

“We were the rebels, we were the outlaws...”

Autobiographical fragments of men against

Belgrado Pedrini

2001

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These few lines that I am about to write to express my impressions on reading this book come straight from the heart. I won't talk about methods and strategies of struggle this time, but of the emotions that are the very reason of the latter.

Reading Belgrado Pedrini's words and the events that marked his life and that of other comrades takes me back through my experience as an anarchist, a journey in which I can find faces, places, events and tales that greatly contributed to forming my deep-rooted convictions and my way of dealing with life.

It would be pointless to indulge in the celebration of an 'heroic past' that I did not experience in first person, even to break the silence surrounding certain facts and people thanks to some of the 'official' historical accounts put forward by the anarchist movement. It would certainly be easy but it would not satisfy what I consider the most important aspect of this past, that is the unquestionable continuity between the necessity and desire for revolt today and that of the past.

This is also one of the reasons, perhaps the main one, why the comrades who can be found in this text had been condemned to silence.

In an epoch of reformism and the politics of 'let's do as little harm as possible', which unfortunately some anarchists are not extraneous to, events and words that strike with courage and push one to commit oneself in the war against authority without reserve could turn out to be inconvenient.

Today's situation has certainly changed and we do not breathe the same air. If it is true that millions of exploited have fallen into the golden trap of consumerist society, it is also true that false comforts and the tolerant hypocrisy of the technocratic regime have also found their way in the souls of all of us, and are affecting our desire for action.

It happens therefore that in order to not 'lose' something, the past becomes uncertain and everything is done to divert attention from the inevitability of the clash with the enemy. But the enemy is always the same, even if it has changed its mask, while social relations and forms of exploitation also have changed their facade: economic and political privilege, inequality and abuse turned into institution... and all those who nurture, protect and reproduce this social abomination.

In this way the actions that are depicted in these pages inevitably burst into the present and dig into the most sincere and courageous feelings that all lovers of freedom keep inside themselves. And they take you to the side of the many comrades that you find again or meet for the first time in this text, in that dimension of relentless struggle where time and age do not count.

You find yourself by their side... hidden behind a rock while laying an ambush to the nazi-fascists... in front of the strongboxes of a property to be raided guns in hand... among the bullets during gunfights against police and carabinieri... in the corridors and dark cells of the jails, those of Franco's dictatorship as well as those of 'democracy that came from the Resistance'... while engaging in the nth escape attempt... while taking part in any explosion of revolt.

Be aware, I'm not talking about fascinating visions or adventure stories. I'm talking about the same strength, the same decisive desire that shines in the eyes of the rebel who aims at his target today, who attacks by using the complicity of chemical materials today, who shouts today, who today writes and makes concrete his hostility towards a world that is becoming increasingly accustomed to the nocivity of power.

Belgrado Pedrini's words are here to tell us to go ahead and try the impossible with all the awareness and determination that each of us is capable of.

In this book I don't see a hero to be commemorated or an era or situation to feel nostalgic about. On the contrary I see the fire that can warm the veins and put in tension muscles and nerves of those who want to find the chance to take this existent-prison off its hinges and deal with the world as free beings, those whose hearts and limbs are not weakened by resignation.

This is the track that unites anarchists from generation to generation and I'm convinced that books like this can contribute to its awakening in the minds, tension and action of those who rebel today, and of those who will do tomorrow.

Guido Mantelli

Introduction

As we publish this autobiography of Belgrado Pedrini along with some direct testimonies of other comrades, we think it is important to introduce it with this note, given the partial incompleteness of the work due to the death of the author.

It is well known that during the fascist dictatorship the Italian Ministry of the Interior would issue a Bulletin of Research containing a long list of names of subversives to be arrested or persecuted, most of them anarchists. It was preceded by a note depicting all rebel youths who did not fit in with the strict discipline imposed by the regime as 'lazy people', 'dedicated to vices' and 'prone to violence'. Comrades Belgrado Pedrini, Giovanni Zava and Gino Giorgi, who in fact began the resistance against fascism long before September 8 1943, were described as such.

These comrades began their armed struggle after disarming and beating five militant fascists in a tavern in Carrara. Living underground, they operated between Milan, Carrara and La Spezia, carrying out actions of propaganda as well as armed and explosive attacks against well-known fascist officials and barracks.

One night in November 1943 they were caught by a nazi-fascist troop in a street in Milan while fly-posting. When ordered to surrender, the three comrades answered with their weapons. A gunfight followed lasting a few hours. In spite of the fact that they had reached the limit of their strength and were surrounded by fascists, the three managed to escape and took refuge in La Spezia, where unfortunately they were recognized and denounced by a spy of OVRA.

One night, just as they finished distributing leaflets they bumped into a troop of Italian and German policemen. A fascist official died in the gunfight that followed. The three comrades, by then wounded and without bullets, were finally captured. Dragged from barracks to barracks between La Spezia and Milan, they underwent indescribable torture before being taken to Massa to await trial and certain execution. In fact, the martial law established the death penalty for their 'crimes', which included possession of weapons and the murder of fascists.

The fascists wanted to carry out an exemplary and fast execution of the rebels in order to inflict a blow on the armed resistance in Carrara. It happened that Giovanni Zava, who had been seriously wounded in the struggle, was unable to walk. As martial law established that the condemned had to walk in front of the firing squad, the trial and execution had to be postponed.

These comrades were later freed by a group of partisans in June 1944, and continued the armed struggle against the nazi-fascists in the mountains of Carrara until April 1945 and even afterwards. To show its thanks to them for their engagement in this struggle, the Republic born from the Resistance threw them in jail for more than 30 years.

As shown by comrade Sergio Ravenna in an important article entitled: '1943: What is the truth?' published in the bimestrial magazine *'Il Mensile Apuolunense'* of October-November 1984, the first armed combat against fascists was carried out by local anarchists in September 1943 in Monte D'Armi (east of Carrara). Nazis on 'Tiger' tanks were raiding a group of 'Alpini' (members of the Italian Alpine troops) of the 'Val di Fossa' Division. Sergio writes: 'Marcello Grassi was hit by a Tiger tank not far from me (shreds of his body were found on the road below) while Mauro Segnanini and Giuseppe Galeotti (Giorgio) were wounded in the leg, luckily not seriously.'

After this combat and others that followed, the comrades took possession of the weapons abandoned by the Alpini and also managed to take those that had been confiscated at the 'Dogali' barracks. Moreover the 'Breda' arms deposit in Massa was looted and the weapons hidden in a cave in Valbona. Other weapons were hidden at 'Lorano II', in Ugo Mazzucchelli's caves.

Meantime the first survivors of the Renicci d'Anghiari concentration camp returned, among them comrades Giuseppe Azzari, Perissino Venturelli, Onofrio Lodovici, Napoleone Vanelli, etc. In the Apuan area the nazi-fascist army issued the first notification of compulsory enlistment, which was totally ignored by the youths of the area. The latter preferred to go underground and join the partisan groups in the mountains.

A few days after the Monte D'Armi operation the comrades who had carried it out came back to the town, captured isolated nazis and fascists and took them to a place known as 'the hole' on via Beccheria. The prisoners were eventually taken to the mountains.

Meantime a number of armed combats were undertaken by comrades in different parts of the town and the surrounding area (Avenza, Fossola, San Francesco, Miseglia, Gragnana, Torano, Castelpoggio, Campo Cecina, etc). During these fights fascists of the black brigades and nazis were captured and eventually taken to the mountains.

In the Carrara area a number of anarchist partisan groups, such as SAP-FAI, 'Lucetti', 'Lunense', 'Elio' and others, were very active.

In the above-mentioned article, Sergio writes: 'One morning in October 1943, as we were still few in number, we saw a small group of partisans led by Elio Wochieevich. Elio was wearing a German uniform and was on his way to attack the prison in Sarzana where a number of comrades were being held awaiting execution. The action was successful and the liberated comrades joined his group (...). The 'Elio', whose vice-commander was Giovanni Mariga, was the first anarchist partisan group to operate in the Apuane Alps. At the time the CNL (National Liberation Committee) did not yet exist and all the groups were autonomous. We did not even call ourselves partisans but bandits'. The undertakings of Elio, Mariga (known as Padovan) and their comrades are documented in the CNL archives in Carrara. The following actions are to be remembered: June 1944, the 'Elio' attacked the prison in Massa and freed more than 50 prisoners, including comrades Pedrini, Zava and Giorgi; November 11 1944, dressed as German soldiers, Elio and Padovan blocked a column of nazi lorries on the Aurelia road. On that occasion they disarmed fifteen soldiers who were escorting a number of handcuffed prisoners, including a priest, and freed them. Other nazis who arrived in tanks were confused by the German uniforms worn by the partisans, and started shooting at one another, while the small group of comrades escaped without any losses.

In order to understand the importance of the anarchist group 'Elio' in the partisan struggle, we mention what its commander wrote in the military report entitled 'Constitution, engagement and activities of the 'Elio' group in the Apuan area', which is in the CNL Archive in Carrara: '...

in Campo Cecina I formed the 'Elio Group'. I managed to provide it with the following weapons in absolute administrative and tactical autonomy:

- 2 'Breda' heavy eight-bore machine guns with 20,000 rounds,
- 4 machine guns with 5,000 rounds,
- 2 German light machine guns with 3,000 rounds,
- 7 German automatic pistols,
- 15 'Beretta' machine guns,
- 15 Sten guns,
- 40 'Mauser' German guns,
- 50 type 41 rifles,
- 15 type 41 guns,
- 200 hand grenades,
- 50 quintals of TNT with fuse.

* * *

JULY 1944

20/7: 400 blankets and 6 quintals of TNT are stolen from TODT.

27/7: Ponte Storto Bridge is blown up.

AUGUST 1944

14/8: the road Castelpoggio-Campo Cecina is blasted.

16/8: a German tank is attacked and two soldiers and an officer are killed.

23/8: our action front... 15 SS agents are killed and a German commander is captured... the SS attack our position in order to free the captured officer.

The enemy retreats, I am wounded...the combat is finally successful: 38 prisoners, 15 dead, 3 machineguns, three automatic handguns, and 30 Mauser guns. The German commando is warned that the captured SS will be executed in the case of reprisals.

SEPTEMBER 1944

9/9: two partisan prisoners captured during the combat of 7/9/44 are freed.

28/9: 5 SS agents captured in Grazzano are disarmed.

OCTOBER 1944

2/10: our group, dressed as SS, raid the town in broad daylight.

14/10: the Linea Gotica military positions (M.Sagro, Campo-Cecina, Castelpoggio and Torano) are blown up.

19/10: our group prevent the Germans from blowing up Vara Bridge by taking and setting fire to the explosive that the Germans had kept to carry this out.

NOVEMBER 1944

1/11: Action in Via Aurelia in broad daylight, seizing of weapons and bullets, capture of 15 soldiers, combat and escape from the enemy.

2/11: Carrara is occupied on our initiative, a huge raid of weapons and vans is successfully carried out, 35 prisoners are captured...?

In September 1944 the occupying nazi army and the fascist black brigades carried out thousands of arsons, raids, massacres, destruction of houses and atrocities of all kinds, especially in the areas of Fivizzano, Carrara, Massa and Terrarossa. This was all due to the fact that the Gothic

Line was progressively established and that the Allied forces, instead of attacking as they had promised, were waiting for the winter to pass. The partisans operating in this area created the Unified Commando of the Apuana Brigade, wanting to discipline the activities of the single formations which had been autonomous until then, all motivated by wanting to face the need to coordinate the military operations against the nazi fascists. ***

This led to the election of a representative for each group and attribution of responsibility for military actions before the CLN. At the same time the latter gained discretionary powers concerning discipline and the military and political efficiency of the groups. In this sense, the groups had to obey the orders of the Brigade Commando.

Elio, Mariga, Pedrini and their comrades did not agree with this militaristic turn in the partisan struggle. They were therefore considered uncontrollable and incompatible with order and discipline and were emarginated due to their need of autonomy and individual responsibility.

When the liberation was completed, the evil hand of Palmiro Togliatti, man of Moscow and now minister of justice, reached out against the anarchists whom he now declared enemies. Pedrini, Zava and Giorgi were arrested again – as were thousands of other partisans who did not give sufficient guarantee to the new-born bourgeois republican order – for events linked to the gunfight in La Spezia in 1942. They were each sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Giovanni Mariga had a similar destiny to that of his comrades, in spite of the fact that during the war of liberation he was asked by the British Commando to execute SS commander Walter Reder – author of numerous massacres including those of Marzabotto and Vergate – a task that was eventually revoked because of fears inside the CLN of possible bloody reprisals by the Germans. Moreover the Allied British Commando of occupation in Italy (Fifth Group) had proposed that he be awarded a gold medal for his courageous and numerous actions against the nazi-fascists. However, Giovanni Mariga being a true anarchist had refused this medal. Unfortunately he was not able to refuse the life imprisonment inflicted by the justice of the Italian republic born from the Resistance, for having killed a well-known fascist and his wife in Santo Stefano Magra in 1946.

All these comrades were guilty of being antifascist in too radical a way, which was incompatible with the interests of the Republic and the new process of pacification. In fact, communist and justice minister Palmiro Togliatti conceded an amnesty to all fascists and opportunistically ‘forgot’ to grant it to his real class enemies, the anarchists.

Anarchist Circle ‘Baffardello’ from Carrara

We the partisans, we the Bandits!

*The persecuted ones are not those you see
in the press or on the stage.*

You can't see them.

*They are locked up in gloomy jails,
have empty bellies and
are putrefied by laws and abuse.*

You keep them out of sight

*and they live through dark seasons
among the ruins of dignity.
But as they are free in their thoughts
even if their throats are torn apart
by silence and solitude,
you will find them alive
ready to defend the rising world.*

Giovanni Boni, 'Il Monello', *The persecuted of Gestapo*, 1945

My story is the story of my comrades and it is similar to that of many other partisans who ended up in jail after the Liberation. The feverish days of hope, laughter and joy were over. We found ourselves at the starting point. In other words lost and without a sou, exposed to the blows of destiny. So we decided to keep on struggling against old and new bosses without reserve, as we had done in the past years.

We were once again bandits for those who used to call us comrades before they took power. Fascism was wearing new colours, those of the new parties: from the Christian Democrat to the Communist and the Socialist Parties. The Resistance was by then an empty word, written in capital letters in the Constitution of the new social-bourgeois republic.

Libertarian ideas, which had been so important in the real Resistance, had been opportunistically banned by the new bosses and governors. However, every action of heroism and sacrifice carried out by comrades in the struggle against nazi-fascism for social liberation will never be lost.

Memories are alive as are the torture and suffering we endured in the nazi camps. Our dead are numerous and anonymous. Those who carried out the Resistance were given nothing, especially as they asked for nothing if not freedom and reciprocal and solid equality among men. Money has never had any values in the moral code of these men. That is what I learned and practised during my partisan struggle.

I was the youngest Gappista [member of the GAP, proletarian armed group] in Italy. I was sixteen and a member of the clandestine communist party. During the Resistance I left the party. I was too rebellious and intolerant of discipline and hierarchy and my love for freedom was too great to be constrained within the narrow borders traced by a party. The libertarian idea that in a sense I had always had – as shown by my battle name, Monello [rascal] – became my philosophy and my style of life.

My encounter with anarchist Giovanni Mariga, known as Padovan, who was the same age as my father, changed my life. It happened on the mountains between Tuscany and Emilia in 1944 and was quite heated. For the first time I met a man who seemed more rebellious and 'skilled' than I was. In spite of the fact that he said little and was quite rude and only inclined to action (he liked making programs with guns), he had an extraordinary humanity that expressed itself in uncommon courage.

He was proud, generous and strongly individualist, always giving the comrades all of himself without expecting anything in return. He was the first of a long series of comrades of ideas and action with whom I shared the bad and good moments of life. An unwritten code regulated

our relationship, which was based on our libertarian idea and held in all our actions: absolute sincerity, never betray one another and total refusal of any compromise.

I don't intend to list my partisan enterprises here. I don't intend to tell you about my journeys from prison to prison, both during the partisan struggle and in the post-war period. And I don't intend to list the numerous escape attempts from all the jails I 'visited' and which led me to the criminal mental asylum in Aversa, as an 'award' given to me by democratic justice.

On the contrary, I want to talk about the comrades with whom I had strong and perhaps unique relations in ideas and life. I want to try to describe the luck I had in finding such comrades by my side, so rich in human qualities and who helped me to hold on to my pride and dignity even in the darkest moments. In other words, I want to tell you about what makes a man a man, whatever the circumstances of life.

