AUTONOMIA: A MOVEMENT OF REFUSAL - SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN ITALY IN THE 1970s

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the continuing significance in contemporary Italy of the Italian new social movement of 1973-83, *Autonomia*, by positing it as a movement of refusal: of capitalist work, of the party form, of the clandestine form of political violence, and of the politics of 'taking power'. It was in discontinuity with the value systems of the reformist Old Left and the revolutionary New Left, but in continuity with contemporary Italian antagonist and global anti-capitalist movements.

In defining the research subject, the concept of individual and collective autonomy emerges as a central characteristic of the Italian new social movements. Autonomy is understood not only as independence from the capitalist State and economy and their institutions of mediation, but also as the self-determination of everyday life, related to the needs, desires and subjectivity of what Italian 'workerism' defined as the Fordist 'mass worker' and the post-Fordist 'socialised worker'.

Using the 'class composition' theoretical perspective of Autonomist Marxism to critique classical Marxism, neo-Marxism and new social movement theory's minimalisation of the political content of new social movements and dismissive analysis of *Autonomia*, the scope of research was limited to the interpretation of 48 interviews of former participants and observers, of primary texts produced by *Autonomia* and of secondary accounts based on 'collective historical memory'. The thematic framework consists of chapters on workers' autonomy and the refusal of work; forms of political organisation and violence involving 'organised', 'diffused' and 'armed' *Autonomia*; and on the youth counter-cultures and antagonist communication of 'creative *Autonomia*' and the 1977 Movement.

The thesis concludes that *Autonomia* expressed the violent social conflicts produced by the rapid transformation of an industrial into a post-industrial society, but ultimately was only a partial break from the traditions and practices of the Old and New Lefts, leaving an ambiguous legacy for contemporary Italian autonomous social movements.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION - AUTONOMY AND *AUTONOMIA*

Autonomy is the ability
to give an adequate rule to Desire,
and not the art of
begrudging the world
(Bifo)[1]

1) Introduction: research subject and thesis aims

The Italian new social movement of the mid to late 1970s, *Autonomia* (Autonomy), also known as *Autonomia Operaia* (Workers' Autonomy), was a key collective actor in the history of late 20th century European protest and social conflict. Firstly, it had a significant role in the highly conflictual and relatively rapid transformation of Italy from a recently industrialised nation to a post-Fordist, post-industrial society from the mid 1970s onwards; a still incomplete process with the gradual emergence of a Second Republic, within the broader context of European integration, from the political instability, regional imbalances and corruption scandals of the First. Secondly, the experience of *Autonomia* has highlighted the changing nature of collective identity, political organisation and social contestation in advanced, urbanised capitalist societies. Thirdly, it represents an as yet unfinished chapter in recent Italian history due to the failure of the political class to achieve closure by reaching a political solution on the fate of the remaining 400 Leftist political prisoners and exiles. The inability or unwillingness to abrogate the 1970s' emergency legislation continues to undermine the democratic fabric of both the state and civil society. The lack of a satisfactory solution for all sides of the virtual civil war that existed in Italy in the late 1970s has fostered silences, omissions and distortions in Italian intellectual and academic life on a crucial period. The 'Strategy of Tension' bombings of 1969-84, alleged to have been carried out by the state itself, have never been adequately explained, let alone punished, so perpetuating the legitimacy crisis opened in 1968.

The overall aim of this thesis, therefore, is to go beyond the obfuscation, distortion and conspiracy theories[2] still surrounding *Autonomia* and the 1970s to ascertain its role as a social movement in the severe social conflicts of a period of permanent political and economic crisis and immense cultural and social change. Since the potential area of research is too extensive for a single thesis and much has already been published on the

Italian new social movements (NSMs) of the 1960s and 1970s (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, della Porta 1995, 1996, Ginsborg 1990, Lumley 1990, Melucci 1977, 1984b, 1989, 1996, Perlmutter 1988, Tarrow 1989, Virno and Hardt 1996, Wright 2002), I have limited my research aims to exploring *Autonomia* as a 'movement of refusal': the refusal of capitalist work, of the party organisational form, of the clandestinity of armed violence, and ultimately of 'politics' itself. A further aim has been to trace the evolution of what was then a new 'class recomposition': the 'socialised worker'[3], seen as the basic class composition of *Autonomia* in the broader territory of the 'social factory'[4], more than the 'workers' autonomy' of the 'mass worker'[5], fought out in the confines of the large industrial factory.

Since the 1960s collective action has moved decisively away from being the expression of social conflict between supposedly homogenous social blocks based on clearly delineated and ideologised social class identities (the proletariat and bourgeoisie of classical Marxism) with the hierarchical party as the privileged site of political organisation. Instead it has shifted towards the heterogeneous sector of the NSMs, comprised of the 'decentred' social subjects of women, students, non-unionised and casualised workers, unemployed youth, homosexuals, environmentalists and other so-called social and political 'marginals'. Their collective identities and ideologies appear to be constantly changing and their principal forms of contestation have been protest and direct action conducted by 'single-issue' social movements, organised as decentralised networks. *Autonomia*, while sharing many of these characteristics, was unique as a European NSM in that it combined several single-issue campaigns (for social needs rather than human rights, access to cultural and political spaces, anti-nuclear and anti-fascism among others) under the umbrella of a heterogeneous, localist movement. It was united only in its identification with the theory and practice of autonomy from the State, institutional political parties and trade unions or any form of political, social and cultural mediation between the interests of capital and those of the proletarian social actors of which it was composed.

