

Toni Negri: "Do you remember Revolution?", *Revolution Retrieved*, oversat af red Notes Collective (London: Red Notes Collective, 1988), pp. 229-243.

brought about by the development of class composition – *subsumption to capital realised in the form of permanent crisis*. What we are presented with is the positive emergence of negative labour as an institutionalised counter-power acting against work that is subsumed within capital. While labour subsumed within capital corresponded to a logic of unity, of command, and its transcendence, *negative labour produces instead a logic based on separateness*: a logic that operates entirely within, is *endogenous to*, that separateness. The institutionalised forms now assumed by labour-power as a *separate* entity also represent its de-institutionalisation in relation to the present framework of economy and politics, to capital and the state. This relation is precisely a negative one, and inasmuch as negative labour has the power and possibility of imposing it on the system, the only unifying logic that remains is one of duality, two-sidedness: a logic that is ephemeral, that is reduced to mere semblance. In reality, it can only represent a moment in a historical phase of crisis, in which the point of reference for all rationality or intelligibility is being rapidly shifted towards a fully socialised labour-power, the new class subject, the “social worker”.

So, we have covered, in outline, some aspects of the formation of labour-power into a social subject. A very rich phenomenology could be provided for this transformation, starting from the mass worker and the history of the mass worker’s struggles. I think that such an account would confirm the theoretical and methodological assumptions I have outlined here.

In conclusion, however, I would stress that so far this is only a half-way stage in the analysis. For, if it is true that every scientific category concerning the relation of capital can now only be understood within a *dualistic matrix*, then a further logical problem is posed: the question of the multiplicity and mobility of the forms of this transformation of the class subject, and how this multiformity can be grasped *within* a mature political concept of labour-power. In other words, how we can develop a theory of the new institutionalality of the proletariat in its multiple matrices. But this will have to wait for another occasion.

## Do You Remember Revolution? (1983)

### A Proposal for an Interpretation of the Italian Movement in the 1970s

by Toni Negri and Others

*Note: This document was written from prison by eleven of the defendants from the Workers' Autonomy movement, arraigned on trial in the "April 7th" show trial in Rome. It was published in the Left newspaper Il Manifesto (20-22 February 1983), shortly before the trial began. Against the prosecution's attempt to reduce ten years of independent communist opposition struggles in Italy to a single conspiracy on the part of a centralised leadership (allegedly linked to the armed terrorist groups), the defendants here present their own reconstruction of the changing shape of the movement since 1968.*

#### Preface

Looking back to re-examine the movement of the 1970s, one thing at least is clear to us. The history of the extra-parliamentary oppositions, and then of the autonomy, was not a history of marginals, fringe eccentricity or sectarian fantasies from some underground ghetto. It is important to affirm that this history (part of which is now the object of our trial) is inextricably part of the overall development of class struggle in the period and the decisive changes and discontinuities that took place at a national level.

From this point of view (which might seem banal, were it not for the times we now live in, so full of fears and provocations), we want to propose some historical-political theses on the past decade, which go beyond our own immediate defence concerns in the trial. The problems we are posing are not addressed to the judges, but rather to all those involved in the struggles of these years, from the comrades of '68 to those of 1977, to all those intellectuals who “dissented” (as we now say), judging rebellion to be rational. So that they may intervene in their turn to break the vicious circle of memory distortion and conformity.

We think that the time has come for a realistic reappraisal of the movement of the 1970s. Against the distortions imposed by the state and

the *pentiti* [trans: "terrorists" who have turned state witness], we need to clear the way for our own political clarification as a movement, to arrive at a proper political judgement of the relation between the movement and the institutions in the context of the new situation of "post-terrorism" today.

That we have nothing in common with armed terrorism is obvious. That we have been "subversive" is equally obvious. Between these two truths lies the key issue at stake in our trials. But it is important that our defence in court, which will be fought with the appropriate technical-political means, is paralleled by a wider debate in the movement, among the social subjects who have been the real protagonists of the "great transformation" of these years. This debate is vitally necessary in order to confront adequately the new tensions facing us in the 1980s.

