THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

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THE RADICAL RIGHT IN ITALY AFTER THE WAR

Franco Ferraresi

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IN MEMORIAM

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Preface

THIS BOOK has a long and intricate story. After the research that I directed on the radical Right was published in 1984, I was asked to translate it into English, making a few necessary adjustments in order to submit it to a non-Italian audience. Upon setting down to work, it was soon apparent that the "few adjustments" amounted to a full rewriting. This was partly because a sizable amount of legal and inquiry materials (investigations, verdicts, and parliamentary committee reports), which had not been available at the time of my first writing, were gradually appearing, adding important elements to the previous picture. These materials, together with the (rather few) research works that were also published in the meantime, required changes in my interpretation and reconstruction. The first English version was ready in 1993. Because it amounted to practically an entirely new book, it made sense to translate it into Italian.

At that point the initial problem emerged in reverse—I now needed to readapt for an Italian audience a book that had originally been conceived for an English-speaking one. That revision was less substantial than the earlier one, but it was still significant because new materials continued to become available. The resulting text was submitted to the Milanese publisher Feltrinelli in 1994 and published in 1995. The present version is a revision of my original English text, taking into account the Italian version, and adding a number of changes and additions necessitated by yet new findings.

Understandably, all this has caused a number of identity problems, not to mention mental confusion, because many times it was not clear whether I was translating, revising, or writing an original text. Tell-tale signs of such confusion, I am afraid, may be evident in this version.

Like most complex projects lasting for a number of years, this one has indebted me to more individuals than can be acknowledged. First I want to thank all those who worked with me and helped at various stages with the collection of materials, especially Giorgio Buso, who provided invaluable assistance with the translations and whose work is partly incorporated in this book. A number of judges and magistrates were most generous with their time and in making available not easily accessible materials. Among them I owe special gratitude to Cesare Borraccetti, Giancarlo Caselli, Loris D'Ambrosio, Maurizio Laudi, Luigi Macchia, Libero Mancuso, Claudio Nunziata, and Piero Vigna. Rosario Minna, Giovanni Salvi, and Guido Salvini read portions of my manuscript and offered invaluable suggestions. My work as a consultant with the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on

Massacres has allowed me to benefit from the insights of many colleagues, and especially those of its former chairman Senator Libero Gualtieri, who discussed many issues and various interpretations with me. A number of masters and colleagues read and commented on parts of the manuscript. I extend my gratitude especially to Norberto Bobbio, Cesare Cases, Roger Griffin, Albert Hirschman, Joanna Jerrison, Marco Revelli, Francesca Rigotti, Lorenza Sebesta, Anna Viacava, and Michael Walzer.

My deepest gratitude however, goes to one institution and to one person. The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey has offered me two priceless years (1985–86 and 1991–92) and two summers (1987 and 1993) for work and meditation in the most stimulating intellectual environment that international academia can offer. And my wife, Elisabetta Galeotti, has been a constant (and at times pitiless) source of theoretical queries for one hopelessly empirically minded social scientist.

Franco Ferraresi
Turin, July 1995

Abbreviations

AIL	Armata Italiana di Liberazione (Italian Liberation Army)
AN	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
AN	Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard)
BR	*Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades, RB)
CISNAL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Nazionali Lavoratori (Italian Federation of National Workers)
CLA	Costruiamo l'Azione (Let's Build Action)
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy)
DP	Democrazia Proletaria (Proletarian Democracy)
ESESI	Ethnikos Syndesmos Hellenon Spudaston Italias (League of Greek Nationalist Students in Italy)
ETA	Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Fatherland and Freedom)
FN	Fronte Nazionale (National Front)
FNCRSI	Federazione Nazionale Combattenti della Repubblica Sociale Italiana (National Federation of RSI Veterans)
FUAN	Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale (University Front for National Action)
JE	Jeune Europe (Young Europe [Belgium])
KYP	Kratiki Ypiresia Pliroforion (State Intelligence Service [Greece])
MAC	Mouvement d'Action Civique (Civic Action Movement [Belgium])
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
NAR	Nuclei di Azione Rivoluzionaria (Revolutionary Action Nuclei)
NOE	Nouvel Ordre Européen (New European Order)
OAS	Organization de l'Armée Secrete (Secret Army Organization [French-Algerian])
ON	Ordine Nuovo (New Order)
ORDINE NERO	(Black Order)
OT	Ordre et Tradition (Order and Tradition)
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)

PDUP	Partito Democratico di Unità Proletaria (Democratic Party for Proletarian Unity)
PIDE	Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International Police and for the Defense of the State [Portugal])
PLI	Partito Liberale Italiano (Italian Liberal Party [a conservative party])
PSDI	Partito Social Democratico Italiano (Social Democratic Party)
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party)
RSI	Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic)
SAM	Squade d'Azione Mussolini (Mussolini's Action Squad)
SID	Servizio Informazioni per la Difesa (Defense Information Service [Intelligence, 1965–76])
SIFAR	Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate (Information Service for the Armed Forces [Intelligence, 1946–65, when it was replaced by SID])
SISDE	Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Democratica (Information Service for Democratic Security [Civil Intelligence, after 1976])
SISMI	Servizio Informazioni e Sicurezza Militare (Information Service and Military Security [Military Intelligence, after 1976])
TP	Terza Posizione (Third Position)
UNCRSI	Unione Nazionale Combattenti della Repubblica Sociale Italiana (National Union for RSI Veterans)
UQ	Uomo Qualunque (The Common Man [both a newspaper and the movement and party that sprang up from it])

THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

Introduction

Right, Left, Radical Right

THE VICTORY of the so-called Pole of the Liberties at the Italian elections of March 27, 1994, brought a neofascist party into a democratic government for the first time in postwar Europe. The MSI (Italian Social Movement, whose candidates had run under the nom de plume "National Alliance") obtained 14 percent of the votes and placed five of its representatives as ministers in the Berlusconi government. No one had expected such a massive success for the Pole, and especially for its right-wing component.

The surprise was largely because of the lack of attention usually devoted to this area of the Italian political system. For most of the postwar years the MSI, founded in 1946, was the fourth largest party in Italy; it was also the most enduring neofascist organization in any advanced industrial country. Yet the first regular monograph devoted to it by an Italian scholar appeared only in 1989 [Ignazi 1989].[1] A comparison with the treatment reserved to other, less relevant or more recent extreme right parties can only highlight this neglect.[2]

Alongside the parliamentary extreme Right, an extraparliamentary (radical) one has existed in some form from the first postwar years to the beginning of the eighties. Its components have been involved in "squadrista" actions, street violence, coup d'état attempts, and finally in a multitude of veritable terrorist actions. The latter especially have been exceptionally serious. Among advanced countries that have experienced "social revolutionary" terrorism (to be distinguished from "secessionist" terrorism, such as that of the Irish, or "vigilante" terrorism, such as that of the Ku Klux Klan [Gurr 1983, 136]), Italy is the only country with a long history of terrorism of the fascist or radical-right brand.[3] Of course terrorism in general (both right- and left-wing) has received much media attention. But although a sizable amount of research has been devoted to the Left, on the Right journalistic information largely prevails.[4]

The reasons for such lack of analytical interest will be discussed shortly. Here it should be noted that the development of so significant a radical-right presence (of which terrorism is only a component) for such a long time in a democratic country would not have been possible without the support of elements outside the radical Right proper. Such support has taken up different forms in different circumstances, ranging from episodes

of veritable connivance on the part of certain state apparatuses to the ruthless use of the groups by components of the party system. And there can be no doubt that for a long time many sectors representing moderate and conservative public opinion have been sympathetic toward the right-wing groups. It will be the task of this volume to analyze the interplay of such factors with other historical, ideological, and social ones, and to examine their effect in the overall development of the radical Right. But certainly, if one considers the weight of such external support, one realizes how great the right-wing potential has been in Italy through the postwar years, a potential both hidden and bridled because of the peculiar setup of the political system. Seen from this perspective, the MSI's success after the breakdown of the previous party system as an effect of the so-called clean-hands wave should be much less surprising.

The main categories of this discussion—extreme Right, moderate, conservative, radical Right—have so far been employed without being defined. Before attempting to define these terms, consider for a moment a long-debated issue concerning the usefulness of the Right/Left dichotomy.[5]

The death knells for this dichotomy have been tolling for more than 150 years,[6] yet its usage in political discourse is still current—proving, one might think, an obstinate vitality that only politicians with an agenda or scholars with a taste for paradox may want to deny. In fact, the issue tends to reappear at times of crisis, when old values are questioned and new problems emerge that old categories prove inadequate to comprise. The interest of the issue, then, transcends the mere discussion of the dichotomy.

The problem is complicated by the fact that the Right has had different, and heterogeneous, historical embodiments. (The same of course is true for the Left, but this book is concerned with the Right.) According to René Rémond's classical distinction, the first Right was counterrevolutionary in that it aimed to upset the outcome of the French Revolution and revert to the social and political structures of the ancien régime. It was, then, a legitimist, traditionalist, antienlightenment, antirationalist, romantic Right.[7] It was followed by the "orleanist" version, inspired by liberal principles and supportive of political rights and a free market. Then came the bonapartist Right, which was authoritarian but claimed legitimacy from below (plebiscitarianism), yet trampled on political rights and freedoms. Rémond claims for his trichotomy a value transcending the French case: traditionalism, conservative liberalism, fascist authoritarianism are presented as right-wing models applicable to the contemporary experience as well [Rémond 1982]. Just this claim for universal validity has been denied by many authors, who reject a number of its components and distinctive features [e.g., Sternhell 1994].

In general the overall value of the Right/Left dichotomy is questioned on two main grounds: the first underlines the dramatic social and political changes of the last two centuries, which caused discontinuity and reversals in the association of a number of themes to the two areas. Thus nationalism carried, originally, a left-wing thrust against the cosmopolitan, dynastic system of the ancién régime. At the end of the nineteenth century it was taken up by the imperialist Right, and later Fascism and Nazism seized upon it as a crucial identifying factor. But after World War II the liberation struggles of the former colonial countries brought nationalism (*that* nationalism, at least) back in the field of the Left, and today it erupts anew, with uncertain connotations, especially in countries of the former socialist area and those influenced by Islamic fundamentalism. Other themes besides nationalism have shifted between Right and Left over the years, while the identification of Right and Left with an unambiguous social base is less and less sustainable in the postindustrial, postmodern society.

This brings up the second objection, that which finds difficulty in reducing today's complex social systems to one single dichotomy. Categories like class, race, and gender, or issues like environmental protection, technological innovation, bioethics, and so on, have little to do, it is claimed, with the Right/Left dichotomy.

The discussion is complicated by the addition of political/evaluative dimensions over the conceptual/methodological ones. In Italy, after Fascism, the notion of the Right carried an obviously negative stigma, and conversely the Left was associated with positive values—at least until March 1994. Those who reject the stigma counter it also by rejecting the Right/Left dichotomy as irrelevant. (This is why critiques of the dichotomy are more frequent on the Right than the Left.)

The interference of the evaluative with the conceptual dimension is precisely one reason why the discussion on the validity of the two terms becomes especially heated at times when political systems undergo drastic transformations and the capability of established interpretive categories is most seriously challenged.

This was certainly the case in the interwar period, when the traumatic disruptions that radically altered many European political systems brought about a number of paradoxical political couples, veritable oximorons such as the konservative Revolution (which included as well the linke Leute von Rechts [the left people of the Right] and National Bolshevism), and of course National Socialism. They frequently aimed at the achievement of some assertedly alternative political-economic syntheses, veritable "third ways" compared to capitalism and Marxism. Of such third ways Fascism and Nazism pretended to be the embodiments. They upset not only political life but also the way it was conceptualized.

Indeed Fascism, at first sight, appeared irreducible to the established Right/Left distinction, equating the former with conservation, tradition, continuity, privileged classes, and order and the latter with innovation, change, discontinuity, lower classes, and revolution. Fascist propaganda described the movement as revolutionary but at the same time traditional, mass-based but also elitist-hierarchical, anti-individualist but anticollectivist as well, antiliberal but antisocialist, and of course anticommunist and anticapitalist.

Revisionist historians and political theorists, in their critique of the gross Third International reading of Fascism as a mere instrument of capital [Poulantzas 1970] have, to a certain extent, supported these claims. They have done so by pointing out aspects such as the roots in the Left of many leaders (beginning with Mussolini himself), sectors (revolutionary unionism), inspirers (Sorel) of Fascism, stressing also the mass consensus the regime enjoyed for many years, the petty-bourgeois origin of its base, the revolutionary methodology of its mass mobilization. All these features contrasted with the pattern of the traditionalist Right (which, however, as mentioned above, was not the only conceivable or historically realized form). Moreover, it was stated that the links of Fascism with big business (i.e., the economic Right) were merely instrumental (which, however, does not detract from their weight).[8]

Most of these comments are unquestionably sound, even if they have often been exaggerated for polemical reasons. But they cannot significantly alter the overall assessment of the fascist experience regarding its placement on the Right/Left spectrum. Fascism surged, was established, and operated with the main task of fighting socialism and communism; it destroyed with violence democracy and the workers' movement, eliminating the representative organizations of both; it increased the workers' exploitation and decreased their share of the national wealth,[9] while assigning to big corporations (both private and public) a dominant role in steering the country's economic policy [Castronovo 1973, 1975; Quazza 1976; Sarti 1971; Tranfaglia 1989]. Corporatist mythology and the regime's welfare measures can only marginally change this reality, as does the assertedly instrumental nature of the relations between Fascism and big business [Sapelli 1975, Sapelli 1981; Griffin 1991, 49–50].

From another viewpoint, although some of its policies carried a modernizing effect (but less significant than that of the corresponding Nazi policies [Dahrendorf 1965]), fascism held to an organicist notion of society, which emphasized communitarian elements and natural roots, leading to a view of conflict as a pathology and hence to a denial of legitimacy for those social groups that articulate it (classes and their representative structures, such as unions, as against communitarian forms, such as the medieval-like

corporations). At the end it stressed naturalistic-biological concepts, like *stirpe* (ethnic group) and race, which quite certainly belong to the universe of the Right.

Contemporary society also goes through a period of turbulent transformation, the effect, among others, being a renewal of the attacks against the old dichotomy. Even before the wave of disruption caused by the fall of communism, the Left was faced with the need of redefining its identity in political systems where the marginality of class conflict was increasingly evident, together with the decline of social class as a factor of primary identification; hence the generalized crisis of Marxism, quite irrespective of the failure of "real socialism" [Bosetti 1993; Lukes 1995]. On the other hand, the difficulties met by welfare policies [Giddens 1994] and the concomitant success, at least temporary, of some right-wing, neoconservative economic measures have reopened the question of the legitimacy of the welfare state, while new special-issue movements, such as ecology and feminism, appeared to transcend the traditional political categories. Hence the renewal, yet again, of skepticism over the usefulness of the Right/Left binomial.

Opposing such skepticism (especially acute in the intellectual world) stands the unshaken conviction of a large majority of voters in most Western countries that the Right/Left distinction is still among the most important criteria of political identification (and perhaps *the* most important). A recent accurate survey confirms that in the last twenty years the Right/Left dichotomy has maintained its validity in the citizens' eyes. In countries belonging to the European Economic Community (EEC), for example, the Right/Left distinction is widely used by the electorate for self-identification, with percentages ranging from a low of 70 percent in Spain to highs of 93 percent in Holland and 97 percent in France in 1988 [Ignazi 1994a, 13].[10]

According to political scientists, the dichotomy's effectiveness is owing to its capacity to provide "a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability" [Sartori 1976, 342]. That applies especially to complex, multiparty systems: it is not by chance that in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, where two-party systems effectively simplify the political spectrum, recourse to the dichotomy is less frequent. The doubts raised by political scientists concern the capability of the Right/Left couple to represent *all* dimensions of the political spectrum, not its validity per se [Ricolfi 1993; Sani and Segatti 1990].

The above, however, says nothing about the *contents* of the distinction. At the origin is a primary spatial perception, that of lateral asymmetry,[11] but the main reference point is to some major founding orientations,

conceptions that endure over time and that articulate veritable worldviews. They go back to a number of criteria, two of which seem especially relevant.[12] The first, most emphasized by Bobbio [1983, 1994], has to do with the approach to *egalitarianism*: the Left favors egalitarian views and measures, the Right opposes them. The second criterion concerns ascriptive social links: the Right views them positively, as factors of identification and protection, and as safeguards for individuals; hence it defends roots, tradition, *Blut und Boden*. The Left views these links as constraints, fetters, and chains, and advocates emancipation and progress [Cofrancesco 1986, 66–67]. This in turn is linked to each side's attitude toward reason, the Left upholding reason as the major and universalistic vehicle of knowledge and the Right stressing its inadequacies in the face of entities such as blood, soil, and race, preferring instead particularistic, idiosyncratic faculties such as intuition, emotion, and racial solidarity. Discursive reason is contrasted with emphatic intuition; logos with mythos [Gossman 1983, 1984].

The attack against egalitarianism is a standard right-wing argument, both in its classical and assertedly new articulations. (In fact the argument is so repetitious as to justify Bobbio's "deadly boredom" in the face of its iterations [1983, 30].) It depicts egalitarianism as the absurd pretense to force equality on all individuals, necessarily leading to a sort of flatly homologated mankind, where the faceless masses, thanks to their *number*, will exert a totalitarian supremacy over the few who are genuinely superior because of their *quality*: the above being an inevitable product of democracy.[13]

But of course this is not really what egalitarianism is about; egalitarianism does not deny differences. On the contrary, it takes differences as its starting point and then stakes out a number of areas in which people must be treated equally, *in spite* of their differences, that is, must be included in the enjoyment of certain benefits. (There is an obvious link between equality and inclusion: the purpose of equality is inclusion; the premise of inclusion is the acknowledgment of equality.) Steven Lukes's notion of *rectification* is very close to this [1995]. The number and width of such areas has broadened in time. In Western society, according to Marshall's classical account, the establishment of egalitarian areas has regarded civil rights first, then political rights, later economic rights, and finally social rights. Thus the areas of inclusion have embraced gradually broader sectors of life, *in spite* of the starting differences among people. For example, the request of civil and social rights for minorities, and the claims of antidiscrimination movements, imply inclusion in areas of equal dignity, respect, and social recognition for those as well who belong to different races, genders, and religions [for a more in-depth analysis, see Ferraresi and Galeotti 1984; Galeotti 1994].

Two central points about the egalitarian thesis emerge from these comments. First, the thesis does not contrast *difference* (which thus cannot be employed as an argument against the Right/Left dichotomy) but *hierarchy*. Second, it shows that the problem of egalitarian theory is that of specifying the *contents* that the egalitarian claim advances at any time. Amartya Sen maintains that all moral and political philosophy that has endured in time advocates the equality of *something* [Sen 1992, 7]; right-wing thought claims precisely the opposite.[14]

The second defining criterion focuses on the position toward ascriptive links (the Right wants to strenghten these links, the Left wants to be rid of them). The criterion certainly identifies some epochal forms of the Right (traditionalism, fascism, Nazism), but its usefulness is more doubtful concerning other surely right-wing positions, such as market-oriented neoconservatism, where a strong individualistic, even Darwinist component is evident. Moreover, it does not exclude contemporary communitarian thought, which by and large belongs to the liberal tradition, occasionally even being taken up by radical left-wing movements.

All this points to the need for drawing further distinctions within the right-wing area. Such distinctions may have to do with several dimensions, such as the *type* of antiegalitarianism propounded—traditionalist, conservative, racist, and so on. But here we are especially concerned with matters of *degree*, that is, the distinction between *moderate*, *extreme*, and *radical Right*, all the more so since these terms and other assertedly contiguous ones (*New Right*, *Nouvelle Droite*, even *Droite Revolutionnaire*) are often employed indiscriminately.[15]

A confused terminology actually reflects the conceptual status of the terms, which has frequently oscillated according to the specific historical circumstances under which their usage originated in different countries. For unlike other terms such as *democracy* and *tyranny*, these are recent ones. In the United Kingdom the term *radicalism* was first coined at the end of the eighteenth century by those groups (especially utilitarians) that spoke out for "radical reforms" in an archaic and corrupt political system. The term *extremism* did not come into usage until the middle of the following century.[16] In France the most "extreme" advocates of the return of the Bourbons were not called extremists, but *Ultras*; on the other hand, the term *radicaux*, already current during the Revolution, was not embodied in a party until 1869, while *extremism* came into use only after the Russian Revolution. The German and the Italian situations present yet different stories [Backes and Jesse 1985, 57ff.; Belligni 1983; Colombo 1983].

In fact extremism and radicalism are partly overlapping concepts, as they indicate, roughly, the positions of those who do not acknowledge the rules of a political community and aim to change the community from the

roots. Such overlaps are probably at the origins of the oscillations in the use of the terms by a scholar like Seymour Lipset, who at first uses the term *radical right* [1964a, 1964b] in order to depict the same phenomena that later on will fall into the "extremism" category [Lipset and Raab 1970; Lipset 1981; see also Lipset 1960]. More recent American works also draw little distinction between the two areas [e.g., Merkl and Weinberg 1993].

Political scientists have attempted to characterize these positions, especially with regard to parties, by referring to the "antisystem" category. According to Sartori, an antisystem party is one that rejects the legitimacy of the system within which it operates, propounding an extraneous ideology [Sartori 1976, 132–133]. Conceptually the criterion is clear, but its implementation raises problems. Precisely with regard to Italy, von Beyme [1988] has made the following objection:

> Only a very conservative party theory like Sartori's shows this obsession with symmetry which is typical of the German concept of "militant democracy" (*wehrhafte Demokratie*). But since the beginning Sartori did not have the *communis opinio doctorum* beyond his attempt to construe a model of polarized pluralism based on an almost equal distance of the Msi and the Pci, respectively, from the constitutional center . . . Italian Communists have accepted the constitution and the political system produced by it; the neo-Fascists have not.[17] [Von Beyme 1988, 2]

In light of recent developments in the Italian situation, it would be easy to treat such statements with irony.

They bring up an important issue, however, that is, the difficulty of relying on a single criterion in order to define (right-wing) extremism in the present situation. All the more so since in the last decade or so in several European countries a number of far-right parties have appeared, displaying new features that differ from the historical ones. For these reasons I find Ignazi's suggestion quite useful of using two different criteria, a topological one (concerning a party's placement on the Right-Left axis) and an ideological one (system-attitude). Thus the extreme Right comprises parties placed at the right-wing extremity of the continuum (there is none at their right) and these drastically reject the existing system, deny its legitimacy, and propound alternative models. Ignazi then proceeds to draw a further distinction between an *old* and a *new* extreme Right, according to their proximity to Fascism [Ignazi 1992; 1994a].

This last distinction presents some problems which we will not take up here.[18] Our present concern is to distinguish, within the extreme Right, the radical sector. Two further indicators may be useful at this time. The first, about methods, concerns the acceptance of violence, and illegal means in general, as legitimate instruments of political struggle: the nonradical extreme Right, in principle, rejects such illegal methods; the radical brand accepts them. The second criterion, an ideological one, has to do with the

degree to which the political system is rejected; in the case of the radical groups, the whole process of modernization and all the elements related to it (rationality, science, and individualism) are embraced.

In my earlier research I followed the international usage, whereby terms such as *radical Right* and *Rechtsradikalismus* are also applied to groups that do not make use of illegal political means, and I defined the (Italian) radical Right only on the basis of its ideological positions [Ferraresi 1984d].[19] Further consideration, and especially the appearence of the "new" extreme Right in Europe, have convinced me of the need to employ the first criterion as well (about methods), and hence to restrict the use of the term *radical Right* to groups accepting the use of illegal political means, including violence.

Empirically, however, the distinction is largely a conventional one, not to be followed too rigidly, especially in the case of Italy. Here the two components (the extreme and the radical one) for many years have been welded together by close tactical and strategic links, reinforced by the frequent commuting of militants between the two. Drawing a neat border between them is frequently impossible.[20] There is also much overlap between the phenomena described by the terms *extreme Right*, *radical Right*, and *neofascism*. The former two are more precise, in that some sectors of the milieu reject identification with Fascism or with some of its expressions.[21]

It is, then, to the radical Right so defined that this work will be dedicated.

As was stated at the beginning, this is an area that has largely been ignored by scientific research. Many factors, both theoretical and political, account for such neglect. One is certainly the attraction of Fascism, which has received most of the attention devoted to this area, particularly among historians. By contrast, liberal and left-wing intellectuals tended to consider the postwar Right (radical and otherwise) as a mere historical residue, the expression of backward areas and personalities still bound to nostalgia and dreams of impossible revenge. The Right was thus dismissed as a subordinate partner in moderate coalitions and as an anticommunist scarecrow, unworthy of conceptual analysis. Not far beyond this viewpoint lurked the old Third International's notion of fascism as a mere instrument of capitalist interests, hence a *nonautonomous* actor.

The difficult position in which liberal-progressive intellectuals were placed as a consequence of the explosion of red terrorism has also played a role. Red terrorism, as the moderate-conservative forces never ceased reiterating, was ostensibly rooted in the Left, that is, in "legitimate" Marxist doctrines and "revolutionary" culture, however deformed and perverted. In order to distance themselves from the terrorists, left and liberal intellectuals underwent painful exercises in soul-searching and self-critique, questioning how terrorist "deviations" had been possible, what revolutionary myths, what notions of "resistance" could lead to terrorist behavior. The

effect of such operations was a nearly unanimous condemnation of political violence and terrorism, and the rallying of all democratic forces to deny any legitimacy and support to their carriers (a major factor in the ultimate defeat of red terrorism). But the effort entailed an overwhelming concentration of interest on the Left. Nothing quite like the above was, or is, relevant for the Right, since fascism in general does not pose any identity/loyalty problems to liberal intellectuals, as its rejection is supposed to be a defining feature of any democratic standpoint.

And finally, the subaltern (nonautonomous) view of right-wing political actors was strengthened in Italy by the importance that covert actions have carried in the country's postwar politics, within the framework of domestic and international strategies aimed at creating unrest and instability in one of the most sensitive spots in the Mediterranean (the so-called strategy of tension). According to many observers, violence and terrorism, on the Right, were simply a part of such strategies; hence the radical Right militants were perceived either as agents of the schemes or as mindless fanatics, on neither account worthy of scientific analysis.

By so neglecting this area, the social and political sciences have forsaken the possibility of analyzing a unique development in advanced industrial countries, to wit, the existence for half a century of a significant far-right sector, composed of both extreme and radical elements, including terrorists, whose interplay with each other and with the political system was influenced by the latter's peculiarities, by the role of the state apparata (both "regular" and "deviant"), by international (so-called) security measures, and by the legacies of the past.

The object of this book is precisely to analyze such a unique development, focusing on its radical sector. What factors influenced it, who were the militants, what (if any) differences were there among generations, and how were they affected by broader social phenomena such as collective movements: these are some of the questions that shall be asked in the course of this investigation.

One critical issue concerns the role played by hidden actors (domestic and foreign intelligence, deviant corps of the state) in many of the events in which the radical Right were also involved. On this matter my views have changed somewhat over time. My first interest in this subject was partly motivated by dissatisfaction with the then prevalent view of the radical Right as puppets in conspiracy games. This may have led my previous work to overstate the degree of autonomy with which the groups of the Right operated [Ferraresi 1984d]. Further research and the availability of later judicial materials have convinced me that the hidden actors' degree of involvement was deeper than I had previously thought. On the other hand, the thesis that radical-right militants, including the assertedly "spontaneous" wing, were in fact mere instruments of the Intelligence service is

now surfacing again, when the "respectable" Right is at pains to sever any links with the most radical fringes and its orthodox organizational and cultural expressions. Finding the exact balance between these interpretations is difficult, and I do not pretend to have reached a definitive answer.

The complexity and multifaceted character of the far Right in Italy would require, in order to investigate it, a number of analytical tools belonging to disciplinary approaches that only partly overlap. They include *Faschismusforschung*, terrorism studies, state theory (especially concerning security, intelligence, and covert activities), besides more conventional political and social science approaches. The difficulty of welding them together in a single, coherent conceptual framework is increased by the paucity of previous research, and by the fact that no satisfactory theory of right-wing extremism has so far been developed for all European countries [Von Beyme 1988, 14]. This implies that no overall, commonly agreed-on interpretive models are available for a study of the Italian situation.

U.S. research, which has developed a set of quite stimulating models, goes back mostly to the theory of displacement, originally suggested by Daniel Bell in the 1950s and 1960s, and later taken up by a number of other authors [Bell 1955, 1964a, 1964b; Lipset 1964a, 1964b; Lipset and Raab 1970]. According to that thesis, the radical-right waves that have periodically surfaced in U.S. history are caused by the disruptions that arise because of major social changes ultimately linked to modernization. These disruptions produce insecurity and anxiety in the most threatened groups ("the dispossessed") whose reaction often leads to the emergence of radical-right groups. Forming the background of this thesis are the notion of social strain, coming from Parsons's system theory [Parsons 1954a, 1954b, 1964a, 1964b], and Smelser's theory of collective behavior [Smelser 1962]. German sociology has also explained the propensity for radical-right movements in that country as an answer to the tensions of rapidly changing industrial societies. It has done so both in the past [e.g., Scheuch and Klingemann 1967] and with reference to recent developments, such as those caused by the unification of the country [Heitmayer 1995].

This is not the place to discuss the adequacy of these models to the countries to which they are applied,[22] nor the concept of the radical Right they employ. But the use of macrosociological categories linked to epochal transformation and modernization processes certainly cannot provide an adequate understanding of a case like the Italian one. Although Italian society underwent a number of different transformations, the presence of the extreme and radical Right has been a constant, and has been present on a much more massive scale than in any other Western country. The Italian case, then, needs to be explained by other factors, be they contextual or of a historical nature. The historical factors begin, of course, with the Fascist

heritage, although that existed in Germany as well, where the extreme and radical Right has been much less relevant than in Italy. The contextual factors include the peculiarities of a blocked political system, the role of the state (or parts of it), the features of the militant groups, and the role of unique intellectual figures, whose thought has nourished the "combat" discussions for decades.

The dearth of appropriate conceptual frameworks applies to the problem of terrorism as well. Most interpretations of the Italian case have so far been based on just such broad, macro variables concerning the political system, ideology, and the economic and social crisis of the country, whereas empirically testable models have been seriously lacking [Catanzaro 1990a, 12]. This has led to difficulties in classifying terrorist acts, of which one paradoxical indicator is that there is not even agreement on the *figures* of Italian terrorism among the sources.[23]

This points to a major difficulty, namely, that not even all the relevant *facts* concerning the intervention of the radical Right in Italian politics have been established with certitude—a matter that itself belongs to the *explanandum*. Thus after an untold number of trials, appeals, mistrials, reversals of verdicts, and other judicial vagaries, all the major massacres attributed to the radical Right are still, by and large, shrouded with doubt as to the culprits.

The difficulty in applying to this area the instruments ordinarily used by social scientists for creating data (surveys, questionnaires, interviews) is compounded by most protagonists' inaccessibility or unwillingness to cooperate. Even when they do cooperate, their versions of the facts must be analyzed with extreme care, because such accounts normally constitute "an integral public aspect of their activities" [Moss 1989, 4]; in some cases, for the informants, such "facts" may make the difference between freedom and long years in jail. In the face of most controversial and obscure events, the social scientist can at most piece together the available evidence (frequently collected by other, especially judicial sources, employing their own methods) and attempt to provide a plausible explanation of why the evidence was shrouded in obscurity (see, e.g., chapter 5).

The constraints described here (the dearth of agreed-on interpretive models, the uncertainty with regard to crucial facts, and the difficulty in collecting empirical materials) have suggested an analytical strategy where precedence will be given to the reconstruction of events in their historical sequence. In so doing, a rather eclectic use will be made of the applicable conceptual tools, which will necessarily keep the investigation at a rather low theoretical level. Such initial mapping of the terrain, however, will remain essential until the availability of less disputable empirical evidence and the refinement of analytical models will allow for more ambitious theoretical efforts in the future.

1

Fascist Resurgence and Reorganization, ca. 1945–1955

Phases

The postwar development of the radical Right in Italy covers a time span of about forty years. It can be divided into three major phases. The first, fascist resurgence and reorganization, took about a decade, beginning in 1946. This was followed by the emergence of the "historic groups" and the deployment of the "strategy of tension" and terrorist massacres, lasting until the mid-seventies. At the end of the second phase a radical strategic shift ushered in the "attack on the state," which was central to the last period (1977 to 1982–83), that of "armed spontaneity" and scattered terrorism.

The first phase saw the activity of a multitude of small groups and organizations, which began to spring up in the very first months after the war, as the immediate heirs of Fascism. At the parliamentary level, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) was founded as early as December 1946, with the stated purpose of giving voice to those who still identified with the past regime. For about a decade it was able to hegemonize and control most of the extreme Right.

This summary description raises two major questions. First, what factors accounted for such a rapid, unabashed, effective resurgence of fascism? And second, what features characterized the early consolidation of the extreme Right? These questions will be taken up in turn.

Factors of Resurgence

The resurgence was favored by the return to power of the coalition that had supported Fascism, together with the reemergence of the communist threat in a period of extremely acute class struggle, and by the role of the state apparatuses.[1] These matters require more attention.

Between 1943 and 1945 Italy had been divided into two parts: in the North Mussolini's Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana, RSI), which was subordinate to the occupying Germans; in the South the royal government, which eventually earned the status of cobelligerent with the Allies. The Resistance against Nazi-fascism took place only in the North. In the South,

with the exception of a four-day uprising in Naples in 1943, "there was no partisan experience to provide political, moral, and ideological sustenance" [Kogan 1956, 11].

Mussolini had been overthrown in July 1943 by a combination of dissatisfied fascist chiefs and a palace conspiracy authorized if not actually led by King Victor Emmanuel III (who had supported Mussolini during the previous twenty years); conservative interests prevailed in both milieus. The "Kingdom of the South," whose jurisdiction was gradually extended as the allied armies moved north, was the expression of such interests, and viewed with deep concern the purposes of radical social transformation voiced by the northern Resistance. Such concern was shared by the Allies, who feared the advance of communist and socialist power. Rome was liberated by allied troops in 1944, and the royal government resumed its official seat there, playing the powerful myth of the *continuity of the state* [Pavone 1974] to a most receptive audience—bureaucrats and the senior ranks of the judiciary.

In the North, by contrast, cities were liberated by the Partisans, who then took over civil administration, appointing as prefects and heads of police members of the CLNs (National Liberation Committees), setting up special tribunals for fascist crimes, in some cases even appointing factory councils in place of profascist managements. The latter episodes were conducted with relative restraint, whereas the CLN's takeover was carried out "with a moderation marred only by sporadic acts of vengeance against real or suspected neo-Fascists" [Kogan 1981, 31].[2] Nevertheless, there was much fear of revolutionary or at least radical developments. After the Germans and the Fascists surrendered unconditionally, in April 1945, the Roman government and the Allied Military Administration quickly set about to check the "wind of the North": the Partisans were disarmed and disbanded, CLN appointees were replaced by career officers, factory councils were dismissed, special tribunals were abolished (all this with the approval of a legitimacy-seeking Communist Party); finally the police were purged of any partisan elements (the only real purge the Italian police underwent after Fascism). The "continuity of the state" was thus secured. Given the array of forces in favor of "normalization" (the Allies, the moderate parties, the Church, the military and civil apparatuses, not to mention business and landed interests), the ease with which the process was carried out is not surprising [Chabod, 120]. In 1947 solidarity among the Resistance parties broke down as a consequence of the cold war, and the Left (Communists and Socialists) were dropped from government. The conservative bloc closed ranks around the DC (Democrazia Cristiana, Christian Democracy) which, in the 1948 elections, scored a great and never matched success (50 percent of the votes). The meaning of the process is clear: "The social groups which had supported the Fascist regime had managed to climb back into their former positions of influence" [Hughes 1979, 134].

These comments should not be taken to mean that Fascism remained in command. Military defeat could not be ignored, nor could the fact that fascist myths and politics were widely discredited and marked by failure. The secular and liberal middle and upper classes which, after World War I, had embraced Fascism in fear of revolution, now, out of similar feelings, turned to the Church and to the party identified with it as their best defense. Hence neofascism could not assume the role of its predecessor as the main representative of moderate-conservative interests. But the two-decades-old allegiance of such interests with Fascism (even if sometimes merely instrumental) made them unwilling to turn against it, all the more so since the ancient foe, communism, was again raising its head. One immediate effect was the almost total failure of the attempt to purge fascists from the civil and military apparatuses, a top priority of the northern Resistance's left wing. The role of the state thus comes to the fore, and requires some attention.

The Role of the State

Recent developments in political science have attempted, according to the eloquent title of a volume [Evans, Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol 1985], that is, "to bring the state back in," to make of it once again a central object of theory and empirical research [Caporaso 1989, 7]. The aim is that of countering the social-reductionist bias of both the "mainstream" (pluralist) approach, alleged to have seen states and governments as merely passive agencies reacting to social pressures, and that of the Marxist approach, which denied the state's autonomy by conceiving of it as a by-product of class relationships.[3]

The "statist" approach emphasizes dimensions such as autonomy and coherence, implying that the agencies and institutions composing the state tend to act together as a coherent whole [Fabbrini 1988, 895]. But whereas some authors, in their effort to overcome the reductionist bias, take such dimensions for granted, others point out that "statehood" consists of a set of variables whose weight may change, thereby affecting the degree of coherence and harmonious functioning of the whole [e.g., Gurr 1989; Nordlinger 1988].

The Italian state has usually been considered as lacking precisely along these dimensions. A traditionally weak central government, an inefficient bureaucracy, a multitude of power centers often at odds with one another, have made it difficult indeed to portray the Italian state as a homogeneous, coherent actor. One exception to this generalization, however, can be found in the immediate postwar years, when the existing state agencies, especially those concerned with law enforcement, were practically unanimous in being, at best, reluctant antifascists.

Fascism, in spite of its much-boasted drives for efficiency and ruthless discipline, had been extremely wary of alienating the bureaucracy and treated it with the solicitude due an important conveyor of petty-bourgeois consensus.[4] The bureaucracy reciprocated. As late as 1973 Putnam could write that for the Italian senior civil servants (95 percent of whom had entered the service before 1943) "it was not so much Italian political life as democracy in se and per se that was incongenial" [Putnam 1973, 172].[5]

The same was true for other branches of the state apparatuses. In 1960, out of the 64 first-class prefects, 62 had served under Fascism. So had all 241 deputy prefects, the 135 *Questori* (provincial chiefs of the state police), and the 139 deputy chiefs. What is more, only 5 of them appeared to have contributed in any way to the Resistance [Pavone 1974, 282–83]. The composition and ideological orientation of the rank-and-file corresponded to those of the senior officers.[6]

These are clear indicators of the failure of the attempt to purge the apparatuses, a matter deserving attention not only for its importance at the time but for the effects it had on the future of the radical Right.

Purges and War Criminals

The purges had been given top priority in the agenda of progressive antifascism. The original intent had been to *colpire in alto, indulgere in basso*, that is, to strike at the upper levels of responsibility and be lenient with the mass of civil servants and other small fry, who often had joined the Fascist Party only in order to make a living. The implementation of this proved difficult. Legally, purges go against a pillar of any rule-of-law state—the principle of nonretroactivity (*nullum crimen sine lege*) [Battaglia 1962, 70].[7] In fact, since purges are basically political measures, their chances of being effective depend on the power and determination of those in command. The new Italian regime, led by many who had long cooperated with Fascism, was not exactly promising.

The groups in power refused to undergo judgment for their past deals with the regime and hindered in all possible ways the work of "de-fascization." They went as far as causing the fall and reorganization of I. Bonomi's first government, in order to get rid of the High Commissar on sanctions when his requests struck some highly placed officials.[8] Control over the purge mechanism was gradually taken out of the hands of political figures and turned over to senior bureaucrats and especially to a judiciary that was not preliminarily purged. In both cases, the right to judge without previously undergoing judgment was claimed in the name of the myth of the *neutrality* of public administration and justice.

The judiciary was the foremost upholder of such myth. This was dis-

ingenuous. Since the unification of the country, and *pace* the principle of the separation of powers, the Italian judiciary had always been strictly subordinate to the executive branch, loyally adhering not so much to the letter of the law as to the political intentions of all governments in power. When the time came the judiciary's subordination to Fascism was very smooth. Of course fascist judges never stooped to the aberrations of their Nazi colleagues; they were also, by far, less harsh in meting out punishment.[9] But loyalty to the regime and its overall purposes was not in question, as was proven by the acceptance and enforcement without complaint of the 1938 racial legislation—although, here again, nothing close to Nazi excesses was ever approached.[10]

It would be impossible and quite tedious to list even the most outstanding cases of sabotage of the purging intents, but at least the general pattern should be pointed out. The main law on the matter (the Royal Lieutenant's Decree #159, of July 27, 1944) called for the severe punishment of "members of the fascist government and fascist officials who had been guilty of destroying constitutional guarantees, abolishing popular freedom, creating the fascist regime, and [who] thus compromised and betrayed the future of the country, leading to the present tragedy" (art. 2). The courts requested that a positive *causal link* be proven between the defendants' acts and *the whole* set of effects listed in the act. Predictably, not one single fascist leader could be found guilty of personally causing all these disasters. Thus the whole upper ranks of the fascist *nomenklatura* went unpunished.[11]

Another article in DLL #159 decreed sanctions against those "who had contributed with relevant acts to keep the Fascist regime in power." Here the courts drew a distinction between the state and the fascist regime, which, together with the "causal link" rule, allowed them to exonerate, among others, Guido Leto, the former head of the secret police (the infamous OVRA), later deputy chief of the RSI's police, on the grounds that he had served the state and not the regime [Pavone 1974, 242].[12] Then in February 1948 the whole procedure was simply abolished: a decree readmitted, with full compensation, all bureaucrats to their posts, even at the highest ranks: the crucial elections of April 1948 were only two months away, and the DC needed their votes.

The treatment of the major fascist war criminals was similarly lenient. In many cases, harsh sentences were issued immediately after the war by first-degree courts; later on, higher tribunals and special courts sharply reduced the terms, or even acquitted the culprits, including those who had carried the highest responsibilities, beginning with Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, the commander-in-chief of the RSI army.

An important case for the role the protagonist would play in later radical-right activities [see chapter 6] was that of Prince J. V. Borghese, a Roman aristocrat who had been famous for his war exploits as a submarine

commander. After 1943 he became one of the RSI's most redoubtable warlords, as chieftain of the infamous X MAS, a unit known for its savage antipartisan tactics [Pansa 1971; Lazzero 1984].[13] Borghese, however, had kept in contact with the Allied Services, which saved him when the RSI collapsed. At his surrender he was immediately placed in the charge of James Angleton, head of the Office of Strategic Services (U.S. intelligence) in Italy, later senior CIA officer in Rome, and finally (and quite controversially) head of CIA counterintellingence in Washington. British intelligence as well was in close touch with Borghese. He was able to postpone trial until 1947. The natural judge should have been in Milano, since X MAS had operated in the North, but the Court of Cassation had the trial moved to Rome,[14] where the influence of the Borghese family could ensure a more favorable atmosphere. Nevertheless, the crimes of Borghese's band were too obvious, and the verdict (reached only in 1949) had to be life imprisonment. But the court, through a scandalous application of extenuating circumstances, pardons, and remissions, reduced the sentence to seven years. Consideration of pretrial incarceration allowed the defiant "black prince" to go free immediately.[15]

In another, most controversial episode of this period, an amnesty was decreed in 1946 for crimes committed in connection with the civil war. The amnesty was meant as a gesture of national reconciliation, especially addressed to rank-and-file Fascists responsible for minor offenses: the text excluded those who had performed "especially heinous tortures" on their victims. The wording was unfortunate: "It is difficult to understand how persons not afflicted by sadism could think that performing *mere* tortures should not be enough [in order, for a convicted criminal, to be excluded from the amnesty], and *heinous* tortures still not enough, thus requiring that they be *especially* heinous" [Pavone 1974, 252]. Yet the judiciary, and particularly the Cassation Court, went much beyond this text, setting free fascist torturers who had been responsible for the most gruesome atrocities.[16]

At the same time, at the instigation of moderate parties bent on discrediting the Left, a series of trials was initiated against Partisans who were treated as common criminals. Possibly the lowest point in this campaign was reached in 1954 when the Supreme Military Tribunal granted regular "belligerent" status to the RSI's units (in the process exonerating a fascist officer who had ordered the shooting of 102 Partisans) at the same time refusing such status to the Resistance fighters, because they were "irregulars" [Pavone 1974, 249]. The decision caused so much indignation that Parliament had to pass a law declaring that Partisans were regular soldiers [Delzell 1961, 554]. The act came only in 1958, so that the recognition remained largely formal. In 1947 the former commander-in-chief of the partisan forces, Gen. Raffaele Cadorna (hardly a radical, by any standard)

had to resign from his post as Defense Chief of Staff partly because "not everybody appreciated his tendency to give preference to officers who had been Partisans, while putting aside those who had fought with the RSI" [CEVA 1981, 376].

Organization and Consolidation: The Hegemony of the MSI

Many of the fascist leaders and militants who had thus escaped the rigors of republican justice reappeared in the political arena as early as the mid-forties, and set about to reorganize the extreme-right area.

It was a very etherogeneous area, crossed by lines of cleavage that concerned major issues ranging from religion to the choice of institutional arrangements, from international allegiances to class alignments. There were thus monarchists and republicans, antibourgeois "socializers" and procapitalist supporters of private ownership; there were Atlantists, neutralists, anti-Atlantists, even some pro-Soviet voices; but also pro- and anti-Arabs, later joined by pro- and anti-Israeli elements. There were then devout Catholics, anti-clericals, and fierce neopagans. Most of these differences came together on the matter of political strategy, where the revolutionary, intransigent, die-hard elements confronted the moderate, accommodating "parliamentary" ones, in a sort of replication of the division among the two phases of Fascism, as a self-proclaimed revolutionary movement and as a "regime."

During the fifties this sizzling world was gradually brought under the control of the MSI (founded in December 1946), which set it along a moderate, pro-Atlantic, parliamentary course. For this reason, at the end of the 1945–55 period, the most radical elements split from the party, and set up their own extraparliamentary groups, which came to dominate the radical-right area in the next years.

The MSI's process of institutionalization followed the rather standard pattern of revolutionary movements becoming institutionalized, as described by R. Michels in the aftermath of World War I. The peculiarities of the Italian political system lent some specific connotations to the process.

Legitimacy and Identity

Extremist movements operating in the context of a parliamentary system are often faced with what has been called the paradox of illegitimate identity [Chiarini 1991]: If they hold on to their identity they cannot gain a legitimate foothold within the system; if they want to be legitimated they

must weaken or altogether relinquish their identity. In Italy this process was reinforced by the existence of two extremes, one of the Right, one of the Left, each of which used the presence of the other to strengthen its own claim to legitimacy.

In the immediate war aftermath, antifascist solidarity among the resistance forces drew the line of legitimacy sharply against those who identified with the defeated regime, that is, the Right. Hence the first postwar governments included the parties of the Left, the PCI and PSI. Antifascist unity, however, was soon shattered by the cold war. In 1947 the PCI and PSI were dropped from the government, and anticommunism became another crucial line of legitimacy, this time drawn against the Left. This opened a breach through which the neo-Fascists could reenter the political arena. The breach, however, was a narrow one, since the anticommunist establishment was willing to use them against communism but not to give them full political status, in order to avoid a challenge from the Right. The MSI's "moderates," on the other hand, wanted exactly that: to achieve full legitimacy as a clerical-conservative, right-wing party. In order to reach that goal, they had to subdue the "revolutionaries" within the party, for whom this was a sell-out.

The political reentry of former fascist leaders and militants was made easier by the extremely acute levels reached by class conflict. The difficult economic conditions caused by the war devastations were met in an obtuse, reactionary way that produced much hardship and massive unemployment.[17] The very often legitimate quests for jobs and land [esp. Tarrow 1967] were seen as subversive, even revolutionary outbursts led or inspired by the Communists and the reaction was brutal: at least a hundred workers and peasants were killed in the postwar years by law-enforcement agents and thugs in the payroll of landowners [figures in Canosa 1976; D'Orsi 1972; Murgia 1975; Sereni 1956]. In this climate the ruling groups were not going to make life too difficult for those who could display plausible anticommunist credentials.

Hence the many small neofascist groups and organizations that mushroomed as early as the first postwar months encountered little or no hostility from the state. These groups usually led short, turbulent lives marked by confused programs, leadership disputes, personal rivalries, and frequent splits, regroupings, disbandings, and refoundings. By and large, their dimensions and the scope of their activities were modest: most notable were attacks on democratic and left-wing parties, dissemination of "nostalgic" literature, and defacement of Partisan and Jewish monuments. Some of the groups, however, like the Italian Army of Liberation (AIL), had a more solid structure (supported by funds from business and U.S. sources) and were actively employed in strike-breaking, protection of scabs, provoca-

tions against workers, and so on, especially in the North where the factory situation was very tense [Chiarini and Corsini 1983, 68–72; Colarizi 1984, 606–7; Faenza and Fini 1976, 264 ff.].

The MSI proper was founded in December 1946 by the merger of a number of preexisting groups and "parties."[18] Its birth enjoyed the blessing of the Vatican (the Jesuits were especially active on its behalf) and the *nihil obstat* of the DC-controlled Ministry of the Interior. Both were eager to create an anticommunist deterrent and concerned lest the "left-wing" fascist base be seduced by communism; they were also worried by the success of the *Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque* (The Common Man's Front), a short-lived, mostly southern moderate-conservative formation, which threatened to reach Catholic groups that the DC wanted to monopolize.[19]

The life of the MSI was long dominated by the tension between its two "souls," the "revolutionary" and the "moderate" one—a replication, as was previously mentioned, of the two major characters of Fascism.

The founders of the MSI belonged mostly to the "revolutionary" wing; many of them were veterans of the RSI, Mussolini's "desperate republic," which gave a deep imprint to the outlook of the first leaders. They were highly ideological, proclaimed the need to return to Fascism's "revolutionary" origins, to its anticapitalist, antibourgeois declarations. They extolled "socialization," as in the mythical (and never-implemented) "Twenty-three Points of Verona," the RSI founding charter, which vaguely upheld the workers' representation in the management of enterprises (the Nazis, horrified at the mere thought of "socialization," saw to it that the "Twenty-three Points" remained a pure paper measure [Bocca 1977; Deakin 1962; Kuby 1982]). They were fiercely republican (the Crown had betrayed Fascism) anticlerical (so had the Church), anti-Atlantic (they had fought against the Allies and resented the harsh conditions of the peace treaty). They were also hostile to business interests that had been quick to disembark from Fascism when the waters got rough. This was the so-called Northern Wind.

But, then and thereafter, the votes came from the South and the Center (Rome). Of the half million votes polled by the MSI in the 1948 elections, almost 400,000 came from these areas: the six deputies and one senator of 1948 were, with one exception, elected in Rome and in southern constituencies.[20] In Rome, the bureaucratic and "imperial" capital, fascist rhetoric had much appeal for the petty-bourgeois voters; all the more so since the blue-collar element there was marginal, whereas for twenty years Mussolini had shrewdly pampered the public employees. And in the South there had never been a strong Left, hence Fascism did not need to display its most brutal face. Moreover, in 1943–45, the South had ignored the critical experiences of the RSI, the Resistance, and the civil war.

Southern politics were instead characterized by a low level of ideological commitment and by the dominant role of moderate-conservative, clerical, law-and-order notables, who controlled the network of local clienteles and were interested more in seizing governmental and municipal jobs and power positions than in engaging in ideological struggles, let alone revolutionary conflict.

The coexistence of these tendencies (a third one, "spiritual-traditional" going back to the teachings of Julius Evola, influenced especially the young and the intellectual élite) was not easy. At the beginning the "Left," which occupied the party secretariat with Giorgio Almirante,[21] dictated the MSI's line. The first electoral platform (1948) rejected "the pollution of democracy," scorched the "cowardly parliamentary and party horse-deals," and advocated a "national state of labor," the workers' "participation in the management and profit of the enterprises," within the framework of a national socialism conceived as a third way between capitalism and communism.[22]

Gradually, however, the moderates emerged. They were backed by the center-southern votes, and controlled important resources (finances) and positions (most deputies, as we have seen, were southern notables). An attrition war ensued, at the end of which the moderates came out as the winners. But it was not easy, and the victory was never complete.

Almirante was replaced in 1950 by the less fiery Augusto De Marsanich, who, in turn, was followed in 1954 by the real leader of the moderates, Arturo Michelini, a quintessential notable, linked to Vatican and Roman financial circles.

The MSI's strategy reflected the change. In foreign policy the party, which in the name of a third-way stand had originally refused to vote in favor of the NATO treaty, gradually watered down its hostility and moved toward an Atlantist stand, a move that was completed by the late fifties. Thereafter, the MSI was the staunchest supporter of the alliance. In domestic matters, the MSI healed its breach with the Monarchists, even signing an electoral agreement with them (1950): at the time the Monarchists' party was the strongest right-wing party in the South. The MSI joined with them, and especially with the Christian Democrats in a number of municipal governments in the Center and South. In the mid-fifties the MSI was a member of local coalitions in a third of the provincial capitals.[23]

The "intransigent" radical wing of the party fiercely opposed this strategy, launching an opposition whose effectiveness is proven by the fact that as late as 1953 a good forty-five out of ninety-three provincial federations had to be "*commissariate*," that is, run by proconsuls from Rome, after the regular secretary had been sacked because of his radical sympathies [Ignazi 1994b, 24]. Party congressess (beginning with that in Viareggio in 1954) became big brawling sessions; prestigious figures (Marshall R. Graziani,

Prince J. V. Borghese) left the party; an important northern federation, that of Brescia, controlled by the radicals, threatened to secede.

Especially the youth and other militant groups, after Almirante's ousting from the secretariat, steeply escalated violence in order to create difficulties for the leadership and to prove that the time of the action squads was not yet over.[24] Demonstrations were turned into riots; punitive expeditions were organized against rival parties and left-wing neighborhoods;[25] and bombs were copiously disseminated, demonstrating the Right's tendency to consider them as almost normal political instruments (and anticipating a more lethal use in later years).

The Korean War and especially the long drawn-out issue of Trieste, an unsolved problem in the peace treaty, kept the atmosphere incandescent. Marshal Tito, supported by the USSR, claimed for Yugoslavia all the formerly Italian Istrian Peninsula including the city of Trieste. In March 1948 the Allies had promised Italy the return of Trieste and the adjoining zone (thus giving a strong boost to the chances of the pro-Western Christian Democrats in the coming elections). But the promise became a dead letter when Tito's break with Stalin reinforced his bargaining position. Not until 1954 did the city return to Italy, but much of the adjoining zone and most of the Istrian Peninsula, with their Italian population, were lost. The issue provided one of the major themes and most burning claims for the right wing and for the nationalist propaganda of the period in general. It was a *national* issue that allowed the MSI to bypass the fascism/antifascism discrimination and to place itself alongside "regular" parties, putting forth a claim that no self-respecting Italian could reject. The win for the MSI was reinforced by the serious difficulties that the very same issue created for the Communists because of their pro-Soviet allegiance. The activists were mobilized around the clock in order to create disorders, unrest, and provocations.

One of the radical groups, which carried the names FAR (Revolutionary Action Fasces) and Black Legion (its mouthpiece was the journal *Imperium*, inspired by the thought of Julius Evola), staged an impressive season of bombings in different cities.[26] A number of renowned militants and ideologues, mostly belonging to the "spiritualist" circles, were charged for these deeds and some were sentenced, thereby increasing their prestige: "to be suspected as a 'dynamiter' became the unavowed desire of many MSI activists" [Salierno 1976, 21].[27]

The party leadership, seeking legitimacy, could not approve of these groups' activities; neither, however, could they entirely alienate them since the youth provided the new blood and the strongest identifying watchwords and themes for the party. The outcome was a typically double-standard approach. In public statements the leaders disowned and sometimes condemned the most obviously illegal actions, indignantly rejecting

any MSI's responsibility for them (the activists' membership in "autonomous" groups lent some credibility to this argument). In private they blandished and encouraged the young militants.[28]

This indeed was a period in which the right-wing ideology had a strong appeal for middle- to upper-class Italian youth, still reminiscing over fascist indoctrination and slogans and repelled by the unglamorous reality of republican politics, concentrated as they were on economic reconstruction. An effective source of ideological identification was nationalism, especially since the cold-war atmosphere had practically eliminated it from the culture of both the ruling parties and the left-wing opposition, flattened as they were in their contrasting international loyalties.

No reliable data exist on the number of young people who, as documented by the police reports in several cities in this period, were attracted by right-wing politics [Colarizi 1984, 615–16]. A significant indicator is the growth and relative success of university students' organizations linked to the MSI. At this time access to higher education was precluded de facto to students from the working classes (only at the end of the sixties would there be a generalized opening). The universities were run by an academic class of which only a handful had an antifascist record (when, in 1931, a loyalty oath to Fascism was requested, only thirteen professors out of about twelve hundred refused to comply) [Salvatorelli and Mira 1964, 526ff.]. Academic authorities of this kind favored a climate of sympathy and tolerance toward the Right, which allowed for the organization and consolidation of neofascist student organizations.[29] Throughought the fifties, the FUAN and collateral organizations polled between 15 and 20 percent of the students' vote, a proportion at least three times higher than MSI's share of the national vote [see the Appendix to this chapter].

Nevertheless the chief concern of the moderates was the party's normalization. During these years the MSI had consolidated its hold on the right wing of the political spectrum and reinforced its structure by establishing collateral organizations for youth, workers, and RSI's veterans, some of whom performed a veritable welfare role.[30] This spread the roots of the MSI in civil society and increasingly gave it the features of a mass party, a development that, as is well known in political sociology, goes against militant thrusts [see, e.g., Michels 1966 (orig. 1911); Roth 1963].

The voting reservoir had also become sizable. The 1951 regional elections in Sicily had brought to the MSI 275,000 votes (up from 70,000 in 1948) and 11 deputies. In the local government elections held nationwide in 1951 and 1952 the MSI had earned 1.7 million votes. Although it had scored significant gains in several northern provinces, such as Turin, Milan, and Venice, the bulk of the votes came from the South, where, as was stated above, they had a moderate-conservative, rather than revolutionary connotation.[31]

The moderates were not going to let such treasury be ruined by the hotheads. The steps taken by Michelini in this connection clearly indicate his strategy. The secretary took the de facto monopoly of information away from the opposition by appointing men of his choice in the major party media; he reinforced the central party apparatus by recruiting professional staff beholden to him; and he strongly curtailed the autonomy of the youth organizations by taking away their power to elect the leaders, who were henceforth to be appointed by the national secretariat.[32] The overall objective was to "plug" the party in the system.

Conditions for a while seemed to be favorable to that purpose. Beginning in the early fifties, "*centrismo*"—the center parties' coalitions that had been in power hitherto—became unworkable, faced with changing social and economic conditions. For a time the Christian Democrats, the hegemonic party, were uncertain whether to open to the Right or to the Left, that is, to establish new coalitions including parties of either of the two wings.

The MSI's moderate leadership took advantage of this situation in order to press its claim for full political partnership at the *national* (and not only municipal) level. After its explicit acceptance of "political realities" at the 1954 Viareggio Congress ("our struggle must be carried out within this system"), the MSI took a number of explicit progovernmental steps that left no doubt as to its intentions. In 1955 it supported the DC candidate Giovanni Gronchi's election to the Presidency of the Republic; in 1957 it voted in favor of the DC government premiered by Adone Zoli;[33] in 1959 it supported Giovanni Segni's government as well as the same politician's election to the Presidency of the Republic in 1962.

The leadership's ultimate goal appeared close to fulfillment in 1960 when Giovanni Tambroni's right-wing DC government stood only thanks to the support of the MSI and the monarchists (the only supporters, besides the DC). But precisely that situation unleashed weeks of fierce social conflict, which led to the dismissal of Tambroni and to the DC's decision to cautiously "open to the Left." The MSI's defeat was even more humiliating because the popular protest, which eventually spread to the whole country, had begun as a near insurrection in Genua against the permission given by the authorities to hold the MSI congress in that sternly antifascist city—a congress that in the promoters' intentions should have celebrated the party's admission to full political status.[34] Playing a role in this defeat was also the left-wing current of the DC, which, behind the scenes, did nothing to curb popular violence in order to discredit its right-wing competitors within the party and to make further coalitions with the MSI impossible.

This, for the time being, was the end of the MSI's capacity to deploy either its *blackmail* or, alternatively, its *coalition* potential—the major instruments of an extreme party operating within a parliamentary system [Farneti 1985, 20]. In the case of the MSI, this implied the attempt either to

join the DC-dominated coalitions or to threaten them with a loss of votes on the Right if the DC's policies appeared to lean too dangerously toward the Left. From that moment until the end of the sixties the party kept afloat in parliamentary activity playing a subordinate role vis-à-vis the DC. It was a role that could not be redeemed by any hope of becoming a full partner of the leading party nor of pushing it toward the Right, as from the mid-sixties on, the DC's choice for the opening to the Left became gradually more irrevocable. Even before that, however, Michelini's "realistic" but uninspiring leadership had caused the party to lose votes (in 1958 it had declined from 5.8 to 4.9 percent) and especially had hurt its political image.

Those who did not accept the end of the revolutionary ideals made one of three choices. Some left politics altogether (that was the case of many first-generation activists) [Salierno 1976, 92]; others established themselves as an inner-party opposition trying to keep the radical flame ablaze within the MSI (Almirante); still others left the party, giving birth to alternative organizations that were to engage in an intricate in-and-out relationship with the MSI that, beginning with the second half of the fifties, endured until the eighties.

The latter were the so-called historic groups of the radical Right, Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale. Their creation signaled the MSI's loss of capacity to control the radical components of the Right which it had hitherto hegemonized. From then on, although relationships with the MSI would never be interrupted, the radical Right was to acquire an (extraparliamentary) autonomy of its own. It is precisely this autonomy that warrants the separate consideration that radical groups will receive in the remainder of this book.

Before turning our attention to this development, however, it is necessary to consider the kind of ideological discourse that was carried out in radical-right circles in the early years.

Appendix

Right-Wing Student Organizations

Electoral returns from the 1951–65 period are available for fifteen Italian universities (out of twenty-eight at the time) covering ca. 70 percent of all students enrolled (160,000 out of 230,000 ca.). Data on Rome are missing, because the student government headquarters there were repeatedly ravaged by neofascist squads that destroyed the records [Urbani 1966, 74]. This significantly underestimates FUAN votes, because Rome University was a fascist stronghold. Consequently some studies estimate that the FUAN's percentage may have been as high as 20 percent nationwide [Ig-

nazi 1989, 60 ff.]. Even without the Roman data, a comparison between national elections and student elections based on Urbani's sample provides some eloquent results, as shown in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1
Right-Wing Votes in National Elections and Student Elections (percent)

1953		*1958*		*1963*	
FUAN	MSI	FUAN	MSI	FUAN	MSI
14.9	5.8	13.9	4.8	14.4	5.1

Sources: student votes, Urbani 1966, 76; national votes, Martinotti 1978, 45.

The FUAN and FUAN-related groups were especially strong in southern universities (in the early fifties they had a majority in Bari, Catania, Palermo) but they also scored significant results in some northern ones (e.g., in 1950 in Milan's Polytechnic and Genua's University). The neofascist stronghold, however, was in Rome, where the "Caravella" group (FUAN's hard core) until the late sixties created a practically unchallenged climate of violence and harassment against democratic teachers and students [examples in Murgia 1976, 113 ff., 157 ff.]. Only in 1966 did "Caravella" lose its majority in the student body's elections.

2

Ideologies, Myths, Ideologues

The Ideological Universe of the Radical Right

The Problem: Ideology in Radical Groups

Ideology performs a crucial function in justifying the ends and means of organized social action, bolstering the cohesion of political groups, and reinforcing the identity of their members. It is a function especially relevant to radical and extremist groups. Such groups, by placing themselves outside or against existing political systems, require powerful symbolic instruments in order to build and confirm the militants' persuasion and lead them to action.

Throughout the postwar years the radical Right in Italy was a small activist minority; moreover, it was a minority whose assertedly uncompromising hostility to the system severely curtailed its access to material resources. Consequently, the importance of symbolic incentives for them was all the more crucial. Nevertheless, attention toward the ideological world of the radical Right on the part of contemporary social and political research has been very scarce. This neglect should be viewed within the framework of a general attitude of the postwar antifascist intelligentsia, which has tended to look down on all forms of fascist thought, denying that such an entity as a "fascist culture" could even exist at all [Bobbio 1973]. (Of course the bombastic fascist contempt for intellectuals and "scribblers" was partly responsible for this denial.)[1] The denial of the intelligentsia was even more drastic regarding *neo*fascist ideology, which was either downright ignored or simply dismissed as the mere rhetoric of nostalgia, interspersed with a rag-bag of bizarre, esoteric lucubrations concocted by lunatic cliques.

Because of this attitude, however, the possibility of exploring the symbolic universe of the radical Right was precluded. Yet this symbology must have been rather effective since, in conjunction with other factors, it was able to hold together and support a small, radically antagonistic milieu in the harsh battle it fought against the system for almost forty years stretching from the end of the war to the early 1980s. Indeed, within this milieu, the ideological debate was lively. The radical Right counted among its members a number of forceful intellectual figures, and it could rely on an

impressive network of publishing and editorial initiatives. Even the most summary comparison of the radical Right in Italy with that in other European countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom, not to mention the United States, where nothing approaching this situation can be found, underlines the significance of the Italian case.

This chapter first outlines the major common themes of the radical Right ideology, especially as they were discussed in the early postwar years. Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7, dealing with the major militant groups, will examine the specificities of the ideological universe of each.

It should be noted at the outset that within the far Right the radical segment had the greatest interest in and need for ideological discourse, as testified by the wealth of its publications.[2] The parliamentary wing, that is, the MSI, settled down quite early into a rather simplified and nonproblematic universe whose main elements were nationalism, anticommunism, law-and-order appeals, and the critique of democratic ineffectiveness and corruption. These elements were placed within the framework of a sternly proclaimed "loyalty to the past," namely, nostalgia for the Fascist regime, its achievements (e.g., corporativism), heroes, and martyrs, whose virtue was extolled in contrast to the present abjection. The rhetorical celebration of the past helped the MSI to avoid too critical a scrutiny of it, which would have revealed its many ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes. (In fact, even within the MSI, positions were quite diversified and blurred [see, e.g., Cofrancesco 1985; Ignazi 1989]. For the present discussion, however, this rough contraposition will suffice.)

This kind of scrutiny was much more the concern of the radical groups.

Fascist Ideology, Old and New

The ideology of historical fascism was the compound of a number of elements that came from disparate traditions of thought, ranging from socialism and anarco-syndicalism to activism and reactionary traditionalism, from law-and-order bourgeois authoritarianism to subversive anticapitalism. It has been claimed that Mussolini was able to fashion such elements into a coherent and systematic intellectual product [Gregor 1979]. The prevailing opinion is, however, that although a fascist mentality did exist [Lyttleton 1973, 364], together with a number of commonly agreed-on ideological clusters, the compound was eminently unstable. This was because the importance of each cluster varied according to tactical and strategic needs,[3] the weight of its different supporters,[4] and the transformation of the movement in a regime.

Understandably, such a composite source offered the neo-Fascists the possibility, together with the onus, of selecting which elements would best

fit their needs. In practice, many of the common, agreed-on value clusters were adopted in a more or less unchanged form; where differences, ambiguities, or antinomies appeared, the radical Right systematically selected the "hardest," most intransigent alternative. Thus, for example, the revolutionary thrust of Fascism was systematically preferred over the law-enforcing, order-restoring dimension, the latter in fact being frequently exposed as the signal of Fascism's surrender to established interests.

Among the chosen elements, perhaps the most comprehensive and all-encompassing was a full, radical, uncompromising rejection of democracy and the "false egalitarian utopia," replaced by a Weltanschauung rooted in the values of élitism, natural hierarchies, and strongly enforced authoritarian rule [Bobbio 1975].

The rejection of democracy was not limited to its inadequacies nor to the gaps between proclamations and deeds. It extended instead to the core values and to the rules that govern the democratic polity, beginning with the peaceful composition of conflicts. In its place *violence* was endlessly extolled as the major instrument of social transformation, the only one capable of bringing about the palingenetic nemesis that occupied the core of the fascist worldview [Griffin 1991a]. The "minimum program" put forth by the leader of the prefascist Futurists consisted in "the love of danger, the *rehabilitation of violence* as the decisive argument" [Lyttleton 1973, 368; italics added]. A logical corollary was the rejection of peace as a value, and the extollment of war "as the only means capable of bringing all human energies to the maximum level of tension, and of imprinting with a seal of nobility the peoples who have enough virtue to face it" [Mussolini 1932].

The mystique of violence, in turn, was only the most brutal expression of a profound topos of fascist (and prefascist: think again of the Futurists) antiegalitarianism: the belief in the right of the brave and the stronger to assert their will and rule over the multitude, the admiration for superhuman figures, hence the claim of the superiority of élites over faceless masses, of the superman's ethics over the "herd morality." This corresponded to another founding element of the fascist mentality—one that placed it clearly in the right-wing field, notwithstanding its asserted ambiguity on the Right-Left distinction, as claimed, for example, by Sternhell [1978, 1983]. This is the belief in the existence of an originary order in human relations, implying natural articulations and hierarchies, which the mechanical and artificial patterns of modern society falsify. Violence reasserts the natural hierarchical order, giving the strongest the right to rule and ridding them of the intrigues of the weaklings and the politicians' sophisms [Marletti 1983, 141].

For, after all, democracy implies compromise, negotiation, bargaining, and rational discussion. Disparagement of these procedures was a product

of that irrationalist and elitist cultural climate that gained ground among the European intelligentsia at the turn of the century in the so-called revolt against positivism [Hughes 1958] and became a central tenet of fascist ideology, eagerly taken up by neofascism.

Against the paltry values of positivistic rationality, a cluster of "deeper," "more authentic" ones was hailed, those "ideas without words" cherished by Oswald Spengler: vital forces, great creative impulses, primeval instincts [Marcuse 1969 (orig. 1934), 5 ff.]. They led to a conception of vitalistic activism, the apotheosis of direct action, the belief in the decisive deed [Mannheim 1936, 134], in life and inspired creativity over reason and "dead" systems of thought, all central to the fascist worldview: "Fascism favoured action, not thought" [Lyttleton 1973, 365].

The most exalted expression of this topos was the worship of heroism against the shabby means-ends reckonings of bourgeois life, a ceaselessly reiterated leitmotiv ("in metapolitics, even the price of potatoes must be heroic" [Viereck 1961, 243]), a leitmotiv usually expressed in the emphatic contraposition of warriors against merchants, heroes against shopkeepers, soldiers against dealers.

A paradox of fascism was that élitism, hero worship, scorn for the masses, and petty-bourgeois paltriness was accompanied by a quest for mass support, which came precisely from the mobilization of petty-bourgeois strata [Germani 1978]. The postwar radical Right had no illusion about their capability to mobilize the masses, which, after plauding Fascism for twenty years, had scattered like chaff at the first difficulties of the regime and were now intoxicated by communism. The neo-Fascists in their boundless contempt for the masses, aimed their appeal only at selected audiences, or rather aimed to create small elites of men "standing among the ruins," defiantly challenging the surrounding world. (Only toward the end of the itinerary did some groups display any interest for the people, which was conceived, however, in *völkish* terms, that is, as the exact opposite of the mass [see chapter 7].) The preference for organic ties, for communitarian bonds, for natural roots against the artificial forms of modern society is of course a crucial dimension of historical fascist movements, leading to the notion of a racial or national community or both, and to its final exasperation into "military communities" [Cofrancesco 1986, 76]. Such an outcome was obviously impossible for neofascism. There, however, the communitarian element nevertheless played a crucial role, reinforced by the specific elements that characterized the conditions of the defeated: the talk was now of the "community of the vanquished," those whom "democratic totalitarianism" placed in a ghetto and who, as a riposte, refused to have anything to do with the world of the winners.

Hero worship and antibourgeois elitism were made possible by (and were a symptom of) another core element of fascist ideology, the hugely

disproportionate overevaluation of the spiritual dimension of man, and the corresponding disparagement of the material one.[5] This allowed fascism to proclaim its hostility to both Marxism and capitalism while firmly keeping within the capitalist camp. It thus could preach revolution and at the same time retain the existing social structure, including property rights. The feature, a crucial one, was common to all Western fascist movements [Mosse 1964, 7; Lyttleton 1973, 372; in general, Mayer 1971].

Neofascist ideologues used these arguments in order to insist on the revolutionary nature of Fascism—which would grant them, as the official heirs, revolutionary status. The argument carried much weight at a time when the radical Right was torn between two issues: on the one hand, the need not to abandon to the Left the symbolic capital represented in modern society by the concept of revolution and, on the other, the historic evidence of the counterrevolutionary practices carried out by fascism in coalition with conservative interests.[6] The solution was found, as expressed in a widely acclaimed essay written by an early protagonist, E. Erra, by dubbing such a coalition "a misunderstanding which, in the practical sphere, lasted until 25 July 1943, in Italy and until 20 July 1944, in Germany" [Erra 1976].[7] Instead, so the argument went, the genuinely revolutionary nature of fascism was proven by its struggle against the dominant modernist Weltanschauung, embodied by liberal individualism, capitalism, *and* bolshevism, lumped together in one single field both by official fascist doctrine and by its dutiful neofascist restatement. Both assertedly shared the same deterministic and materialistic creed, which posits that human actions are dictated by economic and social conditionings alone. Only fascism, by founding its new man on purely spiritual values, could provide an alternative to the materialism and determinism of the Enlightenment.

Precisely by overlooking social-structural features and by diverting the struggle to the spiritual level could Erra and his comrades [e.g., Romualdi 1966] relegate to the "practical sphere," as a "mere misunderstanding," the interest coalition that lasted through nine-tenths of the regimes' lives, while at the same time decreeing as irrelevant the conflict between capitalism and socialism that has torn the century. This in turn, as Herbert Marcuse pointed out in the thirties, allowed fascism to conceal its basic accord with the socioeconomic structure of capitalism [Marcuse 1969 (orig. 1934), 8–10].

The Quest for Myths

Most ideologies, even those endowed with "surface rationality or apparent common sense" [Griffin 1991a, 27], usually contain a set of myths that provide affective, emotional, existential identification and mobilize adher-

ents to action. The need for myths is felt even more strongly by conservative and reactionary Weltanschauungen. Rejecting as they do the foundations of modern society [Mannheim 1936], they are especially hostile to positivist rationality (logos), emphatically contrasting it with mythos as the main vehicle for "real" knowledge.[8] And indeed Fascism had emphatically advocated the role of myth as a powerful and indispensable motor of political action. Mussolini himself, influenced as he was by G. Sorel's lesson, had said: "Myth is a creed, a passion. It need not be a reality. It is a reality in that it is a stimulus, a hope, a faith that gives courage" [quoted in Gentile 1993, 160].

Attention to myth was also a major characteristic of the postwar far Right, which stressed the urgency of "creating *founding myths*, hence of having a *mythopoetic capacity* and expressing a *liturgy*, some kind of a communitarian ritual" [Tarchi 1982, 22].[9]

THE DUBIOUS HEIRLOOM OF FASCISM

Quite obviously, the main quarry of mythical materials, for the postwar radical Right, was that of historical Fascism. But the quarry was searched in a rather selective way.

True to the attempt to establish itself as a lay religion [Gentile 1993], Fascism had devoted much concern to the symbolic dimension of political life. Ceremonies, rituals, marches, salutes, rallies, and public celebrations occupied a disproportionately large place in fascist politics (indeed the critics claimed they exhausted it). But although in the first years they may have been able to evoke a set of genuinely felt emotions and feelings (especially the rituals connected with the celebration of World War I and of the fascist "martyrs"), as time went by, and certainly by the early thirties, they became repetitious and rhetorical, giving way to stale and bombastic performances.

This was partly because the prevalence attributed in the fascist imaginary to charismatic mechanisms centered on the figure of Mussolini. (In the Third Reich, by contrast, Hitler tried to depersonalize his own charismatic figure by integrating it within ritual, in order to prevent a possible loss of legitimacy should the system be turned over to successors lacking his charisma [Mosse 1975, chap. 7; De Felice 1975, 76].) A role may have been played as well by what Jesi called the irreparably petty-bourgeois and provincial nature of the regime, which tended to translate mythical themes into banalized kitsch representations [Jesi 1979, 32], thus rendering them ineligible for later deployment.

Such was certainly the case with the symbology surrounding ancient Rome and Romanness, which had been among the core myths of Fascism. The regime had staged them in rhetorical representations frequently bor-

dering on the ridiculous. What is more, during Fascism, Romanness had been a solar myth, a symbol of victory: the heirs of a catastrophic defeat could hardly identify with it.

This points to a more general problem related to Fascism's early imagery: much of it was linked to the combat and veteran myths of World War I, a war that ended with a triumphant victory. Together with a version of nationalism that stressed the awakening of a "young nation" to a glorious destiny, this accounted in significant part for Fascism's vitalistic optimism—hardly the appropriate theme for the neo-Fascists after World War II. Nationalism was further discredited by the poor performance of the Italian national fabric during the war, which had exposed the emptiness of the fascist pretensions. For this reason the postwar radical Right at times adopted a defensive version of this myth ("the martyred homeland," as in the case of Trieste), at times claimed to abandon it altogether (as in the case of the "spiritualist" disciples of Julius Evola [see next section]), and frequently took refuge in the image of the European, more than the Italian fatherland (yet they called themselves "national revolutionary"; see chapter 3).

THE RSI AS A "BLOOD AND FAITH" EPOPÉE

For all the above reasons, the fascist period that was mostly extolled by the radical-right mythology was that of the RSI. Mussolini's "desperate republic" had, for one thing, tried to salvage and recover the revolutionary thrust of the fascist origins, as in the famed (and empty) socializing proclamations.

But more than what was proclaimed in these, the revolutionary legacy of the RSI was important for neofascism in what may be called its existential subversivism, as the practical experience that came closest to what the ideal fascism should have been [Revelli, in press]. From this viewpoint military defeat was turned into a political resource, an instrument for building a strong, ethically grounded identity, capable of surviving disruption and ghettoization.