Autonomia reached its peak as an incisive socio-political force during the tumultuous events of 1977, but rapidly disintegrated following the waves of arrests of militants at all levels of activity between 1979 and 1983, accused of constituting 'armed gangs' (*banda armata*) to subvert the state. Most of the imprisoned had been released on appeal by 1986. After this period of criminalisation during which some 15,000[6] militants were incarcerated in 'special prisons'[7] for years before standing trial, the remnants of *Autonomia* revived in

the mid 1980s as the 'antagonist movement'. However, a rump based on Roman and Paduan *Autonomia* continued during the early 1980s on an altered organisational and ideological basis, but on a diminished scale, both quantitatively, in terms of activists and resources, and qualitatively, in terms of theoretical contributions and political power, as the National Anti-Nuclear/Anti-Imperialist Co-ordination[8] around the issues of the nuclear arms race, nuclear power, ecology and solidarity with radical national liberation movements, particularly the PFLP[9] and ETA. Some 200 of its most active participants from the 1970s still live in social, political and juridical limbo as refugees in Paris with little prospect for an amnesty (Ruggiero 1993, Scalzone and Persichetti 1999). Nevertheless, given the continuing activity of mainly counter-cultural youth NSMs in Italy, particularly the *centri sociali* (squatted social centres)[10], and despite the disappearance of the New Left (NL) organisations of the Seventies[11], how can the continuing resonance of *Autonomia* in contemporary Italian society be explained? What are the roots of this subversive heritage from the Seventies? What did the broad social movement of *Autonomia* signify, and within that the social movement organisation (SMO) of Organised Workers' Autonomy (OWA)[12]? What was its project within Italian society? How did it relate to the principal social movements of the decade - women, high school and university students, unemployed and underemployed youth, self-organised factory assemblies and neighbourhood committees? Was this a project for autonomy which was diffused throughout the social movements and organisations of the libertarian Left, emanating from the expression of a new set of social and cultural 'needs' by Italy's first post-industrial, post-modern generation? In the light of the gradual end of the First Republic, what have been the consequences for Italian civil and political society of the profound clash of interests between what Sergio Bologna (1977) described as 'a Tribe of Moles' and the political institutions forged in the dualistic logic of the Cold War?

2) Problematic definitions: *Autonomia* and autonomy

One of the central characteristics of the NSMs, separating them from the spheres of institutional or 'revolutionary' party politics, or indeed from other forms of collective action such as interest groups and protest campaigns, is that of 'autonomy'. This Enlightenment notion originally applied to the sovereignty of the individual within the collectivity in modern European thought, but has come to refer to a series of both collective and individual practices, needs and desires characteristic of the social actors of the NSMs. In the collective sense, it signifies the need of different groups of actors to protect and

advance their own agendas without being subsumed by the demands of a wider collectivity, whether it be civil society, the working class, or indeed by other social movements. One of the foremost practitioners of autonomy has been the women's movement, the meeting of whose needs had historically been postponed by 'the revolutionary party' until after the conquest of state power and the establishment of socialism, the issue of gender firmly subordinated to that of class.

In the political sense and particularly in the Italian context, autonomy meant the need of the emergent class composition of the deskilled, massified, Southern internal migrant factory workers of the 1960s to form self-managed, horizontal organisations that would be independent from the social democratic parties and trade unions tied to the Fordist-Keynesian post-1945 social pact. This had principally benefited the more skilled, 'historic' industrial working class of the North. Starting from this point of rupture, the desire of this 'mass worker' for autonomy, also from the perceived drudgery and danger of factory work, quickly spread outside the factory walls to their immediate communities, and then through the intervention of student activists to the broader social terrain, becoming the core practice of the NSMs of the 1970s. The neo-Leninist and Maoist groups of the New Left were unable to confront the growing political and economic crises following the Oil Crisis of 1973. Undermined more by the transformation of the factory assemblies into Factory Councils where the unions were able to gradually re-establish their hegemony, than by the 'Strategy of Tension', allegedly the State's terrorist response to the 'Hot Autumn', the groups dissolved themselves between 1973 and 1976. Some of their individual members returned to the fold of the Historic Left, others took the path of radical parliamentary reformism, founding *Democrazia Proletaria* (DP). Many gravitated towards the autonomous[13] factory assemblies and localised collectives of Workers' Autonomy, deprived of a national co-ordinating structure and a 'party line' but conversely more involved in the immediate struggles of the 'social territory'. What Bocca (1980) described as the "archipelago of *Autonomia*" had emerged by 1975. As factory-based conflict diminished under the impact of technological restructuring but neighbourhood, student and 'marginalised youth' contestations intensified in the mid-1970s, Workers' Autonomy evolved into the broader phenomenon of *Autonomia*. It signified a desire for and an attempted practice of independence from both the capitalist political economy and from the nation state as the ultimate sites of political power, through forms of 'mass illegality', self-management and 'counter-power'.

Although the emphasis was above all on the collective, autonomy was also seen as an individual demand and practice: the diversity of the needs of the individual could not be subordinated to the voluntarism of party discipline nor to the romantic leftist myth of heroic self-sacrifice. This autonomy of the individual within the immediate collectivity of a social movement and the broader collectivity of civil society appeared to find its apposite political expression in the direct, participative democracy of the assembly and the refusal of delegation or any form of representative, institutionalised democracy.

The first problem to be encountered in researching such a diverse and socially diffuse entity is one of descriptive discourse: which *Autonomia* are we dealing with? The Workers' Autonomy of the self-organised factory assemblies of Porto Marghera, Milan, Turin and Rome whose unifying slogan of 'workers' autonomy' against work and capitalist command expressed through the factory system and its wage differentials became the symbol of an expanding series of social conflicts? The Organised Workers' Autonomy (OWA) of Negri[14], Scalzone and Piperno[15], the *Padovani* and the *Volsci*[16], those who sought to 'ride the tiger' of the '77 Movement, who wished to build a party-like structure of revolutionary contestation but were driven into prison or exile after 1979? 'Armed *Autonomia*'s militants were mainly from the 'area of *Autonomia*', disillusioned and frustrated by the political containment and defeat of the '77 Movement, who established the many tiny and often short-lived groups of the terrorist 'second wave', characterising the *Anni di Piombo* (Years of Lead) as much as the Red Brigades? The 'creative *Autonomia*' of the 'metropolitan indians' (MI)[17] with their painted faces and ironic slogans against the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its 'Historic Compromise'[18] with the Christian Democrats (DC); of Radio Alice and the network of free radio stations (*radio libere*), street theatre collectives and small publishers? Or the 'diffused area' of *Autonomia*, which encompassed all these social realities, including the *cani sciolti*[19], women's groups and neighbourhood committees, but was also in deep contradiction with the more 'organised' part of the movement?

