

Eyewitness Report On Italy Terror: It Can Happen Here

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The British destabilization of Italy has now reached the threshold of civil war. Especially since the mid-August Kappler affair, not a week has gone by without a Red Brigades political assassination or near-assassination, without rioting by "left-" and "right-"labeled, British-controlled countergangs. The world press has registered the interminable series of riots, burnings of party and union offices, attacks on public buildings, kidnappings, and beatings.

Americans have good reason today to take a serious look at the terror campaigns that are lacerating a country like Italy. Italy is the laboratory where the British are testing the scenarios that will be acted out in your home town in the near future by the networks of the London-controlled Institute for Policy Studies. In the United States, there may still be time to preempt the operations being planned.

During 1977, terrorism became a fact of the everyday lives of millions of Italians. Events that would have commanded headlines a few short years ago have become minor items on an inside page or fillers at the end of a news broadcast — a bomb, a clash of fascists with police in a provincial town, a political kidnapping. For a population subjected to a daily pounding of terror, these events blur into a pervasive climate of political destabilization.

In Rome, Milan, or other major cities, it is now commonplace for people to leave their factories or offices in the afternoon to find that buses and streetcars are not running because they have been blocked by a street battle between extremists and the police. If you decide to walk to find alternate transportation, you may enter a neighborhood where cars have been set on fire; where the air hangs heavy with tear gas; where the police are fighting groups of young thugs armed with crowbars and Molotov cocktails, wearing woolen ski caps called *passamontagna* to cover their faces or bandannas like the robbers in cowboy movies.

These are usually the *autonomi*, short for *Autonomia Operaia*, the youngest and most thoroughly brainwashed levy of the 1968 "New Left," who are an obscene caricature of the early 1920s Mussolini left-anarcho-syndicalist *squadristi* and were created according to the same time-tested British formula. Less often, the rioters are from one of the organizations allied to the *Almirante Movimento Sociale Italiano*, a party in which some of the

up-front positions are held by ancient Genoese and Roman monetarist families that can trace their lineage as British agents of influence back to Admiral Nelson in the 19th century and earlier.

On another day you may be passing through the central business district of Milan or Rome and come into an area where the shop windows have been smashed, the contents looted, stores and parked cars burned by Molotov cocktails. This wanton destruction is a favorite fall-back option for the *autonomi* when they are barred by the police from storming the court house, ministry, or party headquarters that is their primary objective. Sometimes you will be walking in such a business section and find that the shopkeepers are all at once lowering their metal gratings or *saracinosche*, that people are ducking for cover into home or buildings. The grapevine has told them that a procession of *autonomi* or other fascists is approaching.

Often a gang of *autonomi* will rush into a supermarket, beat up the employees, and run off with as much merchandise and loot as they can scoop up in five minutes — above all liquor — disappearing before the police arrive on the scene. That is called *proletaria* — "proletarian shopping" — a practice that was started by the group *Lotta Continua* a few years ago in a campaign called "Let's take over the city," and which has since become endemic.

A prime training tactic of the *autonomi* before they reached their present notoriety was through what is called *autoriduzione*, literally, self-reduction, which took the form of gate crashing at movie theaters. During 1975 and 1976, and in smaller cities today, it was common practice for gangs of *autonomi* to force their way into movie theaters especially on Sunday afternoon. Theater managers generally regard this as something they can do nothing about, remembering the case of one of the largest movie houses in Rome, at Piazza Barberini near the Via Veneto, which the *autonomi* burned to the ground when the management tried to eject them.

The first major action carried out by the *autonomi* was built directly on this model in November 1976, just weeks after the prodevelopment Andreotti government superseded British agent Aldo Moro. British terrorist controllers decided to apply the *autoriduzione* gambit at the opening night performance of Verdi's *Otello* at the Milan LaScala opera house, with a beggar's opera of hooligans that was supposed to converge on the opera house from each quarter of the city. The center of Milan was put into a state of siege to keep the *autonomi* out of the performance, which was being nationally telecast.

