

# Misleading Appearances

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Autumn 2019

*"With reference to current provisions prohibiting the publication of investigative acts, I call your attention to the serious disruption that occurs on a daily basis thanks to the press - through the reproduction of photographs of offenders arrested with serious charges [...] who are thus elevated to the honour of the most reprehensible notoriety". - Luigi Federzoni, Minister of the Interior, telegram 17916, July 31, 1925 (sent nation-wide to the provincial prefects)*

The use of censorship during fascism is a sadly known fact. Once the voices of the opposition had been eliminated, the regime assigned to the propaganda machine a practically exclusive task, in order to favour the spreading and deepening of fascist ideology. Within the country, there was no longer the need to crush a hostile enemy, but to shape, or rather, to produce, a faithful friend. It was a matter of imposing in all corners of life, a social perception of reality corresponding to the interests and the logic of the State, in order to capture, practically automatically and unanimously, complete consensus. An impossible project to achieve without an incessant manipulation and distortion of a significant part of the news. A multi-faceted reality, one with all its chaotic and conflicting nuances, needed to be selected, dissected, amputated, calibrated, regulated and packaged, to make it look unambiguous and easily presentable. One of the main objectives of this veiling of reality was to eliminate any trace of disorder, not only on the streets but also in the mind.

The first measure taken in this sense was the law decree proposed to the king by Mussolini in 1923, which provided official warnings to any newspaper editor found guilty of spreading news relating to disruption of public order, class hatred or disobedience of laws. Then came the establishment of the national press office managed directly by the ministry, then the monopoly on all information admitted for publication entrusted to a single agency, then the formation of an order of journalists (still operating)... Language needed to be coded, the news properly filtered: particular attention needed to be paid to the financial situation (which could only be exulted), the imprisonment of the opposition had to be silenced, any crime news was minimized (in some cases the newspapers *La Stampa* or *L'Unione sarda* were confiscated for having given too much coverage to certain murders). In other words, Mussolini's censorship aimed at giving Italians the impression that under fascism social life was stable and in order.

These are known facts from the past, almost trivial to remember today. However... today we can ask ourselves, what is the use of censorship under democratic totalitarianism? Do we really think that the reality that emerges from today's mass media is the same one that we live in?

Do we really think that the new technologies, which have made available to those in power deadly means to “format” minds, to prepare them for obedience, have not been completely taken advantage of?

To what extent does something that we consider *reality* correspond to something that actually happened, tangible, rather than to a perceived, virtual, artificial fact? Let us here make a small concrete example: individual acts of revolt, sabotages. According to mass media, here in Italy they occur very rarely, sporadically. Publicly known facts are usually the ones which are claimed by the authors, best if in a roaring manner, or the ones that have such visible and resounding consequences that it would be simply impossible to silence. In other words, those acts that for institutional reasons – sometimes for obvious and other times unknown – are not neutralized in the most simple and summary way: filed away under “technical failure”. Isn’t it perhaps too obvious *to whom* it is most convenient to affirm that a given fire is the result of an unfortunate short circuit rather than a single match, *and for which reasons?* Who will ever notice the news of a technical failure? Unlike a sabotage, a malfunction does not run the risk of catching the eye and especially not of giving a bad example.

Let’s be clear, we are not saying that here in Italy the wild fires of subversion are uncontrollably spreading – this would mean falling into the opposite perception error – just that today, more than in the past, what we call *reality* is most often a construction. Configurable, correctable, extendible and reducible, marketable. This is made abundantly clear by taking a look at the misadventures that transpired over the last year to the structures that supply with energy the world in which we survive. The ones mentioned in the mass media. Those which, eluding the eye, escape reflection.

So, after a minimal search, to our surprise, we discover that: on 26 February there is a fire in the inverter cabin of a wind turbine park in Girifalco (Catanzaro); on 20 March an underground Enel [multinational energy company] cabin goes up in flames in Loseto (Bari); on 14 April there is a fire in an electricity distribution cabin in Cremona; on 23 April an Enel cabin goes up in flames in Villanova di Bernareggio (Monza); on 3 May, in Livorno, a fire in an Enel cabin causes a blackout along the seafront and in the southern neighbourhoods of the city; on 5 May, an Enel cabin goes up in smoke in Palermo; on 9 May, a fire starts in an Enel cabin near Feltre; on 10 May, in Rignano (Pisa), a Telecom relay goes up in flames (the official cause... a short circuit); on May 15, in Florence, a telephone relay flares up; on June 12, an Enel cabin in Forlì burns down; on June 17, another fire devastates the umpteenth electric cabin in Afragola (Naples); on June 18, four Enel cabins catch fire in Corchiano (Viterbo); on June 20, a fire shuts down an Enel cabin in Vasto Marina (Chieti); on June 22, an Enel cabin is literally struck by lightning in Asolo (Treviso); on June 26, in Sassuolo (Modena), a fire to an electric cabin causes yet another distress; on July 10, an Enel cabin catches fire in Cagliari; the next day, July 11, the same thing happens in Orco Feligno (Savona); on July 21, a telephone relay burns down in Pieve di Compito (Lucca); on August 7, Enel loses another cabin in Germignaga (Varese); on August 24, an electric cabin goes up in smoke near a wind park in Arquà Polesine (Rovigo); on August 25, another electric cabin catches fire in Manocalzati (Avellino); on 27 August, the centre of Pescara is affected by a blackout due to a fire that breaks out in an Enel cabin; on 9 September yet another Enel electric cabin goes up in smoke in Prato Perillo di Teggiano (Salerno), and we all read that on 13 September, in Rome, a blackout blocked most of the subway lines.

Now, all these facts (we want to point out once again that this list is not exhaustive and was put together rather hastily, making it justified to wonder how many more similar “accidents”

have occurred) were the result of “technical failures” or “short circuits”, according to mass media. However, at least in the case of the one which took place in Pisa on 10 May, we can find online an anonymous claim. Although this certainly does not mean that all these fires are the result of sabotages, the exact opposite can also be argued: it is not true that they are all the result of short circuits. And where the State’s lie begins and where it ends is impossible to define. If on top of all this we add the many failed arson attempts (because they didn’t spark, or were immediately contained or were thwarted in advance), which obviously don’t make it on the pages of the mainstream press, the number of incidents that took place, but were never reported, increase in a way that is beyond our calculation.

No, we certainly don’t want to force a glimpse or a dream of a reality that is practically overtaken by incendiary acts. We (attempt to) demonstrate that *what appears*, on mass media and on counter-information channels, is a dismal point of reference, a weak criteria, to try to grasp what is really moving and *its potentiality*. To grieve or regret “that nothing ever happens” makes little sense. It makes much more sense to ask oneself how (and where and why) to make something happen and, if it is deemed necessary, how to attempt to communicate it, piercing the techno-democratic censorship and attempting to give everyone a bad example. And once having found a possible answer, going for it.

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Translated for The Local Kids, Issue 5  
First appeared as *Ingannare le apparenze* on the website of Finimondo, September 2019

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