At the core of such a mechanism was the *legionary myth*, the myth of a legion of the braves who had fought for a lost cause in the name of honor and loyalty to ideal values and who now refused to accept the verdict of history, trying instead to carry on the fight even after it was materially lost. The mythical precedent was the "defeat of the braves," a cornerstone of Nazi ideology, which had taken it up from the konservative Revolution, the powerful antimodern, tendentially irrationalistic cultural and political movement that played such an important role in delegitimizing the Weimar Republic and paving the way to National Socialism.[10]

The prototypical heroes of the konservative Revolution were the Frei-

korps volunteers, those who had refused to accept defeat and challenged the Versailles treaty by fighting on, after the armistice, in defense of the Reich's eastern borders and of the German soldiers' honor. As in the title of Von Salomon's immensely popular book that sang their epopée (*Die Geächteten*), they perceived themselves as *outcasts*, rejected by the petty conventions and comforts of bourgeois society.[11] Against the lures of an easy normality, so they claimed, against the barren economic laws of merchants and dealers, they had raised the dark corsair pennant, reviving the lurid myth of the errant soldier, of the *Landsknecht* wandering wherever in Germany it may still be possible to set fire to the powders. (What the myth carefully omitted was the role played by these valiant knights as "the most powerful of the fighting forces available to big business, the bourgeoisie, and the peasantry, in their various struggles against the revolutionary proletariat" [Theweleit 1989 (1978), 2:382–83].) A core element of this myth was the notion of the male society (*Bund* or *Männerbund*), whose "harsh communality" was meant, on the one level, to rid the soldiers of whatever feminine, negative impulses they may harbor [Theweleit 1989 (1978), 2:361] and, on the other, to provide a social model for the years to come. This model was to go beyond both capitalism and communism, to be the "third way," one of the obsessions of the konservative Revolution [Mosse 1964, 177],[12] and was to become one of the most trite commonplaces of fascist propaganda [Bobbio 1975, 621].

The RSI fighters felt that all the elements of this myth were reenacted in their own experience: the rejection by the "normal" citizenry, which, after enthusiastically cheering the Duce up to the eve of his fall, had immediately acquiesced to defeat in order to preserve its businesses and comforts; the comradeship among the fighters, reinforced by the rejection of the burgers;[13] the notion of a fight to the end, for the soldiers' honor, and the clear perception that they were bound by a *destiny* that would admit of no future.[14] It should be noted that a pathos-filled reference to "destiny" as the ineluctable itinerary set for those belonging to the same community—the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*—is a defining feature of right-wing thought, which the Left counters with the notion of the *project* as an instrument for liberating individuals from traditional bonds and construing a new society [Cofrancesco 1986].[15]

Understandably, von Salomon's book acquired, in these circles, "the value of a sacred book, of an initiatic text. . . . It contained all that we had experienced and were unable to express. I read it rapturously, I was lost in it, inebriated by its turbid atmosphere of blood and violence" [Mazzantini 1986, 172]. The legacy was bequeathed to the postwar radical Right, as a prominent leader proudly acknowledged: "I belong to the generation of those who took up the fight carrying in their rucksack nothing but von Salomon's *Outcasts* and Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*."[16]

RELIGIO MORTIS

A crucial theme of the RSI Weltanschauung was an obsession with death, accompanied by an overwhelming funerary symbology. This may seem obvious, as death symbols had always played an important role in the fascist imaginary. Indeed the attribution of a positive value to death as such has been considered a defining characteristic of fascism.[17] Yet Fascism, which claimed to be grounded on classic, solar foundations, emphatically extolled vitalism, action, and movement while enshrining in the very title of its anthem (*Giovinezza*, i.e., youth) the condition opposite to death. (In fact, the opposition is more apparent than real: to die young means to deny old age, hence death.)

The issue deserves a few more comments. Indeed, although the death symbology occupied a central position in the culture of historical fascisms, its meaning was not uniform in time and space. Certainly there were contexts, as in the Spanish case or that of the Romanian Iron Guard, where a veritable *mystique of death* was developed—"a hegemonic, totalizing funerary mythology, posited as the only real reference point for the norms which compel one to act" [Jesi 1979, 31].[18]

Italian Fascism offers a somewhat more complicated picture, one requiring that we draw distinctions between several periods of its development.

The first period (until about the mid-twenties) coincided with the movement's effort to acquire and incorporate the myths linked to World War I, a war that had deeply affected the notions of life and death in European culture. Following a tradition that had included thinkers as diverse as Hegel and de Maistre, then Proudhon, Nietzsche, and Sorel, in many countries vast sectors of the intelligentsia had enthusiastically welcomed the war, as an instrument for the moral rebirth and strengthening of the peoples debilitated by the corrupting lures of peace. Within this conception, and almost as a corollary, the drawing of blood was seen as a consecrating, purifying, and regenerating factor. Of course the drawing of blood might also satisfy a number of individual urges.[19]

In the case of Italy, the myth of the redeeming blood was exacerbated by a nationalistic rhetoric plagued by a national inferiority complex that was the result of the nation's traditional lack of major wars and great victories [Gentile 1993, 30]. Add to that the influence of the irrationalistic, antidemocratic component of interventionism, especially that tied to Futurism, and the outcome would be, as in Marinetti's infamous aphorysm, the extollment of war as "the sole hygiene of the world," in order to rid the earth of "a few million imbeciles."[20]

Afterward the war experience had spread the myths of soldierly courage, the taste for combat, the pleasure of battle: therein, a defiant, challenging attitude toward death was seen as a normal component of bravery. The first

fascist squads, the *Squadristi*, translated this ideology to mean the praise of pure violence, the right of the strong to cheerfully thrash and cane the weak. The breeding ground had been the culture of the assault troops, the *Arditi*, which provided many of the cadres for the squads [Rochat 1981]. The myths were those of beau geste, heroic action, the praise for a life adventurously lived as an ongoing struggle,[21] woven in an imagery full of appeals to virility, of sexual metaphors thinly disguised under combat jargon (penetration, assault, push, impact). A central place in this symbology was given to weapons, which were made into fetishes, as in the songs that depicted them both as semisacred icons and (especially the most phallic ones: the cudgel and the dagger) as sex symbols [Petersen 1982, 992].

There was, however, another dimension, which, although contiguous with the former, should be kept separate, that is, the aestheticizing of war, of combat, and hence of death (*la bella morte*, or beautiful death). The songs celebrated "youth . . . that blows its smile to death, as pure as the kiss of a virgin. War, where one goes to meet death as to meet love" [Pavone 1992, 430]. The source here was romanticism, or rather decadentism, as embodied by D'Annunzio's monumental figure [Praz 1966 (orig. 1930), 337], who dressed this culture with poetic vestments: "A noi piace far la guerra con la morte a paro a paro" ("We like to make war with death one to one").

Fascism seized on this symbolic universe, adding a number of its own elements. Chief among these were the cult for the fallen heroes of the great war and the cult for the fascist "martyrs," thanks to which the myth of the hallowing effect of drawn blood became a crucial factor in the movement's early efforts toward self-consecration [for examples, see Gentile 1993].

In a second period, that of Fascism established, the truculent exhibit of funeral symbology went through a veritable inflation, as death images were endlessly displayed all over uniforms, insignia, and monuments, and declamed in public utterances of all sorts.[22] The result was the downgrading of this universe to empty rhetoric, when not altogether to kitsch. This, as Jesi claims, may have been because of the low mythological temperature of the regime, related to its petty-bourgeois background [see above, p. 35]. But in part it was certainly because of Fascism's inability to resolve the contradiction between the two components of its death-conception, that is, the one that attempted to make the mortuary symbology into a challenge to death and hence into an extollment of an intensely lived life, on the one hand, and, on the other, the romantic, decadent, aestheticizing component (*la bella morte*).[23]

The atmosphere changed anew with the RSI, when the theme of death reacquired its tragic dimensions. The civil war, by breaking the state's monopoly over violence, had turned responsibility for it, and hence for the

killing, over to the fighters. Thus much of the moral anonymity, which normally shrouds soldiers in conventional warfare, was removed, an effect reinforced by the low technological level of this struggle, which gave the enemies greater visibility of each other. The totalitarian character of the struggle, the involvement of civilians, especially on the part of the Nazis, who frequently reenacted the barbaric German custom of collective reprisal (burning villages and shooting hostages), the public executions of rebels, followed by the exemplary display of the executed—all this gave to the civil war a savage, no-quarter dimension, where once more the fascist death symbology came grimly to the forefront.

Add the Götterdämmerung atmosphere that permeated the RSI's "desperate" struggle, the militants' feeling of engagement in a lost battle, one that would admit of no exit other than death. This perception exacerbated the mortuary character of the RSI culture, giving a monstrous connotation to its opponents, transfiguring them into "total enemies." Thus annihilating the enemy became not the means to an end (that of a better society) but an end in itself, incorporating the whole purpose of the violent action [Pavone 1991, 434].

This was in sharp contrast to the ideology of the Resistance, where, at least in its intentions, violence was accepted as a necessary evil, a regrettable means to achieving a better world, as in Primo Levi's question, "Can violence be useful?" and in his anguished reply, "Unfortunately, yes" [Levi 1986, 83].[24]

This is the context in which the RSI's obsession with and extolment of death should be placed. They were concerned first of all with one's own death: "To die! to know how to die! It was our torment. All our courage mystique rotated around the capability to meet death. A man's worth hung on how he met death." But even more important, for some, was the ability to *give* death: "To die is nothing. . . . The point is to kill! To cross that boundary! . . . That's where you prove there is something you prize more than life, both your own and that of the others." And indeed an episode, haunting this militant's memory, occurred when one of his young comrades volunteered for a firing squad, and later justified his gesture by saying: " 'I wanted to learn what it feels like . . . I wanted to have the experience . . . to become a man,' " leading the writer to wonder: "What did he mean? A man is only he who kills?" [see Mazzantini 1986, 137; see also 74, 93, and 136].[25]

Within the framework of this mystique, the fascist creed, in the hallowed function of bloodshed as a much more holy and authentic foundation of collective bonds than any democratic legitimacy, was once again invoked: "He spoke of the blood . . . He said that Italy 'needed that blood' . . . He said that our life . . . counted for nothing, that Italians 'must die' to wash away the infamy of betrayal: to ransome ourselves. Nothing else was left:

to die! . . . He said: 'the earth must be fecundated again with blood' " [Mazzantini 1986, 169].

The belief could reach paroxysmic tunes: "All the world, with the weight of its rot, is about to fall on us. Let us steel ourselves! . . . But let the enemy, when he steps on our bodies, hear the cry of *our blood* that indicts him."[26]

Although endless, the variations on the death theme were, at the end, quite monotonous. They can be grouped in two major categories. The old notion of a defiant challenge to death was transformed into a grim *cupio dissolvi*, a perverse libido for (self- and other-) destruction, which could lead an officer sentenced to death to write that he regretted nothing and that he would have liked "to end yelling; for Italy and for Fascism, *Viva la Morte!*"[27] Alongside this was once again the aesthetization of death, as in the songs weaving in the same lines the well-worn themes of war, death, and lovemaking,[28] or in the chilling words of a WAC volunteer writing to her mother: "I shall be able to stare death in its face, elude it, amuse myself with it; playing hide-and-seek with death must be fun."[29]

Along with the mystique of death, of course, went the cult of weapons: "Weapons! weapons, their terrible fascination. You look at them, you hold them in your hands, you carry them, they make you feel different" [Mazzantini 1986, 174]. A loving approach to weapons is a typical soldierly attitude, by no means confined to the Fascists. (But, as Pavone points out, the range of feelings toward the weapons was wider in the Resistance, including cases of reluctance to use them [1991, 438–39].) In the RSI it became some sort of an exclusive cult, a powerful source of identification for the fighters, all the more strong as all old icons had collapsed.

And as the most perceptive Fascists acknowledged, even the choice of weapons marked a symbolic difference between the two fronts. On the side of the Resistance, the real protagonist was that most emphatically prosaic implement, the Sten tommy-gun, a piece of barrel welded on a plated sheet, plus a coil-spring and a firing-pin.[30] On the other side was the dagger, "the most useless, most antiquated, most provocative weapon. In our iconographic view of the world, the mystique and the ritual of the dagger had a central place. . . . It was virile. Rather, phallic. You held it in your fist, that peg protruding from your side: it felt strong and hard."[31]

Many of these topoi immediately entered the Weltanschauung of the postwar radical Right. So it was, for example, with the cult of weapons as a basic element of collective psychology: "We could not even conceive—wrote a militant from the first generations—that a fascist would not go to any length in order to acquire weapons, that he would not have a veritable mania for them" [Salierno 1976, 106]. So it was for the theme of death, sometimes expressed in purely rhetorical terms, sometimes downgraded to the veterans' savage boastfulness.[32] But for a number of militants death

was indeed claimed as a criterion of truth, in the sense that the only true and just values were those one was willing to die for:

> None of us had a future. We had all taken up a no-exit road: a road at the end of which there was only jail, or flight in some foreign land, or death. This may sound rhetorical but it isn't. Of the peak group in my [MSI] branch, none is left. I was sentenced to thirty years, another to ten. One committed suicide. Two were killed in the Foreign Legion. One killed himself doing bravado stunts in his airplane, another racing a scooter. A third had his throat slit in Africa. I am the only survivor. [Salierno 1976, 132]

NAZISM AND ATYPICAL FASCISMS

But republican fascism lived only a brief season, with a limited number of military episodes or figures that could be raised to fully mythical proportions.[33] Important as its legacy was for the radical Right, it is understandable that the radical Right's quest for mythical materials led its members to canvass other sources as well—especially when the memory of the RSI began to recede in time.

Such references were first provided by Nazism and the German materials connected with it—beginning with the konservative Revolution, by atypical fascisms, and, further afield, by a number of esoteric, Indo-Aryan myths.

What was especially attractive about Nazism was its palingenetic thrust, its extreme radicalism, its refusal to compromise with preexisting interests and establishments; in other words it had the characteristics of a veritable permanent revolution. Congruent with that was the movement's constant effort to fashion all of German society after the values of a military ethic that advocated a harsh life-style, where discipline and self-sacrifice were pushed to ascetic extremes within the framework of a rigorously conceived ritual. (That such an image barely corresponded to the reality of the Third Reich, torn by constant tugs-of-war between many power lobbies, was irrelevant to its admirers.) The admiration was especially focused on the fighting heroes of the Third Reich, the élite corps and shock troops, above all the SS. Of particular importance were the combat units of the corps, the Waffen SS, which recruited volunteers from countries other than Germany and were thus considered the "veritable International Brigades" of "the New Order of Mussolini and Hitler [fighting] against Stalin's materialistic world" [Tarchi 1978b, 27]. Little in the legend corresponds to actual fact: "It is true that some 500,000 foreigners served in the Waffen SS during World War II, but many of them were not volunteers, and very few were idealists of the sort described" [Stein 1966, 138].[34]

In the case of Nazism, defeat was redeemed by the fighters' heroism and by the tragedy's grandiosity, presented truly as a "Twilight of the Gods":

not by chance did Hitler order Berlin's radio station to play Wagner's music during the Reich's extreme agony: the ritual must never fail. It was also a collective sacrificial suicide consciously carried out to the end by the supreme chiefs of Nazism. The radical Right transfigured these episodes with a purple prose, an example of which follows:

> A confrontation occurred in Berlin, in the spring of 1945, between youth who had been taught anew to love the sun and whose breasts held the destiny of a race, and the Mongolian hordes drunken with cheap alcohol, with rape and pillage, and serving one of the most perverted ideologies ever produced by human brains. Each man called to a heroic vocation and believing in the sacred cause of Europe must see in this confrontation one of those privileged moments in history when myth erupts amidst men's struggles, . . . as in the teachings of the northern sagas, when gods and heroes fought a last battle against the unbridled forces of chaos. [Baillet 1978, 70]

Atypical fascisms, on the other hand, attracted the radical Right because, not having reached power, they had not succumbed to its temptations, and indeed were often persecuted or betrayed even by supposedly friendly regimes. Such was the case of the original Spanish Falange, the one conceived and founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, which was extolled for the "ascetic and military sense of life" advocated by the founder. This was in sharp contrast to the placid catholic paternalism of Franco's regime, "whose main concern was to send the youth early to bed, so that they wouldn't mix up in politics" [Romualdi 1973, 10]. Asceticism was the crucial element extolled also in the Romanian Iron Guard or Legion of the Archangel,[35] meaning the "neotemplar" character of its "warrior-monk" militants, their longing to go beyond "normal" religiosity in order to achieve a superior spirituality, as exemplified by the initiatic aspects of the movement (sacrifice, prayer, fasting, and singing as a "mantric" technique).[36] Less important but by no means absent were references to other atypical fascisms, such as the Belgian Rexisme or the Hungarian Arrow Cross movement.[37]

The themes and issues sketched in the previous paragraphs were discussed by a number of intellectuals, and divulged in a multitude of publications. The task of providing a coherent doctrinal framework for the scattered discussions was accomplished by Julius Evola.

The Ideologue[38]

Julius Evola (1898–1974) was by far the most important intellectual figure for the contemporary radical Right—a figure, until very recently, virtually unknown outside the narrowest circles.[39]

In the course of a long career that he began in the 1910s as a dada painter and poet, Evola was always on the sidelines of officiality; for one thing, he never bothered to join the Fascist Party, a fact much advertised by the disciples bent on proving his distance from Fascism. The regime's bureaucrats did not appreciate his lofty nonconformism, his taste for exoteric lore; nor could his imperial paganism be very well accepted at a time when Mussolini was signing a concordat that made the Catholic Church a pillar of the regime. Nevertheless, for about ten years he was in charge of the cultural page of an influential newspaper, *Il Regime Fascista*. Moreover, toward the end of the regime, Evola had access to Mussolini and advised him (without much effect) on racial policy. In 1943 he was among those who, after Il Duce's escape from Italy, welcomed him in Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg—hardly a place open to non-Fascists. After the war he again refused to join any political party, yet, as described in the previous chapter, in the early fifties one of the currents within the MSI bore his name;[40] further, after Evola's death, Giorgio Almirante hailed him as "our Marcuse (only better)." However, his relationship with the MSI was not easy.[41] His undisputed domain was that of radical youth groups, circles, and journals; for generations of militants, in Italy and elsewhere, he was *the* guru.[42]

Evola's thought can be considered one of the most radical and consistent antiegalitarian, antiliberal, antidemocratic, and antipopular systems in the twentieth century. It is a singular (if not necessarily original)[43] blend of several schools and traditions, including German idealism, Eastern doctrines, traditionalism, and the all-embracing Weltanschauung of the interwar konservative Revolution with which Evola had a deep personal involvement.[44]

The meeting point of these doctrines was the attempt to construct a model of man striving to reach the "absolute" within his inner self. The *idées-forces* were those of detachment; rejection of the outside world; quest for inner transcendence; action-without-acting, closely linked to an ethic of asceticism; courage; impassibility; self-sacrifice; and repression of desire. Although the oriental origin of many of these sources is quite clear,[45] the corresponding attitudes are also at the core of what Theweleit construes as the "soldier-male" type, whose mentality is a crucial component of the prefascist and fascist psyche: "The focus of repression in the soldier male is the 'desire to desire'; concomitantly, the core of all [German] fascist propaganda is a battle against everything that constitutes enjoyment and pleasure . . . Attitudes of asceticism, renunciation, and self-control are effective defenses" [Theweleit 1989 (orig. 1978), 7]. The documents in which Theweleit reconstructs the soldier-male's mentality (novels, diaries, journals, and autobiographical writings of Freikorps fighters)

are typical examples of the literature of the konservative Revolution which Evola held so dear.[46] In his case, the sources also included materials like the Samurai code (*Bushido*), the Islamic notion of *Jihâd* (holy war), and Hindu martial models—providing a store of symbols and myths which were to be taken up eagerly in later years by the followers of Evola.

Evola's roots in traditional thought led him to see history as a process of decadence, taking mankind down from "exalted superior stages to stages increasingly conditioned by the mortal, contingent human element" [Evola 1969 (1934), 221]. But not everything in history belonged to regression: political systems like those of Sparta in Greece, the archaic Rome of the *patres*, and the Ghibelline Empire operated in the sense of delaying decadence by enforcing value sets congruent with tradition. In this century Italian Fascism, German Nazism, and the Japanese Empire performed a similar role, endeavoring to give form to

> a coalition of forces representing an open challenge to "modern" civilization: both that of the democracies . . . , and the other, representing the extreme limit of the western man's degradation—the collectivist civilization of the Fourth Estate, the communist society of the faceless mass-man." [Evola 1950, 10]

The coalition embodied a set of antimodern values, subsumed under the notion of the state's primacy over civil society—in turn an expression of the supremacy of the political order over economics.

This was a central point in Evola's thought, where an orthodox traditional (but also Hegelian) standpoint reversed the Marxian (and liberal) rank ordering. The economy corresponds to the physical, vegetative, *feminine* dimensions of a community; it is the *matter* to which the state, as the embodiment of the masculine principle, must give *form*. The feminine is an unstable, promiscuous, nightly substance, opposed to the luminous, fecundating principle represented by the masculine. Here again is a close resemblance to the soldier-males' texts, which "perpetually revolve around the same central axes: the communality of the male society, nonfemale creation, rebirth, the rise upward to hardness and tension . . . The man is released from a world that is rotten and sinking (from the morass of femaleness); he finally dissolves in battle" [see Theweleit 1989, 2:361].[47]

The definition and pursuit of a collectivity's ultimate ends may only pertain to the political sphere; the economy belongs, at best, to the realm of means. At worst, as in bourgeois society, it can become "demony," "hallucination," the most degraded form of which is consumerism [Evola 1967 (1951), 91 ff.]. The radical disparagement of the economy is of course standard conservative-reactionary lore,[48] within the framework of a conceptual universe where "spiritual" dimensions are constantly given primacy over material ones. The simultaneous attack against both capitalism and

Marxism (the aberration of considering the economy as "our destiny") logically ensues.

The rejection of materialism was not confined to the economy; it also determined the character of the political sphere and of the bonds that must prevail therein. For the origin of the state cannot come from below, from the people, but must be rooted in a higher sphere of ideal, heroic, antihedonistic values, capable of removing existence from the naturalistic order—a standard traditionalist notion [see, e.g., Guenon 1927, 87–88].

Fascism was to be praised for its attempt to fashion the Italian people into a severe, military mold, one that tried to keep up a "high moral tension," congruent with an antibourgeois, combative notion of life. It was to be criticized whenever it made concessions to "democratic" pressures, as in Mussolini's "*ducismo*," seen as the tendency to "go to the people," not to spurn the plaudits of the populace [Evola 1969 (1964), 59]. Similarly fascist nationalism, appealing as it did to the simple notions of people and fatherland, was to be rejected because of the naturalistic, collectivistic origin of such concepts ("les enfants de la patrie") and because, in modern Western history, nations were responsible for disrupting the European imperial order [Evola 1969 (1964), 32; 1967 (1951), 117ff.].

Evola's notion of the people was especially scornful: "Only of an élite may one say that 'it is of a race,' 'it has race' [in the French meaning of *racé* for 'of good breed']: the people are only people, mass" [Evola 1969 (1964), 106].[49] Predictably aberrant was the formula "state of labor," utilized especially by the RSI. That the latter was not only a republic but a social one at that elicited the fiercest rebukes from Evola, who extolled instead its *combat and legionary spirit*, one of the chief values in his universe—and, as has been seen, in the whole neofascist Weltanschauung.

The true state should be ruled by an élite held together not by naturalistic, collectivistic ties, but by ideal, spiritual ones: "What unites and what divides is the idea, an idea carried by a given élite and embodied in a State" [Evola 1969 (1964)]. Correspondingly, their organization should spurn all modern forms, like the political party, and follow a model firmly rooted in tradition: "Something like an Order, a 'male society,' carrying in their hands the principle of *imperium*, and holding . . . that loyalty is the basis of their honour" [Evola 1967 (1951), 42; the last clause, it will be recognized, corresponds to the Nazi SS motto]. The prototypes of such a model were the medieval chivalry orders, first and foremost the Teutonic Knights (the founding nucleus of the Prussian state) and the Knights Templars.[50] In recent times the model was embodied by such organizations as José Antonio's Falange, the Romanian Iron Guard (Legion of the Archangel), whose "Captain," C. Codreanu, was one of the great heroes brought by Evola to the admiration of the contemporary radical Right in Europe,[51] and, above all, by the élite guards of Nazism, the SS, to which Evola devoted long, admiring pages [e.g., Evola 1969 (1964), 209–18; 1978 (1941), 224–25].

The rejection of naturalistic (biological) factors in favor of the spiritual ones was also at the basis of Evola's brand of *racism*—or so it was claimed by the author and his disciples who tried to credit him with formulating a doctrine of "spiritual racism," meant as an important weapon in Fascism's struggle against modern society [Evola 1978 (1941), 11–24],[52] but one allegedly untainted by the stigma that biological racism carries in our culture.

According to his doctrine human beings are composed of three elements—body, soul, and spirit—each corresponding to a notion (degree) of race, the highest and most important being the spiritual. The ideal objective toward which Fascism strove should be the harmonious integration of the three, which were normally deficient (because of miscegenation). On these grounds Evola criticized purely biological racism, thus distancing himself from "vulgar anti-Semitism," as no necessary correspondence need exist between Jewish blood and Jewish spirit nor, for that matter, between physical and spiritual "Aryanism" [Evola 1972, 158, 153]. Or so he claimed in his postwar writings.

The trouble with this distinction between the "spiritual" and the "physical" dimension of race is that, within its framework, the Jewish spirit was constantly depicted as the negative pole, the destructive, disruptive force, against whatever positive, solar, virile the Aryan pole embodied: "that treacherous style, that style of slavish hypocrisy and at the same time sly, disaggregating infiltration, which is carried out, almost without exception, by the Jewish race, often without consciously willing it, much as the fire by nature burns and the viper poisons" [Evola 1978 (1936), 26]—so much so that not even by converting can the Jews shed their negative features [Evola 1992, 212]. Believing that such attitudes may also occasionally be harbored by Gentiles can hardly be considered a Jewish-friendly attitude. Indeed, the clearest indicator of the degeneration of modern society was, for Evola, the prevalence of a typically Jewish trait, "mammonism," that is, the worship of money and economic concerns [e.g., Evola 1978 (1936), 61]. The most trite anti-Semitic commonplaces ensued, including references to the infamous *Protocols* (for the Italian version Evola wrote the preface). Contrary to his claims, this standpoint did not prevent him from approving the racist legislation of Fascism as a "natural countermeasure" caused by "the antifascist politics of international Jewry" [Evola 1972, 149; Evola 1969 (1964), 105].

Even more harsh were Evola's militant statements, a collection of which has recently been reprinted, much to the horror of Evola's "moderate" followers [Evola 1992]. A sample can be found in a 1938 article on the "tragedy" of the Romanian Iron Guard or "Legion of the Archangel" [*Guardia di Ferro*].[53] As mentioned above, the Guard's "Captain," C. Codreanu, was one of Evola's heroes, and this article, written after Codreanu's assassination, was a veritable paean to his memory. Most of the piece was dedicated to Codreanu's anti-Semitism, extolled by Evola in a crescendo that culmi-

nated in the following accolade: "Codreanu saw clearly that Judaism could dominate the world through freemasonry and Russia through communism. 'Mussolini—quoth Codreanu—who destroyed communism and masonry implicitly declared war on Jewry as well.'" Evola's final comment was this: "The recent anti-Semitic turn of Fascism [the 1938 racial laws] proves that Codreanu was entirely right" [Guardia di Ferro, 14]. So much for "racism of the spirit."

Evola's contribution, however, was not confined to the "metapolitical" level of doctrine. Especially in the first postwar years, he offered guidance for action to those youth groups "that had refused to be dragged down by the general ruin." The 1949 tract, *Orientamenti* (originally published in Erra's and Rauti's journal, *Imperium*) singled out as models those of the *uomo differenziato* and of *legionary spirit*[54] and provided a catalogue of the fundamental political and ethical positions to be defended.

In this period Evola envisioned the possibility of rallying all the forces of the Right (the MSI, the "healthy" corps of the state, like the police, paratroopers, veteran groups, and the like) in order to take over Italian society, rescuing what still had some value and saving it from total destruction. The 1953 text, *Gli uomini e le rovine* (Men standing amid the ruins), was a major effort to provide a political doctrine in support of such a project. (Significantly, the book's preface was written by J. V. Borghese.) Within a familiar framework of traditional conceptions, the book stressed the urgent need, in order to "stem the disaster," of producing men capable of "standing amid the ruins."[55]

The notion of using the forces of the "true Right" against subversion was one of Evola's lasting concerns. Industrial society had made the state a hostage in the hands of trade unions and organized masses. The army and the police, given the level reached by the "communist gangrene," might be ineffectual. Hence the Right must take it upon itself to gradually organize a close network of task forces, "ready to quickly intervene against all possible emergencies," in order, first and foremost, to uphold "against the rabble, the state and its authority (even in the case of an 'empty state' [as the present one])" [Evola 1969 [1964], 135].

But the strategy envisaged in *Gli Uomini e le Rovine* quickly appeared to have no realistic foundations. The MSI was foundering into small-time parliamentary politics. The "economic miracle," consumerism, the explosion of materialistic values, brought the degradation of Italy on a par with that of the West as a whole. Evola's 1961 text, *Cavalcare la Tigre* (Riding the tiger) was a scathing indictment of this condition. With each new step toward "liberation,"[56] modern society in fact has moved closer to alienation and meaninglessness. The excesses of contemporary life (alcoholism, drugs, sex, and work itself) are but doomed attempts to overcome inner

emptiness. Values, institutions, behaviors are everywhere corrupted, debased, crumbling. This is the end of a cycle, the *Kaly-Yuga* of ancient myths. Nothing in this world is worthy of survival, nothing in it deserves anything but destruction.

But this is the world of history, of linear time; the bourgeois world of science and progress. The man Evola had in mind (the "differentiated man," the "active nihilist," the "anarchist of the right") is radically estranged from and denies any identification with such a world. Its disruption does not concern him. For such a man (sexist terminology is quite in order here), the only conceivable imperative is that of *being purely himself, living according to his own nature*—an imperative based not on an abstract law of practical reason but on the person's specific nature: hence the contents of each one's law are and must remain undetermined [Evola 1961, 44, 47]. How to search for one's own nature, how to identify and "test" it, were the main concerns of Evola's research in *Cavalcare la Tigre*.

The next question—How is one to act in this alien world?—was then answered with the same criteria, that is, by following the dictates of one's inner law. This may well lead to extreme forms of action (*militia*) provided they were carried out with utter detachment from the surroundings, at the same time, however, "assuming" all that in life can be negative, tragic, absurd, painful [Evola 1961, 60]. Such was the real sense of Nietzsche's *amor fati* and the *konservativrevolutionäre* notion of "heroic realism."[57] Together with these, Evola evoked traditional Asian formulas as "action without desire" and "action without acting," in an effort to overcome the contradiction between absolute active engagement in and absolute detachment/estrangement from this world [e.g., Evola 1961, 70; Evola 1972, 33].

The complex interweaving of several intellectual strains, the arcane terminology, the sententious style render *Cavalcare la Tigre* an impervious text, one whose interpretation would create much controversy in the quarrelsome sect of "J. Evola's Witnesses." Possibly the major point of contention dealt with the attitude to be followed regarding politics. Evola was very explicit in denying that the contemporary political realm contained anything worth fighting for. Only "lack of interest and detachment concerning all what is nowadays 'politics'" were conceivable for the differentiated man; "his principle will be then what the ancients called *apoliteia*." The negation was radical; the protreptic, however, carried the seeds of ambivalence: "Such principle concerns basically the inner attitude—Evola claimed—*apoliteia*, detachment, need not lead to any specific consequences in the realm of pure and simple activity; [they] do not carry as a necessary corollary practical abstentionism" [Evola 1961, 173, 174].

At least two possible meanings can be inferred from this statement, and the contrast between them may be used as a guideline for reading the difference that developed in the seventies between two major strains of the

Italian far Right. On the one side were those who claimed to have taken the notion of *apoliteia* literally, as a withdrawal from politics (parliamentary and party politics, that is) and, by concentrating on purely cultural endeavors, attempted to build a hegemonic standpoint in that realm. Many of them, toward the end of the seventies, originated the Nuova Destra, whose ambitious self-definition as Nuova Cultura (New Culture) indicates the direction of their concerns [Revelli 1984; Tassani 1986, 1994]. On the other side were those for whom withdrawal from actual combat was treason; for them the differentiated man could be true to the laws of his nature and achieve supreme existential identity only through extreme political engagement, in the form of the "militia," the "heroic path," or a "holy war," the aim being the total destruction of the rotten and decaying texture of modern society [e.g., Freda 1980]. To this end even the most savage means were not to be eschewed, for the laws of this world are inapplicable to those who believe in a higher reality, and the "grandiosity of the task" should do away with any scruples concerning the choice of the means [Freda n.d., 87].

The latter is the strain that will concern this research.

3

The "Historic Groups": Origins and Development

Background

The postwar structuring of the Italian political system, which by the 1950s had taken a rather stable form, defined the space of opportunity for the entire far-right area. A comparison with the situation after World War I may be enlightening.

The main differences between the two periods, for our purposes, were probably the following: among the middle classes, the *Krisismentalität* (crisis mentality), which, in countries like Germany and Italy, had allowed some intellectual minorities to create antiestablishment mass movements, was substituted now by efforts toward political and ideological aggregation, based on anticrisis consensus majorities [Farneti 1979, 117]. The middle classes and the moderate-conservative groups whose predecessors had embraced Fascism now found their political representation in moderate center parties, occasionally even in left-wing reformist ones. Specifically, the Catholic Party, which previously had been mostly a defender of the Church's interests, became the effective organizer of such strata, reaching some popular sectors as well, thanks to its interclass appeal. Precisely because they were built around consensus majorities, post-World War II mass parties in most European countries had little use for élite minorities. Moreover, Fascism and Nazism had used up the ideological appeal of the far Right, rendering it useless for capturing moderate political opinion. The potential strength of the extreme Right was thus "drastically curtailed, because, unlike in the 1920s and 1930s, when the moderate components were firmly welded to the extremist ones, now such components were cut off. But the extremist minorities remained active" [Farneti 1979, 123].

The international situation (the cold war) played a crucial structuring role by defining the two great areas (pro-Western and pro-Moscow) wherein coalitions would be possible. In each area (the development was European-wide) one party acquired a leadership role but was unable "to absorb *the whole* of the Right and *the whole* of the Left, in other words, were unable to eradicate extremism. . . . Cut off from the possibility of joining with sectors of opinion that had any chance of acquiring a sizable dimension, let alone a majority, the two extreme fringes took up violence" [Farneti 1979, 131]. In this process the Right had considerable support

from reactionary sectors of the governing groups and of the state apparatuses [De Felice 1989].

In Italy the process of radicalization of the far Right was especially intense when both the coalition and the blackmail potential of its parliamentary expression were reduced practically to nil and the MSI was threatened with *irrelevance*: this, as mentioned above, was the case during Michelini's secretariat.

In the mid-fifties general political and economic developments (a solution to the Trieste question; the beginning of the "economic miracle"; land reform efforts in the South) had temporarily reduced social tensions, encouraging the neofascist party to pursue a moderate, pro-DC strategy, which the radicals considered a dead-end. In 1954 the DC's congress elected a new secretary, A. Fanfani, whose sympathies for the Left were known. Partial elections in 1955 and 1956 had brought poor results for the MSI.[1] Reflecting this situation, the 1956 party congress in Milan was a sequel of scuffles and shoutings. Michelini, however, was able once more to retain the majority, cowing the "Left" (Almirante's group) in the position of a loud and vociferous minority that always threatened to leave the party but never dared to do so. At this point, the most determined radical elements exited the MSI (although remaining in close touch with it) and gave origin to the extraparliamentary groups, Ordine Nuovo (New Order) and Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard), which are the focus of this chapter.

In fact these two do not exhaust the whole universe of right-wing radicalism, which includes a broad galaxy of groups, movements, circles, and networks, making up what the protagonists refer to as *l'ambiente di destra* (the right-wing milieu): a purposefully vague term, seldom used by the Left. Within this galaxy the Ordine Nuovo and the Avanguardia Nazionale occupied a role of unquestioned hegemony, for the length of their formal presence on the scene (about twenty years for the former, fifteen for the latter), the energy of their leadership, and the activities they carried out. Moreover, by way of personal and ideological continuity, they provided a crucial *trait d'union* among periods and generations of militants, linking the veterans of the 1940s with the *spontaneisti* terrorists of the 1970s and 1980s. A brief sketch of their main activities follows.

Ordine Nuovo

From "Center" to "Political Movement"

Ordine Nuovo was a development of the FAR-Imperium-"Black Legion" group discussed in chapter 1. The new group was founded in 1954 by Pino Rauti[2] as a "center" within the MSI. After a period of tension and disputes,

it broke dramatically with the party and set itself up autonomously as Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo in December 1956, at the fifth MSI congress in Milan. The fracture was underlined by a torrent of invectives thrown at the "heap of incompetent renegades and traitors" then at the helm of the party, defined as "careerists in heat, bureaucrats on the payroll . . . shrewd merchants" oblivious of the true fascist style, which must be based on consistency and loyalty to spiritual principles.[3]

The ON's ensuing history is formally divided into two periods—the first from 1956 to 1969, when the Center joined the MSI anew, and was replaced by the Movimento Politico Ordine Nuovo (MPON, Political Movement ON); the second period was from 1969 to 1973. In fact a profound ideological and personal continuity runs through both periods, making it possible to discuss the ON as a unitary phenomenon.[4]

In the first phase the group kept its name and facade as a "study center" ostensibly engaging in militant cultural activities—that is, studying, discussing, and spreading the principles of traditional doctrine and radical-right ideology.

In 1969 the threat of "subversion" (the student rebellion and the widespread workers' protest of the "hot autumn") persuaded a number of ON leaders, headed by Rauti himself, that the time had come to reenter the MSI. There, after Michelini's death, Almirante had once again assumed the leadership and was giving the party a new impulse by means of a strategy addressed to both its radical and its respectable components ("bludgeon and double-breasted suit"). Rauti and his fellow prodigal sons were welcomed back into the party and rewarded by immediate cooptation in its Central Committee. It was now Rauti's turn to be accused by the ON's intransigents, together with Almirante, of duplicity, opportunism, and subservience to the system. The ON's radical wing, led by Clemente Graziani, loudly proclaimed the uncompromisingly revolutionary nature of the movement and rejected, as opportunistic and treacherous, the "MSI operation." Ostensibly they broke with Rauti (in fact political and personal links among the militants remained strong) and "pursued the combat" transforming the Center in Movimento Politico Ordine Nuovo. The MPON lived a militant, semiclandestine existence until 1973, when it was dissolved by the courts and went underground, turning decidedly toward terrorism within the framework of a strategy to be discussed later.

In the 1960s the ON boasted a membership of ten thousand, distributed all over the country. Most documents and records have been destroyed, seized, or are otherwise unavailable, so that evidence about day-to-day operations is quite scarce. The headquarters and the national directorate were in Rome. The provincial groups were run by "regents," while at the regional level there were "inspectorates" and "inspectors." Bases and sections of the ON existed in at least twenty-five cities, with strongholds in Sicily, Latium, and Venetia [Pisetta 1983, 752].

The MPON's organization was patterned after that of the center, whose structures it partly inherited. There was a national directorate and eight regional inspectorates (based in Latium, Campania, Sicily and Calabria, Lombardy and Piedmont, Venetia, Emily, Tuscany, and Umbria), which allowed the movement, like the Center, to be active throughout Italy. Proper offices existed in at least eleven cities, and in at least twenty others the MPON groups met in private houses. This raises some doubts with regard to the figure of only six hundred members quoted by the police, who are more reliable when they define their background "as almost entirely student and bourgeois" [Questura 1973, 35].

During its legal existence as both center and movement, the activity of the ON was aimed mostly in two directions: (a) ideological training of the members according to the principles of tradition; the stated purpose was to create a compact élite, an *Order* (the texts carry endless references to "an Order of warriors and believers," to "the ancient knightly Orders," and so on) made up of diehards "standing amid the ruins," for the defense of "the traditional remains that survived after the blast of the 1789 bubo spread plebeian pus all over the world";[5] and (b) carrying out militant street-fighting activity and establishing close links, in Italy and abroad, with other more or less conspiratorial groups and with the "separate corps" of the state, thereby becoming involved in a number of coup d'état attempts.

Ideology

The forms and contents of the ideological indoctrination will be examined first. The preceding chapter presented the main issues discussed in the radical Right (intellectual) milieu at large. The problem now is to locate the ON ideological specificity, and to see how the intellectual discourse operated in the day-to-day training of militants. That will also provide insight into the ON strategic outlook.

In both its incarnations the ON made use of relatively standard ideological instruments, namely, seminars, lectures, and courses (not to mention paramilitary camps and stages).[6] A significant press network supported them, beginning with Rauti's monthly *Ordine Nuovo*, later followed by *Noi Europa*[7] plus a welter of more irregular publications (such as *Bollettino Europa*, *Corrispondenza Europea*, *Europa Korrespondenz*) and local materials. Confederate groups and circles also produced their own militant documents, and a network of small presses issued the tracts and books of the milieu [Revelli 1983]. Altogether it was an impressive array of publications, some of them short-lived, that testify to the breadth and liveliness of ideological discourse in the milieu surrounding the ON.

The journal *Ordine Nuovo*, the official mouthpiece of the group, provides the orthodox view of the day-to-day ideological discourse. Ideologies usually contain a number of symbolic codes that provide representations of salient features of the world. Specifically, such codes define the community/collectivity with which the actors positively identify (the in-group), their value system, opponents, and the countervalues represented by the latter. One of the most significant features of the ON's symbolic codes is their abstract, disembodied nature and lack of concrete social referents, concerning both the in-group representations and political proposals. This is most evident when one compares them to other far-right groups, such as the French Front National or the British National Front, for whom both the positive referents (e.g., the nation and the "common people" for the former, the "British race" for the latter) and the enemies (nonwhite immigration, the establishment, and so on) have clear social connotations. The fact that in the case of the Front National they are defined in theoretical rather than precise terms allows the Front to direct its appeal across a wide social spectrum, and to claim representation for anyone opposing some aspect of the French privilege system [Veugelers 1991, 12].

Contrary to this, the ON rejected as possible sources of group identification all concrete social and political (naturalistic) entities, beginning with the nation and the people.[8] Their reference points were the Order, the élite of superior beings, and the cohort of heroes defending the values of tradition. The motive of heroism, especially, was incessantly propounded, by way of "exemplary portraits"—as the ideal toward which militants should strive, as the unabashed description of the ON's own combat against its multifarious enemies, and so forth.[9] Whatever representation was used, these were abstract, mythical communities/collectivities, devoid of any link with existing social groups or entities that the ON may claim to defend or represent.

The notion of race itself (another major positive referent) lacked the concrete historical specificity of other racist representations: it was the Aryan race, embodied by the warrior castes and the soldiers/heroes of a familiar list: the *Samurai*, the *Ksatryia*, the medieval knightly Orders. Even the most concrete referents (the fighting heroes of the war and postwar period) were deprived of any social consistency by way of mythical transfiguration: "The Aryan blood of the SS is still warm and so is that of the Kamikaze and of the Black Legionnaires and those of the Iron Guard who fell in the name of and for the eternal NEW ORDER" [Mangiante 1955, 8]. The gallery of latter-day *Landsknechten* included as well such *soldats perdus* as the French Foreign Legion, the *paras* of Indochina and Algeria (especially the rebel Secret Army Organization [OAS]), the Vietnam "Centurions," the colonial armies of countries like South Africa and Rhodesia—all of them desperate fighters in the last battle of the West.

The negative referents, on the other hand, comprised practically everything else in contemporary society. The modern world, where traditional values are cast away, where matter triumphs over spirit, and where merchants are honored over heroes, was, for the ON, one single great historical perversion. All its major institutions were rejected, beginning of course with those of the economic sphere, then capitalism and Marxism and the nations embodying them ("the Semitic merchant-society [the United States] and the Semitic-communistic one [the USSR]"). The attack was also carried to the political sphere, involving socialism, democracy, the parliamentary party system, the unions, and so on. The ON lumped all their enemies together in one single, scorching rejection, without bothering to analyze in detail either the actual workings of the system or any specific figure in it. The Jews were possibly the single major exception, being depicted as the incarnation of greedy mercantile spirit and disrupting, cosmopolitan features: "Unpleasant as the Jew's physical aspect may be, what we find especially revolting is his way of being"—followed by the ugliest anti-Semitic stereotypes. But I found no attempt to give concrete examples of the actual workings of such traits in any given historical circumstance or person.

On the other hand, one would look in vain, among the texts published by the ON, for any explicit discussions of strategy (with the exception of debates concerning the attitude to be held toward the MSI). Reference to remote, undisputable objectives (the organic state, a hierarchical society founded on spiritual values, the Order as the backbone of the leadership structure, and other Evolian topoi) combined with insistence on the "metapolitical" nature of the ON's struggle in order to facilitate the avoidance of this issue.[10] Silence on this matter should be compared to the later, very insistent and prolonged debates, carried out especially by the left-wing "revolutionary" groups, but not altogether absent among the right wing, concerning strategic alternatives for the seizure of power. Of course the coup d'état strategy, which, as we shall see, the ON pursued at the time, required precisely this kind of vagueness on immediate aims and targets.

Nevertheless, an overall view of the ON's symbolic universe is quite instructive. The construction of the positive reference community in abstract, mythical terms, without any explicit social linkages, points to a lack of interest in addressing identifiable social groups and ultimately in casting wide the net of recruitment. Even if most of the members were from the middle to upper social strata, the ON never claimed to defend or represent such strata, pretending that the kind of elitism they were advocating had to do with a spiritual, not a social form of superiority. (But of course the scorn for the lower classes was, in the milieu, taken for granted.) Mass proselytizing was thus eschewed: the group was relatively small and it intended to remain so. Such an attitude was confirmed by the comprehensive,

unqualified rejection of the contemporary world that the ideology emphasized. The image promoted was that of a tight, compact cohort, capable of withstanding the siege of a hostile environment and proud of its lonely vigil. Clearly this was a way to turn into a positive, identity-building resource the stigmatization and ghettoization that democratic polity inflicted on the Fascists ("Fascisti carogne, tornate nelle fogne" [Fascist rats, go back to your sewers]).

A consequence was the self-referential nature of the symbolic codes. The texts published in the journal were not really intended to argue or explain a political viewpoint, addressing a general audience in order to persuade it. Rather, their audience was highly selective and the texts were meant to confirm the beliefs of that audience and to display the doctrinal correctness of the authors, their possession of an adequate symbolic competence, that is, their ability to manipulate the codes of an esoteric doctrinal universe (typically rooted in J. Evola's thought).

This being the case, the ON ideologues showed little concern for matters like internal consistency or that the ideology should correspond to actual practice. Indeed, the number of inconsistencies in this symbolic world was quite high. To name a few, the ON rejected the nation as a nonvalue, yet it defined itself as a *national* revolutionary movement. The ON considered the United States the epitome of all that is negative about the modern world, and then allied themselves with the most pro-American sectors of the Armed Forces. They were elitist, knightly, aristocrats, but they rushed to organize and lead the populist, plebeian, mass mutiny of Reggio Calabria—a sequel of riots and outbursts of civil rebellion that set the Calabrian city afire in 1972, when it appeared it would lose the status of regional capital.[11]

All this colors the entire ideological universe of the ON with a curiously ambiguous shadow, providing the leadership with a wide latitude to maneuver and double-talk. This even included the possibility of striking alliances and coalitions with sectors of apparatuses of the very state that the revolutionaries in theory wanted to demolish.

The ambiguity can also be perceived in the use of Evola's doctrines. The ideological world both of the Center and the movement was unquestionably rooted in Evola's teachings, as the members emphatically acknowledged. It was rooted in the early "political" Evola, the one of *Rovine*: "The work of Ordine Nuovo from 1953 to the present has been nothing but an effort to transfer J. Evola's teachings to the political level. . . . [from him] we have drawn all our doctrinal and existential standpoints. . . . *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* can be considered the political gospel of national revolutionary youth." Indeed the tract from which these words are taken is really a summary and vulgarization of Evola's doctrine [Graziani 1973, 26, 27, 30].[12] The master, for his part, bestowed a lofty imprimatur: "The only

group that has held fast in its doctrine, without stooping to compromise, is the one that has taken the name New Order" [Evola 1972, 208]. Yet insistence on Evola's doctrine may have been overemphasized for defensive reasons: at the 1973 trial the ON was charged only with "reconstitution of the Fascist party," as envisaged by the "Scelba Act." More serious charges (i.e., "armed band" and "subversive association") were brought against the radical Right only later, when their use against left-wing extremism compelled the courts to enforce them against the Right as well. By stressing those points of Evola's doctrine that were most critical of Fascism, the MPON's defense was trying to establish its own nonfascist standpoint.

The trial document is interesting also for the picture it attempted to portray of the ON as a strong, virile, militant, and even revolutionary movement, but a respectable one. It went so far as claiming to admit violence only in self-defense [*sic*].[13] In fact at this stage the ON's warriors were not prepared to talk openly of armed combat, of attacking the state, and of other targets that later revolutionary seasons made commonplace. Of course this was in part courtroom strategy. But there was indeed some genuine ambivalence in these upholders of a "strong state": They did not yet see the state as their enemy, yet at the same time they were ready to overthrow it. This ambivalence may have been the result of Evola's intimation to salvage "even a state as empty as this one." At least as important were the close links between radical-right groups and state agencies that offered them support, cover, and protection. This turns our focus to the second aspect of the ON's work, namely, militant activity.

Action: The International Network

A full reconstruction of the ON's militant activities is difficult because through most of its history the group mixed legal and illegal initiatives, the latter ranging from street violence to conspiracy to terrorism. The militants themselves admitted that, at several times during its history, the movement was organized on two levels: the first was cultural and political and operated above ground, through cultural circles; the other was military and operated clandestinely.[14]

The cultural activities are obviously more easily documented. They consisted largely in publishing and promoting the movement's literature and in carrying out a busy agenda of public lectures, meetings, conferences, and reunions in schools, universities, and political venues, where the ON acted alone or in cooperation with kindred units, ranging from FUAN to RSI veterans to representatives of other like-minded European groups.

Not all such activities remained purely cultural, and this brings up a crucial dimension. As is well known, after the war neofascist organizations

were linked by a more or less secret network that covered most of Europe and some areas in the United States.[15] This is to be seen from the perspective of the "nation Europe" concept, a central theme of neofascist ideology. The theme went back to the rhetoric of historical Fascism, where it was linked to the claim that Fascism was the only force capable of rescuing Europe from its otherwise irreparable decadence, worsened by the threat of the twin enemies—Americanism and Bolshevism [Zunino 1985, 322ff., 131ff.]. A number of pan-European initiatives were promoted both during the regime [Griffin 1991b, 9ff.; Ledeen 1972] and in the last years of the war, when many leaders raised the slogan of a "new order" based on the international solidarity of fascist European nations [Linz 1976, 33]. At a time when traditional nationalism was generally held in disrepute as a major cause of the most murderous war in history, neo-Fascists eagerly sought to replace it with the "nation Europe" theme. As expressed in the works of ON member and Evola's disciple Adriano Romualdi, one of the most influential ideologues of the far Right, the attempt was made to overcome nineteenth-century nationalism in the perspective of a new concept, envisaging a powerful, armed, autonomous Europe (one, that is, not dependent on NATO for its own defense and hence endowed with and controlling its own atomic weapons), run by a strong government, nonconstrained by the paralyzing trappings of democracy [Romualdi 1973 (esp.), 1976, 1984].[16]

The "Fascist International," as it was sometimes called, was also motivated by a very practical matter, the need for self-help among like-minded groups and parties representing the regimes vanquished by democracy. This originally was a most urgent matter: the first embryos of the "Fascist International" were the underground networks that helped Nazi and fascist war criminals escape justice.[17] A number of their promoters (e.g., Otto Skorzeny and Leon Degrelle[18]) were to play an important role in neofascist developments for most of the postwar period. Another enduring feature was the interplay of underground, official, and semiofficial activities.

Within this perspective, an important confederate of the ON was the Nouvel Ordre Européen [New European Order], or NOE, founded in Zurich in 1951. It had a three-point program: defense of the European race against both the "Stalinist mongol state" and "Negroid" or "Judeo-American" capitalism; social justice; and European unity ("indispensable for the defense of the race"). Biological racism was the cornerstone of its ideology. Pino Rauti was a member of the NOE, together with Otto Skorzeny and Leon Degrelle.[19] The real importance of the NOE did not lie within its own initiatives but with the fact that it served as a convenient umbrella under which "extremists affiliated with paramilitary groups from various nations could meet to plot subversive, violent actions aimed at undermining democratic regimes"—besides engaging in the traffic of arms [Bale 1994, 105, 107].

Even more important from this viewpoint was probably Jeune Europe [Young Europe], founded in 1962 as a clandestine network of localized communist-style cells. It was led by Jean Thiriart, with funds from the Belgian Union Minière plus Portuguese and German sources. Thiriart's figure is intriguing, as he was one of the first European radical-right activists and intellectuals to express open sympathies for the radical Left (Maoism). But that came quite late in a checkered career that had started out on the Left (Jeune Garde Socialiste) before the war, but quickly moved on to nationalism and collaboration with the Nazis, for which Thiriart was later sentenced. In the fifties he took over an ultranationalist, procolonial group that was renamed Mouvement d'Action Civique [Civic Action Movement, or MAC] and was involved in violent actions supporting the OAS and the Katangese secessionist movement of Moise Tshombé. MAC had acquired a number of overtly fascist trappings and features (e.g., blue shirts and celtic crosses), besides hoarding weapons and carrying out paramilitary camps and exercises. It drew funds from the Union Minière and "material assistance" from the Portuguese secret police. Besides these, the MAC's extensive international contacts included Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National pour l'Algerie Française, the John Birch Society in the United States, and, most important, the OAS, for which it became the "principal agent" in Belgium (in the process acquiring a deep understanding of the "revolutionary war" doctrine, which will be discussed later in this book) [Bale 1994, 108–11]. In 1962 Thiriart renamed his organization Jeune Europe (JE) in order to underline both its growing radicalism and its pan-European orientation (as opposed to the old MAC's Belgian nationalism), with local branches throughout the world. Ordine Nuovo was its official Italian correspondent.[20] Solidarity with the OAS, for which ON organized public demonstrations and practical support like the acquisition of weapons, was obviously a common bond between the two groups.[21]

In the sixties Thiriart's "third-position" stand ("neither Moscow nor Washington") took on an increasingly leftist posture, which led him (after JE's dissolution and incorporation of what was left of it into the newly founded Parti Communautarie Européen [European Communitarian Party]) to urge an alliance with Communist China so as to enable Europe to "settle accounts with America and its accomplices from Moscow" [Thiriart 1964, 29–30]. This was followed by the establishment of tangible links with the People's Republic of China, which included an exchange of information with the Chinese Secret Service about NATO installations [Bale 1994, 120]. After a period of silence, Thiriart resurfaced in the 1980s with yet another sharp change in his course: he expressed praise for the Soviet KGB over both the Catholic Church and the Polish Solidarity and sympathy for the left-wing terrorist groups, such as the Cellules Comunistes Combattantes (Communist Combat Cells, or CCC), Libya's Colonel

Qáddáfi and other Third-World, anti-American regimes. He urged the promotion of joint ventures with all these groups. That Western security agencies, which had closely followed Thiriart's previous activities, seemed to ignore his latest procommunist developments has raised the suspicion that the latter may in fact have been attempts to infiltrate the left-wing milieu and launch provocations. The suspicion has not yet been substantiated by real evidence. On the other hand it seems certain that JE played an important role in transmitting to neofascist activists throughout Europe various unconventional warfare techniques, specifically those linked to the French counterinsurgency doctrines and methods ("revolutionary war") [Bale 1994, 123].

But the real master at this trade was Aginter Press, an important source of the thinking beyond the Italian "strategy of tension," to be discussed in the next chapters. It was founded and led by Yves Guillou, alias "Ralf Guérin-Sérac," who, with the help of other OAS veterans, set it up in Portugal ostensibly as a press agency, although it was in fact a counterinsurgency, counterguerrilla center.[22] He had the support of the CIA, of the paramilitary Portuguese Legion, and especially of PIDE, the feared Portuguese secret police, which supposedly financed Aginter Press at the tune of two million escudos per month.[23] Aginter Press was a sizable operation. Between 1962 and 1965 it organized and established an important network of informers linked, through PIDE, to the CIA and to the security services of such countries as West Germany, Spain, Greece, and South Africa. By the end of the sixties "Guérin-Sérac had a network of informers equal to, if not better than, that of the secret service of a medium-sized country" [Lutiis 1991, 166]. It also had a unit specialized in recruiting and training mercenaries, and a strategic center for coordinating "subversion and intoxication operations" [Bale 1994, 134]. From 1966 to 1969 it operated in Africa against anticolonial (especially anti-Portuguese) movements; thereafter it turned its attention to Latin America[24] and Europe, including Italy (it even broadcast in Italian within the "Voix de l'Occident," a foreign program of Radio Portugal). Also in operation was an "international action organization" called Ordre et Tradition, which included a clandestine, paramilitary branch, specializing in provocation and infiltration, named OACI (Organization Armée contre le Communisme International). OACI organized training courses in which "theoretical" subjects, such as security, propaganda, covert operations, alibis, pretexts, went together with "practical" topics like sabotage and basic ideas in the use of explosives [Lutiis 1991, 168]. The notions it disseminated included a terrorism doctrine that distinguished between selective and indiscriminate terrorism, and urged a "logical progression" of terrorist acts (from the elimination of single individuals to that of important officials to general sabotage acts), which bears a striking resemblance to the texts of later radical-right Italian terrorists.[25]

It also urged the infiltration of pro-Chinese organizations and put its own recommendation into practice by using as a cover the Parti Communiste Suisse/Marxiste-Leniniste (PCS/ML). The latter, with support from the Chinese Embassy, hired as correspondents for its paper, *L'Etincelle*, Aginter personnel, who could thus penetrate "liberated territory" in Africa, as well as infiltrate the Portuguese opposition in Europe.[26] The Aginter man in charge of this operation was Sérac's close associate, Robert Leroy, who was to play a role in Italian matters.[27]

It should be clear then that Aginter Press acted as a rallying center with other neofascist organizations, including Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale; the names of both Pino Rauti and Guido Giannettini were among those of Aginter's correspondents found in the PIDE's files [Lutiis 1991, 166].

This is the international background for the ON's conspiratorial and violent activities. These are obviously difficult to document. The protagonists are understandably reticent and no comprehensive investigation was carried out by the state. As indicated above, at the 1973 trial the ON was charged only with "reconstitution of the Fascist Party" and the prosecution did not really engage in a systematic analysis of the group's violent activities. Thus, for example, it is not clear when the bifurcation between the cultural and the clandestine activity took place, nor its extension (whether, that is, it involved all ON sections or only some). Some "case studies" can be reconstrued on the basis of the investigations on specific ON units and episodes like that on the Udine group which carried out the 1972 massacre at Peteano, or the Tuscan groups involved in the train bombings in 1974–75. These will be discussed below. The oft-quoted dossier of Rome's police, although taking into account only the 1970–73 period, lists thirteen pages of crimes, felonies, and offenses committed by ON's militants and describes the movement's overall activity as "principally violence, carried out both as provocation and retaliation against political enemies, together with aggressions against the law-enforcement agencies and street unrest" [Questura 1973, 35–48].

In other words there can be little doubt that throughout its history and in both its incarnations, as the Center and as a movement, the ON was one of the major protagonists of postwar political violence in Italy. Together with the AN and other neofascist units it was in the first rank in most episodes of *squadrismo* (street violence) and anti-Semitism[28] of the period. One of the most visible instances was the leading role that the ON took, again in the company of the AN, in the 1972 "revolt" of Reggio Calabria, mentioned above.

A volume of activities of this amplitude and length in time, even if one considers only the "legal" period (1956–73) could not be carried out without support from institutional and other sources. These are difficult to prove.

Evidence of funding is scarce. Rome's police report mentions only the members' dues and occasional gifts from supporters [Questura 1973, 37]. The 1973 ON trial, by admission of the court's president, showed no concern for the matter [Battaglini 1973, 38]. Other investigations brought to light ambiguous connections, most prominent being those with the intelligence services and with reactionary business sources. In the early 1960s SIFAR[29] was shown to have subsidized, together with other right-wing organizations, Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale [Zangrandi 1958, 77]. Its successor, SID, continued SIFAR's practice of financing the two groups and collaborating with them [Viglietta 1986, 55]. Bits of evidence that have surfaced elsewhere point to other unclear financial channels, such as business funds[30] and especially sources linked to the "Fascist International" and its sponsors, like the Belgian Union Minière [Bale 1994, 149]. This allegedly also included participation in the international traffic of weapons.[31]

Links with Intelligence were not limited to funding. Some of the most disquieting examples will be discussed in the next chapters, especially in connection with the Piazza Fontana massacre. Suffice it to say here that investigations revealed that, as early as 1966, "the Rauti-Giannettini group had been installed within the SID, on referral from the General Staff."[32] Rauti was at least a "contact," if not a regular informer, for the head of SID [Alessandrini 1974b, 25, 27].

All this should not be taken to mean that the ON was nothing but a front for the intelligence services and other obscure forces operating in Italy and elsewhere. Against such an interpretation are the sheer volume of the group's activities, the extension of its press network, the liveliness and to a certain degree the quality of its intellectual discourse. These factors point to a significant degree of autonomy in the group's initiatives, and certainly a large number of militants were unaware of any links with the secret services. On the other hand the ambiguities, or at least the lack of specificity in the ON's ideology and strategic orientations, together with the obvious sympathy that sectors of the state were showing toward the radical Right, took much stigma away from the idea of any connection between a self-styled revolutionary group and the state apparatuses.[33]

Avanguardia Nazionale

The other historic group of the revolutionary Right was Avanguardia Nazionale, founded in December 1959 as Avanguardia Nazionale Giovanile by a group of ON members led by Stefano Delle Chiaie, ostensibly self-dissolved in 1965 and then founded anew in 1970. Tried and sentenced for "reconstitution of the Fascist Party," it was finally dissolved in 1976.[34]

The AN, like the ON, provided an *interpretatio autentica* of its own

political conceptions, in the form of a handbook for militants, preceded by a short autobiographical reconstruction of the group's history, which we will take as our point of departure here [*La lotta politica* n.d.]. According to this document, the AN was created, much in the same fashion as the ON, in order to contrast the "sterile and purely nostalgic action" of the national parties. Faced with "the provocations of the subversives" and the "criminalization of the press," which painted them as a gang of thugs viscerally given to violence, the AN received little help from the official Right which, in front of the communist threat, could think of nothing more significant than opposing the center-left governments.

Hence, in 1965, the decision was taken to dissolve the AN—a tactical stratagem, since the leadership was committed to "keep the milieu together for the inevitable future struggles" [*La lotta politica* n.d.].[35] Some of the most notorious militants disappeared from sight in order to perform a sort of political *maquillage*; others went back to the MSI, where they obtained important jobs; still others took on more unexpected (and less credible) political cloaks. The occasion for open resurrection came at the end of the sixties, thanks to the student movement, which the "national youth" felt it must confront, without, however, joining ranks with a cryptocommunist establishment: "At this point we decided to bring to life anew Avanguardia Nazionale" [*La lotta politica* n.d., 4].

The headquarters of the organization and its national directorate were in Rome, whereas local chapters, sections, and informal bases were scattered in about thirty other cities throughout the country.[36] The 1973 police report, quoted with regard to the ON, assessed the AN's dimensions at around five hundred members. On the grounds of the movement's nationwide spread alone, this appears to be a gross underestimation.[37] The report's description of the AN's social composition as student-bourgeois is certainly more accurate [Questura 1973, 5]. Predictably, not much information is available on financial sources. The 1976 trial ignored the matter entirely; the 1973 police report mentions only the contributions of the members, "many of whom belonged to affluent bourgeois families" [Questura 1973, 6]. In fact evidence has been brought up of checks from business sources, both on a regular monthly basis and for specific activities (e.g., in order to support training camps) [*La strage di stato* 1970, 51, 80]. The AN also seems to have been involved in the traffic of weapons [Barbieri 1976, 118]. A racket against tank stations in Rome has also been mentioned as a possible source of money for the group [*La strage di stato* 1970, 38].

No press network comparable to the one supporting the ON surrounded the AN.[38] This corresponded to a level of ideological-cultural discussion much more uncouth and primitive than in the case of the ON. The main "theoretical" document was written in an inferior, slipshod style, crammed with muddled arguments and high-sounding platitudes. It envisaged a to-

talitarian, organic, corporatist state, free from all elements threatening its solidarity—that is, parties, unions, class struggle. It was to be grounded on the idea of "Nation," predictably one not to be limited to Italy but embracing Europe: "in order to create, by means of respect and defense of the race's eternal values, a granitic Nation, . . . one able to bring youth back to the old continent, throwing it boldly towards the mastery of its own Destiny" [*La lotta politica* n.d., 36].

Altogether, the AN's was a rather poor ideological universe, stringing together the stalest commonplaces of the Right's armory without ever a suspicion of original revision. If anything specific appears in this document, it is a feature that only connects it to the conceptually poorest of the right-wing groups, like the American Right, namely, the so-called conspiracy theory [Bell 1963; Hofstadter 1967; Lipset and Raab 1970]. According to this theory, red subversion lies in wait at every step, each one of its actions implementing an obscure and mysterious threat: "In every city they created a network of apartments, which were called 'communes.'" Every instance of (asserted) disruption of contemporary society goes back to the conscious and purposeful action of the hidden centers of evil. The youth rebellion of 1968, born as a spontaneous protest, became "increasingly more controlled by Marxism's centers of action" [*La lotta politica* n.d., 41], which dominated the trade unions, not allowing even the countryside to be safe: "subversion knows . . . the instinctive hostility of its natural enemies, those who live in the country": hence the migrations to the industrial cities was seen as implementing the communist need to have available "easily organizable and already potentially discontent masses" [61].

The AN's lack of concern with theoretical issues was confirmed by the organization's lack of "cultural" or ideological initiatives, such as conferences or doctrinal courses. These were replaced by practical training sessions, for example, on the making of explosives (on some occasions the instructors were OAS "experts") [Salvini 1995, 359]. This surely was a useful skill for the militants: at least fifteen "official" bombings, according to a conservative estimate, were carried out between 1962 and 1967 by the AN, to which about twenty unofficial ones should be added. For these deeds eleven militants were blandly sentenced [*La strage di stato* 1970, 51, 60].[39]

The organization enforced strict discipline and rigid hierarchy. Training and practice sessions took place in the movement-controlled gymnasiums. Paramilitary camps and stages were carried out through the years in different locations [Sentenza AN 1975, 4–12]. One of them, at Pian di Rascino in the Apennines at the end of May 1974, turned into a pitched battle with the police, during which one AN activist was shot dead.[40]

Indeed the AN was probably the main carrier of neofascist squadrism in the sixties. Its orientation was basically that of an action squad, brutal in

words and deeds, as its militant statements proudly boasted: "Placing a bomb in front of an empty PCI local is a stupid thing to do. We are for man-to-man combat. Before setting out for an expedition our men are morally [*sic*] trained to smash the bones even of somebody who kneels down and weeps [1969 leaflet, quoted in Pansa 1971, 159].

In the first half of the sixties, the favorite (but not only) battleground was Rome's university, where, together with its confederates (ON, Caravella) the AN strong-armed, harassed, and intimidated students and professors. Against its countless acts of violence, the other students filed in more than 120 reports to the public authorities, *none of which was acted on* [Mariotti and Scialoja 1975, 55]. The police were tolerant, in some cases even conniving with the neo-Fascists.[41]

A sensational episode, a veritable turning point, occurred on 27 April 1966 (when, ostensibly, Avanguardia was not in existence). In the course of extremely violent clashes, a student savagely beaten by Delle Chiaie's thugs fell from a wall and was killed. A general mobilization of students and democratic faculty ensued, leading to the occupation of several departments. The neo-Fascists counterattacked: on May 2 three hundred squadrists, led by two MSI deputies, came to the help of the AN comrades, storming the Law Department. By now the antifascist students had organized and were able to resist; for the first time the police as well took action against the Right. At the following student-body elections, Caravella, the AN confederate group, lost the majority.

This may be considered the beginning of the student movement in Rome, spelling the neo-Fascists' loss of their traditional fief. One last episode should be mentioned in this connection, as proof of the enduring link between the extraparliamentary groups and the MSI, in spite of the feigned hostility between them. On 15 March 1968, a "punitive expedition" of about two hundred squadrists *coming from all over Italy*, headed by three first-rank MSI leaders (G. Almirante, G. Caradonna, and F. Turchi), stormed the Fine Arts Department. The attack was fought off by the antifascist students, and the squadrists were saved by the police [Barbieri 1976, 125].[42]

Defeated in the open field, with their political space heavily reduced by the student movement, the AN concentrated on a different strategy: provocation and infiltration in left-wing groupuscules. Such activities are to be placed in the framework of the AN's contacts with the international centers of right-wing subversion, beginning with Aginter Press, and with turbid sectors of the Italian Intelligence, like the redoubtable Ufficio Affari Riservati (Office for Special Affairs, or UAR) of the Ministry of the Interior.

An eloquent early instance of such activities was the so-called Chinese Posters Operation, which only recently came to light [Salvini 1995, 355 ff.]. Around the mid-sixties in many Italian towns posters were affixed,

signed by nonexistent ultra-left groups, extolling the Chinese Revolution and attacking the PCI's "sell-out" to bourgeois interests. The intent was to frighten public opinion with the apparent proliferation of extreme-left groups and to press the PCI to radicalize its policies in order to prevent a challenge on the Left. The operation was carried out by AN militants under UAR cover (AN militants caught in the act were immediately released) and under the sponsorship of Robert Leroy, who boasted of it in a 1974 imprudent interview that Delle Chiaie strongly resented [Salvini 1995, 356–59].

But the real blooming of these techniques took place after a supposed student excursion to the Colonels' Greece in the spring of 1968 [see below]. The excursion, sponsored by the association of the Greek students in Italy (ESESI), was headed by P. Rauti, S. Delle Chiaie, and L. Facchinetti (leader of the radical group Europa Civiltà). Its participants (the whole ON and AN leadership, plus a few dozen militants), besides being feted and entertained by the heads of the friendly regime, were exposed to crash courses in those techniques of infiltration and subversion that had been successfully employed in Greece the year before. On their return, the "students" devoted themselves to the systematic implementation of these techniques. On many occasions AN activists, disguised as leftists, mixed with demonstrating students, triggering off the most provocative actions. (In one instance Delle Chiaie and his stalwarts went so far as to join a demonstration protesting President Richard Nixon's visit to Rome, wearing the armbands of the Red Guards) [*La strage di stato* 1970, 59].[43] Simultaneously, a surprisingly high number of neo-Fascists "converted" to the opposite creed and joined left-wing groups, prodding them to take up the most reckless initiatives.[44]

Provocation and infiltration were not the only activities in which the AN engaged in this period. Especially after the group's official refoundation in 1970, the volume of its initiatives was remarkably high. The AN was in the front rank in the Reggio Calabria "revolt": most urban guerrilla acts on that occasion seem to have been led and coordinated by AN leaders, who proudly took credit for them [*La lotta politica* n.d., 2]. This was facilitated by the fact that a very strong AN group, led by an aristocratic landowner, existed in Reggio, and for several years carried out attacks and violent activities [Salvini 1995, 366ff.]. The AN participation in the whole National Front adventure, culminating in the aborted Borghese coup, will be discussed in chapter 6.

At this point even the police became aware of the AN's existence and carried out the inquiry on which the oft-quoted 1973 report is based. Although ignoring the group's most serious offenses, it still comprises a fifteen-page list of charges against AN members for crimes and misdemeanors ranging from arson to attempted massacre [Questura 1973, 10–24].

Searches by warrant in the members' houses systematically uncovered all kinds of weapons [Sentenza AN 1975, 15]. But it was not until 1976 that the AN was brought to trial, and even then for the usual, bland charge of "reconstitution of the Fascist Party." The leaders drew mild terms, but the Ministry of the Interior ordered the AN's dissolution. Henceforth it went underground.

4

The Strategy of Tension: Background and Precedents

The "Revolutionary War"

In April 1963 one of Ordine Nuovo's leaders, Clemente Graziani, a veteran of the FAR exploits [see chapter 1] and the future head of the MPON, published an essay in the movement's journal entitled "La Guerra Rivoluzionaria" (Revolutionary War), which carried a number of reflections on the new forms of nonorthodox warfare induced by the Nuclear Age [Graziani 1963].

The paper was a straightforward and explicit replica (in summary) of the Revolutionary War doctrine mentioned in the previous chapter. The doctrine was originally developed by French military intellectuals shocked by the manner in which materially inferior forces (the Viet Minh, the Algerian FLN) had been able to defeat superior and more brilliant armies like the French [Galli 1962; Paret 1964]. It was implemented by the OAS and later spread in the radical-right circles by such units as Aginter Press. The gist of the argument was that atomic weapons made an all-out confrontation between the blocs impossible, but that communism had not given up its global aim of world conquest; it was merely carrying it out without recourse to orthodox warfare, as its objective was the mastery over the souls of men before the conquest of territories. This required more devious and indirect means, like propaganda, infiltration, subversion, and terrorism.

The West had to realize that it lived in a constant condition of war, one that could be won only by mastering the enemy's techniques and implementing them against their inventors. If this implied violating some ethical rules of conventional warfare, like those prohibiting the use of torture or terrorism, so be it:[1] ethical problems should not overly concern the ON militants, who, as true Evolian disciples, placed themselves above bourgeois morals (the paper was interspersed with quotations from Evola advocating, after Jünger, *total mobilization*) [Graziani 1963, 26–27].

These were not (only) the ideas of a radical-right militant, the leader of an extraparliamentary combat group. The same ideas (possibly pruned of some, although by far not all, Evolian overtones) were entertained by important and "respectable" sectors of the Italian ruling groups, including a number of the highest state authorities, sections of the army, of the judi-

ciary, of the business and financial community. They perceived any opening up of the social and political situation to the lower classes as a part of the communist conspiracy and were not averse to the use of authoritarian, even violent means in order to stop it.

To understand this attitude, a few words on the general political and economic conditions of the period are appropriate.

The Political and Economic Background

The 1951–61 decade had been, for Italy, a period of accelerated social and economic transformation. Spurred by a set of favorable circumstances (a sustained international demand for durable commodities; a vast reserve of cheap labor, especially from the South; the availability of new, easily importable technologies; and cheap energy), the economic system went through a phase of powerful development, which brought the Italian GNP to an average growth rate of 6 percent per year (the "economic miracle"). Together with an absolutely unprecedented transformation and modernization of the economic structure, this brought about the greatest social revolution Italy had known for centuries. "It caused the collapse of the agrarian block, the dissolution of the peasant world and civilization, the mass migration of southern peasants either abroad or in the big cities, mostly in the North and Center, but also in the South. (It involved about 15 million people in a population at the time of about 50 million [Gambi 1975, 381].) A new social formation, based on the urban middle classes, came into being" [Ruffolo 1979, 224].[2]

Capitalist interests could run these transformations practically unhindered, thanks to the social peace provided by *centrismo*, the dominant political formula, especially incarnated by the DC. The exclusion from government of the Left (PCI and PSI) practically implied "the total exclusion of the workers' movement from participation in power, as a class, as an industrial actor, as a political force." In exchange, the DC obtained a growing amount of financial resources to be used for cliental purposes and for an increased control over the public sector of the economy [Ruffolo 1979, 225–26].

By the end of the fifties *centrismo* was worn out. Its ossified interest system made it impossible to modernize the archaic state apparatuses and public institutions, thereby heavily reducing the system's efficiency while the marginalization of the workers undermined its legitimacy (together, the center parties never collected more than 50 percent of the votes). The system of *centrismo* also made it difficult to manage the social turmoil caused by the dynamics of change. After several years of sharp contrast within the center parties, dissatisfaction with this state of affairs led, in the early sixties, to the constitution of governments "opening to the Left," that is, in-

cluding the Socialists (PSI). The purpose was to bring a party into governmental coalitions that was closer to the working classes (in the process severing its ties with the Communists), thereby broadening political consensus, in order to carry out the much-needed and long-postponed structural reforms [Mammarella 1964, 315 ff.; Ginsborg 1990, 254 ff.].

The experiment was taking place in a period of sustained domestic and international economic growth and was further advantaged by the thawing of the cold war and the beginning of the détente era among the superpowers. Nevertheless, very little of the reform program was achieved. Moderates and conservatives led by Confindustria, the extremely powerful, archconservative industrialists' organization, saw it as a major threat, the Trojan horse that would open the gates to the bolshevik takeover, and mobilized all their resources in order to hinder it. Even the relatively harmless establishment of regional autonomy (prescribed by the 1948 Constitution, but not yet implemented) was seen as harboring the risk to hand to the Communists chunks of the national territory (and indeed the regions were not established until 1971). "Looking back after ten years of lacklustre coalitions involving Socialists, it is difficult to imagine the panic inspired in some circles by the notion of Pietro Nenni's Socialists entering the cabinet, but the prospect at the time was regarded as catastrophic" [Collin 1976, 17]. Lest this picture of moderate to reactionary groups appear as a caricature,[3] it should be considered that for the constellation of interests that Arno J. Mayer has aptly called the upper cartel of anxiety, "the danger of revolution and the threat to the upper strata may never reach critical proportions. What matters, however, is that these strata are predisposed to perceive this peril as serious, pressing and protean" [Mayer 1971, 70]. And the interdiction power of these groups was so effective that it prevented Italy from having a socialist head of government until 1983—the last country in Europe to do so and long after Spain and Greece (what is more, long after Italian socialism had lost its reformist capacities).

A crucial instrument employed to hinder the advance of the Left was the so-called strategy of tension, which, as will be seen, was really deployed between the end of the sixties and the mid-seventies. In the mid-sixties, however, a number of background developments took place, concerning both the strategy's intellectual foundations and the "warming up" of some protagonists (chiefly, the Intelligence Service), which will be briefly discussed now in order to make later events comprehensible.