Signed: Lucio Castellano,  
Arrigo Cavallina, Giustino  
Coritana, Mario Dalmaviva,  
Luciano Ferrari Bravo, Chicco  
Funaro, Toni Negri, Paolo  
Pozzi, Franco Tommei, Emilio  
Vesce, Paolo Virno.  
Rebibbia Prison, Rome,  
January 1983

## Do You Remember Revolution?

### 1.

The specific characteristic of the "Italian '68" was a combination of new, explosive social phenomena – together with the classic paradigm of communist political revolution.

The critique of wage labour, its refusal on a mass scale, was the central driving force behind the mass struggles, the matrix of a strong and lasting antagonism, the material content of all the future hopes that the movement represented. This gave substance to the mass challenge directed against professional roles and hierarchies; to the struggle for equal pay, for income separated from productivity; to the attack on the organisation of social knowledge; to qualitative demands for changes in the structure of everyday life – in short, to the general striving towards concrete forms of freedom.

In other countries (Germany and the USA for example), these same forces of transformation were developed in the form of molecular changes in social relations, without directly posing the problem of political power – ie an alternative running of the state. In France and Italy, owing to institutional rigidities and a somewhat simplified way of regulating conflicts, the question of state power – and of its "seizure" – immediately became central.

In Italy especially, despite the fact that the wave of mass struggles from '68 onwards marked, in many ways, a sharp break with the labourist and state socialist traditions of the established working-class movement, the classical political models of communism still found a real space in the new movements. The extreme polarisation of the class confrontation, and the lack of any real political mediation or adequate response at an institutional level (in factories, the "internal commissions", or in social welfare, an overcentralised structure with no

local/regional bodies) created a situation where struggles for income and new spaces for freedom became linked to the classic Leninist question of "smashing the state machine".

2.

Between 1968 and the early 1970s, the problem of finding a political outlet and outcome for the mass struggles was on the agenda of the entire Left, both old and new.

Both the Communist Party and unions, and the extra-parliamentary groups, were working for a drastic change in the power structure, one which would carry through and realise the change in the relation of forces that had already occurred in the factories and the labour market. About the nature and the quality of this political solution – generally held to be necessary – there was a prolonged battle for hegemony within the Left.

The revolutionary groups, which held a majority in the schools and the universities, but with roots also in the factories and service industries, realised that the wave of struggles and social transformations coincided with a sharp rupture with the framework of legality that had hitherto existed. They emphasised this aspect of the situation, in order to prevent any institutional-reformist recovery of profit margins and capitalist command. The extension of the struggles to the entire social sphere at a territorial level and the building of forms of counter-power were seen as necessary steps against the blackmail of economic crisis. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the unions, on the other hand, saw the breaking up of the Centre-Left government and "structural reforms" as the natural outcome of the mass struggles. A new "framework of compatibility" and more institutional mediations would, in their view, guarantee a more active role for the working class in the relaunching of economic growth.

Polemics and divisions took place both within and between these boundaries of the old and new Left. It is sufficient to recall, for example, the polemics of the PCI right wing (Amendola) against the Turin engineering workers' federation (FLM) on the question of a "new unionism" representing the movement; or, within the far Left, the sharp differences between the workerist current and the Marxist-Leninist organisations.

These divisions, however, revolved around the common basic problem: how to translate into terms of political power the upheaval in social relations that had developed from the wave of struggles post-1968.

3.

In the early 1970s, the extra-parliamentary Left posed the problem of

the use of force, of violence, in terms that were completely within the classical communist tradition; judging it as one of the means necessary for any struggle on the terrain of power.

There was no fetishism of the use of violence. On the contrary, it was strictly subordinated to the advancement of the movement. But there was a clear appreciation of its relevance. The development of mass conflicts throughout society undeniably posed the question of political power in new terms. After the violent clashes of Battipaglia, near Naples, or Corso Traiano, Turin (1969), the state's monopoly of the use of force appeared as an unavoidable obstacle, which had to be systematically confronted.

Hence the programme and slogans of this period conceptualised the violent breaking of legality as the manifestation of a new counter-power. Slogans such as *Take Over the City* or *Insurrection* synthesised this perspective, which was considered as inescapable, albeit not in any immediate sense.