I met Belgrado for the first time in the sixties in the transit section of a prison in Florence. It was as if once again I was with the old comrades of the partisan struggle (Mariga, Sergio, Zava and many others) once again. Belgrado had many similarities with the others but he was more of a 'philosopher', as he had vast knowledge that he had gained as a self-taught man. At the same time he was extremely naïve, as though he were a child gifted with sublime intelligence.

Zava looked a typical gentleman or a serious lawyer with refined manners and elegant clothes, but he was actually a real 'joker' who liked playing tricks. He was also the favourite 'victim' of the tricks we used to play against him. In Santo Stefano prison he secretly ate Sante Pollastro's cat and only revealed the truth to Sante many years later. The prison director's dog had a similar destiny... Giovanni Zava was not a son of a bitch, he was the son of a cooperative of bitches! He had an extraordinary ability for action and was very extrovert.

Sergio Ravenna had a great ability for thought and action and was also gifted with an almost supernatural ideal. It was he who supported all of us during the odyssey of our incarcerations. Thanks to his numerous acquaintances he never let us down as regards active solidarity and concrete help that saved us from critical situations. Sergio totally despised material things and his libertarian ideal pushed him to help us even if that meant he would be deprived of necessities. I think Sergio was the best and most human comrade I have ever met in my life.

When they got out of prison after a very long period of detention, Mariga, Zava and Pedrini, along with Sergio and other 'old' comrades, founded the 'Bruno Filippi' anarchist circle, which was located at Ponte Baroncino in Carrara. In this way we started our activity as revolutionary anarchists again and were once more in the middle of the movement of libertarian social subversion that had been and still is our life's reason. Our solidarity activity was then directed towards the new young rebels and comrades who were under the repressive attack of the democratic Italian State between the end of the seventies and the eighties. Now I let a young comrade who joined 'Bruno Filippi' speak so that he can tell you about his experience when he met us, the 'old ones'.

A warm greeting to all of you by Il Monello
(Giovanni Boni)

On revolt and on life

It is quite difficult to talk about one's experiences when the latter put you in conflict

with yourself. I don't intend to talk about anarchism in terms of ideology but of an anarchism that takes off from revolt and that is something that belongs to me. And it is in this sense that I want to talk about the 'Bruno Filippi'.

As a kid I started with little acts of rebellion like many other kids. In particular I was in conflict with my family as my grandfather taught me not even to accept my father's orders. My grandfather was one of the first partisans and his ideas were based on Stirner's statement: *the best teacher is the one who teaches revolt to his pupils*.

'Bruno Filippi' was born after the experience of the cultural circle of Via degli Ulivi. There was the urge to create a circle that did something more than distribute books and information. We wanted to create a place where the comrades could talk about radical struggle in society and carry out minimal local struggles (for example those concerning the disastrous situation of the roads, the struggles on the side of the truck drivers, social illbeing, etc) as well as engaging in more serious issues on a national level, those typical of the seventies and eighties such as terrorism and armed struggle that were being discussed on a daily basis inside the movement of social subversion. In this context my experience and that of many other young comrades developed, as we were young rebels becoming anarchists in revolt.

The 'Bruno Filippi' broke with the conformism that had been enveloping the anarchist movement in Carrara for a long while, leading to very harsh arguments with those who wanted to have a quiet life and had chosen the more comfortable road of opportunism in order to keep a distance from the risk of possible repression. We expressed full solidarity to the most radical and informal anarchist experiences, even the armed ones (like AR). We strongly opposed all the historical and official expressions of anarchism in Carrara, which were by then reduced to commemorations and remembrances of a distant past so extraneous to the daily social life of the town. At the 'Bruno Filippi' our ideas and life were not separate from what we actually did in our social struggles. There was no difference between theory and action at that moment.

At the time there was ferocious repression against the movement of social and radical antagonism in all its expressions. A great number of trials and arrests were being carried out against comrades that cops and judges were accusing of belonging to this or that armed organization. So we used to attend the various trials against comrades being held in different towns (Livorno, Florence, etc).

We truly supported subversive struggle and were accomplices with those who were hit by police and judicial repression. Our presence and that of many other comrades at these trials gave us and the imprisoned comrades enthusiasm and will to struggle. To struggle against the State had become a daily event and a way of feeling for all of us.

At first the relationship between the young and the so-called 'old' comrades was quite turbulent at 'Bruno Filippi'. As far as I was concerned, I wanted to act and I was looking for immediate methods that did not actually fit with the specificity of the questions we were dealing with. I thought I was capable of doing everything, as does any young man who is hothead and enthusiast.

Maybe the older comrades were exactly trying to teach the impossible. The fact that they were passionate and cynical came from their way of permanently facing life and revolt. I couldn't grab the sense of this, as I hadn't spent half of my life in prison as they had. However, it was my 'bad' conflict with these 'damned' anarchists that made me grow in all directions without creating myths of any sort. When people are really alive and are not puppets there can be no formal relations or pre-arranged paths. That's the reason why totally horizontal, face to face relations

don't leave space for opportunism. These comrades were rude and sharp but at the same time they had a humanity that can be found nowhere today. Our life, the movement, thought and action were one single thing. We intended life as 'play'.

No discourse based on rigid organisation was ever made, nor did fixed affinity groups exist. The groups that were formed at a certain moment only served the action of the moment and then dissolved. There was no leader, we had solid and free relations where power was absent. We respected any direct action of revolt without privileging any sectors. These comrades taught me to do more than I thought I could do. As they had spent half of their life in jail, these comrades wanted 'everything now', in total and free responsibility.

My closest relation was with Belgrado and Sergio, who were those who spent most time at the circle. I was impressed by their great open-mindedness and understanding of the various positions, and by their modesty so distant from the arrogance of those who have vast knowledge. I was very fond of a sentence that Belgrado used to repeat: 'I'm proud to have never given an hour of work to the State'. As for Sergio I remember his great humanity and strength of character. He was the only one who for more than thirty years supported Belgrado, Mariga, Zava and many other comrades locked up in the jails of the State, and he clashed with those who despite being anarchists were conforming and adapting themselves to the new State born after the Resistance. These comrades were always there and their solidarity went beyond the circle of their own comrades and was directed to all those who were against power, inside and outside prison.

The 'Bruno Filippi' circle had a short life but its subversive anarchist activity was intense in Carrara, thanks to Belgrado, Sergio, Zava, Mariga and other comrades. Theory always went along with practice and against any specialisation of life and struggle. We also used to move to other towns to support other comrades' activity, and many comrades from all over Italy and even from abroad visited the 'Bruno Filippi'. Of course this new wave of subversive anarchist activity in the town worried the vigilant authority, especially as it was truly alive. And we endured searches and other stuff. But something that had been lost in the anarchist movement during the years was taken back again.

As regards Belgrado, Mariga and the other 'old' comrades' views on armed struggle, such as that which marked our movement (AR), their understanding was much more positive and open than that of many young comrades who were therefore more conformist and prone to fit into the system, and in that they were not different from old conservatives. The 'old' comrades were always ready to learn. And I learned from them that nothing is due to anybody... what counts is respect and trust to your comrades. Humanity, dignity and even cruelty are the things that make life and revolt... without teachers or leaders.

A comrade from the anarchist circle 'Bruno Filippi'.

Who is the anarchist-nihilist?

He's the one with two parallel lives,
and each life wants the head of the other.
And there's a killer demon in him,
puffing like a drake of ancient fairytales.

But he's a sincere demon and in the night
he walks clandestine among us.
And if there's no hope
and everything heads to destruction
he's an effervescent 'human bomb'
that can explode at any moment against society!
Sweet and ruthless at the same time
he takes the distance from
those who would like to tame him.
He's inexorable
and doesn't have grace or good manners.
He doesn't forgive.
He follows his code
as bandits do.
He gives you the possibility to surrender before he shoots at you.
But inside the puffing drake a prince is hidden,
who suffers for all cruelty and injustice.
Inside this wild explosive animal
a tender sensible soul lives,
which soon learned
to wrap itself in the fire
to protect its living flesh.
No man in revolt is more cynical, cruel and poisonous than he
when he shouts his intolerance
towards this world.
Snakes pour out of his iconoclastic fury
and his rebellion is similar to madness.
But the intelligence and strength of the most audacious of creators
Conceal behind the chaos and madness of the surface.
This demon of bad thought
is an artist of life
and only speaks the language of the fire of revolt.
He knows he has to make space to be listened to,
ears that can hear,
and for that he has dynamite as his companion.
He knows he must sacrifice himself sometimes
in order to give back dignity and value
to the words 'freedom' and 'human'.
He has never known those ghosts created by fear and confusion,
which men call 'enemy'.
Nobody knows better than him that
'the man's enemy is the man'.
He has a furious awareness:
freedom does not depend on
the will of the mass,

but only on the immediate destruction
of everything that governs this old world, which is strangling all of us.
He could not surrender
not even if he wanted.
He can only surrender to death.
And you, so bloody indifferent and inert,
who let the monsters holding power
use more refined and deadly weapons against
the weak and the harmless,
and against entire populations,
don't you think that he's got all the reasons of this world for
exploding as he likes at the time he fixes and without warning?
There exist no innocent!
The time and space for creation are *here and now*.
And every insurgent of the will of life
moves in 'a circle of visible destinies',
lord of the realm of life without slaves.

Aliens

drawn from *L'ESPLOSIONE*
anarchist-nihilist paper of insurrectionist correspondence

Autobiographical sketches of *men against*

**'In the hell of life
the noblest part of humanity comes in.
The others stay on the threshold and get warm'**

Hebbel

Chapter 1. The protagonists

Carrara is a town of sound anarchist traditions, traditions that go far back in time. A clear example of the Carraresi's love for freedom is the League of the Spartans, which united many of my fellow citizens in the nineteenth century, in Bakunin's time

These proto-anarchists, whose memory is still alive today, were a bit rough and often illiterate, but full of that generosity, humanity and most importantly great sense of autonomy as the first step to freedom that are the typical characteristics of the anarchists of my generation.

Unable to put up with having to live and work for a boss, being exploited and feeling like slaves, they would work like this way in order to stay autonomous and free: they cleaned up the debris left by the capitalist exploiters in the marble caves, and in doing so did them a favour. Then, following in the ancient craftsmen's tradition, they used this debris to make mirror frames, mortars, flower vases and other objects, which they then sold in the local market or in others around the province.

At the time it was widely known that these spartans were less well off than the other workers, the marble quarriers. Hence we deduce that in order to be free these people preferred - and did so for many years - to remain in worse conditions than the other exploited in order to feel autonomous, more free. Freedom was priceless to them, even in times of hunger.

A similar example could be found in all the Liguria region, which borders the Carrara area. There were two different types of contract for those who embarked, for those who worked at sea. The two contracts foresaw different wages. The lesser paid seamen, those with the lower wages, had at least the right to protest, grumble and insult the boss.

In the second half of the 19th century the inhabitants of my area, the workers, the marble quarry workers, the exploited and most of the seamen from Liguria adhered unanimously to the ideology spread first by Bakunin and by Gori, Malatesta and Toccafondi later: libertarian socialism. So from my region, notable and not so notable figures of the anarchist movement emerged. The history of these events and these men has already been written.

So I am going to talk about the land where I was born, where I spent my childhood years and where I developed the ideals for which I have struggled, the ideals for which I have spent half my life in prison, the ideals for which I still intend to struggle now that I am out, the ideals thanks to which I survived and for which I still intend to live and fight.

Chapter 2. The period before the war

My mother died when I was nine years old and unfortunately I remember very little of her. My father was a sculptor, he made marble sculptures and he used to travel the world and visit many towns for his activity. He called me Belgrado because the memory of this beautiful town was still alive to him.

My father was a free thinker and was interested in the problems of the people and the exploited. He read a lot. He had his special way of studying life, especially the relationships among individuals. But he never expressed a real idea nor was he engaged in any political activity. I don't remember him lifting a finger in the struggle against the bosses, the state, the fascists and the church.

I must point out that he never agreed with fascism, on the contrary he dreamt of a free collective life. Sometimes he expressed his disagreement with fascism and Mussolini in short speeches and little jokes. The authorities of the town heard about his positions. Once he was taken to the local Casa del Fascio [fascist premises] and threatened. The fascists spoke to him clearly saying that if he wanted to be safe it would be better for him to avoid expressing himself in the way he was used to doing. In spite of this he was never persecuted and kept on talking badly about fascism inside his house.

When asked about anarchism, which I had embraced at the age of eighteen, he would say: 'Look, these ideas of yours are very beautiful but I have the impression that you will end up very badly thanks to them, you'll end up in jail or in a mental asylum. Don't be in a hurry, don't let yourself be taken too much by this ideology, which is the most human but also the most improbable in this fascist shit'. He added: 'I think you could live more quietly, this is not the right time to struggle under that flag, better to wait for the end of the dictatorship'. Basically, however, my father didn't despise my ideology; on the contrary in the last years of his life, as I was enduring imprisonment and repression, he sympathized further with the anarchists in Carrara and therefore with my ideas. I can add that of all the exponents of the anarchist movement that my father met, Errico Malatesta was the one who most impressed him. My father met Malatesta in Milan, held him in high esteem and they became friends. When Malatesta was on hunger strike in San Vittore prison in Milan in 1920, my father talked to me about him and said: 'I have never in my whole life met a man whose thought is so grandiose and human as Errico Malatesta's'. He used to point out Errico's extraordinary qualities: frugality, kindness, generosity and humanity.

Once he said: 'I remember seeing him sitting on a rock, surrounded by his comrades and sharing with them quite naturally a piece of bread and some figs. Because of his simple pleasant attitude, I thought that if I hadn't had so many problems, a big family and children to raise and if I had been younger and freer I wouldn't have hesitated to join the movement and his comrades'.

After the first world war anarchists in Carrara took up the struggle against the bosses and the state again. In those years the Piastrone group was created, which opposed the coming to power of fascism with all possible means. As Picelli and his Arditi del Popolo [The Brave of the People] along with the revolutionary unionists tried to block Mussolini's march on Rome in Parma, the

comrades in Carrara acted in the same way in their town. I was a kid at the time but I don't remember hearing that there were other groups willing to stop the coming of fascism with every means.

When I was young, an anarchist who impressed me was a guy called Forzetti. One day, as he was tired of being chased by fascists and carabinieri, he shot at them for purely ideological reasons. For this he was sentenced to 30 years and I met him in prison in Pianosa in 1937 or in 1938.

If I were to tell all the facts, anecdotes and actions carried out by anarchists in Carrara and Tuscany against fascism an entire volume would not be enough. I just want to point out that my comrades never made the same mistake as the socialists and communists of surrendering almost completely to the rise of fascism until 1943. Anarchists never surrendered to fascism and kept on struggling well after April 25, even if within the limits of their means.

They wrote leaflets and posters and defended themselves with arms when necessary. During the fascist era, as I couldn't find the collaboration of large groups of comrades and of the mass, I began my subversive anarchist activity as an individualist. Not that I believed in Nietzsche, Stirner and Ciancabilla's theories, on the contrary I considered myself a collectivist, a libertarian communist. However, as I couldn't react to fascism in an organised and collective way, I ended up living my anarchism with individual actions, or rather reactions.

My libertarian awareness came from a personal scientific analysis that I had matured when I was young. My revolt was soon directed against authority, fascism, abuse, capital, the state, the exploitation of men over men and against all the things that didn't let me breathe, didn't let me feel an individual.

When I was eighteen, therefore, I joined the clandestine anarchist movement of Carrara. In spite of the fact that this movement was being persecuted, it survived meetings, discussions, collective reading, distribution of books and papers, leafleting, flyposting and actions of war against the regime.

From time to time we met in a place called the 'Buco' [the hole] in Carrara: passing through a trapdoor we entered a little underground room lit by candles, and there we discussed what to do. We analysed the present and tried to affect the future. Actions, which were usually organized and carried out by a single comrade or two at most, were realized with the means that we managed to get hold of. Each one acted according to his conscience, thinking out and realizing a project in the most autonomous way. It was thanks to this kind of clandestine life that Luccetti developed his plan and tried to kill Mussolini using a bomb he made himself. Unfortunately his attempt failed, but at least he tried, which is the important thing.

I think Luccetti is the typical example of the anarchist who, given the impossibility of carrying out collective actions of emancipation with the masses and among the masses because of oppression and lack of freedom under the fascist regime, ends up realizing his anarchism, his revolution, with the only means he has at his disposal: individual action. He acted against the regime, the oppressor, authority and the state; and he organized all his actions himself with his own strength and ability.

