectively implemented the imperial policies of Russia, the UK and the USA, in a way that was at total variance with his own internal party view in early 1944. Togliatti was more responsible than any other person for Italy's frustrated revolution.

By the autumn of 1944 the US and UK were worried enough about the partisans for one US general to order them to stop fighting. Ironically this recognised the partisans as an independent armed force. As the allies halted, 'for the winter' it gave the Nazis and remaining fascist forces the chance to try and pen the partisans up in the mountains away from their supplies. In the socialist and former anarchist hot-bed in Emilia the landless peasants refused to allow food to be requisitioned to Germany and fought their own landlords, as well as German troops. Whole villages were wiped out in retaliation. For many partisans the fighting did not stop. The allies made no attempt to come to their aid and did not properly resume the offensive in Italy until the Nazis were virtually beaten in Germany by April 1945.

At the same time in April 1945 there was a general rising in Genoa, Turin and Milan. In Turin there was a full scale battle with both Lancia and Fiat factories occupied by the workers. The temporary government made sacking workers illegal and there were street riots involving the unemployed. National Liberation Committees were set up all over the North 10 days before allied troops arrived. After 25 years of bitterness, a terrible score settling went on and 12-15,000 were killed. The partisans numbered up to 300,000 by the summer of 1945, up to 35,000 had been killed and 20,000 wounded.

The PCI leaders were now frightened that this armed force would lead to a confrontation with allied troops and more killing. The political elite decided that the partisans must be disarmed. One British military commentator argued that without the partisans in Italy victory ' would not have been so swift, so overwhelming and so inexpensive'. The partisans were now be led by fraud and the threat of force away from the war they had helped to win and back to the peace that they could no longer control.

## **AN ODD ALLIANCE: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, CAPITAL AND STALIN**

The Christian Democrats (DC) had played little part in the resistance. Its core was an alliance of small peasants and small business and its major votes came from the South, where it also gained much support from the petty bourgeois (doctors, teachers and lawyers) often dependent on State patronage. Longer allied rule in the South kept the Southern peasants isolated from Northern developments 'suffocating 'the fragile force of Southern democracy'. In the South the old order had been shaken, but survived. Taking over in the North the Allied Government removed the Liberation Committees with appointed officials - called 'specialists' - which meant returning the old bureaucracy to power. Selling Togliatti and the PCI the concept of 'national unity' in fact meant bringing back in large part the old fascist elite - acceptable as long as it promised obedience to the Allies - in the civil service and army especially. This process was also at work in much of Germany in late 1945. Even more so, the old power structure of landowners and big business in Italy was largely untouched - either by fascism or the allied victory.

The 'North wind' of mass participation as Claudin puts it was replaced by the 'South wind' of reaction. The party of big business had pre 1922 been the Liberals; now seeing that it would be isolated fighting the left on its own Capital sensed the way the wind was blowing and looked to the Christian Democrats to consolidate its alliance with the South afresh. It was not that the DC was the organised party of business - that would have been too obvious - but business was increasingly looking to use the DC.

The Spanish Communist party under Stalin's tutelage, backed the most conservative elements - the peasants and petty bourgeois - within Catalonia during the revolutionary years of 1936-7. It should not be a surprise that Togliatti's PCI under similar pressures also embraced a Stalinist solution for Italy. The PCI's programme for the 1946 elections was similar to that of the DC - land reform for the South and the corporate State model of the IRI continued from fascism for an industrialising North. Apart from the working class ethos that sustained both PSI and PCI, there was little reason not to give the DC a try. For the DC it could wait for the opportunity to rule alone. Left wing ministers in the new post war coalition discovered in 1945-6 that they had very little control over the economy. The rules on sacking were relaxed by February 1946 - and 240,000 soon lost their jobs - 13 per cent of the Northern workforce.

