

Re-conquering the lost fatherland

FdCA statement on Italy's new militarization

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

4th August 2008

The Right looking to re-conquer the lost fatherland

The army moves slowly into Bari

The San Marco Battalion cautiously takes up position outside the immigrant centres

Bari has been chosen as a test run for Minister La Russa's new security operation, which went into effect on 4th August when 3,000 soldiers went into action across the country.

This is a de facto militarization of the territory, officially beginning in Bari at 7.00 am in the presence of Vice-minister Mantovano and continuing then to Rome, Turin, Milan, Naples, Bologna, Verona, Padua, Palermo, Gorizia and Calabria.

310 soldiers are stationed in Apulia (205 in Bari, the others in Foggia and Brindisi).

In the Apulian capital, 90 soldiers are already on duty, patrolling the city's tourist areas and one of the poorest parts of Bari, the San Pio neighbourhood, while another 150 are guarding the two immigrant centres – the Welcoming Centre for Asylum Seekers (CARA) and the Identification and Expulsion Centre (CIE).

Indeed, during his "visit" to the CARA, Vice-minister Mantovano had to be protected by two security cordons due to a demonstration and to the protests by the almost 900 immigrants (in a structure designed to hold 700) who have been "guests" there for several months while their asylum papers are being processed.

This is not window-dressing, either in Apulia or elsewhere in the country, as the parliamentary opposition states. Instead we are witnessing the first steps of a plan for a permanent military presence on the streets, with the armed forces being entrusted with the functions and operations of military police (on the basis of experiences abroad, from Kosovo to Iraq, from Afghanistan to Lebanon), to guard and control sites and zones of strategic importance for the security of the country. The current rules of engagement are open to widening, given that the level of alert can only rise in the face of a frenzied security campaign feeding an animal-like instinct to repress. And all for the "modest" sum of around €31m for the years 2008–2009.

It is the beginning of a vicious circle which will be impossible to break or to declare concluded (as was the case with the military intervention during Operation Sicilian Vespers and Operation Spring in Apulia), as it is not designed to be an emergency operation, but rather the normal administration of the territory.

The main objective is, of course, anti-immigrant (transforming them all into potentially dangerous criminals), in the illusion of being able to halt the migratory processes by means of making illegal immigration a crime and of long-term repressive methods. In comparison, the patrols of tourist areas, of run-down neighbourhoods (where social policies, not military policies are needed), of churches and diplomatic residences (like the US Consulate in Naples!), appear to be by the way.

With the increase in the use of the army within the confines of the country, the critical vision and praxis of anti-militarism sees confirmation of its political value. Anti-militarism has always considered the armed forces to be instruments of repression, both abroad and at home.

We need to build grassroots structures to monitor the activities of the military police, to denounce acts of repression, intimidation and violence, and to promote a culture of cohabitation based on solidarity and not on repression.

Today, Bari is no safer than it was yesterday. Italy is no safer than it was a month ago.

Today, there are still bands of neo-fascists going around undisturbed, racists are still vowed to racial violence, women's bodies are still treated as objects, workers still die at work. And the parallel State of international crime still calmly goes about its business.

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