The Intellectual Background: A High-Level Conference

In the spring of 1965, the "Luigi Pollio Institute for Strategic Affairs," sponsored by the Defense Chiefs of Staff, organized a conference in Rome on the Revolutionary War, the proceedings of which were later published

with the eloquent subtitle "The Third-World Conflict Is Already Here" [Beltrametti 1965c].

The conference was attended by a select number of senior officers of the armed forces and the judiciary, by politicians, businessmen, and radical-right figures like Pino Rauti and Guido Giannettini,[4] plus a number of invited "university students" led by none other than Stefano Delle Chiaie.

The rationale behind the conference, frankly stated during the meeting, was even more explicitly formulated later on by its organizer, E. Beltrametti, an extreme-right journalist who was also a close collaborator of the Defense Chief of Staff (i.e., the highest military authority of the land).[5] At the origin of the conference Beltrametti placed the proddings deriving from the serious concerns of "official political milieus even at the highest levels" (i.e., the president of the Republic Antonio Segni whose role is described below), lest governmental politics should slide too far toward communism, as an effect of center-left coalitions [Beltrametti 1971, 10]. The announced regions were perceived as a way "to fragment the state and to give birth, in some areas, to independent [communist-controlled] pseudo-Republics" [Beltrametti 1975, 46]. "Responsible circles" were firmly convinced that the Communist Party, under a democratic cloak, was waging in Italy as elsewhere a veritable nonorthodox war. This led to the "obvious conclusion that, in order to counter communism even on the domestic front it was necessary to call in the technical organ in charge of defense and security, i.e., the armed forces." These concerns were obviously shared by the senior echelons of the armed forces [Beltrametti 1971, 10].

Intellectually the Pollio conference did not add much to the Revolutionary War doctrine. What was peculiar to it, however, was the obsessive, paranoiac tone of its anticommunism. The Communists were depicted as a sinister octopus with evil intents, infiltrating all sections of society, including the judiciary and the Church. Even their most innocent-looking actions were in fact part of a conscious, coordinated, worldwide conspiracy, one ruthlessly carried out with total disregard for all rules of civilized existence; since "the Communists . . . share nothing in common with the rest of mankind, they are some sort of an alien presence, like the extraterrestrial races of science fiction. It would be childish to believe that a modus vivendi can be established with them [as would any] humanitarian delusions [be] about [the kind of war we are engaged in]" [De Boccard 1965, 25, 48].

This paved the way for lengthy reiterations of the major tenets of the doctrine. The Revolutionary War could be fought only by using the same weapons used by the enemy, thus requiring that nonconventional methods be employed. This might raise some scruples in the consciences of Democrats, but such scruples should be overcome, it was thought, considering the nature of the enemy. The example of the French officers who in Algeria were "compelled" to use torture was repeatedly mentioned.[6]

The analysis led to a number of strategic prescriptions. First came the need to make citizens aware of the state of war brought about by the Communists, hence the attribution to civilians of a major militant role in supporting the armed forces: without such support no military had a chance of victory in a nonorthodox war. The point was a crucial one, repeatedly underlined at the conference. Since a de facto war was already being staged by the Communists, "radicalizing the struggle is the most correct way to turn the fight to our advantage." This implied the creation of "permanent self-defense groups, i.e., groups . . . that should not hesitate to fight under the least orthodox conditions with whatever energy and ruthlessness was necessary" [Beltrametti 1965b, 74–75]. The suggestion, widely shared [e.g., Accame 1965, 136] included the idea of drawing up lists of loyal citizens ("mobilization lists") who might join the self-defense groups. And of course subversive organizations should be infiltrated [Beltrametti 1971, 152]—a prescription destined to a most important future. Close civil-military cooperation should lead to the establishment of a joint or parallel General Staff, composed of military and civilian personnel. Some proposals went so far as to envisage a three-tier organization: "passive resistance" and "awareness groups" acting at the ground level; above them, a tier of "shock troops," composed of veterans, members of athletic groups, *Wehrgruppe*, and youth groups (obviously of the Right); and on top a rigorously selected, secret leadership with the task of coordinating the strategies of infiltration, counterterror, provocation, and preventive defense [Filippani and Ronconi 1965, 244–45].

The Pollio conference is significant for a number of reasons. It was one of the few public, official gatherings of a highly representative sample of those forces whose aversion to current political developments in Italy went so far as to call for military intervention. In other words, this call was not simply a figment of left-wing paranoia but rather an explicit, openly stated hypothesis, seriously assessed and evaluated in a number of "responsible milieus." This hypothesis was most clearly stated by Beltrametti: "There is general agreement on at least one point, that things must change. Hence it is almost natural to think of a military intervention in political matters. An intervention desired by many, feared by others, talked about by all, and to which perhaps (but many would omit that 'perhaps') even some people in government are presently giving serious thought" [1975, 85]. But the military missed its chance for lack of determination, leadership, and efficiency.

At least as alarming is another issue, also brought up by the conference, that the strategic thinking of the radical Right and that of the upper-echelon military proved to be extremely close. A 1964 document on nonorthodox warfare that was prepared by the Intelligence Service (SIFAR) and declassified only in 1990 dealt with the same topics as the essay by

Clemente Graziani and many of the Pollio papers, using the same conceptual framework and occasionally the same words [Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate, Sezione S.M. *La Guerra non Ortodossa*, 1964 (later SID/03119/71)].[7]

All this should not be surprising when one considers the ideological outlook at the highest level of the armed forces: "The head of the General Staff was surrounded by a score of journalists with a fascist background, such as G. Giannettini, P. Rauti, E. Beltrametti, G. Finaldi, E. De Boccard, etc. They all shared a military culture whose reference points were the élitist ideology of late Nazism, the heroic deeds of the Secret Army Organization, and Algiers's rebel generals" [Lutiis 1991, 72]. The Chief of Staff, General G. Aloja, representing the most extremely pro-American wing of the armed forces, in true Revolutionary War fashion, was convinced that in future wars the "ideological texture" of the soldiers would be crucial; hence he advocated antiguerrilla training for them, and the establishment of veritable psychological warfare schools.

This helps us to understand an episode that would otherwise defy credibility. In 1966, within the framework of an internecine struggle among top-ranking generals, Aloja sponsored the publication of a libelous tract, denouncing communist infiltration in the armed forces. The initiative was suggested and planned by Beltrametti; the tract's authors, hidden beneath a pseudonym ("Flavio Messalla") were Pino Rauti and Guido Giannettini. The booklet was distributed to officers through ON channels. When Aloja realized that the text might be counterproductive to his aims, Rauti withdrew it from circulation, receiving a $1,500 indemnity from the Service's funds [Alessandrini 1974b, 22–27].[8] It is probably safe to say that nowhere else in the West would the highest military authority of a democratic state use as ghostwriters a self-avowed neo-Nazi (Giannettini) and the founder and leader of an extraparliamentary group that had split from the official neofascist party because it considered its fascism too tame (Rauti).

According to many reports, the military intervention advocated by the Pollio conference had come close to being realized a year earlier with the so-called Plan Solo, to which we now turn our attention.

A Precedent: "Plan Solo"

On 15 July 1964, as part of the presidential consultations during an especially difficult ministerial crisis, the president of the Republic, Antonio Segni (DC), summoned the head of the carabinieri, General Giovanni de Lorenzo. The unusual step caused much sensation, particularly because on the previous day negotiations between the four parties of the would-be coalition had broken down.

Political tension was acute. The year 1963 had seen the beginning of

economic difficulties after the boom of the previous years. Wage increases owing to a labor shortage in the industrial areas (for the first time ever) had caused rising prices, an industrial investment strike, and the flight of considerable amounts of capital abroad. Inflation "became a significant problem for the first time since the 1940s. . . . The ex-electricity trusts, whose influence in financial circles was untouched, fomented the climate of uncertainty; stock prices fell, business confidence drained away" [Ginsborg 1990, 271].

The difficulties were laid squarely at the door of Aldo Moro's center-left government, the first to include the Socialists, for its supposed leniency toward labor and its "radical" reform schemes (which, such as they were, had in fact been given up quite sometime before). The majority of the DC decided that it was time to stop the experiment or bring the Socialists to heel, and Moro's government fell (June 25) on a trivial matter. The press mounted a violent campaign predicting economic ruin, which included the well-timed leakage of a confidential letter from Treasury Minister Giovanni Colombo to the prime minister, depicting the economic situation in catastrophic terms. There were high and repeated cries for the president (who was known to be hostile to the Center-Left and to the Socialists) to install a cabinet ignoring the parties (i.e., Parliament). The foreign press ominously hinted at the possibility of "strong" solutions involving the military.[9]

The man most talked about in these circumstances was General Giovanni de Lorenzo, commander in chief of the carabinieri (the most important security force in the country) and close adviser to the president (the latter, in itself, being a rather unusual circumstance). This brilliant and ruthless officer had been the head of SIFAR from 1955 to 1962 and, in the course of a most remarkable career, had established a formidable power base. He himself had reached the highest ranks via dubious means and then illegally placed a number of his men in key positions, both in the carabinieri and in SIFAR, where he arranged for the appointment as his successors of two of his most loyal subordinates.[10] Furthermore, by entrusting the finances of the carabinieri to SIFAR's administrative officer, who illegally held both jobs, de Lorenzo could keep a hand in each cash box. In sum, from 1962 on, de Lorenzo was the head of the carabinieri and closely controlled the Intelligence Service. His relying on a coterie of the faithful created an atmosphere of suspicion and unease; on the other hand, his energy and superior organizational skills much improved the carabinieri's efficiency while his concern with the Corps' standing and the troops' well-being (partly because of his easy money) made him popular in certain quarters.

As part of his reorganization measures de Lorenzo carried out one of his most controversial (and least legal) feats, the creation of a mechanized brigade complete with M47 tanks and M113 armored personnel carriers,

which ostensibly should have been used in law-enforcement operations—a questionable task at best, considering its armament.[11]

The most significant feature of de Lorenzo's tenure at SIFAR was the illegal collection of 157,000 dossiers (so many were discovered during ensuing investigations that the actual figure is probably twice as large) on the private lives of politicians, businessmen, trade union leaders, intellectuals, and other public figures, including the clergy. It was, as one inquiry committee suavely called it, a major "deviation." The data collected "had no conceivable relevance to national security but rather pertained to the most intimate and private matters. There was a tendency to look for damaging items that could be used for the purposes of blackmail. . . . There was also a tendency to twist the information so as to stress its unfavorable aspects" [Beolchini 1991, 30, 36].[12]

The initiative enjoyed the approval and encouragement of the CIA, which, in its hostility to the Center-Left, was interested in gathering damaging materials on Aldo Moro and his aides.

Here attention should be drawn to the Italian Intelligence Service's subservience to its U.S. counterpart, a matter that in turn is part of a larger issue, that is, Italy's place within the Western alliance [Migone 1991]. Early on, U.S. strategic planners recognized Italy's crucial location in the Mediterranean as being extremely relevant both politically and militarily. Hence it was deemed essential to keep Italy from falling under communist control. This concern was at the origin of the stream of documents issued by the National Security Council (NSC) and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) from 1948 on, concerning political and military initiatives regarding Italy.

Although an illegal seizure of power on the part of the Communists would have caused a military reaction, either from U.S. or NATO forces, it is not clear, owing to the heavy censorship applied to the relevant documents, whether such action was also envisaged in the case of a *legal* communist seizure of power.[13] Even were military intervention excluded, however, other initiatives, some implying heavy interference in the country's politics, were not ruled out. Such is the case of the mysterious plan of a permanent, anticommunist offensive, code-named "Demagnetize," laid down by the JCS in 1952, and whose purpose it was to

> reduce the strength of the Communist Party, its material resources, international organizations, influence in the French and Italian governments, and particularly in the trade unions, as well as its appeal to the French and Italian people, so that it will no longer constitute a threat to the security of France and Italy and the objectives of the United States. . . . Since the plan may appear to encroach on the sovereignty or to interfere with the internal administration of the French and Italian governments, . . . extraordinary security precautions must be invoked. For this reason . . . no copies of the plans will be distributed to overseas commands

> . . . the contents of the plans should be divulged only to those U.S. nationals who need such information in the performance of their official duty.[14]

The plan was to be carried out under the general direction of the U.S. ambassadors to France and Italy on a permissive rather than mandatory basis and in cooperation with the commander in chief of the U.S. European Forces [Gualtieri 1991, 23].

In place of military intervention, covert operations became part of established NSC doctrine as early as 1948. The term covert defined those activities conducted alongside official operations, "but which are so planned and executed that any U.S. government responsibility for them is not evident . . . and that if uncovered the U.S. government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them" [NSC 10/2, 18 June 1948]. In areas threatened by international communism, these activities were designed to "develop underground resistance and facilitate covert and guerrilla operations and ensure availability of those forces in the event of war, including wherever practicable provisions of a base upon which the military may expand these forces in time of war within active theaters of operations as well as provision for stay-behind assets and escape and evasion facilities" [NSC 5412, 15 March 1954]. This, by the way, seems to be the first official document where mention is made of "stay-behind assets" [Gualtieri 1991, 19]—a most controversial matter, connected with the so-called Gladio affair, to be discussed later (de Lorenzo, on behalf of SIFAR, signed in 1956 one of the *Gladio* agreements with its U.S. counterpart) [Ferraresi 1992a].

The importance of covert operations in the cold war years significantly increased the role of the Secret Services in most countries belonging to the two hostile blocs. On the U.S. side, covert operations were the domain of the CIA, which "came thus to acquire a pivotal role in carrying out U.S. foreign policy" [Sebesta 1991, 215]. Within NATO, its leadership position was out of the question. Significantly the SIFAR, the first postfascist Italian Secret Service, was formally authorized four days before Italy joined the Alliance (30 March 1949). The treaty established U.S. hegemony over its partners not only in military but in intelligence matters as well, following a general practice whereby the "local" Services were expected to pass on information to the CIA, which was not bound to reciprocity [Lutiis 1986, 42].

De Lorenzo's appointment as head of SIFAR had been supported by the U.S. ambassador to Italy (Clare Boothe Luce), on the suggestion of Carmel Offie, political adviser of the State Department and close collaborator of CIA chief Allen Dulles. Through him the Americans hoped to keep a check on President Giovanni Gronchi, who was suspected of harboring sympathies for the Left. According to Faenza, de Lorenzo was immediately asked to abide by the "Demagnetize" directives.[15] A document establishing closer collaboration with the CIA was signed in 1962, and it committed the

Italian Secret Service, among other things, "to increase funding for those forces that oppose the present political turn (i.e., the Center-Left); to support any action weakening the cohesion of the Socialist Party and promoting internal splits" [Faenza 1978, 315]. (The split did indeed take place, a few years later.)

In fact, U.S. policy toward the Center-Left was not exactly single-voiced. Although the president and his closest advisers, for example, Averell Harriman and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., favored the turn [Schlesinger 1967, 676 ff.], the State Department was, at best, for neutrality and the U.S. Embassy in Rome was hostile [Ginsborg 1990, 258]. On the form that such opposition should take, opinions within the embassy differed. Some allegedly advocated straightforward military intervention should the Socialists join the government; others, considering the advent of the Center-Left ineluctable, favored a more subtle approach, which consisted of voiding it of any real substance. (The first position has been attributed to the military attaché Col. Vernon Walters, a future deputy director of the CIA, who has denied it as nonsense [Walters 1987]; the other, to the CIA chief of station, T. Karamessines [Faenza 1978, 310; Lutiis 1986, 64].) This is the framework within which the CIA's interest in de Lorenzo's files should be placed.[16] It is hard to believe that the CIA knew nothing of Plan Solo.

Basically Plan Solo was a counterinsurgency plan that in fact could be used for insurgency purposes. "On paper, the plan for a military coup d'état will look very much like the outline for an emergency defensive plan [in] the event of an attempted coup by enemies of the state" [Collin 1976, 40]. This indeed is how the "Prometheus" plan of Colonel George Papadopulous operated in the Greek seizure of power of 1967. (That plan, incidentally, bore a striking resemblance to Plan Solo; perhaps not fortuitously T. Karamessines played "an important background role in the Greek military coup" [Ginsborg 1990, 259].)

Plan Solo envisioned the occupation of all major government buildings, important communications facilities, the headquarters of left-wing political parties and newspapers, as well as the national radio and TV stations. The action was to be carried out by carabinieri acting alone (hence "Plan Solo," i.e., "alone") excluding other security forces like the police—in contrast to "normal" emergency plans, which normally are drafted in every province by the local carabinieri unit under the direction of the prefect and in concert with the police and other armed forces.

In Plan Solo, instead, a supporting role was to be carried out by carabinieri veterans secretly recalled from retirement within the framework of another marginally legal clandestine program (Plan Sigma). A similar role was to be carried out by irregular civilian groups that had been secretly recruited in the previous years by a special SIFAR office choosing its members among the radical Right (former RSI militants, including X MAS

sailors and parachutists, etc.) [Minority Report 1971, 162ff.]. The officer who organized the recruitment, Colonel Renzo Rocca, was in charge of relations with the industrial world and especially its powerful organization, Confindustria, whose secret funding he distributed to anticommunist parties, within the framework of a close partnership between SIFAR and conservative business interests.[17] The money was also used to fund civilian recruitments [Minority Report 1971, 162]. Rocca's death by a pistol shot in June 1968, before he could be heard by the Alessi Committee, was immediately ruled a suicide by the judiciary acting in concert with SIFAR, and it remains one of the Republic's best-kept secrets. That covert recruitment of this type actually did occur was confirmed by the depositions of several senior carabinieri officers who opposed the plan;[18] nevertheless for a long time the official line was to deny the recruitments, and much incriminating evidence was classified until 1991 as a state secret.[19]

Last but not least, a number of "dangerous elements" (about eight hundred) were to be arrested and deported to Sardinia, almost certainly in what many years later turned out to be Gladio's main training base.[20] Given Gladio's close relationship with the CIA, within the framework of the stay-behind network, this is further evidence that the CIA was informed of Plan Solo; the same applies to Gladio's leadership, that is, the upper echelons of the Intelligence Service [Bellu and D'Avanzo 1991, 239–40].

How far this planning went into effect is unclear. At the end of March 1964, de Lorenzo ordered the commanders of the three carabinieri divisions (with headquarters in Milan, Rome, and Naples) to have the outline of the plan ready. Each division's draft went to Rome, from where it was sent back to the divisional commands for revision on the basis of a common outline. The whole preparatory phase took place in the strictest secrecy: several senior officers were excluded from the sessions, whereas their juniors attended, presumably in virtue of their reliability; participants wore plain clothes; the plans were drafted by operation officers personally, even eschewing typists (in two out of three cases the existing document is handwritten) [Lombardi (1968) 1991, vol. 5].

From then on a frantic sequel of meetings ensued, both in Rome and at the divisional headquarters, especially in Milan. It was here that, on learning the plan included seizing the prefect, if need be with a pistol in hand, one senior general allegedly objected to the division commander: "Do you believe for a moment that Milan's chief of police, with three thousand public security guards at his disposal, will turn around and look out the windows while we snatch the prefect?" [Majority Report 1971, 743].

The lists of those to be deported were updated and distributed; preliminary surveys of their homes were carried out. As early as February, de Lorenzo had inquired of the air force and the navy chiefs of staff about possible means of transport to Sardinia should the need arise. Whereas the

air force had been cooperative ("Giving you transport planes is nothing, we have lots"), the navy had raised objections, so that when the issue was discussed at Division Headquarters in Milan, air transport was declared preferable, "because the air force comes along, while the navy is still uncertain" [Minority Report 1971, 98–103].

When the government fell, the country, for which this was hardly a novelty, remained absolutely calm: there was no unrest or disturbances of any kind, labor disputes were normal, and strike activity actually declined.[21] Nevertheless, in meeting after meeting at the end of June, de Lorenzo kept prodding his officers to prepare for an emergency, warning them that the situation was becoming graver by the moment. He painted the same vivid picture of a country on the edge of civil violence to the president of the Republic, who passed on his alarm to the top-ranking politicians. Segni's chief concern was to cut the reform program and drop the left-wing Socialists from the coalition. "He . . . was seriously contemplating an end to the Center-Left, the appointment of a 'nonpolitical' government made up of civil servants, and perhaps an increase in governmental powers along Gaullist lines" [Ginsborg 1990, 277]. The pressures of the president were compounded by those of the DC's moderate and conservative sectors, which in turn were reinforced by those of the business world and especially by Confindustria, where de Lorenzo's popularity was very high.[22]

The difficulty of the four-party negotiations was increased by the president's urgency (possibly owing to the illness that shortly thereafter would incapacitate him) and by inevitable rumors about the carabinieri's doings, so much so that "Aldo Moro himself became sufficiently alarmed to order that a variety of loyal army units be brought into the city" [Collin 1976, 60]. When negotiations broke down, and after de Lorenzo's call to the presidential palace (July 15), another most unusual event took place: de Lorenzo met secretly with Aldo Moro, the DC secretary (Mariano Rumor), and other top-ranking DC leaders in the private home of a DC politician (the object of the meeting has never been disclosed). But the next day negotiations resumed, the Socialists dropped their most aggressive proposals and men, and shortly thereafter a moderate government was formed, which, although nominally bearing the Center-Left brand, in fact spelled the end of the experiment.

Plan Solo was never implemented. A few weeks later P. Nenni, the socialist secretary who had conducted the negotiations, in replying to those who accused him of selling out to the DC, wrote in his party's daily:

> Suddenly, the political parties realized that they could be replaced. In the case of a . . . failure of the Center-Left, the only alternative would have been an emergency government. . . . This would have meant a government of the Right . . . a combination of fascists, industrialists, and landowners that would have made the Tambroni government look pale by comparison. [in *Avanti*, 26 July 1964]

The scandal exploded in 1967, when Admiral Eugenio Henke, the new SIFAR head and first of the post-de Lorenzo era, discovered that the files on some eminent politicians had disappeared from SIFAR's safe. The news (with the contents of some files) reached the press, causing an enormous outcry. Two governmental committees (led by generals Beolchini and Lombardi) were charged with investigating the matter; the carabinieri, carried out their own investigation on a collateral issue [Manes]. The results of these investigations were heavily censored by the government, which allowed only some of the documents to be made public (for example, thirty-six out of eighty-six pages of the Beolchini report and all its annexes were classified until 1991; the list of those to be deported is still secret). The DC, led by Aldo Moro, put up the fiercest resistance to the request that a parliamentary inquiry be established: possession of the SIFAR dossiers was a formidable weapon with which de Lorenzo could threaten any number of ruling politicians. Moreover, all those who had sponsored him and countenanced his illegalities, receiving favors in exchange (such as dossiers compromising their rivals), were now hardly in a position to discipline the general and his associates. De Lorenzo, who in the meantime had become army chief of staff, was offered an embassy on the condition that he resign gracefully;[23] upon his refusal he was relieved from command, the maximum punishment meted out to him.

But the pressures exerted by the public and the opposition was too strong, and finally in 1968 a parliamentary committee (chaired by Alessi) was set up. Its efforts were fraught with the most heated debates between the majority and the opposition. Eventually the majority toed the DC line and, although criticizing the general, it accepted his thesis that Plan Solo envisaged no coup d'état, being merely a defensive project in view of a subversive insurrection. De Lorenzo and his colleagues were exonerated of all serious charges; however, because the plan had contemplated that the carabinieri act alone, de Lorenzo was accused of having exceeded his powers and was reprimanded. It should be noted that even the Alessi committee was denied most of the relevant documents acquired by the previous investigations, including the full text of Plan Solo, which were declassified only in 1991. Yet much evidence that was available cast serious doubt on the "defensive" thesis: why, for example, were many carabinieri technicians trained to take over the TV and radio stations if the purpose was only to defend them from the subversives? Why were only some newspapers (those gravitating around the PCI) to be "defended"?[24]

Whether de Lorenzo in fact meant to carry out Plan Solo or only to brandish it as a threat against the politicians is uncertain.[25] That ostensibly "nothing happened" should not lead one to underestimate the episode, a veritable turning point in recent Italian politics.

There is no doubt that the most serious "deviations" occurred then. Even

the DC leadership (but only in 1991, a safe quarter of a century later) now define Plan Solo as "a criminal plan, criminal in its purposes as well as in its incipient organization, a plan that . . . should have come under the strictures of both the civilian and military penal code."[26] The deviations were carried out by a number of very senior officers of law enforcement, the Intelligence Service, and the armed forces, working in close contact with their international counterparts (especially the CIA), with some reactionary political leaders and with a segment of the financial and business world. In the event it had been necessary, irregular civilian groups (obviously of the Right), illegally recruited, would have joined the fray.

When the scandal exploded it quickly became evident (although the terms of the problem were not as clear then as they were later) that the governmental class was unable or unwilling to take adequate measures against the Intelligence Service and some top-ranking generals. The Intelligence Service underwent a nominal reform, which changed its name from SIFAR to SID (Defense Information System), leaving, however, the structure and most of the personnel untouched. De Lorenzo himself ended up in Parliament, as a representative first for the Monarchists and then for the neofascist MSI (by far not an uncommon career). Most of his associates were untouched by the flurry of investigations that followed the scandal; in fact the members of the de Lorenzo clique proceeded unscathed in their careers and those who had denounced the irregularities, beginning with Deputy-Commander General Manes, were put aside.

From then on the Intelligence Service became a prime *political* actor, one that would not shy before illegal, even criminal actions in order to foster its own or its associates' political ends. The most sensational, but by far not the only example was probably its intervention in presidential elections. Such intervention had always been widely suspected; the 1991 disclosures now provide the most authoritative evidence in the words of General de Lorenzo himself, as he testified before the Lombardi committee:

> In 1964 Viggiani [de Lorenzo's successor as SIFAR head] was very much against the election of the present president of the Republic [Social Democrat Giuseppe Saragat]. Viggiani wanted very badly [DC Senator A.] Fanfani. . . . He was always calling up [DC's secretary M.] Rumor, saying: it mustn't happen, what can we do, what can't we do. So that famous file [about Saragat], which was at the source of so many troubles, was fattened on that occasion. Previously it contained only trivial information. When the struggle for the presidency came up, the file was thickened; they added to it the South Tyrol business plus many other unpleasant facts. . . . Clearly, at that time the Service was hostile to Saragat's candidacy, . . . and good old Viggiani went to work a bit. [In Lombardi 1968 (1991), 5:464–65; all this of course was classified until 1991]

From then on, the illegal use of files became a widespread instrument of struggle, perverting many aspects of Italian political life. The SIFAR "collection," specifically, ended up in the possession of the secret P2 Masonic Lodge, becoming a formidable instrument of power in the hands of that obscure and illegal organization [see below, chapter 6].

In order to understand the political role of the Intelligence Service, one must keep in mind the specific characteristics of the Italian political system. In the pre-1989 bipolar world, a country's international alignment chiefly determined its domestic policies. Where a powerful Communist Party existed, as in Italy, the repercussions were most severe, as the struggle against communism became the chief objective and the mortar holding together anti-Marxist forces.

This permitted the supremacy of such forces for more than half a century, thus "saving democracy." But it blocked the system, causing the most serious distortions.[27] All through these years the level of conflict between the parties that made up the government coalitions, as well as within each party, was extremely high. But since the only enemy that could officially be admitted to the public was the external one (i.e., communism), such conflict was hidden, camouflaged, denied legitimacy. The obscurity of many aspects of Italian political life originates from this feature: coalitions fraught with the most fundamental differences still held together, although at different times the same coalitions broke up for apparently trivial reasons; parties that were in government for forty years criticized governmental policies as the most rabid members of the opposition; and so on.

The intragovernmental conflicts that were not allowed to explode in the open degenerated into gang warfare, where the use of Secret Service dossiers for blackmail purposes and other illegal means became frequent instruments of the political struggle. The intelligence services, which in the past had been occasionally involved in politics, after the SIFAR affair became veritable co-protagonists, on some occasions carrying out their own politics. Testament to their involvement is the fact that between the end of the sixties and the mid-seventies the system underwent two major attempts at reform, ostensibly aimed at redressing its "deviations," that is, to bring it under the effective control of government and Parliament. (Both attempts were unsuccessful.) Perhaps even more significant is that of the eight heads of Intelligence who succeeded de Lorenzo, five were investigated or disciplined for asserted illegalities carried out by the Service, including collusion with right-wing terrorism and organized crime. (Of the other three, one died in office.)

Such developments in the intelligence services are intrinsic to understanding the strategy of tension.

5

The Strategy of Tension: A Case Study

Background: 1968 and Its Aftermath

The wave of protest and conflict that erupted worldwide in the late sixties was especially traumatic in Italy because of the specific set of circumstances from which it originated. The first was the failure of the Center-Left: the experiment had not brought about the hoped-for structural reforms, nor altered the pattern of industrial relations. Low wages were still the basic ingredient of the "economic miracle," and they were not counterbalanced by the availability of adequate provisions for the workers in sectors like health, education, and especially housing. The demand for this latter commodity, because of the preceding migrations that were in turn the result of distortions in industrial development, had grown enormously [Ferraresi and Tosi 1979]. This was a major cause of the 1968 explosion.

The balance of political power was also pretty much intact in the hands of the old lobbies, as was proven in the SIFAR case by the incapability or unwillingness of Center-Left governments to deal effectively with disloyal generals. From the other side, the Communist Party offered no viable alternative. It had given up de facto the Leninist, revolutionary model a good thirty years earlier, but it still played around with revolutionary slogans and was unwilling to openly embrace a reformist strategy [Tranfaglia 1991, 2]. All this gave to the 1968 movement in Italy a force and intensity that were unknown elsewhere.

The wave of mobilization began more or less simultaneously with other European movements, but it lasted much longer (until the end of the 1970s), had a much broader front (the students' struggles were joined and later on supplanted by those of the workers, with the support of trade unions and a not unsympathetic Communist Party), and presented more radical claims [Pasquino 1984b, 245 ff.]. Wage demands were soon joined by more sinister developments, such as the new representative organizations established in plants and factories, ominously called "workers' councils," that aimed at restructuring the worker-management relationship in ways that would alter (some said disrupt) the traditional format. Add to this the new "social" requests, such as those for decent housing, public transportation, schooling, and public services in general. Mobilization was massive and nationwide, involving hundreds of thousands of workers in indus-

trial actions of unprecedented intensity.[1] They were at the core of, but by no means exhausted a cycle of collective mobilization that embraced a broad spectrum of sectors, ranging from grass-roots religious communities to neighborhood groups to women's groups. The range of claims, the unorthodox style of the protest (where, it should be emphasized, violence overall played a minor role), and the very entry into the political arena of many groups that never before had chosen to "voice" [Hirschman 1970] their requests had on Italian society an unprecedented shock-effect [for the best account, see Tarrow 1989].

If the relatively harmless advent of the Center-Left had caused the gravest concerns in the "cartel of anxiety," it is easy to understand that the much more radical developments of 1968 raised that concern to a veritable panic level—with the moderate press hard at work to create collective hysteria.

Historians have claimed that important segments of the Italian ruling classes, when faced with the prospect of workers having even marginal access to power, have always responded with a hard, unmitigated refusal [Tranfaglia 1982, 481]. Such behavior may go so far as to include the use of extraparliamentary and even extralegal means in order to confront the perceived threat. Some precedents are telling. At the end of the last century, when the emerging socialist and Catholic movements threatened the hegemony of the ruling moderate groups, the Pelloux government suspended civil liberties *by decree*, enacting the very exceptional legislation that a parliamentary majority had just rejected (June 1899). Only a later Supreme Court ruling would declare the decree illegitimate [Carocci 1975, 353 ff.; Levra 1975]. The authoritarian attempt succeeded with a vengeance two decades later when Fascism seized power. A more recent precedent is the 1960 Tambroni government, dicussed in chapter 1.

The so-called strategy of tension should be seen from this perspective, and so it was by contemporary observers and protagonists. From the "people's prison," where shortly thereafter he would be savagely murdered, Aldo Moro wrote:

> The so-called strategy of tension had the purpose, although fortunately it did not succeed, of bringing Italy "back on track" after 1968 and the so-called hot autumn. . . . It was promoted by those who in our history are periodically, i.e., at any proper chance, ready to reject uncomfortable novelties and would always want to go back to the good old ways. . . . So now they resented the economic costs of the hot autumn, they advocated the need to backstep on the reform road, possibly even on the political agenda. . . . It must be added that the strategy of tension caused a real and high danger, with the risk of a constitutional violation, that only the people's vigilance happily avoided. [In Biscione 1993, 49–51]

The term *strategy of tension*, however, has frequently been used improperly; my effort now is to provide a more precise conceptual definition.

Toward a Conceptual Definition

At the end of the 1960s any attempt to legally swerve the Italian polity to the Right could not count on a parliamentary majority. Actually at the time the extreme-right parties were enjoying some measure of success, thanks to the two-pronged strategy ("bludgeon and double-breasted suit") that was being deployed by Almirante (again, MSI general secretary after Michelini's death in 1969). Almirante renewed links with the militant squads, thus reaffirming the MSI's radical vocation (as witness his welcoming the return of Rauti's group and giving them seats in the party's national council). At the same time he joined forces with the Monarchists in a unified party (MSI-Destra Nazionale), thus trying to build the image of a respectable conservative bloc, bulwark of the system threatened by the Reds. That this respectable party could, if need be, mobilize its militants in the streets was all the more reassuring to conservatives frightened by generalized social unrest. The MSI's strategy was rewarded at the polls: the 1972 returns were the all-time highest (8.7 percent), almost doubling the results of the previous elections, which were 4.4 percent in 1969, the all-time lowest. (However, these results did not match the all-time highest *summatory* (sum and subtraction) of the two parties, which in 1953 had reached 12.7 percent, with 6.9 percent for the Monarchists, 5.8 percent for the MSI.) Still, this was not enough to compel the DC to alter its left-leaning course and "open to the Right."

If parliamentary forces were inadequate, so too was there insufficient mass potential on the Right that could be channeled into a truly counterrevolutionary movement [in the sense used by Mayer 1971]. For one thing no charismatic leadership was available, and mass movements, if anything, were moving in the opposite direction [Tarrow 1989].

Under these circumstances a plausible course for those willing to use force in order to stem current developments was to engineer an authoritarian turn-about on the part of the state (ultimately, but not necessarily, by way of an armed forces intervention), which would include the repression of civil rights and liberties and the sharp curbing of parliamentary powers and those of local councils. Only a situation of generalized social unrest, the responsibility for which could be attributed to the Left, might justify such a development. Hence the necessity to stage street conflicts, bloody incidents, bomb attacks. The Reds could be compromised by either framing them through infiltration or provoking them to fight and thus bringing upon them the legitimate reprisal of law-enforcement agencies (this seems to have been Rauti's scheme since the fifties).[2]

The Greek colonels' seizure of power in 1967 had set a precedent that demonstrated the possibility of a military takeover even in a country not

belonging to the Third World (and one, moreover, very close to Italy) and offered a model that many considered attractive. The Greek colonels' coup took place in April 1967 in order to prevent a likely victory of the Left in the coming elections. Its leader (Col. Georgios Papadopoulos) was a member of the Intelligence Service (KYP), working in close contact with CIA and NATO intelligence. (The later Greek premier, Andreas Papandreou, mocked him as "the first CIA agent to become prime minister"). The coup had been preceded by a period of intense social unrest and violence, punctuated by sabotage, bombs, incidents of arson (dozens of fires had been set in Athens during the night of 20 August 1965). For all these actions, carried out mostly by KYP provocateurs, responsibility had been attributed to the Left. Athens' "night of fires" had been organized by the militants of a radical-right movement named "4th of August" (the date General Metaxas, "the Greek Mussolini," had seized power in 1936), whose leader, Kostas Plevris, a journalist, ideologue, and himself a KYP agent, was one of the masterminds behind the whole strategy of provocation-infiltration-destabilization—besides being a friend of Rauti's [Flamini 1982, 147ff.]. Italian right-wing circles were enthusiastic about the Greek developments; in turn the Greeks were eager to "export" them to Italy.[3]

Even were the extreme stages not reached, the recurring threat of a coup (the "Greek solution"; later the "Chilean solution") would keep the Communist Party from raising the stakes too high [Galli 1974, 324]. This, in a nutshell, was the *strategy of tension* (the term seems to have been used for the first time by *The Observer* on 14 December 1969), in which reactionary economic groups, secret Masonic lodges, sections of the armed forces, domestic and foreign intelligence, parts of the judiciary and police were all involved with the radical Right in the role of shock troops, provocateurs, and in some instances as possible masterminds.

The term *strategy*, taken from the military,[4] is not a felicitous one. Technically (as in disciplines like game theory and rational choice) it roughly indicates the plan of action or the overall concept determining a sequence of decisions set in a hierarchically ordained, closely coordinated means-ends chain.

To look for a similar pattern in the Italian events after 1968 would be foolish, and dangerously close to a conspiracy theory. The number of actors and agencies involved was too great, their autonomy and differences too marked, the sequel of events too muddled for a comprehensive, overall plan (not to speak of a single masterminding agency) to have been at work.

Rather, what seems to have happened is that within the framework of a homogeneous climate of opinion and intents a number of acts were carried out by agents who in some cases were coordinated and in others operated "by ear," without a precise script, but in a manner congruent with that of others or that was, a posteriori, made to dovetail with it.

Portions of this whole may have corresponded to veritable strategic initiatives carried out following a precise outline, as prescribed by one of the most infamous documents of Aginter Press concerning Italy, brought to light precisely during the Piazza Fontana investigations. It was entitled *Our Political Action*, and said:

> Our belief is that the first phase of our political activity ought to be to create the conditions favoring the installation of chaos in all the [Italian] regime's structures. . . . In our view the first move we should make is to destroy the structure of the democratic state under the cover of communist and pro-Chinese actions. Our agents have infiltrated all these groups. Our action will have to be keyed to them, carrying out propaganda and strong-arm actions which will appear as the deeds of our communist enemies, at the same time bringing pressure to bear on power holders at all levels. This will arouse hostility against those who threaten the country's and the citizens' peace, while damaging the national economy.[5]

In other cases single acts were carried out corresponding to the climate of political and ideological opinion prevailing in some circles.

In order to understand how this could be possible, some basic elements of the system should be kept in mind. The first was the existence of a number of radical groups, *acting autonomously* (but with the knowledge that eventually they would be protected by a cover-up) and carrying out violence and provocations. Second, important sectors of the establishment, as shown in the previous chapter, were sympathetic to the possibility of authoritarian solutions to the perceived crisis. Third, the law-enforcement system featured an archaic and cumbersome structure, run by highly bureaucratized, formalistic, abstract, rigid procedures, and by the lack of any direct, democratic responsibility of the judicial personnel.

This mix operated at different levels of interconnectedness among the actors. At the *first level* results could be achieved in a more or less automatic manner, without any form of explicit or conscious coordination. For example, it might be enough that two law courts dispute jurisdiction over a case involving radical-right militants, and, given the cumbersome modus operandi of the criminal justice system, the trial could be delayed for years, without any need for the judges ever to speak to or even know each other. The same result could be achieved by the prosecution downgrading charges or letting the statute of limitations expire or employing any number of cavils.

At a *second level* the dynamics may have been more complex. For example, terrorist groups acting on their own (autonomously) may carry out political crimes (attacks, violence, massacres). Since such groups may have belonged to areas perceived as friendly by sectors of the law-enforcement or order-keeping agencies, investigations on the matter would have been

tardy or inefficient, allowing the culprits to avoid being identified—a standard practice of what Arno Mayer has called counterrevolutionary periods:

> Since crisis conditions activate and reinforce the built-in conservative and reactionary biases of law-enforcement and order-keeping agencies, [counterrevolutionaries] find it relatively easy to enlist auxiliaries there. . . . They rely on these auxiliaries to see to it that their organizations are not outlawed; that their rallies and demonstrations are not banned; that their punitive raids are not forestalled or broken up prematurely; and that their thugs are not sternly prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced. [Mayer 1971, 74–75]

In some cases investigations were derailed by such acts as hiding corpora delicti, protecting suspects or even defendants, or destroying evidence. There were other acts of derailment as well, such as the prosecution consciously pursuing the wrong investigative trails—trails that could be suggested by the perpetrators themselves, by infiltrating the opposing political groups and posturing as their members, or by choosing their targets in such a way as to lead to "natural" suspects (i.e., Fascists attacking the headquarters of conservative parties). Even more serious, authorities might fabricate false evidence in order to divert an investigation away from the real culprits. (For example, the Intelligence Service might plant weapons and explosives on a train, the same type as those used in an attack, and surround them with clues leading to the wrong suspects.) The situation may be further complicated by conflicts or feuds within the state agencies, which may then deviate, slow down, or even suddenly accelerate dormant investigations. Typical of this level of operation was the autonomous deed carried out by the terrorist groups, while cover-up mechanisms were activated only later.

The most serious offenses operated at a *third level*, that is, terrorists carried out criminal acts with the knowledge or even the complicity or participation of segments of the state apparatuses, which later participated in a cover-up to protect the perpetrators.

The boundaries between the three levels, and especially between the second and third, are of course moot. The strategy of tension was the combination and intertwining of all these practices and levels of action. But whereas evidence of acts belonging to the first and second levels is plentiful (all the hypotheses delineated in the above passages are based on actual events, although few have received adequate legal acknowledgment), it is much more difficult to bring evidence of deeds that belong to the third level.

That none of the major terrorist acts (i.e., massacres) have been adjudicated indicates how difficult it is to reach the truth in these matters. Still, we can explore some of the mechanisms at work by discussing a number of "exemplary" cases.

A Case Study: The Massacre at Piazza Fontana

The Climate

The year 1969, that of the "hot autumn," featured the most intense industrial and social conflict to date. An enormous number of strikes, demonstrations, and "hard" actions took place,[6] many of which were accompanied by clashes with the police, warrants, arrests, even casualties.

It was also a busy year for bombers: between January 3 and December 12 there were 145 explosions, that is, one every three days. The responsibility for 96 of them could easily be attributed to the radical Right, either because of the targets they struck (parties of the Left, synagogues, partisan monuments, and so on) or because the authors were actually caught [*La strage di stato* 1970, 16]. Other relevant episodes were a bomb in the office of Padua University's chancellor (April 15); several high potential bombs at Milan's Fair, which wounded some twenty people on April 25; and in August, ten bombs in as many traveling trains, eight of which exploded, injuring twelve passengers. Investigations of the blasts at Milan's Fair led to the seizure of some anarchists who were long detained on flimsy evidence. The press mounted a shrill antianarchist campaign, embracing all "subversives," that is, anyone disturbing the established order. Later investigations would prove that the authors of all these attacks were the neo-Fascists of the Paduan group led by Franco Freda, but this was some years later, in a different political atmosphere, and the news went almost unnoticed.

By far the most important and tragic episode of 1969 was the Piazza Fontana massacre in Milan, where sixteen people were killed and many more wounded. The episode provides an excellent illustration of the strategy of tension at work, involving all its major actors: the radical Right, the intelligence services, the police, the judiciary, and the ruling political class. It is worthwhile, then, to analyze it at some length below, for its exemplary significance.[7]

The First Inquiries: The "Anarchist Trail"

The bomb exploded on the afternoon of 12 December 1969 in the Milanese branch of the National Agricultural Bank (BNA), located in the Piazza Fontana. A second, nonexploded bomb was found in a nearby bank (COMIT, the Italian Commercial Bank). Almost simultaneously, three more explosions occurred in Rome: one in a branch of the National Labor Bank (BNL), wounding 14 of its employees; the other two at the National

Monument (Altare della Patria), wounding 4. Altogether, the casualties of the day included 16 people killed, 105 wounded. The timing of the attacks and the technique and materials employed (explosives, timers, carrying devices, etc.) clearly indicated that all episodes belonged to the same criminal design.

The inquiry began in Milan and although some police officers duly declared that it was aimed in all directions, suspicions were in fact immediately and loudly focused on the Left, with much press fanfare.[8] (But from the very beginning a man such as Aldo Moro had said that he did not "believe for one minute" that the path led to the "Red trail."[9]) Twenty-seven left-wing militants, mostly anarchists, were immediately arrested.

On the night of December 15 one of them, Giuseppe (Pino) Pinelli, while being subjected to intense police questioning, fell headlong from a third-story window in police headquarters and was killed. The police, who had detained him without a warrant, immediately claimed that he had committed suicide when his alibi had collapsed, a version of the facts that raised the most serious suspicions but did not result in any clear legal solutions and none of the officers involved in this turbid episode was ever disciplined.[10] Together with the whole Piazza Fontana affair, the scandal over Pinelli's death dealt a tremendous blow to the credibility of public institutions and was an important factor in mobilizing the whole younger generation against the system [Tarrow 1990, 52 ff.; Bobbio 1979, 55 ff.].[11]

The magistrate on duty the day of the massacre was not entirely convinced of the anarchists' guilt, but his investigation was not allowed to go beyond the very first steps. Responsibility for the case was immediately taken over by Rome, on the grounds of a "connection" between the massacre in Milano and the bombings carried out in the capital. In Rome, on the very evening of the attacks, the police were already investigating the "22 Marzo" (March 22) anarchist group, a member of which, Mario Merlino, turned evidence against his comrades. A few days later a Milanese taxi driver, Cornelio Rolandi, recognized another member of the 22 Marzo, a mediocre dancer-actor named Pietro Valpreda, as the passenger he had carried to the Piazza Fontana Bank on the tragic afternoon. Valpreda was arrested[12] as was the entire 22 Marzo group, while anarchists and Maoists were rounded up all over, within the framework of a colossal campaign of red bashing, which made all previous examples of witch-hunting pale by comparison. On its trail, all forms of dissent were criminalized as preliminary steps to terrorism. The highest state authorities, the government, and the law-enforcement agencies were unanimous in supporting this image, which the moderate press ceaselessly pushed forward. The workers' movement was badly shaken; the unions, then in the midst of difficult industrial negotiations, had to accept, hurriedly, unsatisfactory settlements.

The foundations of this construction were at best flimsy. The "22 Marzo" group consisted of some ten members. One, the crucial M. Merlino, was mentioned in chapter 3: he was not only a member of Avanguardia Nazionale but was a close associate of Stefano Delle Chiaie and had infiltrated this inept band after being rejected by more alert groups. Another member of the group was "Comrade Andrea," actually Salvatore Ippolito, a police agent who regularly informed his officers of the group's plans and initiatives: not by chance had all their previous actions failed miserably.[13] As the judges suavely commented later on, this was because of "the feeble attitudes of those hot-headed youths for carrying out acts of any relevance and because of the almost constant presence in the group of a police informer" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 295]. All of a sudden this ramshackle, multi-infiltrated gang, which could not even smash a shop window without being caught by the cops, was credited with the skills necessary for mounting a highly professional operation such as acquiring, preparing, and simultaneously planting five high-potential bombs in two cities located hundreds of miles apart.

Moreover, Rolandi's identification of Valpreda was wrong in some important details (height, accent, and hairdo) and was flawed by several major procedural irregularities. The first questionable aspect of this part of the affair was the taxi ride itself. It seems odd at best that anyone would ride a taxi in order to plant a murderous bomb, thus clearly risking being identified, especially when the distance to be covered is extremely short (135 meters, i.e., 150 yards)—unless, that is, he or some other actor wants to leave incriminating clues.

There were, then, several procedural irregularities, the most blatant being the following: after (inaccurately) describing his passenger to the police, Rolandi, against all rules of criminal procedure, was shown a photograph of Valpreda: "They showed me a picture and told me it was the person I was to identify" [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 337]. At this point "personal recognition" followed: confronted with Valpreda alongside several dummies, the cabman duly identified the dancer. Shortly thereafter Rolandi was taken seriously ill and the affidavit he signed on his deathbed was, in the words of the judges, "the only serious piece of evidence against Pietro Valpreda" [ibidem, 327].[14] For his part, Valpreda claimed that, at the time of the supposed taxi ride, he was ill in bed at his great-aunt's house. The alibi, however, was marred by a number of contradictions and inconsistencies, which led to a charge of perjury against those relatives who had provided it. They either died before the verdict was reached or were exonerated by the statute of limitations [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 345–67, 416].

In spite of all this, the first Istruttoria (Investigation inquiry),[15] carried out in Rome, resolutely followed the anarchist track. The magistrates were not told: (a) that "Comrade Andrea" was in fact a policeman (it was revealed only five months later, after a request from the magistrates); (b) that

as early as 17 December 1969 a confidential SID note, passed on to the police and the carabinieri (but *not* to the magistrates) attributed the attacks to "the anarchist Merlino Mario, acting on orders of the known Stefano Delle Chiaie. . . . The mastermind of the plot should be one Y. Guérin-Sérac, a German citizen living in Lisbon . . . an anarchist whose ideology, however, is ignored in Lisbon" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 155–56].

In fact there were two SID documents. The original was dated December 16 [see the Appendix to this chapter], and it differed in some relevant aspects from that passed on to the police and the carabinieri on the 17th, possibly in order to protect the SID source which, as the note stated, "must be absolutely protected because, questioned by the police, it has not given them the above information." One crucial detail that was omitted concerns the use of timing devices in Milan's bombs, mentioned in the original but not in the second document. In those first days after the massacre the Milanese investigators still thought that the bombs had been detonated by a fuse, and the press gave wide coverage to that hypothesis; the presence of timing devices was discovered a good month later. The knowledge of this circumstance on the very evening of December 13 is most disquieting.[16] Nor did the second document mention that Merlino had been infiltrated under cover in the pro-Chinese group.

The description of Merlino and Guérin-Sérac (a German!) as anarchists is priceless, as is the supposed ignorance of the latter's ideology on the part of the PIDE.[17] The question remains, then, why should the Intelligence Service have carried out such a tortuous fabrication as the December 17 note since, following an established custom, it could simply have refrained from passing its documents on to the police and the carabinieri. A possible explanation has been suggested, that although the anarchist trail could have been "safe," at the time the SID people who were in the know may have feared that an accurate investigation might demolish it, pointing to the inadequacy of the March 22 band. Placing at the anarchists' back an international organization (Aginter Press) gave strong support to the whole construction. Moreover Portugal was then in firm fascist hands and no serious investigation could be expected of Guérin-Sérac and Leroy [Paolucci 1977, 57; Lutiis 1991, 214–15]. Whatever the reasons beyond this mix of truth and falsehoods, the Intelligence Services refused to cooperate in any way with the inquiry. The head of SID, Admiral Eugenio Henke, in July 1970, wrote to the Roman judge who had requested information: "This Service has carried out no investigations on the matter" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 154]. The SID note of December 1969 reached the magistrates only in November 1973, that is, *four years* after it was written (and after the massacre).

Extremely lengthy procedures is one leitmotiv of this trial: the investigation against Valpreda and the anarchists lasted more than two years before the proceedings reached court in Rome (February 1972). Immediately, on

the grounds of territory, the court declared its own lack of jurisdiction and transmitted all acts to the Assizes of Milan, where the most serious crime of the chain (the massacre) had been committed and from where, it will be remembered, the original inquiry had been diverted in the first place. In Milan, however, the head state prosecutor (Procuratore della Repubblica) estimated that the town could not grant a serene trial and, invoking a constitutionally dubious institute, the removal of trial [*Rimessione*, akin to change of venue], asked the Court of Cassation to transfer the proceedings elsewhere.[18] In the prosecutor's document Milan was depicted as a city practically in the throes of civil war, where gang warfare and political aggression were rife and common citizens could walk the streets only at great risk. This text caused indignant reactions all over the country, but the Court of Cassation declared it perfectly sound and based its decision on it. It was one of the most disgraceful verdicts of recent Italian legal history, removing the Piazza Fontana trial from Milano to Catanzaro.[19] For the second (but not the last) time, the country's major industrial city, hence supposedly the most dangerously progressive, was robbed of the trial. It should be noted that with each change of venue the whole procedure had to start anew; all records, materials, corpora delicti had to be transferred from one court to the next and the new court had to become familiar with the records, evidence, and testimony. Catanzaro is a small city in Calabria, about a thousand kilometers south of Milan. Its court, correspondingly, has a small staff, on whose few judges the gigantic endeavor fell of sifting through the thousands of pages of this trial and pursuing the Istruttoria. The town's distance from Milan, moreover, was most inconvenient for victims and witnesses as well as for the victims' attorneys, who, in many cases, were members of relatively impecunious progressive lawyers' associations serving pro bono.[20]

The Cassation's decree was issued in October 1972, three years after the massacre. The court trial had not even started yet. Nor would it any time soon.

The Neo-Fascists

In the meantime the *pista nera*, or "black (i.e., fascist) trail" had taken form. It was opened in December 1969 in Treviso (in the Veneto region) by the discovery of a large cache of weapons and explosives in the house of the publisher-bookseller Giovanni Ventura and by the testimony of a language teacher, Guido Lorenzon, to whom Ventura had confided that he himself had been implicated in the bombings [Lorenzon 1977]. The course of this branch of the case was also very tortuous, with repeated comings and goings between Treviso, Venice, Rome, Padua, and Milan, where the

Istruttoria finally landed in March 1972, two years and four months after the massacre.

The Milanese inquiry was one of the most shocking events in postwar Italian politics, because it exposed for the first time the long-suspected collusions between sectors of the law-and-order establishment and right-wing terrorism.[21] The investigation focused on the neofascist cell based in Padua, whose activities were exposed by the depositions of several witnesses and confirmed by the investigators. A crucial role was played by Ventura himself, who attempted to differentiate his position from that of the codefendants, by portraying his own role as that of a Secret Service informer infiltrating the radical Right.[22] The cell's features and aims were reconstructed as follows by the first-degree judges:

> The subversive organization was active throughout the country, performing a number of gradually more severe terrorist acts, aimed to upset the social order and to destroy the bourgeois state structures. According to the depositions, the subversive group was born with a nazi-fascist ideology. It consisted of a Venetian component, whose head was [Franco] Freda, and a Roman one, led by Stefano Delle Chiaie. . . . Its strategy had been plotted during a crucial meeting held in Padua on 18 April 1969, which had been attended by Freda and other leaders of the Venetian and Roman cells.[23] In that meeting the program of the so-called *second line* or *second organization* was conceived, namely, to exploit the left-wing extremist groups by means of appropriate infiltration and provocation maneuvers in order to involve them in the attacks and make them appear responsible for a subversive activity whose origin, on the contrary, was rooted in the Right. [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 45–47]

The Paduan group itself, a fanatically anti-Semitic one, was small but had broad nationwide contacts among the radical Right, enjoying an especially close working relationship with Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale. Ventura had declared: "Money came from three sources. One of them was Freda . . . Another source was Ordine Nuovo and still another was Avanguardia Nazionale, or rather a mixed financial base from which Stefano Delle Chiaie drew funds. [The bombings] were financed by these three sources, wherein Stefano Delle Chiaie was eminently present" [CTZ 1979, p. 2: 117]. The veritable arsenal found in their possession had been employed in the twenty-odd bombings of the April–August 1969 season. They included Padua's Chancellorship; Milan's Fair and National Communications Bank; and the August trains. Other targets were a number of judicial establishments (in Turin, Rome, and Milan) that were missed because the devices failed. One defendant, who presumably was repeating Freda's words, commented on the blast at Milan's bank: "The heat of the fire has burned the Jewish money." Altogether, twenty-two bombings were carried out by the Paduan group between 15 April and 12 December 1969

[see Alessandrini 1974a, 130–38; CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 74–90]. For those acts, you will recall, a number of innocent anarchists were investigated and given long prison terms, amid a resounding press campaign.

The group's leader was the Paduan militant-ideologue Franco (Giorgio) Freda, a lawyer, publisher, and disciple of Evola, who added to his spiritual initiatives ("the education of souls") some very material concerns indeed.[24] A former member of the MSI and Ordine Nuovo, he had collaborated with Rauti and Giannettini as early as 1966, when, together with Ventura, they mailed several hundred officers a subversive leaflet signed "Nuclei for the State Defense."[25] He had implemented the "second-line" strategy by infiltrating a number of friends and associates into left-wing extremist organizations, under the cover of his expressed sympathy for antisystem groups of all colors. One of his associates at the Edizioni di Ar (Claudio Orsi) was the founder of the Italian-Chinese Association, while Freda himself gave financial support to one of the most militant ultraleft groups, Potere Operaio [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 180]. G. Ventura, who you may recall based his defensive strategy on the claim that he was a man of the Left, had developed similar initiatives.[26]

Freda was the organizer of the spring and summer bombings, several of which he carried out personally. When the accomplices expressed concern as to possible casualties, he was reported to have answered, with truly Evolian disdain for the plebes, that there was "no need to worry about a rabble capable only of haggling, defecating, and reproducing itself." In the same spirit an entry in his journal called for the elimination of enemies as being necessary not because of hatred but purely for reasons of "hygiene." He was also reported as voicing an intent to poison the water system with arsenic [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 55, 28; CTZ 1981, 445].

Evidence against Freda and his group first came from Lorenzon's and Ventura's statements, but also came from those of other witnesses who exposed the cell's responsibility for the spring and summer "campaign" and provided circumstantial evidence pointing to their involvement in the December bombings.[27] The spring and summer attacks (for which the group's guilt was proven beyond any doubt) exhibited many organizational and technical similarities with those of December. Moreover, the explosive placed in Rome's National Monument was wrapped in the same brand and color of paper as that found in the possession of the Paduan group. And of course the general logic and succession of the attacks fit quite nicely with Freda's oft-repeated notion of a gradually intensified terror program.

As for Freda himself, the main pieces of direct evidence against him included his purchase of fifty timing devices ("timers") of the same make and type as those used in the bombings, for which the defendant could offer no plausible justification. After initially refusing to explain the purchase,

when the latter could no longer be denied, Freda placed it within the framework of his anti-Semitic activites. He had long been concerned with the "Jewish question," "especially with the genocide carried out by the Jews against the Arabs in Palestine." In March 1969, after having given a lecture on the subject in Padua, he reported being approached by some "Arab elements" who suggested establishing "global collaboration relations." After that he claimed to have been contacted by an officer of the Algerian Services ("Captain Hamid") who asked him to provide fifty timers. Freda assertedly obliged, by purchasing and duly delivering the devices [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 126–27].

The court pointed out the unlikelihood of an Algerian intelligence officer asking a Paduan attorney to provide a few dozen implements that could easily be bought anywhere on the market. "Captain Hamid" never materialized, and the woman the defendant produced as a witness to the delivery turned out to be "psychologically and sentimentally subjugated by him," and her deposition was "marred by a number of serious contradictions and unlikelihhods." For their part, the Israeli Intelligence, contacted during the investigation, stated that they knew of no "Captain Hamid" and that no Israeli target had ever been struck with devices using that particular kind of timer [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 110–14; CTZ 1981, 594; Alessandrini 1974a, 62, 76].

Recent investigations strengthen the prosecution's case about the timers. A number of former radical-right militants who turned state witnesses have described a frame-up operation of April 1973, consisting of a bomb attack on the Turin-Rome train and of planting a box of explosives in the country house of a left-wing publisher-militant (Giangiacomo Feltrinelli) [see chapter 6]. The box was also to have contained some of the timers used in the Piazza Fontana bombing. Further, one high-level Ordine Nuovo militant, Pierluigi Concutelli (the killer of Judge Occorsio, see chapter 6) was reportedly approached in jail by Freda, who asked him to pretend that he was Captain Hamid. Both these accounts make the delivery of the timers to Captain Hamid more implausible still. (It seems that eventually the timers ended up in the hands of Stefano Delle Chiaie, who used this to his advantage in keeping Freda "under control") [Salvini 1995, 113–20].

Freda had also asked the electrician who helped him find the timers (one Tullio Fabris) to provide some airtight metal boxes where the timers could be kept; indeed, the explosives were placed in metal boxes of that type. (The same request had been placed by Ventura with Pan.) Furthermore, a few days before the attacks a leather-goods shop in Padua sold four briefcases of the same (German) brand and models as those that had carried the bombs. The briefcase that had contained the nonexploded bomb found in Milan's Commercial Bank was certainly one of those sold in Padua. According to the saleswoman, the customer looked very much like Freda.

The investigations of the Paduan group met with all sorts of hurdles and difficulties. According to a later statement of Bari's general prosecutor,[28] all the stumbling blocks on the road of the inquiry "had a common feature: that of concealing and scattering all findings that could be used as evidence against the members of the subversive Venetian cell." The first investigations of Freda's group had been initiated as early as April 1969 by Pasquale Juliano, a police superintendent in Padua who had suspected correctly that the group was responsible for the spring bombs.[29] Based on charges that appeared in an anonymous pamphlet, the Ministry of the Interior accused Juliano of irregular conduct during his inquiry, ordered his investigations immediately halted, and even had him suspended from his rank and wages. The charges were slanderous, but it was ten years before the courts cleared his name (May 1979). Juliano had been charged with trying to convince a witness to bring false charges against Freda. It later turned out that it was Freda himself who had thus suborned the witness and who had authored the anonymous pamphlet. Freda was sentenced for slander in 1981 (first degree) and in 1982 (in the appeal) by Trieste's court.

When inquiries into Freda's group for the Piazza Fontana affair could no longer be avoided (December 1969),[30] the police immediately attempted to discredit the testimony that had triggered them off by hinting that Ventura was a mythomaniac and that Lorenzon was not suited to receive his momentous secrets: all this before any check on Lorenzon's statements was even attempted.

There followed some curious incidents surrounding the investigation of the briefcases that had carried the explosives. When pictures of the briefcases appeared in the press, the Paduan leather shop reported their sale to the local police, who then passed on the news to their colleagues in Milan and to the Interior Ministry in Rome. *None of them informed the investigating magistrates*, who learned about the event only in September 1972 from a magazine story. By then the probative value of the episode had largely vanished. The saleswoman who had originally identified Freda as the customer on the basis of a newspaper photograph could not recognize him in person three years later. (But her testimony was questionable from the beginning because, according to the police record, she had described a dark-haired customer, and Freda was white-haired [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 128–30; CTZ 1981, 611].)

Moreover, fragments of the briefcases that had exploded in Rome were, unbeknownst to the magistrates, seized by an officer of the Interior Ministry and sent to the German Secret Service, which then identified them as being of the same make and brand sold by the Paduan shop. *This information was withdrawn from the magistrates* who, again, learned of it only three years later. Furthermore, the string with the price tag of one of the briefcases disappeared: "That exhibit could have given a crucial turn to the

inquiries, leading them to the shop that had sold the briefcases. . . . That price tag was never delivered to the investigating magistrates and in fact disappeared forever." The importance of this apparently minor detail lies in the fact that of the thirty-five Italian shops carrying the German ("Mosbach-Grüber") briefcases, only three sold both types (black "Peraso" and brown "City") that were used in the bombings. Of these three, only the shop in Padua usually had price tags held with a string (another of those shops "seldom" used that system) [in Magrone and Pavese 1988, 3: 490; *contra*, CTZ 1981, 608].

A number of unfortunate episodes concerning the stuff of the attacks, that is, the explosives, then followed. You will recall that one of the Milanese bombs did not explode: it was hurriedly detonated, on the advice of a specialist who feared a booby trap. This may have been a prudent decision, but it caused the destruction of crucial evidence. Possibly more questionable is what happened to the explosive seized by the Ventura brothers, which could have been an extremely important corpus delicti, if proven identical with that of the bombings. "It was destroyed *in the presence of Franco Freda* without any warning given to the magistrate who had requested its examination. Not even a sample was collected, on the pretext that, being damaged, it was dangerous" [Magrone and Pavese 1988].

It should be emphasized that *none of the officers who were involved in these episodes was disciplined by the Ministry of the Interior*—the very agency that had reacted so quickly and harshly to P. Juliano's inquiry. In fact some of the persons involved in the two contradictory sets of episodes were the same. Elvio Catenacci, head of the redoubtable Ufficio Affari Riservati (UAR, or Office for Special Affairs, a sort of Intelligence Service of the Interior Ministry), which was responsible for the investigative irregularities concerning the briefcases, was also the senior officer who had endorsed the put-up job against Juliano. Rushing from Rome, he had carried out a lightning inspection in Padua that led to Juliano's suspension. That Catenacci, before becoming head of the UAR, had been posted in Padua may be at the root of Ventura's oft-repeated boast, that his group was safely protected behind "chains and bolts," a bon mot based on the Italian word for bolts (*catenacci*) [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 86]. In spite of this and other controversial involvements, Catenacci, in 1971, became deputy chief of police—a post he held even after receiving warrants for his dubious record.[31]

The officer responsible for sending the briefcase fragments to Germany, Silvano Russomanno, was involved in another murky event: six months after the blast, he "discovered," in the one briefcase that had not exploded, glass fragments of the same kind used by Valpreda for making table lamps. The dancer's defense immediately charged that false fragments of glass had been put in the briefcase by unknown parties, and the "discovery" was

quietly dropped. Neither incident prevented Russomanno from having a brilliant career, all the way to the post of deputy director of SISDE, the civilian Intelligence Service after the 1976 reform. There, in 1980, he engineered another most controversial episode—leakage of the interrogation records of the first and most important Red Brigades "squealer." In other words, the officer whose behavior in 1970 had severely hindered the investigations of the Piazza Fontana massacre ten years later was to deal a heavy blow to those on the Red Brigades. It is hard to believe that either episode was fortuitous, or the result of incompetence, and indeed even the second, which created a much bigger scandal than the first, received a most lenient court treatment [Lutiis 1991, 255–57].

This set of UAR initiatives gives some credibility to the statement relayed to a newsman by a senior SID officer; according to the officer, General Aloja had told him that "the Piazza Fontana blast was somehow organized by the UAR. The SID helped cover everything up" [Cipriani and Cipriani 1991, 121; Salvini 1995, 476–77].

The Intelligence Service

Indeed, at the beginning the initiative seems to have been the UAR's, as SID activities were more limited, being confined to the drafting (and censoring) of the December 16–17 note and refusing to cooperate in any way with the magistrates.

Worse was to happen as the investigation developed.

In fact, there was another obscure matter at the very beginning that received little press attention as it surfaced only much later. The day before the massacre, a car belonging to one Dario Zagolin, a right-wing militant who was also an SID collaborator (and who lived some distance from Milan) was parked in a no-parking zone *near Piazza Fontana*. The prosecutor at Catanzaro's appeal trial suggested that the presence of this car on the eve of the massacre raised grave doubts about who was responsible for the bombing: "Was Zagolin prospecting? Was he checking on the last operational details? What else? The Service's only comment was that they did not know who the man was, nor who, at the SID, 'controlled' him." Zagolin simply vanished abroad and has never been tracked down since [Porcelli 1986, 136; Ledonne 1988, 831].

But the SID's activities that have attracted the most attention are those that were carried out by the Service in order to cover Marco Pozzan, a janitor in a Paduan school for the blind, and Guido Giannettini. Pozzan, one of Freda's close associates, during two interrogations with his counsel in attendance (February 21 and March 30, 1972), had given many details

about the mysterious meeting of April 18, 1969, stating that Pino Rauti had attended it and that there the decision had been made "to exploit the existing social tension and take initiatives to sharpen it" [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 52]. A few days later he claimed to have spoken in a condition of "inexplicable mental confusion" and retracted everything he had said.[32] As soon as he was released he went into hiding, presumably in Padua. A few months later he was "intercepted" by SID agents who invited him to Rome, where they kept him for several days in an apartment belonging to the Service. He was then given a passport with a false name and flown to Spain in the company of a noncommissioned officer of the Service who left him there, whereupon Pozzan disappeared. Responsible for the operation were General Gian Adelio Maletti, head of the SID's "D" office (counterespionage), and his deputy, Capt. Antonio Labruna. Their version was that they had never even known Pozzan's name, that he had been introduced to them by an undisclosed source as someone who might have been able to contact Delle Chiaie. His disappearance in Spain caught them by surprise.

This version of the episode, as will be seen, was rejected by the First-Degree Court but accepted by the Appellate Court. However, a major actor in this and other incidents, Captain Labruna, who has lately begun to collaborate with the prosecution, has confirmed that it is not a true account. He has stated that he and G. Giannettini picked up Pozzan at Rome's station and that Pozzan was accompanied by Massimiliano Fachini, one of Freda's most trusted confederates. Giannettini admitted that he had been present. Labruna has also delivered Maletti's handwritten instructions on how to give a (false) deposition before the court [Salvini 1995, 478–82].

Guido Giannettini was a much more important figure than the Paduan janitor, and the SID's involvement in his case went much deeper. G. Ventura, it will be recalled, had "confessed" (March 1973) that he had infiltrated Freda's group on the SID's behalf, that his SID contact was Giannettini, and that in exchange the latter passed on to him several classified SID reports. Some such materials were indeed found in a safe-deposit box belonging to Ventura's mother. Questioned about them, the Service, after delaying several months (November 1973), attempted to derail the investigators' intentions by stating that the reports "showed some similarities with information that the Service obtained from the most diverse sources." Asked about Ventura's "disconcerting statements" regarding Giannettini, Gen. Vito Miceli, head of the SID, had replied (July 1973) "in lapidary bureaucratese" that the matter fell into the category of military secrecy and could not be disclosed. A few months later (October 1973) Adm. Eugenio Henke, the former chief of SID and incumbent head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when called as a witness, confirmed this policy by reiterating the contents of his July 1970 letter, namely, that the Service indeed had failed

to carry out any investigation of the Piazza Fontana affair. As for Giannettini, Admiral Henke had no idea whether or not he was an SID informer [Alessandrini 1974a, 114; 1974b, 13].

All this could conceivably fall within the normal practice of an intelligence organization protecting its sources and agents. The SID, however, went much further. Shortly after G. Ventura began "confessing," and when the Milanese magistrate was focusing his attention on Giannettini, the two officers who had "managed" Pozzan carried out the same operation with Giannettini, who was first hidden overnight in an SID apartment and then spirited to France (April 1973). The escape occurred immediately before a search was made of Giannettini's house and when the magistrate's summons was imminent; it was organized so as to leave no trace behind of the customer's records. After the escape, Labruna met with Giannettini at least four times; what is more, the Service helped finance Giannettini's exile by regularly sending him checks until April 1974. The Service's attempt to cover up this episode continued long after the preliminary inquiries and well into the trial, when several court requests for SID documents were rejected.

Most important is that in January of 1974 a warrant was issued in Milan for Giannettini's arrest, charging him, along with Freda and Ventura, with the massacre.[33] In other words, the SID covered up and supported Giannettini's activities not only when he was simply an informant for the Service or was merely suspected of involvement in the affair but even when he was formally indicted for the hideous crime.

This is how Catanzaro's first judges summed up the SID's maneuvers up to this point:

> Pozzan had spoken, then retracted, then, in order to avoid the judge's summons, had disappeared, and then escaped: at this point he was shipped to Spain. Fachini was a useful contact on the road to Pozzan when Labruna sought him out. Giovanni Ventura was on the eve of making his revelations when he was offered the possibility to escape from prison. The investigators' inquiries were reaching Giannettini and that is when he was whisked abroad. [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 264]

In the meantime much evidence had surfaced linking Giannettini to the Paduan group. It was proven that frequent and close relations occurred between them not only in 1968–69 but also after the two Paduans were apprehended. The investigators were convinced that Giannettini knew about the bombings carried out by the group in the spring and summer and that Freda and Ventura were aware of his links with the SID and with the army's upper echelons. It would have been foolish—so the magistrates reasoned—to keep a man thus placed informed of a terrorist project, unless he himself were a party to the conspiracy [Alessandrini 1974b, 33; CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 200].

Giannettini's cover was blown in June 1974 by a sensational newspaper interview of Defense Minister Giulio Andreotti (DC), who admitted that Giannettini had been a regular SID informer and that the high-level decision to classify his activities as state secrets was a major blunder.[34] The broader effects of this veritable bombshell on the SID leadership and on the political world in general will be discussed later. That an incumbent minister should intervene in one of the most delicate affairs of his country's politics not with a statement before the magistrates who had requested it but in a newspaper interview is an indication of the explosive political conflict occurring in the Intelligence Service at the time.[35] Shortly thereafter Giannettini gave himself up in the Italian Embassy in Buenos Aires (August 1974) and was extradited to Italy, where he provided a version of his relations with the Paduans that entirely contradicted Ventura's. Giannettini claimed to have charged Freda, his longtime associate, with infiltrating the *Left* (not the Right); Ventura was the agent Freda chose to carry out the plan. Freda, on the other hand, claimed that he knew nothing about Giannettini's links with the SID.

The contradictory statements of the three main defendants strongly undermined their credibility, reinforcing the investigators' suspicion that they were hiding the real purpose of their relationship.[36] This seemed all the more so since, in the course of another investigation, a letter of 4 May 1974 was casually seized, in which Freda asked one of his associates (Claudio Mutti; see above, chapter 2, n. 36) to contact Giannettini (then in Paris) to arrange a common defense plan. Mutti was introduced to Giannettini by a handwritten note (enclosed in Freda's letter), signed by no other than Ventura, further evidence, in the magistrates' view, of "the perfect agreement between the three" [Alessandrini 1974b, 17].

Another extremely serious episode was brought to light in 1975 by a deposition Ventura wrote, according to which Ventura, in 1972, while being detained in Monza, had urged Giannettini, through his wife and sister, to have the SID clear Ventura's name. In reply Giannettini reported the SID's willingness to help Ventura escape from jail, as the Service had already done for Pozzan. Early in 1973 he gave Ventura's sister a key to Monza's jail and a tear-gas can to be used against the guards. Ventura, however, rejected the offer, and nothing came of the plan. Giannettini claimed that the whole story was a fabrication, whereupon the Venturas exhibited the materials in court. The key indeed could open the section of the jail where Ventura had been detained, and the tear-gas, of a type that could not be purchased on the market because of war-material regulations, was the same as that used by SID agents. Neither item could have been obtained by Ventura or Giannettini on their own, and the judges accused Giannettini's associates within the Service (Maletti and Labruna) with having provided them. However, since Ventura had refused the key and

tear-gas, no crime had actually been committed and no formal charges were made [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 189–97; pt. 2: 209–12].

All this led the Milanese judges to conclude their Istruttoria[37] by sending the SID's man to trial as an accomplice in the massacre. The date was December 1974.

This decision should be viewed within the general framework of the proceedings, which were marked by the laborious pursuit of a tormented itinerary. The role of the Cassation Court in steering and shaping the process was crucial throughout.

You will recall that the first Istruttoria, carried out in Rome against the "March 22" anarchists, reached its conclusion in March 1971, sending the whole group up for trial, including the fascist Mario Merlino. The court trial against them began in Rome in February 1972, only to be interrupted two weeks later when the court declared its own lack of jurisdiction on the grounds of territory and sent all acts to Milan's tribunal. On 13 October 1972 the Cassation Court granted the petition of Milan's general prosecutor and had the trial *removed* to Catanzaro. A counterpetition from Catanzaro's general prosecutor to hand the trial back to Milan was rejected by the Cassation Court (November 1972), and the entire Istruttoria, with the anarchists as defendants, began anew in Catanzaro.

First Degree

The trial started before Catanzaro's Assizes in March 1974, but was soon interrupted. Almost before its inception, counsel for some of the victims had asked that the trial be adjourned on the ground that an investigation of the same matter was being conducted in Milan against Freda et al. The Assizes disregarded the petition and started the debate. The matter was then turned over to the Cassation Court, which predictably enough, endorsed the adjournment petition declaring Catanzaro competent to adjudicate *both* the Valpreda et al. case *and* the Freda et al. case (April 1974). That implied that the case in Catanzaro be suspended while awaiting the results of the Milanese Istruttoria; should the latter send anyone to trial, *then* the trial would resume with all defendants on the same dock. Again the Assizes tried to resist the Cassation Court and continue with the proceedings, based on the European Convention's protection of the rights of citizens "to be equitably and publicly tried within a reasonable span of time" (by then the anarchists had been awaiting trial for four years). But the Supreme Body was not taking any nonsense from a small provincial court: the trial against the anarchists must be stopped, the indictment against the Fascists must be part of that trial, and the whole must take place in Catanzaro. Otherwise, what would be the use of the theory of opposite extremes?

A new Cassation decree peremptorily commanded another adjournment of the case and requested that all acts concerning Freda et al. be transferred from Milan to Catanzaro's Giudice Istruttore. At this point the only portion of the case still in Milan was the *stralcio* concerning Giannettini et al. Not for long; in April 1975 the Cassation Court decreed that that part of the proceedings should also be sent to Catanzaro's Judge Istruttore.

With Milan happily stripped of the last shred of the case, everything could finally begin all over again in Catanzaro. A new Istruttoria thus began and was concluded at the end of July 1976 by sending to trial all the defendants of all the "trials" identified up until then (the anarchists; the neo-fascists; the Secret Service men). The unified court trial opened in January 1977 before Catanzaro's Assizes; the first-degree verdict was reached in February 1979.

By then, ten years had passed since the massacre. The country was going through a new, highly dramatic terrorist season, which reached its acme in the spring of 1978 when the Red Brigades kidnapped and murdered the DC's leader, Aldo Moro. Piazza Fontana was a distant memory; facts were blurred; events, periods, and actors criss-crossed one another in the people's collective memory. Public opinion had been highly confused by the well-staged coups de thèatre that had marked the procedural history of the trial. The confusion was increased by the presence in the same dock of bona fide and disguised fascists, of true and phony anarchists, of actual and fake Secret Service agents and collaborators, all charged with the same crimes.[38] It was plausible to expect that the public would only follow the case absent-mindedly, which obviously the dilatory maneuvers had hoped to encourage. Yet Catanzaro's show had the power to shock even a public already grown weary. In a unique display of courageous reporting (the experiment was never repeated until the "Clean Hands" scandals of the 1990s), the state television broadcast the salient phases of the trial. Paraded before the audience was a long line of treacherous generals, inept (or too astute) politicians, disloyal servants of the state, icy double-dealers, and shrewd opportunists. Their styles varied from the pathetic "I don't remember" disclaimer to the impudent denial of evidence on the part of arrogant power brokers who knew themselves to be above the law.

Predictably the focus of the debate, as the first-degree verdict put it, "was from the beginning Guido Giannettini's position, given his role as a collaborator of the state's security service and simultaneously a defendant . . . charged with the most heinous terrorist acts. . . . Was the prolonged and continuous protection granted him . . . a matter of actual complicity or only a case of poor judgment?" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 226].