All the parties had rapid increases in membership in 1945 - the PCI from 400,000 to 1.7 million; the PSI to 800,000, the Action party (the thinking base for the DC) to 250,000. The monarchy was rejected by 54 per cent while the DC in the first free election for 20 years gained 35 per cent of the vote and the old parties - the PSI gained 21% and the PCI 19 per cent. The elections revealed that Italy was still badly divided. In Naples the vote for the monarchy - which meant subsidies, work, assistance and patronage for many was 80 per cent. In Emilia 77 per cent voted against it. In the South 250,000 peasants rose up and took 165,000 hectares of land in Sicily, Calabria and Lazio (around Rome) and established over 1000 co-operatives. Their demands for a further 820,000 hectares of uncultivated land were rejected.

## COALITION SOCIALISM AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

By January 1947 the US was pressing the Italian government to throw out its left wing ministers. By May 1947 when the DC leader De Gasperi returned from the US and sacked them the 'revolution had been contained'. Duggan calls it the 'triumph of continuity'; most institutions of the old Italy had been untouched. The gap between the real Italy and 'political Italy' was as wide as ever. Togliatti and the PCI had achieved something - they had helped create the foundations for Italy's later economic miracle - but this was as big a way short of the hopes of April 1945, as they had been in 1920.

In their recent work on Italian politics, Newell and Bell describe Togliatti's position on the coalition as 'misguided'. This is an understatement if anything. The major problem for the PSI was that unlike the British Labour party it had never since 1945 even commanded the majority vote of the Italian working classes - which honour went to the PCI. The 1946 (and subsequent elections) gave the left more votes than anyone else, but it chose to rule in a grand coalition, reckoning that 40 per cent would not be enough for real power (it has never worried Thatcher, Blair or Brown), while 'national unity' would be served in coalition. Togliatti became the Minister of Justice but made no attempt to reform or purge the civil service of fascists (41).

The PSI vote hovered between 10-15 per cent thereafter as the PCI consolidated at around 20 to 25 per cent. The PSI came to power because it was co-opted by the DC from the 1960s. The PCI's willingness to back a 'progressive' looking DC Party was seen by the Italian autonomist new left by the late 1960s as a betrayal. Perhaps because of their electoral weakness - thereby for different reasons than the success of the Australian Labour party in the 1980s, Craxi's socialists were to join the 'globalisation' trends that have become so universal.

The Italian experience of the 1980s is a vital further chapter in understanding the process of mediation and incorporation by our ruling elites in the era of the Empire of Global capital. In 1983 Bettino Craxi became the first Socialist Prime Minister of Italy. Ginsborg summarises the psychological impact of Craxi beautifully. 'To be a socialist politician in the 1980s' meant to have a mobile phone and a BMW, and 'to mix with high flying lawyers for lunch...in Milan's galleria'. Socially the PSI was a whole 'army of careerists, social climbers and yuppies', in which 'lip service was paid to justice and participation'. This reeks strongly of New Labour Britain after 1997.

Even more is the particular whiff of a Peter Mandelson's campaign against the 'hard left' it also carries. Craxi was a 'Machiavellian' politician, virulently anti communist' whose 'innovation' was Blair Brown's modernisation. The incorporation of foxy, shifty manipulative political elites is a global process. As Sassoon puts it the PSI 'never called 'the tune only which piper to follow' (42). Today, 20 years after the political rupture of 1992 when the vote for the old Italian parties collapsed, we can see that the PSI's sycophancy when faced with real power led to its ultimate destruction.

## **BURLESQUONI: LEARNING FROM THE ITALIAN 'CLOWNS'**

With football as the symbolic 'deep play' of Italian culture it is hardly a surprise that Berlusconi is also President of AC Milan and of a political party which borrows from a football chant - Forza Italia - 'Go for it' Italy (43). A new media blend combining a 'new' politics with continued capitalist 'modernisation' and the power of local finance and clientelism with Global Capital is nowhere better shown than in Berlusconi's relationship to AC Milan. As the Economist laughingly treated 'Burlesquoni' as yet another Italian 'clown', the real power of the finance and media Empire that sustained him and which he built upon, which the Economist of course lives off and supports too, is covered over. The danger of elite cynicism is that any attempt by civil society to mobilise on behalf of ordinary people is smothered with the same assumptions about 'corrupt politicians'.