The survival of the clandestine anarchist movement to which I belonged, therefore, depended on the work of single persons, which was discontinuous but constant through time. In spite of the oppression, comrades in Carrara produced leaflets inviting people to react against the dictator and struggle for their freedom, and slipped these leaflets through doors of houses or left them in station waiting rooms and on the tables in bars.

It was in this atmosphere of continuous conspiracy that I developed my plans against the regime and the fascist state.

I reached the Buco and my clandestine life by studying and reading. The study of Nietzsche led me to Bakunin's anarchism. As a young boy, at the age of 15, I read the works of this German philosopher: 'The Twilight of the Gods', 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' and ***'Gaia Scienza'. At first I was very impressed by these works because they expressed the philosopher's hatred towards Christian and bourgeois societies. But as time passed, I became unsatisfied with Nietzsche's ideas. My thought, in fact, had been always linked to egalitarianism, libertarian socialism and collectivism. Pushed by my rebellion and my thirst for knowledge, I finally got Stirner's 'The Ego'. A few months later I was unsatisfied with Stirner too.

In conclusion I can say that I spent my life under the fascist regime as a free man through my reading, and it was only after I studied the classic works of Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Cafiero, etc. that I started calling myself anarchist. Only then did I join the comrades in Carrara, and it was with them that I started my actions. Of those years I remember comrades Giovanni Zava, Oreste Bonucelli, the Tolaini brothers and Orgate (the man with the limp). It was with them that I discussed, acted and ended up in jail. And it was them that I met again, once we regained freedom and restarted our actions of a lifetime. I was beaten and charged with subversive propaganda with them, I was condemned with them and I started acting with them once again when we were freed.

At the time I personally thought about and planned actions that often however never actually happened. Once I even planned a brilliant attack against the Casa del Fascio [House of Fascism] in Carrara, its secretary, Renato Ricci, and his soldiers. But again the action couldn't be realized.

Chapter 3. My first experiences in jail

As I've already said, I ended up in the jails of fascist Italy a number of times during the regime. To tell you the truth I don't remember exactly how many times and for what specific reasons. However, in 1937 or 1938 I was locked up in Pianosa, in the sixth pavilion. I was taken to cell number two, while in cell number three there was a comrade, Natale Fruzzetti. During the time we spent in the exercise yard we discussed possible revolts or we analysed the situation together, something that became habitual.

There were other antifascist prisoners in that jail, including the socialist Pertini. I remember that at the time there was a deep debate going on among the socialists about what was happening in the URRS between Trotsky and Stalin.

One day the socialists were more excited than usual and were questioning the thesis that had been developed at the last congress of the International. The point was whether so-called state socialism had to exist only in one single state. During that congress Trotsky had forecast the failure of the Russian experience, both on an international level and inside the country. According to Trotsky the reason for that was the fact that the Soviet Union was the only 'socialist' country. On the contrary, certain socialists and even communists agreed with Stalin who maintained that Russia must be the only socialist country and the only leading country. Pertini was among the socialists who supported Trotsky and his thesis.

Natale Fruzzetti, who was a simple man and didn't talk a lot, felt the urge to intervene in the debate. I remember him reminding the socialists that it was pointless to struggle in favour of one or the other position, given that the quarrel between Trotsky and Stalin had another connotation: Stalin was more powerful and considered Trotsky an opponent to be eliminated. Fruzzetti maintained that had Trotsky been the more powerful he would have acted against his rival in the same way. He said: 'I think that we shouldn't be interested in their family quarrels. I suggest we analyse the social questions that concern us most and let those two men of state sort things out between themselves, in their place and in their logic of power'.

Pertini answered with statements of this kind: 'Our theoretical questions lead us to analyse the international situation. You anarchists can reach your own conclusions but this is not politics for us. Your goal is the only one you can achieve through your methods. I think you are not fit for certain questions. You are too short sighted and can't understand the objectivity of our specific dilemmas. But I understand you and I know I can discuss the ideological nature of social questions with you. However I prefer to avoid, without you feeling offended, discussing foreign politics with you. From a strictly ideological and anarchist point of view you are right, but as socialists we are interested in what happens in Russia, even if it's only a problem of power'.

At that time I was a neophyte and to me Russia was only a country where a revolution had occurred. In spite of the atmosphere of conspiracy that characterized us anarchists, the limits that I had as an eighteen years old and the little and irregular news about what had happened in Russia between 1917 and 1920, I had my opinions about that, which I never changed in forty-five years. I definitely considered the creation of a state and of a red (proletarian) dictatorship

in Russia a negative event, but I was impressed by the fact that armed people had first defeated bosses and rulers and had eventually kept what they had conquered with arms as best as they could. For example, Makhno made his revolution in the Ukraine and tried to make a libertarian one, in spite of the struggle against the whites first and the reds later.

My anarchist comrades and I would have liked to have imitated the Russians in this first phase. We knew all too well that we were very few against a well-organised fascist state, but in the name of our idea of a better society, we longed to set an example and to modify the objectively negative conditions of the moment so that the exploited would organize themselves in a libertarian-socialist way.

As for the history of the Russian revolution, the events in Kronstadt impressed me particularly, when sailors in revolt tried for the last time to make the revolution and fight without reserve against the Bolshevik power, the red bosses. I never forgot the repression that followed, when Lenin and Trotsky, who was the chief of the Red Army, ordered the execution of anarchists, sailors and revolutionaries.

When Bakunin split with Marx in the First International, he had already forecast what actually happened in Russia during the revolution and after the creation of a new socialist state.

As far as Lenin and Trotsky are concerned, I have always supported Malatesta's comment after Lenin's death: 'Lenin is dead, good! Long live freedom!'.

Chapter 4. 1942-1944

The resistance against fascism in Carrara and all over Italy had been going on for twenty years, since the regime took over. Anarchists carried out sporadic but continuous actions, both in small groups or acting singularly, and for this reason they were in and out of jail or deported.

One night a few comrades and I went to a tavern in Carrara and there we found seven or eight militant fascists armed with knives, which were their usual weapon when they didn't have truncheons or guns. A picture of Mussolini and a skull were engraved on each knife. As the fascists were annoying the innkeeper's young sisters, with their typical 'delicacy', we intervened immediately with our guns, disarmed them and slapped them in the face. We acted in this way not so much because of the silly things they were saying or doing but in order to offload a tiny part of the fierce hatred we nurtured towards them. The action ended well, but the day after the fascist militia headed by commander Evangelisti started their hunt against us. They went to look for us in our houses and in the places that we used to frequent. Luckily they didn't find us, otherwise it would have been our end. At the time, in fact, it was sufficient to have a gun in your pocket to be executed without trial.

That was not our first action carried out without wearing masks. We had been acting like that, risking everything, for one year. We were now in an open war against the regime and were ready to risk even our life. In order not to be arrested we took refuge in Milan. In a night of November 1942, a year when fascism was stronger than ever and very few people dared attack the black shirts, I was fly-posting a clandestine poster in Milan, which I had printed myself and which invited Italians to stand up against the war, Mussolini and fascism. Police on patrol caught me and another two comrades. We defended ourselves by shooting and managed to flee after sending two policemen to hospital. The day after the newspaper of the regime, '*Popolo d'Italia*' [People of Italy], depicted us as 'delinquents and saboteurs of the moral resistance of the armed forces'. And it regretted we hadn't been killed.

Our freedom, however, didn't last long: we had been identified by the OVRA [fascist secret service], which had been tracking us since it had been alerted by the fascist militia of Carrara. That night we managed to make them lose all trace of us in piazza Cairoli, by shooting from street to street. Then we found shelter at Porta Ticinese, in my sister's house. The next morning my little nephew, coming back home after buying some milk, warned us that the road outside the house was full of plain clothes officers. They were waiting for us. We had guns and hand grenades but I didn't want any shooting to occur in my sister's house. It was all right for us to die, we were fighters, but if we had caused the death of women and children we would have been responsible for a massacre.

We went out in the street. We walked ahead while the officers followed us with their guns ready in their pockets. I think they wanted to push us in some semi deserted place where they could kill us without making too much of a stir. I soon recognized a fascist from Carrara among them, a member of OVRA, who certainly knew about the tavern episode. At a certain point we met an anarchist from Sesto San Giovanni driving a van. That was unexpected good luck and was

also our salvation. He understood immediately what was going on and let us get in. He sorted out a very critical situation: in fact cars were quite rare at the time and the fascists didn't have the time to stop a couple to chase us. In this way we were easily able to reach the northern station, where we hid in a freight train and got to Genoa after a long journey. There we were welcomed by another sister of mine, who was eventually arrested for sheltering us but who was later released because she was married to a marshal of the army.

From Genoa we went to La Spezia, where we found a room in a hostel. We had almost finished the stock of leaflets and posters that we always took with us. One night at around 11pm, as we had just come back to the hostel we heard someone knocking on the door of our room. I went to open it. There were six policemen in plain-clothes, all of them had their hands in their pockets on the handle of their guns. They asked us, with the courtesy that characterized them, to show them our identity documents. Then they said that I was to follow them whereas the others could stay there. It was clearly a stupid tactic to divide us and arrest and execute us one by one. As we saw a number of cops down the staircase, we had confirmation that we were right. Convinced that we had reached what they call 'the day of reckoning' and that we had no chance to stay alive after an 'arrest' of that kind, we preferred to fight directly. We started shooting. They did the same. In that room first then in all the surrounding area, something happened that was to become famous in the annals of that distant epoch. The fight went on until dawn.

At first we got rid of them in the hostel and attempted an escape, but our optimism and with it our intentions failed. The building was by then completely surrounded by fascists and Germans. Fascists, police and the Gestapo also went on the roofs and in to the neighbouring houses. We barricaded ourselves inside the hostel and resisted until our last bullet was shot.

I remember as if it had happened yesterday that Giovanni Zava, one of my comrades, had five or six bullets in his body, whereas I had a couple of them, my thigh-bone was torn to pieces and I was unable to move much. The third comrade, Giorgi, was also wounded and in a pretty bad state. A few wounded policemen were lying around us, one of them almost dead. The operation ended when the nazi-fascists thought that we might have died during the long siege or that we might still be alive but without any bullets left. With a 'brilliant', quick and courageous action, they knocked down the door that was already riddled with bullets. With a series of useless jumps they stormed the room, where we were lying almost senseless in great number, and captured us. Outside in the street, a crowd of curious onlookers attracted by the shootings and the deployment of cops and exasperated by the allied bombardments that had occurred the previous days, welcome us shouting: 'Death to the English, American and Russian parachutists, may they pay for our dead, our ***disgrace and their air bombardments!'.

We were taken to the police headquarters in La Spezia after quick sanitary treatment. There we were locked up in cells smaller than crypts located in the basement. They didn't beat or torture us, they were planning to bump us off later. In fact, a head officer had already ordered his thugs to prepare guns and bullets, put us against a wall and execute us summarily without thinking twice. By pure chance the fascist marshal of La Spezia turned up right then, with his theatrical uniform that men like him used to wear during the day as well as at night. He soon blocked our execution with the authority and power that distinguished him, between a 'attention!' and an 'at ease!'. Thanks to his gross ignorance and the power given to him by the dux and the fascist national party that he represented, he eventually managed to convince the cops to suspend the execution, after hours of discussions and quarrels, in the hope of finding the source of our organization, the so-called instigators. According to him the latter were the authors of the leaflets

they had found in the toilet of our room and that we hadn't been able to destroy completely. What saved us in that dramatically critical moment, therefore, was the ignorance that characterizes all bureaucrats, authoritarians and violent ones, in other words all fascists. According to those poor beasts degraded by their false ideals and their subaltern role, we had a leader just as they had.

We were then taken to the prison in La Spezia after receiving some more medical treatment. Then a long and exhausting investigation started as the fascists hoped to find our instigators. After interminable days of beating and torture they realized that they couldn't find any instigator because the latter only existed in their imagination. It is well known, in fact, that all anarchists, whether they have a degree or not, are critical and autonomous enough are the only ones responsible for what they plan and do,***

Our records, containing the episode in the tavern in Carrara, the events in Milan, the description of the night in the hostel and the leaflets found by the police, were sent to the special court in Rome, which at the time delivered only death sentences. The only thing that kept us alive was the hope, almost certainty for me, that fascism had by then lost the war, or rather that war and fascism were coming to an end. It was sufficient to survive for another while, a few more seasons, to be saved.

I want to point out, however, that we were prepared to die, it made little difference for us to live or to die. A few days later I had the guarantee that our death was definitely out of the question.

It was the most wicked of my brothers who saved me from execution. I hadn't talked to him for years as I was disgusted by the fact that he was the secretary of the fascist national party in Massa. He contacted his colleague in Rome so that our records passed from the special defence tribunal of the fascist state to that of an ordinary tribunal. He didn't do that because he was my sibling: an anarchist and a fascist cannot be brothers. He acted in this way only because in his position he couldn't afford the execution of a family member for crimes against the regime.

As my charges were of both political and common nature, he managed to make the latter prevail and my case became the competence of the court of assizes in La Spezia.

A trial couldn't be held in La Spezia because almost all the judges had been transferred and the courts weren't working well owing to the bombardments inflicted on the city. A few months later there was an attempt to pass my case to the court in Genoa, but the initiative failed because the situation in Genoa was the same as in La Spezia. In the aftermath of the war the judges turned their attention to my crimes of ordinary nature, thanks to which I was not executed, in order to throw me in jail instead of giving me a medal for partisan bravery (I wouldn't have wanted it in any case).

What were my ordinary crimes? At the time when we acted without masks I 'raided' the money of local tycoons (fascist predators) in order to finance our antifascist struggle and our revolution: an armed donation for anarchy and against fascism. These were my ordinary crimes. They called and still call them extortion, I insist on calling them expropriation.

In 1943, therefore, I was moved from one prison to another. At a certain point I was locked up in the prison of Massa. My comrades and I were located in the so-called maximum security section, imprisoned along with other political prisoners and with those who were held as hostages. We were not allowed to see any other prisoner, talk to anyone or receive visits or letters.

This incarceration in the 'death section' was terrible. Every day SS armed to the teeth gave us half a spoon of soup made with seawater (there was no salt at the time) and a tiny slice of bread of 100g. Of course hunger grew day-by-day, and day-by-day our health was affected by that. Moreover when partisans carried out some action outside, a nazi official would pass in front of

our cells, look at us without even opening the door and chose ten of us at random to be executed in some abandoned marble cave. Each time you thought 'now it's my turn' and each time you died a little.

Only businessmen who had been incarcerated for embezzlement didn't run any risk: they paid, so were freed after a few days instead of being executed. It was treatment similar to that reserved today to dishonest industrialists who spend their incarceration in Swiss clinics after poisoning hundreds of people. Those businessmen, however, embezzled not because they were antifascist. Sometimes they 'helped' us in secret because they suspected a possible victory of ours (it was the beginning of 1943) and therefore they wanted to secure their salvation and avoid being executed along with the black shirts by the people. Most of them saved their life and money this way and maybe some stupid person even gave them medals, whereas I was going rotten in jail.

I had no money and was considered a very dangerous subject. I had no hope of being saved and I would die sooner or later during some reprisal execution. Each day I had the impression that I had won a little victory over death. Even the day my comrades, the anarchist partisans, came to free me, I was lying on my bed trying to get used to the idea of death.

The partisans who freed me came in three, two dressed as carabinieri and one playing the handcuffed criminal. They had got inside claiming that they had to consign a prisoner. As soon as they were in, they disarmed the official in duty and eventually called in another twenty partisans armed with submachine guns and headed by commander Elio. They locked the guards in the offices, unplugged the telephones, took hold of the keys and went to the section for 'political prisoners' to free us. They called me by name: 'Come on Belgrado, you're free, we're all free' (we were 52 political prisoners). Before leaving the place, a comrade threw the bunch of keys in the cell of an ordinary prisoner, and the prison was soon empty.

It was a real spectacle to see the town invaded by hundreds of convicts full of stuff stolen from the prison warehouses, some of them wearing the striped winter uniform and others wearing the summer one, white and ragged. We took the soldiers on guard with us, but they were poor stupid miserable cops and we let them go after a while.

The Germans who arrived at the prison after the escape were less compassionate with our jailers. For this reason the director of the prison run off, whereas the marshal, a professional torturer, shot himself in order not to fall in the Germans' hands. That night, owing to the dark and to the emotion, I lost contact with the group of partisans who liberated me, but 48 hours later I found them again on the mountains ready to fight.

