

# 1969-?: The strategy of tension in Italy



Information about the Italian state's "Strategy of Tension" policy in which it carried out terrorist attacks against its own people in order to blame the left and anarchists.

Faced with a huge growth of working class power, with strikes, occupations, self-reduction of prices and mass squatting the intelligence services began carrying out terrorist acts with the help of fascist groups. Anarchists and the left were blamed, and working class militants were arrested. The worst such attack was the worst terrorist attack in Europe in the 20th Century - the bombing of the Bologna train station which killed 85 people (see picture, above)

"[S]ome fascists in the group of terrorists in question worked for the Carabinieri (the Italian military police) , that others had contact with the army or the police and that they received valuable and timely information in the progress of investigation into their activities"(1) - From the report of an Italian parliamentary committee of inquiry.

"The workers struggles of 1968-69, [Italy's Hot Autumn](#), deeply engraved the economic structure of the country and modified the balance of forces. After these struggles, the Left was stronger and power weaker. . . .objectively. The damage provoked by the workers insubordination was very serious indeed"

"Even before '69 many militant and autonomous struggles developed, in particular Pirelli in Milan, neither controlled by the Unions at the level of organization nor dominated by them at the level of the content of the demands. Tangible wage increases, plus less work were the two main themes of that period. The behaviour of the proletariat can be summed up in the slogan of the period: Better wages, shorter hours!.

"Violent strikes broke out in Alfa Romeo and in [Fiat](#). Rioting took place in many towns, the most serious in Reggio Calabria where tens of thousands of people fought against the troops" (2)

"[R]ight-wing political violence most strongly manifested itself in the late 1960s and early 1970s . This was a period of student and youth agitation, new social movements including women's and gay liberation, widespread social unrest and trade union militancy in Italy . This was accompanied by a massive increase in electoral support for the Communists - peaking at over a third of the vote in the 1976 elections. The neo-Fascist terrorists groups of this period were a backlash against all this left wing activity and also against the emergence of left wing terrorist groups such as the Red Brigades. Terrorists of the right .... often planted bombs in public places which killed dozens of innocent bystanders and passers-by . All this was part of a so-called 'strategy of tension', a campaign designed to lead to a breakdown of law and order

and consequent collapse of public confidence in democratically elected government, precipitating a takeover by the army. Indeed in the 1960s and 1970s there were several coup attempts." (3)

On December the 12th 1969 the bombing began, with one bomb in Milan and three in Rome. The bombs in Rome left eighteen wounded, the bomb in Milan killed seventeen and injured eighty-eight. Police acting on information from S.I.D. (intelligence agency) arrested two anarchists for the Milan bomb, later murdering one of them, [Giuseppe Pinelli](#), by throwing him out of a police station window and claiming suicide - an act made famous by Dario Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Despite mounting evidence that this was a fascist bomb, the official party line for years afterward was blame the anarchists. Later the Establishment view changed and the idea that this was a joint operation between anarchists and fascists is propounded! Eventually a number of fascists are tried, convicted and imprisoned but others are acquitted, as is the surviving anarchist. One of the bombers acquitted for "lack of evidence" was Guido Giannette an S.I.D. agent. When Giannette became a suspect, the secret state sent him out of Italy and continued to pay his wages after the arrest warrant had been issued.

In twelve years from 1969 to 1980 4,298 terrorist incidents took place. Of these fascists were responsible for 68%, as well as most of the deaths. The basic pattern repeated again and again is as described above, the left is blamed, there is a high degree of collusion and those responsible usually get off scot free and with a hell of a lot less international political and media attention than the famous Red Brigades.

In September 1974 the head of S.I.D.(secret service) Vito Micelli was implicated in [an attempted fascist coup d'etat in 1970](#) - after a secret report from his own agency reached the Prime Minister's desk. He then nailed his colours to the mast and stood and won as a M.S.I. (fascist) parliamentary candidate. All this time the covert neo-fascist army, [Gladio](#) which was set up in the wake of [World War 2](#), was also lurking in the background.