Prime ministers, ministers of defense, of justice, of foreign affairs, top-ranking generals of the army and the security services, high-level civil and

military aids, all vied long and hard with one another in the noble art of passing the buck.

The main contrast was between the chiefs of intelligence and the civilian leaders. Gen. Vito Miceli, head of the SID, testified that after the judges' requested that he provide information about Giannettini, he had convened a meeting of top SID officers who all agreed that the Service should follow its normal practice of covering up their sources (end of June 1973). Because this was only a technical opinion, Miceli (so he claimed) submitted it to Defense Minister Mario Tanassi who concurred, but in turn said he would submit the matter to the president of the council. Shortly thereafter Miceli, according to his version, was told by the minister that the president agreed with the military advice. Only at this point did he feel authorized to answer the inquiring magistrate that the Service could provide no information on Giannettini, as the matter was classified (deemed a "military secret") [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 234–35].

This procedure (whatever the merits of the case) seems to have been the one usually followed in similar instances, as was attested to by the incumbent defense chief of staff (and former head of the SID) Admiral Henke, and by the senior officers who attended the meeting. One exception, however, was Gen. Saverio Malizia, deputy prosecutor of the High Military Court and counsel to the Ministry of Defense (thus an important link between the military and the civilian leadership of defense), who claimed that "it was well within the powers of the SID's head . . . to reply to a judge's question without any political endorsement" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 242]. This testimony was contradicted not only by the other officers at the meeting but (indirectly) by statements of Minister Tanassi himself (not to mention Mr. G. Andreotti's famed interview). Factual evidence as well[39] supported Miceli's version and led the court summarily to sentence General Malizia to one year in prison for perjury [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 248]. This minor episode was to carry much weight in the ensuing phases of the trial, for Malizia's testimony supported the political leaders' version, namely, that they knew nothing of the affair as no endorsement of the Service's decision had been asked of them.

Specifically, former defense minister M. Tanassi (Social Democrat) stated during the Istruttoria that he had no memory of any such request having been made by the head of the SID; in court he positively ruled out having ever been faced with any state secret issue. His confrontation with General Miceli, during which each man defended his own version, in fact calling the other a liar, was one of the most dramatic moments in the trial. As for the former prime minister, Mariano Rumor (DC), he persistently denied having any memory whatsoever of any of the facts under discussion.

Unexpectedly, and much against the plans of those who had counted on a remote provincial Assizes to leave the power establishment undisturbed, Catanzaro's court issued a harsh verdict: among the major defendants, Giorgio Freda and Giovanni Ventura were found guilty for the massacre and sentenced to life; Guido Giannettini was considered their accomplice and also sentenced to life; Gen. G. A. Maletti and Capt. A. Labruna drew stiff terms as after-the-fact accessories to Giannettini's escape. As for the government leaders involved in the SID's imbroglio, the court asked Parliament to indict them for "ministerial crimes." Finally the anarchist, P. Valpreda, who had been charged with actually placing the bomb, was acquitted, but only on the doubtful grounds of "insufficient evidence" (not unlike a "Scotch verdict"). The court argued that although the rudimentary March 22 group surely was not up to such a complex enterprise, it was "not unreasonable to surmise that one member of that circle may have been hooked, on a personal basis, by the real organizers of the attacks and charged with placing one of the bombs." Given his past record and his well-known propensity to violence, Valpreda was the ideal candidate for such a role. "It cannot be considered illogical, as a hypothesis," that he may have been instigated by the agent provocateur, Merlino, acting on behalf of Delle Chiaie, who in turn operated as the liaison with the real schemers, the Paduans. (Note the hypothetical pattern of the court's reasoning: "not unreasonable to surmise . . . It cannot be considered illogical, as a hypothesis"). Evidence against Valpreda, however, was inconclusive and he was given the benefit of the doubt, as was the possible go-between, Merlino, who had also been charged with placing the Roman bombs.

Giannettini's conviction carried an enormous political significance. According to the verdict, his presence in the conspiracy

> gave [Freda and Ventura] the assurance that they could count on influential support from the very state apparatuses which they meant to subvert . . . and which harbored elements that were willing to give the bombings a political outlet. Guido Giannettini was the crucial link between those elements (still without a name and a face) interested in controlling the terrorist activity for their own end and the Freda-Ventura cell. Hence his role was a first-rank one. [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 271]

A more explicit acknowledgment of the workings of the strategy of tension could hardly be expected. Nor could it be expected that, even so many years after the event, the interests that had worked so long and hard to cover up the truth would now permit this judicial outcome to stand.

The techniques used to demolish Catanzaro's first verdict were the opposite of those used previously to delay and postpone judgment. That result had been achieved by forcing together separate lines of inquiry, which

caused repeated adjournments and renewals of the whole procedure, finally ending up in the *procés monstre* just discussed. Now the game consisted of quietly dismembering the verdict and bringing to the ensuing trials a heap of disconnected pieces, each of which, taken alone, lacked any meaningful content.

As a first step, the Cassation Court (February 1979) quashed the conviction of Gen. Saverio Malizia as "faultily grounded" and ordered the case to be reopened by yet another small southern court, the one in Potenza. The latter, on 30 July 1980, acquitted Malizia "because the fact charged does not exist."[40]

It has already been pointed out that General Malizia (a name largely unknown to the general public) was a crucial link between the government echelon and the Secret Service. His acquittal had immediate effects on the further history of the trial, the appeal proceedings having begun in Catanzaro in May 1980. One of the Appellate Court's first decisions (October 1980) was to reject the defendants' request to recall to the stand all the crucial political-military witnesses (Andreotti, Rumor, Tanassi, Miceli, and Henke). The decision taken on the Malizia case was considered to have rendered their presence superfluous. The political leadership was thus excluded from the trial. Even more explicit was the exploitation of Potenza's verdict by the "political justice," that is, that voiced by the Parliamentary Committee on Indictment Cases, the so-called Commissione Inquirente (Inquiring Committee), which had been vested with the matter in May of 1980 [see below, n. 43].

Appeal in Catanzaro

The real demolition of the first verdict was carried out by Catanzaro's Appellate Court, whose decision, issued in March 1981, shall be briefly examined here.

A striking feature of the verdict was its blithe disregard for the irregularities that marred the case. The continual obstacles to the Milanese investigation and the procedural game of stop-and-go that postponed the trial for ten years were ignored by a text that reads as if the proceedings had gone on with the utmost linearity, marred only occasionally by some "shadows."

The Appellate Court's destructive criticism was reserved instead for the Assizes' verdict. The evidence on which the verdict was based was attacked piecemeal and any overall interconnection was all but ignored. From the start a radical effort was made to belittle the strength and relevance of the Paduan subversive group. Freda's projects were considered nothing more than "strange and utopian theories" [CTZ 1981, 439]; the organization itself was depicted as a small, artisanal one, where each mem-

ber performed all tasks. That such a messy outfit was able to carry out more than twenty bombings in only a few months all over the country did not shake the judges' conviction as to its small size: Other people besides Freda, Ventura, and Pozzan must have been involved in it, but no undue curiosity was shown as to the others' identity [CTZ 1981, 458].

There was, then, a systematic effort to undermine the credibility of the witnesses for the prosecution. The effort was directed first against Ventura, whose fanciful defensive strategy rendered whatever he said unreliable to the judges. This applied to Lorenzon as well, whose hesitancy to expose a friend's possible involvement in a terrible crime was seen as the expression of an "intricate and warped personality," which threw a shadow of doubt on all his accusatory statements.

One objective of this operation was to discredit the notion of the "second-line strategy," making much of the fact that it could not have been plotted during one single meeting. But the time and place of the plotting seem irrelevant, whereas the right-wing strategy of infiltration among and provocation of the Left, whatever its name and whenever plotted, is a leitmotiv of the whole case, proven by a massive amount of evidence. Freda and Ventura, it has been shown, were well versed in the game.

The court then turned to the problem of the timers. The Istruttoria had reached the "mathematical certainty" that the five timers used for the December 12 bombing came from Freda's stock. In the Assizes' debate these conclusions were subjected to the most thorough of cross-checks, lengthening the investigation and requiring that a whole new set of technical tests be carried out on the remains of the blasts [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 91–109].[41] The results led to a significant reappraisal of the Istruttoria's findings: only two of the timers, those of Milan's Commercial Bank and Rome's Labor Bank, could be identified with absolute certainty as being the same type as those bought by Freda. Only a "reasonable presumption" could be linked to the other three [107].

This rigorous check on the Istruttoria (being carried out, incidentally, by a court accused of being unfair to the defendants) was not sufficient for the appellate judges. By stretching and twisting the technical evidence, they concluded that not even these two timers could be identified with full certainty, that only a judgment of probability could be made, which would not justify a conviction. A similar operation was carried out with regard to the bags sold in Padua, whose probative value was strongly played down. These maneuvers were accompanied by a distorted and biased reading of the evidence, including Ventura's delivery of a timer to one witness (Franco Comacchio) asking him to fit it to metal boxes of the kind found in the Piazza Fontana. The court also ignored Ruggero Pan's statement that Ventura had explicitly told him that after the trains the next targets would be the banks, and that the explosives would be placed in metal boxes,

asking him to provide some.[42] The overall result of this demolition work was the acquittal of Freda and Ventura for insufficient evidence.

Later, this outcome was severely censored by the Cassation Court, which ruled that, in demolishing evidence against Freda and Ventura, the Appellate Court ignored the previous circumstances surrounding the two defendants, namely, the twenty bombings carried out within the same subversive project. "The single items of evidence . . . were assessed by the Appellate Court not only in an atomistic manner but at times were distorted, ignoring circumstances that would have been crucial within the proper framework of the defendants' overall behavior. . . . Distortions, contradictions, and disregard of relevant elements [are nowhere more evident than] in the arguments the Appellate Court used to discredit one of the main pillars of the prosecution, i.e., the explosive devices used by the defendants" [Cassation 31730/ 1981, 79–80].

The acquittal of Freda and Ventura, of course, very much lightened the position of their supposed accomplice Guido Giannettini, especially if, as the appellate judges claimed, doubts could be raised as to whether he had been kept regularly informed of their plans. There remained, however, the thorny matter of a defendant charged with a major terrorist crime aimed at subverting the state, someone the state's Intelligence Service had whisked abroad to avoid inquiries. Add to this the barrage of state secrets used to cover up the unseemly connection and the suspicion of governmental involvement in the whole maneuver. This last aspect was the one most easily disposed of. Potenza's verdict on General Malizia paved the way for the political leadership's exit from the trial (and indeed it will be remembered that the Appellate Court called not a single government leader to the stand). Moreover, a parliamentary committee was investigating the case, and Catanzaro's judges were loath to trespass on another jurisdiction.[43] Hence there was to be no discussion of any governmental responsibility in the matter.

Even so, the Giannettini-SID problem remained and the appellate judges did not deny it. However, they rejected any implication of wrongdoing on the part of the Service by placing the blame exclusively on the man who engineered Giannettini's escape abroad, General Maletti: he had acted alone (with the help of his deputy, Capt. A. Labruna) for selfish motives. The judges argued that Giannettini was indeed an SID informer, gathering materials on the Left through the Paduans; his relations with the Service were legal and his links with the top brass had no negative implications. Should there be any doubts, the judges dispelled them with the following argument: "Is it conceivable that the cream of the Service would be involved in a conspiracy? It is not. So it cannot have happened" [examples in CTZ 1981, 524, 528]. All evidence to the contrary was taken to be false. For example, Ventura's tale of an escape offer coming to him from the SID

via Giannettini was only the fabrication of a well-known mythomaniac and need not be seriously entertained.[44]

But why did General Maletti organize Giannettini's escape? It was done as a "precaution taken more in Maletti's interest than in that of his informer," with the purpose of avoiding the disclosure of the Giannettini-SID connection, which would have discredited "the whole Service, and especially Maletti, because it had used someone linked to subversive groups" [CTZ 1981, 515]. But Maletti had joined the SID only in 1971 and had inherited Giannettini from his predecessors. Since Giannettini had been on the SID's payroll since 1965–66, Maletti could hardly be blamed for Giannettini's presence in the ranks. The judges further claimed that, at the famed SID meeting of June 1973, it was Maletti who misled his colleagues into covering up for Giannettini by guaranteeing that the latter had nothing to do with terrorism. Maletti did so because of his "personal interest in avoiding any direct responsibility"; as for the others who, assertedly, ignored Giannettini's position, "there is no reason to suspect any complicity; on the contrary, it should be ruled out" [CTZ 1981, 520, 517]. This of course also ruled out not only the SID's responsibility but also a fortiori, that of the political echelon, as the Cassation Court later emphasized [Cassation 1981, 104]. That Maletti misled them may be true, but the cover-up was pursued even after the warrant against Giannettini was issued and widely known (January 1974); in fact, it remained SID's permanent policy on the matter through the seven-year-long Istruttorias and the four-year-long trial, regardless of changes at the head of the Service (three different chiefs were in office through this period—Henke, Miceli, Casardi—with no change in policy).

All this had no influence (or perhaps too much influence) on the judges' attitude toward the two officers sentenced in the first degree, an attitude dominated by admiration for the officers' "praiseworthy past." Thus they were exonerated of any responsibility in Pozzan's escape. You will recall that they claimed ignorance as to Pozzan's true identity and surprise at his escape to Spain [CTZ 1981, 542]. Such open trust in people on the part of a Service that did not bother to check on a new emissary's identity was considered perfectly plausible by the judges, who discharged Maletti and Labruna of any wrongdoing in the matter. Concerning Giannettini, surely some illegality had been committed, but the judges' good opinion of the officers led to an ever-so-mild reproach, followed only by a symbolic punishment that allowed them to go free. (Maletti emigrated to South Africa and has since stubbornly refused any collaboration with the Italian justice system.)

At this point the extent of Giannettini's exoneration comes as a surprise. He was not acquitted in full, as the systematic demolishment of all evidence against him would lead one to expect, but only on the grounds of

insufficient evidence because of some "ambiguities" in his contacts with Freda and Ventura, especially after the two were indicted and even arrested [CTZ 1981, 565, 649].

Having thrown out the first-degree verdict, did the Appellate Court suggest any theory of its own as to the actual sequence of events? Its interpretation was based on the theme of opposite extremes, conjugated in terms of an unnatural joint venture between neo-Fascists and anarchists, with the latter cast in the role of the unwitting dupes. What in the Assizes' verdict was only a hypothetical possibility thus became the verdict's interpretive mainstay, according to which the anarchists were foolish enough to voice projects and targets that they would never have been able to implement,[45] given the pathetic level of their capabilities. Someone else (i.e., Stefano Delle Chiaie) was informed of such plans (by his man, Mario Merlino) and, in concert with the Paduans, implemented them, possibly with the help of some "March 22" member (the most likely candidate for the role obviously being Pietro Valpreda). The neo-Fascists' intent was to later throw the blame on those who had naively voiced the subversive plans [CTZ 1981, 674].

Regretfully this persuasion of the Appellate Court could not be properly demonstrated because of the "incomplete development" of the preceding inquiries. Thus the Istruttorie and the first judges were not able to prove the connection between Delle Chiaie and the Paduan cell (an argument refuted by the Cassation Court, which pointed out solid evidence of meetings between Freda and Delle Chiaie, who had known each other since university days [Cassation 1981, 67]), thereby allowing the Roman extremist to sail through all investigations and exit the case unscathed [CTZ 1981, 701–2]. Indeed Delle Chiaie was implicated only with regard to Merlino's alibi. He was to be questioned about it (for the sixth time) when he disappeared from Italy and went on to pursue, until 1987, the remarkable career described in chapter 3. Evidence against him included a taped phone conversation between his mistress's daughters, one of whom made the following statements: "Surely Stefano must be in it up to his neck"; and "evidently Merlino said: you must cover me at all costs, otherwise I'll talk" [CTZ 1981, 695].

Merlino was in it, but despite his ascertained role as agent provocateur, his crumbled alibi, and his self-incriminating statements to Serpieri, the court did not consider the evidence against him conclusive. In sum, through no fault of their own, the appellate judges were ruefully compelled to acquit all the major defendants on grounds of insufficient evidence. (The reasoning behind Merlino's acquittal was described by the Cassation Court as follows: "The [first degree's] reconstruction was based on a set of objectively ascertained elements; the second-degree court contrasted them with mere conjectures that were logically faulty . . . and it ignored crucial facts" [Cassation 1981, 67–70]).

What is disconcerting about all this is that the Appellate Court's reconstruction of the facts was substantially close to those facts it had so ponderously declared unfounded. What made the news, however, was the negation of the first-degree verdict and the acquittals (although on "doubtful" grounds) of all defendants, fascists, and anarchists. The confusion in the public mind was reinforced. From then on the massacre could be tied to no one, even though the trial's itinerary was still far from over.

After the Appellate Verdict

The next installment of this unlikely saga was the ruling of the Cassation Court on June 1982. There were two markedly different facets to this verdict. First, the acquittals of Freda, Ventura, Valpreda, and Merlino were severely censured, with the intention of teaching the Appellate Court a harsh lesson in legal hermeneutics. Its judges were repeatedly accused of distorting facts, ignoring crucial evidence, using faulty logic, and altogether disregarding the massive body of consistent evidence accumulated against the defendants.[46] The section of the appellate verdict concerning said defendants was thus quashed, and the case was remitted to another judge. When it came to the question of Giannettini's role, however, this same court suddenly became, in the eyes of the Cassation Court, a master at legal interpretation: its reasoning was faultless, its logic featured an "adequate and complete grasp of all the salient elements . . . correctly carried out according to the principles laid down by the courts and by jurisprudence [. . . leading] to a clear, exhaustive, and logical grounding of the decision" [Cassation 1981, 100, 103]. Unlike the acquittals of his codefendants, Giannettini's acquittal, albeit for *insufficient evidence*, was thus confirmed and became res judicata. Giannettini was forever out of the trial and, consequently, so was the Intelligence Service. After the Inquiry Committee's verdict, Giannettini was the last remaining link with the political echelon; now both the Service and government were out of reach.

The remains of the trial were sent by the Cassation Court to Bari's Appellate Court, yet another southern judge, hundreds of miles removed from the site of the massacre. Here the discussion began in December 1984, fifteen years after the events, and lasted until August 1985. Apart from the public's widespread indifference, this phase of the trial was chiefly notable for two features. The first was the prosecution's belief in Valpreda's innocence and the consequent request for his full acquittal. The second was the court's tiredly resigned attitude, relinquishing any real probative intent in the convoluted matter.[47] The result was a poorly argued verdict,[48] which again used the "insufficient evidence" argument to acquit all major defendants, that is, Freda, Ventura, Valpreda, and Merlino. The convictions of Maletti and Labruna stood, but their punishments were reduced.

Once again all parties petitioned the Cassation Court, but this time the Supreme Body rejected all petitions, and the verdict stood with all its acquittals for insufficient evidence intact. The date was January 1987, eighteen years after the massacre.

But this was not the end of it. As early as October 1981, counsel for one of the victims, taking a cue from Catanzaro's appellate sentence, had petitioned the prosecutor's office to open proceedings against Delle Chiaie, charging him with complicity in the massacre. The elements were basically those of the previous Istruttorie. In 1984 some "repentant" right-wing militants, in the course of other trials, had accused former Ordine Nuovo leader and Freda's friend, Massimiliano Fachini, with having placed Milano's bomb. The new Istruttoria (the fourth!) carried out in Catanzaro was completed in July 1986, with a decree that sent the defendants to trial [Ledonne 1988]. The trial began in October 1988 and ended in March 1989, with all defendants acquitted: the probatory materials were the same as those of the previous trials, and the court did not credit the word of the "repentants."

Twenty years had passed since the explosion; the authors of the massacre were still not convicted.

The story, however, is not yet over. At the time of this writing (July 1995) there have been two new developments. The first is the discovery that another investigation had been carried out by a most unlikely source, the Red Brigades, who concluded that the bomb had indeed been placed by Valpreda, with the help of the Milanese anarchist group led by Pinelli. The explosive had been provided by Freda and Ventura, the mastermind of the whole operation being Delle Chiaie. The bomb was supposed to have exploded after the bank closed, but because it was a Friday, the bank stayed open longer, thus provoking unwanted casualties [Cipriani and Cipriani 1991, 124–25; Silj 1994, 133]. There is no way to verify how this "investigation" was carried out, and hence no way to check on its reliability. It should be added that the police knew about this investigation since 1974.

The second, much more important development is the current investigation being carried out by the Milanese magistrate Guido Salvini, thanks to the discovery of new evidence, and to Captain Labruna's recent willingness to collaborate with the authorities. Some of the most significant items of this collaboration have been mentioned above, including the revelation that, after the massacre, a number of timers belonging to the set used in Piazza Fontana were (and presumably still are) in the possession of the radical Right—thus denying Freda's claim that they were passed on to "Captain Hamid." But the full scope of Salvini's inquiry, which is still under investigative secrecy, is not known.

The last word, then, on the Piazza Fontana massacre may yet have to be told.

Appendix

The SID Note of December 16, 1969

In a meeting on the evening of December 16, our informer has reported that:

- the bomb attacks in Rome were probably carried out by the known Merlino Mario, presently detained by the police. . . . The police ignored some crucial details, such as his whereabouts at the time of the explosions (he told them he was taking a walk, whereas he told our informer that he was with Stefano Delle Chiaie. Our informer, however, knows that Delle Chiaie was elsewhere and not with Merlino);
- Merlino has declared excellent knowledge of the underpass at the BNL branch in Rome [where one of the bombs was planted] and his father is a friend of the director of the BNA bank in Milan;
- the attacks are certainly linked to those carried out in Paris in 1968, the mastermind being one Y. Guérin-Sérac, a German citizen who:
  - lives in Lisbon, where he directs the "Ager-Interpress" agency; . . .
  - is an anarchist, but his ideology is not known in Lisbon;
  - has a deputy named Leroy Roberto . . . ;
  - in Rome is connected with the said Stefano Delle Chiaie;
  - is certainly in touch with the diplomatic service of Communist China in Bern;

  Stefano Delle Chiaie presumably received the orders for the attacks from Sérac and then charged Merlino with the actual implementation. The latter was, like Delle Chiaie, an MSI militant and was later infiltrated, under cover, in the pro-Chinese group, eventually becoming its head and then setting up the "March 22" group. . . . Later Delle Chiaie was expelled from the MSI because of his extremism, while Merlino acquired a truly pro-Chinese ideology.

  This explains the Merlino-Delle Chiaie connection, the latter attempting to strike at the pro-Chinese groups with these attacks;

  . . .
- Merlino, still on behalf of Delle Chiaie, is supposed to be responsible as well for the attack against the "Lazio" carabinieri legion;
- the attack against the National Monument was carried out by chance: the bombs were meant for banks that happened to be closed at the time of the programmed actions, with the timers already set;
- Milan's bomb was not meant to cause casualties, being planned for the time when the bank would be closed. A faulty working of the timing device presumably anticipated the blast [. . .] [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 181–82].

6

The High Point of the Strategy of Tension: Attempted Coups and Massacres, 1970–1975

Background

The years immediately following the "moments of madness" [Zolberg 1972] of 1968–69 coincided in Italy with a veritable explosion of civil society. The great collective movements of the period brought to the foreground, without the mediation of political parties, a range of actors hitherto absent, thus causing much social unrest and a profound crisis of the party system.

One effect was a powerful demand for the democratization of political and social institutions, leading to the passage of a number of important and long-overdue reforms. Among them was a bill legalizing divorce, one establishing the autonomous regions, and a third setting the rules for popular referenda (the latter two implementing constitutional prescriptions that had been awaiting enactment since 1948). Possibly most important symbolically was the "workers' charter," which strengthened the powers of workers in plants and factories by giving them the right of assembly, the right of organization in the workplace, the right to protection in dangerous jobs, and legal protection against unfair dismissal.

That these reforms came about much more as the result of collective protest than of regular parliamentary discussions increased the conservatives' feeling that the system was in the hands of the rabble, which were pushing through demagogic and hare-brained reforms, whose only result would be the political and economic bankruptcy of the country, as a prelude to the advent of communism. The first regional elections, in June 1970, did not alter overall voting patterns, but marked communist victories in Emily, Tuscany, and Umbria, thus confirming the worst exptectations of the moderate and right-wing parties: central Italy was in effect a "Red Belt."

In the meantime, the economic difficulties initiated in the second half of the 1960s were growing. The workers' demands of that "hot autumn," coupled with the worldwide monetary crisis of 1970–71, made matters worse, and the energy crisis that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur War brought

about a veritable recession: unemployment shot up and inflation reached two-digit figures. Although state industry and a number of private groups (e.g., Fiat, Pirelli) maintained high rates of investment, thereby partly mitigating the effects of the economic crisis, most of the private sector responded in more traditional and negative ways.

> As wage increases were passed on indiscriminately to prices, inflation began to rise markedly. The flight of capital took on menacing proportions; investments slumped dramatically. Most significant, Confindustria remained firmly in the hands of those who responded to the situation only with prophecies of doom. . . . Once again, as at the time of the Center-Left, the more open-minded or neocorporatist elements of Italian capital seem to have been swamped by a wave of conservative hysteria. [Ginsborg 1990, 332]

Alongside conservative economic and political measures, the strategy of tension was another, more lethal answer enacted by sectors of these groups in order to check the ongoing process of democratization. The major episodes of such a strategy, which occurred in the first half of the seventies, will now be described.

National Front and "Windrose"

Almost a year to the day after the Piazza Fontana massacre, on the night of 7 December 1970 ("Tora-Tora night"), another most controversial episode was staged by an earlier protagonist, Prince Junio Valerio Borghese. The old soldier had ill-adapted to peacetime conditions and their petty political atmosphere; even his experience as MSI president was disappointing [Pansa 1971, 40–43]. Refusing to stay on the sidelines, however, he had kept in touch with those right-wing forces that, like him, scorned party politics. The season of intense social conflict of the late sixties gave him his chance, and in September 1968 he founded the Fronte Nazionale (National Front).

The movement was aimed at "the defense and restoration of the supreme values of the Italian and European civilization"[1] by establishing a "new political order" that would replace class conflict with "a healthy and realistic collaboration among professional categories," by doing away with such disturbances as political parties and trade unions while giving an exalted position to "modern and efficient armed forces, free from all political interference."[2] The overall purpose was to "build a dam against red terror" [Assizes 1978, 89].

The Front appealed to old Fascists, especially veterans of the RSI, to conservative professionals, businessmen, and industrialists impatient with the "growing social disruption," to notables and "men of order" of different

callings. Much effort was devoted to the officer corps and to veterans' associations, where Borghese had many friends and still enjoyed a high prestige. The new blood for the coalition was provided by the combat organizations, first and foremost our "historic groups." Many members of Ordine Nuovo played leading roles in the Front's activities.[3] As for Avanguardia Nazionale, its leaders were "among the most determined in advocating that the favorable moment should not be wasted." Delle Chiaie, in charge of the youth groups, styled himself as the Front's military commander [Assizes 1978, 94–95].

The Front was run by a national directorate supported by seventy provincial and twelve regional "delegations." Special groups, entrusted with tasks of "a military character," operated at the provincial level. Within a year "adherents numbered in the thousands" [Assizes 1978, 92–94, 100]. Funds came from conservative business sources linked to Borghese and his senior staff. According to the court the plan envisaged "a vast number of small criminal acts, such as harassments, assaults, scuffles, occasionally some sensational event," all of which would create a widespread climate of mistrust, alarm, and anxiety, paralyzing government and exposing the ruling class's impotence and corruption. Moderate public opinion would raise its voice for law and order to be enforced at all costs. At this point, "only the armed forces, for too long humiliated and denigrated . . . would have the chance to reestablish the law, . . . and acquire an overall hegemonic role." The Front would be at their side, "later on claiming the rightful compensations and the privilege to partake in the construction of a strong and authoritative state" [Assizes 1978, 98–99].[4] The ON and the AN were to provide the shock troops; after the summer of 1969, alongside the official organization (or "A groups") there was also a number of underground "B groups," charged with providing weapons, recruiting "special" militants, and making sanctuaries ready [100].

During the summer of 1970 a number of preparatory meetings and drills were held; Borghese had even drafted a proclamation to be read after the seizure of power.[5] The "long-awaited" event took place on the night of 7 December 1970 when several hundred militants were concentrated in various strategic locations in Rome, waiting for the attack order. Confederate groups were alerted and ready to intervene all over the country, in cities ranging from Milan, Verona, and Venice in the North, to Reggio Calabria in the far South [Salvini 1995, 344–46, 369]. The "political headquarters" and the "operational headquarters" were in the business offices of Borghese's aids, both real-estate developers [Assizes 1978, 30].

The volunteers, also coming from outside Rome (many from Genua and Tuscany), were armed with light weapons. More weapons were to be provided by a daring commando operation led by Delle Chiaie, who was to seize them from the armory of the Interior Ministry.[6] Meanwhile a four-

teen-vehicle convoy carrying about two hundred cadets and officers of the Forest Guards School, armed with submachine guns and abundant ammunition, had departed from their Cittaducale base (fifty miles north-east of Rome) for an alarm drill ostensibly directed to the Alban Hills (twenty miles southeast of Rome). Once in view of the capital, the convoy left the freeway and headed for the center of town. Its commander, Major Luciano Berti, an RSI veteran who had been sentenced for collaborationism shortly before the expedition, had ordered a sizable stock of handcuffs.

Suddenly, and for reasons that were never made clear, a counterorder was issued: the operation must stop, all traces of it must be hidden. According to Remo Orlandini, also an RSI veteran, and second in command to Borghese, there was barely time to track down the lorry carrying the weapons picked up at the Interior Ministry and bring them back to their rightful armory. One submachine gun was not returned. Orlandini facetiously complained about the large sum it cost him to have a copy of the gun manufactured in order to replace the missing one [Assizes 1978, 194, 206]. A counterfeit gun was indeed discovered later in the armory, an important piece of evidence, according to the prosecution, of the break-in at the ministry.[7]

The Forest Guards, who were by now in the neighborhood of the main state TV installations, were met by two unknown persons, whereupon they made an about-face and drove back to their base. The militants assembled at several meeting points were dispersed, amid loud complaints and shouts of betrayal. At least on the surface it was an utter fiasco. A few months later, when rumors about the attempt reached the judiciary, Borghese fled abroad (March 1971); he was to die in Spain in 1974 (mysteriously, according to one expert, the former head of counterintelligence) [Viviani 1985, 363].

Opinions on the seriousness of the attempt vary. Officially it was dismissed as a comic opera. Yet the long-time DC secretary and prime minister, Arnaldo Forlani, a cautious man, in 1972 publicly defined Borghese's attempt as the most serious danger ever endured by the Republic. He added: "This disrupting attempt, based on a plot with strong organizational and financial bases, and supported not only by domestic but probably by international sources as well, this attempt is not over yet; we have evidence that it is still under way." With typical style Mr. Forlani always refused to elaborate even on the most alarming parts of his statement: the warning to the relevant audience had been issued, and the DC leader never again took up the subject.[8]

The episode certainly has many disquieting elements. The SID knew all along about the Front's aims and initiatives, having followed it from November 1968 to the very day of the coup, and produced an impressive amount of documents, *some of which* were turned over to the magistrates and dutifully reported by the courts [see, e.g., Assizes 1978, 35 ff.; 68 ff.;

Viglietta 1986, 54–59; Nunziata 1986, 93–94]. Yet not only did the SID do nothing to stop the Front, it tried to mislead the magistrates and the government. When, in 1971, the judiciary asked the SID about the plot, General Miceli, who had repeatedly met with Borghese and his deputies, replied that the Service had come to know of "an unspecified sensational gesture" to be carried out by the Right in reply to left-wing demonstrations, but that further checks did not substantiate the information. He later described the gatherings of the plotters to Defense Minister Tanassi as "a jolly get-together among old comrades" [Nunziata 1986, 93, 95]. This led to Miceli's brief incarceration, which will be discussed shortly.

Important U.S. circles were also at least informed of the attempt,[9] while recent evidence has indicated that the Mafia, contacted by Borghese, was at least sympathetic [Arlacchi 1992, 96; Salvini 1995]. The mysterious order that halted the operation was generally linked to the sudden failure of expected support to materialize, either domestic or international. All this led many observers to surmise that Borghese had been trapped into his adventure by not-so-obscure forces, who really did not want to engineer a coup but simply to scare the government and steer official politics to the Right [Bocca 1978, 52–53; Flamini 1982, 228].

Here a new actor in the drama should be introduced, the infamous P2 (Propaganda 2) Masonic lodge, which was declared a criminal association and disbanded by Parliament in 1981.

The P2 was a super-secret Masonic lodge that came to be controlled at the end of the sixties by an otherwise lackluster and rather shady businessman, Licio Gelli, who transformed it into one of the most secretive, sinister, and all-encompassing power centers in the country. The 1984 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Committee, chaired by Congresswoman Tina Anselmi, discovered that P2 members existed in most sectors of Italian society, including Parliament itself, the business world, the media, bureaucracy, the judiciary, and especially the Intelligence Service and the armed forces.[10] It was ascertained that on several occasions Gelli convened meetings of the military in his private residence. "It is most disquieting—the Anselmi committee observed—to picture a meeting of generals of the Republic, called in his private villa by such an ambiguous figure as Licio Gelli, who systematically operated on the borders of illegality; it is truly unheard of that they would listen, as if he were a shadow Chief of Staff, to his harangues on how they should carry out their most delicate tasks, even relating Gelli's orders to their subordinates" [Anselmi 1984, 82].

It has been surmised that Gelli was a man of the Service through most of his career. The latter knew about him since the early 1970s but never took any measures, even denying having any information on him until the scandal exploded in 1980. Those who had tried to inquire about him met with trouble (including death by an obscure accident and a suspicious suicide). In any case, Gelli's great power undoubtedly came, at least in part, from his

possession of the SIFAR dossiers, which had been delivered to him as a dowry by de Lorenzo's successor at SIFAR, Gen. Giovanni Allavena, who joined the P2 in 1967 [Lutiis 1991, 181].[11]

Gelli's ideology was a crude mixture of commonplaces about the disintegration of Italian society and its joint control by clerics and Communists. He called for radical transformations. The "Plan for a Democratic Rebirth," drafted on his behalf by competent hands, recommended, among other features, strict control of the media, constitutional revision, removal of parliamentary immunity, reinforced tasks for the police and carabinieri, and suspension of union activity and collective bargaining for two years [Anselmi 1984, 65, 146ff.].

The Anselmi committee placed P2 activities squarely within the framework of the strategy of tension. "This committee has reached the reasoned conclusion, shared by several courts, that the P2 lodge, . . . established ongoing links with subversive groups and organizations, instigating and countenancing their criminal purposes, throughout actions that meant to partake of these activities. The P2, however, held to its own political plans, not to be identified with the purposes . . . that such groups and organizations were trying to achieve" [Anselmi 1984, 87]. In other words, "there is no question that, in that period, groups and forces [i.e., the neo-fascists] were autonomously attempting to overthrow the democratic system by violent means; the origins of this situation were certainly autonomous, and its weight should never be underestimated . . . but it was also exploited, in a more subtle way, within the framework of other [the P2's] political plans" [101].

The P2 lodge was disbanded by Parliament; some P2 affiliates were disciplined, but the network of protection they enjoyed was such that most of them were able to keep their positions, and from there continue to influence Italian politics to the present.[12]

The excellent investigation carried out by the Anselmi committee recognized the Borghese affair as a sort of baptism of fire for the P2. It was precisely "in the case of the so-called Borghese coup" that "positive evidence of a meaningful involvement" by the lodge in public affairs surfaced for the first time. The Service's pretense that they knew nothing of the coup came about partly because of General Miceli's membership in the P2 lodge (Miceli's appointment as Henke's successor had been recommended by Gelli in 1970) [Anselmi 1984, 80, 87, 88–89]. "The attempted coup, even though unsuccessful, did attain its political aims. Operationally the plot failed; politically it succeeded because from then on the existence of groups and forces ready to carry out such steps had to be considered a realistic possibility" [100].

From Captain Labruna's materials (taped in 1974, when practically no one knew Gelli's name) it is now emerging that Gelli's role in the Borghese plot was far more important than anyone had so far suspected, to the

point that the order to stop the operation may have come from him [Salvini 1995, 337ff.].

At the time the judiciary shed little light on the affair and in fact did its utmost to belittle it. The first desultory inquiries (1971), heavily influenced by the SID's dismissal of the entire episode as a mere "unspecified sensational event" that did not materialize, led to the quick release of all suspects. Prosecution began in earnest only in 1974, when finally the SID, for reasons to be presently discussed, produced *some* incriminating documents. Even so, only a limited number of people were brought to trial (the whole base of the movement was left out) and *not before 1977*. The most serious charge raised by the Istruttoria ("armed insurrection against the state") was dropped by the Assizes for all defendants, alleging the inadequacy of the attempt. The same court that had scathingly piled up the evidence on which this paragraph is based, taking a sharp turn in its reasoning, came to this surprising conclusion: "They had set out for an isolated, sensational demonstration, one that, although violent and hostile, was inadequate to implement [the figure of armed insurrection as in] *Crim. code* #284. . . . That 'gesture' [*sic*] appears now, as it did then, vain, fanciful, weak" [Assizes 1978, 114]. Admissions like those of Borghese's deputy, Orlandini, and evidence to the contrary, like the Forest Guards' march, were brushed aside.

Orlandini was described as a vain and boastful old fool, and his statements were ruled unreliable. A major piece of evidence of the attempt, you will recall, was the counterfeit machine gun in the ministry's armory, for which Orlandini admitted responsibility. The court disposed of it as follows: "*It is plausible* that the defendant, who was always around the military, for his own ends [*sic*] may have carried out some inquiries about the ongoing rumors *and it cannot be ruled out* that he may have thus learned some data on the [ministry's] weapons, later using such information in order to earn the trust of [the SID's men]" [Assizes 1978, 214; italics added]. Only the manufacturing specifications of the machine guns, together with the number and type of those in the racks, were unknown even to the officer in charge of their maintenance [Nunziata 1986, 75].

As for the Forest Guards' night march, the court considered it entirely normal that (a) a night drill of two hundred fully armed and equipped military men (there was even an ambulance) was halted because of the rain; and (b) in order to make a U-turn the convoy left the freeway driving ten miles into town. There was then the meeting with the two unknowns who, according to the prosecution, ordered the column to retreat. Here the court fell from comic opera into burlesque, by accepting the defense's claim that they were two "poor pederasts" [Assizes 1978, 171] attempting an ambiguous approach—in the pouring rain and with two hundred military around.

As a result a number of the defendants were sentenced on lesser counts

(political conspiracy, criminal association); most of the military were acquitted; and the SID's behavior was found to be faultless.[13]

In the face of such verdicts it is difficult not to agree with the Anselmi committee's interpretation: once the Left and those in general aiming for changes in the existing power balance had received the message that, if they insisted, groups would be available for a coup, the establishment was no longer interested in having the coup carried out. Besides, it could not punish those who had planned it, for two reasons: they might be kept in reserve for future contingencies, and some of them, if threatened, were ready to strike back, revealing links and complicities. Hence the display of evidence about the attempted coup did not achieve the verdict that should logically have derived from it. But such a display was also a warning to the militants to keep out of mischief unless authorized. (Mr Forlani's coded message is an eloquent example of this strategy.)

All this appears even clearer now that the new evidence reveals the actual breadth and weight of the conspiracy, which involved not only aged and day-dreaming veterans but high-ranking admirals and generals as well (all the way up to the army chief of staff, who was ready to provide weapons) [Salvini 1995, 284–310].

The sentence was appealed by the defendants and only in part by the prosecution; the Appellate Court, in November 1984, acquitted everyone of all charges, ruling that "the fact [did] not exist": in other words, according to this court, there had been no attempt, no conspiracy, not even a subversive association. The general prosecutor did not take the verdict to the Cassation Court and the acquittals stood [Viglietta 1986, 70]. The frequent efforts of P2 members, beginning with Licio Gelli himself, to intervene with the judiciary in order to lighten the position of the accused have been pointed out in the course of other investigations [*Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 228–34].

This is all the more disconcerting, considering that the Borghese affair had a sequel. As early as 1971 a number of its veterans, disappointed with the failure of the "Tora-Tora night," had closed ranks and set up a new organization, "The Wind Rose," with more or less the same intents and purposes as the former group. The direction of the entire initiative was in the hands of a number of senior army and especially intelligence officers, who obtained sizable funds from Ligurian industrialists. The plot had been discovered and initial investigations were carried out by judges in Padua and Turin who, in October 1974, arrested the leaders and promoters of the conspiracy, as well as General Miceli. On the grounds of a vague "connection" with the ongoing Roman Istruttoria on the Borghese affair, the Cassation Court, following a familiar path, removed the proceedings to Rome, where they were drowned with the rest of the trial [Assizes 1978, 54–56, 273 ff., 60, 314 ff.]. Verdicts on these charges were predictably mild and

were overturned in any case by the Appellate Court. They will be discussed at greater length below. The 1984 Inquiry Committee also found evidence of heavy P2 involvement in the case of "The Wind Rose" [Anselmi 1984, 96–97].

The Peteano Massacre

Of all the massacres attributed to the radical Right, only in one case so far has there been a final conviction (res judicata), made possible by the perpetrator's confession. This episode is worth describing in detail, because it provides an exemplary view of the strategy of tension at work, besides offering an eloquent example of the activities of a provincial Ordine Nuovo unit.

Through the postwar years, the Venetian region was a most fertile ground for neofascist activities. A section of Ordine Nuovo was founded in Venice as early as 1957, one in Verona in 1961; Freda's Paduan cell has been extensively discussed in the previous chapter. Similar groups existed in Trieste, Treviso, Trento. Units were independent but closely linked to one another in a network of strategic, tactical, and logistical support that extended to other domestic and international centers, such as Jeune Europe and the Nouvel Ordre Européen [Istruttoria 1986, 246].[14] Well provided with weapons and explosives, the groups carried out intense activity, attested to by the many clashes they sustained with law-enforcement agencies [Istruttoria 1986, 59; 247–66].

One of the most active units was the Ordine Nuovo section of Udine, led by two fanatical admirers of Evola, the charismatic Vinciguerra twins, Gaetano and Vincenzo (born in 1949).[15] The group's action-repertoire began in the late sixties and proceeded through the usual crescendo, that is, "forced propaganda," violent brawls and beatings of opponents, even a "self-financing" operation by means of a robbery in a post office (April 1970). Explosives were first used in 1971: among the targets were DC locals, the railroads (a protest against the state visit of Marshal Tito), a war memorial, and the house of an MSI deputy (a deed for which the Left was accused). There followed the burning of the car of a left-wing militant, who was killed a few months later in an obscure accident [89–98, 110, 115]. Understandably such a curriculum elicited Freda's enthusiasm. According to Ventura, he spoke approvingly of the existence, in Udine, of "a group of resolute young men, ready to do any deed, even to plant bombs in order to fake the existence of opposite terrorist groups" [Istruttoria 1986, 504; Assizes 1987, 131].

The acme of the ON group's activities was the Peteano massacre. In May 1972 they booby-trapped a small Fiat, fired pistol shots against its windshield, and placed the car in a mountain wood near Peteano, a village in

Gorizia's district. Then, with an anonymous phone call, they called the carabinieri to the place. When the agents lifted the hood the bomb exploded, killing three and severely injuring a fourth.

In October of the same year, a member of the group, a former paratrooper named Ivano Boccaccio (the man to whom G. Vinciguerra "had given a new purpose in life") tried to hijack a plane from Trieste's Ronchi airfield, in order to seize ransom money to finance the group. When the plane was surrounded Boccaccio fired at the police, who shot back, killing him.

For a dozen years the investigations and the ensuing judicial proceedings ignored the real culprits, focusing instead on a variety of asserted suspects who in fact had nothing to do with the crime. At first a "red trail" was pursued but then quickly abandoned owing to its evident insubstantiality. The trail pointed to the extreme-left group Lotta Continua and was based on the false statements of a militant turned police informer, who, however, in court, with the support of witnesses, denied having ever made such statements [Assizes 1987, 60]. The ensuing "yellow trail" (also based on the phoney declarations of a carabinieri informer, who also in court disowned the statements attributed to him) was more impressive and lasted longer. It concerned a number of local petty criminals, who underwent lengthy investigations and several trials that lasted from 1974 to 1979 before their innocence was proven. By contrast, all clues pointing to the "black trail" were ignored or disregarded (according to the first-degree verdict, there had even been a precise order from a carabinieri general to block any investigation on the Right) [Assizes 1987, 77–81].

Then came Vinciguerra's admission of guilt. He confessed of his own free will, not repudiating his past actions but rather boasting with pride of his stand as a "political soldier." This cost him a life sentence whereas otherwise he would have been assured impunity.[16] He claimed to have confessed in order "to set the record straight":

> I take full, total, and complete responsibility for . . . Peteano's attack, meant as a break with the strategy hitherto followed by movements that I considered right-wing revolutionary, and whose [strategy] was dictated instead by the domestic and international power centers running the state. . . . The massacres had a clear political aim: to arouse, by means of the most savage "provocations," an enraged popular reaction that would have justified repressive countermeasures. The ultimate purpose was to inspire the passage of exceptional laws or an Emergency Act. In that way those centers that feared a waning of their power would have been strengthened. [Assizes 1987, 238–39]

The one truly revolutionary deed was that of Peteano, a *combat action* specifically aimed against the state (represented by the carabinieri) and not against an indiscriminate crowd. It is precisely this feature, incidentally, that presumably impelled the radical Right to take responsibility for the

episode, while refusing to do so for the other massacres. These latter episodes, being indiscriminate, carried a political stigma that not even revolutionary movements wished to bear [Salvi 1989, xiii]. Even that was immediately covered up by the state apparatus:

> The cover-up operations—Vinciguerra claimed—went into effect autonomously. They meant to protect not a collaborator of the Services but a strategy that would have been jeopardized had the truth about Peteano been known. At the time it was unthinkable that the ON might attack the state institutions, because terrorism in 1972 had to be solely communist. [Assizes 1987, 240]

For, according to Vinciguerra, the milieu and the state apparatuses knew the culprits' true identity as early as 1972.[17] Indeed the inquiries following Vinciguerra's confession showed that the original investigations were marred by a number of irregularities that only a very charitable assessment can attribute to gross professional incompetence.

The most relevant are the following. On the massacre site a carabinieri noncommissioned officer found two .22-cartridge shells. He was told by his officers to put them aside, as they were of no interest to the inquiry [*sic*] [Istruttoria 1986, 515]. No further action was taken on the shells, and they eventually disappeared. But the noncom had reported his finding in the first report submitted to the judiciary, giving the shells' caliber. Later on that report also disappeared and was replaced by two different ones, which made no mention of the caliber and falsely stated that the shells had been delivered to the gunnery technicians. Moreover, the signature of the carabinieri lieutenant affixed to the two later reports was proven to be false [Assizes 1987, 179].

The Istruttoria and the Assizes verdict surmised that the substitution of the records, the false statement about the shells' delivery, and the forgery of the signature took place after the October 1972 attempt at Ronchi's airport, where the hijacker had used a .22-caliber gun belonging to a member of Udine's Ordine Nuovo, Carlo Cicuttini. Had Peteano's shells been properly examined, so the court reasoned, they would have shown the link between the two episodes, thus leading the inquiries to the ON group, which instead was not touched, in spite of many clues pointing to them [Istruttoria 1986, 498–537; Assizes 1987, 141–80].

As for Cicuttini, the owner of the gun, not only was he a member of the ON but he was also the MSI section chairman in a neighboring town. Immediately after the airport episode, with the help of the domestic and international neofascist network, he fled to Spain, where he joined the expatriate group led by Delle Chiaie [Assizes 1987, 271 ff.]. The courts gave him a life sentence for his responsibility in the massacre [Assizes 1987; Appeal 1989, 160], but because Spain has refused to grant extradition he is still at large.[18]

The senior carabinieri officers who took charge of the investigation not only monopolized it to the exclusion of other law-enforcement agencies, such as the police (whose head complained bitterly about this behavior), but they established an unorthodox chain of command that excluded even other carabinieri officers not belonging to the group [Istruttoria 1986, 482; Assizes 1987, 111]. They were a tightly knit group, led by a general belonging to the P2 Masonic lodge [Anselmi 1984, 77, 79; Assizes 1987, 112]; his right-hand man in the episode, a colonel, was a former aid of SIFAR's chief de Lorenzo (for whom he had drafted the operational blueprints of the 1964 Plan Solo). The group included two other colonels, one of whom also belonged to the Secret Service; in 1971 they had been involved in a dubious case of bombings in Trento, which led to their arrest for covering up the agents provocateurs who had presumably planted the bombs in order to frame the extreme-left groups. They were later acquitted [Assizes, 117; *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 112–32]. It was this group that was responsible for focusing the investigations on the "red" and "yellow" trails, disregarding the "black" one. The 1987 verdict (Assizes) found them guilty, together with Gorizia's state prosecutor, of an impressive series of charges (perjury, slander, accessory after-the-fact, etc.), and sentenced them to harsh punishment.

Then, in 1989, an extraordinary appeal verdict exonerated the entire lot, on the grounds that the facts charged "did not exist."[19] This verdict has been annulled by the Court of Cassation, on petition from the prosecution. The new appellate trial, in May 1991, which led to a new guilty verdict for the carabinieri officers, was upheld by the Cassation Court.

The Historic Groups: Dissolution and Reorganization

For the organized radical Right, the first half of the seventies was a period of trauma and intense, even frenetic activity. The wave of collective protest and social unrest that had so raised the concerns of the anxiety cartel were perceived by the radical Right as threatening to wipe them out of the political arena altogether. The beginning of left-wing terrorism (in January 1971 the Red Brigades set fire to some trucks at a Pirelli plant) reinforced this feeling, at the same time challenging the Right to emulate such activities.

Other initiatives, coming from certain state sectors and specifically targeted at them, also spurred the Right to action. Ordine Nuovo was brought to trial in 1972 and it was widely expected that it would be dissolved (as indeed it was in 1974); the same fate was (also correctly) anticipated for Avanguardia Nazionale. The most urgent need became, then, that of creating new aggregation poles around which the movement could be reconsti-

tuted, either by collecting the militants of the historic groups under new names or by creating new groups.

This led to a veritable frenzy of activity. Meetings, actions, and initiatives, often overlapping and criss-crossing one another, multiplied, thanks to the near-impunity that the Right enjoyed, as the law-enforcement agencies were either unwilling or powerless to intervene. If this appears to contradict the repressive policies that led to the dissolution of the ON and the AN, the answer is that the state policies vis-à-vis the Right were indeed contradictory, as the following paragraphs will discuss in greater depth. Anyway, apart from the dissolution of the two groups, the measures taken against their members were very mild indeed,[20] and this went together with the lack of indictments over the Piazza Fontana and Borghese affairs. In some instances the connivance between certain corps of the state and the radical groups was blatant.[21]

Sill, no clear picture emerges of the outcome of this flurry of initiatives; especially tentative is the reconstruction of the links between the groups because of the disconnected way in which most groups and episodes were investigated. What we are left with is approximately the following.

First, a number of "cultural circles," "study centers," and the like, were set up, with the purpose of "keeping the milieu together" and providing cover for militant initiatives. Prominent among those was the "Drieu La Rochelle" circle, founded in Tivoli, near Rome, by Paolo Signorelli, a veteran of the MSI and ON experience, who was to play a crucial role in this and the next period. A journal also appeared, *Anno Zero*, of which five issues were published in the winter and spring of 1974.

An important organizational outcome of this phase was the appearance of a mysterious group named Ordine Nero (Black Order), which collected militants of the historic groups and of minor organizations and whose existence did not become known for certain, outside the milieu, until the early 1980s. Its original base was in Milan, where it could count on a hard core of "Evoliani" and veterans from the ON and AN; it consisted of at least seven territorial units, of which possibly the most active was in Tuscany. Ordine Nero was joined by (or possibly it absorbed) other smaller groups, such as the Squadre d'Azione Mussolini (SAM, a time-honored acronym) and La Fenice, which recent investigations consider nothing but Milan's branch of Ordine Nuovo, operating in close contact with the brethren Venitian and Veronese groups (Freda-Maggi and Massagrande-Spiazzi) [Salvini 1995]. Further, Ordine Nero had a very close operational link with a shady organization active in the Valtellina (northern Lombardy), the Movimento di Azione Rivoluzionaria (MAR)—so close indeed that even some militants thought that Ordine Nero was nothing but a kind of armed branch of MAR for the coup d'état strategy [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 28]. The arrest of the MAR's chief led to the seizure of a vast arsenal of weap-

ons, ammunition, and explosives, including a bazooka, military uniforms, forged documents, even two sound-proof cells in which possible kidnapping victims could have been imprisoned.

This connection is most disquieting, because the MAR was led by one Carlo Fumagalli, a former Partisan with a checkered past, which included serving under a future SID general and then on behalf of U.S. Intelligence in Yemen (his partisan exploits for the Allies had earned him a Bronze Star). In the seventies his main source of income seems to have come from recycling stolen cars; nevertheless he was so close to the senior ranks of the army that he organized the escape of some of the officers implicated in the conspiracies of the time. In 1970, and then again in 1972, the MAR had carried out a number of attacks against power pylons, which led to trials and brief jail terms for promoters and organizers, who were quickly released and ready for renewed actions. Fumagalli was sentenced to eighteen years imprisonment in December 1979 but did not take the verdict too hard: "I am paid even to stay in jail," he was quoted as saying [Lutiis 1991, 123].

The Strategy: Terror and Attempted Coups

The strategy of the radical Right was, at the time, directly oriented at the coup d'état, by way of staging a number of incidents and acts of violence that would create widespread social unrest (hopefully heightened by the Reds' reaction), which in turn would justify the intervention of the armed forces. This of course was a standard strategy of the tension doctrine. The tactics to be implemented, however, presented some significant new elements.

First, several protagonists hoped that the rising tension and the multiplication of clashes might lead to a popular insurrection against the regime, and even possibly lead to civil war [a number of statements to this effect in Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 193, 295; Assise Bologna 1984, 288–290]. The 1970–72 "revolt" of Reggio Calabria [see above, chapter 3], in which the historic groups had played a leading role, led many to hope that it would be possible to enact similar insurrections in other locations.

Possibly more important in terms of the radicalization of forms of combat was the notion that terrorism should be systematically employed in the struggle against the regime. Of course the use of terrorism was never absent from the action-repertoire of the radical Right, and especially from its doctrine. But previously it seems to have been considered an extreme instrument, possibly because its legitimacy among the militants could not be taken for granted, conditions for it not being ripe. In the early seventies, instead, the notion of systematically employing terrorism, and especially

indiscriminate terrorism, on a large scale became widespread currency among the militants. The time for it was now ripe.[22] The court materials dealing with the period contain massive evidence of this radicalization process.

Take the position of Gianluigi Esposti, possibly the top leader of Ordine Nero, as described by his associates:

> Esposti had a "*golpista*" [coup-oriented] perspective. He thought that the country should be brought to such a level of terror as to make the implementation of exceptional measures necessary, together with the army's intervention. Such an objective was to be reached through terror attacks of ever increasing seriousness. The way he talked was terrifying; he upheld a theory of "pure terrorism." He spoke of indiscriminate massacres, of attacks to be carried out in succession, or else in different places at the same time. Also, attacks were to be attributed to the "Reds"; . . . also, bombing the trains.[23]

Esposti was not alone in his thinking: old Ordine Nuovo hands, like Paolo Signorelli, who played an important role in this phase, fully identified with the Ordine Nero attacks, considering them part of their common *golpista* strategy.[24]

The matter of self-styled, antisystem warriors planning to carry out a coup d'état together with the armed forces poses, of course, the problem of revolutionary consistency. Many militants tended to brush the problem aside.[25] An attempt to explain the logical itinerary (so to speak) that may have led to this outcome was carried out by a last-generation militant-intellectual, Sergio Calore (now serving a life sentence for his deeds). He is the most important "collaborator of justice" among the radical Right who has attempted to critically scrutinize his own and the group's experience.[26]

According to Calore, the starting point of this itinerary is an oversimplified view of reality, one that ignores social complexity, reducing its dynamics to simple contrasts between power holders who make use of direct power instruments. Such a view is common among extremist groups (the Red Brigades believed in the existence of SIM, the "Imperialist State of the Multinationals"), but here Evolian notions add some typical elements, such as scorn for the economy. Consistent with a classical topos of the konservative Revolution, it is deemed that politics runs the economy by way of instruments only seeking to increase the power of those in command. This goes with the paranoiac notion that beyond each social fact is some hidden entity that moves it and gives it a false look. But a reality that cannot be understood and is perceived as being dominated by force can be fought only with force: hence the coup d'état solution. This goes along with another simplification (rooted again in Evolian or at least organicist notions), that is, the distinction of healthy and sick components in the body social (a favorite concept of fascism [Rigotti 1988; 1992: 216 n.]). As for the revolu-

tion, the coup d'état will eliminate the most dangerous enemy, communism; after that, the time will be ripe for the revolution.

For the time being, according to a court that adjudicated many episodes of this period, the program consisted of "both guerrilla actions and an attempt to renew the disorders of Reggio Calabria and [the lower-scale ones] of L'Aquila, in order to destabilize the system by exploiting real social problems, like unemployment, which hit the subproletariat" [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 295].

Alongside the external targets[27] was an important internal objective, that of aggregating, by way of resounding deeds, the right-wing militants, especially the "malcontent" ones. This led the Ordine Nero to act on two levels: "the first was the 'official' level, so to speak, which consisted of the lighter, nonlethal actions whose authorship should be claimed, in order to acquire consensus and catalyze the sources of social protest; the other, to remain outside Ordine Nero's 'officiality,' consisted of massacres whose authorship should remain undisclosed [even to many militants] in order to spread indiscriminate terror" [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 160–61, 306].

This was the context of an impressive season of violence, bombings, and attacks, a good number of which can be traced to the constellation of groups and initials gravitating around Ordine Nero. Altogether they have been credited with about forty-five bomb attacks carried out between the end of 1973 and the beginning of 1975 [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 9, 62–63].

That such attacks were connected was clear for a long time; what emerged only recently is that some of the major episodes were linked to a tight blueprint aimed at an insurrectional outburst [Salvini 1995]. Three of them occurred in 1973, as follows:

- April 7: A bomb prematurely exploded on the Genoa-Ventimiglia express, wounding the perpetrator, Nico Azzi, a Milanese member of La Fenice; had the explosion taken place where originally planned (under a tunnel) it would have caused a terrible massacre, for which the responsibility was to be attributed to the Reds;
- April 12: During a major right-wing demonstration in Milan, organized by the Silent Majority and the MSI, with the participation of most groups of the area and top-ranking MSI leaders, a hand grenade thrown by a right-wing demonstrator killed a policeman, A. Marino;
- May 12: A soi-disant anarchist with radical-right connections, Gianfranco Bertoli, threw a bomb in front of Milan's police headquarters, killing four bystanders. The target, he claimed, was the prime minister, Mariano Rumor, who, however, had already left the premises when the bomb was thrown.

The three episodes were part of a single, provocative ploy, to have been primed by the train blast. The operation was planned and organized by

Giancarlo Rognoni, La Fenice's leader, who also provided the explosives. The first phone call was to be made in the name of the ultraleft "October 22" group, asking for the liberation of its imprisoned members. Other clues leading to the Left were planted on the train.[28] Furthermore, the attackers had hidden a box of explosives in an abandoned farm in the Ligurian Apennine, located in one of the zones marked on the map found on the mauled corpse of Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the left-wing editor who blew up under a power pylon he was sabotaging in January 1972. The box was indeed found, as intended, later on, and attributed to Feltrinelli's (nonexistent) guerrillas, but without the precedent of a red massacre, ruined by Nico Azzi's accident on the Genoa-Ventimiglia express, the find had little effect.

The April 12 demonstration, organized by the legal component of the Right (the Silent Majority and the MSI), was meant as an impressive gesture of protest against the Reds' misdeeds, of which the train attack was to be the bloodiest. After that attack misfired, the police forbade the demonstration but the neo-Fascists went ahead with it anyway, further damaging their own cause with the serious riots that led to the killing of the policeman.

Finally, the attempt against Minister Mariano Rumor was to be the most serious item of the strategy. Here, too, the attempt was made to implicate the Left, both by depicting Bertoli as an anarchist and by setting up veritable frame-ups. The provocation was quickly discovered.[29]

The subversive program continued into 1974. Below are listed some of these episodes:

- January 1: A bomb planted on a train was fortuitously found before it went off in Silvi Marina, Marche;
- February 2: A bomb exploded against the Milanese headquarters of the partisan association (ANPI);
- March 6: A number of power pylons were blown up in Barberino di Mugello and Calenzano (Tuscany);
- March 13: A bomb was thrown against an office of Corriere della Sera, in Milan;
- April 21: A high-potential bomb went off accidentally a few minutes before the arrival of a train, demolishing twenty-five yards of track near Vaiano (Tuscany); the charge had been placed between a steep rock wall and a precipice, just before a tunnel, so had it gone off at the train's passage, the effects would have been horrendous;
- April 23: Three bomb attacks were carried out simultaneously against the Internal Revenue offices in Milano, against a Socialist Party local in Lecco (Lombardy), and against the communist house in Moiano (Perugia).[30]

The escalation of violence led to two major massacres in the spring and summer of 1974. The first occurred on May 28 during a union rally in

Brescia, a city where radical-right violence, supported by reactionary industrialists and by the presence of many RSI veterans (Brescia was the RSI's capital city), had grown for years, experiencing a steep escalation in the spring of 1974 [Chiarini and Corsini 1983]. The combat methods of the groups are well illustrated by the tragic destiny of Silvio Ferrari, an AN militant, who was blown up by the explosives he was carrying on his scooter on the night of May 19. A number of savage "reprisal" attacks against the left were mounted by the neo-Fascists, against which the union rally of May 28 had been organized.[31] The bomb, placed in a garbage can, blew up at the height of the rally, killing four and injuring almost a hundred.

Then, on August 4, in Tuscany, a bomb planted in the Munich-Rome "Italicus" train killed twelve people and injured fifty. Responsibility for both massacres was claimed by Ordine Nero, although the text of the claim is dubious. After many years of the most controversial investigative and judicial labors, during which the full repertoire of possible accidents, pitfalls, deviations, and cover-ups was duly experienced and all the inevitable degrees and levels of jurisdiction were exhausted, both cases ended without any conviction for the authors of the massacres. They are among the major "unsolved" mysteries of the period.

The judicial itinerary of the Italicus case will be discussed in the next pages. As for Brescia's massacre, the first-degree trial ended in 1979, with a life sentence for a minor (and bizarre) neo-Fascist, Ermanno Buzzi, and a ten-year sentence for his supposed accomplice, Angiolino Papa. In April 1981, shortly before the appellate trial was to begin (*in Brescia*), Buzzi, who had expressed his willingness to collaborate with the judges, was strangled *in Novara*'s maximum-security jail, where he had just unaccountably been transferred from Brescia. The killers were two prominent leaders of the radical Right, Pierluigi (Lello) Concutelli and Mario Tuti [see below], shielded by other radical-right prisoners. This was one of the most disquieting episodes in a very murky case. In the previous days Buzzi, with his lawyer's help, had desperately resisted the transfer order, which was nevertheless confirmed by the Justice Ministry; just one day after his arrival in Novara, Buzzi was murdered.[32] In 1982 the Appellate Court fully acquitted all the remaining defendants in the case. The verdict was overruled by the Court of Cassation; the new appellate sentence (1985) renewed the acquittals, this time, however, for lack of evidence. This verdict became final in 1987.

The trial about Buzzi's murder, however, had also given origin to a new line of inquiry on the massacre, partly overlapping the former. This was because a number of "repentant" black terrorists accused Cesare Ferri of the deed. Ferri was a Milanese militant gravitating around the La Fenice group, with close links to Brescia's groups and a previous record of

violence. He had fleetingly entered the previous inquiry, because the priest of a parish close to the massacre site declared he had seen him in his church the morning of the massacre. Ferri immediately disappeared abroad for a few months and was never brought face to face with the clergyman. On his return he was able to produce witnesses who declared they had seen him at the Catholic University on the morning of the massacre, and this put an end to *that* line of inquiry. The repentants' declarations reopened it but, although other incriminating evidence emerged, his alibi stood and he was finally acquitted—but not without the usual sequence of trials (the last verdict, that of the Court of Cassation, came only in 1989).

Between the Brescia and the Italicus massacres, an apparently minor, still obscure episode took place: Gianluigi Esposti, leader of Ordine Nero, was shot by law enforcement officers while camping in a paramilitary base in the hills surrounding Rome (Pian di Rascino).*

It is not by chance that the most deadly events took place in 1974. The economic difficulties caused by the deep recession subsequent to the 1973 energy crisis heightened the social tensions created by the fierce dispute on the divorce issue. A referendum had been called by reactionary Catholic groups in order to repeal the 1970 bill legalizing divorce. The ensuing campaign soon acquired the tones of a major battle for or against the secularization of the country. It mobilized all sectors of civil society (the parties, including the PCI, had done their utmost in order to avoid the referendum, fearing it would deepen the lay/Catholic cleavage). The defeat of the antidivorce front had an unexpectedly large, historical dimension. The composition of the opposite coalitions was very important: on one side were the Catholic Church, the right-wing components of the DC, and the MSI; against them were all the others, including the PCI and some secularized DC groups. The de facto alliance between progressive Catholics and Marxists was a shock to the supporters of traditional political balances, especially as it came shortly after the PCI's secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, launched his famous proposal of a "historic compromise"—a veritable coalition between Catholic and Marxist forces in society, as a way out of the political stalemate in which the country was sinking, once the failure of the Center-Left coalitions became obvious.

Whatever the merits of Berlinguer's proposal [Ginsborg 1990, 354ff.] it increased the concerns of the cartel of anxiety and of the radical Right. "They hammered into our heads . . . that if we lost [the referendum] we would disappear altogether from the scene" [in Tuscan Attacks, Assizes

* Giancarlo Esposti had in his pocket a document-size photograph of Cesare Ferri, presumably to be used for a forged passport. Its publication in a local paper elicited the testimony of the parish priest.

1988, 310]—all the more so since in the same period left-wing terrorism was making the headlines. In the spring of 1974 the Red Brigades kidnapped and held prisoner for almost two months a right-wing judge from Genoa, Mario Sossi; the debate over the conditions for his liberation created deep tensions within the judiciary, and between the judiciary and the government. By setting him free without any compensation the Red Brigades scored a great public-relations coup. Shortly thereafter the first killings were acknowledged by the Red Brigades, who claimed, however, that they had been accidental.

The season of violence, the chief episodes of which have been described above, was the radical Right's reaction to this situation. It was connected to the peak of the coup d'état season.

Any attempt to discuss this season should begin with the statement that none of the *coup* plans was, as far as it is known, implemented, let alone successfully; they were all interrupted either during preparation or shortly before implementation. This has allowed the conservative sectors of the establishment to claim that the coup scare was, in fact, nothing but a product of the paranoiac imagination of the Left, fueled by the irresponsible investigations of some junior, radical prosecutors and judges. On the opposite side are countless statements from militants, who claim that the coalition between the radical groups and different sectors of the establishment (especially the military) was taken for granted within the coup d'état perspective and used to explain an entire season of violence. According to Sergio Calore, for example, "the whole campaign of blasts of the 1974–75 period is related to this coup project," also because "in the ON we were convinced that any attack, even if it caused massacres, would be useful in this coup strategy" [Assizes, Bologna 1988, 300]. Moreover, available evidence has revealed a number of disquieting episodes, originating in different sectors and carrying different but homogeneous ideological banners, which would be difficult to explain otherwise. The reconstruction, however, is necessarily tentative, because the events of that period have been covered up with thick layers of disinformation, and many crucial facts are still obscure.

First, there seems to have been a plan for a coup between the end of April and early May: most Ordine Nero militants arrested in connection with the Tuscan attacks claimed that they were operating within the provisions of such a plan, of which the spring attacks constituted the preliminary phase. The plot included the assassination of an incumbent minister and attacks on the carabinieri barracks and was to be carried out as a joint MAR-Ordine Nero initiative.[33]

Inquiries into an episode planned for August, which came to be known as the "White [i.e., ostensibly nonfascist] Coup," aroused much sensation among the public. The investigation began in Turin (by the magistrate

Luciano Violante), where one of the alleged promoters, a former partisan hero and diplomat with NATO experience, Count Edgardo Sogno, was based. In the fifties Sogno had founded "Peace and Liberty," an anticommunist organization ostensibly devoted to propaganda, but that in fact collected files on PCI activists and communist workers in plants. Money came from FIAT, ministries of the interior and defense, and the CIA. ("When FIAT stopped financing us," Sogno recently declared, "I went to the United States and asked for help from my old friend Allen Dulles," who obliged [in Gatti 1990, 37].)

In the seventies Sogno, together with Luigi Cavallo, a shady figure who in the past had been an agent-provocateur [Lutiis 1991, 145–53], founded the Committees for Democratic Resistance, comprised of intellectuals, journalists, politicians, and senior military officers. Once again the stated purpose was to mobilize public opinion against the communist danger. According to the indictment the real objective was quite another matter:

> A violent action, conceived of as "swift and pitiless," such as not to allow for "any chance of reaction," in order to seize the president of the Republic and have him dissolve Parliament and appoint a provisional government comprised of senior military personnel and "experts," . . . whose program would include the [permanent] dissolution of Parliament, the constitution of a single [governmental] trade union, the establishment of concentration camps, the retroactive abolition of parliamentary immunity, and the setting up of special tribunals.[34] [Violante 1976, 3]

The role of the radical-right groups in the plot was described as follows by the subsequent Roman Istruttoria: The conspirators meant to "unleash the rabble of Delle Chiaie's AN . . . seen as the instruments that would throw the country into a pit of anxiety and terror, in order to blackmail the government and put in force the demented will of the conspirators" [*Requisitoria Vitalone*, 182, quoted in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 254].

The SID had followed Sogno's activities since their inception, carrying out three different investigations, which uncovered the objectives of the plot and its participants, including high-ranking military officers. The threat was taken so seriously that (a) the defense minister (Andreotti) directed the head of the SID to immediately alert the police and the carabinieri, whose commanders thereupon ordered the corps to take emergency precautions;[35] (b) a surprising cable was sent by the deputy head of the SID (General Maletti) putting all peripheral intelligence centers on the alert, at the same time enjoining them *not* to inform the police and carabinieri because, as General Maletti later testified, "There was evidence that significant numbers of them were involved in the initiative" [Violante 1976, 15]; and (c) a top-level meeting was called at the Defense Ministry (July 14), in which the most senior officers of the armed forces were each asked to

carry out investigations in his branch, and, in the minister's words, the decision was taken "'to immediately effect some transfers [of high-ranking generals] from sensitive posts, in order to interrupt possible links' and disrupt a possible military 'network.'" The transfers were in fact carried out, but later the minister admitted remembering only one of them [Violante 1976, 17].

On the very same day that Violante issued a warrant for Sogno and Cavallo (5 May 1976), the Cassation Court, on the petition of a minor defendant, stripped Turin of its competence over the trial and had it transferred to Rome; there the Istruttoria was reopened and, predictably, concluded with the acquittal of all defendants. Their only fault, according to the Giudice Istruttore, was dissent, which the Republic does not forbid "because it is at the core of constitutional legality." Some years later, in a newspaper interview (December 1990), Edgardo Sogno took care to outline just how constitutional was his dissent:

> There was a climate of general disruption. The country was slowly slipping in [Enrico] Berlinguer's hands. Together with [former defense minister Randolfo] Pacciardi I had devised a program . . . Had the PCI entered the government, even in a coalition, a military action would have taken place. Everything was ready. [quoted in Silj 1994, 159]

This episode was related to yet another affair, brought to light at the same time by the investigation of a Paduan magistrate, Giovanni Tamburino. A neo-Nazi doctor had delivered a briefcase holding the blueprint for an insurrection plan, complete with a list of more than seventeen hundred names of people to be "neutralized," blank forms for death sentences, and leaflets signed "Windrose." Among those arrested was a self-styled military judge, Roberto Cavallaro, who had unaccountable access to the most secret installations, and who described the existence of an "X organization" planning for an "institutional transformation," which he argued was legal and envisaged by secret NATO protocols.

Investigations on the organization's funds revealed the existence of huge sums (at least a billion current lire) that business milieus had made available to the Windrose and to Borghese's National Front, as many participants, as stated above, were veterans of the earlier conspiracy.

There then followed the cautious admissions of Amos Spiazzi, an artillery major in charge of intelligence for the NATO artillery unit based in Verona. He held a cosmic (the highest level) NATO security clearance while being a close friend of ON leaders, to the point of attending a crucial secret meeting among the remnants of the historic groups. He confirmed the existence of the secret organization, also claiming that it was legal. After being visited in jail by a general sent by SID's head, Miceli, he refused to cooperate any further with the investigators.

Indeed the major controversy is in regard to this organization's status: Miceli claimed it was legal while at the same time asking to be relieved of the state-secret strictures concerning it, whereas his deputy, General Maletti, with whom a bitter conflict then erupted, depicted it as a subversive structure.[36] Both Miceli and Maletti, incidentally, belonged to the secret P2 lodge, and this should raise doubts regarding the notion that the P2 was the mother of *all* postwar Italian plots.

On 31 October 1974 Tamburino issued a warrant for Miceli's arrest. It depicted the organization as "formally labeled a 'security organization' but [that] in fact operates as an obstacle against certain transformations of domestic and foreign policy, an obstacle that, by limiting popular sovereignty and being implemented with abnormal, illegal, secret, and violent means of action, takes on a truly subversive character." It further had "the purpose of causing an armed insurrection and an illegal transformation of the Constitution and forms of government by a military intervention. . . . The initiative was to be carried out by several armed groups, hierarchically structured and linked with one another. . . . It was financed with the purpose of creating disorders and carrying out attacks, intimidation, and violence. It organized support groups and set up its own information service and parallel military and civilian lines of command" [quoted in Lutiis 1991, 112, 374].

Miceli's arrest predictably caused an enormous sensation but little damage to the plotters. The general never went to jail but instead went to a military hospital and then was subjected to house arrests.[37] Shortly thereafter, on the petition of another marginal defendant, the Cassation Court took the case away from the Paduan judiciary and had it transferred to Rome, where it was merged with the Borghese affair and allowed, many years later, to come to the same inconclusive end as that investigation.

The Role of the State

Most of the antagonists who had engaged in fierce combat against one another in the episodes described above belonged to various branches of the state: the judiciary, the armed forces, the Intelligence Service. The role of the state thus comes to the fore once again. However, unlike in the early postwar years, when state action was rather homogeneously oriented in favor of conservative interests, and hence those of the Right [see above, chapter 1], this was a time when a significant degree of heterogeneity prevailed. Sharp ideological differences, contrasting interest constellations, even generational or organizational loyalties increased the traditional pluralism of the Italian state to the point of fragmentation and cleavage (which in some cases may have turned to its advantage in dealing with "enemies of the state.")[38]

It would be impossible of course to represent all the positions taken by public (state) actors during the strategy of tension. Omitting the innumerable nuances that characterized them, two major contrasting viewpoints emerge, one of which requires further qualification.

On the one hand were those sensitive to the powerful wave of democratization that was taking over Italian society and that had reached the state apparatus as well. "For the first time, though not in any systematic way, the *modus operandi* of the various parts of the state apparatus was brought into question. New groupings amongst state employees attacked entrenched hierarchies and tried to democratize structures and attitudes." Prominent among these were certain sectors of the judiciary, whose organized expression was Magistratura Democratica (Democratic Magistrates), an association of "young magistrates and judges, strongly influenced by the intellectual climate of '68, [who] tried to reform the antiquated legal system, to diminish the intolerable delays in the administration of justice, to evolve less class-based forms of justice" [Ginsborg 1990, 322]. The traditional inefficiency of the political system provided wide-open spaces in which the association could operate, by intervening in areas ignored by political regulations—from pollution to food additives, from building speculation to surveillance in the factories [Canosa 1979, 70].

While succeeding governments made no serious efforts to uncover the truth about the many mysteries of the Republic, it was a handful of such magistrates and judges (not all of whom belonged to DM) who earnestly attempted to investigate the fascist massacres, beginning with that of Piazza Fontana; who reopened the case of the Borghese coup after the initial, desultory inquiries had led to nothing; who brought the ON and the AN to trial; and who investigated the coup attempts of the early 1970s discussed in this section. Most of these judges operated in courts distant from Rome (especially in the North) and held relatively junior positions.

On the opposite side were the defenders of the status quo. Prominent among them were other sectors of the judiciary, led by its senior ranks (the so-called ermine robes) beginning with the Court of Cassation and the Roman judiciary in general, traditionally sensitive to political pressures. With the help of the abstract, formalistic, and bureaucratized character of Italian criminal procedure, they could carry out the kind of activities that have been described relative to the Piazza Fontana case, the Borghese and Windrose conspiracies, the massacre in Brescia, not to mention a great many lesser cases, like that of Peteano; other examples will be mentioned presently.

It hardly needs mentioning that the defenders of the status quo were to be found not only in the judiciary but in most law-enforcement agencies—the military and civil services, the police, the Intelligence Service. This is to say nothing about broad sectors of public opinion which, goaded by part of the moderate press, devoted themselves to a long, earnest, systematic job of

slandering and otherwise delegitimatizing the judges and magistrates who had reached hitherto inaccessible sanctuaries. The present work of demolishing the "clean hands" inquiries is but a mild sequel to such precedents.

Among the opponents to innovation, a further distinction should be drawn between the hard-line supporters and those toeing a softer line—the hawks and the doves, to use a well-worn expression.

The doves believed that, by the early seventies, the democratic wave of 1968 had exhausted its thrust and could be absorbed by the system without resorting to brutal means. Hence they thought it was time to disembark the most crude proponents of the *golpista* strategy and the terrorist bands.

This was consistent with international developments of the period: in the spring of 1974 the paleofascism of Salazar's heirs was toppled in Portugal by a general who had long fought the Angola and Mozambique liberation movements and had come to believe that conceding formal independence and keeping economic control over those territories would be less expensive than fighting ugly guerrilla wars. In the summer of the same year the Greek colonels were also, suddenly, thrown out of power. The Spanish regime was clearly in its death throes. In the United States, the public exposure of CIA covert activities had created much criticism and was to fuel public controversy in the coming years, in addition to the Watergate scandal and the unglorious end of the Nixon presidency. Altogether a world strategy was emerging that envisioned for Europe a law-and-order pattern anchored on the Center and not on the right wing of the polities, and that excluded military dictatorships and paleofascist governments.