It was June 1944.

Chapter 5. The partisan struggle

I could write an entire volume just telling the anecdotes of the period I spent in the mountains, but for reasons of space and not to talk of events that I don't have a precise recollection of, I prefer to relate only what I remember best. In the spring and summer between 1944 and April 1945 I was part of the 'Elio' brigade, which was named after its commander, a Slav called Elio Wochiecevich, (a Marxist), who still lives in Carrara. I was with the 'Lucetti' group, headed by Ugo Mazzucchelli, for only twenty days.

At the time a number of partisan groups operated on the Apuan Alps, all of them linked and dependent on the brigade general command, which was based in an abandoned marble cave called 'Carbonera'.

My group, the 'Elio', could count on a variable number of men, let's say between one hundred and one hundred and eighty, most of them anarchists. Another two groups operated in the area: one was that of Mazzucchelli and the other was mixed, that is to say its members were anarchists, socialists and communists. I don't remember having heard that any other groups ever operated in the mountains of Carrara and Parma; I have never seen monarchists, liberals and catholic fighting in the Resistance. It was then that I understood how certain individuals, as privileged, cannot take arms against other privileged.

I remember one episode of that time very well: it was a gunfight between a group of five anarchists, including myself, and a group of fascist cops, including the infamous lieutenant Gallo, a well-known torturer of partisans as tremendous as he was bloodthirsty. I was with Giovanni Mariga, called 'Padovano', Libero Mariotti and two others that I prefer not to name.

We met the cops on the avenue in Sarzana by pure chance. They soon recognized some of my comrades and identified us as their enemy, the bandits, the partisans. A gunfight followed, which lasted for a few minutes. One of the cops died, whereas we lost Libero Mariotti, whose body was riddled by bullets. We managed to leave the scene under the astonished gaze of two German soldiers who had witnessed the event in amazement. The latter didn't intervene because both the anarchists and the cops were in plain clothes and the Germans were unable to distinguish the ones from the others.

At a certain point, as the fascist cops realized their allies were on the scene, they started shouting: 'Help us, they are bandits, they are partisans!'. Immediately we repeated the same loudly but keeping cool and without panicking. In this way the two Germans found themselves in a very delicate situation, which was not mentioned in their ancient war handbook, so they stayed still in fear of killing some fascist. They didn't even take their guns out and we left without any bad consequences.

I remember another partisan operation as if it had happened yesterday, that of Torrione, one of the biggest caves in Carrara, where there was a huge building that had served as accommodation and a canteen for the workers before the war. It was our base and we used the rooms as bedrooms and as a depot for our weapons. There was also an enormous shed that we had turned into accommodation for the prisoners.

The event was so extraordinary that we named it 'Tragic dawn'. This operation occurred in November 1944. The comrades on guard referred that a great number of tanks and trucks were parked at the Vara bridges and their artillery had started shooting wildly at the caves. In fact we could hear the roar of cannons but, because of the echo or for other reasons I don't remember exactly, we thought that the nazi fascists were further away. At first we thought the roar came from the Gothic Line, which was not very far from there.

At the time the abandoned marble caves were like impregnable fortresses. We got into position and found out that hundreds and hundreds of Germans of the Wermacht along with dozens of SS agents supported by the Decima Mas of Valerio Borghese (the one who is now referred to as the 'black prince') were opposite us. Valerio Borghese and the Germans thought they could raid those mountains easily under the cover of their artillery. Protected by firing from the tanks, Germans and fascists went up the mountain paths and climbed the inaccessible ground in order to reach the top, our outpost, where we were waiting for them.

That day our group was one hundred and forty comrades. When the fascists were close enough, we started shooting with long-range machineguns. The massacre of the day had begun. The few nazi fascists who managed to survive our artillery barrage were eventually hit by our handguns, grenades, hand bombs and also little avalanches of marble that had been carefully prepared. At a certain point I found myself isolated in a spot so I faced the huge enemy forces by myself with my machinegun for a few hours.

This unexpected welcome, together with the roughness of the area, which they didn't know at all, prevented the Germans from advancing. They were compelled to stop and any attempt to storm our positions proved useless. They realized too late that our locations couldn't be conquered as they were protected by the height and by blocks of marble. In the evening the Germans retired and we went down to retrieve arms and wounded.

On that occasion we captured thirty young Alsatians of the SS, who were taken into the shed and questioned by commander Elio and political commissary Rigo. First the prisoners claimed they were not part of the SS as Hitler's special guard but were agents of a body operating in all the occupied territories in order to guarantee public order. Secondly these eighteen-year olds claimed that they didn't approve of the war waged by Hitler and Mussolini against the partisans and the Allies.

Actually the Alsatians were terrified of being executed and were ready to renege not only Hitler but also their mother if necessary. Concerning the execution of nazi fascists it was established that we had to wait for the ok from the CNL. The latter thought it was convenient to deliver the prisoners to the Allies beyond the Gothic Line, considering the young age of the captured and also to demonstrate to the Allies that the operation had been carried out with seriousness and style. This didn't happen though because in the following days, during a raid of nazi fascists, we left the prisoners partially unattended. The latter managed therefore to escape and return to their bases and their sad and infamous role as SS.

I can recall some of the thirty or so operations carried out by my group between June-July 1944 and April 1945 that I took part in. I remember passing the border twice along with commander Elio. These transfers into free zones were made necessary by the huge concentration of nazi fascist forces in Carrara and by the intensity of their raids. The Germans achieved this concentration parallel to strengthening their position on the Gothic Line. It was the nazi fascists' final attempt to block the Allied on the Gothic Line and stopping once and for all any partisan activity from Parma to Carrara.

Before this, in September 1944, I entered Carrara with the partisans of 'Elio', where I took part in an operation that ended with the killing of a well-known German spy (an Italian sergeant woman who was wanted by the Allied, the CNL all over Italy and the liberation committees of the whole of Europe). We partisans occupied the town for four days then we left to allow our co-citizens to get supplies. An unexpected delay in the coming of the Allies, in fact, had brought the spectre of famine to my town.

A few days later I took part in the blockage of Doganella, a place not far from Carrara, along with other comrades of the 'Elio'. On that occasion the Germans lost any sense of reality and, in a fit of fear, ended up massacring one another. One of the successes achieved during this operation was the liberation of father Erasmo Celorio of the Sacred Heart church in Marina di Ronchi (Massa). Even if I don't like priests, and he was aware of that, I think he will remember the events of that day, as he is still alive and perfectly lucid.

In September 1944 I also took part in the battle against the Germans in the marble caves of Ravaccione. A group of SS headed by Major Rader, responsible for the massacres and fires that occurred in the village of Vinca, were attacked and eventually completely destroyed by us, the partisans, in an ambush from above.

Besides Elio Wochiecevich, commander of my group, Alessandro Brucellaria, commander of the 'Gino Menconi' group, can also testify to my activity as a partisan. These two commanders were with me during the fight in Darma, when we conquered the fascist positions in Padula leaving many Germans dead. Finally, I took part in the fight at the mouth of the Magra river and in the liberation of Sarzana and La Spezia.

Chapter 6. The aftermath of the war

When the fascist regime finally collapsed on April 25 1945, a wave of happiness ***invaded all partisans and all those who had never accepted fascism and had risked their lives on the mountains: it was the euphoria of those who had defeated their enemy.

If armed revolt had created a situation that was completely different for us anarchists, it didn't seem to us that the new situation was paradise on earth. The dictatorial one-party state had been substituted by a more liberal multi-party state, autarchic capitalism had been substituted by international capitalism. Moreover, the ideology of the new regime and its parties was decisively clerical, in the worst sense of the word.

You can imagine what passed through my mind and that of my comrades in a situation like that. I'm not exaggerating if I say that in Carrara and surrounding area, where priests have never been welcome, catholic people have always been a race at risk of extinction. The new democratic-clerical reality and the presence of the Americans at home didn't convince us, we definitely didn't like it.

However we anarchists started organizing ourselves already on April 26; we formed groups and reorganized the Italian Anarchist Federation. Having acted clandestinely until then, we adopted a form of propaganda and struggle that could be carried out in a regime where formal freedom was guaranteed. My comrades and I decided to put a definite end to our question with fascism our own way. After the Germans fled, in fact, I had no intention of forgetting. I wanted the tyrants, the exploiters and the proprietors to pay for all the hunger, misery and desperation endured under fascism. I wanted to persecute them as they had persecuted me and my comrades, my revenge would be my forgiveness.

But the new bosses had another opinion: Pietro Nenni, for example, the commissioner for the purges, didn't hit the bigwigs as he preferred to hit the small fries, youths, poor people of no importance. Consequently, the judiciary and police of the new state were full of fascist members. The attorney general in Genoa, for example, knew very well that the victims of fascism wouldn't forgive the fascists and their supporters so easily. I can imagine what he thought when he read my records. In fact I spent thirty-two years in prison. My crime: having struggled against fascism and having 'defeated' it.

The police of the bourgeois republic born from the Resistance captured me in an ambush. It happened in May 1945 in La Spezia, where I was hunting hidden fascists that nobody dared to catch. When I was arrested I was alone. Giovanni Zava, who had struggled for the Resistance in Serravezza and Pistoia, was arrested for the same reason almost at the same time. They accused us of having participated in a gunfight that had occurred in 1942 that had left a cop dead.

Chapter 7. The sentence

The trial against us was held in 1949, four years after the end of the war, for the simple reason that most ex partisans were still in arms, and were so until 1948, and thought and hoped that social revolution was coming soon. The bourgeois-papal judiciary, therefore, preferred to avoid holding a trial like that which concerned me in such a hot period as the post-Resistance one. Partisans, still animated by the spirit of the Resistance, would certainly attend any trial against ex partisans, which would affect judgements and sentences.

On the contrary, in 1949 the Italian state was definitely consolidated and the passion and revolutionary hopes of many were fading, especially after the attack against Togliatti. During that year the first heated discussions inside the parties of the parliamentary left started while their base was losing influence. Moreover, in 1949 police had gained total power of control and was pointing its iron hand to revolutionaries and ex partisans. For this reason judges and cops decided to put off all trials to make sure they wouldn't suffer reprisals and opposition.

During the hearing held in May 1949 against us, the defence tried to demonstrate the value of our actions and their connection with the Resistance (the real one). It was useless, I was sentenced first to life imprisonment, which was eventually commuted to thirty years following a later decision of the constitutional court.

I asked for a pardon in 1948, 1954 and 1967. I attempted to escape in 1948, 1952 and 1955. But it all ended badly.

I'd like to point out that during the trial it was established that the policeman who died in the gunfight was not killed by me. The bullet found in his body belonged to a 7.65-bore gun, whereas I only had two 9-bore guns. As I realized that the author of the fatal shooting could be my comrade, who had managed to find refuge abroad, I denounced myself with a letter to the president of the court. My comrade had a wife and three children whereas I was on my own, and it was less painful for me to serve thirty years than it would have been for him. Most importantly, I was politically responsible for the group and it was therefore right that I pay for everyone before the enemy.

I never thought, however, that I would grow old in prison. I was a partisan and we had just won.

Chapter 8. My prisons

My prisons were definitely different from those of Silvio Pellico. He spent his time in jail almost exclusively in the Spielberg prison. Not the same for me. I was a rebel, and as such was continually transferred from prison to prison for thirty-two years. The reasons for my transfers were substantially these: first, I tried to escape every time the occasion occurred; secondly, prison directors considered me one who stirred up rebellion; thirdly, I used to make propaganda among the detainees spreading anarchist ideas about life and freedom, which was naturally frowned upon by the prison authority.

In 1946 I was moved from the prison in Pisa to that on the isle of Pianosa. A few months later I was transferred from Pianosa to the prison in Parma. A year and a half later I was moved to Fossombrone following a series of heated protests and an escape attempt (which I had left at an embryonic stage). I stayed in Fossombrone from 1949 to 1951 and then I was moved to Pesaro; from Pesaro to Parma again, from Parma to Saluzzo and from Saluzzo to Pianosa again.

So, when I arrived, I discovered I was not a welcome prisoner, given my previous experience: in fact, less than a month later I was moved to Milan on the pretext that I needed medical treatment. This happened in 1953.

Not that the prison doctors were moved out of pity or other humanitarian feelings. As prison directors, who had never loved me, found no other way to get rid of me, they asked the doctors for help.

From San Vittore I came back to Pianosa, then to Fossombrone. From there I was moved to Naples, where I stayed six months. After stirring up a protest which was joined by dozens of prisoners against the director, a guy called Bonamano, I was taken back to Fossombrone.

I arrived for the nth time in that prison with a letter to the director advising him against moving me to Civitavecchia and also inviting him to give me 10 days punishment. He promptly accepted the suggestion; for the period required my food was rationed, my hours in the exercise yard reduced, I was not allowed to buy supplies from the prison and forbidden to write, even on toilet paper.

My life was marked by continuous transfers from prison to prison until 1975. I came back to the same jail three, four or five times during my thirty-two years of imprisonment. Prisons for convicted are not so numerous in Italy. I know everything about them: how many windows and doors they have, how large their cells and yards are, in what state the staircases are, every nail and edge where you can step on, etc. Prisons on islands, which I visited certainly not as a tourist, are those of Pianosa, Asinara and Porto Azzurro, where I ended up five or six times for disciplinary reasons and with very bad references.

Life at Porto Azzurro was extremely hard for my comrades and me. We ex partisans were subjected to strict surveillance and quite hard restrictions in that damned island. The other prisoners also suffered restrictions but not as heavy as ours. As I said, I visited almost all the prisons in Italy, but not the nearly two hundred judicial prisons, which couldn't open their doors to me as I was convicted and there was no hope for me to be put on trial again.

In all the prisons I've been in, including the Maschio di Volterra, I've always studied the effective possibility of escaping any time the occasion seemed favourable. At the prison in Volterra I heard that a gypsy called Bonora and a man from Milan had managed to escape after digging the classical underground tunnel that took them outside the walls, quite painstaking work. However they were recaptured on their way to Pisa.

I know how the 'San Vincenzi' (nickname used in the prison in Bergamo for those who live outside the jail) are often fascinated by thefts carried out by the most skilful thieves, by escapes achieved thanks to intelligence and shrewdness and by those who manage to avoid paying taxes.

To these people, who maybe don't believe in the state and in its institutions and are fascinated by those who attempt to escape prisons in a romantic way, I would like to say that if I didn't become a 'Papillon' [as I never managed to escape] it was only because I was severely controlled after three escape attempts. The possibility of escaping, in fact, depends on the position and structure of the prison and on the type of surveillance inflicted on the detainee.

I was under special surveillance in all Italian prisons after my failed attempts at escape. As a consequence, I always ended up in the most secure cells and in the sections where the possibility of getting out, sorry of escaping, was practically nil.

As for my part, ever since I was a kid I had no trust in the laws of the State, nor had I any trust in the old and new constitution of the Italian state. Furthermore I could not count on solidarity campaigns carried out by comrades and antifascists whom I didn't know and had no hope of a new trial. The chances I had of getting out of prison before the end of my sentence were really few. The only possibility for me to breathe the outside oxygen was the illegal way of escape.

For me, a slave in chains, the only hope was the method adopted by desperate slaves who, in the times of ancient Rome and its empire, followed Spartacus.

Chapter 9. Other comrades in jail

In the prisons of the Italian democratic republic I found many comrades of ideas, of struggle, especially anarchist ex partisans like myself. I'm going to tell their stories, as they told them.

I'll start with the youngest anarchist partisan from Carrara, Goliardo Fiaschi. He was born on August 31 1930 and his parents were called Pietro and Nella Del Vecchio. He still lives in Carrara, in via Santa Maria. He was an ex partisan fighter, whose enrolment number was 014375. On September 9 1943 he took part to the liberation of his town by helping deserters in their escape and by gathering their weapons, which were later to arm the partisan groups. This was the first task that the antifascists from Carrara gave him. Later Fiaschi was engaged in carrying material, mainly weapons, to the hideouts of the CNL [National Liberation Committee]. As he was a thirteen years old kid, Goliardo claimed he was fifteen during the whole period of the Resistance.

Given his young age, he could pass unobserved under the nose of nazi fascists on a number of occasions, as he carried trolleys officially loaded with wood and fabric, but actually full of weapons, ammunitions, food and clothes. His hatred towards nazi fascists was a family habit: his father had always opposed the regime. Young Goliardo learned soon how to assemble and disassemble 91 and 38-calibre guns, and later he learned to shoot, which he was very good at. The first time he tried to use a gun, he grabbed a 12-calibre gun with both hands but the weapon slipped from his grasp and wounded him. The second gun he tried was a 7,65 Walter gun, which had been stolen from a German car along with a ***'machine pistole'. The latter never reached the partisans' places because Fiaschi broke it while 'working out the way it works'.