On the other hand, in concrete terms of the mass movements themselves, organisation within the framework of illegality had much more limited and modest defensive goals: defence of pickets, of housing occupations, of demonstrations, security measures to prevent possible right-wing reaction (which was seen as a real threat after the bombing provocation of Piazza Fontana, Milano, December 1969).

In short, a theory of attack was widespread, based on the combination of a communist outlook and the "new political subject" that emerged from 1968. It remains a fact that for thousands of militants following the "Red Years" of 1968-9 – including trade union cadres – the organisation of struggles on an illegal level, and public debates on the forms and timing of confrontation with the repressive structures of the state, were widespread and commonplace themes in the movement.

4.

In these years, the role of the first clandestine armed organisations (the GAP – Partisan Action Groups – and BR – Red Brigades) was quite marginal and outside the general outlook and debate within the movement.

Clandestine organisation itself, the obsessive appeal to the partisan tradition of the wartime resistance, and the reference to the "skilled" working class that accompanied it, had absolutely nothing in common with the organisation of violence in the class vanguards and revolutionary groups of the movement.

The GAP, linked to the old anti-Fascist resistance and the Communist Party tradition of organising at "dual levels" (mass and clandestine) which goes back to the 1950s, put forward the need for preventive measures against what they saw as an imminent Fascist coup.

The BR, on the other hand, were formed from a confluence of Marxist-Leninists (Trento), ex Communists, and Communist Youth Federation personnel from the Milan and Emilia areas. Throughout this early phase, they looked for support and contacts among the PCI rank and file, and not at all in the movement. Their operations were characterised by anti-Fascism and "armed struggle in support of reforms".

Paradoxical though it may seem, the adoption on the part of the revolutionary groups in the movement of a perspective of struggle that included illegality and violence, made the gap between this and the strategy of "armed clandestinity" even wider and more unbridgeable. The sporadic contacts that existed between the groups and the first armed organisations only confirmed the gulf in language, outlook and political line that divided them.

5.

In 1973-74 the political context within which the movement had developed began to disintegrate. Within a short period of time, there were multiple ruptures in the movement, sharp changes in political perspective, and changes in the very conditions of the conflict itself. These changes were due to a number of interacting factors. The first was the change in the policy of the PCI, which now judged the situation at the international level such as to render a socialist alternative government impossible. Hence the PCI turned to its compromise strategy of finding an immediate political solution within the existing balance of forces.

This led to a split, which became increasingly deep, within the political and social forces that had, up to this time, in spite of internal differences, shared the common goal of finding an alternative power structure that would reflect and realise the radical content of the mass struggles. The PCI and its union federation now began to draw nearer to the government and became increasingly opposed to wide sectors of the movement.

The extra-parliamentary oppositions now had to redefine themselves in relation to the PCI's "Historic Compromise". This led to a crisis and a progressive loss of identity for the groups. The struggle for hegemony on the Left, that had to some extent justified the existence of the revolutionary groups, now seemed to have been resolved unilaterally in a way that closed the debate altogether.

From now on, the old question of "finding the political outlet", a "solution in terms of alternative government" etc, was identified with the moderate politics of the PCI compromise. Those extra-parliamentary organisations that still followed this perspective were forced to try to go along with the PCI, influencing the outcome of the compromise as best they could – for example, participating in the 1975

(local) and the 1976 (national) elections. Other groups found that they had reached the limits of their own experience. They found no alternative but to dissolve themselves. (This was the case with *Potere Operaio* – "Workers' Power" – 1969-73, which is the main object of the prosecution in the current trial.)

6.

The second factor in this change of 1973-74 was the fact that the central class force behind the mass struggles post 1968, i.e. the assembly line workers of the major factories, began, with the union-employer contracts of 1972-73, to lose their role as a vanguard of class recomposition in an offensive sense. The restructuring of large-scale enterprises was beginning to take its toll.