The lessons from the Mussolini era in Italian history are covered over when they are mediated via the old media propaganda of the 1940s and 50s. Mussolini too was derided by Eden as a 'gangster', a knave and a fool. AJP Taylor wrote the English version of Mussolini's history as a 'fraud'. Mussolini in these post War accounts, which ignore the Conservative praise for Il Duce in his 1930s pomp, leave his final image as a Clown. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Mussolini's political power first stemmed from his role as the owner of a paper, subsidised by the French war machine, after Mussolini had declared for war in 1915. After a spell in building and finance (Fin Invest), it was television and the media that gave Berlusconi his real political power. Here explicitly again like Blair and Campbell is the triumph of spin - the manipulation of information in the media age. Obama too may be rapidly on his way to fulfil a similar role of spinning hope when reality stays much the same. Perhaps we should see through our own generation of Clowns now before it is too late. Perhaps that's why it takes an Australian reared in the Murdoch Empire, writing one of the recent biographies on Mussolini in English to see into the nature of the implicit media collusion - concocting the stories that never attack the real Empires - for they are too much a part of it themselves. It is Bosworth who also sees that today's Neo-Fascism in Italy is only viable with an accommodation to Global Capital. Is this all that different from the Neo-Cons or New Labour, for that matter?

On so many levels the Anarchist protestors are right to choose the clown image against the Clowns. But there is a danger that the media savvy sight and sound of the clowning itself covers over the serious message of resistance - alongside the attempt to subvert the present understandings. For people are being killed by the Empire that these Clowns represent. 400,000 Italians had to die in 1940-45 - and my dad very nearly bar a few inches among them - because Mussolini needed, a few 'belligerent dead' (44) to be the junior partner in Hitler's Empire. We come back to the Scots imperialists in Afghanistan.

Ginsborg asks whether Berlusconi like Mussolini showing us the image of our endangered futures. As Mussolini was the precursor in 1922 of the 'fascisms' to come - is Berlusconi a representative of the 'new model' capitalism?

## **PREMATURE REVOLUTIONARIES**

The Italian anarchists have too often suffered from having 'their enemies' write their history. It should now be possible to have a far less dogmatic dialogue about the Italian left. This has a meaning globally for anarchist alternatives to Capital beyond either Italian history or the Italian left. At the very least it is vitally important to see the anarchists' significant contribution to the future Italian labour and socialist movement. Historically, as the first mass predominantly working class party the anarchists helped forge the ties between socialists and labour. The anarchists 'symbols and heritage' have 'dominated mainstream Italian socialist culture' (45).

It was the anarchists who in Italy helped build the revolutionary tradition, which re-surfaced in the PCI - if not in the PSI. This enabled a 'popular socialism' which was Italy's 'second culture'. The factory councils of 1919-20, the autonomists on the left of Italian Communist party in the 1970s and those looking for self management – in factories or commune or province – all owed a great deal to the anarchist tradition not just to the revolutionary aftermath of World War. Rather than the historians who see the Italian anarchists as doomed to failure by their backwardness, the better historical analogy would be to see them as the Hussites of the nineteenth and twentieth century. They were premature revolutionaries.

## **GLOBALISING ITALIAN ANARCHISM?**

In the historic compromise that in effect predated 1989 and runs on via Prodi in today's Italian left, the autonomous, anti Statist, anti imperial and anti corporatist left in Italy has often been marginalized, even by the PCI. But such anarchist strands found their way via people like Negri's work into what today has often been called the 'anti globalization' movement (usually by its enemies). It is no coincidence that Italian anarchists played such a prominent part in the protests in Genoa in 2001. So in understanding Italian anarchism – its roots, defeats and re-surfacing – comes a thread that links us all to the alternative European and World Social Forums (however weak and ill-formed for participation by the 'multitude') that have grown out of such protests. It is no accident that the first European Social Forum was in Florence in 2002.