Goliardo started his resistance in Carrara in the 'Gino Lucetti' group and kept on fighting until 1944, when he left the group and went beyond the German front in order to fight with the Allies on the Seravezza front. From there the Allies sent him to the Abetone front to fight with the third brigade 'Costrignano' of the Modena division.

As the war was over, he came back home on foot, as they didn't want to give him a horse. Only in the Abetone area he was taken on board an American car and driven to the house of the mayor of Bagni di Lucca. He stayed there three days and then the American commandant owner of the car drove him home. In Carrara he found his house semi-destroyed by German bombs but all his family were safe.

Talking about that period, Goliardo says: 'I didn't pass the front to save my life but to free my homeland. My mother came along with me up to a hill begging me to come back. As I reached Bergiola I found other anarchist comrades and went to Antona with them. There we found a column of civilians and we passed the front with them. When they did the rollcall in Seravezza, fourteen people were missing. Despite my mother's tears I had left Carrara because I was indignant at the Allies, who never arrived. In Carrara people were desperate from hunger, nazi fascist reprisals and the bombings of the Allies. Before leaving I had been victim of bombardments too. For example, once I was half buried with soil after a bomb exploded in Avenza. Another time, as

I was coming back into town, a blast sliced the nape of the neck of a female peasant who was bringing milk to hungry people. I tried to help her but nothing could be done.

However, the Allies gave me some weapons in Abetone: a Sten gun and some Sipe bombs. During the battle at Monte Lancio, an operation that was carried out in broad daylight against the Germans and in spite of incessant enemy fire, I arrived the second after my commander Filippo. The day after that battle, we started our liberation march towards Fanano. We liberated Sestola, Pavullo, Sassuolo and Modena. This phase was not at all easy as roads and fields were full of landmines and the few Germans left put up a fierce resistance. I don't remember whether it was in Sestola or in Marano that nazis were carrying out massacres; the hospital was on fire with all the wounded inside and we could smell burnt flesh at a distance. In the end we marched into Modena in a rain of flowers. I was leading my brigade and was proud of this. I was very happy because the war was over and the nazi fascists had been defeated but at the same time I was in pain because I didn't have any news of my family and my town'.

This young anarchist, after giving an outstanding example of the highest values of the Resistance, decided to keep on the struggle against international fascism according to his revolutionary spirit.

In August 1957 he went to Toulouse in France, where he met Fazerias, a well-known anarchist expropriator fighter. It was August 14 and Fazerias had to change French money into Spanish one. That money was to be employed a few days after to reach Spain and carry out an attack against Franco. On August 15 Goliardo Fiaschi, a guy called Augustin and Fazerias left Toulouse and prepared themselves to go beyond the border during the night. Fazerias had welcomed young Fiaschi in his group as he was impressed by the latter's activity as a partisan. As established, the trio reached the border in the evening. They soon noticed that the police patrol there was quite strong in spite of the Ferragosto [mid-August holiday]. They had to wait for the favourable moment to go over the border, which happened later than scheduled.

According to their plan, the three anarchists would have passed through a few villages until they reached Barcelona. The journey from Toulouse to Barcelona had to be made by bike so that the anarchists seemed explorers.

As they came near to San Juan the three stopped on a hill that overlooked a vast panorama. Goliardo went down the hill to get a supply of water but as soon as he got to the river he found that the water was polluted with horse shit. In order to avoid being spotted by the guardia civil of the village the three were compelled to drink the polluted water. A heated discussion broke out on the accumulated delay between Augustin and Fazerias: the latter wanted to follow all the scheduled stages whereas the former maintained that it was necessary to reach Barcelona as soon as possible. Fazerias decided to go to the nearest village to buy something and asked the other two to wait for him. When he returned he found his comrades hidden in a graveyard and not where he had left them. The two, in fact, having spotted a patrol of the ***guardia civil, had preferred to move. Augustin, Goliardo and Fazerias, therefore, left that village without further delay.

The passage in the next village was organized in this way: Fazerias would cross it the first by bike, Fiaschi and Augustin would follow him ***ten minutes one after the other. When Goliardo reached Fazerias he learned that Augustin had decided to go to Barcelona by train. As they were left only the two of them, Fazerias and Goliardo kept on travelling.

It was understood that Franco's police had been alerted of the three revolutionaries' plan and for this reason Augustin was arrested in the house of a comrade in Sabadell on August 27, in spite of his amazing attempt to escape.

On August 28 Goliardo and Fazerias were in Barcelona waiting in vain for Augustin to arrive at the decided time and place. On August 29 Fazerias told Goliardo to wait for him in their shelter on the Tibidabo mount, he would come back either at midnight or at midday the day after. Fazerias also told his comrade to come back to France if he hadn't seen him coming back for the second appointment.

As he said goodbye to his friend, Goliardo walked towards the shelter after filling two bottles of water. At a certain point he was stopped by six people armed with machineguns. Comrade Fiaschi, who was not able to defend himself as he had his hands busy, exploded with a series of insults and curses in Tuscan dialect. As the policemen heard him cursing in Italian, declared: 'Here is the Italian friend of Fazerias'.

Questioned on the spot, the anarchist from Tuscany said he didn't know anything and that he didn't know where Fazerias was. The cops took him to the police headquarters and looked for an interpreter, not being able to communicate with him in Spanish. They managed to find a maitre d'hotel from Carrara working in Barcelona, who accepted to act as interpreter. He said to the anarchist: 'Police were ordered not to take prisoners, if you hadn't had spoken in Italian you would be dead'.

The questioning was quite hard, almost violent as the policemen wanted to know at all costs where Fazerias was. Actually, Fiaschi didn't know where Fazerias had gone; the latter had incredibly managed to leave the place where they had met each other in spite of the presence of a great number of policemen. That was because the Franco's militiamen had been busy with their lunch at the time.

Goliardo claimed that he had only come to Barcelona to sail to Mexico. The policemen got in touch with their colleagues who were questioning Augustin, whose version was supposed to be the same as Goliardo's. They intimidated the latter to spit it out otherwise he would regret being born.

In the night the militiamen of the guardia civil went up mount Tibidabo with Goliardo hoping to find Fazerias in the secret shelter. As they passed the first time in front of the shelter, Goliardo intentionally avoided it and spoke loudly so as to alert his friend about the guardia civil, had he been there. Around 2am he took the policemen into the hut, as he was sure that Fazerias couldn't be there. Using Goliardo as a shield, the cops entered the hut, where they didn't find anything except Goliardo's bike and Fazerias' arms. Fiaschi stayed in that hut until half 12 of the day after. It was then that he learned that Fazerias had been shot by the police armed with machineguns. Then Goliardo was questioned for three days and three nights simultaneously with Augustin (this was his impression) without seeing him. He was also compelled by force to sign a piece of paper without knowing what was written in it.

Twenty days later Goliardo Fiaschi met Augustin in the yard of a prison. On August 12 1958 the two men were sentenced by the special military court of Barcelona. The hearing lasted about one hour and, as always happened in Spain, the defendants knew the result three days later. Goliardo Fiaschi was sentenced to twenty years and a day imprisonment, whereas Augustin to twenty-one years and four months. Goliardo asked to make a declaration during the trial, which was exceptionally conceded. In this way he could defend Fazerias in front of the judges by declaring that the latter was a revolutionary and a fighter for freedom.

After 8 years' imprisonment in Spain, the anarchist from Carrara was consigned to the Italian judiciary. He was extradited because the Italian police and judiciary wanted to attribute to him a series of robberies that had occurred in Italy after the Resistance and that had remained unsolved.

The reactionary forces in Italy welcomed Fiaschi by calling him 'leader of the anarchists'. Once again police and judiciary refused to accept that anarchists don't need leaders.

Goliardo was therefore condemned (as innocent) to rot in jail for years and years and was deprived of his life and of the affection of his comrades. He got out of prison in March 1974 at the age of 44 as he was granted a pardon. The latter was conceded when the sentence was about to expire thanks to the intervention of comrades and the very few politicians who had been in jail during the fascist regime. Goliardo's mother, who was in her eighties, and his sister, who was seriously ill, could therefore embrace their loved one.

During my imprisonment I met Elio Wochiecvich in jail, the ex commander of the group I had been part of. I saw him in the Porto Azzurro prison as he had been sentenced to ten years (which he served entirely) because police and judiciary considered him responsible for an attack against the police station in Carrara that occurred soon after the war.

In that prison Elio continued to stand for his ideas of rebellion, the same that had led him to struggle in the mountains.

In my journey from jail to jail I also met Giovanni Mariga, the vice commander of the group 'Elio'. I met him in Fossombrone, Pisa, Genoa, Livorno and Porto Langone. Now I let him talk about his story.

'I was born in Padova in 1899 and I only got interested in politics after the first world war. Before then I used to play football as fullback in the Padova team. I have never asked anybody for anything in my life, least of all to fight in a war, that is to say to kill people without knowing why. But all the youths of my age were called up and I had to go with them. I fought in Piave, then in Trentino and I took part in the liberation of Trieste.

I finished my service as a soldier in 1920. Soon after the war I was still 'bersagliere' [Italian infantry soldier recognizable by his plumed hat] and was deployed at the Villa Rei barracks in Ancona with my company. One day generals and governors sent us to Albania in order to put down a riot. When we arrived at the port and the officers ordered us to take position we all came back to the barracks. In fact, in the days preceding embarkation some comrades (anarchist fellow soldiers) had taken Errico Malatesta to the barracks, hiding him in one of the trucks carrying supplies. Dressed as a 'bersagliere' in spite of the fact that he was sixty years old, Malatesta started antimilitarist propaganda, inviting the troupes to desert and condemning all wars.

When I was back in Padova in 1920, I met an anarchist waiter who saw me reacting against fascists as they started doing their bullying and he gave me some pamphlets and books. So I became anarchist and never stopped opposing fascism. During the twenty years of dictatorship, from 1922 to 1943, I spent about sixteen years of my life in prison. My periods in jail went from a minimum of three years to a maximum of six.

When the armed resistance started I was freed by the partisans from Malaspina castle, where I was serving my nth sentence. I went with them to the mountains and to Carrara and remained with them, arms in hand, until April 25 1945. I took part with Belgrado in all the actions of the 'Elio' group, of which I was vice commander. To tell you the truth, I was freed before Pedrini and my partisan activity lasted longer than his. I carried out most actions alone or with small numbers of comrades while others comrades of the same group acted on different fronts. I took part in all the big battles against nazi fascists carried out by the group that Belgrado has already

mentioned. I passed beyond the Gothic Line many times and freed Italian, English and Russian prisoners whom the Germans wanted to deport to Germany. Then I had the occasion to free women, old people and children from hunger and reprisals.

One day I learned that a couple of spies, who were terrorizing the whole country, had come to Carrara. So I studied a plan to capture them. One of them was an Italian woman who had been working for the Germans for many years. As a sergeant she had been awarded a cross studded with diamonds because she had contributed to the arrest of many partisans, most of whom were later executed. This woman, a sergeant and a spy, was wanted by the CLN all over Italy and by all the liberation committees in the areas occupied by the Germans. When she saw me, she understood my intention and took out her gun to kill me but I was faster and executed her with my Sten gun. Another woman and the Germans on the spot got into a panic and ran off.

I dressed myself as a German soldier on a number of occasions so that I could go beyond the German blocks. We carried out these kind of operations on a German military vehicle driven by a comrade who never abandoned the wheel. Once we stopped a colon of Germans on the Aurelia road and freed a number of Italian prisoners including a priest. Furthermore I saved four Russian prisoners from certain death in Gardiano di Garfagnana. One night, after April 25, some individuals entered a shop in Santo Stefano Magra and started shooting. Two people were killed, one of them an ex secretary of the local fascist party. He had been a ruthless persecutor of partisans, to such a point that he was nicknamed 'Rompiteste' [head-smashing man]. This guy had committed the most terrible atrocities, in particular against local anarchist antifascists. A few days after the shooting I was ambushed and shot by men armed with machineguns (two bullets reached the bones of my skull). Probably they were members of the political police of the area, at the time headed by a young commissioner called Mangano.

They captured me and accused me of the shooting in Santo Stefano Magra along with four other people. All of us always claimed we were extraneous to the episode. In spite of that we were sentenced to twenty-three years each. In this way the bourgeois judiciary closed the case. There was no real evidence against me but an anarchist is always a perfect target, a pre-arranged victim, when it happens that a torturer is executed by the people.

I didn't manage to collect a single cent to pay a lawyer in the appeal trial as I had spent all my money to pay a lawyer during the first degree. Flora, my partner, couldn't help me as she had also spent all her money to cover the expenses of the first trial.

Without a trusted lawyer I was given a life sentence in the second trial, whereas my co-defendants had their sentence reduced. Later I asked former president of the republic Saragat for mercy twice, but he didn't concede it. After the second failed attempt I wrote two lines to the president to 'thank' him, which were intended as insults. The third time I asked for mercy it was with the help of many comrades from Carrara and other towns and I obtained it mainly because of Sandro Pertini's intervention. He had just become president of the Chamber of Deputies. I'd like to say that I think Pertini is one of the few real antifascists. I promised him I would not seek revenge against those who had organised the ambush against me.

So I gained freedom after twenty-two years in prison in 1968, aged sixty-nine. I think I was granted mercy because of my actions as a partisan. Meantime I had been awarded, without asking for it, the Vittorio Veneto knighthood and a decoration by the Allies. Furthermore, Colonel Rossi proposed that I be given a golden medal for my struggle during the Resistance, whose text said: 'Proposal for the highest award of military value to be given to partisan Mariga Giovanni (the Padovano) of the group "Elio": As he demonstrated superior and exceptional courage and absolute

fidelity to the ideas of liberation, he acted on every possible occasion and gained the admiration of those who were linked to that cause; he crossed the lines twelve times at the highest risk. In the sad days that followed the battle of Garfagnana he went among the enemy positions several times in order to free his commander and English Marshal Olan. He is one of the few who deserve the highest award for his enterprises’.

In the end I was not awarded this medal, which I hadn't asked for nor had I asked for the others.

Instead, I was given a note by the Padova council in which it was stated that I had no right to any medal because I had been serving a life sentence.

As you can imagine I have never liked medals and in fact I wrote to the minister asking not to be named for any more.

I had more serious problems to sort out as I was sixty-nine and without a wage. Luckily a law stating that ex partisans were entitled to a little pension had just been issued. I claimed for it and waited.

Later I was called to help the commission that had to grant these pensions. It was made up of a lieutenant, a captain and a major of the army. They had to examine a huge amount of claims and establish if the claimants were entitled to receive the pension. I helped as best I could as many partisans had effectively fought in the Resistance but not using their real names. I made it clear that I could do nothing for the individuals who had not indicated their battle names in the forms. I then suggested organizing a meeting with those who had been excluded so that I could recognize them.

When the work of the commission was over, they asked me if I thought there might be partisans who had not been granted the pension. I told them that one of those was myself. They examined my record and stated that it was incomplete. In fact in the claim I had to demonstrate that I had been a partisan for at least six months and prove that I had taken part in at least three actions. Well, I had been a partisan for two years. Furthermore six months are six months but a fraction of second is sufficient to die as a partisan.

I had noticed that five hundred people who were granted the pension had claimed that they killed the German spy I shot and so I told the commission: “If you think that five hundred people can have executed one spy simultaneously, even though many people contributed to the realization of this operation, then I think there should be no difference between five hundred people and five hundred and one”. Soon after I was granted the pension too and now live thanks to it’.

Another friend and comrade I met during my detention is Giovanni Zava. I already said that he was with me in the hostel in La Spezia on that fatal night in 1942. The judges appointed after the resistance sentenced him with a further charge. They accused him along with other comrades of having killed an ex member of the fascist party in Genoa shortly after the war. But he was granted mercy for this crime in 1949.

I then met again Giovanni Zava, Goliardo Fiaschi and Giovanni Mariga in Carrara once we were released. Giovanni Zava, however, was released less than a year ago, in 1974, after thirty-one years of prison. Like me, he was detained longer because the judiciary didn't consider the years we spent in prison in 1942 and 1944 during the fascist regime.

Finally I want to point out that there exists the concrete possibility that other people, anarchist or not, might be still in prison as ex partisans.