The increasing use of redundancies (*cassa integrazione*) and the first partial though radical changes in technology and work organisation, blunted the thrust of preceding forms of struggle, including the mass strike. The homogeneity of the shop floor and its capacity to exercise power over the overall process of production were undercut by new machinery, new systems of control, and by the restructuring of the working day. The representative functions of the new "Factory Councils", and hence their division into Left and Right, had a paralysing effect on the unity and autonomy underlying the preceding struggles.

Not that the power of the line worker (the "mass worker") was weakened by any reserve army or competition from the unemployed in the traditional sense. The point is that industrial reconversion tended towards investment in sectors outside the sphere of mass production. This brought sectors of labour-power which had been relatively marginal – such as women, youth, highly educated new strata etc – to a central position in social production as a whole. These new strata had less organised history behind them. Hence the terrain of confrontation began to shift from the "factory" (in the literal sense) to the overall mechanisms of the labour market, public expenditure, the social wage, reproduction of the proletariat and in general to the distribution of income independent of remuneration for work.

7.

In the third place, a change occurred within the subjectivity of the movement, in its culture and outlook towards the future. To summarise: a complete rejection took place of the labourism of the official working-class tradition. The idea of revolution as "seizure of power" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" in its orthodox forms, was rejected, along with the residual baggage of "realised Socialism" in Eastern Europe, and any project of "alternative management" of the system.

As for the links that had existed within the post-68 movement

between new qualitative goals and the old model of communist revolution, these were now totally broken. Power was now seen as a foreign enemy force in society, to be defended against, but which it was no use "conquering" or "taking over". Rather, it was now a question of its reduction, of keeping it at a distance. The key to this new outlook was the affirmation of the movement itself as an "alternative society", with its own richness of communication, free productive creativity, its own life force. To conquer and to control its own "spaces" – this became the dominant form of struggle of the new "social subjects". Wage labour was no longer seen as the terrain of socialisation and the mass reference point. It was now regarded only in an episodic sense, as something contingent and of negative value.

The feminist movement, with its practices of communalism and separatism, its critique of politics and the social articulations of power, its deep distrust of any form of "general representation" of needs and desires, its love of *differences*, must be seen as the clearest archetypal form of this new phase of the movement. It provided the inspiration, whether explicitly or not, for the new movements of proletarian youth in the mid-1970s. The referendum on divorce (1974) itself gave a first indication of this tendency towards the "autonomy of the social".

From that point on, it becomes impossible to regard the Left movement as a "family tree" – unless one is referring to a family in crisis! The new subjectivity of the movement was totally alien to the official working-class movement. Their language and objectives no longer had any common ground. The very category of "extremism" no longer explained anything. One can only be "extremist" *in relation to* something similar: but this similarity, these common points of reference etc, were fast disappearing. Those who look for a continuity at this point of the story (as the prosecution does in our trial!) can only find that "family album" of continuity in the separate and sectarian existence of the Marxist-Leninist "combattant organisations".

8.

All these factors, but especially the latter, contributed, between 1973 and 1975 to the birth of "Workers' Autonomy".

The autonomous movement was formed against the PCI project of the Historic Compromise, in response to the crisis and failure of the revolutionary Left groups, and as an analysis and practice of struggle which sought to go beyond the previous "workerist factory" perspective and to understand the changes in the labour process which were taking place. But above all, it expressed the new subjectivity of the movement, the richness of its multiple differences, its rejection of formal politics and of mechanisms of representation. It did not seek a "political outlet" or

"solution". It embodied an immediate exercise of power within society.

In this sense, localism and pluralism are a defining characteristic of the experience of autonomy. Rejecting any perspective of an alternative running of the state, there could be no centralised leadership of the movement. Every regional or local collective which was part of the "area of autonomy" had its own particular characteristics of class composition and class interests. These differences were not seen as a limitation, but as their *raison d'être*. It is therefore absurd and impossible to try and reconstruct a unitary history of these movements between Rome, Milan, the Veneto and the South.

9.

From 1974 to 1976, the practice of mass illegality and violence became more intensified and diffuse. But this phenomenon had no overall "anti-state" objective behind it. It was not a preparation for any "revolutionary" project. In the big cities, violence developed as a function of the need for an immediate satisfaction of needs, the conquest of "spaces" that could be autonomously controlled, and largely in response to cuts in public spending.