The Italian experience where the alienation from the economic and political elites has a very long history provides clues from which we can learn in Britain and across Western Europe and Latin America. This is partly reflected in actual anarchist movements, but importantly is about the practice of anarchist traditions, principles and possibilities. The reflection on anarchist experience I hope will eventually provide for new movements within civil society, which in the broadest sense are based on anarchist principles. We will need to start afresh to educate people not to accept the rule of Global Capital and its subservient elites. Peoples of the world unite is still a slogan for today's struggles against Global capital.

## END NOTES

1. I am drawing the analogy here between the old Italian idea that 'Africa began in Naples' and the 'post modern slum cities of our time. See Davis, M. Planet of Slums. London, Verso 2006 - an important context for today's movements in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Venezuela. In Dead Cities, New York, New Press 2002, Davis also refers to Naples as an 'archetype pre-capitalist City' p 8. It would also be possible to see it as an archetype slum city of the new semi proletarian age of 'flexible', throwaway labour.
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4. Sassoon, D. Contemporary Italy. Economy, Society and Politics Since 1945. 1986; Second Edition, London, Longman 1997 p xiii
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14. Bobbitt, P. The Shield of Achilles. War, Peace and the Course of History. London, Penguin, 2002 p 79-83 and Kennedy, P The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers . Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000. London Fontana 1988 p 45.
15. Hanlon,G. Early Modern Italy 1550 - 1800 St Martins Press, 2000 p 71-4 on rule in the South, p 199- 200 on Milan, p 281-2 on the rise of Piedmont.
16. Hearder, H. Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento. 1790-1870. 1983, this ed London Longman 1992 p 44-54 on the rise of Piedmont and p 129-33 on Napoleonic Italy. Beales, D. The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy. London, Allen & Unwin 1971 particularly p 32-88.
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18. Gonzales, M. Andrea Costa and the Rise of Socialism in the Romagna. University of America Press 1980. Quote is p 10. Also see Clark p 13-17, Duggan p 146-74.
19. Megrao, G. Mussolini in the Making. London, Allen & Unwin, 1933 p 32-41, Gonzales p 49 -145, Clark p 69 – 81.
20. Hostetter, R. The Italian Socialist Movement. Origins 1860-82. New York, Van Nostand 1958. The quotes are p 138 and 331.
21. Pernicone, N. Italian Anarchism: 1864-1892. Princeton University Press, 1993 p 106 on Bakunin; on IWMA membership p 16-77, Hostetter p 257-68.
22. See Lyttleton, A. The Seizure of Power. Fascism in Italy, 1919-29. London, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1973 excellent summary of Trasformismo p 8-20.
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24. Richards (1965) p 143, 210, Pernicone p 97-128 on the up-risings of the 1870s, p 111-2, 134-44 on revolutionary anarchist communism. Gonzales p 156-9,181-7 on the Friends of Romagna, Hostetter p 138 on Costa, p164-73 on Cafiero.

25. Seton Watson writes the anarchists off on 'law and order' p 67-73. Pernicone's analysis is less prejudiced and more nuanced p 140 - 80.
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27. Pernicone p 283-93 on Sicilian fasci, Gonzales on elections and Rome p 210-26, 314-29, Seton Watson p 75-7, 159 -67, Clark p 101-4.
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42. Sassoon (1986) p 4, Ginsborg (2001) p 150-1.
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44. Bosworth, R.J.B. Mussolini. London, Hodder 2002. Quote is p 368. See p 300, 410-27, 489.
45. Ginsborg (2005) p 1-2, Levy (1989) p 1, 45. The Guardian belatedly caught up with this theme in its editorial of 30 March 2009 called In Fascisms Shadow. Its comment followed the creation of President Berlusconi's new political party – the Freedom Bloc – as his Forza Italia merged with the 'neo-fascist' National Alliance.