The groups in Italy that were working precisely toward such extreme solutions could become an embarrassment and had to be marginalized. Hence the sensational developments of 1974, including, early in May, the incarceration of MAR leader C. Fumagalli after many years of comfortable impunity. This was followed by the obscure killing of his confederate G. Esposti at the end of that same month, a few days after the Brescia massacre.[39] Much more shocking to the public was an interview with Andreotti that blew Giannettini's cover (June 1974), as well as investigations carried out by a sector of the SID (led by General Maletti) on the Borghese affair, the "White Coup," and the "Windrose Conspiracy," which brought to light the responsibility of other sectors of the SID and led to the temporary arrest of General Miceli. That this initiative was part of a broader strategy was admitted by General Maletti himself who, during the brief term he served in Catanzaro, made a most revealing statement: "We were convinced to act in that way by the pressures of a friendly Service." Given Maletti's connections and loyalties, it has been surmised that the "friendly Service" was the CIA or sections thereof, but neither the investigators nor the court pursued this lead [Lutiis 1991, 197].

However, since the relationship had been very close indeed between respectable sectors of the establishment and the coup strategists, the uncou-

pling operation could not be too drastic. Hence the SID did not introduce much more material than the magistrates in Padua and Turin already knew of (for example, no mention was made of the vast sums the conspirators obtained from business sources, apparently including American ones) [Lutiis 1991, 104–5]. What is more, the SID's investigations were crucial in allowing the Roman prosecutors to reopen, with perfect timing, the dormant investigations of the Borghese affair. This led to the conflict of competence with Turin and Padua which in turn allowed the Cassation Court to divest those other courts of their inquiries and bring the cases to Rome, where they met the inglorious end described above.

The general logic was to expose, or even indict the lowest levels (Esposti and Fumagalli) while absolutely shielding the higher ones. This is why the SID turned over to the judiciary (and a most benevolent judiciary it was, being in Rome) only a small and carefully pruned part of its documents from which only inferences could be drawn. But now a rather shocking confirmation could be gleaned from one of Captain Labruna's tapes, recording two 1974 sessions between an SID colonel and two senior members of the conspiracies in question. The precise objective was to decide what documents should be turned over to the judiciary, and the colonel, with total frankness, repeatedly stated the need to "build a wall" that the judiciary could not pierce in order to protect a number of senior officers. These included an admiral, at the time due for a promotion to defense chief of staff—which he duly obtained. As for the colonel (who in the meantime had become a three-star general), when recently summoned he had entirely forgotten the whole matter [Salvini 1995, 287 ff.].

Even so, the hawks were not happy, both because they preferred the hard line and because they themselves stood to lose personally (vide Miceli). They still enjoyed strong positions of power, including significant international connections with those sectors of the intelligence community that favored the hard-line approach. After all, General Miceli most likely was the Italian "high intelligence officer . . . linked to antidemocratic elements of the Right" who, according to the report of the 1975 Pike Committee of the U.S. Congress, in 1972 had received $800,000 of CIA funds from the U.S. ambassador in Rome, Graham Martin. (The funds were to be used in anticommunist propaganda.[40]) In this regard it is important to keep in mind that one of the contributing factors to the CIA's crisis of the mid-seventies, so serious that its head of counterintelligence resigned, was the split that existed within the agency regarding its "Italian policy."[41]

The hawks, then, unleashed a fierce counteroffensive, which included the following major episodes: Giannettini returned from Argentina exposing General Maletti's involvement in his escape, thus leading to guilty verdicts against Maletti (and Labruna) in the Piazza Fontana case (the only guilty verdicts made against SID officers). Mr. Andreotti was replaced at the Ministry of Defense and (temporarily) shifted to a lesser ministry, and

Mr. P. E. Taviani, who, as interior minister had carried out a similar clean-up of the ministry's redoubtable Ufficio Affari Riservati, was temporarily pushed out of government. General Miceli, as mentioned above, was quickly released from jail and, following the tracks of his predecessor General de Lorenzo, ended his career as an MSI deputy. (In Miceli's case it was a return home, for, to make an understatement, he had always been close to that party.[42])

On the general political level the conflict was quickly absorbed by the spongelike features of the Italian system, without any real democratic shake-ups. Similar to what had happened in the de Lorenzo affair, the Christian Democrats, led by Aldo Moro, refused to have the behavior of their men subject to any rigorous public scrutiny. A few years later, faced with another major accident (the so-called Lockheed scandal), Aldo Moro expressed with unusual bluntness his and his party's philosophy on such matters. He proclaimed in Parliament: "There must be no scapegoats, no human sacrifices. . . . The DC stands firm in defense of its men . . . You will not judge us on the piazzas, we will not let ourselves be put on trial" [quoted in Ginsborg 1990, 379]; obviously no challenge to the DC's dominance of Italian politics was to be tolerated.[43]

Mr. Andreotti, one of the most resilient figures of the system, reemerged shortly after his brief eclipse (thanks, in large measure, to Aldo Moro's mediating skills) and went on pursuing his remarkable career as a man-for-all-seasons. His disclosure of the SID peccadilloes was generally interpreted as a ploy that would provide him with an image acceptable to the Left, at a time when the latter was on the upsurge. The operation was quite successful, considering that some three years later he was to lead the first DC government enjoying the communists' "not no-confidence" [see below, chapter 7]. He never publicly admitted that he knew of any wrongdoing carried out in the upper echelons of the military. And indeed no one was disciplined for the 1974 events.

The Service remained firmly in the hands of the hard-liners. When a reform was carried out in 1977–78, much against the will of the governmental parties which, following Andreotti's and Moro's lead, never acknowledged any deviation on the part of the Service, it was easy for them to empty it of any real significance. The reform abolished the SID as a unified service, creating two agencies in its place, the military SISMI (Servizio Informazioni Militari) and the civilian SISDE (Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Democratica). In fact SISMI inherited and monopolized all the relevant resources and the men of the SID, leaving SISDE an empty semblance that never amounted to much. (An effort was made, for example, to appoint as its head an officer junior to the chief of SISMI [Lutiis 1991].) This made it easier to circumvent other reform provisions, like

effective parliamentary control over intelligence, as later events would clearly demonstrate.

Judicially, no significant results were achieved. The investigations were carried out in a fragmented, atomized form, ignoring possible links between the several episodes. Especially the Roman judiciary, which ended up in charge of the major investigation of the 1974 events, studiously avoided "establishing the existence of connections—which the first inquiries had clearly demonstrated—between the political conspiracy and the armed bands responsible for the attacks. No one has really attempted to ascertain the existence of a link between these two levels" [Nunziata 1986, 80]—no one, that is, except the Paduan and Turinese magistrates, whose inquiries, however, were soon stopped.

The Response of the Radical Right

In the Short Run

The changes in state policies affected the radical Right in several ways. In the short run, at least a partial breach of communication occurred between some radical-right groups and the "respectable" conspiracy sectors. Consequently, attacks originally planned as part of the coup d'ètat strategy were carried out by the radical groups even after the overall strategy was called off. Once the attacks had taken place, their perpetrators were shielded with the usual repertoire of protections and cover-ups.

This is the most plausible reading of what ensued regarding the Italicus massacre of August 1974. It has been surmised that the bomb was planted by a Tuscan unit of Ordine Nero, within the framework of the terror strategy aimed at bringing off a coup d'état that summer, but that it was called off for unknown reasons (the difficulties of President Nixon, on whose benevolence the conspirators seem to have counted, were frequently mentioned in this respect). The main defendant, Mario Tuti, one of the most charismatic ideologues and leaders of the radical Right, in a 1980 article published in the *Bulletin of the National-Revolutionary Prisoners*, described that incident quite frankly: "In the summer of 1974, like many others who had deluded themselves into believing that there would be a coup d'état, I had taken to the Maremma hills with my assault rifle"[44] [Tuti, "Tolkien-mania," in *Quex* 4 (March 1960): 56]. He was a firm believer in terrorism, especially of the indiscriminate sort, and his group, which controlled a sizable reservoir of explosives, had carried out quite a number of bomb attacks, which only fortuitously, until then, had caused no casualties.[45]

Once the massacre had occurred, the by-now familiar cover-up dynamics took center stage. Inquiries and later historical-legal research uncovered an intricate web of relations involving the radical groups associated with Ordine Nero, some prosecuting offices, the MSI, and the P2 lodge.[46] The Service opposed, with the most steadfast refusal, any request for collaboration, although (or possibly because) it was in close touch with key figures of the bands. One was Augusto Cauchi, a top leader and liaison with Licio Gelli, who, through Cauchi, had financed the groups. Cauchi disappeared after a meeting with the SID's head in Florence and has been a fugitive ever since (Argentina has recently refused to extradite him). When the Florentine magistrates inquired about him as late as 1985, they were told it was a "state secret" (that was after reforms in the Service had ruled out state-secret protection in terrorism cases).

On the basis of such investigations conducted by these officers, the First-Degree Court, although building an impressive case against the Ordine Nero defendants, felt compelled to acquit them for insufficient evidence. The Anselmi committee, which utilized this court's findings, had no doubts about P2's political (if not legal) responsibility for the massacre [Anselmi 1984, 93]. The appeal verdict in 1987 reversed the acquittals, issuing three life sentences. But inevitably the Court of Cassation then repealed the convictions; the second appeal verdict in 1991 (i.e., sixteen years after the massacre) acquitted Tuti and his confederates.[47]

In the Long Run: Attack on the State

The ON had been the major reference point of the whole ultra-Right. Its dissolution and the flight abroad of a number of its historical leaders necessitated immediate reorganization efforts and led to a major strategic turn. The latter was heavily influenced by the way the milieu read the set of initiatives that the state (or rather sectors of the judiciary) had developed, concerning not only the ON but also the Piazza Fontana case and the Borghese, Windrose, and other coup attempts. Although in retrospect the prosecution of their deeds had been quite mild (and would be further softened by higher-level courts that reversed most first-degree convictions), the militants were traumatized by what appeared as the state's veritable betrayal. They had long enjoyed a privileged relationship that had granted them impunity, and at times even solidarity. Now they were targeted by state repression. To this was added the veritable ghettoization that militant antifascism, the powerful reaction to the impunity following the massacres, had inflicted on them. The isolation of the ultra-Right was increased because the MSI, its chief parliamentary support, after its 1972 peak was

growing more and more irrelevant, as both its coalition and its blackmail potential were waning [Farneti 1985, 20]. The radical Right's reaction to this situation began a new phase in its history [Minna 1984, 61 ff.].

A crucial episode in this process was a secret meeting held in Albano Laziale (near Rome) in the fall of 1975, which was attended by most of the clandestine leadership. There the decision was made to merge the remnants of the ON with Avanguardia (still legal), thereby attempting to assemble all "antagonistic forces." The new strategy was summarized by the battle cry handed over to the militants: "Attack the state" and "Disarticulate power by striking at the conveyor belts of state power" [Vigna 1986, 15; Macchia 1983, 445 ff.].[48]

This language was new for the Right, for whom the enemy until then had been the regime, the party pigsty, the corrupt capitalist society, and so on, but not the state as such. That the terminology and semantic content was that of left-wing terrorism (the Red Brigades) was not fortuitous. Indeed, in this period, the Red Brigades were "stepping up" their strategy [Caselli and Della Porta 1991, 155 ff.].

In the first phase of their activity (1971–1973/4) the Red Brigades had carried out what they called "armed propaganda." Starting from the notion that political power cannot be seized without military power, the idea was to use "partisan action" in order to educate the revolutionary Left to armed resistance. In this first phase, Red Brigades action was concentrated in factories; targets were chosen for their actual or symbolic importance in the workplace; violence was directed preferably against the results of capitalist production (e.g., new trucks set on fire in a Fiat plant); persons were threatened, and after 1972 kidnapped, but no blood was spilled until 1974. Beginning in 1974 the Red Brigades tried to extend the scope of their actions from the factory to the political sphere, in a nationwide perspective. The means were by now clearly terrorist; the objective was to destroy "the heart of the state"; the slogan was "Strike at the state in its weakest links, disarticulate its power centers, liberate imprisoned comrades, bring reprisal against the judiciary." In 1974 the first kidnapping occurred, that of a judge (Mario Sossi; see above), and (so-called defensive) combat actions were fought. This was also the year of the first (apparently accidental) killings in Padua. (But after the Brescia massacre the Red Brigades declared: "Revolutionary forces are by now authorized to answer fascist barbarity with proletarian justice.") The first premeditated assassination took place in 1976, with the murder of a judge, Genoa's chief prosecutor, F. Coco [Caselli and Della Porta 1991].

There is no question that the example set by the Red Brigades was important for the radical Right. It proved that in a democratic (i.e., nonpolice) society, high-ranking targets could be struck even by small groups engaged

in armed combat, and the Red Brigades' lethal military efficiency provided a competitive stimulus (the younger generation was beginning to complain that whereas the Reds acted, all the Blacks did was talk).

Between the end of 1975 and the following spring a frenzy of meetings and discussions took place. Against the "regime's repressive efforts, and any temptation to surrender," the "revolution firmly asser[ted] its determination to survive." A number of operational and strategic alternatives were assessed, and new or renewed ideological issues emerged. The two-level theory took form, according to which the Right should henceforth act at two levels, a legal and an illegal one [Macchia 1983, 277–78]. Possibly as an implementation of this theory, a new group was founded in December by Paolo Signorelli, named Lotta Popolare (Popular Struggle). While Avanguardia Nazionale was being investigated, Lotta Popolare was the legal pole around which the militants could openly rally. The name indicates the emergence of a hitherto absent interest for "the people" as a source of genuine values that had been corrupted by society; some ambiguous populist overtones began appearing in the language [477]. This went together with the reassertion of old myths, such as that of the "political soldier" whose ongoing embodiment was the *latitante operativo* (roughly, "militant fugitive") [450].

It was especially the "criminalization" of the AN (i.e., its trial and dissolution) that required a reply capable of revitalizing the milieu by proving that the Right was good for deeds and not only words. Moreover, it was necessary to recover an autonomous political space within the revolutionary front, which was dangerously close to being monopolized by those left-wing groups that had taken up armed struggle.

Given this situation, the strategic choice could only be military action, implemented by the "1976 campaign." The most sensational episode to occur was the murder of Judge Vittorio Occorsio, the prosecutor at the ON's trial, carried out by the group's "military commander," Pierluigi (Lello) Concutelli. The organization claimed responsibility for the act, with a handful of leaflets strewn on the victim's corpse [see the appendix to this chapter]. For the first time the radical Right openly targeted and struck a high representative of the state and signed the deed. (Peteano's attack was carried out by a relatively isolated, provincial unit; its targets were anonymous, rank-and-file carabinieri and the attack was not publicly claimed.) Shortly thereafter there was a robbery of weapons and then a robbery in the vaults of the Labor Ministry. The meaning of these actions was clear: the radical Right had chosen to engage in *armed combat* against the state, which implied as well the movement's need for *self-arming* and *self-financing*.

The successes of the "1976 campaign," and especially Occorsio's murder, elicited great enthusiasm in a previously dispirited milieu,[49] at the

same time reinforcing the "militarist" against the "political" component. One effect was the erosion of the old leadership's control over the "brave impatience of the young militants born in the struggle and for the struggle" [quoted in Macchia 1983, 512].[50] The issue was made more serious by the fact that an unusually efficient prosecution led to the swift apprehension of Occorsio's murderer and his accomplices (February 1977); Lotta Popolare was decimated by arrests as well.

But the real problem was political. Managing the "1976 successes" in fact meant attempting to control the explosions of armed struggle primed by these very successes. The contrasting views on this issue (plus the "mallet of repression") eventually led to the failure of the unification process then under way. On the one hand was the classical strategic doctrine of clandestine movements, of which the ON and AN tradition was imbued. It implied the existence of a rigid organizational structure, leaving no room for autonomous groups or "spontaneity." "The new military-political phase that began [with the Occorsio murder], replacing the previous cultural-political one, requires . . . an iron discipline . . . 'Stray dogs' will be pursued as enemies of the revolution" [Macchia 1983, 518]. On the other hand, the general social and political upheaval that had taken over Italian society was driving the young radical generations, including those of the Right, to forms of spontaneous, scattered rebellion, which were a far cry from the structured hierarchical patterns of the ON and the AN.

The tension between these two drives characterized (and gave a peculiarly ambiguous connotation to) the last, terrible phase of the radical Right. Its most visible protagonists were the new generations of militants, those who burst on the scene in the late seventies, claiming to be the carriers of new political conceptions, new ideological and combat patterns. They were profoundly influenced by the forms that collective protest had taken in these years—what came to be known as the "1977 Movement." For the first time the radical Right, albeit in its own way, was directly linked to a wave of collective protest. In order to understand the changes that occurred in the strategy and behavior of the Right, it is necessary to first take a look at the general social transformations of the period.

Appendix

The Text of the Leaflet Thrown on the Corpse of Judge Vittorio Occorsio

"Bourgeois justice stops at life sentences, revolutionary justice goes beyond. A Special Tribunal of MPON has judged Vittorio Occorsio and has found him guilty of serving, out of career opportunism, the democratic

dictatorship, thus persecuting the militants of the New Order and their ideas. Vittorio Occorsio has prepared two cases against MPON. At the end of the first, thanks to the complicity of the Marxist judges Battaglini and Coiro, and of the DC mandarin Taviani [Interior Minister], the political movement was dissolved, and long jail terms were inflicted on its leaders. During the second inquiry, many MPON militants were investigated, jailed, and brought in fetters in front of the bourgeois tribunals. Many of them are still illegally detained in democratic jails, many more have been compelled to spend hard years as fugitives. The inquisitive attitude shown by the system lackey Occorsio does not deserve any pity, the fury with which he has persecuted the New Order has lowered him to the level of an executioner. But even executioners die! The MPON Tribunal sentences him to death, and the sentence will be carried out by a special task force. Forward with the New Order!" [quoted in Vigna 1986, 154–55].

7

The Last Phase: “Armed Spontaneity”

Background

The Crisis of the 1970s

The “1977 Movement” was the tail end of the long wave of collective mobilization that had begun in 1968–69. Unlike what had occurred in 1968, this movement was an almost uniquely Italian phenomenon, practically unknown even in countries where the previous movement had been strong. This is because of the specific Italian developments of the 1970s.

The massive transformations of the previous decade, culminating with the protest movements of the early 1970s, contrasted sharply with the almost complete immobility of the institutional and political spheres. Public administration and bureaucracy had remained impervious to the winds of change, refusing to alter their torpid and slothful ways. Inefficiency and corruption were endemic and made a mockery even of the few innovative policies of the period, such as the Housing Act of 1971 [Ferraresi and Tosi 1979; Ginsborg 1990, 346].

At the political level, the “block” of the system persisted, congealing the parties in the plaster of oligarchic power games. In 1971, when the wind of 1968 was still blowing strong in society, Parliament staged an incredible spectacle of protracted party bickering that required no less than twenty ballots for electing the new president of the Republic. (It was the moderate DC Giovanni Leone, who did not even enjoy the full support of his own party and could be elected only with the MSI votes.) There were even some political steps backward, when the DC dropped the Socialists from government and briefly re-created a center-right coalition, under the leadership of Giulio Andreotti (June 1972–June 1973).

On the economic front, Italy, together with the United Kingdom, was the most vulnerable of European countries to the worldwide crash that followed the 1973 energy crisis. The main effects were high and lasting inflation, decline in productivity, unemployment, and spiraling of the public-sector deficit. The Socialists, back in government after the 1974 divorce referendum, were not willing to be the sole bearers of unpopular deflationary measures and budgetary cuts. The result was governmental stagnation, that is, lack of any reform initiatives.

Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs pushed many sectors of the productive middle strata toward the Left. In the regional elections of 1975 and especially in the national ones of 1976, the PCI made dramatic gains, reaching its best results ever (34.4 percent, up 7.3 points from 1972), only a few percentage points below the DC (38.7 percent). Together with the Socialists and other small left-wing parties they did not quite reach a majority (46.6 percent or 49.7 percent, according to whether the Republicans were included in the count), but neither did the DC, whose coalition (without the Socialists) added up to 46.1 percent with the Republicans or 43.4 percent without them.

An attempt to oust the DC, building a left-wing coalition, then, would have been theoretically feasible, but it was never considered a realistic possibility. The PSI, for one, was distinctly cool to the prospect. The PCI, for its part, put forth the strategy of the "historic compromise," the grand alliance between the working classes and the Catholics (i.e., the PCI and the DC, plus the smaller formations), which the party secretary, E. Berlinguer, had advocated since 1973. Behind this choice lay the persuasion that in a fragmented country like Italy, especially at a time when violence and terrorism were growing daily, and the United States was still hostile to any communist approach to power, a bare majority would not be enough to enable the Left to govern. It would risk unleashing an authoritarian reaction from the Right, or even civil war. The example of the Chilean tragedy loomed large in the thoughts of the communist leadership.

The outcome was the government of *non sfiducia* (not no-confidence), headed by G. Andreotti, truly the man for all seasons (August 1976–January 1978). Communists and Socialists were not in the government, but they agreed not to topple it; in return, they were to be consulted on its program. The next Andreotti government (January 1978–January 1979) reproduced this formula, allowing the Communists to "edge an inch or two nearer government" [Ginsborg 1990, 378], without, however, receiving any ministries. The "national solidarity" governments, as they came to be known, were dominated by one theme, terrorism ("red" terrorism, that is); otherwise their productivity was practically nil. When the failure of the "historic compromise" strategy became too glaring, especially in the eyes of the communist rank-and-file, the party went back to the opposition (1979). In the next elections it suffered a significant setback, the beginning of its decline.

The developments thus far described could also be placed within the framework of the "overload" theories [Crozier et al. 1979]. The significant aspect is that Italy followed neither of the classic alternatives that other systems faced with the overload crisis had to choose between. Both the neoconservative path (implying the state's withdrawal from the market and civil society) and the social-democratic one (implying a great reform

program in order to rationalize the welfare state) were avoided. Instead, the system was cast in the plaster of two great covenants. The first, among the parties, meant to ensure "governability"; the second, involving the "social forces" (i.e., unions, employers, and beneficiaries of social services), was to ensure "compatibility," that is, priorities in the allocation of resources. As a result, the loci of political mediation and trade-union bargaining were endlessly multiplied, thus congealing the system in absolute immobility. At the same time political parties could penetrate into every nook and cranny of civil society: pork-barreling and the seizure of public institutions became the rule. And this time the Communists and the unions were included in the feast (or rather had some crumbs).

Militant Antifascism and the "Opposite Extremes"

The social tension caused by the industrial conflict was sharpened by the resurgence of militant antifascism. Rejection of fascism had always been a core value of democratic parties, but previously, apart from a few, exceptional instances (e.g., the collective mobilization against the Tambroni government in 1960), its expressions were mainly ceremonial if not ritualistic. After the Piazza Fontana massacre, when the collusion between neo-Fascists and state apparatuses had become evident, antifascism reacquired a real target. All the more so since the MSI, faced with the conflict between bourgeois order and left-wing protest, had resolutely chosen to side with order, even in the streets and piazzas. Against a Right thus aligned, thousands of left-wing militants were mobilized, in order to prevent the Right from having access to the public space. For their part, right-wing militants were as forcefully bent on asserting themselves in the piazzas. This gave origin to the season of the "opposite extremes," a time of daily confrontations and street violence between rival factions whose turbulence was to characterize the next few years.

In some districts of the major cities (notably Rome and Milan), a situation of veritable gang warfare erupted, whereby confrontations and beatings broke out daily for the most trivial reasons, like the seizure of a few square feet on a wall for one's posters. Control of the territory became crucial. "The map of Rome was like a leopard skin, with some dots controlled by the 'Reds,' others by the 'Blacks,' and trespassing could cause shooting" [Bianconi 1992, 61]. A protagonist confirms: "People died for very little then. You could get killed because of the newspaper you were reading or the way you were dressed."[1]

Meanwhile, red terrorism was gradually increasing its activities, raising the level of the targets, producing more victims; its actions would culminate in the spring of 1978 with the abduction and killing of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades.

The "1977 Movement"

At the official, parliamentary level, a de facto grand coalition was established that included all parties, from the conservative PLI to the PCI, leaving out only the MSI. The extreme wings of the spectrum, both Right and Left, reacted fiercely to what they saw as the birth of a DC-PCI-dominated regime, which would bring about the closure of the system, rendering all forms of traditional opposition either impossible or meaningless. Add to this the economic difficulties especially affecting the young: a generation grown up in the myths of affluence and consumerism was now faced with structural unemployment.

But the young were not alone. The social transformations of the previous years had given form to a number of new collective subjects that could not be identified along traditional political and class cleavages: women, the unemployed, the Greens, young proletarians, several strains of hippies, other hard-to-define social figures. The conflict was now between the "ins" and the "outs" of the system: the marginals and the unemployed were poised against the privileged and the guaranteed, including Communists and unionized workers. An episode carrying enormous symbolic weight occurred in February 1977. Rome University was occupied in protest to a recent reform bill, and it became a focal point for disaffection in the capital. When the communist union leader, Luciano Lama, attempted to address the occupation, he was shouted down and violent clashes broke out between the stewards who accompanied him and those occupying the university. The breach was never healed.

All this concerned, first, the Left, but it deeply affected the Right as well. At the root of these developments were not economic and political factors alone, but also cultural and intellectual factors coming from different strains, and these factors strongly influenced the form of political mobilization and protest of the "1977 Movement."

For the latter was born of a critique not only of traditional parties but also of "classic" extraparliamentary groups. Hitherto the militant's life (the left-wing militant's, that is, but again, mutatis mutandis, the pattern applied to the Right as well) was shaped by his (the militants were mostly male) rigorous Marxist-Leninist "political analysis," which determined both the content of his "political work" and a politically correct personal life, leaving no room, it was later claimed, for autonomy, critique, creativity, or individual problems.

The 1977 Movement radically subverted this pattern. Not by chance one of the most important influences was that of feminism, which focused attention on personal life ("What is personal is political"). What now came to the fore was sexuality, self-determination, rejection of authoritarianism, of male-dominated politics. *Needs* and *desires* became crucial, the former

taken from the Marxist tradition (Heller), the latter from the psychoanalytical one (Lacan, Irigary, Foucault)—both, needless to say, vulgarized when not outrightly perverted.

Other elements of the intellectual cocktail were *negative thought*, namely, Nietzschean doctrines in the neo-Marxist reading of Italian authors like Massimo Cacciari and Toni Negri. It was used as a justification for *spontaneismo*, that is, a perception of violence as a personal, antisystem statement, along the lines of Foucault's Pierre Riviere. Add the *nouveaux philosophes*, who emphasized dimensions such as antidogmatism and antipolitics, justifying any behavior as long as it was "against": the model was Deleuze's and Guattary's "desiring machine."

Action was legitimized on the basis of *desire*, regardless of any notion of responsibility, of political obligation. Desire was seen as the only force leading to personal liberation against the system's suffocating powers. Pleasure, amusement, irony became the *political* instruments of the "Metropolitan Indians," whose slogan was "Our laughter will bury you all." The break with the "old" movements was dramatic.

> Under these circumstances—wrote a participant turned historian—no coherent political project [could] be carried out anymore. The only possibility [was] to enhance a multifaceted opposition, rooted in the radical needs of emerging social subjects. . . . The emphasis now shift[ed] from *revolutionary struggle* to generalized *dissent*, from the construction of *organization* to the upholding of *scattered behaviors*, from the quest for a synthesis to the a priori rejection of any comprehensive view. [Bobbio 1979, 184]

A crucial element was the shattering defeat of the "revolutionary Left" at the 1976 elections. After much soul-searching and exhausting negotiations, a number of such groups (PdUP, Avanguardia Operaia, Lotta Continua) had agreed to field joint candidates on a common ticket under the name of Democrazia Proletaria (DP). Expectations were high: "Some people expected three million votes . . . Myself—said a former leader of Lotta Continua—I expected, in Turin, from our group alone, some eighty to ninety thousand. The whole ticket got thirty thousand, the equivalent of a demonstration. Nationwide DP had a meager half million, 1.5 percent, a disaster. . . . It was a terrible shock. The next day Lotta Continua was practically finished" [in Stajano 1982, 61]. The disbanded militants of the former extraparliamentary groups were among those who filled the ranks of the 1977 Movement.

The movement took two quite distinct directions. The first was creative, nonviolent, playful, as in the irreverent theatricals of the Metropolitan Indians in war paint. The other was militarist, and it gave birth to a brief period of radical social conflict, of which the extreme fringes ended up in terrorism. The "workers' autonomy" was its main slogan, based on the notion of "*operaio sociale*," which, it was claimed, entitled everyone to the

status of "society's blue collar," and hence to a "social salary." The distinction between the public and the private sphere, between political claims and subjective wants, between legal and illegal actions was blurred: "*illegalità diffusa*" ("scattered illegality") was decreed as politically correct. Self-reduction actions became commonplace, that is, the refusal to pay utility bills, as did robberies in department stores ("proletarian expropriations"). These practices, and the enormous spread of violence in general, decreed the end of the movement as such. The cleavage between the nonviolent ("humanist") fringe and the violent one became unbridgeable, while the increase in the daily rate of violence burned in a short, nihilistic season ("*tutto subito*" ["everything immediately"]), whatever political content the movement may have had. In a few months the wave was exhausted; its militants either reverted to private life (*riflusso*) or, in the case of the most desperate, fell into (red) terrorism, which was then declining and to which they gave a new injection of manpower for its last, murderous season [Caselli and Della Porta 1991].

It was the general climate of the post-1977 period that especially influenced the developments of the radical Right.

On the Right

The Right, first of all, was undergoing a generational change because of the political coming of age of a new cohort of militants, those born after 1955. They were distant from the historical memory of fascism, from the rhetoric of nostalgia, from the myths of the RSI, even from reverence for the historic groups. They were much more influenced by the concerns, the styles of behavior, the anxieties, the antisystem fury of their generational peers—even those belonging to adverse political sides—than by conventional right-wing iconography (or so, at least, they liked to depict themselves: how true this self-representation was will be discussed later).

The obvious difficulties that the 1977 Movement created for the Left (both in its orthodox, parliamentary and its "revolutionary" strain) were seen as opening a breach through which the Right might be able to escape the political ghetto wherein they had been confined over the previous years. The motto of militant antifascism had been "Fascisti carogne, tornate nelle fogne" ("Fascist rats, get back into your sewers"):[2] now they saw their chance to come out in the open.

At the same time the crisis of the historic Right, the dissolution of Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale, left a number of young militants without organizational references, but also without the straightjacket of rigid hierarchic and ideological constraints. The opportunity was there for experimenting with new forms of politics and militancy.

A turning point, at least in the collective memory of the milieu, was Camp Hobbit, a three-day festival in the hills near Benevento (Campania), where some three thousand young militants of the MSI youth organization (Fronte della Gioventù), closely linked to Rauti's faction within the party, congregated to discuss, sing, "be together" (June 1977).[3] The significance of the episode was well illustrated by a participant:

> We spent three days together, two thousand of us; we thought we could really weld life and politics, which had never been possible before. If you went into politics, you had to accept a miserable life, the kind no teenager could take. In fact we had the same experiences as the others, we went to rock concerts, we crashed the gates with them, we fought against the cops with them—with the same ones who'd beat us up, or whom we'd beat up the next day. It was funny, think of it. We had always been cooped up in the party branch, which produced a sort of schizophrenia, because you were a part of a generation, but at the same time you were not accepted. Now there was the hope that the time of daily beatings with the Reds would be over . . . to find ourselves on the same wavelength, those creative thrusts that carried the 1977 Movement, namely, young people in charge of politics.[4] [Cattaneo Interview #9, in Buso 1993, 249]

These hopes were soon shattered; violence picked up again, savagely: "It was an ongoing tit for tat: every night either some of ours fired at the Reds or the Reds fired at us, so that someone was always wounded;[5] until Acca Larentia came. At that point the gang war literally hit the sky, blocking a process of change and transformation that would have required time and quiet" [in Buso 1993, 253].

Again one episode had an enormous symbolic impact, the killing of two young MSI militants (aged eighteen and nineteen), as they left the party branch located in the Acca Larentia street (7 January 1978).[6] Their comrades immediately staged a "hard" demonstration in front of the branch, where the carabinieri faced them. A shot fired by an officer killed one of the youth (aged nineteen), whereupon the attempt was immediately made to collect signatures for the officer's indictment. The attempt failed. The MSI leaders, concerned lest their good relations with the law-and-order agencies be damaged, refused to testify.

The experience was traumatic for the young militants, who felt exploited and betrayed by the party. Their furious reaction caused three days of savage violence, spreading from the Tuscolano area into the neighboring districts. Automobiles and buses were set on fire, shop windows were smashed, passers-by were assaulted, armored police cars were stormed and shot at. Fioravanti's group alone fired at least three hundred rounds.

This—as the "black Pasionaria," Francesca Mambro, commented, was the point of no return.[7] From then on, all-out armed struggle was the path followed by the radical-right youth.

For the majority of rank-and-file militants the choice came quite naturally, as a means of self-defense, a way to "assert a presence." There seems to have been no real discussion about it nor any debate concerning the possible consequences and future perspectives of the choice, certainly nothing comparable to what, around that time, was going on among the Left.[8]

What seems to have happened is that traditional right-wing conceptions and behavioral patterns were reinforced by the anarchistic, emotionally loaded atmosphere of the 1977 Movement, beginning with the rejection of rationality and logical explanations. The militants' autobiographical reconstructions are interspersed with such utterances as "deep in my heart I knew," "I felt," "I sensed"; statements like "I don't even know myself why [I joined the Right]" are regularly followed by the mention of "things and values that one carries inside," testifying "a relationship with reality mostly made up of instinctual perceptions and intuitions. . . . This is 'what Marxists will never understand.' It is elsewhere, in myth, in the examples, in a transcendent order of values (precisely 'those values that one carries inside') that the real sense of existence can be found" [Buso 1993, 244]. For many militants the choice of armed struggle came basically as an expression of elementary existential thrusts (including the taste for a good fight), which on a higher level might be couched in terms of a radical antagonism against the dominant system, although without any specific political project.

Yet at the same time, and frequently within the same or affiliate groups, a number of leaders and militants, mostly from the older generation, were trying to steer or even exploit the youth's spontaneous rebellion, by channeling it (more or less unbeknownst) within the grooves of traditional strategies.

This gave the last phase of the radical Right a peculiar, and still unresolved, ambiguity, which requires further probing.

Spontaneismo Armato

Background Discussions

In fact, at least at the beginning of this phase of the radical Right, a number of discussions, mostly led by members of the older generation, were translated into a few documents and bear the signs of such ambiguity.

They contained, on the one hand, a scathing critique of the past strategy of the Right, leading to an emphatic call for all-out, nonstructured, spontaneous action. On the other hand, they hinted at a comprehensive design wherein spontaneous action would be only the instrument of a broader strategy. The overwhelming concern (a veritable obsession) was with the

aggregation of the scattered forces of the Right, an aggregation that would inevitably take the form of structured, clandestine units.[9]

The first aspect was the one most dramatically emphasized: the documents were one long sequel of charges and indictments against the recent past of the Right and its protagonists. The MSI was summarily dismissed as a party led by turncoats and informers, a corrupt group that sold out to the Catholic-communist regime ("Rauti the renegade"; "Servello [Milan's MSI boss] the sleazy Yankee"; and so on). But the critique was also leveled at the former myths of the radical Right, the "historical groups." Their *golpista* strategy, it was now recognized, trapped the revolutionary movement into a humiliating role of having to support schemes aimed in effect at strengthening the very system they claimed to attack ("*golpismo di stato*," state-sponsored coupism, carried out by "*vecchi tramoni*," the old plotters). Worse yet, evidence was beginning to surface that some of the Right's heroes had been in cahoots with the state apparatuses. A vertical fall of their charisma ensued, leaving very few of them unscathed in the general opprobrium (e.g., Freda, Tuti, and Concutelli).[10]

The groups as such were accused of exploiting the militants, both through their rigid hierarchical structure, which elicited nonresponsible behaviors, and through a manipulative use of ideology. Ideology as well, then, was indicted as a mechanism producing mystification and deceit. In place of ideology, *action* was emphatically advocated as the privileged instrument of political struggle. The very name of a militant journal, and the group that referred to it, *Costruiamo l'Azione* ("Let's build action") underlined this conception:

> The *fil rouge* of our history—one of the documents read—moves . . . outside the realm of ideologies . . . Our movements always went the opposite way from the "theory-praxis" model. Ideologies, schematic constructions . . . are alien to our nature . . . Action by itself is what brings together men who otherwise differ in their social origins . . . [and] material and cultural interests. [*Posizione teorica*, 1978]

Action had to be an end in itself but was not to degenerate into purely aesthetical beau geste, remaining anchored instead to spiritual values. Amid the ruin of the old ones, the only surviving value was *combat as an existential duty*: "Nothing better than the just battle befits the Ksatryia."[11] Against the false myths of modern society, the values of the political soldier should be dignity, courage, above all honor and heroism—those making up the legionary spirit. Only the legionary spirit may lead to the degree of depersonalization, of total existential commitment, that allows the militant to fight "as a humble soldier, in a war without time and space, side by side with the Spartan and the Templar, the Samurai and the Ksatryia, against the dark forces of subversion." The outcome was "exemplary," "heroic action," dictated by existential needs and scorning political or utili-

tarian reasoning: "We are not interested in seizing power, not even, per se, in establishing a new order . . . what interests us is combat, action in itself, the daily struggle to assert our own nature" [*Quex* #3, 1979, 6–8].

Intellectual rationalizations such as these, corresponding to the traditional topoi of the radical-right Weltanschauung, were confirmed by the militants' more immediate statements: "[On the Right] there is really quite another atmosphere, more heroic, more handsome, . . . brighter, more . . . inspiring; . . . there is more . . . heroic ideals, courage, strength, youth, life . . . I always loved what is heroic" [Interview #19, in Buso 1993, 268].

In the background of this imagery quite obviously were Evola's doctrines, as some protagonists fully and emphatically acknowledged: "Evola is a beacon. One of those men that . . . offer to political and intellectual elites . . . all reference points necessary to lead a differentiated life in a world of ruins" [Azione Rivoluzionaria 1977, 10]. This time it was the late, anarco-nihilist Evola of apoliteia. The notion was developed out of a sense (advocated by Freda since the 1960s) that scorns detachment as cowardly and points to extreme political engagement ("*militia*," "*via eroica*," "holy war") as the only way in which the "differentiated man" can achieve spiritual fulfillment. This of course required a process of radical simplification and vulgarization. What in Evola's doctrine was a long, painstaking, and by no means linear itinerary, which only the very few might hope to travel successfully, was reduced to its most literally brutal aspects: each man is a law unto himself; the search for one's own nature was rapidly brought to conclusion by identifying with the warrior; combat, then, was the obvious path—a path that came easy to a rank-and-file not really given to intellectual discourse. And indeed some militants exhibited impatience for the master's doctrines;[12] at the same time, two of the most militant Evolian tracts, of 1935 and 1940, were reprinted and widely circulated, at least among the "intellectual" elements [*Metafisica*; *Dottrina Ariana*; these are analyzed in Ferraresi 1987a; 1987b].

The most visible outcome of these conceptions was *spontaneismo armato* ("armed spontaneity"), the formation of small, swiftly acting and disappearing groups, politically (i.e., not structurally) linked in a loose pattern, hence reciprocally autonomous, although operating all in the same bacteriological culture, where militants frequently overlapped and actions could be "signed" by more than one organization, in what has been called "archipelago strategy" [Capaldo et al. 1986, 204].

However, the "spontaneity" of such development, its heroic lack of a purpose ("we are not interested in seeking power"), has been questioned. And indeed the documents of the period, when one takes a closer look, reveal other themes not always congruent with "spontaneous" premises, being much closer to the "revolutionary war" doctrine, as delineated in chapters 3 and 4 above.

To begin with, the documents envisaged a "revolutionary progression" wherein *spontaneismo* was only a first stage, to be followed first by terrorism and then by guerrilla warfare.[13] Terrorism in turn meant, first, to kill a number of strategic figures and then to attack the means of communication (trains, roads) so as to destroy the legal power apparatus, replacing it with revolutionary cells. In order to demolish the people's morale and their confidence in the state, terrorism must be "apparently blind, indiscriminate."[14] Finally urban guerrillas would exploit the specific conditions of the cities, priming the contradictions of the pluto-Marxist system, thus reaching broad areas of sympathizers.

In the on-going stage, the movement should organize a number of "revolutionary antisystem nuclei . . . present in all situations that offer some chance for revolutionary action. They could thus strike at all vital cells of the system but hide their membership in the movement through the use of different initials" [*Fogli d'ordine*, in *Requisitoria Mancuso*, 72].

All this was subordinated to the reaggregation of the revolutionary forces scattered by the dissolution of the AN and ON, a task to be given absolute priority. To that purpose, even provoking the system's repression by means of increasingly more serious acts would be useful: "Recent experience has taught that only repression has given some (but not enough) bite to our movement, and that only examples and holocausts [*sic*] lead our people to do any hard thinking" [in Requisitoria Mancuso 1986, 74].

How much of that remained a mere theoretical exercise or the wishful thinking of a few, and how much was in fact implemented, is a crucial question.

Clarification of the major crime attributed to the radical Right, the massacre at Bologna's station (eighty-five persons killed on 2 August 1980), hinges significantly on this question; a temporary answer may be found in the second appeal verdict of Bologna's court (1994), which handed life sentences to Giuseppe Valerio ("Giusva") Fioravanti, Francesca Mambro, and Sergio Picciafuoco. The very tormented itinerary of this case reflects the episode's difficulty. The first-degree verdict (1988), preceded by sharp disagreements between investigators and judges, accepted the prosecution's argument that the crime was carried out by a number of young militants, led by Giusva Fioravanti, under the sponsorship of the older ones, thus underscoring the notion that *spontaneismo* was in fact manipulated all along by the "old plotters," some of whom (Fachini and Signorelli) were sentenced along with the youth. The appeal verdict (August 1990) found the prosecution's evidence inadequate concerning both the crime and the operational link between older and younger generations, and acquitted all in full according to the new code's rule. That appeal verdict, in turn, was quashed by the Court of Cassation, which ordered a new appeal trial, which ended with the mentioned verdict. The latter, however, sentenced only the

material executors while acquitting Fachini and Signorelli. This verdict has also been petitioned before the Cassation Court, which, instead, upheld it (24 November 1995).

It is obviously impossible here to allocate criminal responsibilities that the courts themselves are having such a hard time in attributing. But there is no doubt that the contacts between the leaders of the older groups and those of *spontaneismo* were relevant both on the intellectual and the operational side.

For example, one of the most important strategic texts of the period, the *Fogli d'ordine di Ordine Nuovo*, quoted repeatedly here, was jointly written by militants of the older group and those of Costruiamo l'Azione. A task force of the latter unit organized the flight to Costa Rica of the prototypical militant of the previous phase, Freda, then residing in a "compulsory residence" in Catanzaro (5 October 1978). Another charismatic hero of the older generation was Concutelli, the killer of Judge Occorsio: several minutely planned operations to free him, organized by Fioravanti and his group, misfired for fortuitous reasons [Assise Bologna 1984, 1021]. Then a joint hit-group made up of members of Costruiamo l'Azione and NAR, led by Fioravanti and Calore, attempted to avenge Concutelli's capture by executing the lawyer charged with causing it: an innocent passer-by was mistakenly killed in his place.

These are only a few examples of a very thick web of relations woven between the militants of the two generations. They were acknowledged even within the milieu, but there was sharp disagreement on their real significance (thus Terza Posizione was suspicious of Costruiamo l'Azione because the "old plotter" Paolo Signorelli was an eminent figure in it; in turn Costruiamo l'Azione charged Terza Posizione with being nothing but an affiliation of Avanguardia Nazionale) [Assise Bologna 1984, 284]. Hence it is necessary to keep them in mind as a crucial *toile de fond* for understanding the intricate and at times murky developments of this phase of the radical Right.

By definition the term *spontaneity* rejected structural setups and permanent organizational patterns, yet, at least for a time, some distinct groups and aggregations did operate. The most important are briefly discussed below.

Costruiamo l'Azione

Costruiamo l'Azione was the name of a journal, six issues of which were published between late 1977 and the spring of 1979. Five thousand copies were printed of the last issue. It was distributed outside schools, door to door, and through other forms of "militant distribution." The costs were

covered largely by means of "self-financing," that is, with the proceeds from robberies and holdups.

In practice it was also a group (a "political movement"), led by veterans of the Ordine Nuovo (de Felice, Signorelli, and Fachini) together with members of the younger generation (Aleandri and Calore). Although the former carried out a crucial role in starting the movement and recruiting the younger militants, it was the "new" exigencies that, at least ostensibly, prevailed in the name of the "archipelago strategy." Structured organizational models were rejected in favor of a "factual" cooperation grounded in the choice of targets and actions with which several groups could identify themselves. The journal gave voice to the antigroup ideology by pretending not to be the expression of a political organization but a "reference point" for an "area," a locus for debate and for the quest of a "political space" reaching beyond the narrow borders of the traditional Right.

At the core of the strategy was the notion of a "scattered attack" against the system, one that ostensibly rejected the traditional conspiratorial model of the Right based on a double (covert and open) level of action. The purpose was to set up a "united front" against the system, together with the most radical elements of the Left, the groups of the "Organized Autonomy."[15]

This was Freda's proposal of the late 1960s, endlessly reiterated by *Costruiamo l'Azione*, both in its own prose and that literally quoted of Freda himself.[16] With this intention in mind, a "meeting on repression" was organized in a Roman cinema in the spring of 1979, to which groups of the Organized Autonomy were invited. The attempt failed because the Autonomy did not respond, but a few cases of "mixing" did in fact occur [Buso 1993, iv, 2].

The "united front" ideology was buttressed by the attempt, rather novel for the Right, to take "social roots." The journal exhibited much concern for the (new) Left's favorite themes, especially those the youth were protesting, as well as issues like the "southern question" ("domestic colonialism"), the government's income policies ("savage attacks against the workers"), urban decay, the prisons, and so on. A number of "committees," "units," "initiatives," all duly calling themselves "popular," found space in the pages of the journal (and *only* there, one suspects), which vouched for their intransigent social commitment. The old rightist rhetoric occasionally resurfaced (as in sickening celebrations of the peasant culture: "Let our wine be as thick as the blood of the steer") but, by and large, concepts and language were conspicuously taken from Marxism—a doctrine to which the authors claimed to be indebted while at the same time pointing out its incapability of overcoming economic bias.

This said, it must be recognized that the "archipelago strategy" worked only within the right-wing milieu. A number of groups "were in tune" with

the program advocated by the journal and implemented, in the 1978–79 period, a massive volume of actions ranging from propaganda to violence (attacks, holdups, killings). Most of them were initiated in Rome and the adjoining area,[17] but contacts were also intense with the northern (Venetian) group led by Freda's associate, Massimo Fachini, who controlled the journal's distribution in the North. And Fachini introduced to the group his pupil Gigi Cavallini, later to become Fioravanti's chief associate and one of the NAR's most effective killers (his victims included Judge M. Amato; see below) [Capaldo et al. 1986, 205].

Close contacts were entertained as well with common criminals. Costruiamo l'Azione had links with several gangs, one of which, led by Egidio Giuliani, was an exemplary crossbreed of criminal actions and subversive initiatives, including those of the Left (Giuliani cooperated with sectors of the Movimento Comunista Rivoluzionario, headed by some of the former Red Brigade terrorists who had kidnapped and murdered Aldo Moro) [Capaldo et al. 1986, 945].[18]

The journal's role as the "resonance chamber" for the groups' autonomous operations followed from the notion that the attacks should target the system and its symbols, and that the choice should be clearly perceptible. Hence the importance of *armed propaganda* (a notion borrowed from left-wing terrorism), which required some degree of "permeability," that is, awareness within the milieu if not of the responsibility for each episode, at least of each episode's general political referent. And this is what Costruiamo l'Azione claimed to attempt. At least ostensibly it was a far cry from the old rightist strategy centered on covert actions.

The real armed branch of Costruiamo l'Azione and the group that implemented most of these principles was the Movimento Rivoluzionario Popolare (Popular Revolutionary Movement, or MRP) made up of the inner core of the journal's group. It carried out two major bombing campaigns, in 1978 and 1979. According to S. Calore, the first, preparatory campaign had been planned by militants of the older generation "in order to test the milieu's responsiveness" toward a strategy aimed not at the classical fascist objectives but at the symbols of state power. The attacks should not be claimed, in order "to spread our ideas even in circles that might have refused them had they known their origin." It worked: "In a couple of months we as a group carried out about fifteen bombings, but many more were accomplished by other groups that joined the campaign . . . a good sixty of them. [That proved] that a certain element was willing to follow directives issued even in such an indirect fashion" [in Assise Bologna 1984, 974, 977]. The older militants were later acquitted, but the links between the two generations are indisputable.

The attacks of the second campaign, however, were endorsed by a logos used by Costruiamo l'Azione (a spade and a submachine gun). Most signif-

icant, both for the amount of explosives used and the choice of symbols of the system as targets, were the ones enacted against the Capitol in Rome (seat of the City Hall), the central jail, the Foreign Ministry, and the Higher Council of the Judiciary (an especially vicious attack).[19] The accompanying leaflets were couched in terms that could very well be found in Marxist documents [see the first Appendix to this chapter], reflecting a line from which other right-wing militants, like G. Fioravanti, took their distance [Assise Bologna 1984, 123].

These attacks were the last carried out by the group. Costruiamo l'Azione, as an organized band, broke up around the end of 1979 when some of its leaders were captured (F. de Felice and S. Calore, the latter drawing a life sentence for his participation in the ambush against Concutelli's lawyer, which resulted in the death of a passer-by), but especially because the tension between the younger and the older group members erupted so severely at that time that one of the juniors (Aleandri) was kidnapped and other members of the group threatened to kill him.

The conflict had to do, first of all, with control over the proceeds of the holdups. Equally important was the emerging awareness that the seniors were using the group's "leftist" openings as a facade behind which their traditional schemes and their collusions with the establishment had persevered, including contacts with disreputable figures like P2 leader Licio Gelli. It was precisely their disenchantment with such behavior that led some of the juniors (Aleandri and Calore), after they were captured, to collaborate with the prosecution, thus allowing the prosecutors to reconstruct the group's itinerary.[20]

Moreover, it is plausible that the accelerated pace of change of the radical-right strategy, as expressed by Costruiamo l'Azione, especially in its last bombing campaign, were too traumatic for many sympathizers, who chose to remove themselves from such heterodoxy. Foreshadowing the end, the journal's last issue denounced the infiltration in Costruiamo l'Azione of "groups that perceived it as a threat to their existence, to their role as the controllers of the true revolutionary energy."

Urban Warriors: The FUAN-NAR (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei)

In the spring of 1979 the Roman branch of FUAN, located in Via Siena, became the meeting place for a group of activists all coming from different experiences, their one common feature being perhaps an extraordinary propensity for violence. Their previous records included slayings, homicides, pitched battles; most of them, according to the prosecutors, could be "summarily described as street fighters and in some cases robbers" [Capaldo et al. 1986, 213].

Quite obviously, such militants were much more oriented toward combat than intellectual exercises, however rudimentary. Indeed, the traditional fascist preference for action over thought, which was commonplace in the neofascist world, found in this group the most extreme implementation. Significantly, the only texts they wrote are the broadsheets endorsing the attacks [Zavoli 1992, 443].[21]

The contrast with left-wing terrorist groups, precisely concerning the theme of violence, should be clearly emphasized in this connection [Ferraresi 1992b]. One of the most perceptive studies on Italian left-wing terrorism has noted the following:

> Unlike members of the IRA or ETA, the [Left-wing] participants in armed struggle in Italy had no base community of reference united around an identity which transcended the recourse to arms. . . . [T]he practice of violence had itself to be made to carry a complete range of social meanings and to provide the basis for political and individual identity." [Moss 1989, 5–6]

A consequence for the Left was the need "to make violence continuously intelligible" [Moss 1989, 6]. The problem was further complicated by the backgrounds of many of the militants, which was frequently either Catholic or Orthodox Marxist. The former was against violence per se; the latter had to confront Leninist orthodoxy, which was distinctly cool toward terrorism unless firmly rooted in mass movements. Documents of the early Red Brigades reflect such orthodoxy.[22] The entire matter had to be placed within the traditional Marxist concern for theoretical correctness, (the "theory-practice" model, explicitly rejected by the Right, as in the quote above, page 157).[23] This led, at least for a time, to painstaking "theoretical" efforts to elucidate and explain their actions, accompanied by the group's efforts at proselytizing the broadest social target ("the masses"). It was precisely in order to legitimize violence to the working class that the Red Brigades initially took great pains to bring charges against their victims for their (the victims) supposed crimes, to seize and publish incriminating documents, and so on.[24]

None of these factors operated on the right wing, where the fascist tradition—mixing romantic, superhuman traditions with anarchist, nihilist ones—considered violence a natural act to restore a necessary order, an act valuable in and of itself since it expressed the superiority of heroes over inferior beings, proven inferior precisely because they suffered the violence. "Both war and mass murder, for romantic fascism, represent a liberating act, the breach of a web of 'artificial' relations that imprison heroes. It allows for the resurfacing of the archetypal world wherein warrior force is both an ordering principle and a rule for civil hierarchy" [Marletti 1982, 141]. On the one hand, then, violence was conceived as an expressive-liberating act (hence a noninstrumental one); on the other, its aim was to

smash the enemy with an overdose of terror, as in the squadrist tradition [Marletti 1979, 211–12]. The result was a culture that took violence for granted and was never much concerned with the risk of harming innocent victims.[25]

As for its identification as a community [Moss 1989] it should be remembered that the "milieu," thanks to the ghettoizing effects of antifascism, combined with its self-proclaimed pride, saw itself as a "differentiated" community, whose identity required no further definition. From this standpoint, violence also needed no explanation or justification.

Disdaining, then, any group or party discipline and any gradual, long-term view of the revolution, these militants rejected both the confined space of the historical Right and the notion of activism as mere street fighting, escalating it instead to veritable military actions. The example of red terrorism, and especially that of the Red Brigades, which had "done away with idle chatter" in favor of the most determined action, was to be emulated.[26]

Along with this was the rejection of hierarchical structures and organizational constraints; no one was allowed to issue orders, only give "examples," "models," and "suggestions," which anyone in the milieu was free to follow or reject. Giusva Fioravanti (born 1958) was the prophet of *spontaneismo* and its most charismatic figure; his awesome "career" at the young age of twenty would ultimately account for about ten homicides, not to mention his role in Bologna's massacre. According to one associate:

> He advocated moving "lean and agile." His idea was to carry out increasingly serious deeds, which on the one hand would underscore the Right's presence and on the other bring out the best elements, those most willing to join the armed struggle, sifting out the "butterflies"—and there were lots of them in our milieu. In this way the "spontaneista" program would spread like quickfire, making repression more difficult and keeping the authorities from understanding what was going on. It was the so-called scattered spontaneism. [in Assise Bologna 1984, 1070]

Fioravanti's words confirm the antihierarchical attitude:

> Our military capabilities had increased, our example was being followed, we liked that, rebellion should be as violent and widespread as possible. . . . Our charisma allowed us to spread our message widely, we wanted to suggest issues for reflection . . . [But] we always strove to "de-hierarchize" our groups, we did not want kids our age to depend on directives coming from the party or from philosophical textbooks. We wanted everyone to use his own head. [In Bianconi 1992, 107]

The acronym NAR (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, coined by Francesca Mambro) was not meant to be the exclusive copyright of one single group

but was available to anyone willing to use it. The only condition was that each episode carry a clear antisystem "revolutionary" connotation. Indeed, a number of units, groups, or even extemporaneous aggregations made use of the acronym in order to endorse a multitude of actions that took place all over the country, the center of activity, however, being in Rome. Their sheer volume is staggering: there were twenty-nine "acknowledged" attacks in 1978, forty-three in 1979, and thirty-two in the first six months of 1980.

The MSI's attitude toward this group was at the very least ambiguous. On the one hand it claimed to have nothing to do with them (but the FUAN was in fact the MSI sibling organization); on the other hand it attempted to exploit youth militancy, as in the case of the demonstration called to commemorate the Acca Larentia killings. The demonstration was planned in the FUAN's local, under the supervision of two MSI leaders. It was organized as a veritable episode of urban guerrilla warfare, including the use of Molotov cocktails and firearms, the storming and sacking of shops, of public transportation, of the DC district local. Some MSI leaders participated in the demonstration, during which the police killed another young party militant [Capaldo et al. 1986, 213].

The day before this "commemoration" (9 January 1979) Radio Città Futura, a left-wing radio station that had made some irreverent remarks about the Acca Larentia victims, was stormed by Fioravanti at the head of a commando manning submachine guns and hand grenades. Only women announcers happened to be on the premises: five of them were machine-gunned in the legs. A violent argument ensued in the milieu; Costruiamo l'Azione blasted the episode as the "escape valve of some frustrated impotents, masturbating with their guns" instead of really hurting the system (but shortly thereafter Calore and Fioravanti were together in the mistaken killing that led to Calore's capture), while others, like Tuti and the journal *Quex*, which claimed to be the mouthpiece of *spontaneismo* (see above, n. 10), hailed its "revolutionary correctness."

It was typical of the zeitgeist and certainly of the NAR's way of reasoning, that this episode was meant as a gesture capable of sending a message to the "other side" in order "to stop this business of the opposite extremes" (Fioravanti). The concern was shared by others on the Right (Freda, Calore, Signorelli); but whereas for them it was merely a tactical move, "for us it came from ethical, human, emotional reasons . . . To go on fighting among us kids was nonsense. So we thought of organizing a complex, bloody, military operation . . . and to follow it up with a statement asking for a ceasefire . . . It may seem contradictory . . . but we had to perform an act of force at the moment we proposed an armistice." In order to prove his so to speak peaceful intents, Fioravanti insisted that even though thirty rounds were fired no one got killed [in Bianconi 1992, 108, 113]. Indeed the NAR's communiqué following the attack offered to bury the war ax

with the Reds [see the appendix to this chapter: "A Peace Offer from the NAR"].

Another typical NAR action was the assault, in full combat dress, against a bullet-proof vest manufacturer, in the effort to seize equipment. There followed a gigantic weapons holdup, which netted enough weapons to arm the entire radical Right for the next few months.[27] Not to be outdone, the "women nucleus," led by Mambro, carried out a number of arsons and holdups. (The "women nucleus," incidentally, was a novelty for a traditionally sexist milieu where, as Mambro acknowledged, "women have precious little space; when they do, it's because they have seized it with teeth and nails"[28] [in Zavoli 1992, 448].) Potentially more lethal was the storming of a PCI local, with firearms and hand grenades: twenty-five people were wounded. All these events took place between 10 January and 15 June 1979.

Terza Posizione

More or less at the same time as the NAR was begun, that is, early in 1979, another radical organization was formed in Rome, Terza Posizione (Third Position) inheriting the themes and a number of militants from a previous group, Lotta Studentesca (The Students' Struggle), which for a time had been under the wings of Paolo Signorelli. For his part Freda had encouraged the future leaders of Terza Posizione, with whom a number of Avanguardia Nazionale veterans were in contact as well.

Terza Posizione was also the name of the group's journal. Its themes included the by now familiar rejection of traditional ideologies and lineups ("neither with the red front nor with the reaction") in favor of a "third position" leading to popular revolution. Predictable targets were "the system" and its repressive structures ("state lagers"), while special attention was devoted to the schools, as mechanisms for social and ideological indoctrination. This was in keeping with Terza Posizione's audience and recruiting ground, largely represented by students. They later made up the largest subgroup among right-wing militants, increasing in number significantly later on. They made up 35 percent of Buso's sample, 80 percent of whom belonged to the later generations, as opposed to 15 percent on the Left [Buso 1993, 217].

There was much discussion of the organization versus spontaneity issue. The first alternative (i.e., the attempt to channel the scattered revolutionary energies within a unified strategy, or at least a broad logic) originally gained preference over all-out spontaneity, as in the NAR's "generalized clash." In spite of a number of more or less appropriate Evolian references, the level of discussion was quite poor, as could be expected by an organization where most members were still in their teens.

Terza Posizione spread rapidly. Although the movement was active mostly in Rome, it had an incipient national organization, with bases as far north as Venetia and as far south as Sicily. The basic unit was the *cuib*, the cell of the Romanian Iron Guard (all symbols used by Codreanu's Legion were eagerly taken up in this period, possibly because the mystique of death that was so prominent in the Legion's iconography and Weltanschauung was quite appropriate for this last desperate, nihilistic phase of the radical Right).[29] Right alongside the open structure there was an entirely clandestine "operational nucleus" charged with providing weapons and funds by theft and robbery. At a higher, more secret level was the Legion (again Codreanu), "the aristocracy of the aristocracy," which was to become the ruling class after the revolution. The Legion's charismatic leader, Peppe di Mitri, who was highly skilled in holdups and robberies, was a prominent member of the AN and a close associate of Delle Chiaie, which led many observers to posit a strict relationship between the two organizations.

The Splinters

This already quite dynamic picture underwent a further, rapid acceleration as a consequence of several fortuitous captures in the second half of 1979, which effectively wiped out much of the movement's leadership.[30]

Costruiamo l'Azione ceased to exist, as did the Via Siena Fuan as an aggregation point for *spontaneismo*. Third Position lost the leaders of the "operational nucleus" and was left to face the growing pressure of the grass-roots militants, who were pushing for increased military (in fact criminal) activity, seen as the only viable "revolutionary" choice in the absence of any broader strategy. All possibilities of control from the senior ranks were practically swept away.

The ensuing months witnessed an incredible escalation of right-wing violence, often endorsed with the initials NAR. According to the magistrates: "A stunning volume of thefts and robberies, in banks and apartments, were carried out . . . by a great many youngsters (as young as sixteen) and were politically motivated (the need to acquire funds for Third Position or to help comrades in jail) but were also motivated for purely economic reasons, thinly disguised under a revolutionary cloak" [Capaldo et al. 1986, 222].

Such escalation was made possible in the first place by the generalized inertia of the state apparatuses, whose efforts were mostly directed toward fighting left-wing terrorism while that of the Right was sadly underestimated.[31] Political sympathies, social origins, and family relations favored such underestimation, systematically leading to unjustified leniency to-

ward violators [Capaldo et al. 1986, 227ff.]. As a result, after the inquiry following Occorsio's assassination (1976), the investigators lost their "feel" for this milieu. In spite of the "stunning expansion" of terrorist acts with clearly neofascist overtones, until 1979 no comprehensive inquiry was devoted to this area. When it did begin, only one deputy prosecutor (Mario Amato) was assigned to the task, while at the same time as many as five deputies were assigned to a trivial case of soccer corruption. Fioravanti himself acknowledged that there were "friendly state forces [that], since we were the 'bourgeois children,' allowed us to roam at will about Rome" [in Assise Bologna 1984, 1596; also Zavoli 1992, 430].

But right-wing violence was also in tune with the general climate of the post-1977 years: a climate of violence, confrontation, and convulsion, where red terrorism was rampant and casualties numbered in the dozens. In 1978 there were some seven attacks a day [Moss 1989, 2], amounting to a total of 38 terrorist killings by the two factions. The victims numbered 36 in 1979 and 135 in 1980 (including those killed in Bologna's massacre) [Galleni 1982, 49; see figure 7.1].

Right-wing terrorism was influenced by that of the Left, both directly and through the climate engendered by its presence; at the same time it differed from it in many significant ways. A brief account of the itinerary of left-wing groups may shed some light on the developments of the Right [what follows is based on Caselli and Della Porta 1991; for a systematic comparison of the two terrorisms, see Ferraresi 1992b].

Some Notes on Left-Wing Terrorism

After the initial phases of their development [see above, chapter 6] the Red Brigades, in 1976, had been decimated by arrests and were isolated from their original nurturing ground, the factory. The 1977 Movement provided them with a new potential and support. This radicalized their strategy, which moved now from "attacking the heart of the state" to "unfurling civil war."

Originally the Red Brigades considered themselves the vanguards of a movement that also included institutional components (the PCI and the trade unions, toward which the early Red Brigade documents were critical but cautious). The enemy then was "neo-Gaullism" plus "Germanization"; now it became "social democracy," including the unions and the "*Berlinguériani*" (Berlinguer's followers). The bourgeois state, it was claimed, alternatively utilizes fascism and social democracy. This ideological shift rationalized the Red Brigades' isolation with respect to the social strata to which they had previously referred.

It also required a transformation in the forms of its action. Initially, in

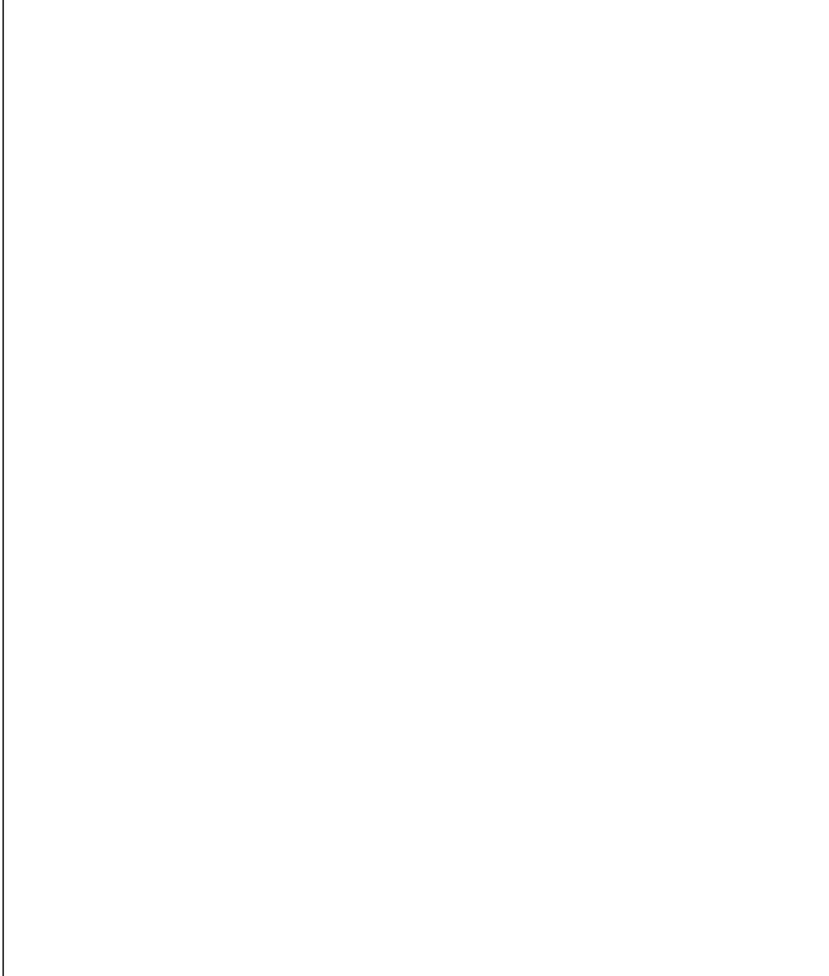

Figure 7.1 Acts of Violence 1969–1982. Source: Della Porta and Rossi, 1986, 16.

the factory, victims were meticulously "indicted"; now attacks were carried out at random among the thousands of executives and cadres at the large factories. In 1977–78, eighteen woundings and one assassination of industrial personnel took place. In no case did the Red Brigades bother to specify the charges against their victims, who were violated simply as symbols of the system. This also implied a change in their forms of intervention: from "punitive actions" their object now became "destruction," to be carried out by veritable "campaigns" aimed to attack and destroy capitalist power as such.

This, together with the fact that industrial conflict was decreasing (without, however, disappearing), implied that the Red Brigades began disregarding factory objectives and chose political targets, especially among the personnel of the ruling party (the DC).

The move outside the factory was rationalized by the claim that professional workers had sold out to reformism, so that only unskilled workers and especially the marginal proletariat could have revolutionary interests. Consequently the Red Brigades tried to hegemonize and organize the clandestine groups of that area, and to link up with "*terrorismo diffuso*" ("scattered terrorism"). From now on many actions were aimed at building up "prestige" among the small clandestine groups, in order to bring them under the Red Brigades' umbrella. At the same time, actions against the law-and-order apparatus increased: in the 1977–78 period, there were fifteen victims among the police and the judiciary. There was also an appalling series of crimes in order to prevent Turin's trial of the "historical heads" of the Red Brigades (Aldo Moro's kidnapping was part of this "campaign"). But the trial did take place, severely disproving the terrorists' claim that armed struggle could not be brought to trial unless a police state was established. The visible and painstaking respect of due process on the part of the state was a major cause of the ensuing crisis experienced by the terrorist groups.

Along with this went an increase in the savagery of the terrorist actions: a demonstration of technical efficiency was sought in order to hegemonize an area already inclined to armed struggle. The aim, stated by the documents, was "to demonstrate to the resistance movement the levels reached by guerrilla warfare in the organization of proletarian power." Moreover, assassinations allowed the Red Brigades to keep public attention focused on terrorist groups.

The 1977 Movement, however, declined rapidly, and so did the scattered terrorist groups. With them vanished the hopes of generalized guerrilla warfare. The Red Brigades faced a paradox: the number of militants was still significant, but no real political reference points were left. The solution was to define armed struggle as autonomous with respect to other forms of "class struggle," to the point of considering it as the only possible defense of the proletariat.

Two other factors played a role in this phase. Dissatisfaction with the Red Brigades' isolation created internal dissension and shattering conflicts leading to a number of splits and fissions; a common element among the splinter groups was the reciprocal charge of *militarismo*, that is, of separating from the political logic of intervention, namely, the extremist tendency to use military arguments exclusively to justify armed struggle. A second effect of the crisis was *pentitismo*, confessions leading to a torrent of arrests

and discoveries of hideouts. Beginning in 1980 the erosion of Red Brigades' structure became constant and unstoppable.

This did not keep the Red Brigades from renewing their offensive, which indeed in this period was truly savage: confrontations with the police and carabinieri increased, with high-ranking officials being killed and wounded in great numbers (consistent with the logic of open warfare, where the objective is to inflict heavy losses). The same occurred against judiciary and DC personnel. Some attacks were meant as "propaganda actions" aimed at the "new emerging subjects": the targets included doctors, inspectors from the Ministry of Labor, and a NATO general.

Whatever the ostensible justifications for their actions, the dynamics intrinsic to the development of terrorist groups played a crucial role. Clandestinity bred isolation, and hence a loss of contact with the ongoing social struggles, even with those fringes of opinion that might show some sympathy for armed struggle. Actions then became increasingly self-referential, aimed more and more at an audience confined within the armed groups. Here a critical motivation was the rivalry between the various factions trying to outbid one another in order to seize hegemony over the leftovers of the organization. Thus senior law-enforcement officers were kidnapped and killed (Judge Giovanni D'Urso, Gen. Enrico Galvaligi) in order to meet the demands of those upholding the Red Brigades' orthodoxy, the imprisoned "historic group"; Milanese businessmen were killed by the "W. Alasia" splinter column in order to establish its prestige vis-à-vis the executive committee; and others were killed as an expression of emulation by the two major splinter groups. A barely credible episode took place in Turin, when two private guards were savagely murdered with the sole aim of advertising a leaflet exposing the betrayal of a Red Brigades leader (a charge that proved to be ungrounded).

The most macroscopic example was probably Aldo Moro's abduction and killing. One of the Red Brigades' objectives was to force the elimination of *Autonomia* (Workers' Authority) and minor groups through state repression, and to encourage their affiliates to seek the protection and superior resources of the "historic" organization.

For their part, minor organizations followed a complementary logic: the killing of a well-known journalist in Milan by a recently formed group of teenagers was meant to attract the Red Brigades' attention and elicit a direct offer of incorporation.

All the above increased the Red Brigades' isolation, for attacks became less and less intelligible to "lay" audiences, and even less justifiable. But it was necessary to keep going, through increasingly bloody and desperate actions, in order to bear witness to the group's survival, to the existential identity of its members, to the correctness of having chosen armed struggle. With regard to the latter, however, in order to deny defeat, the terrorists had

to construct a new image of armed struggle, as an autonomous and self-sufficient fact.

The praxis of armed struggle had previously been seen as instrumental in activating the revolutionary process which was to be carried out in the interests of the proletariat. Now it became an end in itself, *as a praxis of liberation*.[32] The terrorists gave up any attempt to analyze (however mystifying) social trends within which the actions of the "revolutionaries" could be inserted. No longer was civil war seen as a historical phase of class struggle to be promoted by means of guerrilla warfare. A new vision and a new way of living emerged, grounded on the existential conditions of metropolitan guerrilla warfare. War was the only complete expression of class consciousness and of the proletariat's political struggle against the level reached by the organization of capital. It was the expression of *a new absolute enmity between classes*. Guerrilla warfare was the only way to break the totalitarian social control of capital as a form of control over the people's consciousness. The ultimate outcome was this: it is not necessary to win the civil war, only to witness its unfurling in everyday reality.

This reconstruction clearly shows how far the "movement," beyond the political facade of its terminology, was sliding toward a dimension of existential rebelliousness, even to the point of attributing aesthetic qualities to it (war or class struggle conceived of as a liberating praxis). The change was reflected in a number of statements made by Toni Negri, the most influential thinker of the "workers' autonomy," advocating *class hatred* as a gesture of liberation [Negri 1977] and combat not only as an aesthetic experience but even an erotic one:

> This solitude of mine is creative, this separateness is the only real collectivity I know. The resulting happiness is clear: Every act of sabotage and destruction redounds to me as a sign of class collegiality. The possibility of risk, far from bothering me, fills me with the feverish emotion of one who awaits his beloved. Nor does the pain of the enemy affect me. Proletarian justice has the same productive force as self-realization [*autovalorizzazione*] and the same power as logical conviction.
>
> I immediately feel the warmth of the worker-proletarian community every time I pull the ski mask over my face.[33]

On the Right: All-Out Combat

For the ultra-Left the emergence of existential, even aestheticizing thrusts as opposed to political ones was a relatively late phenomenon, and one largely concerning some fringe elements. On the Right, however, such dimensions were deeply rooted in the groups' Weltanschauung and tradition.

In the phase considered here, any discussion of political objectives, even allowing for the broadest interpretation of the terms, was replaced by existential needs and slogans. More than revolution the militants spoke now of the "restoration of human values," of the need for a "differentiated" lifestyle, of building a "community" where such values and styles could be implemented and defended.[34] (But Evolian stereotypes were frequently skin-deep: "XY strutted around saying he was a warrior-monk, no less! then he got caught, went to jail, and the next day, what do you know, he repented and started squealing, just like that, the warrior monk!" [in Buso 1993, 321].) An old fascist claim came to the fore once again, that of creating, through the mold of struggle, a new man, capable of stating, through "exemplary actions," his radical "otherness" and "differentiation" in the face of a massifying and oppressive society.

> For us, Fioravanti declaimed, the really important thing is to change man . . . Armed combat is a way to this end; in order to change man it will be necessary to change . . . the sense of fear, fear of death, fear of the loss of liberty. . . . Armed combat puts in question all these fears . . .
>
> I happened to engage in armed combat because of my personal features, it was the only thing I could do as an act of liberation. . . . I consider myself an extreme-right militant because my origins and friends are here, but we go much beyond traditional right-wing positions. . . . We have nothing to do with old-fashioned right-wing revolutionaries, plotting coup d'état attempts. [in Ferraresi 1984c, 87]

The myth of the "heroic act," of the "exemplary action," found its implementation in a life woven with danger and frenzied actions, intoxicated with adventure and risk, with the daily test of one's audacity. The love of weapons, a historical constant of right-wing culture, a transfigured expression of its virilistic motives, of its phallic symbology [see above, chapter 2], was crucial in this phase as well: "In our milieu, especially with the young, all you had to do was show the barrel of a revolver and they went crazy . . . if you showed them the barrel of a tommy-gun, they'd follow you anywhere"—and it predictably led to increasingly reckless enterprises. Any talk of a comprehensive strategy or of any real political planning now became irrelevant or impossible; actions were decided extemporarily, the choice of objectives frequently left to chance.

This helped blur the boundary between political activity and common criminality—a fact that created precious little ethical problems. The "revolutionary morals" first developed on the Left admitted of "expropriations" in order to finance the underground (but within the framework of strict rules).[35] The 1977 Movement later advocated "widespread illegality" as a form of transgression against the dominant values, to which a positive, destabilizing function was attributed: a notion eagerly taken up by the con-

temporary Right.[36] Robberies, to them, became part of a process of "individual economic liberation"; actions of "personal self-financing" multiplied (why should revolutionaries be poor?). But frequently the frank admission was heard that commiting robberies had become a kind of sport, a fascist trademark ("in Rome, if you were a Fascist, you had to commit holdups"). It was something to brag about ("in the streets, the talk was about who did this, who did that"), an activity that did not change bourgeois life very much ("in 1979 I would commit the robberies, then go back home, living my regular life without a bother in the world") [the quotes appear in Buso 1993, 281]. This was considerably removed from the Red Brigades' puritanism;[37] but even from within the Right itself (and leaving quite aside Evola's austere notions), such conduct underwent severe criticism.[38] The heads of the movement, on the other hand, far from repudiating such actions, took in a share of the proceeds, in order to "finance the revolution."

This also brought about a thick network of relationships with common criminals, which, although nothing new for the Right (e.g., Lello Concutelli was captured in a hideout belonging to a "common" gang), intensified in this period. Already at the time of Costruiamo l'Azione this rapport was propounded by the elder militants, especially by Aldo Semerari, a criminology professor at Rome University, who advocated the need for the neo-Fascists to link up with organized crime in order to finance their own activities. Semerari himself connected the two milieus, since, as a psychiatrist, he was the defendants' expert in court for several gangs, and his diagnoses (of partial infirmity and the like) had been critical in obtaining lenient terms for many of them. Among his star patients were the bosses of the "Magliana gang," and it was precisely with that gang that the neo-Fascists established especially close links.[39] First-rank militants of the Right, such as Alessandro Alibrandi and Massimo Carminati (both great friends of Giusva Fioravanti, who defined the latter as a "first-rate bandit"), had no qualms about collecting the gang's credits and eliminating its enemies. The gang returned the favors (details were provided by Cristiano, Giusva Fioravanti's brother) [Flamini 1994, 23].