The Political Strategy

The Christian Democratic (DC) Andreotti government survived that initial period because it gained the support of a faction in the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The British counterdeployment has been to mobilize the autonomi along with their complementary fascist organizations Lotta Continua and Il Manifesto to play on the psychological vulnerability of the PCI. The PCI can be paralyzed, reasoned the British, and the hegemony of agents within the Party, like Napolitano, Amendola, and Chiaromonte, can be guaranteed, if the PCI is attacked by an ultraleft force using the following line: "While the PCI bureaucrats make undercover deals with Andreotti, the capitalist oppressor, in the Parliament, the autonomi and the other authentic heirs of the Resistance tradition are in the streets fighting the DC regime, defending the real interests of the workers and students." The British judged, in part correctly, that the anarchosyndicalist pathology of some of the PCI and CGIL trade union rank and file is sufficiently strong to make them accept that definition of the situation.

A key test run for this approach was the speech delivered by Luciano Lama, the CGIL leader, at Rome University in February 1977. The speaker's platform was assaulted by hundreds of club-wielding autonomi, and Lama had to be defended by the CGIL security forces, workers brought to Rome for the occasion.

Since then, the autonomi from several cities have gathered for major actions at increasingly frequent intervals. On the morning of May 19, 1977 this reporter was in Rome on the way to my office. The bus system had largely been shut down because autonomi from across the country had gathered in the Piazza dei Cinquecento, in front of the main railroad station, where the central bus depot is located.

As I walked across the piazza I had a chance to observe the autonomi up close. Most were unemployed youth dressed in army surplus. Italy has almost a million unemployed youth, many of whom live with their parents, and most of whom have never had any hope of a productive job. Most of the autonomi looked like beggars, hustlers, petty thieves, students in outmoded technical junior high-schools. Hollow-eyed and pasty, expressionless faces bespoke high levels of drug use.

Mixed in with the crowd were groups of *Indiani metropolitani*, with faces painted white and black like the rock singing group Kiss, some wearing black bowler hats like the fascist gangsters in the film *Clockwork Orange*. Most were dressed in rags, many with feathers and other Indian trappings reminiscent of the youth gangs of the pre-Nazi Weimar Republic. The scene recalled the motley, variegated rabble that followed the Constable of Bourbon into Rome in 1527 to sack the city under the orders of Hapsburg Emperor Charles V and his Fugger financiers.

The autonomi boast of having no organizational structure of their own. Like the West German Spontis, they represent pure heteronomy. In fact, they have only one or two leaders of their own worth mentioning. One is Oreste Scalzone, whose service to Her Majesty's Government goes back to the 1960s when he was a leader of the "student movement" and then Potero Operaio, the first major anarchosyndicalist-fascist grouping in the

country. In many cities today, the leaders of the local chapter of Lotta Continua double as spokesmen for the autonomi. Thus the autonomi can be delivered in sufficient numbers at the appropriate place and time for an "anti-capitalist action." In this May 1977 case, slogans were "Down with Andreotti, down with the DC, down with the traitors Berlinguer and Lama." The demonstration had been outlawed, and the streets were full of riot police and carabinieri.

Danger: Autonomi at Work

Later, I saw the autonomi at work. The New Solidarity-International Press Service office in Rome looks over the Piazza del Gesù, a square located not far from Mussolini's old headquarters of the Jesuit order. Opposite this stands Palazzo del Gesù, the headquarters of the Christian Democracy (DC) and the office of DC party secretary Zaccagnini. Visible less than a hundred yards away is a corner of the building in Via delle Botteghe Oscure that houses the headquarters of the PCI.

The DC headquarters is *de rigueur* a target for autonomi and other left extremists. Each of the two or three demonstrations crossing the piazza in any given week stop for several minutes of gesticulating and threats against the D.C. Under former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, that was as far as things went. Under Andreotti, the autonomi have been told to storm D.C. headquarters.