In 1974, the self-reduction of transport fares, organised by the unions in Turin, relaunched a mass illegality that had already been practised particularly during rent strikes. From now on, and in relation to the whole range of public services, this form of "guaranteed income" was widely put into practice. While the unions had intended this self-reduction to be a symbolic gesture, the movement transformed it into a generalised, material form of struggle.

But it was the occupation of housing in San Basilio, Rome (October 1974) which above all marked a turning point: a massive and spontaneous militarisation by the proletariat as a defensive response to violent police aggression. A further step for the movement was the big Milan demonstrations in the Spring of 1975, following the killings of Varelli and Zibecchi by Fascists and police. Violent street confrontations were the point of departure for a whole series of struggles against the government's austerity measures – the first steps in the so-called "politics of sacrifice". Throughout 1975 and 1976, we experienced the trajectory – in many ways classic – of the history of welfare struggles: from self-reduction to appropriation; from a defensive struggle in the face of increases in prices and bills, to an offensive struggle for collective satisfaction of needs.

"Appropriation", of which the greatest example was the "looting" during the night of the New York Blackout, became part of collective behaviour in all aspects of metropolitan life: free or "political" shopping; occupation of premises for free associative activities; the custom of young people refusing to pay for cinemas or concerts;

overtime bans, lengthening of rest periods in factories, etc. Above all, it represented the appropriation of free time, liberation from the constraints of factory command, the search for a new community.

10.

By the mid-1970s, two distinct tendencies in class violence had become apparent. These may be approximately defined as two different paths in the birth of the so-called "militarisation of the movement". The first path was the movement of violent resistance against the restructuring of production taking place in the large and medium-sized enterprises.

Here the protagonists were above all worker militants, formed politically in the period 1968-73, who were determined to defend at all costs the material basis on which their bargaining strength had depended. Restructuring was seen as a political disaster. Above all, those factory militants who were most involved in the experience of the Factory Councils tended to identify the restructuring with defeat; this was confirmed by repeated union self-outs on work conditions. To preserve the factory as it was, in order to maintain a favourable relation of force - this was their aim.

It was around this set of problems and among this political/trade union base, that the Red Brigades - in their second phase, from 1974 to 1975 - found support and were able to take root.

11.

The second path of illegality, in many ways diametrically opposed to the first, was made up of all those "social subjects" who were *the result* of restructuring, of decentralisation of production, and of mobility in the labour force. Violence here was the product of a situation of part-time work, of fragmented forms of income, of the immediate impact of the social organisation of capitalist command.

This new proletariat that was emerging from the process of restructuring violently confronted local governments and the administration of income transfers, and fought for self-determination of the working day. This second type of illegality, which we can more or less identify with the autonomous movement, was never an "organic project". It was distinguished by the fit between the form of struggle chosen and the attainment of specific objectives. This also meant an absence of separate military structures specialised in the use of force.

Unless we accept the views of Pasolini - of violence as "natural" to certain lumpen social strata - it is impossible to deny that the diffuse violence of the movement in these years was a necessary process of self-identification. It was a positive affirmation of a new and powerful productive agency, born out of the decline of the centrality of the

factory, and exposed to the full pressure of the economic crisis.

12.

The movement that exploded in 1977, in its essentials, expressed this new composition of the class and was by no means a phenomenon of "marginalised strata".

Described at this time as a marginal "second society" (by PCI cultural spokesperson Asor Rosa), this new class composition was already becoming the "first society" from the point of view of its productive capacity, its technical-scientific intelligence, and its advanced forms of social cooperation. The new social subjects reflected or anticipated in their struggles the growing identity between new productive processes and forms of communication - in short, the new reality of the information-system factory and the advanced tertiary sector.

The movement of 1977 was itself a productive force, independent and antagonistic. The critique of wage labour now took an affirmative direction: creatively asserting itself in the form of "self-organised entrepreneurship" and in the partial success of running, "from below", the mechanisms of the welfare system.

This "second society" that confronted the state in 1977 was asymmetrical in its relation to state power. No longer was there a frontal counterposition; rather there was a search for freedom and income, in which the movement could consolidate and grow.