But of course some actions clearly had political connotations. Increasingly, symbols of the system were chosen as the targets—the strategy pursued by Costruiamo l'Azione the previous spring. A typical example was the killing of two policemen, Maurizio Arnesano (6 February 1980) and Franco Evangelista ("Serpico," 28 May 1980) as they stood guard, respectively, before the Lebanese Embassy and a Roman lyceum. The actions intended to point out to the militants the path the "attack on the state" was to take and that the struggle was to be purely military: the two victims were chosen for no other reason than that they represented the system. Both

actions were carried out by joint NAR/TP hit groups, with Giusva Fioravanti in the forefront.[40]

Certainly the most sensational killing of the period was that of deputy prosecutor Mario Amato, the magistrate who, almost single-handedly, had begun a vigorous inquiry of the Right. Amato was in fact isolated in his office. The head prosecutor refused to give him any support (the same man who had assigned five deputies to the soccer scandal); other colleagues attacked him openly; the bar association accused him of being a "red" judge bent on wantonly persecuting innocent youth.[41] When his inquiries came too close to some highly placed actors and milieus, his liquidation became a must for all projects of the militant Right [Capaldo et al. 1986, 230]. Even so, he was given no protection. Unarmed, without any escort, Mario Amato met his killers in the morning of 23 June 1980, while waiting for the bus after he had taken his child to school. Fioravanti and Mambro (who had organized the operation, which had been carried out by G. Cavallini, with G. Vale's support), celebrated the news with an oyster and champagne dinner.

Lacking any veritable political project, the NAR had no real interlocutor with whom they could negotiate claims or requests, as for example the Red Brigades had done during the Moro abduction and in other cases when they offered to trade the freedom of their quarry with that of "political prisoners." This form of negotiation, moreover, was alien to NAR logic, which was based on noninstrumental "exemplary action" (and it is open to question whether they might have been able even to conceive of negotiable targets). Their actions therefore gradually became more self-referential, as their message was directed more and more exclusively to the right-wing radical world itself.

So it was in the case of the Amato murder, which, besides executing a "pig," was also meant as a message for the movement, loudly advocating *spontaneismo*, both through the symbolism of the killing and the accompanying broadsheet. The execution was performed in an emphatically "spontaneous" way, especially when compared, as it was meant to be, to the murder of Occorsio four years earlier. That operation had been carried out with a great display of power: it was executed by the ON's military leader (Concutelli) after much planning and high-level coordination among several groups; the attackers rode a powerful motorcycle and used a high-powered submachine gun (and one, moreover, with an important "history"),[42] riddling the judge with bullets as he sat in his car; the broadsheet endorsing the action contained an analytical indictment against Occorsio the hangman whose offenses were meticulously listed. Mario Amato, by contrast, was shot at a bus stop by two youngsters riding a scooter; only one shot was fired, from a common handgun. And the broadsheet entirely ig-

nored the victim, developing instead a long argument in favor of *spontaneismo* [see the appendix to this chapter, "The Broadsheet Endorsing Mario Amato's Murder"].

In the words of a militant,

> The idea was to shake up the milieu, through the enthusiasm the gesture would have elicited and the repression it would have caused, thus convincing many, who still hesitated, to go underground and join the armed struggle.

The message was acknowledged: it created "tremendous enthusiasm" and "powerfully galvanized" the movement [quotes appear in Assise Bologna 1984, 1076].

More than a year later a similar message was charged over another awesome episode, the slaying of a police captain, F. Straullu, who had become the most vigorous investigator on the milieu (his inquiries had led to the capture of fifty-six extremists). Together with his driver he was ambushed by a commando led by F. Mambro and A. Alibrandi and literally massacred by a hail of high-powered bullets (October 1981). The broadsheet, mentioning only in passing the "dirty activities" of this "pig" was aimed entirely at the movement's domestic audience [see below].

Even the most horrendous crime attributed to the Right, the 1980 massacre at Bologna's station (eighty-five killed) carried, at least in part, important internal motivations. Not even the last verdict has cleared away all doubts concerning this episode, so the utmost caution is necessary in discussing it. I shall merely point out some readings of the episode provided by the radical Right itself, which offer an enlightening interpretation and make it plausible to attribute it to right-wing terrorism (not necessarily acting alone).

But the starting point should be the theory of indiscriminate terrorism, as expressed in the famed "Nuoro paper" in 1979 by the imprisoned right-wing intelligentsia:

> Terrorism, both indiscriminate and against selected targets, carries an offensive potential (it has been called the poor man's bomber) that can be used to unleash the offensive against the regime's forces. . . . An all-out offensive will give us the great advantage of compelling many sympathizers and would-be revolutionaries to make a clear choice . . . they will have to give up their hesitations and follow us in the struggle. . . . A climate of civil war, and the inevitable tightening of repression . . . will force them to overcome their indecisions. They will be encouraged to do so by the sensational successes that a "rewarding" technique like terrorism brings to the attacker. . . . [A] few dozen militants, scattered in small groups, can really give a decisive turn to the revolutionary struggle. [Assise Bologna 1984, 84–89]

Here again terrorism was advocated first and foremost in order to attract hesitant militants to the armed struggle. And this made perfect sense, so to speak, to the recipients of the message, especially in the climate of competition and rivalry that existed among the groups, as some ex post facto comments clearly indicate:

> [Because of the strong contrapositions existing in the radical-right world] there began to surface the idea [promoted especially by M. Ballan and M. Giorgi] of "making a bang" in order to aggregate the groups and to bring about some overall control. It should also have been a warning to certain forces [governmental ones, whose enthusiams for the Right was waning].[43] [Quoted in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 543]

Another source from the same "milieu":

> He [Adinolfi] told me [Ansaldi] that the massacre had certainly been carried out by Delle Chiaie's group in order to criminalize Terza Posizione, which was becoming too strong too quickly. [Assise Bologna 1984, 247–48]

The same purpose, but against a different group, was voiced by another "informer" [Mario G. Naldi], who was certain that the bomb was a provocation against *Quex*, as part of "the inner feud among radical-right groups" [Assise Bologna 1984, 36].

These statements are not quoted here as incriminating evidence against any specific individuals, which obviously they cannot provide. But they clarify that, within the armed groups of the radical Right, it was perfectly plausible to blow up eighty-five people for one or more of the following reasons:

- to attract new militants
- to consolidate the scattered world of armed struggle
- to criminalize or otherwise make trouble for a rival group
- to send a warning to formerly sympathetic elements of the state, who were apparently losing enthusiasm for the Right

Except for the last one, they were all internal messages, addressed to fellow participants in the world of armed struggle. It hardly needs to be added that militants reasoning in this manner (the term *reason* is used loosely here, to be sure) could be rather easily exploited and manipulated both by their own leaders and by outside agents.

The murder of Judge Amato had deeply shocked the Roman judiciary, which closed ranks and started to investigate the radical Right in depth, picking up the threads of Amato's inquiries (the establishment of Straullu's unit was one effect of such reorganization). Little over a month later, Bologna's massacre, immediately attributed to the Right, created an immense public outcry, and reinforced the pressure of the investigators on the move-

ment. Dozens of militants (forty from Third Position alone), were rounded up and arrested, with charges directly or indirectly related to that crime.

This further raised the "level of combat," in a terrible escalation of slayings. For the capture, flight, or death in combat of peak militants were not enough, for a time, to stop the movement. On the contrary, a number of new groups, bands, and micro units sprang up in 1980 spurred by their desire to emulate the other groups and by the "legionary ideal." The peak group was now the NAR, or rather a small, hard-core unit (the "Magnificent Seven") gathered around Fioravanti, Mambro, and Cavallini, plus some "expatriate" Third Position members. The junior groups carried out mostly logistic and flanking activities, which included paying for clandestine sanctuaries and legal costs. Such activities in turn required large sums, collected by means of robberies and holdups. In their desire to emulate previous terrorist activities, a dynamic that has been illustrated with regard to the left wing, these groups vied with one another in expressing their courage and recklesness so as to prove their mettle and be admitted to the élite aggregation.

Death and Purification

The daily existence of terrorist groups, both on the Right and the Left, was marked by action, combat, and violence, leading to a large number of casualties, both in their own ranks and among their adversaries. The experience of death, then, was for them obviously a very close one. But the manner with which the two sides dealt with it differed significantly. The problem for the Left, as stated above, was that of justifying violence, and it was done by referring to the revolutionary ideal. Within this framework, death was the object of a repression process which abstracted from the act per se. A member of the commando that had kidnapped Aldo Moro after murdering his bodyguards, put it this way:

> As long as I was in the Red Brigades, the problem [of death], in human terms, so to speak, did not really occur; precedence was always given to an abstraction, the abstract idea of revolution. Revolution implied that people would die, on both sides, it implied violent clashes, and once you had made this kind of a choice you were ready for everything to follow. [in Zavoli 1992, 289]

Ideology rendered the killing legitimate and justified even the highest levels of violence, including armed struggle, as adequate in the tradition of the workers' movement in a given historical circumstance.[44] And the ideological abstraction involved the victims as well. They were dehumanized and transformed into the carriers of specific functions within the capitalist mode of production: "Your enemies are a category, that is, they are

symbols, functions, they are not men . . . Your relationship with death is absolutely abstract" [Della Porta 1990, 182].

On the Right, however, there was nothing abstract about the issue, which was in keeping with the fascist obsession and fascination with death and with the Weltanschauung of a generation that had no illusion of final victory ("We are a generation of losers," said Fioravanti. "We have always been on the side of the defeated" [Quoted in Zavoli 1992, 444]).[45] Not surprisingly, then, these last militants exhibited a range of attitudes, behaviors, even postures that closely replicated those of the earlier fascist periods [see above, chapter 2]. First, death was seen as a challenge to manly courage and as an expression of vitalism: "Now, suicide or death in general, there is a pattern which transfigures it . . . I mean, to give, to receive, to give oneself death, is always an act of courage" [Interview #9, in Buso 1993, 287].

Such a challenge could take on some more or less aestheticizing overtones, bordering on decadence, even morbidity, as in the following case:

> This kid who had turned eighteen four days before his arrest, and he struts into jail proclaiming the theory of death in combat against the police, together with his brother, who was not his brother at all, he was his comrade, they called themselves brothers, think of that. . . . I was shocked, because hearing an eighteen year old say that his greatest aspiration was to die, together with another scatterbrain a couple of years older, gave me a shock. I had also taken into account that I might die in action, but wait a moment, I did not go into action in order to get killed . . . And there were a great many like him! [Interview #18, in Buso 1993, 316]

The militant described in this account may very well have been a scatterbrained teenager, barely out of adolescence, but the official doctrine, as articulated by the sacred texts, sang the same, aestheticizing tunes, unthinkable to the Left: "The Legionary achieves complete fulfillment in Heroic Death. . . . The thought of Death is alway in his heart, so that he is ready at any moment to set out serenely on the triumphal journey to Walhalla . . . the Kingdom of Heroes."

This explains some morbid ceremonials, unheard of among left-wing terrorists, like treasuring the bloodied clothes of fallen comrades as relics and soaking them in the fresh blood of new "martyrs." Further, a horrid ritual was followed in "executing" a traitor, whereby the same gun was passed from hand to hand, and shots were fired even after the victim was clearly dead so as not to "leave out" the junior members of the group [both accounts in Bianconi 1992, 84, 201]. Finally there was the notion of exemplary death as a legacy for the followers:

> Ultimately you accept a sort of delayed suicide logic. It becomes kind of a testimonial combat. "I keep fighting until they kill me." But in fact I seek to be killed

> . . . following certain canons, certain rules, certain principles that will render my death exemplary for my friends. [Interview #9, in Buso 1993, 289]

The Left, despite the drift of some late fringes toward an existential, aestheticizing dimension, remained strongly anchored to such political values as class struggle, revolution, identification with the masses. On the right-wing side, on the other hand, a totally different theme acquired overwhelming importance in this period, that of *purifying action*. It corresponded to a deeply rooted topos of the radical-right thought, in turn deriving from some archetypes of the Weltanschauung of the Right in general.

The theme of purity, as anthropologists have made clear, is connected to the concepts of order, structure, and pattern, threatened by destructuring factors of several kinds, which produce such negative effects as impurity, defilement, pollution, dirt. Hence in primitive cultures, where the social system is structured with greater force and with more total comprehensiveness than in the modern ones, concern with impurity is that much stronger [Douglas 1966, 40, 73 ff.]. Modern societies, that is, where structuring is blander and operates in separate spheres of life, have learned to live with differentiation, indeterminacy, and ambiguity, which programmatically are not perceived as threats.

This is precisely what the Right rejects. The Right is in favor of firmly established roots, of *Blut und Boden*, of originary liens, of organic social units, of the community of destiny (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*), of the homogeneous ethnic groups, and sees all of them threatened by the advent of etherogeneity, by the destructuring and intermixing brought about by modernization. The quest for purity (for the people, the race, the group) follows logically from such premises. Not by chance did racism, in its modern form, appear with Gobineau as a defense of the *purity* of blood, as the horror for the hybridization of the races. It did so when the Industrial Revolution disrupted ancient patterns and uprooted men from their lands of origin, thrusting them into an undifferentiated world, beyond the natural boundaries of community survival, of established identities.

The Right in general, then, is against change, ambivalence, compromise; it fears what is formless, destructured. The *radical* Right exacerbates such notions, propounding a model of man as the "political soldier," the "differentiated man," extolling such values as rigor, fixity, hardness, depersonalization, within a "militarized" conception of life. The "male soldier" of the konservative Revolution is a prototypical representative of such a model:

> The most urgent task of the man of steel is to pursue, to dam in, and to subdue any force that threatens to transform him back into the horribly disorganized jumble of flesh, hair, skin, bones, intestines, and feelings that calls itself human—the human being of old . . . This, I believe, is the ideal man of the conservative utopia: a man with a machinelike periphery whose interior has lost its meaning . . . The mechanized body as conservative utopia derives . . . from men's compul-

> sion to subjugate and repulse what is specifically human within them—the id, the productive force of the unconscious. [Theweleit 1989, 2: 161–62]

Compare this to Mary Douglas's viewpoint: "Pollution also arises from the interplay of form and surrounding formlessness. Pollution dangers strike when form has been attacked" [104].

The matter/form dychotomy is also crucial in Evola's thought, and it structures some of the major antithetical couples in his universe:

> The state is to the people as the olympic and uranic principle is to the cthonian and "inferior" one, much as "idea" and "form" . . . stand against "matter" and "nature." . . . It is the same relation of a luminous, masculine, differentiating, fecundating, individualizing principle as opposed to a feminine, labile, promiscuous, nightly substance. [Evola 1934, 43]

Fascist doctrine correctly followed this principle, by asserting that "the people, the 'nation,' conceived in a generic, naturalistic, romantic sense, are only the 'matter' . . . the state is the 'form'" [Evola 1969, 24]. This brought about Evola's extollment of a "heroic-sacred world, implementing a severe *ethos*, the love for discipline and for a virile, dominating posture" [Evola 1951, 224]. Its ideal representative was the man-in-arms, best realized in such societies as those of Sparta, the archaic Rome of the *patres*, the Prussian garrison-state, all the way to Nazism and its highest achievement, the SS, of which Evola hailed the Spartan spirit, the rigorous discipline, physical courage, and a "depersonalized ethic bordering at times on dehumanization" [Evola 1969, 211].

It was on these aspects the followers most insisted. Thus, in sketching a profile of the political soldier, Franco Freda propounded for him "cold and lucid fanaticism . . . the impassion of the political soldier. He must neither hate nor love . . . He must keep *pure*, eschewing even hatred. Enemies must be eliminated as a simple matter of hygiene" [quoted in *Filo Neco*, 16; italics added]. The theme of purity, implicit in Evola's work, became explicit here and in other works by Freda: "In a political soldier, *purity* justifies any hardness, disinterest any ruse, while the impersonal character given to the struggle does away with any moralistic concern" [Freda 1980b, 87; italics added].

The theme was taken up by *Quex*, which extolled the "Legionary's" *purifying action* by placing him "above any law of this degenerate society . . . The Legionary's action is destructive and creative . . . destructive of everything represented by this shopkeepers' world, creative because all that has been generated by this society gets *purified* by it" [*Quex* 2, 1].[46]

In the case of *Quex* such principles led to precise operational outcomes: From its very first issue a column, significantly entitled "Ecrasez l'infâme," singled out names and misdeeds of "pigs," "rats," and traitors, against whom the "purifying action" of militants should be deployed.

Implementing such admonitions was the task of the last hour's militants, first and foremost the NAR. Mambro et al.'s leaflet claiming the murder of captain Straullu gives an eloquent testimonial to the group:

> We are not interested in seizing power nor in educating the masses. What counts for us is our ethic, to kill Enemies [*sic*] and to annihilate traitors. The will to fight keeps us going from day to day, the thirst for revenge is our food [*sic*]. We shall not stop! We are not afraid to die nor to end our days in jail; our only fear is not to be able to *clean up* everything and everybody, but rest assured, with teeth and nails we'll go on. [in Capaldo et al. 1986, 239; italics added]

Revenge was aimed first against the "pigs" (*sbirri*) and "torturers" of the system: half a dozen law-enforcement officers were slain after Amato (in some cases they carried no specific responsibilities, chosen simply because they wore a uniform).[47]

But revenge was also aimed inwardly. In the perverse logic of the time ("'We were a paranoiac band,' Fioravanti later admitted, 'we did not trust anybody, we thought everybody could be spies or cops in disguise'") [in Zavoli 1992, 438], the sharpening of the state's repression unleashed a savage internecine war, where top-level militants accused one another of betrayal, of causing comrades to be captured, of exploiting the movement in general for selfish ends. Fioravanti and his group took upon themselves the task of *purifying* the milieu. The chief designated targets were the leaders of Third Position who, in Fioravanti's view, had lured the kids with the sirens of revolution, trained them in the use of violence, only to entangle their revolutionary anger with hypocritical wait-and-see arguments, while taking personal advantage of their illegal activities—and now had left them alone to face the repression.

The first casualty was Francesco ("Ciccio") Mangiameli, leader of the Third Position in Sicily, murdered in a sort of hallucinated collective death ritual by the Fioravanti brothers (Giusva and Cristiano) and G. Vale, while Mambro and others stood watch (September 1980). Before the names of the killers became known, Mangiameli was celebrated as a fallen hero in the fascist customary style ("he loved life as a combat, he loved death as an adventure"; "they halted his march toward the absolute" [Assise Bologna 1984, 603]). Yet the episode had many obscure facets, including a possible connection with the Bologna massacre and other ambiguous actions of the Fioravantis.[48]

Besides Mangiameli, another dozen militants were killed by their comrades in the delirium of purification that overtook the NAR in its last phase.[49] It could be observed that the campaign against the "rats" was also crucial in the terminal phase of left-wing terrorist groups. But here it was mostly instrumental, a desperate defense of an organization nearing defeat. On the Right it was an end in itself, in the name of such slogans as "Revenge is sacred," "Don't let imprisoned militants feel useless," and the like.

For this as well the history (and mythology) of the radical Right in the interwar period provide enough precedents. The "sacred *Vehme*" was the name taken up by the "executioners" who, in the turbulent *Freikorps* period, jumped on their own comrades who were suspected of betrayal, liquidating them pitilessly: "When an outside enemy is lacking or out of reach, armed male brotherhoods are liable quite literally to set about tearing each other apart" [Theweleit 1987, 1: 21].[50] (How the ideal of revolutionary purity can be linked with organized crime, and other even more polluting elements, is a problem that hasn't really seemed to bother the NAR.)

But in the meantime, the work of the police and carabinieri was having its effect, decimating the groups. Giusva Fioravanti was wounded and captured in Padua during a pitched battle that cost the life of two noncommissioned police officers (February 1981). The rest of the band escaped, but two months later Giusva's brother, Cristiano, was also captured and decided to turn state evidence; he became the "super rat," allowing the investigators to reconstruct most of the group's activities.[51]

One by one the most notorious militants and leaders were arrested or fell in combat: after the capture of the Fioravanti brothers, Alibrandi fell (December 1981) and Mambro was wounded and arrested during a bank robbery (March 1982). In May Vale committed suicide rather than face capture (the next day a policeman was slain in revenge).[52] Then Cavallini was captured, then some "northern referents," and then W. Sordi, the leader of a satellite group, whose collaboration with the investigators allowed them to learn names, actions, and hideouts of both militants and weapons. The movement was effectively shaken. An attempt on the part of the "expatriate" Third Position leaders to send emissaries to Italy and resume control failed, and by the end of 1982 *spontaneismo armato* was practically over, although some captures dragged on until 1983.

The general climate surrounding violence and illegality was also changing: on the Left the post-1977 Movement petered out, as it became increasingly evident that its revolutionary furors had no outlet other than senseless destruction. Red terrorism, decimated by prosecutions and defections after the Moro assassination, was nearing defeat. That many of its latest recruits were drawn from the post-1977 wave helped criminalize the whole movement, accelerating its end.

As social conflict declined, the political system as a whole settled down to a new equilibrium, where the Left took a markedly more defensive position than it had in the seventies. The PCI had been losing electoral strength (four percentage points between 1976 and 1979, which would become almost ten by 1987), thus weakening its claim to governmental status; the Socialists increased their distance from the Communists and were rewarded in 1983 with the premiership. The workers' movement, in the grips of inflation, technological change, and political dissension among the

major unions, was forced to moderate its requests. The backlash (*riflusso*) of the 1980s overtook political and social life, reassuring conservative public opinion. Both the social and conspiratorial sources of domestic terrorism were thus drying out. On the Right and on the Left, the most extremist fringes laid down their weapons.

As for the strategy of tension, it had become superfluous, and its protagonists were allowed to return into the shadows where much care was taken to leave them undisturbed (no one, with the exception of a few, lower-level handymen, has undergone any sanction for his deeds).[53]

Appendix

Fascist Marxism? (The MRP's Broadsheets)

The attack that heavily damaged Rome's Municipal Council (April 1979) was "signed" by the following broadsheet: "Popular Revolutionary Movement. Last night, at 00.50, we struck at the Capitol's headquarters of Rome's municipality, a center of power and control. Destroy the seats of covert and open repression! Beat repression through generalized people's guerrilla warfare! Free all imprisoned revolutionaries!"

The high-power blast at the central jail (May 1979) was explained as answering the need to strike at "the structures of capitalist control." "When the new capitalist instruments break up the class composition and achieve a restructuring by means of succeeding crises, we appeal to all revolutionaries to join us in intensifying a practice of widespread counterpower against the state's fascism [*sic*] and opening up a dialectic armed front capable of consolidating the revolutionary unity, by shattering the structures of capitalist power transmission."

The attack against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a few days later was accompanied by the following broadsheet: "The present phase of the struggle against capitalism is not that of a liberation war, but it lays down its premises. The MRP attacks have been aimed at symbolic power structures in order to show the contradiction between formally democratic institutes and their antiproletarian use. . . . [We must] strengthen the practice of widespread guerrilla warfare in order to create militarily and socially free enclaves. . . . Against fascism and imperialism, let us struggle without pause [*senza tregua*, the name of a left-wing terrorist group]."

Not even the Red Brigades, whose military organization was without comparison more efficient than that of the MRP, had ever dreamed of opening up "liberated areas." Nevertheless, the statements of this group were taken seriously by radical-right commentators/militants, who ponderously glossed the term *fascist* as characterizing whatever in the present system

"corresponds to the compromising, probourgeois, pro-Zionist tendencies in Mussolini's regime up to 1943 . . . and that were punctually taken up again by the present Republic" [Ingravalle 1987, 46].

A "Peace Offering" from the NAR

After storming "*Radio Città Futura*" and severely injuring five women announcers, the NAR issued the following communiqué, a typical instance of their intellectual output both for its line of reasoning and its literary quality:

> We stormed a den of hate mongers, we struck hard, yet we could have struck harder. We chose a particular target because we are sick and tired of seeing red or black youth pay with their lives for the misdoings of the system. We don't like to strike at people who, like us, are seriously engaged in improving this system [*sic*], even if they are imbeciles. They are imbeciles, but after all they are our colleagues. We hope that the "comrades of the movement" [the Reds] won't allow their nerves or their anger and so on to take over but will start using their heads, and we hope that the time is over when people ride a motorcycle past a party branch, shooting away like mad. We hope they will resist the forces of reaction—white, red, or black—that exploit our rage in order to have us destroy one another [in Bianconi 1992, 112].

The Broadsheet Endorsing Mario Amato's Murder

> There is no use in giving advice about setting up the famed, autonomous but interdependent Cuib . . . Too often people hide behind statements like "We have no money," or "We have no weapons." Money and weapons are in the street, and a knife is enough to start. And to the several members of the "Great Fascist Organizations" (Avanguardia Nazionale, Ordine Nuovo, etc.) we say: Fuck off, you never achieved anything and never will; the only ones who tried anything (Concutelli, Tuti) were buried by your dirt. You are idiots and sheep, considering that you need to be many behind some little boss in order to feel like someone . . . Given our numbers, all that is left to us is revenge. All we can do is take revenge for our comrades killed or in jail; if we can't have them with us, at least they must not feel useless, and this is no cheap pietism because *revenge is sacred!* . . . The sight of the cops, the traitors, and the Reds covered with our blood is known to all! Should anybody have a short memory, they could check with our comrades in jail; those with a capital "C," of course, not the several thiefs or robbers who paste a revolutionary halo on their own shoulders. In order to reach such objectives, no "dens" or "great organizations" are needed. Three reliable comrades and some goodwill are enough. And if three aren't available, two will do. Don't tell

us that there aren't two reliable comrades! Even if it is so, our task is go on looking for them or, if need be, to create them. CREATE ARMED SPONTANEITY. We end this document by telling those who charge us with not being "political enough" that we are not interested in their politics, only in the struggle, and in the struggle there is precious little room for talking. And to those who charge us with having no future, we reply, "little lords, are you sure you have a clear view of the present?" And to those who charge us with being desperate, we say that our "desperation" is better than cowardice. To him who needs a hand, we will give it, and it will be bullets for those who go on polluting our youth, preaching wait-and-see and the like. Now we return to our homes and our usual lives, waiting for the time of our next revenge [in Capaldo et al. 1986, 230; the translation respects the inferior style of the original].

8

Conclusion: From "Differentiated Men" to Skinheads?

THE POSTWAR development of the radical Right in Italy can be seen as a process of gradual radicalization. After an initial phase of resurgence and reorganization, the neofascist groups embraced the coup d'état strategy, which, between the end of the sixties and the mid-seventies, included massacres and terrorism, and later destroyed themselves in the savage *spontaneista* explosion of the early eighties.

Their presence was a somewhat unique phenomenon on the European scene. The postwar political systems, built as they were around large consensus majorities, made it impossible for the extreme Right to become a mass movement, as it had done after World War I. But in Italy the memory of Fascism and the sharp class cleavage kept space open for right-wing extremism and allowed the radical Right to perform a supporting role in favor of the ruling interests, especially when social conflict was most acute.

This was originally the case in the late forties, when the violent strife that resulted from the distortions of postwar reconstruction and the fear caused by the presence of the most powerful Communist Party in the West, led the groups in power to overlook the antifascist solidarity of the Resistance, thus allowing for the resurgence and reorganization of neofascism around the MSI.

In the sixties the opening of the political system to the Left, cautious as it was, provoked panic among a ruling class that, throughout the history of unified Italy, had never been averse to using illegal, authoritarian means in order to keep the lower classes away from power positions. The result was the long period of the strategy of tension. The groups of the radical Right (the "historic groups") had formed in the previous decade, when the MSI, although keeping its antisystem rhetoric, gave up de facto its "revolutionary" ideals and accepted the logic of parliamentary politics, in a role of subservience to the DC (the "good spittoon"). They were now ready to take part in the season of plots, conspiracies, attempted and failed coups d'état, which were unleashed by a mixed company that included domestic and

Portions of this chapter were discussed in January 1995, at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies of Columbia University; at the Committee for European Studies of Princeton University, and at the Departments of History and West European Studies of Indiana University (Bloomington). The comments received then are gratefully acknowledged.

foreign intelligence, separate corps of the state, veterans, and restless sections of the armed forces and the (so-called) law-enforcement agencies. The radical Right was involved in most of the significant episodes, from street brawls to bomb attacks to massacres, the highest point occurring between the end of the sixties and the first half of the seventies, concomitant with a period of extremely intense social and industrial strife.

Changes in the international scenario, the reaction of some sections of the state, and the dissolution of the historic groups in the second half of the seventies closed the season of the great plots. But the radical Right was not yet at the end of its itinerary. The 1977 Movement brought about a time of "collective madness" which provided new fuel to both left and right-wing radicalism. At this time, a new generation of activists joined and replaced the veterans of the historic groups, and gave birth to *spontaneismo armato*, in whose savage blaze the last militants of the Right set themselves afire, together with countless victims.

Armed spontaneity was a genuine development. It would be wrong to understand it simply as a camouflage of the old tactics carried out by hidden remnants of the historic groups, in cahoots with the intelligence services, in order to adapt to new times. For one thing, by then the strategy of tension had lost much of its purpose. It was originally meant to create bloody accidents and blame them on the Left; but by the late seventies the volume of bona fide left-wing violence, obligingly produced by red terrorism, was so high as to render, in principle, right-wing falsifications needless. Still, a number of the old protagonists were certainly active within *spontaneismo*. They influenced it and intervened in several episodes, possibly including the bloodiest ones. By and large, however, *spontaneismo*, especially at the rank-and-file level, was quite unlike the previous forms of militancy: its strategy was different, as were its political objectives, the actions deployed, the targets.

This made the ensuing failure of the radical Right even more significant. With *spontaneismo*, the Right for the first time had attempted to become part of a collective movement, identifying with a number of its issues. The attempt proved that its impact on the young generations was very weak. The movement had practically no outlet except in Rome. Even there, the attempt to set up a coalition or at least a regime of nonbelligerence with the Left met with failure.

This raises the broader question of what allowed the radical Right in general, and not only its last generation, to endure for four decades on the political scene of an advanced democratic country. The presence of reactionary antidemocratic minorities is not unknown in Europe, especially in those political systems where, in the nineteenth century, powerful romantic movements built a strong philosophical-ideological basis for irrationalistic, antipositivistic, antimodernistic attitudes, as in France and

Germany. Since the war, however, none of these fringes, not even in Germany, had the endurance and the virulence of those in Italy.

The factors that account for it are, first, structural, having to do with the peculiarities of the political system. Its long-lasting *blockage* meant that for about half a century the same political party (the DC) was in power, while the second largest party (the PCI) formed the opposition: again, a unique feature among Western democracies. For a long time the major regulatory mechanism of democratic polities (alternation in power) did not operate in Italy.

The governmental parties, exploiting their electoral impunity, ran the system through a policy of systematic handouts to several groups and clienteles. This also meant that each interest group and lobby (bureaucracy, university, armed forces) was allowed a wide-ranging autonomy, quite outside any intent of a general political rationalization.

These background dysfunctions strongly affected the state apparatuses. When the Republic was established, its structure and personnel remained largely the same as during Fascism. Later on, the lack of alternation in power heavily subordinated the administration to the ruling parties, rendering parliamentary controls largely ineffective: patronage, clientelism, and inefficiency were notorious. The situation was even worse concerning the intelligence services, which came to operate as a state within the state ("separate corps"), outside any parliamentary control, in cahoots with international partners whose identities, as well as their terms of agreements, never underwent democratic scrutiny.

Another consequence of the blockage was the polity's low level of efficiency, which made attacks against the "democratic farce" more plausible in Italy than elsewhere. The party system's immobility amid turbulent social change and disruptive tensions could make an all-out, antisystem opposition appear more attractive to the most extremist elements (both on the Right and the Left) as the only possible solution.

We thus turn to the "subjective" side, that of the actors, where, in the case of the radical Right, the most important factor was of course fascist inheritance. This, however, was not unique to Italy. Elsewhere, for example in Germany (the other major formerly fascist country, leaving aside of course the differences between the two political systems), there had been no resistance movement against the Nazis, no civil war; after 1945, militant anti-Nazism was never really a feature of the political system. In Italy, by contrast, the memories of Fascism implied not only ideal identification with and longing for things past, but a very present, ongoing feeling of community identity with the members of a group that was defeated in a bloody civil war and was since ostracized by antifascist rhetoric (if not by actual public policy).

The radical contradiction of being "fascists in a democracy" (Almirante) was carefully nurtured by the MSI leadership in order to preserve a closed community, endowed with its own codes and rituals that set it apart from the surrounding world. In spite of their loud complaints against "democratic stigmatization," the leaders were not really interested in a radical change: the cult of a "comforting specificity" [TarCHI 1994, 83], together with the safe reservoir of 1.5 million votes, ensured an ongoing rent that no one wanted to jeopardize through foolhardy critiques of the past. The bond with the past was strong for the younger generation as well. Biographical data do not allow for conclusive evidence, but it appears that personal hereditary factors played an important role in the choice of alignments: a disproportionate number of radical-right militants came from families where fascist identification or sympathy was still relevant.

The feeling of identifying with one's community, of cohesion among the ranks, was reinforced by a significant intellectual outpouring, whose major spokesman was Julius Evola and whose main icons were effectively propagated by a widespread network of publishers, journals, and magazines. Evola's doctrines were decisive in transforming ghettoization into a badge of honor, marginalization into a proud boast (the damnation of the modern world), and victimization into the superiority complex of the "differentiated man."

The result of all this was the ongoing reproduction of a "human type" whose features remained remarkably permanent over time, appearing over and over again throughout the history of Fascism. Even when the historical memories grew fainter, as in the period of armed spontaneity, a set of personal traits were conspicuously evident, bringing the militants of the last generations into the same ideal category as those of the RSI, those of the intermediate periods, and going further back, the "revolutionaries" of the early fascist years. In fact, these traits corresponded to some of the everlasting features of the radical-right "soldiers" across countries and over time. They were described by the Right itself, both in its literary [e.g., Jünger, Von Salomon] and in its doctrinal [e.g., Evola, Moeller van den Bruck] texts, as well as by the research carried out on such materials in the social sciences [e.g., Marcuse, Mannheim, Fromm, Bobbio, Theweleit]. Our analysis has confirmed the actual empirical consistency of such a "human type" as late as forty years after World War II.

Most of this book has been devoted to describing such individuals, so it will suffice here, by way of illustration, to discuss some traits of their Weltanschauung. Its most comprehensive feature was probably an antimodern, romantic, at times decadent, aestheticizing approach to politics that stressed the "differentiated," aristocratic, elite elements of commitment as opposed to any interest-based, means-ends, rational calculation.

This corresponded to a standpoint that scorned the practical results of politics, emphatically preferring action per se, regardless of its outcome ("We are not interested in seizing power, not even in establishing a new order per se . . . what interests us is combat, action in itself"). Material success or defeat was irrelevant, as long as action was carried out following the proper canons that raised it to heroic or exemplary status. A taste for spectacles (typical, for example, of the NAR, which even planned to film an attack) was part of this conception.

The indifference toward practical results implied another crucial dimension, namely, an identification with materially lost causes in the name of higher principles (the call of destiny, as long as it was tragic; soldierly honor; loyalty; comradely solidarity). This had been at the core of the commitment of RSI volunteers, and precisely for this reason (which received doctrinal support in Evola's notion of the legionary spirit), it became a myth in the eyes of later generations. The stereotype was expressed by Fioravanti in his customary style: "About defeat we never cared, we are a generation of losers, always on the side of the defeated."

A logical consequence was an identification with outcasts (Von Salomon) and reprobates, all those rejected by society: again, an enduring icon. Such was the self-image of the RSI militants, later converted into a self-portrait, accurately fashioned by the neo-Fascists, as those who democratic society had criminalized and constrained in the stigmatizing ghetto of the past. Later on, after Piazza Fontana, the renewed antifascism of the left-wing student movement, by taking all political space away from the Right, made of its militants, in their own eyes, a small, persecuted minority.

Add to this the fascination-obsession with death, a further leitmotiv linking the first "revolutionary" Fascists of 1919 ("We like to make war with death one to one") to the last, *spontaneista* generations. In between, there had been the overwhelmingly funerary imagery of the RSI, both in its dandified forms ("It must be fun to play hide-and-seek with death") and in its more tragic ones ("Let the enemy hear the cry of our blood"). This obsession powerfully gripped the first neo-Fascists of Salierno's generation ("All our tradition was based on the cult of death and its symbols. . . . None of us had a future. We had taken a no-exit road, at the end of which there could only be jail, flight, or death"), those of the "historic groups" ("The Legionary achieves complete fulfillment in heroic death"), and enduring all the way to the last desperados of *spontaneismo*, for whom death was still a dominant interest ("suicide, death in general, there is a pattern that transfigures it . . . to give, to receive, to give oneself death, it is always an act of courage"). The whole range of expressions was again present: the aestheticizing one ("He loved death as an adventure"); the pedagogical one ("In order to change man, we must change the sense of death"); even the juvenile one, as in the youngster who dreamed of falling in combat against

the police, together with his "brother." In the background stood the typically fascist contradiction between challenging death as the reaffirmation of vital impulses and morbidly contemplating it as an aesthetic event.

Almost as a corollary was the Fascists' passion for weapons: again, a long enduring topos, from the *squadrista* songs celebrating weapons as sacred icons; to the RSI's infatuation even with the most anachronistic example like the ubiquitous dagger; to the "veritable mania," matter-of-factly considered a basic element in the fascist collective psychology by the first neofascist activists (such as Salierno); and finally to the views of the later generations ("In our milieu, it was enough to show the barrel of a gun and they went crazy"), epitomized by Fioravanti's killing of a policeman simply to add a tommy-gun to his collection.

It goes without saying that the expression of this Weltanschauung could not be left to reason, whose inadequacy, another theme insistently reiterated by the *maîtres à pènser*, was again and again exposed by radical-right militants across generations. Thus, during the RSI, Mazzantini's comrades "occasionally made an effort to talk . . . but our talks were so muddled, our words so poor . . . 'What's the use of words,' XY would say 'Words can only deceive you, they mix up your ideas . . . There are things one cannot explain, things one *feels* are so, and that's it. . . . If you don't feel them, it's no use, you can't understand'" [Mazzantini 1986, 167].

This was a perfect vulgarization of Guénon's dictum that "it is difficult to make our contemporaries understand that there are matters that, by their very nature, cannot be discussed" [Guénon 1956 (1927), 80]. And indeed the extollment of "ideas without words" belonged to a broader notion: the rejection of logos in favor of mythos, a cornerstone of reactionary thought, especially prominent in the German world, provided much doctrinal support for the radical Right, from the konservative Revolution on.[1] Reason, being distributed among human beings in a tendentially egalitarian way, is much too "democratic" a faculty to enjoy the favor of thinkers who disdain egalitarianism and discursive argument based on universal rules, while basing their proselytizing on particularistic, idiosyncratic instruments (feelings, emotions, elective affinities) reserved for small cenacles of the elected [Gossman 1983, 1984]. As for the masses, these would be mobilized by appealing to instincts, passions, racial identity, the call of *Blut und Boden*.

Disdain for reason among contemporary militants, especially those of the last generations, corresponded to the countless repetition of phrases like "I sensed" or "deep in my heart I knew," which populated their statements. This, again, contrasted with the Left, which for a long time, consistent with its broad proselytizing thrusts and its need to legitimize and explain violence, deployed a painstaking effort to analyze, explain, and articulate in theoretical terms the groups' strategy, objectives, and tactics. The result

was a veritable outpouring of documents, resolutions, and statements, practically unheard of on the Right. There, violence was not a controversial issue, whereas scorn for intellectual work was most acute, making for the dearth of written materials and for the frequently inferior quality of those in existence.

A further point should be made here: In a universe where objective criteria and rational arguments for the assessment of success and defeat had so little currency, where material results were so scorned that blowing up eighty-five innocent passengers was considered an adequate way to send a message to mutinous comrades, the rank-and-file could easily be manipulated and exploited. This phenomenon was normal during the strategy of tension but also occurred in the phase of armed spontaneity and was carried out both by senior militants and by more obscure agents. The extent of such intervention remains to be fully ascertained, but the chances for this to happen, and more generally for the past mysteries to be finally cleared up, do not appear too promising under Italy's present political conditions.

The disruption of the fifty-year-old postwar regime has produced a winning right-wing coalition whose leading party, Forza Italia, built its political fortunes on the myth of a communist hegemony over the governments of the past decades. Such a party, then, cannot admit, even as a hypothesis, that a strategy of tension existed with the precise aim, pursued even in the bloodiest way, of keeping the Communists, and in general the Left, away from power [written in 1994].

This is all the more so since the coalition led by Forza Italia, although perhaps not including the very same actors of the strategy of tension, includes many of their heirs and those who directly helped to cover up and divert investigations, while current high-ranking protagonists belong to one of the most turbid organizations of those times—the P2 Masonic lodge.

Add to this that an in-depth discussion of the strategy of tension would necessarily bring to light the past of a crucial coalition partner, the MSI-AN, which is presently at pains to deny that it ever had at any time in its past even the slightest antidemocratic temptations. This issue will be taken up shortly.

It is hard to believe, then, that a regime founded on such premises would want to wipe away the fog surrounding the strategy of tension. The question remains, however, as to the chances of perpetuating, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the type of individual described in these pages.

Most of the factors that favored their presence in the past seem to have disappeared. The final demise of the cold war, with the dismantling of international communism, has rendered unthinkable a strategy of tension like the one that operated in the 1970s (although fringes of the secret services appear to be engaged in private wars of their own). System blockage has been replaced by an extraordinary system dynamics. The com-

bined effect of international events (the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing end of communism) and domestic shocks (the 1992 electoral law, replacing the proportional system with a uninominal one, and the shattering "clean hands" investigation) has changed the system almost beyond recognition.

The most shocking aspect of these transformations, of course, was the access to government, for the first time in postwar democratic Europe, of a neofascist party, the MSI-AN.[2] That party was later ousted from government together with its coalition partners, but its remarkable development requires further comment.

In 1969, when Giorgio Almirante became the MSI's leader for the second time, he made an effort to renew the look of the MSI (its language, choreography, and style) and repeatedly stated his commitment to democratic procedures. There was no real revision of its theoretical-ideological foundations, however, neither then nor later on: the claim to reject a "purely nostalgic" ideological state did not go along with an in-depth reflection on the crucial themes concerning Fascism (which was only vaguely if ever put into question): democracy, popular representation, the relationship between the state and the individual, and so on. Even more important, the major ambiguity regarding political methods was not erased: the stated allegiance to democratic procedures sharply contradicted Almirante's encouragement of the "right-wing street militancy."

This is a critical point. The MSI as such cannot be held responsible for neofascist terrorism. But it certainly produced a radical political culture, propounding a "system alternative" that encouraged violence. Its militants were actually involved in thousands of violent episodes (frequently in self-defense), while a number of its leaders and militants flirted, to say the least, with those involved in the season of conspiracies (after all, Valerio Borghese was a former president and a charismatic hero of the MSI). The "contiguity" lasted until the very end of terrorism, as in the case of the Roman FUAN local in Via Siena, discussed in the previous chapter.

This situation caused the 1976 split that resulted in a new group, Destra Nazionale (National Right). In spite of its quick failure, the DN episode deeply affected MSI politics, for its members were the moderates, those most interested and competent in opening up and holding contacts with other parliamentary forces.[3] Their departure further isolated the MSI. The isolation was worsened by the renewed explosion of (red and black) terrorism, and by the formation of the "national solidarity" governments in the late seventies, which in fact sanctioned a sort of grand coalition including all parties, with one exception—the MSI.

The latter countered by reinforcing its attacks against "the system" along two lines. On the one hand, Almirante lumped together in one single hostile bloc all elements of the political system, against which the MSI hurled

itself valiantly, alone, claiming to identify with the protest wave (youth, petty-bourgeois tax strikers, southern unemployed). On the other hand, Rauti, who, in an interesting role reversal with Almirante, had become the leader of the opposition, tried to build a new party identity, with the aim of forming a true "political community." The innovative ideas came from this area, such as the questioning of the accepted right and left dichotomy based on the "revolutionary" dimensions of Fascism. Hence Rauti's attempt to "talk to the Left" in order "to make [left-wing] rebels understand that ours is the true revolution."

The two components clashed at the Twelfth Party Congress (Naples, 1979), a dispute that Almirante easily won, in the name of the most adamant fascist continuity: "The MSI needs no 'refoundation' . . . It suffers from no political or ideological identity crisis." Although emphatically different, Rauti's standpoint was also germane to the fascist tradition in its radical-revolutionary version. It called for the rejection of the bourgeois-capitalist world, of liberal democracy, of consumer materialism, of Americanism—all in the name of spiritual and communitarian values following the most orthodox Evolian teachings. It was also anti-imperialistic, hence sympathetic to the Third-World nations; together with this component's links to the French Nouvelle Droite's notion of differentialism, this made for a nonracist viewpoint.[4]

The contrast between the two positions lasted throughout Almirante's period. At the 1982 congress Rauti came up with "new needs" (environmental protection, consumer protection, as well as the protection of users of public utilities, handicap carriers, animalists, and antivivisectionists). Almirante brought the house down by shouting: "Let everyone know, if they search for fascism, that fascism is here."

This was all the more paradoxical because in the 1980s, important changes occurred in the system that eventually brought an end to the other parties' ostracism of the MSI. First, a substantial deradicalization of Italian politics, along with the end of terrorism and the vertical drop of the "opposite extremes," mellowed antifascism. This was also the result of a cultural rereading of Fascism (especially thanks to revisionist historians such as Renzo De Felice) that took much of the demonic taint away from the historical specimen, thus reducing its stigma for its heirs. Finally certain political sectors, beginning with Craxi's Socialists, took a number of initiatives aimed at decongealing the MSI's position in order to break the DC's monopoly on the right-wing sector of politics. Toward this end Mr. Craxi made a statement to the effect that no party represented in Parliament could be considered anticonstitutional.

In spite of all this, the MSI did not break out of its isolation: it was either incapable or unwilling to face up to a veritable self-critique to resolve its identity/legitimacy dilemma. The leadership did not dare quit its fascist

moorings, which avoided traumas and provided a safe, although limited electoral harvest. As a result the MSI had no strategy of integration in the sociopolitical system; on the contrary, the MSI presented itself as the only alternative. The terms of such an alternative were either corporatist (in the sense of the fascist corporations: Almirante's majority) or communitarian (Rauti's opposition): both, needless to say, far outside the liberal democratic paradigm.

Matters did not change much after Almirante's death in 1988. At the 1987 Party Congress in Sorrento, Rauti's program was centered on the notion of "a breakthrough on the Left," the aim being to construe a system-alternative that would battle the "pseudovalues" imposed by Americanism. The emphasis was on Third-World sympathies, acknowledgment of the "right to difference," the upholding of communitarian identities, and the like. For his part Fini advocated a "Fascism for the year 2000," sharply rejecting any break with or revision of the past and any "mingling" with other parties because, as he stated, Fascism has on its side "eternal values that cannot be historicized because they are universal." Fini conquered the secretariat, but his position was weak.

The battle was renewed at the 1990 Congress. There Fini predicted a great future for the MSI, in the name of its stance against the "principles of 1789"; those principles were charged with responsibility for depriving the European man of "any 'heroic' dimension" and of making him into a mere *homo oeconomicus*. Further, Fini challenged Rauti on the latter's own grounds, the rejection of Western society. For a long time, Fini claimed, the need to fight communism had put the muzzle on "the struggle against Western values and way of life (that is, liberal democracy in the political sphere [*sic*], capitalism in the economic sphere, and lay materialism in the spiritual realm), which find their main expression in Americanism." Now that communism had ended, the struggle should be carried on without any inhibitions, rescuing the MSI's true identity and its loyalty to Fascism (such loyalty being the leitmotiv of the whole congress). That was in 1990. In the same breath, and without perceiving the contradiction, Fini reiterated complete allegiance to democracy and popular rule. The congress ended with Rauti's success, a narrow one, however, and short-lived: a turn to the Left was much too shocking for the MSI, which, fifteen months later, returned Fini to the secretariat.

Research on the political culture of the MSI cadres confirms the lack of adequate effort in scrutinizing the party's ideological heritage and shows how that culture is still entirely grounded on fascist thinkers. As late as the 1990 Party Congress, the reading list of the MSI delegates was headed, by far, by Mussolini's works, followed by those of Julius Evola.[5]

The only attempt to revise this cultural estate came, not without ambiguity, toward the end of the seventies, with the Nuova Destra: significantly,

the group was quickly expelled from the party [Revelli 1984; Tassani 1986; 1994]. Compare this to the powerful effort the Left had been making for some time to broaden its foundations by including streams of thoughts other than Marxism and eventually replacing it as its cultural referent. Beginning in the mid-seventies the Left initiated a neoenlightenment project, aimed at rescuing both the social sciences (disdained by Marxism) and liberal authors like Max Weber and Karl Popper. This was followed by the "discovery" of Anglo-American neoliberalism and the discussion surrounding it. Authors like Rawls, Dworkin, Ackerman, Nozick, and Rorty, communitarians like McIntyre, Taylor, and Sandel, and their critics such as Walzer were all translated into Italian, often by left-leaning publishers, and their arguments were discussed in journals of the Left and by intellectuals close to the leadership of the Communist Party.

The acceptance of democracy on the part of the extreme Right, that is, seems to have come more as a necessary and so to speak mechanical effect of living in a democratic polity than as the result of a true revision of a political culture rooted in Fascism and in the rejection of the "1789 principles." Consistent with this, in November 1992 (i.e., fifteen months before entering the government) Secretary Fini celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the fascist seizure of power with a grand parade complete with fascist salutes and marches, and even after entering government he defined Mussolini as the greatest statesman of the century.

This set of contradictions and inconsistencies, which a merely conceptual analysis would clearly assess as a drawback, in the exceptional climate caused by the crumbling of the postwar regime, turned out to be a major advantage. In such a climate the previous years' exclusion of the MSI became a badge of honor, allowing the party to portray itself (with some justification) as the only party untouched by a system of corruption that had caused the inglorious end of all the others. That also sharply reduced the significance of antifascism as a discriminating value. Quite apart from its rhetoric and rituals, antifascism had proven incapable of keeping the crooks out of the "constitutional arch."

That collapse, moreover, caused a vacuum in the right wing of the political spectrum: the DC had disappeared and its heir, the Popular Party (PPI), had moved leftward, searching for popular referents. Broad sectors of its moderate, law-and-order voters thus remained, so to speak, without moorings. This was especially true in the central-southern regions where, as previously discussed, antifascism never enjoyed a high priority.

These voters were for more interested in other matters, for example, that the MSI cling to its traditional platform, one rooted in governmental support and subsidies. To this end the lack of a cultural-political, in-depth discussion was also an advantage since it allowed the leadership to put forward, as a noncontradictory proposal, a coalition with Silvio Berlusconi,

a politician who claims to be the foremost champion of individualism, free initiative, deregulation, and putting an end to the state's intervention.

Again, the absence of a cultural discussion, together with Gianfranco Fini's excellent skills at communication, succeeded in presenting as major new turns a number of positions that had belonged to accepted MSI doctrine since Almirante's times (such as the declaration that the principles of freedom and liberty cannot be waived[6] and repeated allegiance to democratic procedures). Moreover, at a time when disgust with the old system was at its peak and a major concern of the electors was the promise of something new Fini was able to "sell," as a significant novelty, the group he led in the 1994 elections—Alleanza Nazionale, or AN—which in fact was nothing more than the old MSI. Until its refounding congress at the end of January 1995, AN had no structure, no organization, no funds, no headquarters, and no staff of its own, and more than 90 percent of those elected to its ranks were old MSI cadres and former MPs.

The refounding party congress of January 1995 did not dispell the ambiguities. It did cause a minor split, headed by Rauti, who once again shouted at the betrayal of the MSI heritage and founded his own, small party. The old name was abandoned in favor of a new one (AN); commitment to democracy was renewed; even antifascism received grudging recognition as an important factor in the birth of the democratic Republic (but its present value was denied, on the curious ground that the end of communism made antifascism superfluous).

But not even on this occasion were the crucial questions asked, which should have been framed more or less as follows: "If we are no longer fascists, who are we? And if we are no longer Fascists, what is wrong with our having called ourselves Fascists up until yesterday? What is wrong with the fascist ideology? . . . Could it be that the anti-Fascists were right?" [Ignazi 1994b].

Such questions will not likely be posed in the near future. And this silence does not bode well for the future of Italian democracy.

Our final question concerns what room remains in Italy's present context for the "human type" in the radical Right.

The signals coming from the (former?) extreme Right are not homogeneous. On the one hand empirical research shows that the MSI's cadres, compared to those of other brethren European parties, such as the French Front National, appear more "moderate" on several issues. A 1990 comparison of the cadres of the two parties revealed that MSI personnel were less nationalistic, less militaristic, less authoritarian, and significantly less racist than their counterparts. All this, however, was taking place within a general attitude of rejecting the system, where a significant minority accepted violence as a legitimate means of political struggle [Ignazi and Ysmal 1992, 106, 111 ff.].

A grimmer picture emerges from research carried out in 1991 by the MSI's youth organization (Fronte della Gioventù) on its own members.[7] These militants exhibited an extremely high acceptance of violence as a means of struggle and a concomitant rejection of tolerance as a value.[8] This went with a strong hostility toward democracy: only 13 percent of respondents called themselves Democrats, and 50 percent considered democracy "a fraud," 33 percent "an equivocal term," and 13 percent a "nonvalue." Correspondingly, 92 percent did not think that "all men are equal," 64 percent called themselves anti-Zionist, 25 percent antisemitic, 11 percent indifferent, and *no one* was pro-Israel [Ignazi 1994b, 89].

In the face of all this the party, with lightning speed, after its 1994 success, gave up its previous antisystem stand and proceeded to eagerly place as many of its men as it could in crucial power positions. The anticapitalism and the rejection of the economy which, until recently, were advocated in the name of Evola and spiritual values, were followed without any apparent discomfort by the coalition of AN, in the role of the staunchest partner. At the helm was Silvio Berlusconi, the politician who is perhaps Italy's major representative of the *homo oeconomicus* ideology, the same businessmen-politicians whose TV channels are the main vehicles of those base materialistic values that the Right has always claimed to oppose in the name of spiritual concerns. Along with this goes the leadership's courting of all the Western embassies and the preferred Washington and London addresses (including the financial ones supposedly run by Jewish money). Within the party (now the Alleanza Nazionale) all this roused precious little complaint, except the harmless exit of Pino Rauti with a handful of followers.

The question is this: What became of the hard and intransigent "differentiated men" brought up on Evola's reading, who, until recently, represented one principal soul of the party? Their disappearance, and the fact that many of them seized prestigious posts in the materialistic world, may be explained by several factors, the first of course being opportunism. No doubt that, after a fifty-year-long abstinence, the chance of occupying power positions not only in the political-institutional world but in the world of culture, of the mass media, of publishing, may have induced many Evolians to forget the rigors of a recent past (considering, moreover, that severity had not really been tested as there were indeed few lures to be resisted then). There is no reason, of course, why opportunism should be a monopoly of left-wing revolutionaries turned bourgeois.

Another possible explanation overlaps the first, namely, that the reading of Evola and the *konservative Revolution*'s authors, for many actors of the present Italian scene, may have been skin-deep, a sort of ceremonial dress for a certain milieu, a costume that was very easily dismissed once *Realpolitik* requested it.

It is perhaps too early to say which of these two explanations may be appropriate or, if neither fits, what the alternative explanation might be.

Within this general and, admittedly, fluctuating picture, the role of the radical Right, in the last years, has been taken up by skinheads. All over Europe, but especially in Germany, Great Britain, and to a lesser degree in Italy, these gangs carried out violent activities, countless acts of aggression against foreigners (expecially those of color) and those who were "different": homosexuals, *Asylanten* (asylum seekers), refugees, *Gastarbeiter* (immigrants). The level and volume of violence are staggering: from the fall of the Berlin Wall to 1993, there were thrity-six victims in Germany, seventeen alone in 1992; in that same year nine citizens of color were killed in Britain [Marchi 1993; Schmidt 1993].

These gangs' pattern of development, which originated in the United Kingdom as early as the 1960s, varied according to the context. In Germany a crucial role was played by the unification of the country (1990) and by the ensuing economic crisis that gripped the regions of the former German Democratic Republic, a set of factors obviously absent elsewhere. Racism, xenophobia, and the use of brutal violence, along with a look that emphasizes Nazi apparel, insignia, songs, rituals, and salutes, are unifying elements among the skinheads (in Italy, in fact, they are dubbed *Naziskins*). Does that qualify them as the continuation of the radical Right discussed in this volume?

Research on the topic is still in the initial stages, and no homogeneous picture has emerged yet. Concerning Italy, only a few remarks can be made with any confidence. Gang members come predominantly from the lower social strata, including the underclass. Consistently, their level of education is low. This signals a clear difference from the former groups of the radical Right, both the "historic" ones and those of the *spontaneista* period, whose membership came mostly from middle- and upper-bourgeois elements, and where students made up a large component. A further distinction is that a significant part of the skinhead activity is not primarily political but social and "cultural." Many groups are only involved either in musical activities (i.e., playing and listening to "hard rock") or in hooligan and thuggish behavior (i.e., the "crews" of football fans). Neither of these activities has a primarily political implication, although in some cases it does (e.g., "Rock against Communism" or some Nazi *ultra* crews). A number of groups mix the political and the sociocultural dimensions, others remain confined to one, and still others have changed over time; drawing the line is difficult.

The politically oriented section of the movement has taken the name "Movimento Politico Occidentale" (Western Political Movement), and it makes a conscious effort to indoctrinate and organize under its hegemony the tendentially scattered crowds and "crews" in the field [for the best

account, see Marchi 1993]. A number of veterans of the old groups are active in and around it: one of the leaders, for example, is the son of Clemente Graziani, the (still fugitive) founder and long-time leader of Ordine Nuovo. Contacts with the MSI were evident, at least until the end of 1992.[9] Some journals and reviews attempt to provide doctrinal orientation, but, so far at least, the favored vehicle of communication for the movement is the fan magazine, known as *fanzine*. Congruent with the rank-and-file level of education, the ideological sophistication of this material is rather primitive, consisting mostly of enthusiastic accounts of beer rallies, clashes with rival gangs, "nigger-bashing" raids, and the extollment of brute violence. The lack of any "differentiated," elite conception of political engagement is quite visible, to say nothing of metapolitical principles.

In sum, the distance between the "legionary spirit" and the skinhead brawls seems quite wide. It may be too early, however, to proclaim that the days of the differentiated man are over yet. For one thing, it seems that Rauti, at a loss to find a constituency for his new-born party, as most of the right-wing political space is occupied by the AN, may be turning some of these groups, including the racist ones, into a militant base.

More important, perhaps: a powerful irrationalistic wind is blowing in many corners of Europe, bringing in its wake nationalism, chauvinism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, racism, and religious fundamentalism. They are frequently couched in terms of rescuing original identities, threatened, it is claimed, by the encroachment of modernity, that is, the globalization of languages, the "Americanization" of culture, the planetary reach of the international economic system. The rebirth of virulent anti-Semitism in a number of former socialist countries once again targets the Jew as the embodiment of cosmopolitan, economic rationality. Once again, that is, the enemy is the modernization of society, the establishment of universalistic, rational patterns of discourse among peoples and groups. That the critique against capitalism is often at the center of these attacks should not deceive anyone as to their deeply reactionary inspiration. The interwar konservative Revolution carried the same message, and it is still influencing some protagonists,[10] while here and there international solidarities are reappearing, beyond the traditional network of the "Black International."[11]

The form of these developments, so far, is scattered and spontaneous, and their substance is still quite fluid; should the trends become stronger and more coordinated, the old embers might ignite again.

Notes

Introduction
Right, Left, Radical Right

1. Besides partial discussions in works dealing with the Italian system in general [e.g., Galli 1972] and some "local" researches [e.g., Chiarini and Corsini 1983], there had previously been only two short monographs, both the work of non-Italian scholars [Rosenbaum 1975; Weinberg 1979]. This lacuna in the scholarly community [e.g., Von Beyme 1988, 14] is all the more puzzling when one considers that Rosenbaum's study was a Ph.D thesis and Weinberg's an eighty-eight-page introductory sketch. Distinct billing should be given to G. Galli's essay on the symbols and ideology of the Italian Right within the framework of the postwar crisis [Galli 1974]. To these one should obviously add the inevitable apologetic literature penned by the protagonists, for example, Almirante 1974; Almirante and Palamenghi-Crispi 1958; Tedeschi 1950.

2. Consider, for example, the German NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland), which was already under scrutiny in the 1970s [Klingemann 1971; Kuehnl et al. 1969; Maier and Bott 1968; Mauch 1971; Richards 1967], within a general climate of intense scholarly interest in right-wing extremism in Germany [e.g., Fetscher 1983; Grebing 1973; Peters et al. 1979; Dudek and Jaschke 1984; Backes and Jesse 1985; Sinus 1981]. Consider, too, the French *Front National*, which rose to eminence only at the end of the 1970s but still inspired a massive accumulation of literature [see Mayer and Perrineau 1989]. Finally, much investigation has been devoted to the resurgence of the extreme Right in Europe [e.g., Von Beyme 1988; Harmsworth 1992; Kirfel and Oswalt 1989; Ignazi 1994a, 1994b].

3. Two cases similar to the Italian are those of West Germany and Japan (both formerly fascist countries, it should be noted), where radical-right terrorism has been lethally active (e.g., eighteen people killed in Germany in 1980) [Fetscher 1983, 198]. There seems to be no comparison with Italy, however, in terms of the length of time, the virulence, and the overall sociopolitical effects of the terrorism.

4. Even here preference for the Left is quite evident. For example, G. Bocca, one of the most knowledgeable investigative journalists in Italy, has written two books on terrorism: the first, *Italian Terrorism*, devotes a mere 8 pages out of 170 to right-wing forms [Bocca 1978, 49–56]; the second, despite its comprehensive title (*We Terrorists*) is concerned solely with militants of the Left [Bocca 1985].

The most comprehensive research project has been carried out by Bologna's Cattaneo Institute, which eventually produced as many as six volumes [Catanzaro 1990a, 1990b; Della Porta 1983, 1990; Della Porta and Pasquino 1983; Pasquino 1984b; for a succint English version, see Catanzaro 1991]. Within this impressive production, only four essays have been dedicated to the Right [Ferraresi 1984b; Minna 1984; Fiasco 1990; Pisetta 1983].

5. For a more analytical treatment, see Ferraresi and Galeotti 1987; see also Galeotti 1984, and the discussion of these theses in Bobbio 1994, 60–64.

6. The 1848 *Dictionnaire politique* stated that "for some time now . . . these ancient distinctions [between Right and Left] have lost much of their value" [quoted in Cofrancesco 1986, 56].

7. Karl Mannheim assigned similar features to conservative thought, especially in Germany [Mannheim 1953; 1964]. Basically Isaiah Berlin [1990] expresses views along the same line.

8. Concerning Italian Fascism the main reference is to R. de Felice's work [esp. 1966a; 1974; 1975], and to the wide debate they originated. For an effective summary of the debate, see Delzell's introduction to de Felice 1977 [1969]; for discussions dealing especially with the consensus issue, see Aquarone 1979; Tranfaglia 1989; Pasquino 1985.

9. Average daily wages (measured in 1938 lire), which in 1921 had reached an index of 135, declined to 123 in 1926 and to 115 in 1932. On the other hand, between 1921 and 1938 the workers' productivity increased at a rate of 1.4 percent per year [Castronovo 1976, 96–97].

10. Even more significant, perhaps, is the criterion's endurance through time. For the seventies, see the survey in Laponce; see also Inglehart 1977 and Klingemann 1971. For the eighties, see, among others, Van Deth and Geurths 1989; Huber 1989; for data on the EEC, see Bauer and Niedermayer 1990; on France, see Mayer 1993, 1; for a general discussion, see Ignazi 1994a, 13 ff.

11. The lateral metaphor, which until the ancien régime privileged the up-right sequence against the down-left one, was reversed by the French Revolution, which gave the terms their present value [Laponce 1981; Galeotti 1984; Ferraresi and Galeotti 1987].

12. Among others, freedom/authoritarianism; progress/conservation; dominant classes/dominated classes; individualism/collectivism [Bobbio 1983].

13. Attacks against democracy and egalitarianism normally go together. For a selection (or rather a "monotonous refrain") of Nietzsche's statements on the topic, see Bobbio 1983, 28–30. Consider this contemporary sample: "Democracy . . . annuls and disregards not only merits and merit differences, thus becoming an anti-selective system . . . it is also an antipopular one, ignoring different needs, dazzled as it is by the chimera of egalitarianism" [Veneziani 1982, 40].

14. Possibly the most authoritative contemporary statement of this view comes from the founder of the French Nouvelle Droite:

> I define here as *belonging to the Right*, by pure *convention*, the attitude which considers as good both the *diversities* of this world and, consequently, the *relative* inequalities that are their necessary result; conversely, it considers as evil the gradual homogenization of the world promoted and implemented by the bimillenial preaching of egalitarian ideology. I define as belonging to *the Right* the doctrines according to which the relative inequalities of life lead to *power relations* ["rapports de force"] that produce *historical development*—and that believe that *history must go on*. . . . An antiegalitarian conception of life maintains that diversity is the *fait-du-monde par excellence*; that such diversity necessarily produces de facto *relative* inequalities [again: but can inequality be anything but relative?!]; that society must take such inequalities into account and admit that people's worth differs . . . ; that in the course of social relationships such worth is

> essentially measured by the responsibilities each individual takes upon himself . . . that freedom consists of the actual possibility of exercising such responsibilities; that adequate rights must correspond to these responsibilities, the end result being a *hierarchy*, based on the principle *unicuique suum*. [De Benoist 1977, 58–59; all italics, except the penultimate (*hierarchy*), in the original]

15. For example, Roger Eatwell, in an otherwise useful book, places Margaret Thatcher and Alain de Benoist under the same heading (New Right). Now de Benoist depicts as his chief enemy the Judeo-Christian tradition, with its egalitarian drive, which he claims to be the forerunner of all sorts of totalitarianisms, including communism. His proximity to Ms. Thatcher is at least questionable. Again, Eatwell considers "the nearest postwar movement" to the notion of radical Right that of Pierre Poujade in France—an antitax party that lived a short season in the early fifties [Eatwell 1989b, 70, 73].

Part of the problem, of course, is linguistic, in that the term *New Right* translates literally as *Nouvelle Droite*, but the terms refer to widely differing phenomena. It is interesting that in France the term *Droite Radicale* is seldom used, possibly replaced by *Droite Revolutionnaire*, especially in reference (*après* Sternhell) to Fascism. In Germany, on the other hand, *Rechtsradikalismus* is the more current term [e.g., Dudek and Jaschke 1984], but *new Right* is also used [e.g., Minkenberg 1990; 1992].

16. Backes (following the *Oxford Dictionary*) finds the first use of the term *extremism* to be around 1850, in reference to those who "took an *extreme* and uncompromising view of the sectional differences that culminated in the [American] Civil War" [quoted in Backes and Jesse 1985, 56].

17. For a discussion of the German obsession with symmetry, see Grebing 1973.

18. See my review of Ignazi 1994a, in *L'Indice* 10 (October 1994).

19. This led to the inclusion of the so-called Nuova Destra (New Right) in that category, which at the time appeared to have straightforward political aims. Later, the movement developed along a prevalently cultural path and finally lost most of its relevance [for a discussion of the Nuova Destra, see Revelli 1984; Tassani 1986, 1994; Zucchinali; also see autobiographical texts such as AA.VV. 1980; 1982. On the French Nouvelle Droite, the senior partner of the firm, see, in addition to de Benoist 1977, 1979, especially Taguieff 1984; 1994].

20. For this reason I confine to a note the possible fourfold table deriving from the crossing of these two variables:

		Accept Violence	
		+	–
Reject Modernity	+	Radical Right	Nuova Destra
	–	Skinheads	Parliamentary Extreme Right

21. This distinction as well should not be used too rigidly because the rejection of Fascism is often a mere tactical move to avoid antifascist legislation, to say

nothing of the controversy over the nature of fascism (a term some authors claim should be applied only to the historical, Italian specimen).

A final, graphic caveat: the term Fascism (upper case) will be employed for historical Fascism in Italy, whereas the lower case (fascism) will be reserved for generic use [Griffin 1991a, 1].

22. For a discussion of the American models, see Ferraresi 1974.

23. The three major sources are the Ministry of the Interior, the Cattaneo Institute in Bologna [Della Porta and Rossi 1984], and the Section on State Problems of the Communist Party [Galleni 1982]. According to the Ministry of the Interior, between 1968 and 1982 there were almost 15,000 acts of terrorism, as opposed to little over 13,000 quoted by the PCI and fewer than 3,000 identified by the Cattaneo Institute. The number of casualties differs as well: 404 for the Interior Ministry, 425 for the PCI, and 351 for the Cattaneo Institute. There is not one year during this period that the three sources present the same figures, and sometimes the variations are macroscopic [see Moss 1989, 19]. And this despite the fact that the three profiles were partially linked: the PCI study relied on Interior Ministry data supplemented from party, judicial, and journalistic sources, and the Cattaneo research acknowledged a major debt to the PCI figures. (For ministerial data, see Ministero degli Interni, Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Pubbliche Relazioni, *Sintesi Statistica sul Terrorismo e Violenza Politica dal 1968 al 1982*).

Chapter 1
Fascist Resurgence and Reorganization, ca. 1945–1955

1. A purely proportional electoral system, without any quantitative threshold for admitting parties to Parliament, also played a role. It allowed for the ongoing presence of parties with minimal electoral strength (as low as 1.5 percent). The 1993 reforms have introduced a one-ballot uninominal system and a 4 percent threshold.

2. In view of later neofascist exploitation of the myth of the bloodbath that allegedly took the lives of more than 300,000 fascists—a myth strongly supported by moderate public opinion and by the Church—it should be pointed out that the opinion quoted in the text is widely shared by historians [see, e.g., Hughes 1958, 137; Delzell 1961, 544]. There are no reliable figures on the number of Fascists who were victims of summary executions. The MSI has recently reduced the original claim (more than 300,000) to 20 to 30,000, which still appears inflated [see G. Almirante, in *La Repubblica*, 16 December 1987, p. 5]. On the other hand, the figure of 1,732 fascist victims, given in 1952 by the interior minister, Mario Scelba, seems too small. A more reasonable assessment is probably that of G. Bocca, who claimed that in the whole of northern Italy, between 12,000 and 15,000 people may have been shot [Bocca 1977, 339].

3. This, of course, hardly does justice to one of the most lively debates in contemporary political science. G. Almond, for one, has vehemently denied the charge of social reductionism leveled against the "mainstream" school. See Almond 1990, and the *Symposium* discussing his thesis [Nordlinger 1988; Lowi 1988; Fabbrini 1988; for the "statist" position, see, e.g., Carnoy 1984; Evans et al. 1985; Caporaso 1989]. On the other hand, authors like Poulantzas and Offe had already discussed

the autonomy of the state from a Marxist and neo-Marxist perspective in the late sixties/early seventies.

4. On Mussolini's attitute toward the bureaucracy, see Ferraresi 1980, 112–13.

5. A few years later Putnam found that *regional* (as opposed to national) administrators appeared much more open toward democratic politics [Putnam 1993, 51].

6. In 1945 a certain number of partisan troops and officers were recruited into the police corps. An outcry of "red hands over the police" went up and, in spite of their good record [Colarizi 1984, 401 ff.], they were soon dismissed and replaced by former members of the African police force (Polizia dell'Africa Italiana, or PAI) who had been accustomed to the ugliest racist and colonialist behavior and were led by some of the most unsavory figures of fascism [D'Orsi 1972, 40]. Besides these, the ranks of the police were open to former members of Mussolini's RSI forces, collaborationists, even fascist militia men who had been purged or arrested as war criminals but were immediately cleared thereafter.

The whole operation was managed by carabinieri General Giuseppe Piéche, formerly a fascist prefect, then an officer of the fascist intelligence (OVRA) and Mussolini's personal informer. During the war he had organized the political police of Romanian Ustachi leader Ante Pavelic, becoming their head. All attempts to purge him failed, and he was reinstated in a senior post at the Ministry of the Interior by Christian Democrat governments [Murgia 1975, 369–70].

7. The controversy was not unique to Italy. The French "legislation de l'épuration" was based on the principle that "new laws can have a retroactive effect when they refer to new crimes which former legislators could neither foresee nor imagine" [Aron 1987, 7: 107]—a dubious juridical notion.

8. Typically, on this occasion, the British supported the prime minister against the high commissar, in order to bring about a more conservative cabinet [Hughes 1979, 127; Delzell 1961, 399]. Allied occupation policies have been used by Italian historians, especially those of the Left, as the whipping-boy for all the failures of the Resistance. Against this, it should be remembered that the first measures of the allied military government in this direction were more determined than those of P. Badoglio's government (the first after Mussolini's fall). Only later, especially under British leadership, did the Allies became strong supporters of the most conservative forces. For example, Winston Churchill was furious when Badoglio's government was replaced by a coalition led by the moderate anti-Fascist I. Bonomi. His cable of 11 June 1944 to Stalin is famous: "I have been astounded by what happened to Marshal Badoglio. It seems to me that we have lost the only competent man we had to deal with, and the one who was bound to serve us best. The present cluster of aged and hungry politicians will naturally endeavor to push Italian claims and might be the greatest possible inconvenience to us" [*Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the United States and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 227].

9. The "Special Tribunal for the State's Defense," the most feared and ominous fascist court, in more than fifteen years of peacetime work pronounced nine death sentences (all enforced), five of which concerned alleged Slav terrorists [Aquarone 1965, 103; on the Special Tribunal's activity, see Neppi and Modona 1973, 155;

Salvatorelli and Mira 1964, 516ff.; on the German judges' subordination to Nazism, see Neumann 1937, 441–48; 1944, 29–31].

10. With a number of exceptions, compliance was unquestioned and often zealous. A *Race Tribunal* was established to adjudicate cases of uncertain racial identity; there was even a new legal journal (*Il diritto razzista* [Racist law]), whose board of editors included some of the best-known jurists of the time [De Felice 1961, 637, 433; for examples of "racial verdicts," see Canosa and Federico 1974, 63].

11. The courts exonerated, among others, Dino Grandi, one of the most influential fascist leaders (and a former ambassador, minister of justice, minister of foreign affairs, and president of the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations); Giovanni Giuriati (a senator, minister, president of the Chamber of Deputies, and member of the Fascist Grand Council); Augusto Turati (longtime secretary of the Fascist Party, and hence an incumbent in many high-ranking posts); Paolo Orano (a member of the Grand Council, second-in-command of the Militia, secretary of the Interior, and president of the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations); and many others of similar rank [Pavone 1974, 244–46; Canosa and Federico 1974, 130–31].

12. After heading the OVRA for many years, Leto joined Mussolini's Republic in 1943, which did not keep him from establishing quiet links with the Allies. The latter, interested as ever in securing the services of even the least palatable former Nazi and fascist intelligence officers, reinstated him in his former position at the end of the war, thus putting him in charge of OVRA's priceless records. After his acquittal, he became technical director of all police schools in Italy.

One of Leto's deputies at OVRA, who also had joined Mussolini's RSI, in 1945 became the second head of police of republican Rome [Lutiis 1991, 45].

13. The MAS (Motoscafi Anti Sommergibili, [Antisubmarine PTBs]), were legendary assault boats that sank several Austrian battleships in World War I. In World War II the name (X MAS Flotilla) was taken up by the special unit led by Borghese whose frogmen, riding motorized torpedoes, penetrated into the harbor of Alexandria (Egypt), severely damaging a number of British battleships. Borghese gave the same name (X MAS) to the land-based band he led in the civil war after 1943.

14. The change of venue was obtained on the grounds of "statutory suspicion." The nature of this institute, which brings exception to the constitutional principle that "no one can be removed from the natural judge as established by law," is discussed below in chapter 5.

15. Other exemplary cases were those of the senior officers of the Fascist Military Intelligence (Servizio Informazioni Militori, Military Information Service, or SIM) who planned and organized the 1937 murder, in France, of two eminent antifascist leaders, Carlo and Nello Rosselli. In 1945 the head of Intelligence at the time of the murder, Gen. Mario Roatta, and some of his close aides were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. The sentence remained largely symbolic. Roatta was helped to escape abroad even before the verdict was announced. During the trial the upper echelons of the army, the carabinieri, and the (supposedly renovated) republican secret service were all conspicuously present at his side. The other defendants, who were tried in absentia, reappeared a few years later when a series of scandalous sentences reversed the first judgment; the longest any of them served was two years [Lutiis 1991, 53].

16. An infamous case was that of the seven Black Brigade members who, after raping a partisan messenger, knifed her to death and impaled her naked corpse in a vineyard. Genua's judges argued that raping a woman was not torture, only rape; that knifing her was not a heinous act, since knives were normally used in killings; and that the impalement took place when the woman was dead, so it was just insult to a corpse.

The patriarchal culture of the judges of the time treated partisan women with a condescension bordering on contempt. Thus the Court of Cassation also granted amnesty to a Black Brigade captain who, after interrogating a partisan woman, "had all his soldiers rape her in turn, while she was blindfolded and her hands tied," for "such a beastly act is not torture, but only [*sic*] the worst offense that can be made against a woman's honor and modesty, even if she was somewhat 'free,' having been a partisan messenger [*sic*]" [12 March 1947; see also the sentence of 10 September 1947] [Battaglia 1962, 90–94].

17. Huge layoffs took place in the northern industrial cities (thirty to forty thousand workers were dismissed in Genua, fifty to sixty thousand in Milano in the winter of 1947) while peasant unemployment was still endemic in the South, dominated by absentee landlords. Between 1946 and 1948 the peasant unemployment level reached 50 percent in Apulia and 33–37 percent in Calabria and Lucania. Half the southern farmers lived in "poor or inadequate conditions" as opposed to 6 percent living so in the North; similarly, there were 78 percent of sharecroppers and tenants in the South as opposed to 7 percent in northern Italy. In 1949, 19 percent of the labor force nationwide were unemployed, one of the highest rates in Europe [Castronovo 1975, 381–90; Tarrow 1967].