From this vantage point I watched as the heads of the column of autonomi ragamuffins crossed the piazza chanting "You'll pay dearly, you'll pay for everything" and moved off toward Largo Argentina a few blocks away. In front of the DC office, a company of gas-masked riot police was deployed in a phalanx, with the first rank crouching behind plastic shields marked *Polizia*. Suddenly, a small group of provocateurs split off from the main procession and charged the police. When they were halfway across the piazza the autonomi let fly with three or four Molotov cocktails, which did not reach the police but which started a bonfire in the center of the piazza. The police replied with a salvo of tear-gas grenades, which filled the piazza with swirling clouds of gas, dispersing the crowd but cutting visibility to zero.

From the office windows I could see nothing but billowing gas. Then in quick succession came six shots as an unseen autonomo emptied his revolver at the company of police. Still in the fog of gas, we heard the siren of the ambulances that came to take away the wounded policemen.

That was only part of the shooting in Rome that day. Like the robber baron Orsini family of the Middle Ages, the autonomi were holding the bridges across the Tiber near Castel Sant'Angelo and Saint Peter's, where they had posted details armed with .38 and .45 caliber revolvers. In order to cross these bridges, the police had to put on special bullet-proof flak suits complete with armored face masks. Even so, they suffered several casualties. Since then the police have used armored cars. As the evening wore on, the autonomi broke up into small bands that ran through the center of the city, looting, and trashing shops. Not until midnight did the last of them withdraw.

Some weeks later a young girl was shot dead as she

crossed one of those same Tiber bridges, caught in a cross-fire between police and autonomi. The autonomi had shot first, but the liberal-radical intellectuals of the café set blamed the police. In fact, the police are themselves infiltrated by agents provocateurs who periodically open fire to heat up a given situation.

What Is An Autonomi?

The average rank-and-file autonomi zombie has matured in the controlled environment of the collapsing, British-controlled Italian economy of the period since the mid-1960's. He is an adolescent, and the only schools he has ever known were wrecked long ago, during the 1968 student *contestazione*. Serious teachers have been driven out in many cases by Maoist groups like Movimento Studentesco or Lotta Continua. The patronage system is now controlled in some schools by these groups together with Il Manifesto and certain agents of the PCI. If the average leftist teacher of the 1960s was in fact already a radical nominalist under the influence of Benedetto Croce, many young teachers today are oriented toward the intellectual authority of Chairman Mao, the Chomskyan linguist Umberto Eco, or the theoreticians of the old Potere Operaio. The young autonomo, the student of today, is the last stop on the line.

A favorite slogan of the autonomi is "*Lottare sui propri bisogni*," "fight for your own needs," except that in the Italian the slogan carries the overtone that the need involved is for some kind of excretion. What are their needs? "My need is that I need everything," said one faceless autonomo leader. The objective can be anything that will satisfy the unbridled heteronomy of the extreme neurotic and psychotic. Other autonomi slogans fit very well with the British plan for slave labor in the Mediterranean basin after existing industry has been dismantled: "Abolition of work. Abolition of wage labor. *Compagni rifiutiamo il lavoro.*"

The autonomi make up the backbone of any demonstration against nuclear energy, as at the Montalto di Castro site, where the peasants teamed up with Prince Caracciolo, a major landowner and close associate of Enrico Cuccia and Gianni Agnelli. The autonomi say that nuclear energy is fascist because it is hierarchical, centralized, and so complex that it can only be controlled by a scientific caste, while the superprofits go to the "mafiosi" of the DC and the "American multinational corporations."

The autonomi can turn into wild beasts when together in packs led by trained provocateurs. Taken by himself, the average autonomo is a pathetic wretch, usually passive almost to the point of catatonia.

For example, one autonomo was taking a remedial English course at a summer school for flunked junior high students where a European Labor Party member was teaching. "Did you do your homework?" asked the teacher. "No," said the autonomo slowly, "I wanted to, but then there were some problems." "What problems?" "I don't know, just problems, so I couldn't make it." "Why were you absent the other day?" "Well, I wanted to come, but there were too many problems," and so on. The individual autonomo is timid, vapid, almost meek. But he has a burning hatred of authority, especially intellectual authority, and he will join together with his *compagni* to fight it.