The use of the political slogan 'workers' autonomy', from which *Autonomia* took its name, originated in the dissident Marxist journals of sociological research and political intervention *Quaderni Rossi* (QR) and *Classe Operaia* (CO)[20] of the early 1960s. It was widespread by the 'Hot Autumn'[21] of 1969, by which time it performed the function of a unifying slogan for disparate NL groups and ideologies, from *Lotta Continua* (LC) to the

founders of the Red Brigades (BR). Plotting the historiography of the changes in the concept of workers' autonomy in recent Italian politics could be the subject of a research project in itself, for by the time the autonomous local collectives and factory assemblies came to identify themselves as *Autonomia Operaia* in 1973, and later as the more general movement of *Autonomia* in the mid-1970s, both the meaning and the use had changed.

Autonomia Operaia, as the name implies, was a direct descendent of the operaist[22] tradition, stemming from QR. Operaism (Italian workerism) emerged as a political and intellectual movement that held to the PCI's tenet of 'workers centrality' but was otherwise critical of orthodox Marxism's neglect of working class subjectivity and the ineffectual reformism of the Historical Left. From this initiative, via CO (a more interventionist split from QR), *Potere Operaio Veneto-Emiliano* (a political group and newspaper dedicated to factory struggles in northeast Italy) and through various local factory initiatives, particularly in the Porto Marghera petro-chemical plant, *Potere Operaio* (PO) was born as a national political organisation in 1969. PO was instrumental in forming an alliance between the libertarian 1968 students' movement and the widespread autonomous workers movement of what became the Hot Autumn. It dissolved itself in 1973, pressurised by the resurgence of feminism that caused a crisis of militancy and the withdrawal of many women activists from the masculinist NL groups. The redundancies and restructuring triggered by the 1973 Oil Crisis accelerated the PCI and unions recuperation of control of the large factories of the Northern industrial triangle, undermining the presence of PO and the other NL 'groups' within the factories. Contemporaneously, the peak of autonomous factory militancy, the occupation of the FIAT Mirafiori plant in March 1973, demonstrated their redundancy, as few of the *Fazzoletti Rossi*[23] were NL activists.

By 1977, the peak of both social conflict in the decade and of the political power and cultural resonance of *Autonomia*, 'workers' autonomy' had acquired a quite different meaning. What had originally been a factory and university-based movement of social and political contestation had spread to most sectors of society, including the professional middle classes. The intense period of conflict in the large factories of the North and to a lesser extent in the southern 'cathedrals in the desert'[24], mobilised by the non-unionised southern migrant workers in alliance with union dissidents, students and the NL, had temporarily thrown the instruments of social control into disarray before being recuperated by the unions, who halted the spread of localised autonomous decision-making and the

direct democracy of the factory assembly. But while the struggles within the factory were being rolled back by tactical retreats and strategic reforms (the *scala mobile*[25], the Factory Councils and the 1970 Workers Charter), the fulcrum of social conflict had shifted towards the 'social factory'. An example was the *autoriduzione* (self-reduction) campaign in Turin in 1974 where working class communities organised to pay self-reduced fares on public transport, involving the printing and issuing of their own tickets, in which radical sections of the unions were also engaged (Cherki and Wieviorka 1980). Similar struggles took place over the community control of reproductive needs (housing, rent, bills, shopping) and later of leisure needs (eating out and cinema and rock concert tickets). These conflicts were allied to the demands of the emerging women's movement for control of their own bodies and lives through more liberal divorce and abortion laws and the democratisation and feminisation of medical and social services. Thus, a new conception of autonomy was required to mirror the transition from the industrial factory to the social factory, from traditional working class struggles to those of the NSMs.

Conversely and confusingly, *Autonomia* also refers to 'diffused' and 'creative' *Autonomia*, the 'autonomy of the social' represented by counter-cultural, unemployed and semi-employed urban youth, students, radical feminists, homosexuals and the *cani sciolti*. Youth and graduate unemployment reached crisis levels in the mid 1970s. Many young people consciously chose to avoid even looking for work (let alone the 'refusal' of the late 1960s). Increasingly, they fled from the suffocating authoritarianism of the traditional Italian nuclear family to live collectively, often in squatted flats and occasionally in communes[26]. They survived partially though 'black market jobs'[27] and partially through mass expropriations of food from supermarkets and restaurants, but also through the 'self-reduction' of bus fares, rock concert and cinema tickets. This was the sea in which OWA swam, but it was not necessarily an ideal environment. The irreverent MI of the '77 Movement not only mercilessly mocked the institutional Left, but also satirised the excessive seriousness and self-importance of the 'revolutionary Left', of their very concept and practice of politics, leading some to theorise about the emergence of a 'post-political politics' (Lotringer and Marazzi 1980, Grispigni 1997). It is important, however, to demythicise the imaginary splits that sections of the Italian media and academy have presented, between 'peaceful *creativi*' and 'violent *autonomi*'. Despite their diverging political praxis and objectives, there appears to have been considerable interaction between these two forms of *Autonomia*, particularly during the '77 Movement, suggesting that the

division between cultural and political social movements imposed by NSM theorists like Melucci and Castells may be more formal than real.

3) Periodisation: the trajectory of *Autonomia*

In December 1973, PO dissolved itself at its third national convention at Rosalina. Dalla Costa together with most of the women activists had already decided to leave the male-oriented politics of operaism and 'workers' centrality'. Others, like Negri, were moving towards a less rigid, 'post-operaist' position. At a macro-analytical level, this decision coincided with the Oil Crisis and, after 25 years of uninterrupted growth in the 'developed world', a deepening global economic crisis, combined with the first waves of mass redundancies, industrial automation and restructuring in Italy. At the meso level, the crisis of the NL groups was confirmed by the autonomously organised occupation of the FIAT Mirafiori plant in March 1973 by the *Fazzoletti Rossi*, leading Negri (1979a) to announce the birth of the 'Party of Mirafiori', a new level of autonomy within the class composition of the mass worker, a 'vanguard' which not only made the unions and parties of the official working class movement redundant, but also the NL groups, PO included. A new type of worker and a new set of social actors required new forms of political organisation and action.