This asymmetrical relation was precious, a great achievement, and showed the authentic basis of the social processes that underlay it - the emergence of a great new social force of antagonism. But it needed time, and needed new forms of mediation, a "New Deal", in order to come to fruition.

13.

However, this outcome was denied. Instead, the forces of the "Historic Compromise" reacted to the movement entirely negatively, denying it any time or space, and imposing a symmetrical relation of opposition between the struggles and the state.

This was quite different from the process in other European countries, most obviously in the case of Germany, where the repressive operation was accompanied by forms of bargaining with the mass movements, and hence did not directly attack their reproduction. Not so with the Italian "Historic Compromise" government; here, the repressive net was cast exceedingly widely; legitimacy was denied to any forces developing outside of the "social pact"; the new avenues of corporative regulation of conflict were denied. Repression itself developed a generality that was aimed directly against spontaneous social forces.

14.

The organisations of Autonomy (*autonomia organizzata*) found themselves caught in a dilemma between consignment to a marginalised role and a social ghetto; or immediate confrontation, at a tempo imposed by the state. Their eventual defeat can be traced to the attempt to close this gap – by maintaining roots in the social network of the movement, while at the same time confronting the state.

This attempt proved, quickly, to be quite impossible, and failed at both levels. On the one hand the political acceleration imposed on the movement led to the organisations losing contact with the social subjects, who rejected “traditional politics” and followed their own various solutions – at times individualist, or through constitutional channels, in order to work less, live better, and maintain their own spaces for freely creative production. On the other hand, this same acceleration pushed the autonomous organisations into a series of splits over the question of militarisation. The contacts with the militant groups were rejected, and these soon became a separate tendency in the movement, pushing for the formation of armed organisations.

The dilemma was not resolved; it only became deeper. The whole form of autonomy, its organisation, its concept of politics, was thrown into question and crisis.

15.

From the end of 1977 and throughout 1978, there was a growth and multiplication of formations operating at a specifically military level, while the crisis of the autonomous organisations became more acute.

Many saw in the equation “political struggle equals armed struggle” the only adequate response to the trap that the movement was caught in by the reactionary politics of the Historic Compromise. In a first phase – in a scenario frequently repeated and typical – numbers of militants made the so-called “leap” to armed struggle, conceiving this choice as an “articulation” of the movement’s struggles, as a sort of “servicing structure”. But the very form of organisation specifically geared to armed actions soon revealed its lack of links with the practices of the movement. It could only sooner or later go its own separate way. Thus the numerous armed groups that proliferated in the period 1977-78 ended up resembling the model of the Red Brigades (which they had initially rejected) or joining them. The BR, as the historic guerrilla formation, totally separated from the dynamic of the movement, ended by parasitically growing in the wake of the defeat of the mass organisations of the movement.

In Rome especially, from the end of 1977, the BR made a large-scale recruitment from the movement, which was in deep crisis. Autonomy

had come up against all its own limitations, opposing state militarism with street confrontations, which only produced a dispersion of the potential the movement represented. The repressive straitjacket, and the real errors of the autonomists in Rome and some other areas, opened the way for the expansion of the BR. The Brigades had been external to, and critical of, the mass struggles of 1977. Paradoxically, they now gathered their fruits in terms of reinforcing their organisation.

16.

The defeat of the Movement of 1977 began with the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro in March-May 1978.

The BR, in a sort of tragic parody of the way the official Left had developed its policies from the mid-1970s, pursued their own politics in complete separation from and outside of developments of currents of resistance in society at large.

The “culture” of the BR, with its “people’s courts, prisoners and trials” – and its practice of an “armed fraction” totally within the logic of a separate sphere of “politics” – played against the new subjects of social antagonism, as much as against the institutional framework.