18. The creation of a political party was by no means an obvious outcome of neofascist organizational efforts. Radical groups considered it to be a sell-out to legalitarian politics. As late as the 1950 Party Congress, a delegate drew thunderous applause when he shouted, "We shall not tolerate anyone calling the MSI 'a party.' Our ethics is combat!" [Murgia 1976, 132].

19. The "Front" issued from a magazine of the same name, which in August 1945 printed as many as 850,000 copies. It waged incessant war on everything that threatened the "ordinary Italian": anti-Fascists, the Allies, the purges, the CLN governments, and so on. It was to lend its name to a new derogatory epithet in Italian politics— *qualunquista*, "meaning a digger of one's own garden, a cynic, a potential Fascist" [Ginsborg 1990, 100; also Pallotta 1972, Setta 1995].

20. The trend has persisted through the years. In 1972, the year of the party's maximum strength before 1994 (8.7 percent nationwide), almost two-thirds of the votes came from four southern regions (Campania, Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia), as well as Latium (the region around Rome), representing little over a third of the voters. In the triumphal 1994 elections, when the MSI climbed from 5.4 percent to 13.5 percent, no northern region was up to the national average and many were far below (e.g., Piedmont, 6.9 percent; Lombardy, 5.1 percent); the opposite, of course, applied to the Center-South (Latium, 21.2 percent; Apulia, 19.8 percent).

21. Giorgio Almirante (1914–1988), an elementary school teacher by training, during the fascist regime had worked for two of the most fanatical journals, *Il Tevere* and, after 1938, *Difesa della Razza* (Defense of the race), the mouthpiece of fascist racism. In 1943 he joined the RSI, becoming chief of staff of the Ministry of

Popular Culture, where, again, he distinguished himself as a radical supporter of Nazi methods. After the war he was indicted for allegedly issuing a proclamation which called for the shooting without trial of partisans captured after 25 May 1944; he was acquitted thanks to an amnesty.

22. When the first six MSI deputies chose to sit on the extreme Right of Parliament, the choice was so disconcerting that the party had to explain it in its newspapers. It argued that since the Communists were sitting on the extreme Left, the MSI members, as their archenemies, had to sit on the extreme Right; however, this did not modify the revolutionary and socializing aims of the party [Ignazi 1989, 46–47].

23. In fact the trend had begun immediately after the war. In its first municipal campaign, in 1947 in Rome, the MSI obtained twenty-five thousand votes and three seats in the City Council. Although not being included in the majority, the MSI supported the DC mayoral candidate, who was elected by one vote. (He turned out to be one of the most opaque figures of the DC political stable, responsible for the most shameless urban speculation—the "second sack of Rome"). The apogee of this politics should have been an operation with an enormous symbolic impact, a straightforward MSI-DC coalition in the 1952 elections in Rome ("the capital of Christendom"). The "Sturzo operation," as it came to be known from the name of its inspirer, barely misfired.

24. "You can count by thousands the 'actions' that we of the MSI and the other groups carried out [between 1949 and 1955] . . . raiding party offices, smashing tablets commemorating Partisans, desecrating Jewish cemeteries, setting fire to trade-union offices, holding anti-Semitic demonstrations, blowing things up, beating people up, and throwing paper bombs." Thus spoke the "Roman *ducetto*," an anonymous informant of Del Boca and Giovana [1969: 143–45]. There was even a plot to murder the communist MP who, as a Partisan, had shot Mussolini: "The idea of executing Walter Audisio had been circulating since 1948. . . . Among other things, it would have placed the MSI's leadership on a difficult spot, compelling them to face a hard choice, whether or not to reject the deed. Had they rejected it, they would obviously have enraged all the party members and especially the activists; had they condoned it, they would have been in big trouble in Parliament" [Salierno 1976, 109].

25. In January 1950 two hundred thugs in three lorries stormed the PCI local in a popular roman district (Garbatella), throwing hand grenades and beating passers-by with truncheons [Murgia 1976, 141, 171 ff.].

26. The first bomb exploded on 28 October 1950 (the anniversary of Mussolini's "March on Rome") in a movie theater in Rome. On November 16 heavier blasts hit two enemy parties' headquarters. In March a ministry, the U.S. Embassy, and the Yugoslav Consulate were struck. In April the bombs hit the National Partisan Association headquarters in Rome, Milan, and Brescia, and the county jail in Arezzo. Altogether the attacks numbered more than thirty.

27. The leaflets dropped at the sites of the bombings were signed FAR and "Black Legion." The journal *Imperium* (which was printed using the same typeface as the FAR-Black Legion leaflets) was edited by Enzo Erra and Pino Rauti. They were both indicted, along with Clemente Graziani (future ON leader), Franco Petronio (future MSI deputy), and many others. According to the police, they were

all registered members of the MSI, and some even held party offices [Barbieri 1976, 23]. Three of the defendants were sentenced to less than two years, others to shorter terms, and still others were acquitted. The prosecutor payed homage to the youth's pure hearts and their love for the fatherland [Murgia 1976, 130].

The most illustrious defendant was Julius Evola, described by the police as "teacher and spiritual father of this clique of fanatics" [Murgia 1976, 129]. There can be little doubt about that: Erra, Rauti, and Graziani were his acknowledged disciples, and *Imperium*, besides devoting much space to the discussion of his ideas, was the journal where he published one of the sacred texts of the radical Right, *Orientamenti* [see below, chapter 2].

28. "No top leader was ever so foolish as to order us to place a bomb in a Communist party building or in a union local. On the contrary, the instructions were to be calm, to bide our time, not to act rashly. Then there would be some incidental remarks, some sotto voce statements like 'Violence is a rational and purifying means.' We took care of translating such words into deeds" [Salierno 1976, 150].

29. In 1952 fascist groups in Rome's University assaulted some professors who, as expatriates during the war, had made antifascist propaganda speeches. The chancellor refused to discipline the aggressors, stating that "to hail the fatherland is no crime." A Jesuit then famous for his anticommunist radio appeals, Father Lombardi ("God's microphone"), complimented the patriotic youth [Murgia 1976, 110].

30. The most important were CISNAL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Nazionali Lavoratori), the MSI-oriented union, and FUAN (Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale), the university students' organization. At the high-school level was the *Giovane Italia*, and, beginning in the seventies, a general umbrella organization for youth groups was the Fronte della Gioventù.

31. In the South the 1952 local elections had brought the joined MSI-Monarchist ticket an increase from 670,000 votes (1948) to 1.5 million, which compared favorably to the 2.12 million polled by the DC, the 326,000 of the Liberal Party, and the 144,000 of the Republicans.

32. Twenty years later, in 1977, G. Almirante was to take advantage of this possibility by subverting the results of the Fronte della Gioventù elections, won by the opposition candidate, Marco Tarchi, in place of whom he appointed Gianfranco Fini, who had placed seventh. Thus began the remarkable career of the present general secretary of the party.

33. Similar support had been granted in 1953 to G. Pella's government. Pella's and Zoli's were both *monocolore* (i.e., DC-only) governments, with shaky parliamentary majorities. In particular, Prime Minister A. Zoli, who had originally rejected the twenty-four MSI votes as "neither necessary nor desirable," was forced to accept them when it turned out that without them his government would have been one vote short of the necessary majority.

34. "We had gone to Genoa with the best intentions, declared Filippo Anfuso, the RSI's former ambassador to Berlin. Had they let us hold our congress in Genoa, we would have specified our program, defined our democratic convictions, offered guarantees. More than that, had the DC made an effort to understand our intentions and taken us into government, we might even have disappeared as a party. Instead, they threw us overboard" [Del Boca and Giovana 1969, 202]. The intentions may have been good, but the choice of Genoa, a blue-collar city that had played a strong

role in the Resistance, as the seat for the MSI's congress, was clumsy enough. When it became known that the congress would be chaired by a former RSI prefect who had been responsible for the deportation and death of many Genoese workers and anti-Fascists, a near insurrection took over the city (30 June 1960) and immediately spread to the whole country. The congress was canceled, but Tambroni tried to repress the popular movement with an iron fist: on July 5 one demonstrator was killed by the police in Licata, Sicily; five more were killed in Reggio Emilia two days later; further killings followed in Sicily, both at Palermo and Catania. Shortly thereafter Tambroni was forced to resign [Ginsborg 1990, 256–57].

Chapter 2
Ideologies, Myths, Ideologues

1. Mussolini's view that intellectuals were less trustworthy than peasants [Mack Smith 1982, 141] was endlessly reiterated by his followers. See, for example, a 1923 passage by Curzio Malaparte: "[We shall] . . . wage war against the vile and scattered family of the *intellectuals*. A cowardly, untrustworthy, malevolent lot. Especially a cowardly one. They are mostly averse to any kind of upheaval that does not turn to their immediate benefit and that brings out virtues they do not possess, such as courage, force, willpower, ferocity [*sic*]" [Malaparte 1988 (1923), 96].

2. Through the postwar years, a multitude of publishers and publications discussed the ideological and political issues of the radical Right, and although each of these publishers, considered by itself, may have been quite small, together they made up for a sizable and quite significant ideological apparatus. The most effective of such publishers, the Edizioni di Ar, was founded and run by Franco Giorgio Freda, arguably the most important activist-ideologue of the radical Right, whose deeds will be discussed at length in chapter 5 [for a detalied discussion of this publishing universe, see: Revelli 1983 and Ferraresi 1984a, 1995, 96–106].

3. In 1921 Mussolini declared: "We do not believe in dogmatic programs . . . We shall allow ourselves to be both aristocratic and democratic, conservatives and progressives, law-abiding and law-breaking, according to what will suit us at any given time, place, and circumstance" [Salvatorelli and Mira 1964, 56].

4. Bobbio drew a distinction between three major groups of supporters: the "frightened conservatives," who requested law and order and a firm discipline; the uprooted young war veterans yearning for a new, "revolutionary" order; and the petty bourgeois elements, crushed by rival antagonisms, who wanted a mediation that might pacify a convulsed society. The former conceived of Fascism as the antithesis of bolshevism; the second as the antithesis of the liberal-bourgeois regimes, hence as the revolutionary competitor of the Soviet Revolution; the third assigned to Fascism the task of implementing an original third way, an alternative to both capitalism and Marxism [Bobbio 1975, 616].

5. The fascist conception of life, according to Mussolini, was a "spiritualistic conception. The world for fascism is not this material one . . . fascist man . . . achieves that purely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists" [Mussolini 1932, 847].

6. There was also the problem of squaring with Fascism's undiluted hostility to the model of all revolutions, the French, and its effects: "We represent—Mussolini

claimed—the sharp, categorical, definitive antithesis to the whole world . . . of the immortal principles of '89." With the same flair for understatement Dr. Göbbles declared, shortly after the Nazi seizure of power, "The year 1789 is hereby eradicated from history" [Bracher 1969, 10; Mussolini's quote is in Evola 1969: 23]. Sixty years later, the present secretary of the MSI-AN, Gianfranco Fini, foresaw a great future for his party precisely because of its opposition to "those principles of 1789" which have stripped the European man of all "heroic dimensions," making of him a mere "homo oeconomicus" [quoted in Ignazi 1994b, 76–77].

7. This essay was hailed as a landmark in the circles of the radical Right [Tarchi 1980, 112; see also Houllefort 1978, 45–46]. Together with Pino Rauti, Enzo Erra was the leader of the spiritualist-Evolian current within the MSI. He edited and published several militant journals, including *La Sfida* and the all-important *Imperium*. In 1952 he became a member of the MSI's Central Committee. This was also the year he was tried for the "Black Legion" bombings [see above, chapter 1].

8. The mythos versus logos contraposition is discussed at greater length in Ferraresi 1987a; see also Jesi 1973, 1979.

9. Tarchi's paper was given at the founding conference of the Italian Nuova Destra ("New Right," of which Tarchi was a major promoter) [see below]. Much of the conference was devoted precisely to the discussion of myth and ritual at times dominated by the "rationality crisis" [see, e. g., Cardini 1982, Del Ninno 1982]. For his part, the best-known ideologue of the combat groups, Franco Freda, wrote: "What, then, is 'our destiny'? Not the magic spell of reason (together with the sortileges of economics, of politics, of 'history'); not a culture sodden with rationalism, but the truth of myth, the culture, which is divination, of the Idea" ["Professione d'identità," in *Risguardo* 4 [1984]; special issue printed to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Edizioni di Ar, the press founded and directed by Freda (see below, chapter 5, n. 24)].

10. On the konservative Revolution see, among others, Mohler 1972, Faye 1972, Rauschnig 1939, Sontheimer 1962, Breuer 1993.

11. Ernst von Salomon (1902–1972), the son of a Prussian officer, had been a cadet in the Prussian military academies in Karlsruhe and Berlin-Lichterfelde. After the armistice he volunteered for the Freikorps, fighting several campaigns in the Baltic. He was later involved in a number of subversive and terrorist activities, culminating with his complicity in the 1922 murder of the leading Weimar liberal statesman, Walter Rathenau. For that he served five years in prison.

The English title of his book (*The Outlaws*) is unsatisfactory, as are many other points in the translation.

12. It is difficult nowadays to realize the extent to which the *Bund* ideal permeated German thought up to and including Nazism. Worship for the *Bund* was shared by respectable intellectuals like Stefan George and sinister crackpots like A. Rosenberg [Viereck 1961, 264]. A whole sector of the konservative Revolution took its name from it (the *Bündischen*) [Mohler 1972, 153–61, 256–72]. The feeling was, if possible, stronger among the veterans, whose front-line experience "had strengthened the idea that the *Bund* of men, bound together by a common spirit, . . . was the only valid form of social organization that remained after the catastrophe [Mosse 1964, 226]. Hence in the Freikorps: "Parties are the mass; the Freikorps are fellowships of men" [Heinz 1930, 162; quoted in Theweleit 1989 (1978), 2: 77].

13. "My comrades! . . . The word stood for that being together, that feeling of brotherhood, someone who shared the few things of which your existence consisted. A bond that the hostility and rejection which surrounded us had rendered so deep." These are the words of a young student who, out of disgust for the weakness and ineptitude displayed at the fall of Fascism by the elder generations that had taught him to worship the Duce, had joined the "Mussolini Battalions" and bitterly fought against the Resistance in the North. His critical reappraisal of that experience is one of the most significant memoirs of the period seen from the fascist side [Mazzantini 1986, 184].

14. " 'We are done for,' our lieutenant used to say 'once this war is over we shall be of no more use, we must disappear . . . As soon as our destiny will be accomplished, we shall disappear' " [Mazzantini 1986, 168; the lieutenant later commited suicide].

15. Von Salomon provides an exemplary statement of this theme as well. In one of the most incandescent dialogues in that high-temperature book, *Die Geächteten*, during which Rathenau is identified as the enemy to be killed, Kern, the fanatical leader of the assassins, declaims: "I could not stand . . . that from the rotten, corrupted material of this epoch, something grand should once again emerge. Perhaps Rathenau pursues what the babblers call a politics of fulfillment. We don't care, we fight for higher things; not in order for the people to be happy, but for them to meet their destiny" [Von Salomon 1994 (1930), 243].

16. The quote is from a personal letter to the author of one of the most active radical-right protagonists of the past decades, Paolo Signorelli, who frequently will be mentioned in the next chapters. Salomon was a myth not only for the Italian radical Right. Alain de Benoist wrote, concerning the milieu surrounding the French OAS (Organization de l'Armé Sècrete): "Around the 1960s, the years of the militants and the conspirators, vanquished and outcast though they were, they read with a passion those pages describing the brotherly [*sic*] features of the great activists of the past; of this book they appreciated the repugnance for humanism and bourgeois institutions . . . , the taste for war and the nostalgia for action [de Benoist 1977, 688]. Predictably the Italian Nuova Destra was on the same wavelength. What Marco Tarchi extolled in *Die Geächteten* was "a stimulus and a guide to the discovery of an unrepeatable and fascinating epopée, and even more of an ambitious aspiration: that of extracting, from the incandescent crucible of the wars, of the massacres and terrors, a new human substance, placed at equal distance from the West of the merchants, and even more from the East of the brutal collectivism" [book review in *Diorama letterario* (July 1980): 8; on the reception of Salomon in the contemporary right-wing milieu, see Revelli 1994, 423 ff., and my review in *L'Indice* (April 1995)].

17. "No other political and ideological movement has been so determined in identifying itself with necrophilia and making of it a ritual, a way of life. Many people die for their ideas, many bring death to others, but when death is seen not as a means to an end but as a value in itself, then we have the seeds of fascism, and we should define as fascism the movement that promotes such a notion. I mean death as a value to be affirmed as such . . . Death felt as 'urgent' because it is joy, truth, justice, purification, pride; both death administered to others and realized upon oneself" [Eco 1983, 123; see also Eco 1973].

18. In Spain a famous expression denoting this symbology was the cry "Viva la Muerte!" ("Long live death!"), shouted in the *Aula Magna* of Salamanca's University, which became the motto of El Tercio and later an overall slogan of antirepublican forces during the Spanish Civil War. (El Tercio was the Spanish Foreign Legion, whose commander, Gen. Millan de Astray, threw these words in the face of the University's rector, Miguel de Unamuno, adding for good measure: "Abajo la inteligencia!" [Down with intelligence!]).

Even more central was the symbology of death for the "Legion of the Archangel," which, in Jesi's view, cultivated a veritable *thanatomania* that depicted the encounter with death as a love encounter. Not surprisingly, the songs of El Tercio had many motives in common with those of the Iron Guard. "El novio de la muerte" was the significant title of El Tercio's anthem, whose lyrics read: "I am the bridegroom of death, / one who is going to bind himself strongly / to this loyal companion." Compare this to the song of the Iron Guard: "Death, only death, legionaries / is a happy marriage for us. / Legionaries die singing, / legionaries sing dying" [in Jesi 1979, 34].

19. The combat descriptions of the konservative Revolution's literature substantiate that notion, as in E. Jünger: "We were filled with the sudden fury of savage desire . . . Fast, make it fast, the killing must begin! There was now only one deliverance, one course of fulfillment and one happiness: flowing blood. We felt the wicked bliss of anticipation." And again: "Yes, the fighter thirsts for blood . . . The voluptuousness of blood hangs over war like a red storm-sail over a black man-of-war: in its limitless momentum it is comparable only to Eros itself" [the first quote is from *Feuer und Blut*, the second from *Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, both in Theweleit 1989, 2: 182, 188, where a number of other examples can also be found].

In Salomon the pleasure of battle takes on an even more explicit erotic dimension: "I fired—and all the day's dullness vanished. The machine-gun wriggled and jerked like a fish, but I held it firmly, tenderly in my hands, clamping its tossing belly firmly between my knees and running through one strap after the other. I saw nothing, but Schmitz leaped dancing, screaming, and howling up the bank, pushed me aside, and climbed across to take my place" [Salomon 1994 (1930), 109].

These, it should be noted, are the "brotherly faces," the "new human substance" that the fans of the konservative Revolution hold up even today for our admiration.

20. "The future—Marinetti's friend G. Papini had screamed in 1913—needs blood on the road. It needs human victims, massacres . . . We need corpses to pave the roads to all triumphs . . . There are too many of us in the world . . . The rabble overflows, imbeciles multiply . . . In order to reduce the number of these noxious mouths . . . let the general collective murder come!" [see: "Life Is not Sacred" (in *Lacerba* 1, no. 20 (1913), quoted in Bobbio 1986, 102].

21. The notion of life as struggle, Adorno pointed out, is often a rationalization of aggression [Adorno et al. 1964 (1950), 246].

22. At the age of *eight*, the members of the fascist children organization, Balillas, took an oath that committed them to "serve with all [their] strength, and if necessary with [their] blood, the cause of the fascist revolution." Correspondingly, the ideal of fascist pedagogy, as related by an elementary school primer, was "a six-year-old Balilla who swears his loyalty to Il Duce . . . and dreams to fight and die for his fatherland" [quoted in Gentile 1993, 127].

23. When, in 1934, the fallen Florentine Fascists were entombed in the cathedral, the journal of the fascist youth organization stated: "The new shrine is permeated by the suggestiveness extolling *la bella morte*" [quoted in Gentile 1993, 132]. (I am not aware of any other language that includes the expression "beautiful death.")

24. This, of course, belonged to the theory and ideology of the Resistance; that in practice some people within its ranks enjoyed the use of violence per se cannot be disputed. Yet, on this matter, "it does not suffice to say . . . that cruel and sadistic people can be found in all fields and be content with ascertaining that they were, without comparison, more numerous in the fascist ranks. Rather, it is necessary to focus on the cultural foundations supporting the rival fronts and ask why some were more apt than others to select cruel and sadistic behaviors" [Pavone 1991, 427].

A significant precedent could be found at the time of the civil strife that led to fascist seizure of power (1919–21). Then, as now, the Socialists were unenthusiastic about the use of violence (not a marginal reason for the lack of organization that led to their defeat) as they thought that numbers, justice, and history would be on their side. For agrarian Fascists, on the other hand, organized terror was "the essence of their activity" [Lyttleton 1982, 978].

25. Compare this to the outraged statements coming from the Resistance: "Enough with teen age gangsters killing for fun!" [Pavone 1991, 432].

26. The quote comes from the letter of a nineteen-year-old volunteer, who later fell against the Partisans [Pavone 1991, 432; italics added].

27. The words echo, of course, those of Millán Astray, quoted above. Significantly, the socialist "Hymn of the Workers" stressed the opposite theme: "Death to the kingdom of death."

28. The most famous RSI's combat song went: "Women don't make love to us any more / because we wear a black shirt / . . . Loving Fascists is not convenient / better a coward who has no banner / . . . Who gives a damn. Dame Death / flirts amidst the battle / she allows only soldiers to kiss her / go on, lads, court her! / let us kiss her under the bullets."

Another unit sang: "Death does not scare us / a man makes war and then he makes love / if a sharp shot takes him to the grave / you light a candle, and that's all there is to it."

29. The aesthetic infatuation with death was rejected by the Resistance fighters, as in the following two statements: "Our shock units [*gappisti*] are brave, and they have proven it in the last ten months. But it cannot be expected that they feel vowed to sure death" (compare this to the "novio de la Muerte" topos mentioned above). And this: "[The Fascist rhetoric advocates] 'a bullet between the eyes in a summer field': . . . we are against that. We love life, and we take death with dignity and pride" [in Pavone 1991, 503].

30. "More than a weapon, it looked like a rough work tool, conceived for that dirty job . . . An essential working tool, made to do away with all that was false, hypocritically chivalrous, rhetorical, in the business of killing a man: you hide behind a tree, and tratratra: one down. . . . For you, comrade Fascist, just lead, without any waste, frills, regrets. That's all you can expect" [Mazzantini 1986, 162].

31. The phallic symbology was prolonged by the semantics surrounding the use of the dagger, which, perhaps not fortuitously, defy English rendering: the dagger is

"bared" (*snudato*), it is used in "body-to-body" (*corpo a corpo*, i.e., hand-to-hand) combat.

32. In Salierno's memoirs, the war tales with which the veterans entertained the younger comrades were nothing but a succession of "episodes of violence, of a boisterous, cheerful ferocity. Bellies were disemboweled, throats gashed, limbs amputated, Partisans hanged one after another in long rows. How could I presume to compete with someone who, either in Russia or in Yugoslavia, had kicked broken the jaw of a captured partisan woman and then, placing the rifle's muzzle in her mouth, had blown her head off?" In this climate, "to fry a few Socialists appeared as a fascinating adventure" [Salierno 1976, 14, 32].

33. Whereas the Resistance has produced a great deal of high-quality memoirs and works of fiction (one only need mention such authors as Beppe Fenoglio and Cesare Pavese), very few texts extol the enterprises of the RSI militants. Probably the best memoir is that of Mazzantini, an unorthodox participant.

34. A typical apologetic text is the following: "These Waffen SS were the cream of the cream of the soldiers, the hard core, the fanatics, the super-armed, the super-motorized, those who were thrown at the most infernal sectors in the most difficult moments . . . They became the true Imperial Guard of the European empire building, a gigantic guard of more than half a million first-rate volunteers." This epic description, current in radical-right texts, was penned by one of its living myths, Leon Degrelle, the founder and leader of the Belgian Rexisme, who during the war was a bemedaled Waffen SS officer [in Tarchi 1978, 32].

The Waffen SS myth was not confined to the Italian radical Right. In France, as early as 1946, clandestine journals like *Combattant européen* and *Le Drapeau noir* portrayed the international brigades of the Waffen SS as the heroic nucleus of the "new Europe." Later, groups such as the World Union of National Socialists and the Federation Ouest-Européenne entertained a worldview centered on Himmler's belief that the international Waffen SS were the nucleus of a new European elite [Griffin 1991b, 19]. More "moderate" apologetes tried to depict them as a prefiguration of NATO [*sic*]. See Stein 1966, 138 ff. for a discussion of the origin and construction of the myth; see also Lazzero 1982, Wegner 1990 [1982], and, more apologetically, Quarrie 1983.

35. On the Guard, in general, see Weber 1966a, 1966b; Barbu 1968; Jesi 1973.

36. See, e.g., C. Mutti's review of Sburlati, *Codreanu e la Guardia di Ferro*, *Totalité* 4 (1978): 43–44. (Claudio Mutti, a university instructor, was a close collaborator of Franco Freda at the *Edizioni di Ar* and elsewhere. His name will come up again in connection with the Piazza Fontana massacre trial). On the esoteric practices of the Guard, see also the quite different approach of Jesi 1973, 37 ff.

37. On *Rexisme* in general see Carpinelli 1981; Etienne 1968; on the Arrow Cross movements, see Deak 1966; Lacko 1969, 1980; Eros 1981.

38. This section is based largely on Ferraresi 1987a and 1987b to which the reader is referred for a more analytical treatment.

39. After many years of almost total neglect, interest in Evola's thought is slowly emerging in scientific and cultural circles. See, besides our own work, Cofrancesco 1985, Di Vona 1985, Drake 1986, Jellamo 1984, Jesi 1923, Sheehan 1981, Fraquelli 1994. An indication of this growing interest was the conference held in November

1986 at the Sorbonne, which was devoted to the theme: "Métaphysique et politique: René Guénon, Julius Evola." The proceedings have been published in the first issue of *Politica Hermetica* 1 (1987).

40. This particular current within the MSI was led by one of the most prestigious figures of the extreme-radical area, Giuseppe (Pino) Rauti, whose remarkable career, as will be shown, was to take him from the foundation of Ordine Nuovo to the MSI's secretariat, and finally, in 1995, when the MSI took on the name of Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance), to leaving that party and founding a new one, bearing the old name. Rauti was one of Evola's closest followers; his major theoretical effort, incidentally, was often a blatant plagiarism of Evola's works [Rauti 1976; examples in Sheehan 1981, 50, n. 9].

41. " 'Your leaders are imbeciles' is a typical remark Evola would toss to a group of young MSI militants reverently gathered to hear his word, 'violence is the only possible and reasonable solution, but it presupposes intelligence, and intelligence is conspicuously absent' " [Salierno 1976, 142–43].

42. German translations of Evola's work have been available since the thirties. Most of it has also been translated into French in the past fifteen years; a Centre d'Etudes Doctrinales Evola existed in Paris in the mid-seventies; the journal *Totalité* defined itself as *Revue Evolienne de France*. So far, English translations have been less numerous; examples are *The Doctrine of the Awakening* (London: Luzac, 1951) and *The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983). But militant journals are spreading his word. See, for example, *Scorpion*, nos. 6, 7, 9, 10 (1984–86); *Rising*, no. 1 (1983), with articles by and on Evola [French and German bibliography in Ferraresi 1987a, 108–9].

43. Opinions on Evola's intellectual worth differ dramatically even among nonpartisan scholars. Sheehan considers him "perhaps the most original and creative—and intellectually the most nonconformist—of the Italian fascist philosophers" [Sheehan 1981, 76]. Jesi, to the contrary, exposes him as a plunderer of German sources, one who could get by only thanks to his provincial readers' ignorance of the originals [Jesi 1973, 100].

44. The climax of a 1934 visit to Germany was, for him, a speech he delivered at Berlin's *Herrenklub*, the circle of the conservative aristocracy. "Here," he was later to write, "I found my natural habitat. From then on a cordial and fruitful friendship was established between myself and the club's president, Baron Heinrich von Gleichen . . . That was also the basis for certain activity in Germany, grounded on common interests and objectives" [Evola 1972, 135].

Heinrich von Gleichen-Russwurm was the formal head of the *Juniklub*, the very center of the Jungkonservativen, in turn one of the most important strains of the konservative Revolution. The towering intellectual figure of the club, and its spiritual leader, was Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, whose immensely influential *The Third Reich* (1923) was dedicated, with a long, overwrought letter, to Gleichen [Mohler 1972, 404 ff; Stern 1961, 181 ff.; Faye 1972, 17 ff.; Goeldel 1984].

45. Evola wrote extensively on such doctrines as Tantrism and Yoga [*Tantra*, *Risveglio*, *Yoga*]. Marguerite Yourcenar considered *Lo Yoga della Potenza* a "great book . . . one of those works that nourish you year after year, and, up to a point, transform you." She found, however, Evola's racism deplorable and sternly criticized his "almost morbid greed for supernatural powers, which leads him to accept

acritically the most material aspects of the spiritual adventure" [Yourcenar 1985, 175, 181–82].

46. In fact the origins of the model can be traced at least as far back as the German wars of liberation against Napoleon. From then on, according to Mosse, soldiers projected "a moral posture exemplifying courage, strength, hardness, control over the passions and the ability to protect the moral fabric of society by living a so-called manly life. This life was lived . . . wholly within a camaraderie of males, the *Männerbund*, which was to play such an important role in German history" [Mosse 1990, 27].

47. Similar attitudes toward the feminine characterized other interwar profascist writers, such as the Futurists [Kaplan 1986, 81].

48. Compare another *maitre à pénser* of the konservative Revolution: "The Prussian style demands not only a mere precedence of higher policy over economics; it demands that the economic life should be *disciplined* by a powerful state" [Spengler 1934 (1933), 191].

49. Compare this to Theweleit's model of the fascist psyche: "If 'race' is the opposite of all that is 'mass,' then 'race' and 'proletarian' must also be opposites . . . It follows from this that the man who assigns himself a place in the Aryan, or any other 'higher' race, is aligning himself in opposition to the lower classes, the mass, the proletarian, the woman, the animal . . . The man of 'race' mobilizes himself against the 'mass' of pleasure; body armour versus the desiring-production of the unconscious. As long as a single drop of vulgar mass desire continues to flow, the battle is not over; . . . Ultimately, it is toward his own death (and the death of all others with him) that the race-warrior steers; for only this, it seems, will eradicate that 'alienrace' in its entirety" [Theweleit 1989, 2: 75, 77].

50. The medieval knightly orders were one of the great mythical references of the konservative Revolution. The orders in turn were a model for that other great (and overlapping) myth, the *Bund* or *Männerbund* [see above, n. 13]. Significantly, in the passage quoted and at other points in his writings, Evola uses the two terms (*order* and *male society*) as indicating the same phenomenon.

It would be tedious at this point to mention all the fascist or profascist writers who placed at the core of their ideology an élite based on a close-knit male society. Suffice it here to mention one of the most popular authors with the postwar radical Right, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle: "Together with the Philosophy of Force and the Revolution of the body went Drieu's cult of an élite of the virile. . . . His model of the ideal élite was drawn from the First World War. . . . Drieu's élitism also stemmed from his fondness for the camaraderie that he found in close-knit peer groups. . . . He had found a . . . 'manly' gratification in the fraternity of the trenches" [Soucy, 211, 218; for a taste of Drieu's standing with the contemporary radical Right, see, e.g., Giannettini, Prisco, and Romualdi 1981 (1965)].

51. See, e.g., the special issue of *Totalité*, nos. 18–19 (Summer 1984), which was devoted to the Iron Guard, entitled *Un mouvement chevaleresque au XX' siècle: la Garde de Fer*, containing a 1938 article by Evola that will be discussed presently.

52. Evola's main text in this area [*Razza*, 1941] had the stated purpose of providing fascism with a "correct" (as opposed to entirely amateurish) race doctrine. The book, Evola recalled, "was openly and personally acknowledged by Mussolini. . . . He sent for me and praised it, . . . saying that he needed precisely a doctrine of that

sort . . . Specifically, the theory of the Aryan-Roman race and the myth connected with it could be used to supplement the Roman ideal generally promoted by Fascism. They could, moreover, provide a foundation for Mussolini's intent to rectify and uplift . . . the average Italian type, extracting from it a new man" [Evola 1972, 155]. The text overflows with fulsome praise for Fascism [e.g., 266 ff.]; Mussolini authorized Evola to title the German translation *Grundrisse des* ***Faschistischen*** *Rassenlehre*, thus adding to the original Italian title the adjective "fascist" [see also Evola 1937].

53. The article was never reprinted in Evola's lifetime; the French translation published in 1984 by *Totalité* chastely bowdlerized the most offensive statements [for a comparison between the original and *Totalité*'s version see Ferraresi 1987b].

54. "The human type we are discussing . . . must be clearly recognizable, unmistakable, *differentiated*"; "a spirit exists already that can provide a path for the forces of resistance and recovery: it is the *legionary spirit*. It is the attitude of those who were able to choose the hardest way, who dared to fight even knowing that, materially, the battle was lost" [Evola 1950, 12, 13].

55. The imagery of men who remain standing when all else is crumbling was also a direct derivation of the konservative Revolution's literature, as represented especially in E. Jünger's writings [Theweleit 1989, 2: 19; Jünger 1922].

56. Predictably, Evola had no use for women's liberation ("the renunciation by woman of her right to be a woman") [Evola 1961, 202]. (The theme is a familiar one in the konservative Revolution's literature: "The emancipation of women will destroy any culture" [Delmar 1925, 22, quoted in Theweleit 1989, 2: 45].)

57. Evola wrote a tract on what is considered the "Bible of heroic realism" [Mohler 1972, 126], E. Jünger's *Arbeiter* [*Operaio*].

Chapter 3
The "Historic Groups": Origins and Development

1. At the Sicilian regional elections the MSI had lost about fifty thousand votes and three seats. The 1956 provincial elections were also disappointing; even in a traditional stronghold like Naples, the PNM-MSI coalition lost two-thirds of its votes to a dissident monarchist party led by picturesque shipowner Achille Lauro.

2. "Tall, thin, ascetic-looking, Pino Rauti walked at a slow, deliberate pace. He appeared untouched by the curiosity that surrounded him. He made me think of a Jesuit" [Salierno 1976, 87]. Giuseppe (Pino) Rauti (born in Catanzaro in 1926) at the age of seventeen volunteered to serve in the RSI's Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana (Republican National Guard). Captured, he escaped to Spanish Morocco, was arrested in 1946, and was freed shortly thereafter. An early disciple of Evola, Rauti was one of the leaders of the "spiritualist-Evolian" current within the MSI, besides being involved in "collateral" activities like the FAR-Black Legion events (he edited the journal *Imperium*). In 1953 he joined the staff of Rome's conservative daily *Il Tempo*. In 1972, after a series of events that will be discussed presently, Rauti was elected to Parliament as an MSI deputy. In the eighties and until Almirante's death in 1988 he was deputy-secretary of the party. At the 1988 MSI Congress he was the intransigent wing's candidate for the leadership and was defeated

by only a slim margin by Giorgio Fini. In 1990 Rauti ousted Fini and became the general secretary of the party, only to be ousted in turn by Fini in 1991. When, in 1995, the MSI became Alleanza Nazionale, he left that party and created his own, bearing the old name.

3. P. Rauti, "Onore e Fedeltà," *Ordine Nuovo* [henceforth *ON*] 1, no. 1 (April 1955).

4. Thus begins the self-presentation of the MPON: "Without useless theoretical lucubrations we shall take up again the political issues which *Ordine Nuovo* developed and debated up to the so-called MSI operation. Our discussions, then, will . . . [hold] firm the principles that inspired the militants of the political center Ordine Nuovo" [Anon., "Il Movimento Politico Ordine Nuovo," in *Noi* 1 (March 1971), 27].

5. S. Mangiante, "Per un Ordine Ariano," *ON* 1, no. 3 (June 1955).

6. The courses organized by the MPON dealt with such topics as traditional revolution and subversion, the two races, "orientations," the holy war, the East-West contraposition, revolt against the modern world, and plutocracy as a subversive force. Predictably, the bibliography consisted of texts by Evola and René Guénon. Other topics included revolutionary war, the techniques of revolutionary war, propaganda, and organization and choice of combat themes. For suggested readings from the works of C. Graziani, G. Giannettini, and Adolf Hitler, see Battaglini 1986, 34.

7. The first series of *Ordine Nuovo* was published between 1955 and 1965. The second series reappeared in 1969 with one issue, published in order to explain Rauti's return to the MSI. *Noi Europa*, *Mensile per l'Ordine Nuovo* (A monthly for the New Order) started publishing in 1966. For a list of those supporting the MPON (a sizable number), see Battaglini 1986, 37–38.

8. True to Evolian, spiritualist principles the ON defined the naturalistic cult for the fatherland as a nonvalue, proudly asserting: "*Our fatherland lies wherever the struggle for the Idea is carried on*" [Graziani 1973, 20]; as for the people, "sovereignty and power must be out of the reach of the ignorant masses" [quoted in *Istruttoria* Casson 19, 56].

9. Heroism was, of course, a virile duty and privilege, the achievement of man's *spirit* in contrast to the inferior feminine *matter*: "Only he who will have conquered the female that lies inside him . . . will have become a 'warrior,' a 'man-spirit,' a '*Vir*' in the ultimate sense" [S. Mangiante, "Per un Ordine ariano," *ON*, 1, no. 3 (June 1955)].

10. For example, "Our combat is a metapolitical, rather than a political struggle, aiming for the depth of men's souls, in order to rid them of any trace of the materialistic and hedonistic pollution coming from this decrepit society: a total struggle then, one eschewing compromise in any form. . . . The New Order we envisage . . . shall be founded on the principles of the Organic State, of Hierarchy, and be rooted in the eternal values of Tradition" [n.a., "Elezioni politiche e battaglia nazional-rivoluzionaria," in *Prima linea nazional rivoluzionaria*, Agrigento (Spring 1972), 1].

11. The ON was proud of its role in the episode, as the broadsheets testify: "Against a government of thieves and cowards, the ON youth fight on the barricades at the head of Reggio's people, in favor of tomorrow's revolution, which will

destroy everything in order to have everything rebuilt anew" [quoted in Sentenza Ordine Nuovo 1973, 104].

12. The text, which contains a *summa* and *interpretatio autentica* of the movement's conceptions and ideology, was produced as a brief for the defendants during the 1973 trial that caused the MPON's dissolution. The brief, although signed and later published by Clemente Graziani, was probably written by Rauti [author's interview with the president of the court; see also Minna 1984, 42]. This, incidentally, is a good example of the continuity between the two phases of the ON.

13. The attempt to portray the ON in this way should be challenged by such militant leaflets and slogans as the following: "Behind the ON's proud axe, fearless men have rallied, whose violent strength will pitilessly fall on the loathsome, bleating herd led by the Christian-Communists"; or, "We break heads, not shop windows," and again, "Ordine Nuovo breaks heads" [quoted in *Sentenza ON*, 52–53; Questura di Roma 1973, 41].

14. Here are some statements on the matter: "Like all other sections of the ON, [Tivoli's] 'Drieu la Rochelle' circle was organized on two levels, political and operational"; "they asked me to help organize a new structure for the movement, a structure that envisaged a double development, a political, above-ground sector, operating through cultural circles and political movements, and an underground sector" [quoted in *Istruttoria Peteano*, 62].

15. A vast literature exists on the Fascist International, part of which is marred by a certain flair for cloak-and-dagger stories. A reliable and exhaustive up-to-date account, especially concerning the groups relevant to Italian developments, is in Bale 1995, 46–249.

16. Adriano Romualdi (1940–1973) was the son of longtime MSI deputy secretary, Pino Romualdi (allegedly Mussolini's natural son, which, if true, would make Adriano Il Duce's grandson). A university instructor, Adriano was one of the first militant intellectuals to write on Evola; his 1964 review of *Fascismo* was reprinted as the introduction to the 1979 edition of Evola's book. He authored the first monograph on the master [1966] and wrote on Nietzsche [1971], Plato (depicted as "a veritable precursor of Nazism" [1977]—a pet fascist notion), the konservative Revolution [1981, a posthumous text heavily indebted to Mohler's]; on the Waffen SS, predictably considered as forerunners of the European ideal [Romualdi translated the text and wrote the preface: Saint Loup (alias Marc Augier), *I Volontari Europei delle Waffen SS* (Rome: Volpe, 1967). Incidentally, Marc Augier, a former Nazi collaborator [Mosse 1964, 313], founded a postwar neofascist organization, the French Youth Movement.

Romualdi was killed in a car accident that a first-class expert defined as strange "because Romualdi collaborated with the [West] German Secret Service, investigating the East European countries" (the expert was Guido Giannettini, whose figure and deeds will be extensively discussed in the next chapters [quoted in Pesenti 1974, 116]).

17. These are the organizations that writers have most sensationalized. The most notorious was the object of a best-selling novel, F. Forsyth's *The Odessa File* (New York: Viking, 1972). Odessa probably did exist, but "there is little consensus about its historical role and significance" [Bale 1995, 56].

18. Otto Skorzeny was a dashing SS commando officer, whose most daring en-

terprise was the liberation of Mussolini from his prison atop the Gran Sasso Mountain in 1943. After the war he did not retire. Among other initiatives, Skorzeny purportedly was in charge of Juan Peron's secret police in Argentina, training them in torture and interrogation techniques. He also trained Abd al-Nasir's intelligence and security services, after recruiting a hundred German advisers from the SS underground and neofascist outfits. The purpose was to train Arab guerrillas in commando tactics and in protecting the former Nazi technicians working for Nasir from Israeli "hit" teams. The job was carried out at the CIA's bequest. One of the instructors at Skorzeny's school of saboteurs was Robert Leroy, second in command of Aginter Press, to be presently discussed.

On Leon Degrelle see above, chapter 2, note 37.

19. The movement's eighth assembly, hosted by the ON in Milan in 1965, demonstrated "conclusive evidence" that the notion of six million Jews exterminated in concentration camps was pure propaganda [Flamini 1981, 1: 80]. The leader of the NOE, Guy Amaudruz, a professor of languages and a former adjutant of Colonel Arthur Fonjallaz, the founder of the Schweizerische Faschistische Bewegung (Swiss Fascist Movement), contributed articles to both *Ordine Nuovo* and to flanking journals, such as *La Legione*. At the ninth meeting in 1967, again held outside Milan with the ON's support, "there was open talk of instigating a military coup in Italy" [Bale 1994, 101–6].

20. Giovane Nazione (Young Nation), one of the ON's confederates, in 1963 changed its name to Giovane Europa (Young Europe) and became the Italian branch of Jeune Europe [Barbieri 1976, 69; Del Boca and Giovana 1969, 454–55].

The mouthpiece of Jeune Europe was the monthly *La Nation Européenne* (of which Jean Thiriart was the "political adviser"). Wildly anti-Zionist and anti-Israel, the journal featured headlines such as "Les ignobles méthodes gestapiste [Gestapo-like] d'Israel" (February 1969). *Ordine Nuovo* regularly published articles and pieces by key Thiriart associates while Italian activists contributed to *Nation Européenne*; one of them was Franco Freda's associate, Claudio Mutti.

21. At the time of the Algerian crisis, the ON Students' Corporation distributed in high schools broadsheets such as the following:

> "Students! Today in France public opinion rallies around [Pierre] Lagaillarde, the Jeune Nation, and the Ultras, while the best French youth keep the banner of European civilization flying high, by fighting against the hordes of the colored revolution. At the same time, all over Europe, the socialist-communist organizations, together with the stateless and the homosexuals of the pink radical-Marxist International, mount a vulgar campaign of shameless lies in order to stab in the back those who, on African soil, are fighting for Europe. The gold of the Muscovite International supports [left-wing] student demonstrations and the emasculated whines of a gang of big-mouthed pimps, self-styled antifascist intellectuals." [P. Lagaillarde, together with colonels A. Argoud and C. Lacheroy, with M. Bouyer, B. Lefevre, and J. Maningaud, was one of the signatories of the OAS *Appeal to the Frenchmen* (1961)]

22. Guillou/Guérin Sérac was a French veteran who had fought in Korea and Indo-China, possibly serving as a liaison man between the CIA and the French services. He was later assigned to a crack parachutist regiment in Algeria, where he

deserted and joined the OAS rebellion. After Algerian independence and the OAS's defeat, he emigrated to Spain and then to Portugal, the last colonial empire that appeared willing to fight for Western values over "communist imperialism."

23. The figure is quoted in Bale 1995, 132, who had access to some PIDE documents. The PIDE records fell into the hands of antifascist groups after the fall of Salazar's heirs in 1974, and some of them were made available to specialists. Among other matters they revealed the names of the Aginter Press's Italian correspondents, including Rauti and Giannettini [for a complete list, see Lutiis 1991, 166]. The matter became of great interest in the Piazza Fontana inquiry, from which much of the information in this paragraph is taken.

24. The agency offered its services to authoritarian regimes, training personnel in Guatemala and post-Allende Chile in "revolutionary war" techniques [Bale 1994, 137].

25. Guérin-Sérac had prepared a mini-manual for the "perfect" terrorist, entitled *Missions Spéciales*, from which Bale has selected some excerpts:

- Subversion acts with appropriate means upon the minds and wills in order to induce them to act outside all logic, against all rules, against all laws: in this way it conditions individuals and enables one to make use of them as one wishes.
- *Action psychologique* [is] a nonviolent weapon [used] to condition public opinion through the use of the press, the radio, conferences, demonstrations, etc. . . . with the goal of uniting the masses against the authorities.
- Terrorisms breaks the population's resistance, obtains its submission, and provokes a rupture between the population and the authorities. . . . There is a seizure of power over the masses through the creation of a climate of anxiety, insecurity, and danger.
- Selective terrorism . . . destroys the political and administrative apparatus by eliminating the cadres of those organs.
- Indiscriminate terrorism . . . destroys the confidence of the people by disorganizing the masses so as to manipulate them more effectively [quoted in Bale 1994, 138–39].

26. The picture may have been even more intricate. There is evidence that the leader of the PCS/ML, one Gérard Bulliard, was in fact a neofascist provocateur, and his party a phony organization to be used as a cover for the radical Right. The role of the Chinese Embassy in Berne likewise remains unclear, but it was far from innocent and may perhaps be understood in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split and of Chinese efforts to neutralize Soviet influence in Africa. Thiriart seems to have been involved in the operation, but many of the crucial questions still remain to be answered [Bale 1995, 140–41].

27. Robert Leroy's long career included prewar membership in Charles Maurras's Action Française, then in the Cagoule terrorist underground, in the *Requeté* Carlist militia forces during the Spanish Civil War, in Vichy intelligence, in the Waffen SS "Charlemagne" division, and, as mentioned above, in Otto Skorzeny's commando forces, for which he acted as an instructor. After serving some years in jail as a collaborationist after the war, he went to work for both NATO intelligence

and the German BND [Bale 1994, 135]. This was the man whose name came up in connection with the Piazza Fontana massacre [see below, chapter 5].

28. An anti-Semitic wave surged in neofascist circles in the late fifties and included raids against Rome's Jewish ghetto and synagogue in 1958 and 1960. It was intensified in 1961–62, in connection with the capture, trial, and execution of Adolf Eichmann in Israel. The following is a typical leaflet of the period (1962):

> "International Jewry, with the tacit consent of the Western democracies and the barbarians of the Asiatic steppes, has created a new victim . . . Adolf Eichmann, the noble survivor of a phalanx of heroes who gave their lives at Nuremberg, in the name of the Superior Principles which were to create a New Order in Europe. Adolf Eichmann, we swear never to forget you and to avenge your death when the moment shall come!"

The leaflet, similar to those distributed in other cities, was handed out in Brescia by a group (Students for a Young Nation) supported by the ON-flanking journal, *Riscossa*. One of the two brothers who wrote the leaflet, in a book published shortly thereafter, was to hail Julius Evola as "the master who, more than anyone else, has been able to give a clear picture of the tragedy in which we live" [De Domenico, in Chiarini and Corsini 1983, 223, 206; also Del Boca and Giovana 1969, 157].

29. SIFAR was the Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate, military intelligence until the 1965 reform, when it changed its name to SID, Servizio Informazioni Difesa (Defense Information System).

30. The inquiry into the Piazza Fontana massacre disclosed a letter of 18 September 1969 in which one Lando dell'Amico asked the "Commendator Bruno Riffeser" reimbursement for "paying Lit. 18.5 million, as per agreement with the journalist Pino Rauti" [Alessandrini 1974a, 54]. Dell'Amico was a shady journalist with Secret Service contacts; Riffeser, a senior executive of the petrol concern SAROM, was the son-in-law of Attilio Monti, a reactionary oil tycoon with a fascist background, whose name has been frequently mentioned as one of the possible sponsors of the strategy of tension [examples in Alessandrini 1974b, 18; for a description of the whole episode, see Lutiis 1991, 158].

31. The 1973 ON trial uncovered correspondence of May and September 1969 concerning a *Mondial Import-Export* company, which vouched for, and was in turn supported by, ON members in Rhodesia, Portugal, and Angola [Battaglini 1986, 38–39]. The company, owned by the ON financial administrator, Mario Tedeschi, was involved in the international traffic of weapons [Flamini 1983a, 220; 1983b, 349]. A few years earlier (March 1964) the SIFAR had reported on a journey to Spain and Portugal by a group of ON members, led by "the journalist Pino Rauti and Clemente Graziani . . . In Portugal the movement's leaders were to meet with senior officers of the PIDE in order to define a plan for the purchase of weapons in Italy on behalf of that country. Graziani, as go-between, was to contact an important industry in Northern Italy" [SIFAR Note # D/107930/I of 3 March 1964, quoted in Flamini 1981, 21; also in Barbieri 1976, 92; a partial version was originally published in Zangrandi 1970, 58].

32. Guido Giannettini, an influential ON ideologue and a member of the Aginter Press group, was to have a notorious career as an intelligence agent, plotter, and

agent provocateur. In 1969 Giannettini and Rauti were photographed in a German military installation, where, together with German officers, they inspected *Leopard* tanks [Alessandrini 1974b, 23].

33. In 1974, after a left-wing attack against ON's branch in Tivoli (the "Drieu la Rochelle" circle), two carabiniere officers showed up at the bar where the Drieu's activists used to meet and, after giving the Nazi salute [!] asked for more information, stating that ON leader Paolo Signorelli had sent them. "This kind of a relationship—witnessess commented—was quite normal for our milieu's mentality . . . we were forever discussing coup d'état plans; one could not be too fastidious if we were in touch with the cops" [in Assizes, Bologna 1988, 1563].

34. Stefano Delle Chiaie (Caserta, 1936) has been defined as "one of the world's most dangerous right-wing terrorist leaders during the 1960s and 1970s" [Bale 1995, 145]. His remarkable career began in Rome as an MSI militant and branch secretary. At the end of the fifties he was already active in the radical milieu. In the early 1960s he traveled all over Europe in order to strengthen his international connections with the NOE and especially with the OAS, with which Avanguardia Nazionale developed a close relationship, followed by one with Aginter Press. After Delle Chiaie left Italy because of his involvement in the Piazza Fontana trial [see below, chapter 5], he traveled to different Latin American countries as an Aginter "correspondent" [Linklater, Hilton, and Ascherson 1984, 206]. He was also in touch with the Greek Secret Service, which provided training and funding for AN and shelter for its fugitives.

For many years his most important operational base was in Spain, where Delle Chiaie collaborated with the group of fascist, Nazi, and OAS veterans that made up the right-wing commando employed by Franco's security agencies to eliminate domestic opponents of the regime and to fight the ETA terrorists. Delle Chiaie became the main reference point for Italian radical-right militants escaping justice, most of whom gathered around him. His involvement, real or alleged, in a number of acts of violence (including the 1977 "calle Atocha massacre," the assault of a neofascist commando on the Comisiones Obreras offices, resulting in the killing of five union officers and the wounding of many others) became an embarrassment in post-Franco Spain, and he had to leave that country [Bale 1994, 165].

He went to Chile, where he had already worked with the "special operations" branch of the police (Direccion de Inteligencia National, or DINA), helping to recruit European Ultras to be employed in the "neutralization" of anti-Pinochet Chilean exiles [Flamini 1983b, 559–60]. Among the casualties were the former DC leader Bernardo Leighton and his wife, shot (but not killed) in Rome (6 October 1975) by Pierluigi Concutelli, ON and AN hit man who would later murder the state prosecutor at the ON trial [see below, chapter 6]. The Leighton operation was organized by an American-born specialist named Michael Townley; Delle Chiaie earned the gratitude of Pinochet, even if the victims survived [Bale 1995, 166; for more details see Dinges and Landau 1980]. Recent evidence proves that AN and the SID attempted to place responsibility for the Leighton operation on the Chilean leftist movement MIR and on the Italian NAR (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, Armed Revolutionary Nucleus) [see Salvini 1995, 352 ff.].

When, after the murder in Washington of Orlando Latelier (Salvador Allende's foreign minister) Pinochet was forced to extradite its organizer, Townley, and to

whitewash DINA, Delle Chiaie moved to Buenos Aires. There he had previously established contacts with José Lopez Rega, Juan Peron's secretary, who was to become a minister and the organizer of the dreaded Triple A paramilitary squads; Delle Chiaie and his associates participated in many episodes of the "dirty war" that took over that country in the mid-seventies.

From Argentina he moved on to Bolivia (November 1979), where he formed an Italo-Argentine paramilitary group confederate to the Novios de la Muerte headed by a West German neo-Nazi named Joachim Fiebelkorn, whose important adviser was Klaus Barbie [Linklater, Hilton, and Ascherson 1984, 266 ff.]. When the "cocaine coup" took place in 1979 Delle Chiaie was among its protagonists, and helped set up the structure of brutal repression that ruled the country over the next years. The Bolivian junta's blatant violation of human rights, and its equally blatant involvement in the drug trade, increased international pressure and finally compelled the junta to cede power to a new government. Delle Chiaie quietly slipped across the Argentine border and disappeared for a number of years, until he was captured (or allowed himself to be captured) in Venezuela in 1987 and was extradited to Italy [Bale 1995, 169–73].

Throughout this period he had flown in and out of Italy with relative ease, further evidence of his links with the Italian and other intelligence services. Such links brought violent accusations against him of being a spy and agent provocateur, even within the ranks of the radical Right. But it was probably because of these links that, once back in Italy, he was extended special judicial privileges connected with his extradition from Venezuela and was cleared of all charges.

35. In 1962 Delle Chiaie had been indicted for "reconstitution of the Fascist Party." In the ensuing trial the charge was downgraded to "apologizing for fascism" and he was given a bland sentence for it; according to the 1976 sentence of Rome's tribunal, this was the real reason for the AN's dissolution [Sentenza Avanguardia 1976, 1]. At the appeal trial (21 May 1963) Delle Chiaie was acquitted thanks to an amnesty [Pansa 1971, 157].

36. As in the case of the ON, the identification of AN locals can be difficult. For example, one of the two locals in Trieste carried the name "Cultural Circle *Julius Evola*"; in Massa Carrara AN's front was again a "cultural circle," named "*I Ghibellini*" (also, incidentally, a name of Evolian lineage); in Naples it was the "Study Center *La Runa*"; and so on. (*La Runa* is an obvious reference to the AN's symbol, namely, the next to last letter of the runic alphabet—a rhomb with elongated lower ends.)

37. The (presumably) most eminent figures of the movement alone, those indicted in the 1976 trial in Rome, numbered sixty-four.

38. The mouthpiece was *Avanguardia*, which appeared intermittently until 1971. Other publications were even more irregular. One of them, *Quaderni Runici #1* (1972), devoted to the "Jewish problem," was filled with the most banal anti-Semitic stereotypes [Questura di Roma 1973, 30].

39. There were also several frame-up attempts. In 1964, according to the confessions of a militant, explosives were to be hidden in some PCI locals, which would then have been searched by the carabinieri. The organizers, Mario Merlino and Stefano Delle Chiaie, explained to the militants that the deed had been suggested by the carabinieri themselves, who also suggested placing bombs in the DC Roman

headquarters and at the main radio and TV station. The frame-up did not work because the AN militants were recognized and chased away from the communist locals, but the bombs at the DC and at the radio and TV stations did go off. Five AN militants went to jail for some months. When they came out, they accused Delle Chiaie of betraying them because he had granted a "cover" that hadn't materialized [*La strage di stato* 1970, 52]. Later, an AN militant who threatened to expose Delle Chiaie's links to the Interior Ministry, one Antonio Aliotti, was first threatened and later found dead in a car laden with explosives [*La strage di stato* 1970].

40. This is the bland version of the court [Sentenza AN 1976, 4]. In fact, the episode was one of the most obscure in a dark year, 1974. The AN activist who was killed was Giancarlo Esposti, and the "police" who shot him were presumably Secret Service agents. There are grounds to suspect that Esposti's was not a simple paramilitary camp but a base linked with a coup d'état plot. The episode is discussed at greater length in chapter 6 below.

41. There was even downright collaboration between the police and the groups. One famous example took place in 1963, when Moises Ciombè, the Congolese leader who had been responsible for Patrice Lumumba's death, paid a state visit to the Pope. "The police charged the left-wing demonstrating students . . . Side by side with the police and the 'SS' (Special Squads of plainsclothesmen . . .) were the AN squads carrying, for the occasion, the same black batons as the police. . . . Even the foreign press gave broad coverage to the explicit connivance between Fascists and police. In order to cover up the scandal, the Ministry of the Interior dissolved the Special Squads and transferred [its chief]" [*La strage di stato* 1970, 51, 59, n. 5].

42. Almirante's picture, posing proudly atop the department's stairs in the midst of his pretorians, was in all the newspapers.

The enduring links between Almirante's party and the radical groups is well known, and it took the form of reciprocal help during campaigns, support for specific candidates, and, later on, help and support for fugitives from Italian justice. A significant example is the support the party provided, at Almirante's prodding, to protect the man responsible for Peteano's massacre [see below, chapter 6].

43. Guillou/Guérin Sérac's manual advocated that "the infiltrators at a demonstration should situate themselves strategically within the midst of it," where "they can carry out violent provocations against the forces of order, thereby inciting the cycle of action-repression-reaction" [in Bale 1995, 139].

44. The cases of "conversions," camouflage, and infiltration are too numerous to be recounted here [see Strage, 57–59; Ascari 1979, 64]. The most important was that of Mario Merlino, Delle Chiaie's right-hand man, formerly a militant of the ON and of Giovane Italia, who was also in close contact with Rauti and Caradonna. Shortly after his return from the Greek excursion, he grew a beard, long hair, donnned an eskimo coat, and founded an "anarchist" circle named "XXII Marzo" (March XXII), whose members infiltrated student demonstrations, throwing Molotov cocktails and setting fire to cars; the conservative press referred to these acts as the "blind violence with which PCI-maneuvered hooligans set fire to the cars of peaceful citizens." The students, however, identified the provocation, and the XXII Marzo was soon disbanded. Merlino then attempted to join a Maoist group (Proletarian Vanguard) and the Communist Party of Italy (Red Line). In both cases he was

recognized and rebuffed. He then joined the student movement in a department located some distance from the university's main campus. During a demonstration, he threw Molotov cocktails that caused the police to charge. Identified once again, he was enjoined to leave. Other provocation attempts also failed and Merlino was definitely "burned" in terms of his association with Marxist-Leninist organizations. His only remaining possibility was with the anarchists. He joined a ramschackle outfit named "Bakunin circle" where he soon engineered a split between the "moderates" and the "radicals," founding, with the latter, a new group, this time named "22 Marzo" (March 22). One of its members was to be accused of planting the bomb responsible for the Piazza Fontana massacre. Merlino was one of the chief witnesses for the prosecution [see below, chapter 5; on the infiltration episodes, see *La strage di stato* 1970, 34–45; Ascari 1979, 39 ff., 49 ff.].

Chapter 4
The Strategy of Tension: Background and Precedents

1. "Indiscriminate terrorism . . . implies the possibility of killing old people, women, children. These have always been deemed horrendous crimes, as useless, even counterproductive acts. But the rules of revolutionary war have upset all moral and humanitarian principles . . . The OAS in Algeria, with few men available, using such revolutionary war methods (which it had learned of course from the FLN), was able to keep the whole Muslim population confined to its quarters, even though hunger, disease, and all sorts of suffering would have pressed the masses to attempt sallies beyond the barbed wires of terror and systematic death" [*sic*] [Graziani 1963, 17].

2. Reflecting this process, internal migrations were massive, involving, over the decade, about 15 million people [Gambi 1973, 381]. Needless to say, growth was very unbalanced: investments rose from 16.7 to 24 percent of the GNP and the rate of capital accumulation reached a level without precedent in any other period of Italian history. But real wages were stable (except in 1954–56) and unemployment, especially in the South, was still rampant: in 1961 it hit 7.3 percent of the labor force, a mere .7 points down from 1951, and in contrast to a European average of 1.9 percent [Castronovo 1975, 407; Colarizi 1984, 699; on the demographic aspects, see Sylos Labini 1974, Table 1.1; 1978, 223].

3. The author of the comments just quoted, a specialist in military affairs who had been the adviser to the Defense Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, after serving as a briefing officer on the staff of the U.S. Secretary of the Army, under no account can be considered a radical.

4. Rauti gave a paper on "La tattica della penetrazione comunista in Italia"; Giannettini gave one on "La varietà delle tecniche nella condotta della guerra rivoluzionaria" [both in Beltrametti 1965c, 93–99, 151–70].

5. Eggardo Beltrametti had been the editor-in-chief of *Europa Nazione*; he was later to edit two officious military journals, *Rassegna Militare* and *Politica e strategia*.

6. The keynote speech at the Pollio Conference opened with a three-page quotation from a clandestine tract written during the Algerian War by Col. A. Argoud,

"one of the most serious, competent and brilliant minds of our time, not only on military matters" [De Boccard 1965, 21–23]. Argoud, as we have seen, was one of the OAS leaders [see chapter 3, n. 21].

7. It could be objected that these were standard concepts within the intelligence world and, more generally, within Western strategic thinking [Galli 1962]. But since most of the papers discussing them were classified, one would still need to explain how the radical Right came to know of them.

8. The pamphlet was entitled *Le Mani Rosse sulle Forze Armate* (Red hands over the armed forces); a version carrying the real names of the authors was polemically reprinted in 1975 by *Lotta Continua* [Rome: Samonà e Savelli]. For his part, Beltrametti was proud to acknowledge his own role in the initiative [Beltrametti 1975, 175 ff.].

9. On June 23 *Die Welt* wrote that the senior ranks of the armed forces were restless; on July 2 *L'Express* spoke of the carabinieri generals as harbouring strong political ambitions; *Le Figaro* stated that the carabinieri could be counted on. General de Gaulle himself thought that Italy had reached her Fourth Republic [Minority Report 1971, 127].

10. Brigadier General Giovanni de Lorenzo (1907–1973) became head of SIFAR in December 1955 and held office for almost seven years, the longest tenure ever. In February 1962 he was promoted to lieutenant general and statutorily should have left SIFAR and taken up a field command. By pressuring the political authorities into postponing his follower's appointment, he was able to keep the SIFAR post until October. In the meantime a presidential decree, passed at his prodding, made the command of SIFAR equivalent to a field command. He was thus qualified for the job he coveted, commander of the carabinieri, traditionally given to a three-star general on assignment from the army. But the incumbent commander still had one more year before retiring. A smear campaign was mounted against the unfortunate officer, who was compelled to retire nine months early, clearing the way for de Lorenzo. Next came the issue of de Lorenzo's succession at SIFAR. The officer he wanted for the post, Egidio Viggiani, a colonel, lacked the seniority needed for promotion. Records were altered to make up for the required seniority; Viggiani became a general and could thus be appointed. The same disregard for procedural niceties was displayed in the appointment of the second in command, Giovanni Allavena, also de Lorenzo's man. At the end of 1964 Allavena obtained a promotion "for exceptional merits" and a few months later, when Viggiani died in office, Allavena succeeded him [Beolchini 1967, 65–66, 74; Collin 1976, 16–24; Lutiis 1991, 60–62].

Similar methods were employed in de Lorenzo's new assignment, commander of the carabinieri: when he took over as commander he brought along seventeen SIFAR officers (ignoring the custom, which was for a new commander to bring one Aide de Camp), officers who owed their advancement to him or were otherwise beholden. By contrast, he ruthlessly purged, with transfers and punitive assignments, many whose loyalty was uncertain [Beolchini, 72 ff.; Lombardi 1968 (1991), 62 ff.; Minority Report, 74 ff.]; transfers involved about eighty-nine commissioned and noncommissioned officers and enlisted carabinieri [Majority Report 1971, 452; Minority Report 1971, 75].

11. The unit was established on 30 January 1963, without governmental, much less without parliamentary discussion; the official order came only the following April. De Lorenzo himself, in his deposition to the Lombardi committee (classified until 1991) admitted it had been created on the sly [Lombardi 1991 (1968), 5: 373]. A senior officer put the issue tersely before a parliamentary committee: "Many other generals and I did not concur in the assignment of tanks to the carabinieri, because they primarily carry out police functions, despite their status as part of the army. It is difficult to see what a fifty-ton tank has to do with the work of maintaining law and order" [Majority Report 1971, 512; for a good discussion of this issue, see Collin 1976, 29 ff.].

12. A SIFAR directive discovered by the committee required agents to investigate all activities the subject carried out at any time, as well as "all contacts the person ever made, either in terms of personal friendship or as a matter of professional relations, with anyone belonging to the political, economic, and intellectual world and even with people potentially dangerous to the national interest" [Beolchini 1967, 30]. Note that the only category justifying the Service's concern (those threatening the national interest) were listed at the end, almost as an afterthought.

13. Take, for example, the JCS *Memorandum* of 23 March 1954, commenting on the draft of NSC 5411, "U.S. Policy Toward Italy," according to which, in order to avoid Italy's subjugation to the Soviet bloc, "the United States, preferably in concert with its principal allies, should be prepared to take the strongest possible action . . . , such action possibly extending to the use of military power" [*Foreign Relations of the United States 1952–1954*, vol. 6, 1666]. This possibility does not appear in the final version of NSC 5411, dated 15 April 1954. The text available, however, is heavily censored precisely in the sections on "Courses of Action," where paragraphs 14–26 and all those after paragraph 29 are omitted [*Foreign Relations*, 6: 1680–81].

The relevant documents have been made available to me courtesy of Dr. Lorenza Sebesta, of the European University in Florence. Sections from some of them are reprinted in Gualtieri 1991, 15–18; see also Sebesta 1988, 46–56.

14. See JCS 1735/162, 17 December 1952, 1313, 1317–18, and the previous versions of the same (e.g., JCS 1735/126, 14 May 1952). The documents were (partly) declassified in 1975, and a version was published in Italian by Faenza in 1978. Faenza's version differed in one important detail from the one examined in 1991 by the Gualtieri committee (and quoted here), in that it stated: "The Italian and French governments must ignore the Demagnetize Plan, since it evidently may encroach on their national sovereignty" [Faenza 1978, 313–14; Gualtieri 1991, 23].

As late as February 1985, seven years after Faenza's disclosure, the Italian services denied any knowledge of "the so-called Demagnetize Plan," when Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, who was to answer a question in Parliament, inquired about it.

15. This would seem to contradict the requirement quoted above that the document be seen only by U.S. nationals. Faenza adds that "from that moment on SIFAR was bound hand and foot to U.S. interests. A first example of the SIFAR-CIA collaboration is a service that [William] Colby asked de Lorenzo to perform, namely, to bug the Quirinale Palace and the Pope's library in order to record the president's and the Pope's private conversations" [Faenza 1978, 314].

16. "T. Karamessines . . . asked General de Lorenzo to probe into the curricula of political leaders favorable to opening to the Left, in order to find out which could be blackmailed. He specifically requested that detailed records be kept of Aldo Moro's collaborators" [Faenza 1978, 316]. Allegedly, de Lorenzo gave Karamessines two copies of each file, one for the CIA station in Rome, the other to be sent on to Langley [Lutiis 1991, 64].

17. When they became convinced that the center-left formula of government had a good chance to be implemented "Confindustria agreed to foot the bills and de Lorenzo threw his organization wholeheartedly into the battle to fight what it considered to be an extremely dangerous experiment or perhaps even the end of the capitalist system in Italy." SIFAR also conducted, on behalf of Confindustria, preemployment investigations on prospective junior executives [Collin 1976, 17; evidence in Zangrandi 1970].

18. "Enough evidence eventually piled up . . . to permit the firm conclusion that de Lorenzo, working through SIFAR and his 'faithful' among the carabinieri, had made serious efforts in 1963 and the spring of 1964 to recruit ex-military men and others into a variety of legal, extra-legal and illegal groups which were designed to increase the manning levels of his organization. It is difficult to estimate the precise extent to which he was successful. . . . It would perhaps be reasonable to guess that in the event of an emergency de Lorenzo could have increased the numerical strength of his command by something in excess of 10 percent, or approximately 10,000 men" [Collin 1976, 39].

19. See, e.g., the deposition of former SIFAR colonel Guglielmo Cerica, of which forty out of fifty pages were classified [Lombardi 1991 (1968) 6: 257–307].

20. "I thought, if we catch'em, we'll cart them all off to Alghero [Sardinia, where Gladio's secret base was located]. They'll even have a good time" [the area is a tourist resort] [De Lorenzo's deposition, in Lombardi 1991 (1968), 5: 423].

21. The head of the police, Angelo Vicari, thus testified, adding: "Whenever worrisome situations arise, we alert the prefects, but not even this was done during that period." The same picture was drawn by the chief of the army general staff, General Aloja, who related the opinions of the head of SIFAR (General Viggiani) and those of de Lorenzo himself [Majority Report 1971, 393–94].

22. A senior SIFAR officer testified that early in 1964 he had been summoned by a friend, a fascist lawyer who represented important real estate, industrial, and agricultural interests. "He told me, 'Dear friend, things here are going from bad to worse, the economic situation is going down the drain; the world of business and finance is upset, they are very alarmed, something must be done . . . we have much confidence in your commander, General de Lorenzo; de Lorenzo will do something, but you must also try and give a hand.'" The lawyer then put the SIFAR man in touch with Confindustria's press secretary, who confirmed the line: "He assured me that . . . they were sure of the man, of this person [de Lorenzo]" [Lombardi 1991 (1968), 6: 262, 264; this part of the testimony was declassified only in 1991].

23. In his typical style, de Lorenzo had secretely taped the conversation with the emissary who had delivered the offer and tried to use it in one of the several lawsuits he was involved in, but the government classified that tape as well until 1991. The general contents of the conversation, and especially the offer of the embassy, however, were widely leaked [the text is in Lombardi 1991 (1968), 2: 755–840].

24. The doubts are increased by the 1991 disclosures, which reveal, among other things, that the seizure of the newspapers was to last "only for the time necessary to put the machinery out of order so as to make the printing of said newspapers impossible" [see the text of Plan Solo in Lombardi 1991 (1968), 1; the quote is on p. 42].

25. One of de Lorenzo's successors as carabinieri Commander, who firmly denied any coup d'état intention on the part of his erstwhile chief, yet gave this interpretation: "In my opinion the general . . . attempted what diplomats call a *ballon d'essai*, letting the news leak to those who were renegotiating for a new center-left government, especially to the Socialists and the Social Democrats: look, it would be in your own interest to go back cooperating with the DC . . . in order to have them give up the intransigent posture they were carrying . . . Like a poker player he wanted the others to pass and he succeeded. The others . . . immediately withdrew their fiery intents . . . and the deal with the DC was struck" [Lombardi 1991 (1968), 2: 777–78; the paragraph was censored until 1991].

26. These are the words of the head of the DC delegation in the Gualtieri committee, Sen. Lucio Toth. Even more scathing comment was made on Plan Solo by the other DC representatives, such as Sen. Giovanni Granelli [see Gualtieri 1991, 172–73, 194].

27. On the notion of system blockage and its effects on a related issue (terrorism), see Pasquino 1983.

Chapter 5
The Strategy of Tension: A Case Study

1. In the period of 1968–73 Italy had the highest conflict indicators in Europe, measured in terms of number of actions per 100,000 workers; workers involved per 100,000; and days of work lost per 100,000 workers [Bordogna and Provasi 1982, 224].

2. A talk given by Rauti at a radical MSI unit, and reported by Salierno, quite aptly summarizes this posture: "We cannot hope—Rauti said—to carry out a coup d'état or a right-wing insurrection *tout court* [simply]. . . . But we can and must . . . force our enemies to come out in the open. We must force . . . the Communists to choose between insurrection and surrender. They know that if they take up the rifle they'll be crushed. We must force them either to do it or be forever marginalized in a ghetto of isolation and feebleness." Rauti's strategy envisioned a number of steps, including direct attacks and ceaseless provocations against the Communists; indirect tactics, i.e., attacks on others, leading the public to cry out for law and order; international connections, i.e., the establishment of a European and worldwide network of extreme-right groups, newspapers, pressure groups, and so on, plus contacts with foreign governments and services interested in preventing the Communists from seizing power in Italy [Salierno 1976, 88–89].

3. One of the main channels of collaboration between the Greek regime and its Italian admirers was ESESI, the National League of Greek Students in Italy, controlled by the Greek Intelligence Service. It was under ESESI sponsorship that Kostas Plevris (who seems to have visited Italy regularly before the major accidents [*La strage di stato* 1970, 95]) organized, together with Rauti, the 1968 "student excursion" to Greece mentioned in the previous chapter, which was followed by the

epidemic of conversions to the Left by radical-right militants. The Italian Service (SID) also had a hand in organizing the cruise [Lutiis 1991, 97].

4. "Strategy is the use of combat for the purposes of war . . . It must give every act of war an immediate purpose, eventually leading to the final one" [Clausewitz 1970, 173; see also Paret 1986, 3, 206ff.].

5. The document is quoted in all the investigations and in most works dealing with the period [see, e.g., Linklater, Hilton, and Ascherson 1984, 206].

6. In 1969 the number of workers involved in industrial conflict jumped to 7,507,000 from 4,862,000 in 1968, and the hours of work lost for strikes went from 73,918,000 to 302,597,000 [Regalia, Regini, and Reyneri 1977, 69].

7. The literature on the affair fills bookshelves. The richest collection of court materials and the most accurate overall reconstruction of the trial are in the Magrone and Pavese volumes (1987–88). They number more than two thousand pages and yet are far from including all possible relevant documents. A perceptive description of changes in the (enormous) symbolic meanings of the affair is given in Tarrow 1989; 1990.

8. A senior officer of Milan's Political Squad, Luigi Calabresi, was quoted in *La Stampa* as stating: "We must aim [the investigation] in the sector of extremism, meaning, of course, left-wing extremism." *Il Messaggero* rhetorically asked: "Can [the culprits] be the 'Maoists,', the 'Chinese,' the fanatical groups who place themselves even at the left of the Communist Party?" This reply followed: "An officer of the Political Squad, Mr. Calabresi, is sure of this," and the statement against left-wing extremists ensued [quoted in Zagaria 1986, lxxx]. The other moderate newspapers toed the same line.

For his part, Milano's prefect, Liberio Mazza, had cabled the prime minister: "Reliable hypothesis in the course of being perfected orients inquiries toward anarcoid groups." The ministry replied in kind, by sending the following cable to other European police departments: "En ce moment nous ne possedons aucune indication valide à l'égard des possibles auteurs du massacre, mais nous dirigeons nos premiers soupçons vers les cercles anarchisants" [At present we have no valid indication as to the possible perpetrators of the massacre, but our first suspicions are aimed at anarchist circles] [quoted in Flamini 1982, 124].

9. His prison journal leaves no doubt as to his opinion: "The news I received from the secretary to the President of the Republic, who had it from the chief of police, was that the trail was Red, which I did not for one minute believe. The trail was visibly Black." Some dramatic comments follow: "The preeminent role of the SID and that (also significant) of the police have not yet been fully ascertained at the trial. But their involvement is out of the question" [in Biscione 1993, 50].

10. Immediately after Pinelli's death, the head of police, Marcello Guida, declared to the press: "There is strong evidence that he was involved in the massacre . . . his alibi had collapsed . . . he saw he was lost . . . his was a desperate gesture, a sort of self-accusation" [Cederna 1971, 12]. Pinelli's widow and his mother charged Guida with slander and defamation, but the courts rejected the charge.

11. The Pinelli affair had another victim. Police Superintendent Luigi Calabresi, who was among those questioning Pinelli on the fateful night, became the object of a violent hate campaign by the extraparliamentary Left. He was murdered in April 1972, in front of his house. In 1988 a former militant of Lotta Continua (an extreme-

left group) unexpectedly confessed to the killing and charged the group's charismatic leader and one of his deputies as having been the principals in the crime. In spite of three controversial trials and one Cassation verdict, this murder also has yet to be resolved.

12. Pietro Valpreda was a straggler with a criminal record for robbery and attempted robbery. At thirty-seven he was the oldest and one of the most fiery members of the 22 Marzo group. According to witnesses, "He thought that the methods of the Italian Anarchist Federation, together with those of traditional anarchism, based on propaganda work, organization, and study, were obsolete and inadequate to bring about any change. . . . He felt it was necessary to start using bombs. This business of the bombs, he repeated it many times. He even wrote on a wall of the shed where we lived: 'Bombs, blood, anarchy' " [in Ascari 1979, 134].

The official anarchist groups returned Valpreda's hostility. The bulletin of the Italian Anarchist Federation, *Umanità Nuova*, wrote in its 27 December 1969 issue: "We are not interested in talking about Valpreda, the inspirer of a small group of fanatical juveniles who called themselves an anarchical circle, but were seething with squadrist elements, obsessed by an insane cult for destructive violence. . . . It has been unanimously ascertained that Valpreda and his cronies had nothing in common with the anarchist movement, even less with any libertarian ideology" [in Ascari 1979, 147].

As for the moderate press, it immediately dubbed Valpreda "the monster."