The end of PO and the crisis of operaism were further evidence of the decomposition of the 'mass worker' as the central actor in subversive social transformation. This subject's revolutionary potential had seemingly been spent in the intense cycle of industrial and social conflict from 1967 to 1973, reaching its zenith in the mould-breaking but short-lived autonomous occupation of FIAT Mirafiori[28]. A new 'class recomposition' began to emerge as the first effects of the post-Fordist automation and decentralisation of production were felt. Contemporaneously, PO fragmented into dozens of localised assemblies and collectives throughout urban and industrial Italy.

Workers' Autonomy emerged in 1973 as a loosely structured network of factory assemblies and local collectives, linked by publications such as *Rosso* in Milan and *Senza Tregua* in Turin (later by *Autonomia* in Padua and *I Volsci* in Rome), and as *Autonomia* from 1975 by 'free' radio stations like Bologna's Radio Alice, Rome's Radio Onda Rossa and Padua's Radio Sherwood. Relations with the feminist movement continued to be tense and autonomous women's collectives were critical of Workers' Autonomy's continuance of

some discredited forms of political practice from the NL groups, particularly a macho predisposition for the use of (sometimes armed) violence, although feminism itself was by no means synonymous with pacifism[29]. Moreover, operaist and autonomist women themselves were accused of being old-style Marxist revolutionaries by 'consciousness raising' feminism and were isolated from the mainstream women's movement.

An innovatory organisational paradigm was constituted, articulating itself first into the network of *Autonomia Operaia*, and later into the broader social phenomenon of *Autonomia*, the site of the new subjectivity of a recomposed social actor, the 'socialised worker' (Negri 1976 and 1979d, Partridge 1981, Pozzi and Tommasini 1979). Its moment of self-realisation was the '77 Movement, when a new type of social autonomy was practiced rather than demanded by students, women, unemployed and counter-cultural youth and some self-organised workers. This was an autonomy from the work ethic and politics of austerity and sacrifice inherent in the PCI's orthodox socialist traditions as much as in the DC's centre-right populism: autonomy as the self-determination of life, time and space as social pleasure rather than social duty. Such a political project and collective attitude was anathema to the PCI's strategy of Historic Compromise with the DC and support for economic austerity measures as the response to systemic economic and political crises. Thus, 'Red Bologna' as much as DC-controlled Rome, became the site of violent confrontation between the NSMs and the State, with the PCI prominent in supporting draconian repressive measures, like the *Legge Reale*[30].

The kidnapping and assassination of DC president and co-architect of the Historic Compromise, Aldo Moro, as the pinnacle of the BR's 'attack on the heart of the State', gave the 'party system' the opportunity in 1978 to launch an all-out offensive against the radical Left movements in general and *Autonomia* in particular, and ultimately to accelerate and complete the restructuration of the entire industrial working class with minimal opposition from the unions. Following the '77 Movement's failure to gain the same level of popular support, particularly among the industrial working class, as the movements of 1968/69, repression provoked a general *riflusso* (withdrawal into private life) from political activism, while pushing the more 'militarist' sections of *Autonomia* to 'raise the level of conflict' through clandestine armed violence and industrial sabotage as the space for open political activism drastically shrank. This in turn allowed the State arbitrarily to equate *Autonomia* with the BR, resulting in the arrest of *Autonomia*'s intellectuals, despite their

previous public criticisms of the BR as an elitist, anachronistic and counterproductive attempt to topple the State and seize power[31].

The arrest of Negri, Scalzone, Piperno and other OWA intellectuals on 7th April 1979, the first of several waves of arrests launched by the Paduan PCI-linked judge Calogero, marked the beginning of the end for *Autonomia* as a social movement. It was already weakened and divided by the vociferous internal debate over the use of armed force, as well as isolated from the industrial working class by a combination of its increasing use of armed violence and the PCI and unions' successful pacification of significant sectors of social protest. The resulting persecution of autonomist intellectuals and activists, led by judges and journalists close to the PCI, resulted in various waves of mass arrests and imprisonment on terrorism charges, and the exile of *Autonomia*'s core intellectuals and activists. As an attempted revolutionary neo-Leninist vanguard structure within the broader social revolt, OWA had been smashed by 1983, although a redimensioned *Autonomia* survived the bleak political winter of the early to mid 1980s as a 'submerged network' to participate in the creation of the *centri sociali* network from 1988/89 onwards.

The final blows to the broader movement for working class autonomy, launched in 1968/69, came with the expulsion in December 1979 of 61 of the most militant autonomist and NL activists from the Turin Mirafiori plant by Fiat's revived management, followed in 1980 by an official strike terminated ignominiously by a return-to-work march by 40,000 non-strikers and their supporters, with only token opposition by the PCI and union leaderships (Revelli 1982). The 'mass workers', the protagonists of the Hot Autumn, had turned their backs on the struggles of the 'social factory' and the 'socialised worker', preferring to protect under the sheltering wing of the institutional Left the gains made during the previous decade from the harsh winds of social pacification, industrial restructuring and economic austerity. The 1980s of the 'CAF'[32], the *Pentapartito*[33], political stability, steady economic growth and hedonistic consumerism had begun. They were to end in the squalid corruption crises of *Tangentopoli* and *Mani Pulite*, the symbolic end of the First Republic and the beginning of the present shift towards a more authoritarian 'Second Republic' since the early 1990s.

4) Hypotheses

Having outlined the definition and periodisation of the research subject, it is necessary to state the hypotheses researched in this thesis. Firstly, *Autonomia* was not a political organisation or party, but a broad, heterogeneous 'new social movement', made up of differing and sometimes mutually antagonistic internal tendencies, namely 'Organised Workers' Autonomy', the 'area' of 'diffused' or 'social *Autonomia*', 'armed *Autonomia*' and the 'creative *Autonomia*' of the '77 Movement, with marked local and regional differences.

Secondly, while the individual and collective practice of autonomy is a key characteristic of all new social movements, *Autonomia* was completely distinct from classical single-issue social movements, such as the European anti-nuclear movements, in that it encompassed a spectrum of diverse social actors and their contiguous social conflicts. Furthermore, it did not seek only to radically reform aspects of capitalist society (as do single-issue social movements) but to foment a 'mass insurrectionary counter-power' from the grass-roots of civil society which would directly challenge State power and cause a terminal crisis in capitalist socio-economic relations, so precipitating an immediate passage to communism without having to 'take power' and create a transitionary socialist society.

