

Bits of the World in Briefs

Fifth Estate Collective

1978

ITALY

Since the kidnapping of Aldo Moro in Rome last month, newspapers around the world have been covering the story of the abduction of this “poor man” while attacks by fascist groups in Italy go unreported, and in fact condoned by the Italian high courts (the Feb. 28, 1978 issue of *In These Times* reported that three judges in Rome have ruled that the self-proclaimed fascist group Ordine Nuovo—New Order—were not at all a fascist organization, which are illegal under Italian law. Upon hearing the ruling of the three judges, the Ordine Nuovo members in the courtroom started singing, ‘All ‘armi siam fascisti’—‘to arms, we are fascists.’).

But all of this does not mean that fascist groups like Ordine Nuovo are gaining in popularity or that fascism is in the cards for Italy. It does mean though that the now-governing political powers are moving further and further to the right in their attempts to rein in a society out of control.

Shortly after the abduction of Moro by the Red Brigade, an “anti-terrorist” decree was issued by Italian Prime Minister Andreotti which set mandatory life sentences for kidnappings where death results and legalized wiretappings as well as detention without warrant and interrogation without an attorney present. All of this had the eager backing of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which called, along with Socialist parties, for the army to be brought in to investigate Moro’s kidnapping.

As if this isn’t enough to show who is the real “right wing” threat in Italy, the PCI, in solidarity with the police, mourned the death of Moro’s carabinieri (military police) bodyguards killed during the Red Brigade’s assault, with a poster read: “Moro Abducted, Five Comrades—Over the past six months, the Italian government has been openly attacking the Autonomous Workers groups in attempts to physically squelch the militant actions of the groups.

On November 7, 1977, the Italian Minister of the Interior Cossiga ordered the closing of three political and social centers of the left, while leaving the fascist centers untouched.

With the PCI’s support and urgings for further actions to be taken against “subversives,” 100 police with guns and armoured cars moved in and closed the main office of the Autonomous Workers Committees in Rome, the Cangaceiros (proletarian youth circles) in Turin and another Autonomous Workers office in Rome.

A demonstration was organised against the closures in Rome for Nov. 12. The government banned it, but thousands defied the ban and were attacked by police using tear gas on a massive scale, driving vehicles at high speed into the crowd and on several occasions opening fire with machine guns and pistols. However, the protesters tactics of having 8 decentralised demonstrations in different areas of the city made the police repression more difficult and an effective protest was made.

December 2nd, the day of the Metal Workers’ Union (FLM) national strike and demo in Rome, saw armed riot police surround the University where the “autonomist” groups were assembling before marching to join the demonstration. Firing tear gas bombs at all the campus exits, the police physically prevented the autonomists leaving the University and arrested and beat up those who did slip out.

More brutal yet were the police actions of December 12th. Plans were made to demonstrate in Rome in commemoration of the people killed by a Fascist bomb in Milan in 1969 and to protest at the dragging out of the trial of the Fascists and government ministers involved. Once more the right to assemble and march was refused. The police attacked the demonstration, arrested 200 people, and imprisoned them in a gymnasium in a police barracks. They then fired tear gas into the gymnasium. The effect in a crowded, enclosed space can be imagined. In addition, people were badly beaten. One woman, four months pregnant, was hit so brutally that she lost her child through a forced abortion.

Five days later feminists demonstrated against the police brutality marching through the centre of Rome chanting “Now there are the flying squad men who can give you an illicit abortion” and (referring to the PCF leader), “Enrico never forget, you won’t make your compromise on our skins”. The trade unions have issued a statement condemning the police violence. Following the protests the Rome police chief, Migliorini, has been dismissed by the government.

(What this all means for the autonomous groups in Italy and what actions the government will take against them, can all be summed-up in a recent quote taken from Communist Party Deputy Ugo Pecchioli: “Certain components of the Workers Autonomy constitute the logistical base, the point of support for the clandestine groups...These nuclei must be hunted down, the chains of solidarity broken.”)

USA

Gary Tyler’s situation took another turn for the worse when he was once again denied the right to a new trial. Tyler was convicted of first-degree murder by an all white jury in 1975 as a result of frame-up charges stemming from the shooting of a white student during an anti-busing rally in Destrehan, La., in 1974. Overwhelming evidence shows that the victim was actually shot by an anti-busing demonstrator. Tyler is now serving a life sentence at hard labor (he was originally sentenced to death), despite the fact that a key witness for the prosecution has recanted her testimony. (IWW)

On the subject of “justice” in the United States, the IWW *Soapboxer* reports that a University of Washington researcher—Arthur Kobler—checked out 1,500 instances where civilians have been killed in recent years and found that only three cases, or one fifth of one percent, resulted in criminal punishment of the cops involved. Kobler says that a-about 60% of these killings occurred under “questionable conditions.” 57% of those killed were involved either in no crime at all or in misdemeanors or crimes against property. At least 25% had no weapons of any kind. One third were shot in the head, and one quarter hit in the back. Good figures to keep in mind when ‘dealing’ with the police. (IWW)

WEST GERMANY

Recently, two communiqués from imprisoned Red Army Fraction members in Hamburg and Koln-Ossendorf were sent to the FE (the Hamburg communiqué was dated March 9, 1978 and the one from Koln-Ossendorf, March 10, 1978).

In the communiqué, the RAF members said they were going on a hunger strike to protest the conditions in which they are kept.

Copies of the communiqués are available from us by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



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