A combination of such persons can seriously subvert the state only through the massive magnification and support that their "movement" receives from the mass media. Last fall, the autonomi decided to kick off their offensive by taking over Bologna, the heart of the PCI "red belt." This plan was consciously modeled by their British controllers on Mussolini's March on Rome, which was basically a theatrical sham of exactly the same type. In the week before the scheduled march, the event got cover stories in both *Espresso* and *Panorama*, the two leading radical newsweeklies. One cover story showed a masked autonomo making the "P .38" salute — a fascist Roman salute with two fingers extended. Both magazines played up the absurd thesis that the autonomi, together with the *Indiana metropolitani*, Partito Radicale and militant homosexuals of the FUORI (United Front of Revolutionary Italian Homosexuals), had captured the imagination of the workers and were threatening to influence them more than the unions and the PCI.

What About The Police?

The key to the current situation is that law-enforcement agencies have been forced to adopt a policy of *not* going after the autonomi. Since all the police are controlled by the Interior Ministry in Rome, this policy clearly comes from Interior Minister Cossiga, a relative of Enrico Berlinguer's British agent father, a creature of British post-World War II occupation boss Aldo Moro, and a man with a foible for collecting and sampling pills and medicines.

Cossiga has been repeatedly called upon to explain in Parliament why his forces do not move effectively against terrorism. His reply has generally been that he wants to defend tolerance, that he repudiates over-reactions to terrorism that could undermine democracy, and especially that he wants to make sure that Italy does not imitate the "authoritarian" West German government in even attempting a crackdown against terrorists. It should come as no surprise that Cossiga has been in close touch with British Home Secretary Merlyn Rees during recent months.

The most famous base of operations for the Italian autonomi was, until just a few months ago, the so-called "Autonomous Collectives" of Via dei Volsci in Rome, which had spawned armed bands of *Volsevicchi* for countless riots over the years, not a few of which had led to loss of life. The place was notoriously full of drugs and illegal weapons, including the famous P .38 pistols that are the autonomi's trademark. Via dei Volsci had spread its control over large parts of nearby Rome University Polyclinic Hospital, where they had driven out PCI members and reduced many hospital buildings to filth and squalor. Slogans were daubed on the walls in red paint, daily fights took place in the corridors, and the autonomi steadily recruited mental patients from the psychiatric wards, many of whom later found their way into hard-core terror bands.

Month after month, Cossiga refused to lift a finger against Via dei Volsci, despite the deaths of policemen and bystanders in riots around the city. When the pressure became unbearable, he decided to shut down Via dei Volsci and to garner a little credibility for himself in the process. When riot police finally surrounded the place at

5 a.m. one morning, they found no guns or drugs or incriminating evidence. Cossiga had seen to it that the autonomi leaders had been tipped off well in advance. The autonomi have since been directing their growing operations from an alternate command center.

Attack on the ELP

The European Labor Party (ELP) possesses special, critical evidence on Cossiga's connivance with the autonomi. The area *dell'autonomia* had been oriented to a hostile posture towards the ELP during 1974 and 1975 by slander articles published in *Panorama* and *L'Espresso*. During the past year this has been followed by a pattern of multiplying direct physical attacks on ELP public rallies by autonomi stormtroops. In each case, the police have refused to intervene effectively, using excuses so patently ridiculous that there can be no doubt that their inaction is a direct result of orders from Cossiga.

A crescendo of these attacks came during the month of October. Part of the timing had to do with the role played by the ELP during the staged escape of Nazi war criminal Kappler, the kidnapping of West German industrialist Schleyer, and the skyjacking of the West German Lufthansa airliner to Somalia — a skyjacking that Cossiga had refused to nip in the bud, letting the plane leave Rome. This series of British intelligence-manipulated incidents gave rise to a "Nazi revival" scare, which had a tremendous impact in Italy. Large sections of the population proceeded to act out their "anti-Nazi resistance" ideology-fantasy at a time when the economic survival of Italy depended on an alliance with West German Chancellor Schmidt.