Thirdly, the historical core of *Autonomia*, the autonomous workers' movement (AWM), embodied in practice the operaist theories on workers' self-organised autonomy and the 'refusal' of capitalist work, and can be considered as a new social movement for its historic and antagonistic break with the parties and unions of the 'institutionalised' Left and their value system based on the 'dignity of labour'. Workers' autonomy through self-organisation led to a rejection of the historical organisational forms of both the Old and New Lefts, namely the hierarchical political party and its subordinate trade unions, and the adoption of an informal network of localised collectives based on consensual decision-making through direct democracy as the overall movement structure. 'Armed *Autonomia*' created 'parallel structures' of organised, semi-clandestine violence combined with legal political activism, in opposition to the clandestine model of the terrorist 'armed parties', and as a militant response to State repression and neo-fascist violence. The counter-cultural youth movements and antagonist communicative action of 'creative *Autonomia*' within the '77 Movement represented a form of 'post-political politics' that broke with the neo-Leninist political practice and culture of OWA and the New Left groups.

Finally, *Autonomia* in particular and the Italian NSMs of the 1970s in general raised questions concerning central political and social issues (the 'refusal of work', forms of democratic participation, models of political organisation, the place of urban youth subcultures within civil society, the role of new forms of antagonist communication and political language, the uses and nature of political violence), most of which remain unanswered, but no less relevant to the development of contemporary Italian civil society. In effect, *Autonomia* was the principal movement of a generation of refusal: of capitalist work, of the delegatory principle of the party form, of the clandestinity of the 'armed parties', and ultimately of 'politics' itself.

5) Summary of chapters

Five main conceptual frameworks were identified as being key to an understanding of the political, social, cultural, theoretical and historical significance of *Autonomia*: the 'refusal of work', forms of political organisation and violence, youth counter-cultures and forms of antagonist communication. They were discussed in the three main chapters of the thesis.

5.1) Workers' autonomy and the refusal of work

The 'refusal of work' was theorised by operaism as a widespread practice among the new 'class composition' of the 1960s, the 'mass worker', particularly those of the autonomous workers movement in the large factories of the northern 'industrial triangle'. This shifted during the 1970s into a generalised refusal by youth to enter the factory or workplace as part of the search for an alternative society based on pleasure and the expropriation of 'secondary' cultural needs more than 'primary' physical ones[34]. However, the refusal of work was countered by post-Fordist technological automation and industrial restructuration, leading to the re-emergence of mass unemployment and divisions within the working class between the 'guaranteed' employed and the 'non-guaranteed' unemployed and underemployed. Some operaist intellectuals, above all Negri (1976, 1979d), claimed that in fact a new type of worker, the 'socialised worker' (*operaio sociale*), had substituted the 'mass worker' as more central to the needs of post-Fordist capitalism and was therefore potentially more antagonistic to its project of industrial restructuration and economic austerity. With the defeat and demobilisation of the NSMs by the end of the 1970s, a critique emerged within *Autonomia* of the refusal of work and of its potential to be recuperated within the post-Fordist organisation of labour, where workers' knowledge of

labour-saving 'tricks' was expropriated as part of the Toyotist 'just-in -time/total quality' production model.

5.2) Forms of political organisation and violence

The concept of 'autonomy' was key to the various forms of political organisation within *Autonomia*. These included the more tightly organised workplace assemblies and political collectives associated with OWA which attempted to form a national network with aspirations of becoming a neo-Leninist 'revolutionary vanguard party', able to directly challenge the political and cultural hegemony of the institutional Left over the Italian working class. However, OWA's attempt to impose its residual organisational model on the heterogeneous spectrum of the '77 Movement was fiercely resisted by the more fluid, localised structures of 'the diffused autonomy of the social', namely those movements, such as women and counter-cultural urban youth, who effectively refused the concept of political organisation itself and were often characterised by an emphasis on cultural interventions.

A further political form emerged in the late 1970s as the myriad of small semi-clandestine groups of 'armed *Autonomia*' attempted to differentiate themselves from the clandestine paramilitary cellular structures of the terrorist groups by combining in 'parallel structures' open political activity with clandestine 'armed actions', more against 'things' (i.e. industrial sabotage) than people. Most of the 'armed *Autonomia*' groups, however, quickly collapsed under the weight of their internal contradictions, seeking to be part of the 'autonomy of the social' while engaging in an 'armed struggle' whose politico-military logic of frontal opposition against the State led to a residual process of clandestinity and separation from the movements. In the midst of the concomitant crisis of *Autonomia*, those that were not disbanded by the State dissolved themselves into the larger terrorist groups by the early 1980s.

5.3) Youth counter-cultures and antagonist communication

Perhaps *Autonomia*'s most innovative and lasting contribution to contemporary Italian collective action came in this field. 'Creative *Autonomia*' consisted of the 'free radio stations', the MI and a galaxy of artistic collectives and small independent publishers, placing linguistic experimentation and the immediate satisfaction of cultural needs at the centre of their actions. They not only sought autonomy from the stifling conformity of traditional 'bourgeois' culture, but also rejected the NL and OWA's political culture, while

seeking to create a 'post-political' politics. This apparently most 'marginalised' section of *Autonomia*, culturally comparable to the punk movement, was the first to demobilise with the recrudescence of violence and repression in the late 1970s. However, their counter-culture was the most influential part of *Autonomia* for the Italian 'antagonist movements' of the 1980s and 1990s.

6) Conclusion

While similar social movements have existed throughout recent urban advanced capitalist societies, *Autonomia*, in its various spatial and discursive articulations, can be said to represent one of the most massified and radical ruptures with both the Historic and New Lefts, as well as with capitalist institutions and values. It encapsulated the conflict between the libertarian practices and socio-cultural needs of a new generation of social actors and the gathering drive by the State and its 'party system' towards economic austerity, the reduction of the 'social capital' of the Welfare State, and the reimposition of labour discipline and social peace in an attempt to resolve the deeply embedded economic and political crises of the 1970s. Caught in a rapidly diminishing no-man's land between terrorism and State repression the project of autonomy attempted by a significant sector of post-industrial working class urban youth was squeezed out of existence by 1983. Many of the 'new social subjects' had already turned to the new forms of individualism and consumerism that became embedded in the 1980s, the most self-destructive being Western Europe's worst heroin addiction epidemic. However, autonomy as both individual and collective praxis has become fixed as the prevailing characteristic of the NSMs of the radical libertarian Left of the 1980s and 1990s, and is now prevalent within the nascent global anti-capitalist movement.