By 1977 S.I.D. was so embroiled in scandal that it was replaced by a 'new' secret service - S.I.S.M.I. . Then came what was at the time the worst single terrorist atrocity in European history. On the 2nd of August 1980 a bomb exploded in the second class waiting room of Bologna railway station. Eighty-five people were killed and over two hundred wounded, Bologna was a Communist Party electoral stronghold with a powerful workers' movement and had been targeted previously. Ten years later a number of S.I.S.M.I. officers were on trial for this atrocity, they included a General Secretary, a General and a Colonel. Their convictions were later quashed. As we have seen these were by no means the only incidents of far-right terror and state collusion with it in Italy at that time, for example repeatedly the secret services created false trails of evidence leading away from the perpetrators of rightist violence. One might wonder what motivated it and indeed what motivated the virtually indiscriminate terror itself, the whole story would have remained in the realms of conjecture and could be dismissed as speculation but for chance.

During investigations into a banking scandal police searched the home of Licio Gelli. Gelli had fought for Mussolini's reborn Roman Empire in Spain, Yugoslavia and Albania and when Italian fascism crumbled he joined the Nazi S.S.. After the war Gelli worked on the 'Ratlines' - the Vatican and C.I.A. sponsored escape routes for Nazi fugitives. Later he dealt arms in Latin America and reputedly became the linkman between the C.I.A. and Juan Peron the Argentine dictator. Searching his home, the police came across a list of over six hundred names and evidence linking them to a Freemason group called Propaganda-2 or P-2. Now freemasonry or any other oath-bound secret society is illegal in Catholic Italy, but of course totally unremarkable this would be but for the membership of P-2.

P-2 recruited from the "elite" of Italian society. It included within its ranks one hundred and ninety five military officers, two serving Ministers, three ex-Ministers, one Party Secretary, sixteen Magistrates, four hundred and twenty two State officials, thirty six M.P.s as well as Secret Service heads and various bankers and capitalists (4). Magistrates investigating the Bologna bombing found that P-2 directed much of the fascist violence and associated cover-ups and distortion. Gelli was P-2's 'venerable master' (that's leader to us mere mortals) and in 1986 he stood trial for his part in the 1980 Bologna bombing and was acquitted but found guilty of perjury. On the fourth of August 1974 a train bombing near Bologna killed twelve and injured forty-eight. A 1983 trial judgement on this atrocity found:

"In the opinion of the parties claiming damages, the accused members of 'Ordine Nuovo' (New Order) were inspired, armed and financed to carry out the attack by the Masonic movement, which took advantage of right-wing subversives and terrorists, within the context of the so-called 'strategy of tension' in an attempt to halt the country's gradual drift to the left and set up the basis for a future coup d'etat" (5)

This was the P-2's plan, by means of terror in the style of agent provocateur promote a law and order agenda and provide a pretext for a clampdown on dissent and worker's struggle, if necessary a coup d'etat would be part of this. However given that P- 2 constituted a 'State within the State', a coup would be the option of last resort and would happen if for instance the Communist party entered a coalition government. Such a coup would have undoubtedly involved [Gladio](#), another organisation in the murky shadows of Italy's secret state sharing the same ends and means as P-2.

The Italian state's Strategy of Tension shows how the elites who govern us and profit from our labour will stop at absolutely nothing to maintain their power and wealth, even resorting to terrorism against their own populations in a "democratic" Western state. Any people wanting a better world today should take note, and be prepared.

### **Postscript**

In March 2001 General Maletti, commander of the counter-intelligence section of Italy's military intelligence, claimed at a trial of various fascists for one of the 1969 bombings, that "The C.I.A., following the directives of its government, wanted to create an Italian nationalism capable of halting what it saw as a slide to the left and, for this purpose it may have made use of rightwing terrorism. I believe this is what happened in other countries as well." (Quoted in the Guardian of March 26th 2001)

*Edited from the Free Earth website by libcom*

### **Footnotes**

1. Quoted in 'The Darkside of Europe' by Geoffrey Harris page 113.
2. 'The Ripening of Time no.12: Italy Documents of Struggle' page 11.
3. 'The Fascist Experience in Italy' by John Pollard page 132
4. including Silvio Berlusconi, later to be Italian Prime Minister . Berlusconi was head of Group 17, P2's media section tasked with influencing public opinion and with P-2's help moved into the television business , his companies now dominate the Italian media and have been instrumental in his election success in a coalition with the 'National Alliance' a split from the old fascist party . The media in Italy continues to link the modern radical left with the 'days of lead', with i.e. the terrorism of the 70s. No comment necessary.
5. as (1)

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<http://www.stragi.it/index.php?pagina=associazione&par=archivio>

