

# Serantini, Franco, 1951-1972



A short biography of Italian anarchist Franco Serantini, who was murdered by police during an anti-fascist demonstration.

Francisco Serantini was born in Cagliari on Sardinia on 16th July 1951 and abandoned at birth. He was given both his names by an official of a literary bent or a priest or policeman who had seen in the paper recently mention of the Romagnol writer of the same name, an author of picturesque novels, one of which was *I Bastardi*.

He was adopted at the age of two by a childless couple. After the death of the adoptive mother he went to live with his maternal grandparents at Campobello di Licata. At the age of 9, he was transferred to an institution in Cagliari.

In 1968 he was sent to the Institute for the Observation of Minors and from there to the Pietro Thouar reformatory of Pisa which had an open regime, where he had to eat and sleep in the institution. He went on to attend a school of business accounting in Pisa. Student life opened him up to new and radical ideas and he began to take an interest in the youth organizations of the Communists and Socialists, before joining the leftist group [Lotta Continua](#) and finally arriving at anarchism and activity in the [Giuseppe Pinelli](#) anarchist group which had its centre in via San Martino in autumn 1971.

At that time in 1968, Pisa, with Trent and Turin, was one of the centres of student radicalism.

Franco was intensely active in the various political activities of the period, including the Red Market in the working class neighbourhood of Cep, where fruit and vegetables were sold at low prices to the poor, in various anti-fascist activities, and in the campaigns for the liberation of [framed anarchist Pietro Valpreda](#). On the 5 May 1972 he took part in the anti-fascist demonstration called by Lotta Continua against the meeting of Giuseppe Nicolai of the fascist party MSI. The demonstration was attacked by the police. Franco found himself surrounded by a group of mobile police of the 3rd and 4th platoons of the 3rd Company of the 1st Raggruppamento Celere di Roma and was severely beaten.

From there he was taken to the police barracks and then on to the Don Bosco prison. There he was interrogated and beaten again. The examining judge, the jailers and the prison doctors did not regard his injuries as serious.

After two days of agony he was found in a coma on 7th May and transferred to the prison clinic where he died at 9.45am.

The afternoon of the same day the prison authorities tried to obtain the quick burial of Franco. The court turned this down, whilst news of Franco's death spread through Pisa. Luciano Della Mea, an anti-fascist militant, together with the lawyer Massei, asked for the body to be delivered up.

After the autopsy, the lawyer Giovanni Sorbi emerged and announced that he had been traumatised by what he saw. The chest, shoulders, arms and head of Franco were covered in blood, and not an inch of his body had been left untouched. Franco's funeral on the 9th May saw a huge demonstration. The veteran anarchist Cafiero Ciuti gave a speech at the graveyard, followed by a Lotta Continua militant and a member of the [Durruti](#) anarchist group of Florence (Cinti was a retired railway worker, an [Ardito del popolo](#) in 1921, sacked by the fascists in 1924). The old [anarchist song](#) Sons of the Factories was sung at the graveside.

On 13th May a huge demonstration called by Lotta Continua took place. Gianni Landi spoke for the anarchists and Adriano Sofri for Lotta Continua. The demonstration finished at the last residence of Franco before his death and a plaque was put up there.

Demonstrations took place regularly in memory of Franco every year. In Turin a school was named after him, and in 1982 the San Silvestro square in Pisa was renamed Piazza Franco Serantini with a monument donated by the marble workers of [Carrara](#).

All attempts to bring the police officers to justice ground to a halt in the courts. Despite this, the campaigning of the anarchist movement and Lotta Continua kept the murder of Serantini in the public eye. The Justice for Franco Serantini Committees, the ballad Ballata per Franco Serantini by Piero Nissim, and the book on Serantini's life by Corrado Stajano made sure that Franco's memory was not forgotten.

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