NOTES

[1] *Autonomia é la capacitá di darsi una regola adeguata al Desiderio ,e non l'arte di tenere il broncio al mondo.* Settantasette [discontinued], 3.97, [web: http://www.taonet.it/77web.htm].

[2] A typical example of the conspiracy theory approach that has plagued recent Italian historiography is by the Guardian's present Italian foreign correspondent Phillip Willan (1991). His byzantine convolutions about Gladio (the Italian section of NATO's 'Operation Stay Behind', a clandestine network of 'sleepers' to be activated to resist a Soviet invasion or the advent of a PCI government, whose long suspected existence was finally revealed in 1991 causing a national scandal), the Strategy of Tension, the Red Brigades, the Moro Affair and *Autonomia* reach the point where he claims Negri was a somewhat unlikely CIA agent. For an alternative account of Gladio and its alleged connections with the Strategy of Tension, see Coglitore and Scarso (1992). The political exiles Scalzone and Persichetti (1999, n4&5, p7) attack the *dietrologia* (backward looking) of sociologists, political scientists and journalists sympathetic to the DS (ex-PCI) who practice a

discipline which "predicts the past" and "feeds on conspiracy theories", particularly the "destabilisation conspiracy" to prevent the PCI/DS coming to power (until 1996):

> "According to this logic, the history of Italy, from [1945] until the DS' 1996 electoral victory (...) is interpreted as the plot of a 'double State': one corrupt and with hidden ramifications which has criminally held onto power during the First Republic; the other loyal and legal which made itself a bulwark against the atavistic subversion of the dominant classes. It is superfluous to add that the PCI-PDS-DS was always the essential pillar [of rectitude]. On the nature of the conspiracy, two 'doctrines' have confronted one another: the first (...) has hypothesised the 'conscious and direct role' played by the social movements and in particular by armed struggle (...) against the PCI; the second has hypothesised about 'heterodirection' [*l'eterodirezione*], the 'unconscious complicity' of the Red Brigades in particular, as if they had been nothing more than pawns manoeuvred by hidden powers."

They also have harsh words for the Situationist conspiracy theorists, De Bord (1979) and Sanguinetti (1979), accused of suffering from "maniacal conspiracy and metaconspiracy obsession syndrome" (ibid.).

[3] A further development of the concept of the 'mass worker' (see note 5) by Negri in the 1970s was the *operaio sociale,* a 'class composition' theoretical elaboration of the 'new social subjects' of the post-1968 NSMs, particularly the then emerging 'precarious' worker in the mid 1970s post-Fordist reorganisation of labour, who was often also a student and had even greater mobility than the 'mass worker'. Perhaps this theoretical social actor is the most relevant residue of the social conflicts of the 1970s, the predecessor of the casualised intellectual worker typical of the continuous restructuring and "flexploitation" (Gray 1995) of late 20th century neoliberal capitalist society. See chapter four for further explanation of this Autonomist Marxist 'class composition theory' concept, as well as Pozzi and Tommasini (1979) and for an English excerpt, see Negri (1979d). Negri has since updated his class composition theory to the 1990s with the 'immaterial worker' (telematic workers whose product is 'immaterial') (see Negri and Lazzarato, 1994) and to the 21st century with the concept of 'multitude', the principal antagonist subject in globalised society (see Negri and Hardt, 2000).

[4] *Fabbrica sociale.* See chapter 4 for a definition from Cleaver (1979).

[5] The *operaio massa* was an Italian 'workerist' concept describing the dominant class composition in the factories of Northern Italy from the mid 1950s, constituted principally of young, unskilled and semi-skilled internal migrant assembly line workers from Southern Italy, most typically employed at FIAT's Mirafiori plant in Turin, with a similar economic role to other immigrant workers in Europe like the Turkish 'guest workers' in West Germany and the 'Commonwealth immigrants' in the UK (Scalzone and Persichetti 1999, Crouch and Pizzorno 1978). They were no longer controllable within the Fordist paradigm of union negotiations, productivity deals and the unwritten social pact between the parties of the reformist Left and the Italian state, the political basis of the 'Economic Miracle' of the Fifties and Sixties. Hence, this industrially deskilled and socially uprooted 'mass worker', who first emerged historically in the Taylorised car factories of Detroit in the 1920s and 1930s, contrasted with the socially and culturally more homogenous 'craft worker' (*operaio artigiano*) and 'professional worker' (*operaio professionale*), the mainstay of the PCI and the CGIL trade union federation in the immediate post-war period. The southern 'mass worker' saw autonomy from these culturally alien and politically stifling structures, let alone from the North Italian culture of work, as the central strategy for both meeting their needs and expressing their diversity. Thus, they did not identify with the unions and the PCI and became the backbone of the autonomous workers struggles of the 'Hot Autumn' (see note 20).

6 Figures taken from Balestrini and Moroni (1997, p14). Of the 15,000 incarcerated (often for up to the legally stipulated maximum of 5 years and 4 months of remand before facing trial) after 1979, only 6,000 were actually sentenced. A total of 40,000 *denunce* (political arrests) took place approximately between 1968 and 1982 – "almost South American data", as one informant commented.

7 The *carceri speciali* (special high security prisons for mainly Mafia and political prisoners) were introduced by decree and without parliamentary consultation or approval as part of the packet of emergency measures of 1975.

[8] *Co-ordinamento Nazionale Anti-Nucleare/Anti-Imperialista.*

[9] Popular Front for the Liberation of Metropolitan Indians Palestine: a Syrian-based Marxist-Leninist organisation within the PLO formerly led by George Habash.