With the Moro operation, the unity of the movement was definitively broken. There began a situation of emergency, terror and State blackmail, a closing-off of space, in which the autonomy frontally attacked the BR, while large sectors of the movement retired from the struggle. The emergency proclaimed by the state and the PCI was not successful as far as “anti-terrorism” was concerned; on the contrary, it tended to select its victims from among those publicly known as “subversives”, who were used as scapegoats in a general witch-hunt. Autonomy soon found itself facing a violent attack, starting in the factories of the North. The Factory Collectives of the autonomy were denounced by trade union and PCI watchdogs as “neo-terrorists” and were weeded out. Right in the period of the Moro kidnap, the autonomists were launching a struggle at Alfa Romeo against Saturday working. They were branded by the official Left as “terrorists”. Thus began the process of the expulsion of a new generation of autonomous militants from the factories, a process that reached its climax with the mass sackings at FIAT in the Autumn of 1979.

17.

After the Moro operation, in the desolation of a general State of Emergency and a militarisation of the whole of civil society, the state and the Red Brigades now faced each other as if opposite reflections in the same mirror.

The BR rapidly went down the path already set for them; the so-called “armed struggle” became terrorism in the true sense of the word.

From 1977 to 1978, the targets on the death list were selected only according to their functions – police, magistrates, factory managers, trade unionists etc – as the revelations of those who turned state evidence have shown.

The repressive wave of arrests and imprisonment against the movement of autonomy in 1979 eliminated the only political network which was in a position to fight against this logic of terroristic escalation. This can be demonstrated in practice by the fact that between 1979 and 1981, the Red Brigades were able to recruit, for the first time, not only militants from the lesser armed combattant organisations, but also more widely from a desperate and scarcely politicised youth, whose anger was now deprived of any political outlet or expression.

18.

The state witnesses, those who have turned state evidence in exchange for remission of sentences (the *pentiti*) are only the other side of the terrorist coin.

The state informers, the supergrasses, are only a conditioned reflex of terrorism itself. They are the final truth of its total abstractness and separation from the struggles of the movement. The total divorce of the “armed struggle” from any relation to the struggles of the new social subject is revealed in a distorted, horrendous way by this merchandising of state informers.

The system of remission for state informers (set up by law in December 1979) has given rise to a logic of destruction of the whole judicial framework, as well as a judicial, public destruction of the memory of the movement. The individual memory of the *pentiti* is manipulated and distorted, with indiscriminate vendettas being settled en route. Even when they tell the truth, they abolish the real motivations and context of what they describe, establishing hypothetical links, effects without causes, interpreted according to theorems constructed by the prosecution.

19.

The sharp, definitive defeat of the political organisations of the movement at the end of the 1970s by no means coincided with any defeat of the new political subjects which had emerged in the eruption of 1977.

This new social subject has carried out a “long march” through the workplaces, the organisation of social knowledge, the alternative economy, local services, administration and communications. It proceeds by keeping itself to the ground, avoiding any direct political confrontation between the underground ghetto and institutional deals, between separateness and co-management. Though under pressure and often forced into passivity, this underground movement today

242

constitutes – even more than in the past – the unresolved problem of the Italian crisis.

The renewal of struggles and debates on the working day; the pressure on public spending; the question of protection of the environment and choice of technologies; the crisis of the party system; and the problem of finding new constitutional formulae of government – behind all these questions lies the density and living reality of a mass subject, still entirely intact and present, with its multiple demands for income, freedom and peace.

20.

Now that the Historic Compromise has come to an end, and in the post-terrorist situation today, the same question is again, as in 1977, on the agenda: how to open spaces which can allow the movement to express itself and grow.

We come back to the basic issue: how to relate struggles and their political outlets; how to relate the struggles within a New Deal at the institutional level. This perspective, in Italy as in Germany, is both possible and necessary, not because of the backwardness of social conflict, but because of the extreme maturity of its content.

We must now take a clear stand, to take up once more and develop the thread of the movement of 1977. This means opposing both the militarism of the state and any tendency to relaunch that of the “armed struggle” (there is no “good versus bad” version of “armed struggle”, no alternative to the elitist practice of the Red Brigades: *all* versions end by being antithetical to the new movements). A powerful new social force, both individually and collectively, outside and opposed to the framework of wage labour, has emerged. The state is going to have to take this phenomenon into account, not least in its administrative and economic policy calculations. This new social force is such that it can be at one and the same time separate, antagonistic, *and* capable of seeking and finding its own mediations.

243