13. These actions were of the following military cast: "smashing the windows of the Fiat store on Manzoni Street, of the offices of the daily *Il Messaggero*, and of the Fiat store on Bissolati Street." The painstaking enumeration of the actions is that of the judge who used evidence of these activities to define and heavily sanction the group as a "criminal band." "It certainly cannot be said that the results caused by the defendants . . . were especially serious in terms of the damage they produced," the verdict conceded. "What matters is not the actual degree of the plan's implementation [*sic*] . . . The only relevant aspect, insofar as the [criminal band] . . . is concerned, is in regard to the permanent agreement among [the defendants] to carry out an indefinite number of criminal actions such as those described" [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 295].

14. The officer responsible for the picture episode was the same who had proclaimed Pinelli's guilt, the head of the police, Marcello Guida. Later he claimed to have no recollection of the circumstances, and although his behavior was sternly censured by the first Catanzaro verdict [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 333–35], he was never disciplined for it.

15. Until the 1989 reforms the Italian criminal procedure belonged to the so-called inquisitorial model (as opposed to the common law's "adversary" model), consisting of two distinct phases. During the first phase, the Istruttoria (investigation; inquiry), evidence was collected under the cloak of secrecy and with limited guarantees for the defendant, by a public prosecutor (Pubblico Ministero, usually carrying the rank of Sostituto Procuratore) who then stated his case *in writing* before the Giudice Istruttore. The latter delivered a sentence (Sentenza-Ordinanza) which could either dismiss the proceedings or send the defendant to the second phase, trial in court. This was based on the evidence gathered during the Istruttoria, and in fact many debates were nothing but a rereading and reassessment of the written records

of the Istruttoria. (In the adversarial system, by contrast, evidence emerges in the first-degree debate, where the defendant is protected by the procedure's publicity and especially by the immediate confrontation of defense and prosecution and by their cross-examination of witnesses and materials.) In the inquisitorial model, lawful motives for appealing a verdict are many and in fact most verdicts are actually appealed, either by the defense or the prosecution. It is also intrinsic to the system that the first degree and the appeal court (Corte d'appello) may evaluate differently the evidence collected by the Istruttoria, reaching dramatic reversals of verdicts. There is, then, a third level, that of the Court of Cassation, which for the most part may be petitioned only on points of law. The Cassation Court can either confirm the previous verdict, remit the case to another appeal court, or quash the verdict without remittal. It should be clear why, with such a system, often years might pass before a final decision is reached.

Since the Italian and the Anglo-Saxon system do not correspond exactly, a literal translation of the terms is impossible. In the course of this chapter, the term *magistrates* will be applied to those involved in the pretrial investigation (prosecutor and Giudice Istruttore), the word *judges* to the judges in court.

16. The source of the document was Stefano Serpieri, a member of the extreme-right group Europa Civiltà, who was connected to Delle Chiaie and the Guérin-Sérac-Leroy group, besides being an informer for both the police and the SID. On the night of December 12 he was put in the same cell as Merlino, in order to collect the latter's confidences, which he apparently succeeded in doing. All the information contained in the SID note was provided by Serpieri, but it is uncertain that all Serpieri's information was extracted from Merlino. Among the items we are sure about is the fabrication of Merlino's alibi, with Delle Chiaie's help, and the friendship between Merlino's father and the director of Milan's National Bank of Agriculture. The source of other items (the use of the timers, the indication of Merlino as the Roman bomber) cannot be stated with equal certainty [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 374].

17. Rome's police knew Merlino very well: "We were terribly worried by [his] presence among the anarchists—an officer testified—because we knew he was a crony of Delle Chiaie, whom we considered responsible for many attacks, although we were never able to collect conclusive evidence against him" [Ascari 1979, 61].

As for Leroy, all his exploits, beginning with his membership in the Vichy Republic's SS, were described in the same police file as early as 1965. The SID could not ignore that; indeed, a 1970 circular directed by the SID head office to all field branches (which, for a change, was delivered to the magistrates only in 1976), stated: "Leroy Robert-Henry, presently a collaborator of Guillou [a.k.a. Guérin-Sérac] is an ancient member of the French SS. . . . Neither Guérin-Sérac nor Leroy are anarchists; they belong to an anticommunist organization. This information should be withdrawn from the police and the carabinieri" [quoted in Mosca 1978, 108; see also Ascari 1979, 86–87].

18. The Italian Constitution [Article 25, 1] states that "no one can be removed from the natural judge, provided for by statute." One exception is the removal of the judge "for grave reasons of law and order [*ordine pubblico*] or lawful suspicion [that the court may not adjudicate fairly] [*Criminal Procedure Code*, Article 55]. The

institute has ancient roots in civil-law countries, going back to the French revolutionary legislation. Theoretically, it should protect the courts from undue pressures or disturbances. In practice its main use has been political, aimed to remove touchy cases from courts that are deemed dangerous (by the power holders). Some precedents are enlightening. In 1924, when a socialist deputy, Giacomo Matteotti, was kidnapped and murdered by fascist thugs, the natural judge should have been Rome's Assizes. But the Cassation Court had the trial removed to a safe place, the small provincial town of Chieti, in Abruzzi, where indeed the murderers drew very mild sentences. A case closer in time was that of Prince J. V. Borghese, whose trial, in 1947, was removed from the natural judge, in Milan, and held in Rome, where the defendant, as you may recall, was actually set free [see chapter 1].

19. A paragraph of the Cassation Court's ruling provides a good example of the style and ideology prevailing in the circles of the "upper-anxiety cartel." Among other factors, the court considered the following statement by the prosecution as acceptable ground for requesting the trial's removal:

> The extreme-left extraparliamentary groups and organizations in Milan took initiatives . . . aimed to demonstrate the *pretense of innocence* of Valpreda and other defendants. They did not refrain from insinuating to the public that there were doubts and perplexities as to the correctness of the Istruttoria's inquiry and the police investigation. For this purpose they took advantage of the fact that warrants had been issued against a certain Freda and a certain Ventura based on the same evidence for which Valpreda and his *accomplices* were being detained. [Quoted in Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 138; italics added]

The words I chose to italicize most sharply clash with the basic principle of due process, namely, that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. Here, instead, it was the defendants' innocence that was treated as an extravagant "pretense." Moreover, the term used for Valpreda's co-defendants (translated above as *accomplices*, for lack of a better equivalent) is *correi* (literally, "co-culprits"), indicating that the Cassation Court took the anarchists' guilt for granted, even before the trial began.

The scandal over this decision was such that, two months after it was issued, a new statute severely limited, in *rimessione* [change of venue] cases, the Cassation Court's power to choose the venue of the new trial, specifying that it must be chosen "among the judges belonging to the same district of appeal or to a neighboring district." The whole matter was further regulated in 1980 by an act requiring that the new judge be the one "with equal jurisdiction, located in the head city of the nearest district of appeal" [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 136].

20. In the Italian judicial system, crime victims and their relatives may claim damages within the criminal trial. Thus they become party to the proceedings (*parte civile*) and can call witnesses or cross-examine those introduced by the defense or prosecution.

21. The public prosecutor in charge of the inquiry was Emilio Alessandrini, and the Giudice Istruttore was Gerardo d'Ambrosio (the inquiry is usually known as "Istruttoria Alessandrini-d'Ambrosio"). Emilio Alessandrini was murdered years later (29 January 1979), by a commando of the extreme-left terrorist group Prima Linea (Front Line). In the leaflet claiming responsibility for the murder, Prima Linea charged Alessandrini with attempting in his investigation of the Piazza Fontana

affair, to rationalize his section of Milan's Tribunal and to return "democratic credibility" to the state [Stajano 1982, 158]. One of Alessandrini's killers was the son of longtime DC minister Carlo Donat Cattin, one of the most important leaders of his party.

22. G. Ventura's figure was one of the most ambiguous in the trial. Originally Freda's close friend and ideological companion, he claimed to have switched to a left-wing creed, later renewing his contacts with Freda's group only in order to collect information on them for the SID, represented by G. Giannettini. He claimed further that, in order not to arouse his quarries' suspicions, he had to be involved in some of their actions (the spring attacks). He assertedly severed relations with Freda after the August bombing of the trains, realizing that Freda planned to intensify his terrorist activities, in agreement with the Roman group. There were a number of contradictions in Ventura's statements, however: the fact that his close relationship with Freda continued well after the August bombings; the collapse of a crucial alibi; and Giannettini's denial that Ventura played any role in SID activities. All this discredited Ventura's version and led the magistrates to indict him, using his admissions (among other pieces of evidence) to build the case against the entire group. The prosecutor, E. Alessandrini, described Ventura's defense strategy as toeing a constant line: "He categorically denied facts that were not supported by hard evidence and when evidence did surface, he admitted the facts but offered an interpretation that would exonerate him from any responsibility. Thus, at the beginning, he maintained that Lorenzon was a mythomaniac and even charged him with slander. Later, as Lorenzon's statements were gradually supported by evidence . . . Ventura admitted having made the incriminating statements but claimed they had been misunderstood by Lorenzon who thought that it was Ventura who was directly involved when in fact he had been describing actions carried out by Freda. And later, when evidence pointed to Ventura's direct involvement in some of the actions . . . he admitted them, maintaining however that they had been part of his cover as an infiltrated agent in a subversive group" [Alessandrini 1974a, 146].

23. Some witnesses accused Pino Rauti and Stefano Delle Chiaie of attending the meeting, along with Freda, Ventura, and other Venetian militants. Rauti was briefly imprisoned but when his alibi was validated by his Roman newspaper colleagues he was later acquitted. Delle Chiaie was already a fugitive abroad so investigations of him were not pursued; the appeal judges ruled out his presence at the meeting [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 110–11; CTZ 1981, 471].

24. Freda was one of the most charismatic and influential leaders of the radical Right, and not only in Italy. His publishing house, the Edizioni di Ar, which is still operating, is arguably the most important vehicle in existence for spreading militant literature—from Evola's works to those of Hitler to the texts of traditional and heterodox fascism [Revelli 1983; Ferraresi 1984a; 1995, 100–107]. Its importance has also been extolled outside Italy [see, e.g., "Les *Edizioni di Ar*: Naissance d'une Nouvelle Culture," in *Totalité* 5 (1978)]. Freda's 1969 text, *La Disintegrazione del sistema* (The disintegration of the system), mixed Evolian and Marxist notions, advocating a coalition between the extreme Right and the extreme Left in order to destroy the capitalist system ("Nazi-Maoism"). It was hailed as "a classic" [Baillet 1978, 72], as "the manifesto for the fourth front, the European front, the one that must be opened after those of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, in order to defeat

Yankee-Zionist imperialism" [Houllefort 1978, 18]. Freda has also acquired a number of admirers in the United Kingdom, where he was recently defined as "a martyr for our cause," and "one of the finest contemporary political theorists of the national revolutionary struggle in Europe" [Murphy 1983, 7].

On the other hand, Freda himself purportedly confided to at least one radical-right comrade, Vincenzo Vinciguerra [to be discussed in the next chapter] that he wrote *Disintegrazione* in order to infiltrate the "Chinese" groups [Vinciguerra 1989, 153].

25. It was thought that the Nuclei had been established by Rauti and Giannettini within the framework of the struggle going on within the army high command, which also was responsible for publishing *Red Hands over the Armed Forces*, whose main concepts the subversive leaflet reproduces. Ordine Nuovo (to which Freda belonged at the time) was also involved in distributing the leaflet as well as the *Red Hands* tract [Alessandrini 1974b, 25–27; Flamini 1981, 129–30]. Recent investigations consider the Nuclei a much more important and ominous organization with subversive purposes [Salvini 1995, 415–53].

26. Ventura, in the spring of 1969, together with Count Pietro Loredan, another defendant, had financed, with a sizable sum (more than $10,000), a leader of the "Marx-Leninist Party," whom Loredan had previously attempted to convince of the need to reorganize partisan groups against the neo-Fascists.

27. One of them was Ruggero Pan, who reported that Freda had tried to recruit him as a bomber for his group. Pan was also in close contact with the Ventura family: a few hours after the Milanese blast, Ventura's brother, Angelo, burst into Pan's house, saying: "There has been a carnage, but it wasn't my brother" [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 98].

28. This was the petition (*ricorso*) filed with the Court of Cassation on 14 April 1986 by the general prosecutor in Bari, in order to cancel Bari's appeal verdict. Most of the quotations on this and the following pages are from this document [in Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 488–91].

29. In the course of these investigations, Freda's telephone was put under police control. According to Ventura, Freda was so informed by a police officer the day after the control was authorized [in Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 488 ff.].

30. The inquiries on the Paduan cell were set off by the initiative of a private citizen, a lawyer who reported a conversation he had had with Lorenzon to the public prosecutor in Treviso in which Lorenzon had related his talks with Ventura. Only at this point did the investigations on the Paduan cell, which had been interrupted by Juliano's misfortune, have to be renewed.

31. On 6 July 1970 a train carrying workers to a major demonstration had derailed in Gioia Tauro (Calabria), killing four. Catenacci had authoritatively endorsed the thesis that the accident was the result of the personnel's negligence. In fact it was a fascist attack [Lutiis 1991, 95].

32. That a meeting took place on 18 April 1969 is reasonably certain. Some calls were apparently made that day about a meeting due to take place later in the evening. The calls were made by Freda to Pozzan, Ventura, and one Ivano Toniolo and were intercepted by the police who kept Freda's line under control within the framework of the investigations on the spring bombings [texts in Alessandrini 1974a, 38–39; CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 99–103; CTZ 1981, 463–67]. Toniolo, in whose home the meeting probably took place, was a close associate of Freda, who had been indicted

for the April bombings. He disappeared from Italy to avoid the investigation and never returned (he was sighted in places such as South Africa, Spain, and Angola [Salvini 1995, 510–11]).

Freda denied the meeting ever took place and claimed to have forgotten what the calls were about. Ventura admitted the meeting had occurred but stated that the guest from Rome was not Rauti but Delle Chiaie. He speculated that Pozzan might have mentioned Rauti's name on Freda's suggestion, as Freda wanted "to obtain protection from the MSI, which in fact was trying to drop him" [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 53].

The controversy about the meeting concerns both its relevance and the identity of those in attendance. Although the first-degree court ruled that it was the crucial episode in plotting the second-line strategy, the appeal judges pointed out that the idea of infiltrating and exploiting the Left had long been circulating among the Right and that a short meeting one evening was hardly the occasion to work out such a momentous plan. Even the appeal judges, however, admitted that the meeting did take place and was attended by a shadowy figure whom none of the defendants has ever identified. Instead of concluding henceforth that the mysterious figure must have been very important indeed, the appeal judges, bent as they were on minimizing anything concerning the Paduan cell, denied the meeting's relevance on the ground that Ventura appeared only mildly interested in attending it [CTZ 1981, 479].

33. In March 1974 Milan's magistrates concluded the Istruttoria on Freda, Ventura, and others, by charging them with the massacre and sending them up for trial before Milan's Assizes. The positions of Giannettini, Rauti, and Loredan were separated (*stralcio*) from those of the other defendants, and a supplemental inquiry was carried out on them [the itinerary is in Magrone and Pavese 1987, 1: 258–67].

34. "In order to make this decision a special meeting was held in Palazzo Chigi [the official government seat], but it was a veritable deformation, a major mistake. Instead, the truth should have been told, namely, that Giannettini was a regularly recruited informer of the SID, who reliably provided timely news, like that of the organization of the massacre." So runs the text of the interview, published by Massimo Caprara in the weekly *Il Mondo* (20 June 1974). In his court testimony (1977) Giulio Andreotti confirmed the gist of the interview but denied referring to "Palazzo Chigi" (i.e., the government). He claimed merely to have mentioned some level above the military ("una sede politica superiore") and that the information had come to him from General Miceli (head of the SID). The confrontation in court between G. Andreotti and M. Caprara (January 1978) was one of the most dramatic moments in the trial. Each maintained his own version; Caprara produced the handwritten notes of the interview, where the expressions "state secret" and "meeting at Palazzo Chigi" were clearly legible [CTZ 1979a, 153, 226–31].

35. Aldo Moro's memorial reports the DC leader's shock at Andreotti's revelations and his incapability of sifting through the reasons that may have motivated them [Biscione 1993, 48–49, 51].

36. Giannettini's version further clashes with the fact (admitted by the defendant) that he had gathered no information on the Left through 1969, and the SID officers who had been in charge of him were unanimous in stating that his value as an informer was practically nil. This raises two further questions: (a) If Giannettini

was so marginal, why was such a broad effort made for such a long time to cover up for him? and (b) How could such an assertedly marginal agent be in close contact for so long with the most senior ranks of the armed forces and the Intelligence Service (first the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and then all the successive heads of "Office D," the counterespionage section of the service)?

Other credibility problems are posed by Giannettini's classified reports found in Ventura's safety deposit box. Two of the reports, depicting supposed initiatives of the Right aimed to overturn the center-left regime, with the support of the CIA and reactionary business circles, apparently were not filed with the SID but passed on by Ventura (acting as a man of the Left) to some extreme leftist groups, in order to goad them into carrying out illegal "defensive" actions, like the reconstitution of partisan bands [CTZ 1979, pt. 1: 93]. Giannettini admitted that the reports were written in a form "meant to impress the 'Chinese' " [CTZ 1979, pt. 2: 183].

37. This, as you will recall, was the supplementary inquiry on Giannettini and others, since the main branch of the Istruttoria (against Freda, Ventura, and others) had already concluded in March of that year [see above, n. 33].

38. Actually, some of the major defendants were fugitives: in October 1978 Freda had escaped from his obligatory residence in Catanzaro, with the help of common criminals and Masonic groups; Ventura was to do the same in January 1979, shortly before the verdict was announced.

39. A draft of Miceli's reply to the magistrates carried Miceli's handwritten note: "Draft approved by His Excellency the minister and the defense chief of staff"; the latter (Admiral Henke) had also initialed the text [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 353].

40. Essentially, Potenza's court argued the following: that customarily the head of SID had the power to classify a case as state-secret without any political endorsement; that General Miceli (with General Maletti's complicity) must have done just that in order to justify Miceli's previous lack of cooperation with the judges; that the senior officers' meeting was a *mise en scène* organized by Miceli to cover his tracks, and that he had never meant to consult the ministers; and that the latter, in those days, were too busy changing governments (M. Rumor's cabinet had just been installed) to be involved in such a menial matter as Giannettini's situation. Hence Malizia must have told the truth [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 356–63].

Potenza's verdict made a slanderer of General Miceli, since it claimed that he had falsely accused the ministers. Indeed, he was perfunctorily charged with slander but was acquitted in 1984 [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 363].

41. The Istruttoria had argued that (a) all the bombs the attackers used on December 12 had sixty-minute "deflection" timers produced by "Junghans" and distributed by "Gavotti" (the same kind Freda bought), and (b) that between March and December 1969 only fifty-seven timers of that type had been sold, and Freda had purchased fifty. Since the other seven were bought individually by different customers, in an entirely fragmented fashion, five of the bombings could only have come from Freda's stock [CTZ 1981, 595]. Extending the time period in question led to the discovery that the number of timers "Gavotti" sold was higher than that supposed by the Istruttoria.

42. According to the Cassation Court's later verdict, by totally disregarding this testimony the appeal judges veritably "distorted the facts . . . because most of the

factual findings supported by precise evidence were substituted by contrary suppositions totally unsubstantiated by any evidence at all" [Cassation 31730/81, 82; for a discussion of the depositions and evidence, see CTZ 1981, 598–601, 605].

43. The Parliamentary Committee on Indictment Procedures (the so-called Inquiry Committee) was vested with the issue in May 1980 and decided the case in August 1981. The counts differed for the several governmental leaders involved. Former prime ministers Giulio Andreotti (DC) and Mariano Rumor (DC) and former defense minister Mario Tanassi were charged with being after-the-fact accessories to Giannettini's cover-up and with giving false testimony in court; former minister of justice Mario Zagari (PSDI) was charged with omitting, abusing, and revealing official acts. The Inquiry Committee, whose membership of twenty was proportional to the membership of the parties in Parliament, rejected the case with a majority vote that relied heavily on Potenza's verdict.

At that point the opposition collected the required signatures (three hundred) and the case was deferred to the two houses in joint session. They were to decide whether to accept the committee's verdict or defer the ministers to regular court. In March 1982 a majority vote (corresponding to the governmental coalition) confirmed the committee's verdict and exonerated the ministers.

Both levels (that of the committee and the joint houses), voting strictly along party lines, made a sham of "political justice." This was perfectly normal with cases before the Inquiry Committee, popularly known as the *Grande Insabbiatrice* (the "Great coverer-up"). Precisely because of its less-than-prestigious record, the committee was abolished by a popular referendum in 1987.

44. Here again, the way the judges dismissed evidence is disturbing. First they questioned the logic of the SID planning such an escape, "when it would have been far simpler and more effective to confirm [Ventura's] claim that he was an informer." (Why, then, did they organize Giannettini's and Pozzan's escape?). The factual evidence, you will recall, was provided by the Venturas who exhibited a can of the SID's special tear gas and a key to the section of the jail where Ventura was detained. The judges argued that (a) the key opened only the men's section of the jail and not the two outer gates; (b) the tear gas was indeed the same as that used by the SID and was not sold on the market, but it was not exclusively SID equipment. In other words, "nothing ruled out that Ventura and his relatives might have acquired the key and the tear gas in some other way than how they claimed. Indeed, it was logical to believe that had the project truly been the SID's, it would then have been much better conceived and organized" [CTZ 1981, 538].

The structure of the argument, then, went as follows: it was inconceivable that the SID would have thought of such a plan; had they thought of it, however, they would have carried it out better; so therefore they hadn't done it. No attempt was made to test a crucial assumption: how the Venturas might have obtained the tear gas and the jail key from sources other than the SID.

45. At the anarchists' meetings it was repeatedly suggested that the bombs be placed at the National Monument and in the banks. A possible target was the branch of the National Labor Bank where the father of one of the anarchists worked—of all the Roman banks, this was precisely the one where the bomb was planted [CTZ 1981, 674].

46. "On the one hand, the appellate judge has attempted wholly or partly to invalidate the probatory efficacy of each objectively ascertained element, opposing

it with mere suppositions or totally subjective and hypothetical constructs, irrelevant simply by the rules of legal hermeneutics; on the other hand, it has omitted to examine said elements in their aggregate, logical, and cronological concatenation, thus making it impossible to reach a comprehensive, overall assessment of the whole." Again: "Taking each on its own, these clues may not dispel all doubts and perplexities . . . , but when they are . . . plentiful and all point to the same conclusion, it is a duty to ascertain whether they converge. [Instead,] the impugned sentence . . . has isolated each single episode, breaking up events into fragments, and has concluded that on such a basis no solid causal chain can be reconstrued" [Cassation 31730/81, 64, 84].

47. "Bari's appellate court displayed a most peculiar tendency of deferring any decision to the decisions, and especially the non decisions, of others, as if to say: 'No one has made any sense out of this mess, why should we be able to?' " [Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 471].

48. This decision's technical level, according to the later plaint of Bari's general prosecutor, was miserable: "Its most untidy line of reasoning, obviously developed to provide an apparent basis for the acquittal, shows that the examination of each item, a superficial, apodictic, and distorting examination, was carried out in an atomistic fashion, against all interpretive rules established by law and precedent"; the judges' assessment of the statements made by Lorenzon, Comacchio, and Pan is "a veritable abuse of justice"; "to expose once again a distortion of the facts [carried out by Bari's court] is truly embarrassing" [quoted in Magrone and Pavese 1988, 2: 467, 492].

Chapter 6
The High Point of the Strategy of Tension: Attempted Coups and Massacres, 1970–1975

1. The quote comes from the National Front's charter, registered with a public notary in September 1968 [in Assizes 1978, 84].

2. See "Directions for a Program" (January 1969) in Pansa 1971, 135–38.

3. Borghese had had a long-standing relationship with the ON, possibly strengthened by shared admiration for Evola's doctrines. In 1968 he had joined the ON's campaign to boycott the coming elections, by publishing an appeal in the ON's monthly, *Noi Europa* 3, no. 2 (May 1968).

4. According to intelligence information that surfaced in later proceedings, the plans were even more ruthless. A fellow aristocrat and supporter was quoted as saying, "Valerio Borghese had already studied a 'provocation' plan based on a number of 'big' dynamite attacks, so that the right-wing armed action would take place in a climate of repulsion against the 'red' criminals; he [Borghese] had gone on to say that, unfortunately, in some cases innocent victims are necessary" [in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 300].

5. The proclamation began: "Italians, the augured political turning point, the long-awaited coup d'état has taken place. The political formula that has held power for twenty-five years, leading Italy to moral and economic disaster, no longer exists" [for the full text, see Assizes 1978, 24–25; see also Ferraresi 1995, 279 ff.].

6. In the original plan the AN militants were to seize the Foreign Affairs Ministry and its crucial communication network. They would then let the carabinieri take

charge and devote themselves to rounding up the subversives, especially union leaders, who were to be deported to the Aeolian by way of ships set to sail. The plan was modified when complicity from within the Ministry of the Interior made the seizure of that target easier [Salvini 1995, 314–16].

7. Orlandini's recollections were taped during a 1974 meeting in Switzerland with SID captain Antonio Labruna, who made some interesting comments about the whole episode. According to him, the Interior Ministry's redoubtable Ufficio Affari Riservati "must have known [about the raid on the armory] because the AN was paid by the ministry." Labruna further speculated that "the AN's infiltration in the National Front may have been a UAR move in order to exploit the coup, direct it, and possibly stop it at the right moment" [Assizes 1978, 195].

This information was known (and quoted) by the investigations carried out in the mid-seventies. But the greatest portion of Labruna's material was never delivered to the judiciary, and the material that was turned over had been previously pruned by the SID of its most embarrassing contents. Only in 1991–92 did Labruna deliver the rest to the magistrates [Salvini 1995].

8. The words were spoken in a public rally in Spezia, on 5 November 1972 [Flamini 1983a, 244; Lutiis 1991, 106; Viglietta 1986, 47].

9. The names of Ambassador Graham Martin and Attaché James Clavio have frequently been cited in this connection [Flamini 1982, 220]. Orlandini boasted that the conspiracy had the support of the White House and that President Nixon, through his intermediary (Edward Fendwich), had granted "almost all" of Borghese's requests [Assizes 1978, 156].

"Fendwich" indeed existed, but his name was Hugh Fenwick, a U.S. executive who in 1968 had been in charge of Italy's Republican Party, supporting Richard Nixon's campaign. He thus knew the future president (with whom he had been photographed in a Roman restaurant), but he was not close to him. He was in contact with Orlandini and informed Ambassador Martin of that. According to Fenwick's recent account of the matter, the ambassador at one point told him to sever any contact with Orlandini and to let it be known that the U.S. government disapproved of the *golpe* (coup) attempt. But Fenwick kept in touch with Orlandini on his own, which may have led the latter to believe that the embassy went along with the conspiracy [Gatti 1990, 106 ff.]. There is no way to check on the reliability of this version (Fenwick recounted it after Orlandini's death), but it is certain that Ambassador Martin never passed his information on to the Italian government.

10. Almost two hundred officers had joined, including twelve carabinieri generals and eight colonels, eight admirals, twenty-two army generals, four air force generals, and six higher police officers. Among the many P2 members holding important offices were a naval chief of staff, four heads of intelligence, beginning with General Miceli, and at least one general secretary of the service (Col. Pietro Musumeci; for more on this officer, see below, chap. 7) [Anselmi 1984, 77, 80].

11. In July 1978 Gelli issued a circular recruiting letter, in which he gave potential applicants the phone number of a SISMI center [the military intelligence service after the 1976 reform] "where a person would answer all queries from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM every day." "In other words—a dismayed prosecutor commented—the P2 secretariat was in the heart of our Defense Ministry" [*Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 503].

12. For example, the committee set up by the Ministry of Defense to look into the position of senior officers suspected of being P2 members was chaired by a retired admiral who turned out to be a Mason; the minister of defense himself, Gino Lagorio, was "certainly not an outsider to Florence's Masonry" [*Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 505; Anselmi 1984, 78].

13. In fact the exoneration of the SID leadership had begun with the Roman Istruttoria, carried out by a magistrate who was a close associate of Andreotti and later became a DC senator and then a minister, always remaining a stalwart of Andreotti's "current." He wrote: "When [Miceli] realized that Borghese and his followers had indeed attempted to topple the state, *risking a terrible bloodbath*, instead of correcting [his dismissive reading of the affair], he was solely concerned with upholding the mystifying thesis of a 'jolly get-together among old comrades,' hiding all available evidence and ordering his staff to keep silent on the matter." What consequences did the magistrate draw from this scathing indictment? "Miceli's meetings with Borghese and Orlandini *before* the 1970 episode, and his activity *in favor of the insurgents*, cannot be considered an expression of the former's adherence to the latters' initiatives [*sic*] nor of a joint criminal intent [but only an effect of Miceli's poor judgment" [in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 216–17; italics added]. Hence all the general got was a mild rap on the knuckles.

14. Contacts with international groups began as early as 1961 and they included the Venetians' participation in founding, in Frankfurt, the Young Europe movement in the founding of the constitution in Frankfurt; meetings in 1962 with French OAS militants and German and British Young Europe militants; the founding in 1964 of a "Venetian center for the Italian-Iberian friendship" (Spanish fascist); meetings in 1965 with Belgian Young Europe militants; and meetings in 1967 with Gaston Amaudruz of Nouvel Ordre Européen [Istruttoria, 246].

15. One of the briefs Vincenzo Vinciguerra delivered to the judges is rounded up with a passionate defense of Evola's thought in contrast to those who exploit and distort it [Vinciguerra 1990, 42 ff.]; Gaetano "always made himself available to discuss his political theories and provide texts that supported them, especially those of Julius Evola" [Istruttoria 1986, 98]. As to their charismatic spell over the comrades, consider the following testimonials: "Gaetano gave me a new purpose in life—wrote one militant to another—it is not politics, it is faith in the very truth, it is what you also were after, but it is not only a political/spiritual matter, it is much more." More soberly, in the words of a witness: "I would say that Gaetano, with his intellectual brilliance, enchants people" [Istruttoria 1986, 144].

16. Since 1974 Vinciguerra had been a fugitive, first in Spain (where he joined Avanguardia Nazionale and inevitably gravitated toward Delle Chiaie) and then in Argentina. He gave himself up in 1979 (assertedly because the life of a fugitive would have compelled him to compromise his dignity as a revolutionary militant). At the time of his confession (in 1984) Vinciguerra was in jail on a charge related to the Ronchi episode. After confessing, he did not claim the statutory benefits accruing to "dissociated" and "repentant" militants.

There is evidence that his decision to confess had been cleared with the clandestine leadership of the "national-revolutionary" expatriates [Istruttoria 1986]. According to later investigators, the confession might even have been devised as a strategy to gain credibility with the judges in order to exonerate Avanguardia

Nazionale from more serious charges, i.e., involvement with the Bologna Massacre [*Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 547].

17. That Peteano was the Right's doing was common knowledge among militants all over Italy [depositions in Assizes 1987, 225–30]. According to Vinciguerra, when the news reached Rauti, "Pino's hair went gray" [Istruttoria 1986, 305–6]. Vinciguerra himself had made some dangerous admissions that eventually reached the Secret Service. "Around November 1972 I learned that, shortly after Ronchi's hijack, Captain Labruna had gone to Padua and spoken to M. Fachini about that episode and also about Peteano. La Bruna said, literally, 'Now stop doing nonsense' because he thought I took orders from Fachini or someone close to him" [Assizes 1987, 230].

18. Cicuttini was also supported by the top MSI leadership. G. Almirante was accused by some disaffected comrades of having sent him the money he needed for surgery on his vocal cords, so as to escape responsibility for the phone call. Allegedly Almirante entrusted the MSI provincial secretary in Udine, Eno Pascoli, with sending the money, and indeed Pascoli's account for June 1974 showed a $34,650 transaction through Switzerland to Spain, for which no plausible explanation was offered [Assizes 1987, 290]. Almirante and Pascoli were charged and then acquitted by an amnesty.

19. This is another of those verdicts that would deserve an extended scrutiny, if space allowed. Its main feature was that of brushing aside all the irregularities of the investigations as "inexplicable," "unusual," "perhaps unpraiseworthy" episodes because of the investigators' well-intentioned hurry, devoid of any malicious intent, while all incriminating evidence was "explained" away in cavalier fashion. Thus the noncommissioned officer's crucial testimony about the shells was belittled on the (familiar) basis of the officer's "emotional" conditions (easily explicable, as he was incriminating all his senior officers). Further, the Istruttoria and the first verdict considered some crucial carabinieri reports to be surreptitious replacements of the originals because, among other cues, they carried inappropriate seals (those of Udine's command instead of Gorizia's). Why think of any wrongdoing? "It may be that those [in Gorizia] who wrote the reports put the seal on the first report and forgot to put it on the second. They mended the omission in Udine [the place of the report's submission] where the right seals were obviously not available" (*sic*) [Appello 1989, 122]. As for the signature of the carabinieri lieutenant in charge, the court—after admitting that the signature was faked—went on to state: "It may be legitimately deduced that it was affixed by someone who noticed it was missing, without necessarily even introducing the possibility of a malicious cover-up." Total lack of evidence (and of any means of checking this hypothesis) was replaced by another familiar argument: "If they had truly wanted to do mischief, they would hardly have left such visible traces" [Appello 1989]. To top it off, the court considered it absolutely unthinkable that a Secret Service that was charged with protecting the state should plot against it.

20. Remember that both groups were only charged with, and sentenced for, "reconstituting the Fascist Party," certainly a minor count when compared to the criminal activity they had been engaged in. The government decreed that the two groups be dissolved under the pressure of political opinion.

21. The reorganization program of the radical Right was discussed at many

meetings throughout Italy. One of them (28 February–2 March 1974), which was attended by most ON and AN leaders and by those of affiliated groups, was held in a hotel on the Adriatic coast whose owner collaborated with the SID, the police, and the carabinieri—something most participants were aware of. "It is certainly quite unusual—so a magistrate commented—that the leaders of an illegal movement chose, as the venue for a meeting, precisely the place where they knew they could be kept under surveillance . . . unless that was the only 'safe' place, one where they felt they could enjoy appropriate covers" [quoted in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 44–45].

22. It should be noted that indiscriminate terrorism was eschewed by the left wing, in keeping with the latter's strategic outlook, which rejects the idea of generating widespread social terror. [The matter is treated more analytically in my "Varieties of Terrorism: The Right-Wing and Left-Wing in Italy" (Princeton, N.J.: The Institute for Advanced Study, February 1992).]

23. The quote is from the deposition of a young Milanese "Evolian," A. Danieletti, who joined Esposti in his last expedition; the same program was espoused to, and related by, other militants such as V. Viccei [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 193, 289, 290].

24. According to a witness: "Signorelli . . . was very much in favor of a military intervention, to be primed by destabilizing factors . . . [He] wanted "instinctive" bomb attacks, specifically rather heavy ones" [in Assise Bologna 1988, 1567].

25. Consider the following episode: In 1974, after a left-wing attack against Tivoli's "Drieu La Rochelle" circle, two carabinieri officers showed up at the Drieu's favorite hangout and, after giving the Nazi salute [*sic*], said that Paolo Signorelli had sent them and asked for further details on the attack. "Something like this—clarified the witness—[was] quite normal for us then. . . . We always talked about coup operations; one could not be too fastidious when it turned out that our people were in touch with carabinieri officers" [in Assise Bologna 1988, 1563]. Paolo Signorelli was later aquitted of the charges brought against him.

A major investigation on *spontaneismo armato* devotes a full chapter to this issue, entitled "The Links with Some carabinieri Officers" [Macchia 1983, 289–99], containing depositions such as the following: "We always had contacts with carabinieri. Signorelli and Calore were charged with them. . . . I remember dining with the two of them [and other militants], plus Lieutenant X, who belonged to ON, and his commanding officer, Captain Y, who belonged to AN . . . They knew Clemente Graziani very well; they said it was better for him to stay abroad, whereas Delle Chiaie did not need to bother because, in their opinion, he enjoyed highly placed covers" [Macchia 1983, 290].

26. Calore has given a number of interviews, one of which, within the framework of the Cattaneo project on terrorism, has been made available to G. Buso; what follows is based on Buso's work [1993, 245 ff.].

27. According to leaders close to Signorelli, the attacks were to be aimed at "the mouthpieces of the regime," such as Milan's daily, *Il Corriere della Sera*; "agencies that harassed the citizens," such as the Internal Revenue offices; and ways and means of communication, such as bridges, power pylons, and trains [Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 292–94]. All these targets, as will be presently seen, were indeed struck.

28. Rognoni was sentenced to twenty-three years but escaped to Spain thanks to the usual neofascist network.

29. Bertoli had a most checkered past, including common criminal activities and work for SIFAR; he had been a member of the Peace and Liberty movement of Edgardo Sogno and Luigi Cavallo, to be discussed; he was in touch with protagonists of the Windrose conspiracy, also to be discussed; and, finally, he had moved into a Kibbutz in Israel, from where he set off for the attack. While in the Kibbutz he was visited by two French militants of Jeune Revolution, the youth organization of Ordre Nouveau, who were en route to the colonels' Greece.

The day after the attack, an anonymous caller phoned to say that the bomb had been given to him by a Yemenite member of Al Fatah.

30. This *very incomplete* list is based on Maletti 1984, 527–36; Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 76; and a much longer compilation in Marchi 1995, 16–22.

31. In fact the first degree court ruled that Ferrari's death was inflicted by his comrades, who had sabotaged the bomb in order to punish Ferrari for his unwillingness to pursue the attacks [Marchi 1995, 95 ff.]. Later proceedings disclaimed this charge.

32. "Buzzi's murder made it impossible to prove legally the undoubted responsibilities of the Avanguardia Nazionale's militants, who benefited from the investigators' inexplicable blindness." So stated one of the lawyers at the trial [Isodarco 1992, 2: 985].

33. The text of a veritable declaration of war was seized from the house of Carlo Fumagalli, the MAR's redoubtable leader, two days before his arrest. It read: "Milan, 7 May 1974. The SAM (Mussolini's Action Squads), Avanguardia Nazionale, and Potere Nero [Black Power] officially declare war on the state and on bolshevism. Hostilities will begin at 24:00 hours today, with attacks on the main railroads and airlines and commando attacks against left-wing parties responsible for the present degradation of the Italian state" [in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 60; for more on this plot, see also Tuscan Attacks, Assizes 1988, 154–59, 295].

34. The program for this initiative, which was seized from Luigi Cavallo's house, enjoined the following:

> The coup must have blitzkrieg features: it must be carried out on a Saturday, during the summer holidays, when factories and plants are shut down for two weeks and the masses are away, scattered on their vacations. The action is to be prepared following the Indonesian, Chilean, Greek, Peruvian, and Brasilian models, i.e., following a complex, accurate blueprint, for which the necessary time for preparation will not be brief. It must be a right-wing coup with an advanced left-wing program, so as to split the anti-Fascists and rule out the Fascists. [In Violante 1976, 31–32]

35. The depositions of the two commanders are in Violante 1976, 12–14, and *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 261.

36. A former head of counterintelligence has written the following in his quite controversial history of the service: "The head of the SID himself [Miceli] declared in December 1977 that the structure was legal and that both high-ranking military and civilian authorities were aware of its existence. The head of the 'D' Division of

the SID [Maletti] claimed, on the contrary, that it was a primitive organization aiming to carry out a coup d'état" [Viviani 1985, 351].

37. Tamburino had issued the warrant after receiving a report from Maletti which stated that the head of the SID was preparing to flee [Barbacetto 1993, 79].

38. David Moss has convincingly argued that the pluralistic nature of the Italian state presented a major difficulty for (Red) terrorism, by depriving it of a single interlocutor with whom it could carry out negotiations [Moss 1989].

39. G. Esposti, according to his associates, was planning to attack the president of the Republic during the June 2 parade, apparently a favorite occasion, in connection with an expected coup attempt. (A veritable arsenal of weapons and explosives was found in his camp, pitched in the hills surrounding Rome.) He was killed on May 29 by a carabiniere sharpshooter (who was possibly a member of SID); the other agents on the scene testified that Esposti had fired first. A few days earlier the "identikit" of one of the presumed perpetrators of the Brescia massacre appeared in the newspapers; it strongly resembled the clean-shaven face of G. Esposti. But in the preceding weeks Esposti had grown a beard [Cipriani and Cipriani 1991, 182 ff.]. The Right has always claimed that Esposti's killing and the publication of the "identikit" were part of a Secret Service plot to nail the responsibility for Brescia's massacre on the Right, which would have led to its being wiped out politically, had it not been for Esposti having grown a beard.

40. According to the same 1975 Pike Report, CIA support for anticommunist parties during that election amounted to some $10 million. (In the 1948–68 period, about $65 million was invested for the same purpose. A former CIA officer, V. Marchetti, estimated CIA outlays in Italy to be $20–30 million a year in the 1950s [Marchetti 1978, 168].)

41. In December 1974 the CIA counterintelligence chief, James J. Angleton, an old "Italian hand," together with his three senior aides, resigned over policy differences with the head of the agency, William Colby. "Angleton . . . was known to be critical of Colby's 'opening to the Left' in that country [Italy] and elsewhere" [Jeffreys and Jones 1989, 197].

42. "Miceli returned from a POW camp wearing a black shirt. He was always a fascist in his heart, and not by chance was he an MSI founder. He himself opened the MSI section in Trapani." These are the words of MSI Senator Giorgio Pisanò [in Gatti 1990, 110].

43. The Lockheed scandal erupted when a U.S. Senate inquiry found that the aircraft manufacturer had been bribing politicians all over the world in order to secure orders for its planes. Three Italian ministers were accused of accepting bribes: Mariano Rumor and Luigi Gui of the DC and Mario Tanassi of PSDI. A parliamentary committee voted to remove Tanassi's and Gui's parliamentary immunity and send them to the Constitutional Court for trial. There Gui was acquitted, whereas Tanassi was sentenced to a brief prison term (March 1977). As for Rumor, the parliamentary committee was split 10 to 10, and the deciding vote of its DC president, Mino Martinazzoli, saved Rumor from standing trial [Ginsborg 1990, 372–73].

44. In 1975 Tuti had shot two of the policemen who had come to arrest him and became a fugitive abroad for several months. In 1981, in Novara's jail, together with

another top militant, Pierluigi (Lello) Concutelli, he strangled Ermanno Buzzi, in connection with Brescia's massacre [see above, p. 133].

45. Tuti coauthored one of the most detailed statements of the terrorist strategy, the "Nuoro document," to be discussed in the next chapter. On other occasions he had expressed his belief in the need "to strike in a hard and indiscriminate manner," and described terrorism as "the poor man's bomber" [Appeal, *Italicus* 1987, 433; Assizes 1984, 26].

46. Some defendants had worked with the police and the secret services, from which they received valuable informations on the ongoing inquiries. The P2 lodge, which had heavily financed the groups in Tuscany, counted many representatives among key officials in the local law-and-order apparatus. These included one district attorney (who happened to be Licio Gelli's son-in-law) an assistant chief of police, the head of the carabinieri, and others [Scarpari 1983; 1986].

47. In 1987 Tuti led a sensational escape attempt from a model jail. The prisoners took several hostages, barricaded themselves in the infirmary, and held out for almost a week before surrendering. Tuti conducted the negotiations that led to a harmless conclusion of the escape—a circumstance that presumably was not without influence in the ensuing stage of his trial.

48. The merger was not without ambiguity and reciprocal suspicions. When Clemente Graziani, then a fugitive in London, learned of it, he told a fellow expatriate (Marco Affatigato, himself a rather shady figure) that "since the links between Stefano Delle Chiaie and the Interior Ministry were well known, much as were those between Paolo Signorelli and the Secret Services, the new structure was bound to become an instrument of the services." Affatigato added: "Graziani told me that in May 1975 he went from London to Paris in order to meet Delle Chiaie. But he found Captain La Bruna in the café where the meeting was supposed to take place, so he immediately returned to London, without meeting with Delle Chiaie" [in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 534–35].

49. "After Occorsio's killing we were all cheered up, there was much elation; finally we had been able to do something big" [Cattaneo Interview #9, in Buso 1993].

50. The quote is from a self-interview delivered by the fugitive leadership of the ON to the weekly *Panorama*, quoted in Macchia 1983, 512.

Chapter 7
The Last Phase: "Armed Spontaneity"

1. The quote is from an interview with Francesca Mambro, the "black Pasionaria," Giusva Fioravanti's companion and later his wife [in Zavoli 1992, 437].

2. These were the worst of the matters: "Uccidere un fascista non è reato / è la giustizia del proletariato" (Killing a fascist is no crime / it is only proletarian justice)"; and "Le sedi del Mis / si chiudono col fuoco / con i fascisti dentro / sennò è troppo poco" (The MSI locals / must be closed with fire / with the Fascists inside /otherwise it's not enough).

3. The term *Camp Hobbit* comes from the characters in J. J. Tolkien's saga *Lord of the Rings*. For the Right's fascination with Tolkien's heroes, see Portelli 1983; Revelli 1984.

4. These feelings were widespread in the milieu [see, e.g., Cattaneo Interview #17, in Buso 1993, 249–51]. Buso had access to the approximately twenty interviews carried out within the framework of the Cattaneo Institute program on terrorism. When not otherwise specified, the interviews mentioned in this chapter come from this source.

5. Here is one example among a great many.

> 30 September 1977, in Rome . . . began like many other days at that time, with brawls and attacks the police had come to consider routine. The Fascists beat up a "Red" in the Trionfale District, the riposte was a march around the 'black base' of the Balduina, the MSI branch. It was one of the most fascist neighborhoods in Rome, no wall was without graffiti against the Reds, decorated with swastikas, celtic crosses, the symbols of Avanguardia Nazionale and Ordine Nuovo. Offensive slogans were hurled . . . The MSI militants at first replied with other slogans, then decided to counterattack. There were many of them; they could play it safe. Some had weapons . . . The final attack took place toward evening; it was now the Reds' turn to be on the run; rocks, clubs, iron bars were flying. Some shots were fired, a young Lotta Continua militant, Walter Rossi, was struck at the base of the skull . . . When the police came to help, he was dead." [Bianconi 1992, 72]

This was the first killing carried out by the Fioravanti group; almost twenty more were to follow (not counting Bologna's massacre).

6. Even by the period's harsh criteria, this killing stands out for its coldblooded viciousness. Moreover, it does not appear to have been a "normal" episode of gang warfare. It was later discovered that the submachine gun that fired at Acca Larentia was the same used in three major Red Brigade murders.

7. "At Acca Larentia . . . , for the first time, and for three days, we Fascists fired at the cops. . . . It was normal for [the Reds] to do it, it was entirely new for us, because up to then the Fascists were considered the armed branch of power. From then on, robbing police or carabinieri of their weapons had a great meaning for us . . . It even became a status symbol" [in Bianconi 1992, 87].

8. The participants were quite aware of this:

> All those kids . . . shooting away like madmen. And they followed no logic, no criteria, as opposed to what . . . may have happened on the Left, [where] a political project actually existed, a path . . . they thought to follow. On the Right . . . it was a very instinctive choice, . . . much without any supporting project . . . There are no political documents . . . , how do the Red Brigades call them, strategic deliberations, where first you assess the situation and then you decide to act. [Cattaneo Interview #17, in Buso 1993, 280]

And another:

> This "new possibility," in fact meant taking up arms. An easy enough possibility. It is much easier to deploy armed actions; picking up weapons is not really difficult. The difficulty would be to construe a political project, to try out strategic alternatives. [Cattaneo Interview #16, in Buso 1993, 281]

9. The documents most frequently quoted by the investigators are "Formazione elementare," written in the AN milieus in the mid-seventies; "Prospettive

dell'azione rivoluzionaria," 1977; "Fogli d'ordine del Movimento Politico Ordine Nuovo" (March and May 1978), written by the leaders of Costruiamo l'Azione (Calore, Signorelli, Raho, Fachini, etc.; its "General Rules" replicate part 6, "Security," of "Formazione Elementare"); "Posizione teorica per un'azione legionaria" (1978), written by militants associated with Terza Posizione and *Quex*; an untitled document left in a telephone booth in Bologna on 31 August 1980, which had been previously published in June 1979 in *Noi Europa* (a journal printed in South Africa), over the signature of M. Tuti (who admitted writing it in Nuoro's jail together with a number of contributors to *Quex* plus Guido Giannettini); "Regola dell'ordine dei ranghi," presumably written by F. Freda, from whom it was seized; "Obiettivi e metodi di lotta del movimento rivoluzionario Terza Posizione" (1980); "Legalitá Borghese e azione rivoluzionaria." For more details, see Ferraresi 1984, 109 ff.

10. Freda, then under trial for the Piazza Fontana massacre, played an important role as the inspirer of many initiatives, beginning, in 1977, with the attempt to bring together the survivors of the old groups. His contacts with the founders of Terza Posizione were influential in the birth of that group [see p. 167]. Even the journal *Quex*, the coordinating bulletin among radical-right prisoners that became the main theoretical mouthpiece of *spontaneismo armato*, was founded following the directives of Freda, who maintained a leading role in the project.

11. Evola's statement was quoted word for word in two of the seized documents (*Azione Rivoluzionaria* 1977, 10; *Azione Legionaria* 1978, 5).

12. "There were comrades who went off on a limb by reading all them books, they locked themselves up in the ivory tower about which Evola spoke so much. . . . There were deviations in those who ate up too many books . . . so I adopted the motto of the man who said that as soon as he heard the word *culture* he reached for his revolver" [Cattaneo Interview #18, in Buso 1993, 270].

13. The notion was outlined in the paper written in Nuoro's jail by M. Tuti and the Gotha (Blue Ribbon) of *spontaneismo* (with the collaboration of the revolutionary war expert G. Giannettini). It was taken up by other texts, such as "Formazione Elementare," parts of which were in turn absorbed in later documents. Significantly, a copy of Tuti's text was left in a telephone booth in Bologna some weeks after the massacre.

14. "Indiscriminate terrorism . . . may be promoted in order to unleash the offensive against the regime's forces. We shall rely on the impression created on both the enemy and the forces that are at least in part favorable to us . . . the masses will be induced to fear and admire us, at the same time despising the state for its weakness" [in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 66].

15. See, for example, "Obiettivi di lotta," in *Costruiamo l'Azione*, no. 4 (1977): 2. In court Sergio Calore stated: "In our reasoning . . . a theoretical meeting point existed for those, like us, whose development was rooted mostly in an existential experience and those who had a Marxist-Leninist background but rejected a Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy" [in Buso 1993, iv, 4].

16. The prose of *Costruiamo l'Azione*, somewhat edulcorated in the translation, was the following: "We, . . . understood our mistakes, and we say to 'organized autonomy': wake up, guys, don't let yourselves be buggered another time, stop being the tamed monkeys of antifascism in order to beg for the friendship and approval of shitters. The enemies are common, and they are all together in a mound;

let us storm without quarter the filthy shit-mound" [*Costruiamo l'Azione*, no. 1 (1977): 11].

References to Freda were plentiful (see, e.g., "Sul fronte unito," in *Costruiamo l'Azione*, no. 5, 1979, 12). The journal *Quex* acknowledged as well that Freda's thought was at the origin of this strategy. In an article intended for that journal, Mario Tuti wrote: "The methods pointed out in [Freda's] essay, 'La disintegrazione del sistema,' have finally had a chance to be deployed in the present situation, far different from the methods of 1968–69 . . . when the Right still foolishly played with the coup strategy . . . Precisely in the struggle against the moribund and unnatural coalition of the pluto-Marxist regime a joint space opens up for truly differentiated men, quite apart from their political labels." The "methods of struggle" alluded to were the NAR's attack against "Radio Città Futura," to be discussed presently.

17. They included: Tivoli's "Drieu la Rochelle" [Calore]; the "Ostia group"; the "Vigna Clara-Parioli" group [Signorelli]; the "Coordinamento Organico di Popolo" [Mario Rossi]; the "Comunità per la rivoluzione di Popolo" [Pierluigi Scarano]; and of course the FUAN and Terza Posizione.

18. Giuliani provided formidable logistical support, in terms of hideouts, forged documents, and especially weapons (including a bazooka). He was responsible for countless criminal actions, including a robbery netting gold worth about three billion lire. The booty was recycled by the "northern group"; Fachini's pupil, G. Cavallini, repeteadly commuted between Rome and Venetia, carrying installments of the loot.

Giuliani's gang carried out "political" attacks as well. One of them was against the Honeywell Data Center in Rome. Responsibility for the deed was claimed by a leaflet using a logo (a fist grasping a submachine gun) that was also used by the journal *Costruiamo l'Azione*. The journal, in its turn, praised the action as exemplary.

Shortly before Bologna's massacre Giuliani had delivered a massive amount of explosives to a satellite group. Concerned that it may have been used in Bologna, he was "pacified" upon discovering that it had "only" been used against the Council Hall of Milan's municipality (29 July 1980). The explosion, a major one, only by luck produced no casualties.

19. A car loaded with ninety-four sticks of dynamite was timed to explode during a rally of Alpine troop veterans, scheduled in the square facing the Council. The malfunctioning of the timer avoided a carnage.

The episode is still surrounded by much controversy. The explosion was originally planned for the night, when the square would be empty; it is unclear as to who altered the timing and why. One of the perpetrators (M. Iannilli) claimed to have placed some cardboard pieces between the timer's pincers, in order to keep it from working. But no cardboard was found, and, in fact, the timer went off as soon as the police detonated it. This, plus the enormous amount of explosives used, ruled out, according to the court, the likelihood of a merely demonstrative gesture [Lutiis 1986, 197 ff.].

20. Aleandri (then in his late teens) claimed that F. de Felice charged him with acting as liaison for Licio Gelli. He recounted "sitting in the waiting room of Gelli's hotel suite, side by side with people like [General V.] Miceli . . . , with a minister of the Republic who was submitting to Gelli an economic bill, and others" [Assise

Bologna 1988, 1494]. Later, "we had a terrible row with de Felice . . . In the presence of Semerari, Fachini, and Signorelli, he again asked to control the money from holdups, and said that Calore and I were irresponsible kids, and that it was true, that they . . . were attempting to rescue a certain real estate man . . . in order to earn his milieu's gratitude. At this point Calore and I started having second thoughts about our relations with the de Felice and Gelli group and about the possibility that they might be exploiting us [instead of us exploiting Gelli as de Felice had always maintained]" [Assise Bologna 1988, 1670; Calore's reconstruction of the incident substantially coincided with that of Aleandri; see *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 455].

A further contrast was the change in the timing of the CSM bomb, mentioned above. All this, and Aleandri's refusal to go on with the attacks, resulted in his kidnapping, which, according to him, involved a senior: "[My kidnappers] told me they had asked Fachini's permission to act as they did. That was evidence that they took orders from Fachini" [Lutiis 1986, 126].

De Felice, Gelli, and Fachini rejected the charges and were acquitted. But the milieu's climate has been confirmed by no less a man than V. Vinciguerra (normally very scornful toward repentant militants: "Aleandri's declarations on the links between Gelli and P. Signorelli . . . provide a reliable view of a milieu that, on the one hand, goaded the most naive elements to 'storm' the regime . . . while, on the other, fornicating with and taking orders from people like Gelli" [Vinciguerra 1989, 92].

Of course the matter of a "revolutionary" group charging a teenager to liaise with Licio Gelli, *if true*, raises strong suspicions about the radical Right's planning capability. But this was a milieu eschewing normal evaluative criteria.

21. This of course, among the right wing, was not a unique feature. A group like Costruiamo l'Azione, being centered around a journal, must have given some relevance to intellectual work. Yet even there suspicion toward it was strong. "You became a 'politician'—one of the leaders recalled—they'd say, 'they are politicians,' meaning, 'they are unreliable, they must be avoided.' This attitude got more and more drastic, so that you could not even have a discussion with someone with whom you had not been involved in some action." And another: "If one said: I want to think about it [carrying out an attack], in that milieu it meant: OK, you are out, totally disqualified" [Cattaneo Interviews #9 and #15, in Buso 1993, 269–70].

22. In 1971 the Red Brigades declared: "The Red Brigades' action must always and unerringly refer to objectives that strictly pertain to the mass movement. The utmost attention must then be paid to avoid their becoming the 'armed hand' of the masses and replacing them in the struggle. The Red Brigades' task is to stimulate the movement with their actions, thereby channeling it within the strategic perspective of the people's war" [in Caselli and Della Porta 1991, 163]. Similar concepts were repeated in a 1973 "self-interview" published in *Potere Operaio* (#44), where the Red Brigades criticized "militarist or somehow incorrect tendencies." A militarist deviation implied believing that armed action, envisioned as "exemplary," may be capable of "setting the masses in motion." A "gruppista" deviation implied attributing to Samurai-like nuclei the function and tasks of armed combat [in Tranfaglia 1982, 542].

Of course, many changes had occured between Lenin and the Red Brigades; among those changes, was Latin American terrorism. There had been, first, the example of the Cuban "fuegos." Then the Uruguayuan Tupamaros, the models of

many European theories, had reversed Leninist orthodoxy by stating that "the very fact of arming, preparing, equipping for, and then performing actions that violate the principles of bourgeois legality, creates a revolutionary consciousness, plus organization and revolutionary conditions" [quoted in Bonanate 1979b, 119]. And the Red Brigades, as early as 1971, advanced what later became their official thesis, i.e., that "it is around armed struggle that class autonomy is established and not vice versa," because "only armed struggle expresses class power" [in Caselli and Della Porta 1991, 164].

23. "Documents were much poorer than our experience," Mario Moretti later declared. "We endlessly argued about commas and clauses; even broadsheets had to be little textbook expressions of the communist line" [Moretti 1994, 70]. Mario Moretti, sentenced to life imprisonment for kidnapping and murdering Aldo Moro, was one of the founders and a major historical leader of the Red Brigades.

24. The attempt to strike only at "guilty" targets, incidentally, contradicts an alleged defining feature of terrorism, namely, that victims are "innocent." And, indeed, many left-wing militants refused to be defined as "terrorist" [Catanzaro 1991, 185].

25. One of their documents states: "The national-revolutionary militant must act ruthlessly and without being in the least bit constrained by the so-called bourgeois morality . . . in order to reach the desired objectives, no losses inflicted to the enemy or to 'neutral' parties shall be counted, including the nonstrictly necessary ones" [Nuoro document, quoted in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 84, 89].

26. Admiration for the Red Brigades was widespread, as witness this quote from *Quex*: "Surely their ideas are no further removed from ours than those of some despicable individuals who dare call themselves of the Right. And we could count on an extraordinary organization and on exceptional militants, which certainly is not the case with the MSI, its fugitives, and its flankers" [no. 1 (October 1978): 13–14]. And this: "The Red Brigades . . . following an old OAS slogan, have clearly shown that they can strike whenever, wherever, and against whomever they choose" [19].

27. The operation was carried out as an insolent display of military efficiency: there were three covering rings of militants, one including a pseudo-guitar band; the attackers were disguised as carabinieri; invitations were issued to come and watch the show. The action was organized in Via Siena; participants included sections, or representatives, of the NAR, of other FUAN branches in Rome and Trieste, AN militants, MSI militants, and others. The weapons seized were divided up among Terza Posizione and the FUAN; the latter were further apportioned among branches in Rome, Rovigo, and Trieste. The Via Siena base where the holdup was planned and discussed at length was open to the attendance of even teenagers. According to the prosecutors, "so many people had come to know of the plan that it was decided to involve as many as possible, in order to ensure their silence. Many were given only secondary or superfluous tasks; others who were not included in the action came all the same, just to watch the show. In spite of this, for a long time the investigators groped in the dark as to who the culprits were" [Capaldo et al. 1986, 64 (manuscript)].

28. The number of women increased in right-wing groups of the later generations, possibly an effect of the post-1977 climate. They always represented a small

minority (about 5 percent of the total in Buso's sample, i.e., 41 out of 706), mostly concentrated (87 percent) in the later groups. By contrast, on the Left women represented about 25 percent of the militants, with some increase, though not dramatic, over time (they accounted for 18 percent until 1975) [Buso 1993, 208; data for left-wing groups in Della Porta 1990b, 137–46].

The different atmosphere on the two sides is confirmed by the protagonists' perceptions. "Being a woman in the Red Brigades! said one of them, Paola Besuschio . . . Inside the Red Brigades, as far as my experience and that of my comrades went, there was no role difference between genders. We all had the same tasks and the enthusiasm of living our life together" [in Zavoli, 106].

29. *Quex*, the journal of *spontaneismo*, borrowed from the same lexical quarry: "In order to give birth to a CUIB [*sic*], three or four comrades are sufficient" [Ferraresi 1984, 84, 93]. The NAR mocked this aping of Codreanu ("the famed, autonomous but interdependent *cuib*": see Appendix to this chapter).

30. During the summer Signorelli, de Felice, and Calore had been temporarily imprisoned on minor charges. When Fioravanti was also imprisoned, a centrifugal movement was immediately set in motion in the FUAN-NAR milieu, where a number of units broke loose from the center and for the most part went on their own. The final blow came when the last charismatic leader of the FUAN, D. Pedretti, was arrested during a holdup in a jewelry store. The Via Siena local was locked up and the militants scattered. A few days after Pedretti's arrest, on December 14, Di Mitri, Nistri, and others of Terza Posizione were captured while transferring weapons; on the seventeenth, Calore (who had been let out of jail sometime earlier) and others were caught, literally with smoking guns in their hands, after the mistaken assault on Concutelli's lawyer.

31. After the 1976 Secret Service reforms, the prime minister was to report to Parliament twice a year on "security and information policies." The November 1979 report (from Prime Minister Francesco Cossiga) was devoted mostly to the Left, barely mentioning that "some elements [of the Right] were operating in Northern Italy." The next report (23 May 1980) actually stated that "in the foregone semester right-wing subversive activities have decreased" [in Bianconi 1992, 143].

32. See Caselli and Della Porta 1991 for the documents at the root of this reconstruction.

33. Negri 1978, 43, [quoted in Thomas Sheehan, "Italy: Behind the Ski Mask," *New York Review of Books*, 16 August 1979, 26].

The aestheticizing flair is also evident in another, famous statement of an intellectual supporting the "Autonomia," Franco Piperno, according to whom "the growth or defeat of the subversive movement in Italy depends on its capacity to go through a narrow passage: that of welding together the *terrible beauty* of 12 March 1977 [when the "Autonomia" staged a violent demonstration in Rome] with the *geometrical power* deployed in via Fani [where Aldo Moro was abducted and his bodyguards massacred]" [Piperno 1978, 20–21; italics added].

34. "We meant to create spaces, communities for living according to our feelings . . . islands in the metropolitan desert . . . We lived the meeting places of the Right as those where we could express our desire to live, to exchange our affections." One such place was the "Legion," Third Position's nucleus, described as "precisely this, the intent to construe, for the future, a community of men . . . capa-

ble of really living according to certain values" [Cattaneo Interviews #16 and #17, in Buso 1993, 282, 283].

35. Moretti was at pains to clarify these: "Much as we tried to keep costs down, we always needed to do expropriations . . . We practically robbed a bank each month . . . The money, every last penny of it, went to the Executive Committee, which distributed it to the several columns and fronts. Any comrade could ask to see the books, but in my twelve years with the Red Brigades it never happened. Probably because being in the Brigades cost us so much disruption, so much blood, took so much from each one of us, that we cared very little about money" [Moretti 1994, 92].

36. Here the level of "theoretical discussion" was the following: "We realized that, ultimately, this society was based on the economy, so we had to fight it with its own weapons. That's why we started robbing the banks . . . We realized that our old systems were not up to the times; we really thought we were striking at the heart of capitalism" [Cattaneo Interview #18, in Buso 1993, 284].

37. "Did you spend much?" the interviewers asked Mario Moretti. "Not at all," was the reply. "Very few comrades drew a wage, only the full-time, underground militants . . . I lived with Lire 200,000 a month [roughly $130.00], we all drew the same wages . . . How should we reckon what was needed to support a militant? On a worker's wage, there was no other criterion. It may have been moralistic, but we considered that compulsory" [Moretti 1994, 106].

38. Fioravanti defined "mercenary Fascists" as those who used the booty of robberies to live the high life (but went on doing actions with them) [Capaldo et al. 1986, 221]. Even more scorching were the words of Vinciguerra [1989, 57].

39. Aldo Semerari, a P2 member, also worked with the secret services. Shortly after Bologna's massacre he was gruesomely murdered—his severed head left on the seat of his parked car. The crime has not yet been solved. It may have been an act of criminal revenge (Semerari had shifted his loyalties from one sector to another of *Camorra*). It has also been surmised that, because of the psychological breakdown he suffered after a few weeks detention in connection with Bologna's massacre, he may have become unreliable, which in turn may have led to the decision to shut his mouth forever. Indeed, the night before being murdered Semerari had attempted to contact the services which did not respond [Flamini 1994, 24, 38, 71].

40. Each episode would merit a detailed description. The Arnesano killing, whose purpose was to seize the agent's weapon, was an eloquent example of the zeitgeist, as interpreted by the NAR. Fioravanti's otherwise well-supplied armory lacked an M12 tommy gun, a weapon that for some reason he coveted. He could have easily bought it underground, but the warrior's ethic required that "irons" be seized in the field. So an action was organized by Giorgio Vale, a twenty-year-old TP militant who had come to regard Fioravanti as his leader. Fioravanti, however, wanted to be treated on an equal footing. For him, the only way to show comradeship was to "do" a risky action with someone, committing himself to the direction of the other. Accordingly, he asked Vale to tell him only where and when to meet him and what policeman should be robbed. The meeting was for 10:30 AM, which gave Fioravanti time to rob a bank before showing up (his work day began early); but it was he, in the end, who shot and killed the cop [Bianconi 1992, 133–35].

41. Amato documented the lack of cooperation in a sworn testimony before the Higher Judiciary Council, given ten days before his murder [in Bianconi 1992, 146 ff.; see also Castaldo 1983].

42. The weapon used in the killing, one rarely used in Europe, was a U.S.-made Ingram MAC .9 caliber *Maschinepistole* with muffler. It belonged to a stock the manufacturers sold to the Spanish police, which never answered the queries of the Italian prosecutors on how the weapon ended up in the hands of a fascist killer. Later, investigations persuaded the prosecutors that "Stefano Delle Chiaie, always ready to collaborate with any Secret Service, may have received such a weapon in order to use it against the ETA [Basque terrorists]," later passing it on to Concutelli [Vigna, 165]. Commenting on the episode in 1982, Delle Chiaie said: "I did not give the Ingram gun to Concutelli. I was not the instigator of that action. But I approve of it" [in Ferraresi 1984b, 108].

43. [Quoted in *Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986, 543]. In another context the same informant mentioned one of the militants referred to in the text (M. Giorgi), by saying: "The idea of 'doing a bang' in order to bring about the aggregation and reestablish control over all right-wing groups came from him and M. Ballan. They were later the ones who 'pushed hardest' to do the massacre" [*Requisitoria Mancuso* 1986].

44. In the words of another militant: "We had *the support of authoritative texts, from the history of the workers' movement*, where this aspect is made perfectly legitimate, congruent with the history of the workers' movement. So, once it has been established that historical conditions warrant this kind of organization, what follows are technical consequences, to be viewed with much detachment" [in Della Porta 1990b, 180].

45. A morbid contemplation of defeat, where decadence, *amor fati*, and noblesse oblige romantically intermingle, is a standard topos of the radical-right Weltanschauung. "Do we care for success?" Kern declaims, the hero and mentor of Ernst von Salomon: "No, we care for fulfillment. It is true, we never had successes; we shall never have any" [Salomon 1994, 261].

46. The document left in Bologna's telephone booth strikes the same chords, where it states, for example, that only through the use of weapons the militant "can reach that *transcendental purity* which is a veritable form of heroic and warrior asceticism."

47. A peak "warrior," Alessandro Alibrandi, fell in December 1981, in a conflict during which a policeman was also killed. The next day a carabiniere, chosen at random, was killed in reprisal. Alibrandi, the son of a senior member of the Roman judiciary, had returned from Lebanon a few months earlier to "resume combat" after Fioravanti's capture. He had participated, with Mambro, in the slaying of Captain Straullu and his driver. Incidentally, his permanence in Lebanon with a number of comrades, where they trained in the Falange's camps, was the pretext the secret services used to forge a "Lebanese trail" which severely derailed the inquiry on Bologna's massacre [Lutiis 1986, 228 ff.; see also below, n. 54].

48. Shortly after Bologna's massacre, Maj. Amos Spiazzi, the Intelligence man discussed in connection with the 1974 conspiracies [see above, chapter 6] declared in a newspaper interview that he had infiltrated the radical-right milieu on behalf of

the SID, meeting one "Ciccio," described as the man charged by Delle Chiaie with the task of coordinating the scattered neofascist groups in Rome; their project included a major terrorist attack [Assise Bologna 1984, 267 ff.]. "Ciccio" was Mangiameli. According to the first-degree court, this information might have led the investigators to track down the culprits of Bologna's massacre, but Mangiameli was murdered to erase the clue—the reason adduced by Fioravanti (appropriation of the movement's money) being clearly insufficient, in the court's reasoning, to justify the act. In contrast, the Appellate Court ruled that for the Fioravanti group charges of financial impropriety would be more than enough reason to execute a comrade.

But there may have been other reasons as well. According to Giusva's brother Cristiano, who turned state evidence, Mangiameli was executed also because he had attended a meeting in which Giusva had agreed to kill a Sicilian DC politician who had run afoul of the Mafia and of deviant political interests. This again was ruled implausible by the Appellate Court. Giusva always denied committing this latter crime, although the victim's wife "almost surely" identified him as the "icy-eyed killer" who murdered her husband in front of her eyes [Bianconi 1992, 231]. And Cristiano adds a chilling declaration: "When the composites of the [politician's] killers appeared in the papers, I remember my father saying: 'They have done that as well!' because they looked so much like my brother and Cavallini" [Lutiis 1986, 60].

49. A partial balance sheet of the killings carried out by the Fioravanti group was provided in the leaflet written after the murder of Straullu and di Roma:

> Once again Revolutionary Justice followed its course, and let that be a warning to all rats, torturers, scribblers. Whoever should doubt the determination and efficiency of the revolutionary fighters, let him check on the stages of this last year, and he will realize that the time of idle talk is over, the word now is to arms.
>
> On January 6 we executed the rat squealer Luca Perucci . . . We had previously executed the foolish profiteer Francesco Mangiameli, a worthy companion of Roberto Fiore and Gabriele Adinolfi who are the natural representatives of perennial cowardice . . . On September 30 we executed the dirty informer Marco Pizzari, responsible for the capture and assassination of the revolutionary militant Nazareno De Angelis. His death claimed revenge, and revenge it was, even if only in part . . . Finally, on Wednesday last, it was Straullu's turn. [In Bianconi 1992, 215]

50. In order to find similar examples on the Left one must go all the way to Japan—where, however, it may be thought that the Samurai ethics may heavily influence the face of political ideologies. The case is that of the Japanese Red Army, a left-wing terrorist group, whose leaders, in 1972, while the group was attempting to elude pursuit, killed twelve of the twenty-nine remaining members "in an orgy of self-purification" [Ford 1985, 310].

51. He involved Giusva even in the Bologna massacre: "Concerning the massacre at Bologna . . . I used to be absolutely certain that my brother had nothing to do with it. Now I don't know what to think any more. Certainly he has taken an ambiguous stand concerning the killings of [Piersanti] Mattarella and Mino Pecorelli [a

muckraking journalist of whose murder Giusva was charged and later acquitted]" [Lutiis 1986, 57].

52. There was another victim: in August 1983 Carmine Palladino, a former AN militant who had been charged with giving the information that led to Vale's death, was strangled in Novara's jail by Lello Concutelli [Assise Bologna 1984, 249].

53. But the intelligence services did not seem much interested in mending their ways. Their efforts to mislead investigations on the 1980 Bologna massacre defy credibility. Only a few examples may be quoted from the magistrates' very detailed inquiry report.

In September 1980 the so-called Lebanese connection was manufactured; it included Al Fatah leaders; Falange militants; Italian, Spanish, and West German radical-right extremists; as well as Swiss journalists linked to Italian intelligence. The latter, in a whirl of notes, memoranda, and reports that were in turn reticent, contradictory, misleading, and false (but all carrying some element of truth), made up a connection, linking Italian neo-Fascists active in Lebanon (Alibrandi's group) with Bologna's massacre, thus compelling the investigators to go on a wild goose chase for months, which removed them from the most dangerous lines of inquiry. In the words of the prosecuting judges: "The pollution technique has been the same for years and is by now well tested: (a) throw a volume of information at the prosecution that is hard to sift through and that compel it to engage in exhausting but useless research; (b) carefully measure and deal out information, verifying the materials 'hold,' adding 'meaningful' details, and so on; (c) organize a press campaign in favor of the elements thus provided, at the same time discrediting those collected by the prosecution; and (d) manufacture information in which falsehoods and truths are combined or that contains elements that are in themselves true but that are linked by false connections. The prosecutors will then follow the track thus served, finding in it occasional confirmations, but reaching no result whatsoever" [in Lutiis 1986, 242].

Next came the "KGB connection," a news leakage manufactured by the head of Intelligence (and P2 member) Gen. Giuseppe Santovito, with the help of a notorious con man, F. Pazienza [Lutiis 1986, 237]. Another false trail involved the crash of an airliner downed near the island of Ustica by suggesting that the crash was caused by the explosive carried on board by an AN exile, who in fact was quietly resting in Nice, forgotten [248–54]. There was then the "French connection," which was (secretly) announced to the press after the visit to Italy of a French police inspector who belonged to FANE (an extreme right-wing organization) [254–59]. The sensational "Ciolini affair" followed, rotating around a false witness bragging of international and diplomatic links.

But the most impudent and clumsy episode was the planting of weapons and explosives on the Taranto-Milano train like those used in Bologna, a deed for which two senior officers of Intelligence (needless to say, P2 members, one of whom was General Musumeci, discussed in the previous chapters) were (rather mildly) sentenced [Lutiis 1986, 13].

Given these premises, it is little wonder that the trial for the Bologna massacre could open only *six years* after the fact, that it encountered enormous hurdles, and that the November 1995 sentence of the Court of Cassation (the second, after one first-degree trial and two appellate verdicts) has left many questions unanswered.

Chapter 8
Conclusion: From "Differentiated Men" to Skinheads?

1. "We [German] intellectuals—Herman Hesse's *Steppenwolf* complained—instead of . . . rendering obedience to the spirit, the Logos, the Word, and gaining a hearing for it, are all dreaming of a speech without words that utters the inexpressive and gives form to the formless . . . The German intellectual has constantly rebelled against the word and against reason, and courted music" [Hesse 1962 (1928), 148–49]. A similar point was made by Thomas Mann, in one of the *Magic Mountain*'s great ideological confrontations. Here Herr Settembrini, the spokesman for enlightened, humanistic reason, sadly remarked to his disciple, Hans Castorp: "You are silent . . . , you and your country, you preserve . . . silence. You do not love the Word . . . My friend, that is dangerous. Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact—it is silence that isolates. The suspicion lies at hand that you will seek to break your solitude with deeds" [Mann 1952 (1924), 517–18].

What for Hesse was "speech without words" became Spengler's "wordless ideas," but the message was far grimmer: "That which we have in our blood by inheritance—namely, wordless ideas—is the only thing that gives permanence to our future" [Spengler 1934 (1933), xiii].

Even a man like Luigi Pirandello, when signing the manifesto of fascist intellectuals, felt obliged to declare: "I have always fought against words" [quoted in Hamilton 1971, 57; see Ferraresi 1987a, 117 ff.].

2. In the 1994 elections the MSI climbed from 5.4 percent of the votes to 13.5 percent; current (1995) surveys credit it with an even higher percentage, over 18–19 percent.

3. The group's dissent from the MSI was expressed in four eloquent points: (a) the need for the Right to become more homogeneous to democratic parties and institutions; (b) the need to give up the "vain attempt to build a 'system alternative'"; (c) the need for a "clear and explicit rejection of all totalitarianisms, for a final and unambiguous commitment to the principle of freedom as a top priority"; and (d) the "need to put an end to all extremist verbiage and to nostalgic speculations" [in Ignazi 1989, 179].

4. Although in the opposition, Rauti's viewpoint significantly influenced the party, which did not take up the racist stands of brethren organizations like the French Front National.

5. Then came some classical Fascist authors, like G. Gentile and U. Spirito, and the European militant-theoreticians of the interwar period (Codreanu and Primo de Rivera, plus Hitler's *Mein Kampf*). Then followed the "etherodox" writers of the thirties (Drieu La Rochelle, Brasillach, and Celine), and, in some cases, Spengler, Jünger, von Salomon, more rarely Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt. An MSI intellectual (G. del Ninno) in 1994 made only minor additions to this list (D'Annunzio, Marinetti, some marginal figure of the fascist period) [Ignazi 1989; 1994b, 87, 117].

6. On this point Fini even fell into a lapse by declaring, in the spring of 1994, that in some circumstances freedom is not a primary value—a statement that no true liberal democrat would ever utter.

7. The research, concerning 226 militants, was published in *Proposta*, no. 6 (1991), with the title "Dove va il *Fronte della Gioventù*." [data in Ignazi 1994b].

8. A third of them (32 percent) admitted armed struggle both as a general method to "change things" and "in this historical context"; 66 percent thought it right to assert one's own reasons "with the fists" [Ignazi 1994b, 88].

9. The above-mentioned celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the fascist seizure of power (November 1992), organized by the MSI, was also attended by a strong skinhead contingent. They were grouped under the pennants of the Movimento Politico and indulged in the usual fascist rituals (salutes, songs, and slogans).

Less conspicuously, in Rome a number of MSI-AN district councillors have been elected from the skinhead milieu.

10. The founder and leader of the French Nouvelle Droite, Alain de Benoist, is a disciple of Armin Mohler, in turn the former secretary of Ernst Jünger and the author of the official reconstruction of the konservative Revolution's development [Mohler 1972]. De Benoist is now active in the circles of reactionary ex-Communists in Russia.

11. In several countries radical-right volunteers/mercenaries are being recruited for the fight in Bosnia. The Movimento Politico Occidentale has reportedly been among those promoting such initiatives, in support of the Croatian irregulars, possibly as a memory of the Ustasha allegiance with Nazi-fascist forces during the war. More important, and ominous, is the coalition between the "fascist" Russian leader, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, and some neo-Nazi groups in Germany.

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