[10] Often squatted and sometimes conceded (by local government) public buildings, such as disused schools or factories, taken over by groups of youth, usually from the *area antagonista* (the successors of *Autonomia*) or anarchists (but also *extra-comunitari* immigrants and even football fans) to use as meeting places and centres of cultural, social and political activities, given the lack of the provision of such facilities by local government. A social phenomenon almost unique to Italy, where squatted housing is now much rarer than in

Britain, it has mushroomed in the 1990s resulting in over 100 *centri sociali occupati/autogestiti* (squatted/self-managed social centres). See Ruggiero (2000), Wright (2000) and Montagna (2002) for analyses in English of the *centri sociali*. In Italian see Adinolfi et al (1994), Democrazia Proletaria (1989), Dines (2000), Ibba (1995), Moroni (1994), and Sorlini et al. (1977).

[11] The only remaining NL party, *Democrazia Proletaria*, merged with *Rifondazione Comunista* on its split from the ex-PCI in 1991. *Il Manifesto* remains only as a national newspaper, the only independent mass circulation daily in Europe to still call itself 'communist'.

[12] *Autonomia Operaia Organizzata*. See case study in chapter 5.

[13] The term 'autonomous' refers to groups who organised autonomously and considered themselves part of the broader 'area of *Autonomia*', but often maintained a distance from the *autonomi* (autonomists) of Organised *Autonomia*.

[14] Antonio (Toni) Negri remains a controversial figure among the remnants of *Autonomia*, capable of arousing extremes of admiration for his theoretical brilliance or hatred among many of his ex-comrades for his 'disassociation from terrorism' (perhaps misinterpreted as disassociation from the movement) and flight to relative privilege as an internationally renowned university professor in Paris, while less prestigious comrades were left behind in prison or have had a much more arduous exile. Born in Padua in 1933, Negri was a leading intellectual activist and theorist of *Potere Operaio* (PO) and Organised Workers' Autonomy, and a major contributor to most of the 'workerist' publications from *Quaderni Rossi* (QR) in the early 1960s onwards. He was elected municipal councillor for the PSI in Padua in 1959 and edited the party's regional newspaper, *Il Progresso Veneto* (a supplement of which reported on the upsurge in industrial disputes in the area in the early 1960s and was called *Potere Operaio*) until he left in opposition to its decision to form the first centre-left coalition government with the DC in 1963. He had already begun to work directly with the hitherto poorly organised and barely unionised petrochemical workers of Porto Marghera, organising a reading group on *Capital* together with his wife, Paola Meo, and the philosopher and future PCI deputy and DS mayor of Venice, Massimo Cacciari. Contemporaneously, QR began publication, edited by Raniero Panzieri, a senior PSI figure and by 1960 an Einaudi editor, and Romano Alquati, a Marxist intellectual, in Turin, and with notable contributors such as Asor Rosa (later the PCI's main critic of the '77 Movement), Bologna, Tronti, Foa, Reiser and Fofi from Milan and Rome and Negri from Padua. However, Negri, Bologna and Alquati preferred a more direct intervention in factory struggles splitting from QR in 1964 to found *Classe Operaia* and then *Contropiano*. He contributed to *Potere Operaio* (by 1967 the journal of the Porto Marghera autonomous workers and after 1969 the national weekly of PO) and other 'workerist' publications in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly *La Classe*. He also wrote for non-workerist journals like *Aut-Aut* and *Critica del Diritto*, the journal of *Magistratura Democratica* (the democratic judges organisation). He had won the Professorship of Philosophy of Law at Padua University in 1959 and later the Professorship of State Doctrine in 1967, teaching at the Institute of Political Science which became the national and international centre of *operaismo*. Here Negri worked with Sergio Bologna, Luciano Ferrari Bravo, Sandro Serafini, Guido Bianchini, Ferruccio Gambino and the 'workerist' feminists Alisa Del Re and Maria Rosa Dalla Costa until he and many of his colleagues were arrested under terrorism charges in 1979. With the students movement of 1968 and the 'Hot autumn' of 1969, Negri helped to found PO, for whom he was responsible for international relations and the translation of the main workerist texts into foreign languages. His political activity continued to centre on factory struggles, particularly those outside union control on issues like health and safety and resistance to speed-ups, as he developed his theories on the 'refusal of work' and (post-PO) the recomposition of the 'mass worker' as the 'socialised worker' through industrial restructuring. He became PO's most important and internationally renowned theoretician with a series of publications with Feltrinelli, Italy's most radical publisher, in the 1970s (see Bibliography and C.Feltrinelli, 2001, for an account by his son of its owner's colourful life and mysterious death). However, by 1973 Negri was leading a faction within PO calling for its dissolution into the emerging area of 'workers' autonomy', the precursor of the *Autonomia* movement, resulting in his expulsion but also PO's divisive dissolution. In the same year, he and former members of the Gruppo Gramsci refounded the Milanese magazine *Rosso* as the organ of the *Collettivi Politici Operai,* which also became known as *Rosso* and was to be at the centre of the 'Organised *Autonomia*' project. With Emilio Vesce and Franco Tommei, he also founded the journal *Controinformazione*, but left after one issue in disagreement with the involvement of the Red Brigades. By 1976 he had become the most well known, and for PCI and DC opinion makers, 'infamous' voice and face of *Autonomia*. His relentless persecution by the Italian authorities had already begun, resulting in a brief period of exile in 1977 during which he began to teach at the University of Paris VIII and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, at the invitation of Louis Althusser. After charges of inciting his students at Padua University to violence were dropped, he continued to live and work in both Italy and France. However, a press campaign of extraordinary vilification was the prelude to his arrest on April 7th 1979, along with the intellectual leadership of *Autonomia*, accused of being the 'brains' behind the Red Brigades and the architect of Moro's kidnapping