Chapter 10. What the majority of detainees think

During my period in jail I had the chance to witness a surprising scene more than once. It concerns the reaction of most detainees, especially those who have served the longest sentences, when their time in prison comes to an end. As the door is open to them, they don't dare go out and cope with freedom and the outside world.

On the other hand, most prisoners are ready to do anything in order to obtain better living conditions in jail. After a few months in prison, some are even willing to torture and rape their inmates in order to gain little privileges and the favour of the guards. With or without privileges, they remain prisoners in chains, and their 'services' often come to be loathed by the screws themselves. I can say that a detainee serving a long sentence generally adapts himself to prison, where he tries to create the best possible conditions for himself. In order to achieve such a miserable goal he is ready to sell himself to the jailers, the director and the priest.

When a prisoner acts as a coward and bootlicker, it's because he's an individual without a strong personality and moral ***fierceness, whose critical capacity doesn't go beyond his limited personal situation. Such a bootlicker ends up thinking and feeling as if he was a jailer, a jailer without uniform, a jailer in striped pyjamas.

The prisoners who attempt to escape are very rare. They are exceptional individuals.

For any prisoner out of one hundred who plans an escape there are another ninety-nine who are ready to betray him and spit it out to the director. Most prisoners think it is better to be a bootlicker and do little favours to the director and the priest in order to improve their condition slightly rather than risk their life by jumping a wall first and by facing an uncertain destiny outside later. Simply disappearing without leaving any trace once you are outside is very difficult. Then you can imagine the troubles of a fugitive if he doesn't know many people in the area and he needs to change his clothes and eat. These are insuperable difficulties for those who are ignorant, uncritical and lack confidence.

The first problem facing a prisoner who wants to escape is the planning of his escape, in spite of the fact that he has become brain dead thanks to the prison. In order to do this you need rationality, organisational skills and cold blood.

It is not sufficient to read 'The Count of Montecristo' in comic version to put an escape plan into action. Generally a comrade, an idealist, an anarchist is not affected by prison as he has a strong enough character. His mind is definitely critical. If he decides to attempt an escape he knows what he is going to find outside: the solidarity of his comrades.

On the contrary, a common 'criminal' can only find a mafia environment with its laws, logic and its false myths.

To conclude, those who survive better in jail are those who never lose hope of getting out soon with any means, illegal or legal. The others are brutalized and dehumanised. In the best option

they become living dead and in the worst spies of the directors, the jailers, the priest and the state.

Chapter 11. My attempted escapes

I tried to escape from prison three times. The first was in Genoa in 1947, when there were four of us: Zava, two other prisoners who supported our ideas, and me.

The method we adopted was the simplest and best known. We worked in secret for a number of months in order to get hold of a handsaw that would cut through the bars. Once we had the precious tool we cut the bars of the cell and went down to the patio using a rope made with 'classic' bed sheets. This was the trajectory we had to follow: first we had to go through two foregrounds and then jump up two walls watched by four guards armed with machineguns. The four of us were pushed by our thirst for freedom and the will to carry on the struggle along with the anarchist comrades from Carrara and from all over the country.

The two boys from Genoa who were with us, sympathizers as I still call them, were extremely sensible and for a while they had been the targets of Zava's and my propaganda. They soon became active participants in our evening meetings during which we discussed anarchist ideas and analysed reality. At first I think the two boys were a bit confused as they considered communism and Marxism the only road for the liberation of the exploited.

On the contrary, Zava and I didn't see any paradise on earth and pushed for deeper analysis. In this way we tried to bring them to as libertarian positions as possible. During our meetings I tried to remember everything I had read of Bakunin, Malatesta and Kropotkin even if many years had passed since, and I tried to make them understand the causes that produced the exploitation of men by men. After this series of evening classes on anarchism the two from Genoa felt in love with libertarian ideas.

Unfortunately our escape attempt failed. After cutting the bars we silently reached the first patio and went up to a room used as mortuary, whose roof was made of very thin slabs of slate. The latter cracked under our weight making terrible noise. The guards were alerted and started shooting. In a few minutes all the guards of the prison rushed to the mortuary room and we were captured like mice in a trap. There were no wounded during this escape attempt. There followed only sad consequences for us: isolation, beatings from the guards and the 'mozzi' (detainees who help the jailers on certain occasions) and the 'fair trial' according to the rules of the prison. The trial was held in Genoa in a grey court that Bakunin would have called court of injustice. Zava and I were 'rewarded' with six months more imprisonment. It was our first serious escape attempt and the so-called democratic judiciary made us pay what it considered the right price. The two sympathizers from Genoa were sentenced to only three months more because Zava and I claimed full responsibility for the episode by telling the judges that we had almost ***plagiarized them.

My second escape attempt was carried out in 1951. I tried to flee the prison of Saluzzo with 'comrades' completely different from the previous ones. In Saluzzo too I spent a lot of time getting the tools for escaping including the money necessary for the immediate 'after'. I acted in this way. I waited for some trusted comrades to get out of prison after completing their sentence. I asked them to find ***handsaws and blades for me, which eventually they had to hide between the soles

of a pair of shoes, or in a cooked piece of bread, or in a false-bottomed box. After a while I had got all the necessary tools in my cell.

As we cut the bars of the window of the cell, we passed to the second part of the plan. We were on the second floor of the prison and had to go down to the patio. This time the attempt was more complicated. There were twelve of us this time, not just four. The idea regarding the escape, in fact, didn't come from me alone, as it was a collective plan. The twelve of us were all ex partisans, political prisoners. Nine were communists and three anarchists. When we decided to regain freedom, the boys turned to me: news and fame run rapidly in prison and everybody knew about my experience as regards escape attempt. Once we got the tools and cut the bars, I went down first, followed by the second man. The third got excited and let himself fall down instead of doing things slowly. In this way he made a terrible noise and raised the alarm. Some of the comrades who were still in the cell got into a panic and didn't dare move. Others were braver and tried to go down as fast as possible, of course making a terrible noise too. The guards started shooting in all directions for ten minutes. We were all recaptured in little more than an hour. I was inflicted the usual consequences: isolation, beating and transfer to another prison where I could be punished in a more appropriate way. I went on trial this time too. On this occasion I explained that I was being given an unfair sentence, as the crimes I was accused of were ideological and political actions. The judiciary kept on considering us common criminals, in spite of the fact that I turned my cage of defendant in the court into a kind of stage for prosecution and defence. I also asked that our case be reopened. Of course my request was ignored.

As I was a persistent offender, this time I was sentenced to a further eighteen months of imprisonment, whereas the others, who were fugitives for the first time, had sentences from six to eight months. As for those who had remained in the cell at the moment of the escape, the judges wanted to accuse them of complicity but they were later acquitted as we all claimed responsibility for the escape plan and maintained that they were not informed about it.

My third escape attempt was organized in the prison of Pianosa, a Tuscany isle not far from Livorno. In this prison there are 'common criminals' and 'disabled detainees'. I belonged to the group of the former. There I met convicted criminals whom I could trust and organized my plan along with three companions who were locked up in my cell. As you can imagine, the main difficulty was to cross the sea.

While organizing the escape, I relied on the knowledge of fine arts that I had acquired as a student of art. I prepared four dummies by mixing clay, plaster and bread crumbs. First I moulded four heads trying to make them as similar to ours as possible and then I applied some of our hair to them. Secondly I put the heads on dummies made of old jumpers and pants filled with straw. The result was quite satisfactory. I had created four doubles that we put in bed while completing the cutting of the bars. We went down from the window and reached the patio. From there we passed into a kitchen garden bordering the prison, climbed over the wall of the garden and ran towards the sea. There, according to the plan I had established with two comrades from Livorno, a motorboat should have arrived at a certain time. These two comrades were members of the local anarchist federation and had been in Pianosa prison serving a short sentence. I had studied the escape plan with them in details while they were detained and later in coded letters. So the comrades from Livorno started their journey to pick us up. Unfortunately the weather changed all of a sudden and a tempest made their journey impossible. They were therefore compelled to come back to the shore.

The situation for us was not at all easy: we were out of the prison but blocked on an island. We were ready to try the impossible in order to gain freedom. Desperate but aware, we started building a raft by using ropes and wood that we found in a farmer's hut. But this raft, even if it had been built by people determined to be free at all costs, couldn't overcome the fury of the sea and there was no way for us to leave the shore. After many hours struggling with the waves we had to surrender and find shelter in the graveyard of the island, where we were captured the morning after. Armed guards on horses and on bicycles flushed us out from our hideout. My companions were two Sicilian men and a man from Cremona. The latter had been in the anarchist struggle during the fascist regime and had then fled to France and Spain, where he had taken part in the revolution and in the civil war against Franco.

As we were taken back to jail, we were severely beaten and eventually we were moved to the Porto Azzurro prison for three months. When the punishment period was over, we were moved to Livorno, where we stood trial. I was given a further eighteen months, the comrade from Cremona one year and the two Sicilian men two months each.

This was my last collective escape attempt. I tried to escape on my own on another occasion while being moved from one prison to another by freeing myself from the carabinieri handcuffs. In fact, when a detainee is moved he is confided to the carabinieri who take him to the station and then charge him on a van to destination. If the detainee is young and fit he can try to free himself from the handcuffs during the change of train in the station and then run off. It was what I did during a transfer. But on that occasion too I was quite unfortunate. The train station where I had managed to free myself was full of soldiers who helped the carabinieri to recapture me. This time, however, my attempt was not considered as an escape and I didn't stand trial. Normally an escape of this kind is followed by a trial but still today I don't know why the procedure was not applied to me.

I think that the greatest difficulty a prisoner who wants to escape has to cope with is the hostility of the other detainees. In fact, any escape means that all prisoners are submitted to repression in the days immediately following the attempt. However, it is not so much repression that causes the hostility of the other detainees as their envy and sloth. Generally they are people with no ideals, they are even ready to sell their mother, they have been defeated by the violence, wickedness and suffering they endure in prison. When these unhappy miserable people realize a companion in chains wants to escape they soon prostitute themselves to the prison authorities and sell their companion in order to obtain little insignificant privileges.

An escape attempt is oxygen for the very few critical and sane detainees who react to prison. They often survive prison only by planning escape attempts. Hoping to be able to flee is a way to not die in the prison grave. But as I've said most detainees are masses of scared people that are unable to think. The risks and dangers of a prisoner willing to flee are armed guards and the difficulties he finds outside. So the mass of prisoners dehumanised by prison prefer to adapt themselves to the jail, without realizing that in this way they only get more dehumanised.

Chapter 12. Life in Italian prisons

The prison system today is better than it was during the fascist regime as concerns food. This change, however, is still insufficient to satisfy minimum human needs. Prisoners are given daily food whose value is about five hundred liras. But this daily amount is systematically and inevitably reduced by the mafia inside the prison. Those responsible for this mafia are the prisoners working in the prison kitchen, the chief commanders and the guards (who are the main responsible for the reduction of daily food). These gentlemen always do their best to steal whatever they can from the prison population. As a consequence a prisoner who is supposed to receive a daily food supply of five hundred liras receives only less than a half this amount.

The quality of the food is still extremely poor. In fact prison food is the worst on offer in the market. In other words it is disgusting. Only in a few prisons the situation has improved lightly thanks to protests carried out by prisoners and dearly paid for by the latter. For example in Fossombrone food has been more decent for a few years but in other prisons it is still the worst. For these reasons after a couple of years' diet in a prison, prisoners' health conditions get seriously bad. Most prisoners become definitely debilitated.

As concerns hygiene, environment and sanitation the situation is simply tragic. Most Italian prisons are very old buildings that had been ancient convents or medieval fortresses. First of all these structures are inadequate to contain a great number of people. The sensation that you feel when looking at the prisoners in a jail is the same you feel by opening a tin of anchovies. And if we want to talk like intellectuals, the relationship space-individuals in Italian prisons is the same as the one described by Schopenhauer when he talks about porcupines compelled to live in a limited space, and therefore they end up punching one another. Altercations break out very easily in these limited spaces. Fighting in order to offload anger and suffering is normal administration in prison. The real and only responsible for this unacceptable situation is the State and its government, which in thirty years has never taken any action to improve the situation.

I'm absolutely convinced that in a society such as that sought by anarchists, prisons cannot exist. On the contrary, in a society like the present one, which considers itself modern and civilized, prison is a clear example of its grade of civilisation.

The situation of Italian prisons is a crystal example of inhuman 'civilisation' taken to its maximum level. The rules in prisons are the same that were into force during first the monarchy and then the fascist regime. They have passed through the Renaissance and the Resistance intact, until the present time, and have been integrated into the new constitution of the republic. The only small changes that have occurred in the last thirty years are the result of ministerial circulars, which have only slightly lightened some disciplinary method.

In 1968 and in the following years revolts started breaking out in prisons in order to obtain reforms. The radicalisation of the analysis that students and workers had made outside reproduced itself inside the prisons. The main requests, which were also talked about by the media, were the abolition of the penal code and the introduction of penitentiary reforms.

From 1968 to 1975 prisoners all over Italy were aware of all revolts breaking out in the jails of the country and they also knew that politicians talked about them from time to time, without the government doing anything. Revolts in prison multiplied exactly because of the prisoners' collective awareness that any project of reform whatsoever was systematically abandoned after promises were made, according to a typical Italian way of governing.

As the revolts spread, jailers asked the government to give them *carte blanche* in order to put down the riots. The minister of justice ended up accepting this request, especially in the prisons where most rioter prisoners were concentrated. I have to say that repressive methods in Sardinian, Sicilian and Porto Azzurro prisons were even more cruel and harsh than those in force during Mussolini's regime. Following the current rules, prisoners can get out of the cell for only one hour a day, as it was during the *dux*' period. Prison directors, however, can decide to concede up to six hours in the patio. This happens when detainees are disabled or have tuberculosis. For all the others directors concede one or two hours' maximum.

The possibility to communicate between prisoners is very limited. Two prisoners can talk to each other for a few minutes during their time in the patio, but they are always carefully watched by two guards specially appointed to prevent escapes and revolts. A method used by prisoners to communicate is to write on little pieces of papers that are exchanged from one cell to another. Another method is muttering words while in front of television. Communication, however, always depends on good luck and on the spies all around. One has to be very careful when talking about politics or culture. It could be very dangerous if those listening understand that what is being said between two prisoners has something to do with revolt. In this case the prisoners in question are soon divided, taken back to their cell and are very unlikely to see each other again.

Prisoners who break the rules of the prison with words, thoughts or actions are inflicted five days to three months' solitary confinement. Of course the punishment varies according to the 'crime' committed: altercations, riots and escape attempts receive maximum punishment whereas more light infractions receive the minimum.

Any infraction always means a reduction in the food provided. Instead of two meals a day one gets one meal and a piece of bread. In other words one loses that half dish of beans he would have been given in a normal situation.

As concerns punishment in the isolation cell, it is decided by a committee made by the director, the doctor and the prison priest. In theory the latter is supposed to be the prisoner's defender, according to Christian charity, in other words he should intercede in the prisoner's favour with the other two in the name of Christian love. Prisoners, in fact, should be considered as God's children and should have their punishment reduced by the ministry of God. On the contrary the priest often acts as an accuser, especially if the prisoner doesn't seem a good Christian.

I think that all prisoners are poor disgraceful people but for the State and the church they are divided into 'good' (the repentant), who can sit at God's right side, and 'bad', who have to be condemned even in the last divine trial. It has been largely proven that if the director proposes a punishment, the priest doesn't try to get it reduced. As for me, the priest always pushed for my punishment to be ***strengthened. One can think as one likes, but my opinion is that priests in prisons are really bad characters.

The doctor has to assess the health conditions of prisoners and the impact punishment can have on them. Generally he acts following his 'sold and prostituted conscience' and doesn't express himself in favour of prisoners. Isolation can be inflicted in the same prison or in another one, depending on the number of cells available. Isolation cells are very small and narrow with very

little air and light. The air you breathe there is very bad, to say the least. Furthermore there are plenty of spiders, bugs and lice. These cells are often located in the worst part of the prison, generally the basement. They have a single tiny window with very thick bars. What counts for directors is that these cells are isolated so that no one can hear a prisoner screaming while he is being beaten. The bed is a folding bed with some dirty straw on it, which smells so bad that you can't help being disgusted when you have to sit on it. The 'mattress' is never washed and the stains of piss that decorate it go back to the fascist era. Furthermore it is infested by entire colons of insects and parasites of every kind. I ended up in cells like these, whose dirtiness is almost indescribable, on many occasions. Besides the bed, there can be found a ramshackle table bed in iron, which fits perfectly with the squalor of the environment. There is also a lamp attached to the ceiling, which is switched off very rarely in the night. On the contrary, the lamp is normally kept switched on all the time especially if a detainee is submitted to a particularly strict surveillance. In prison isolation sections, there can be also found so-called 'containment' beds, where the prisoner is tied and 'assisted' by the screws or by other prisoners, which occasionally are crueller than the screws themselves, and are called *lozzi* in prison slang. They are proper pigs that can do all kinds of dirty stuff on the tied prisoner. They beat him wildly or, even worse, masturbate themselves or piss in his mouth. This happens mainly when the tied prisoner asks for some water or a puff from a cigarette.