The ELP was to our knowledge the only political force in the country with the guts required to go into the streets and call on Italians to repudiate this madness. This appeal to reason had its own profound echo in the public, and drove the fascist and profascist "left" into a frenzy. Both considerations led the British top operative Enrico Cuccia to begin more ambitious attacks.

In early October 1977 ELP organizers in the Piazzale Lodi in Milan were selling an issue of *Nuova Solidarieta* headlined "Ally with Schmidt against British terrorism." They were approached by a dozen autonomi who assaulted them, screaming, "They support Schmidt — it's incredible!" When the ELP members took refuge in a coffee bar, they were followed by several autonomi, one of whom had a pistol partly visible under his jacket. These autonomi demanded that the ELP members hand over all their newspapers and other propaganda.

The leaders of the ELP squad managed to place a call to the antiterrorism section of the police, reporting that their lives were in danger from the armed autonomi. The response: "We can't come, because there are only four of us here." A second call to a local police precinct brought the response, "You are always telling us a bunch of bullshit, always wailing about terrorists and autonomi. We'll see if we can send a car over, but you better not tell us any more of your bullshit."

The police did arrive some time later; the autonomi were still on the scene. The ELP members immediately identified the autonomi to the police, pointing to where they were standing on the other side of the piazza. The members demanded that they be taken into custody,

indicating their intention of filing a complaint.

"We can't do that," said one of the policemen. "If we ever went after them, they'd kill us and you too."

A short time later ELP members were organizing near the La Scala opera house. Here they were assaulted by autonomi in *passamontagna*, who moved in quietly, surrounded one ELP member, threw him to the ground, and kicked him in the face. The ELP member needed hospitalization, but the hospitals were on strike. At a first-aid station he found an intern who was willing to treat him, but who then threatened him with more violence when he identified his attackers as "fascist autonomi." The intern was an autonomi sympathizer.

The autonomi who carried out this attack live in apartment buildings owned by the City of Milan, but which they have occupied. Milan has a Socialist (PSI) mayor, and British agents Riccardo Lombardi, Bettino Craxi, and Umberto Dragone of the PSI have seen to it that no one disturbs safehouses on city property. In addition, the autonomi have ample access to the Milan State University, where they maintain caches of weapons and drugs in basement rooms assigned to the Maoist Movimento Studentesco.

On repeated occasions, the police have attempted to discourage the ELP from swearing out complaints against the autonomi for street violence. They have also refused to provide protection. Once police lieutenant told ELP organizers "I can't have my men getting beaten up by the autonomi."

That, of course, is the cynical facade put up by cops who have been thoroughly demoralized by their inability to carry out their job — an inability that traces back to Cossiga. Another policeman expressed his feelings more honestly to an ELP member when he said in despair: "The autonomi are armed, they have knives and guns. They control the streets. It's too late for us to do anything about them."

A Warning For Americans

With this situation in Italy, it is not surprising that West German police officials have taken seriously the warning that unless they solve the Cossiga problem, they are wasting their time with their month-long dragnet in West Germany and other countries to capture leading members of the Baader-Meinhof group. These actions can be easily frustrated by the terrorists, who could be hiding out anywhere in Italy and nobody would know — except Cossiga.

Nor should Americans try to laugh off the impotence of the Italian authorities to stop the terror wave there. The cause of terrorist ascendancy in Italy today is the subversion of the Italian state by the secret services and political intelligence forces of the United Kingdom, a subversion that extends into every walk of life. Terrorism in Italy will stop when the Cuccias, the LaMalfas, Moros, Amendolas, Benvenutos and Lombardis have been driven out of public life, when the *Espresso* and *La Repubblica* cease publication. Such terrorism will end when Messrs. Healey, Jenkins, Owen, and Rees are cut down to size.

— Webster Tarpley