I was tied on containment beds many times, and there I was systematically beaten. Nobody pissed on my mouth and I think I was quite lucky about that. You can't react when you are tied. A prisoner under punishment and isolation has the right of one hour in the patio but actually it is reduced to forty or forty-five minutes. Other restrictions inflicted on him is the impossibility to write letters, buy supplies or communicate with other prisoners. In other words, he loses all the little rights that are enjoyed by the other prisoners.

I have been in the isolation cell fifteen times for three months and on the containment bed forty times. Before ending up there, of course, I was submitted to the judgement of the committee composed of the director, the doctor and the priest, who decided about my punishment because of my escape attempts, my protests and the riots that I stirred up on many occasions. I was beaten on the containment bed many times for periods going from three to five days.

I took part in all the revolts that broke out in the prisons I have been in. The most sensational were those in Saluzzo, Parma and Fossombrone, when we managed to occupy three sections of the prison for three days. On that occasion the general inspector of prisons and the attorney general of Ancona intervened and listened to our requests, which I presented to them as I discussed the problems of that prison with these 'gentlemen'. We obtained more hours in the patio, improvements in the food and the possibility of having a shower twice a month instead of once. We also obtained other minimal concessions such as the possibility of playing football for the youngest prisoners. I was recognized as the one responsible and the promoter of this revolt, so I was transferred to the prison of Porto Azzurro. I arrived there with the usual letter of the direction, which stated that I was a dangerous individual and a conspirator. Therefore I remained in the prison section where rioters were concentrated following jail protests, and stayed there for one and a half year during which time I had particularly repressive treatment inflicted on me. Thank you!

I was beaten on a great number of occasions while detained and especially, as I've said, after my escape attempts. I got my first beating in 1947 in Genoa. In 1955 I was beaten almost to death in the prison of Pianosa. There I was also put on a containment bed for three days and three

nights, during which time I was not given any food or water. Any time I asked for water, I was beaten and given salt water instead. I received similar treatment after my escape attempts from the prison of Saluzzo and every time I tried to put forward requests through protests, carried out alone or with other prisoners. The most used methods against rebellious prisoners are the following. First, punches and slaps in all parts of the body (head, back, chest) that don't leave immediately visible bruises. Second, for more serious punishment, the cops beat you with little sacks of sand, which can cause severe internal damage without leaving traces outside. I know very well these little sacks, whose weight varies from one to one and a half kilo. Third, on certain occasions prisoners have their testicles punched and strangled so as to provoke the most acute pain possible. The screws do that in order to make the prisoner 'sing' or as a punishment in itself.

Of course these kinds of torture are not contemplated in any code or rule, they are unofficial actions that the State leaves to the discretion of jailers. When I attempted to escape I was beaten and tortured because they wanted to know how I got the ***handsaw, who had given it to me, who were my accomplices, etc. On the occasion of revolts, I was inflicted these special treatments because I had dared defy law, order and the prison rules. Torturers are generally professional hangmen who perform their chiefs' orders. They are ignorant, illiterate and ***unconscious evil people at the director's disposal. These mercenaries are even ready to kill if this is what the director wants. They can be distinguished in two categories: those who torture only in order to carry out an order and those, the majority, who torture because they feel pleasure in doing so. They unload in this way all their repressed cruelty and lust. I think that their ruthlessness derives from the environment they come from, an environment obviously characterized by absolute violence. These people get angry and react with the maximum fury for very little reason, as they are covered by the authorities and know they won't be punished.

The violence that made them degenerate in this way is that typical of a hierarchical and therefore inhuman society. Needless to say, violence is the cause and effect of the State, besides being its definition. Jailers are the lowest steps of the violence carried out by the State on individuals. I managed to survive in prison for so many years thanks to a saying that is valid both for those who are locked up and those who are outside:

*'Rebellion is the*** nobility of the slave'*

Chapter 13. To react in order not to die

If you want to avoid dying ‘in a civilized way’ when you are facing a long sentence, or rather if you don’t want your spirit to die, you have to react by reading, writing and thinking. Unfortunately libraries in Italian prisons are not that good. It is extremely difficult to find classics or scientists’ biographies in them. Most of the books that can be found in jail are ***impudently fascist or clerical.

In the San Vittore prison in Milan the library is run by the prison priest, who is not very careful. Thanks to his laziness I could find books of Spencer, Darwin, Hemingway, Kant and Hegel. I reread them with great pleasure, as they even circulated during the fascist period in spite of the repression. Unfortunately I also visited other prisons.

There was nothing readable in the jails of Fossombrone, Pianosa, Parma and Castelfranco. In certain prisons I’d have even liked to find ‘Pinocchio’. When I couldn’t find anything to read, I reacted by thinking and reflecting. Italian prisons offer a very limited choice as concerns newspapers too. Until not long ago any rightwing daily and magazine could be found, the most ‘leftwing’ magazine being *Famiglia Cristiana* [Christian Family, a catholic weekly]. In spite of the fact that after 1963 socialists sat in parliament or at the government, *ABC* and ****Espresso* were never distributed in prisons. But if a prisoner wanted fascist books or newspapers he had a vast choice. I remember a prisoner asking for some old issues of *Candido* and *Il Borghese*: he was satisfied the very same day.

I wrote to the minister of justice many times in order to be allowed to read *Umanità Nova* [a weekly of the anarchist federation] and *L’Unità* [a newspaper of the communist party]. I ***obtained to read *L’Unità* after a series of protests but in thirty-two years my request as concerns *Umanità Nova* was never considered. I think the jailers knew that the latter could be too stimulating for a prisoner, whereas *L’Unità* couldn’t create much trouble, as it was already quite soft at the time.

Having at my disposal only some bourgeois newspapers and a few hours in front of the TV, I had no other choice than using my brain in an autonomous way. I got used to thinking and reflecting a lot. Another method to kill the time and not get dehumanised was to revive by heart extracts from famous authors’ works (poetry and prose) that I had studied as a kid. I can’t say how many times I recited ‘*a Silvia*’ [To Silvia] by Giacomo Leopardi and ‘*L’Inno a Satana*’ [Hymn to Satan] and ‘*Odi barbare*’ [Barbarian Odes] by Carducci. My mind often turned to the Sonzogno editions and to the popular socialist divulgation of Darwin, Keplero and Einstein’s theories dating back at the beginning of the century. As concerns the history of the anarchist movement I remember reflecting a lot on certain characters, Cafiero for example, who summarized the first six volumes of Marx’s ‘Capital’ into Italian. I questioned myself as to why he did this compendium and I found the answer in the comments of the libertarian thinkers of the time: ‘To translate and divulge ideas and to make public whatever can be useful to induce the masses to reflect is always revolutionary. When a man becomes critical by reading and studying he develops automatically the sense of rebellion and the desire for revolution’.

So I spent the time of my sentences meditating and it was as if I was reading. The time to go to the patio and the time of meals arrived rapidly, and in this way entire months passed by. Most prisoners didn't pass their time in this way as their brain was empty of any idea. They didn't use to study and reflect. It must be quite sad and squalid not to have reference points or ideas to be thought about when you are condemned to forced solitude. Your brain inevitably deteriorates and you get dehumanised. After the war, literacy classes have been introduced in Italian jails, the equivalent of primary schools. Teachers are chosen very carefully by directors: I only met Christian-democrat or fascist teachers in prison. Instead of getting students, whose age varies from twenty to eighty, interested in culture, these teachers let them talk about sport all the time so that they don't learn anything. Hundreds of prisoners got primary school certificates without knowing how to make elementary calculations or apprehending the name of Garibaldi and how many wars of independence occurred in Italy.

School in prison has the mere function of 'demonstrating' to those outside that prison can rehabilitate inmates. To avoid dehumanisation and laziness, I also wrote a lot while in prison. Of course what I wrote couldn't be submitted to the judgement of literary critics. My writing was extremely personal and I've never given any importance to it. I wrote mainly poetry following the metrics of classic poets of the last century. I don't think this kind of ***metrics, which once was taught in schools, is in fashion today. I treated various subjects such as the death of comrades in prison, springtime, love, nature, Pietro Nenni...

I threw out most of my scribbling after reading it to interested people. I've never thought of keeping what I wrote especially as I was never really sure that I would get out of prison alive. What is left are the pieces of paper I had in my pocket the day they opened the door to me in order to 'free' me.

Once I also attempted to write a tragedy, first writing it in poetry and then translating it into prose so as to make it more readable. The subject was the 'morti bianche' [deaths on the work-place], the tragic deaths of those who fall into the oven of a foundry or are gassed in mines. I got the idea while staying in the Sicilian jail of Ragusa in 1964 after reading the news of a similar tragedy. I had developed my tragedy following the scheme of Pietro Gori's old anarchist song entitled 'The four seasons'. Unfortunately the screws seized it during a search in my cell.

I think they destroyed it and so I lost the desire to write another one.

Belgrado Pedrini

Belgrado Pedrini's typescript finishes here. Unfortunately it is incomplete owing to his premature death.

Extracts from 'L'Amico del Popolo' (February 1978-March 1979)

'Friend of the people', magazine of the anarchist circle 'Bruno Filippi', Carrara.

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 1

Belgrado Pedrini's speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the anarchist circle 'Bruno Filippi'

Greetings to all of you comrades!

The re-opening of the Anarchist Circle 'Bruno Filippi' is in my opinion a positive event, and I'm sure you agree. It is a clear sign that anarchists from Carrara want to carry on the difficult path that Bakunin showed us, that is to say the liberation of humanity from any kind of slavery, mortification and misery that has been created by States and their supporters.

Anarchists are ready for any sacrifice in order to attain this social liberation.

We know that the road we are running under ***the enemy arrows is full of obstacles and dangers, but we do not surrender as we are certain that history, science and philosophy will prove us right one day. In the long wait we will not shed tears under the enemy's blows; on the contrary, we will greet beautiful and vengeful death in the same way that he, Bruno Filippi, greeted her as he left the last breath of his young life in the ***fire.

I'll tell you a story in order to show you how strong Bruno Filippi's anarchist faith was. When a ***literate affirmed that anarchy would never be achieved, he answered: ***'Say to the swallow that flies towards springtime that she will never reach it; you'll see her sadly folding her wings. But I insist, I do not give up: I go towards anarchy because history goes toward it too. I go towards the bright anarchist springtime, which will give the oppressed and slaves all over the world joy and smile'.

From an historical point of view, Bruno Filippi does not close the circle of great anarchist heroism but ***continues the tragic path of the great iconoclasts of Anarchy unperturbed.

He was born in 1900 in Milan and collaborated with the anarchist paper 'Iconoclast' and the magazine 'Vertice', directed by Renzo Novatore. He was only 19 years old when he carried out his sensational action, which all of you know about. He fabricated and carried with him the deadly device that the nemesis of justice inspired in him. He wanted to punish the direct accomplices of the monarchy, who had turned the sea of blood shed by the Italian people and by the people of half the world into gold. That day, 7th September 1919, fat mafia men had gathered in the aristocracy club in Naples to celebrate the wealth accumulated through wars. Unfortunately they did not receive the punishment they deserved. The device exploded a few seconds earlier in the avenger's hands, and tore him to pieces. His action, however, was not in vain: murderers of people

all over the world were shattered with terror. Anarchists did not shed any tears but strengthened their faith in future victories, which are revenges of justice and love.

As admirers of Bruno Filippi's revolutionary thought, we will launch from this little anarchist site our daily struggle against the oppressors and the exploiters of the world, in the same way as the flames of the greatest revolution in the world burst out of Marat's hovel. We are convinced that the anarchist circle 'Bruno Filippi', which is being born again after almost thirty years, will enjoy the solidarity and friendship of all the anarchists groups in Italy and in the world.

By concluding this modest speech I express my deep gratitude to all the comrades in Carrara and to those of the 'Francisco Ferrer' circle from Genoa, who helped us in the reconstruction of 'Bruno Filippi'. I also want to greet the comrades who came from all over the country to celebrate this beautiful day with us, while the anarchist flag flutters in honour and respect of Bruno Filippi.

Long live libertarian thought! Long live Anarchy!

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N 3

Anarchists of Bruno Filippi's answer to the crocodile tears of the government, the political parties and the unions.

One of the ***main responsible for the economic and moral disaster in this whining Italy has been kidnapped as was Elena, which led to the Trojan war. Some people think that this kidnapping has not been orchestrated by young revolutionaries but by those who sit in the highest ranks and who are willing to justify a coup against proletarians. People should open their eyes on the mysteries of Italian politics, which is linked to the foreign one by shady interests.

Others think that it was Marxist revolutionaries who kidnapped ***ex-black shirt Aldo Moro, the leader of the most powerful party which is leading Italy on dirty sink water like that of ***Stinfale [check] lake.

Who did take Italy to the edge of economic collapse so that today our country must rely on foreign loans, which make the government and the people slaves of so-called allied states? Who did produce social misery, corruption, pornography, drugs, theft, fraud and scandals that are taking the highest government officials to court? Who did transfer milliards and milliards of liras born from the blood and sweat of the working class into foreign banks? Who did order the police to shoot ***on workers in Avola, Reggio Emilia, Milan, Rome and Turin? It was the same political class that has generated hundreds of Bava Beccaris in order to defend privilege and wealth. It was the ruling class supported by the counter revolutionary communist party and the unions, slaves of the system.

After generating disorder, social injustice and arrogance in all the bodies of the state, government, unions and political parties have the cynical courage to attribute to a few rebel youths the responsibility for Italy's political, economic and social defeat. And why didn't these thieves shed a tear when they robbed and tortured young women of the poor class? Or when they killed Pinelli and Serantini?

You authoritarian people, do you cry only when the sword strikes your flesh of the privileged of capital? Do you think you are invincible and superior even before death? This is the anarchists of the BrunoFilippi's answer: put your heads in the ashes and admit you are guilty.

We wish you were all kidnapped and thrown in the Tiber along with all your strongboxes.

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N 11

WORKERS!

Did you notice how the crocodile tears of the government and the communist party on Aldo Moro's grave soon disappeared in the soporific atmosphere of the electoral campaigns?

The two political crocodiles are right when they both proclaim themselves winners. In fact they still coexist in perfect harmony thanks to the dullness of the Italian people. The party of the dead Moro and that of the dead Berlinguer (in the political sense) keep on their electoral farces and get fat on the workers' shoulders, who still believe in the 'marvellous and progressive destiny' announced by the false apostles of the church and by the false followers of Marx. The Christian Democrats exult as they got a bunch of votes more than the communists did, but the workers must have noticed that not a single ounce of extra bread has entered their bags after these electoral victories because 'the wolf is hungrier after its meal'.

Workers! The anarchists of Bruno Filippi want to suggest to you the only wise thing that can be done: DO NOT VOTE FOR ANY POLITICAL PARTY. Give a kick in the arse to professional politicians, get rid of the bosses who suck your blood, be the masters of social life because you are FREE MEN AND NOT HUMBLE SERVANTS!

You can do that with the only possible means: THE LIBERTARIAN AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION, which is the grave of all the vampires of the earth.

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N 12

Communist workers!

We anarchists are wondering why you still believe in the internationalist and revolutionary communism of the so-called Soviet Union. Let's forget Italian communism, whose ideological death is more than certain. On its corpse the pope of Rome, who substitutes God on earth, has already issued a death certificate: 'dead for excess of historical compromises. Now it can enter heaven'. Maybe you communists also believe in this death but you still have hope in so-called soviet communism. And maybe you dream of a column of red tanks that will free you. If we didn't care about you we would wish you ***saw this fatal soviet march to Italy so that you would become aware of the blood and tears implied in soviet communism. Luckily for you, this unexpressed hope of yours won't see the light.

Anarchists did not only study Bakunin and Malatesta, they also studied Marx and Lenin and they can tell you that the doctrines of the latter have never been realized and that State communism is the negation of freedom and social equality.

The Soviet Union does not recognize the Marxist 'historical and dialectical materialism' because this doctrine implies philosophical atheism and economic equality. To achieve the latter it is necessary to abolish money, to recognize the principle 'to each according to his/her needs' and the extinction of the State.

As Saturn devoured his children, so the Soviet Union devoured all the theoretical premises of Marxism, starting from the supposed workers' power. Ask Breznev whether it is him or the working class who governs his 'socialist' country! He is the last devourer of Marxism as he was preceded by Lenin and Trotsky in taking political power away from the soviets. The Italian communist workers must know that Russia is an imperialist State whose rules are not those indicated by Marx and Lenin but by Bismark and Machiavelli, so they don't have to wait for Russia to help them in bringing socialism to Italy.

Real communism will be implemented by the people once they are tired of traitors and swindlers.

LONG LIVE THE ANARCHIST SOCIAL REVOLUTION!

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N 15

Citizens,

You are once again being asked to vote by the usual thieves of the State and political parties, by now strictly linked to each other by common anti-proletarian interests.

Anarchists, who don't pretend to be on your side because they are there for real, tell you once again that your vote doesn't express your will. On the contrary it is the will of politicians who induce you into voting through ***captious speeches that forge your political awareness.

First of all you should consider that when they issued the laws that today they put ***under your judgement following their own interests, they didn't ask you if you agreed with those laws. They went on without your approval and paid no attention to your political will.

Secondly you should consider that every time you have to vote it is you who pay for it and not the vampires of the State and of political parties.

Now reflect on the two laws you are asked to abrogate or to confirm. As for the law regulating the financing of political parties they ask you whether or not you want to be robbed with your consensus, of which they are sure anyway. The other referendum asks you if you accept to be accomplices of the 'war law' of so-called republican minister, who proposed and issued it without listening to your opinion, so that his weapon suppliers could put down in a bloodbath any attempt of rebellion against the capitalist and clerical state, which he loves so much!

We can understand ex-Stalinist Luigi Longo when he asks you to empty your pockets and fill those of his party; but we can't help being indignant at his new communism when he asks you, without showing any ideological shame, to confirm the infamous Reale law, which is already bleeding with workers' blood. Reale created his law in order to save the institutions of the bour-

geois republic, and also his farms full of chickens and turkeys. 'Republic' means 'public thing' but he only wanted to safeguard his ***things.

For this reason, we place minister Reale among the grey mullets of Mazzini's ideal and Luigi Longo among the invertebrates of Marxism-Leninism.

It would be great if, after Moro, these two Italian profiteers also disappeared!

Anarchists don't vote following their ideology; but the people who still are engulfed in the electoral swindle should do the right thing and refuse the two laws for which they are asked to vote 'yes'.

It would be even better if you set the electoral ***sites of Italy on fire and started waging social revolution along with us.

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 16

XV and XVI century

Citizens,

we want to give you an idea of the infamous 'Quemadero' that was built in Tablada (Spain) on orders of the catholic monk Thomas Torquemada (Tommaso Torre Quemada), founder and leader of the Spanish Holy Inquisition, which later spread all over catholic Europe and was responsible for the most cruel murders carried out in the name and glory of God.

The great inquisitor, minister and devout servant of queen Isabella the Catholic, a thief and murderer, wanted to fight against heresy, that is to say against different religious faiths. In this way the political and economic hegemony of the catholic church and the monarchy would be kept intact, right when Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Switzerland were threatening to expand religious reforms. The Catholic Church was not worried about religious unity but about its huge political and economic interests, which it had conquered with the powerful help of religion. The latter nurtured and still nurtures the resignation and slavery of the people.

In order to repress political and religious thought, Torquemada helped the Spanish monarchy and church with surly fanaticism and also with lucid political calculation and cold determination. In this way he killed with iron and fire millions of heretics and served not only his religious cause but also the throne and the Catholic Church, which was intolerant towards any other faith and sworn enemy of free thought.

Millions of human beings guilty of being supporters of sciences or philosophies considered dangerous by the Catholic Church were burnt to death on the 'Quemadero'.

The accusation of heresy advanced by the inquisitors meant death by fire of the 'guilty' and the confiscation of all their wealth, which was the main concern of the church.

Condemnation was even inflicted on the forefathers of so-called heretics, so that their bones were exhumed and burnt on the same fire.

Never had such a ferocious battle against freedom like that of the 'Holy catholic Inquisition' been seen in the world.

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 30

Citizens,

after hearing the major of Carrara's and of senator Pecchioli's speeches about the Resistance, we want to tell you something on the same subject. As ex-partisans we think we have the right to do so.

When politicians talk about the liberation of Carrara or about the liberation of Italy in general, they use a ridiculous euphemism in order to avoid saying that Italy only changed bosses: it was fascist capitalism before while now it is fascist-friendly capitalism. Yesterday people were slaves trembling with fear and now they are slaves rippling with enthusiasm. They are slaves not only of the rich but also of their servants, like those who gave ***lectures in the Ambrosi theatre.

The senator even told us that the Resistance has not been betrayed but no one could ask him what he means by Resistance. The men of his party who along with anarchists played a role in the liberation of Italy wanted freedom and also social and economic justice, without which there cannot be freedom. Today we see them prostrate in worship of the pope and of the capitalist State that pays them so that they are on its side. They are humble servants of the same clerical-capitalist State that they wanted to destroy once upon a time. Nevertheless the senator came to Carrara to tell us that the Resistance, intended as a struggle against all social injustice, has not been betrayed! See the coherence of the communist senator! He obviously learned something from the Catholic Church, which claims that the Christian ideal was not betrayed with Torquemada, the persecution of Giordano Bruno and the catholic Inquisition! Furthermore the senator ***boasts against the terrorism of 'subversive people' but he doesn't spend a word on the terrorism of the bourgeois State, from which, as a logical reaction, comes the terrorism of those who want to put an end to capitalism and social injustice. The senator shoots arrows at the rebels generated by the rotten womb of an exploiting State, which he wants to defend at all costs, but he doesn't say anything about the more and more numerous and despicable murders committed by the political class so that the republic is pushed into a sea of mud and the fascist State is restored.

Senator Pecchioli doesn't see that millions of workers are unemployed and millions of mothers are looking for a house, that there are people who live in hovels and youths who take drugs because they don't have any hope. Pecchioli doesn't see the thefts that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Most importantly, he doesn't see the military 'bayonets' in defence of the people's exploiters.

According to Pecchioli, Spartacus did wrong when he stirred the slaves against the imperial oppressors, he should have waited peacefully for Roman law to realize pacific justice and political progress through the work of its senators!

And according to Pecchioli, Carlo Pisacane did wrong when he liberated the prisoners of Ponza and when he tried to free the slaves of Sapri. He should have stayed quiet waiting for legal justice!

So let's all keep quiet, waiting for Pecchioli, the pope and his priests to realize social justice!

But, honourable senator, we want to tell the people that rebellion is the ***nobleness of the slave!

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 33

To the know-all of the bourgeois press

As the Italian capitalist press indulges in talking about injustices committed in other countries, especially the eastern ones, to such a point that it seems delighted in describing concentration camps, ghettos and forced labour camps as if it was imitating Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, we ask leftist and rightist scribblers a precise question. You know Solgenitzin's tragic story about the archipelagos of death by heart, but have you ever been in those Italian concentration camps called mental asylums, located right in the country of Beccaria and Lombroso? No? Well, you'd better go there and then you will lose the courage to be indignant at the mental asylums of other countries, where brains are washed with the regime's acid until the last cell of free thought disappears. We have known about such horrible places since 1918, but you ignore or pretend to ignore what happens in the mental asylums of our beautiful country, where brains are not washed but are smashed with batons and limbs are broken on ***containment beds while so-called patients scream and agonize in the name of the 'psychiatric science' of the Christian regime, and are inflicted torture until death like in the times of Alessandro Borgia and Clemente VII. Have you ever heard about the infamous Saporiti, Amati and Raguzzini, directors of the judicial mental asylum in Aversa? Maybe not. Then try to attend the lessons that these unrepentant followers of Lombroso's criminology give to the ferocious guards of their mental asylum, all of them illiterate louts from southern Italy. They say: 'You are the guards of congenital delinquents, as you can see from their features: big forehead, protruding cheekbones and jaws, floppy ears, arms like those of monkeys and a crooked walk. The cause of their being criminals is of a psycho-physic nature and derives from a gland hidden underneath their skull. They commit crimes following biological necessity and they are therefore irresponsible from a penal point of view. But society must defend itself and so it locks them up in mental asylums for an unlimited period of time. Social opportunity suggests they have to be eliminated according to science without thinking about it too much. There also exist criminals who don't have floppy ears but they are all the same irresponsible and mad and must be tamed with whips and containment beds. The sooner they disappear the better for the society we defend'. Now imagine what can happen to the unfortunate people trapped in this concentration camp 'of good health' after such lessons are given to ferocious and ignorant guards. Much worse than ****'Archipelago Gulag'! Try to smell the shit of your country, you who sell your pen to those who offer the best wages!

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 36

The truth about Asinara special prison

For those who don't know it, Asinara is a small island near Porto Torres in Sardinia and is just a little bigger than Piazza Alberica and Piazza Farini put together. There stands the special prison that has been the subject of debate over the last few days, which watchdog general Dalla Chiesa also took part. Let's forget for the moment this potential Bava Beccaris ready to shoot

at the slaves in chains who scared the State, a State that is not based on rights but on the most merciless social injustice defended by troops of hungry soldiers without any social conscience. Scribblers of various kinds, specialised in telling lies at the service of the State, also participate in this debate. Among them there are social democrat deputies Costantino Belluscio and Terenzo Magliano, who visited Asinara prison and established that guards working there are doing very badly... whereas the prisoners live as if they were in heaven where they have everything even including hen's milk!

We affirm that quite the opposite is true and we are claiming this on the basis of irrefutable observation. Guards are doing very well as they get wages that are far higher than those that workers are paid, and they will be also granted generous pensions, even if they produce only chains and tears. Political prisoners, on the contrary, are doing very badly thanks to general Dalla Chiesa, who thinks he can destroy young rebels' revolutionary spirit with hunger and whips.

During Mussolini's regime ***Abyssinian Ras were imprisoned in Asinara prison and they were starved to death besides being beaten to death too, whereas the guards enjoyed money and parcels stolen from those poor unfortunates.

History is repeating itself as the current detainees in that jail are hungry and are beaten every time they attempt even the smallest protest. They are held naked in disgusting cells and are lashed by those guards who 'are doing very badly' and for whom the State has destined millions of liras so that they can carry on their work of ferocious hangmen with more enthusiasm.

We want to say to general Dalla Chiesa* to come to Ponte Baroncino in Carrara, where he will receive all the spits he deserves.

If this murderer is offended by our affirmations we are ready to defy him at a duel with guns or swords, as he likes. Otherwise he is the cowardly killer we think he is.

* * *

L'AMICO DEL POPOLO N. 38

Section 7 of the judicial mental asylum in Aversa

The press in the service of the State thunders against terrorism and the atrocities committed in other countries as if the cleric-capitalist Italian government was extraneous to any form of cruelty perpetrated both openly and in the closeness of prison cells and judicial mental asylums, about which we have already spoken. As our public denunciation was totally ignored by the State, here we are once again denouncing jails and mental asylums, which the scribblers euphemistically call 'mental health houses'.

The design reproduced here illustrates one of the 'curative' methods adopted in the infamous section 7 of the judicial mental asylum of Aversa, where prisoners considered mentally ill are imprisoned. Generally these poor people are left rotting in dirty rooms from which they are kicked out every morning by guards beating them with belts and pushed by force in a courtyard. As the prisoners oppose resistance, horrific screams can be heard all around. Then the doctors, all of them Lombroso's followers, smell the bodies of these disgraceful people and order them to go to collective showers administered through 'healthy' pipes... so healthy that the bodies washed in this way are left drying in the sun or in the wind as if they were rags.

Sometimes the so-called mad react with violence and turn the courtyard into a bullfight camp where punches, kicks and butts are hurled in any directions without any precise targets amid screams, spouts of water and guttural curses. On those occasions the guards run on the scene and compel the poor mad in containment beds where the latter are 'calmed down' under blows of belts and batons.

This is sufficient to make tamer general Dalla Chiesa proud of himself even though he does even more horrible things in the*** sites of his exclusive dominion.

We are going to tell you the rest about prisons in the following issues of the 'Bruno Filippi'.

BELGRADO PEDRINI'S SPEECH AT THE VII CONGRESS OF F.I.A.P. [Italian federation of Partisan Associations] IN MODENA

Dearest members,

We have just heard a member urging us to act so that F.I.A.P is joined by youths. Well said! But in order to prevent Partisans Associations from becoming laurel wreaths to be handed down to posterity in praise of the partisan era, which we have lived to the full, it is necessary to engage in concrete initiatives, that is to say in a social struggle in support of workers. We can become involved in problems such as housing, law wages, pensions, grants for poor students and other related issues that workers are particularly interested in. In this way only will many youths join our glorious ranks, as this assembly seems to want.

Dearest members, let me recall the kind lady who preceded me on the microphone to remember republican combatants: Mazzini, Garibaldi and others.

I must say I was very happy about this because we, anarchist members, pay great respect to all those who fought for social justice and freedom. The lady, however, could have also remembered Felice Orsini, who lost his life while struggling against Louis Napoleon's dictatorial imperialism, or Pisacane and Cavallotti. And as we are mentioning martyrs and combatants, let me remember ours, who fell in many arenas of the world for the liberation of the entire humanity. I want to mention Francisco Ferrer, Bresci, Caserio, Passanante, Acciarito, Angiolillo, Sbardello, Schirru, Ravachol, Emile Henry, Sacco, Vanzetti, Lucetti, Pinelli, Serantini, the martyrs of Chicago, and many others. This demonstrates that we anarchists also have martyrs.

Dear members, we have heard a jubilant voice in this hall: that of a socialist member who has foreseen an avalanche of proletarian votes, which will be able to submerge the corrupt regime of the Christian Democrats.

Very well! We anarchists want them to fall too, and we also want the fall of whatever regime, especially the dictatorial ones. But let's be careful! Are you sure that freedom and justice will come after the current government falls? Or perhaps will other guns be drawn, like those that murdered thousands of anarchists in Moscow in 1918? Or will other tanks, armoured vehicles, and scaffolds come along to massacre those who really love freedom and justice?

History is not always progressive: sometimes it goes back and takes us to the darkness of dictatorship. I give you an example: after the Greek and Roman republics fell, there was not more justice or freedom, but ferocious dictatorships, slavery and blood.

After Negrin's republic fell, there was no dawn of a better world but the cruel dictatorship you all know.

An avalanche of votes! This sentence just upsets me. Are you sure this avalanche of paper won't turn into a bloodbath of the Italian people? We anarchists don't believe in the ***thaumaturgic power of electoral ballots. To believe in this kind of victory means not to understand the immutable nature of capitalism; it means not taking the recent example of Chile into account. I don't want to prophesy the apocalypse now. On the contrary I wish a pacific progress for the Italian people but we must stay united, and be prepared for the worst. We must also make sure that our ideological differences don't provoke discord among us, for if we are not united we will be surely defeated.

We heard prophecies of an imminent coup d'état from this microphone. I don't know if this can be true but if this should happen we anarchists will be always ready, with you, to defend the last piece left of freedom. A few words and then I'll finish my speech.

Someone said here that many partisans, in those terrible years, later joined fascist organizations, Black Brigades, etc.

This is not true! Those villains were not partisans, they were gangs of hungry people ready to sell their conscience for a piece of bread.

* * *

SOLIDARITY TO THE YOUNG SQUATTERS OF THE MONTECATINI PLANT

The anarchists of 'Bruno Filippi' in Carrara express their solidarity to the squatting of the above mentioned plant, carried out by groups of youths in order to create, with juvenile zeal and hard work, a 'Social Centre', where interesting initiatives can be carried out, such as those the youths themselves list:

'A centre for counter-information, cultural discussions, music, political and social discussions, and against the use of drugs'.

This is enough to make these willing youths proud as they try to contribute to the cultural development of our town.

They want to call those youths who feel alone and lost because they don't have ideals that give them a strong moral sense for their lives.

We anarchists of the 'Bruno Filippi' are very interested in these juvenile initiatives. We want to say to these little heralds of cultural thought, who have squatted the abandoned Montecatini plant, that we offer them our support and solidarity, and that we will be with them if despicable emergencies occur.

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Belgrado Pedrini
“We were the rebels, we were the outlaws...”
Autobiographical fragments of men against
2001

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