and murder in 1978. After four years of imprisonment, including involuntary participation in the Trani prison revolt of 1982, he availed of the law on 'disassociation' and was released from prison under parliamentary immunity in 1983, having been elected a deputy of the Radical Party. Following the removal of his parliamentary immunity by a handful of votes (the Radical Party deputies abstained) and under threat of rearrest, he escaped to Paris the same year to join the growing community of Italian political refugees, founding the heterodox Marxist journal *Futur Anterieur* and collaborating with the philosopher and psychologist Felix Guattari in various publications. He re-entered Italian extra-parliamentary politics in 1993, when he collaborated with some of his former detractors among the *Padovani* of Radio Sherwood (a Paduan free radio station formerly linked to *Autonomia*) to produce the first issue of *Riff Raff*, in which he presented an updated, computerised version of the 'socialized worker'; the 'immaterial worker'. In 1997 he voluntarily returned to Italy to complete his prison sentence of 23 years for moral complicity and armed insurrection against the state in the hope that the then *Ulivo* (Olive Tree) centre-left coalition government would enact an amnesty or at least a significant reduction in the sentences of political prisoners from the 1970s, so allowing the exiles in Paris to return. However, neither of these solutions has yet to materialise despite repeated attempts to get the issue debated in parliament. In 2001, he was released from prison under house arrest. He is now an internationally recognised Marxist authority following the hugely successful publication of *Empire* in 2000 (heavily influenced by Foucauldian 'bio-politics' and lauded as the 'Communist Manifesto of the globalisation era'), co-authored with the North American Marxist academic Michael Hardt with whom he has frequently collaborated. He also writes regularly for the independent communist national daily newspaper, *Il Manifesto*. Somehow, he has also managed to be the father of two children and a prolific academic author since the early 1960s with works on Spinoza as well as several publications in various languages on state theory and philosophy of law. (Biographical note based on Negri 1988a, p269-271, and S. Bologna 1980b, p180).

[15] Toni Negri, Oreste Scalzone and Franco Piperno were the founders of *Potere Operaio* (1968-73), the New Left 'workerist' organisation that successfully campaigned to subordinate the students' struggles to the 'workers' centrality' of factory-based class struggle. On PO's dissolution all three were to become leading intellectual activists within Organised *Autonomia* and were arrested in 1979, accused of being the strategic leadership of the Red Brigades. After periods of imprisonment all three escaped into exile, Negri and Scalzone to Paris and Piperno to Canada. Both Piperno and Scalzone had been members of the PCI before 1968 when they were among the leaders of the Rome students' movement, Scalzone being badly injured by fascists during an occupation. Piperno, along with Adriano Sofri, the founder and 'leader' of *Lotta Continua*, helped to establish the workers-students council in Turin during the wildcat strikes at FIAT in the summer of 1969, while Scalzone edited *La Classe* and helped to establish PO. From 1970 onwards, Piperno was PO's main organiser. Scalzone moved to Milan in 1970 and became active in mass demonstrations there. In PO, he was responsible for building relations between PO and the general movement, being particularly active on the question of political prisoners and the struggle against the 'special prisons'. His growing popularity both in PO and in the wider movement made him a natural national spokesperson for PO. He and Piperno wanted to further centralise PO's leadership in 1973, in opposition to Negri's successful attempt to dissolve PO. After PO's dissolution, he founded the magazine *Linea di Condotta* and the COCORI organisation. More of an activist than a theoretician, Piperno withdrew from political activism from 1975 to 1977, becoming a leading member of Organised *Autonomia* following the 1977 Movement, during which Scalzone emerged as the leading spokesperson of *Autonomia*, particularly at the Bologna Convention. In 1978, he and Piperno set up the magazine *Metropoli*. Unlike Scalzone and Negri, Piperno escaped arrest on April 7th 1979, but was arrested in August and extradited in October from Paris. After escaping into exile again to Canada, he returned to Italy in 1986 and now teaches physics at the University of Calabria, writing extensively on the problems of time in physics, economics and linguistics. Scalzone continues to live in Paris where, as the spokesperson of the remaining exiles, he actively campaigns for an amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. All three have continued to write articles and books on the 1970s (Biographical notes based on S.Bologna [1980b, p148] and Virno and Hardt [1997, p266]).

[16] The Paduans and the *Volsci* (named after a street in Rome where they were based) were the axis around which Organised *Autonomia* mobilised.

[17] *Indiani metropolitani*. See chapter 6.

[18] The *compromesso storico* was made with the DC from 1973 to 1979 when the DC suspended the system of 'imperfect bipartism', which had hitherto guaranteed the PCI's permanent exclusion from power, on condition that the PCI reined in working class social and industrial conflicts. The PCI's leader Berlinguer proposed this strategy through a series of articles in the PCI's theoretical journal *Rinascita* in late 1973 on the supposition that the USA-sponsored *coup d'état* against Allende's elected socialist government in Chile that September signified the definitive closure of the 'parliamentary road to socialism'.

[19] 'Stray dogs': those disaffected former members of the NL groups (particularly LC) critical of dogmatic Marxism and wary of further organisational involvement.

[20] This was the project of Panzieri, Tronti, Alquati and various dissident PCI, PSI and trade union intellectuals to theorise, through a revival of Marx's 'workers' enquiry', the 'class composition' and 'self-valorisation' of the 'mass worker' present in the upsurge in autonomous working class militancy during the 'Economic Miracle' and mass internal migration from South to North from the mid 1950s onwards. See chapter 4, Wright (2002) and Roggero (2002).

[21] The name given to the period of wildcat/chequer board/hiccup strikes, internal factory demonstrations and industrial sabotage carried out by over five and a half million workers (25% of the labour force), almost exclusively self-organised autonomously from the unions and the PCI, during the autumn of 1969 (Katsiaficas 1997). Arguably this unprecedented period of industrial unrest and social revolt began with the Revolt of Corso Traiano in Turin in July 1969 (if not with the first autonomously organised strikes in Milan and Porto Marghera in 1967/68), in which most of the southern part of the city, built in the 1950s and 1960s as a workers' dormitory around the giant FIAT Mirafiori plant, erupted into revolt for three days following a police attack on a workers and students march. The huge wave of working class unrest begun in 1969 continued unabated, reaching its peak with the armed occupation of the Mirafiori plant in March 1973 by a new generation of even more militant workers (the *Fazzoletti Rossi* – Red Bandanas) who organised autonomously even from the New Left. From then on the effects of technological restructuration, redundancies and the unions' recuperation of consensus and control through the Factory Councils began to dampen down the autonomous workers' revolt, which nevertheless continued at an exceptionally high level until the 1980s (Italy and the UK were the countries where most man hours were lost per year due to strikes and absenteeism throughout the 1970s). The most important aspect of the 1969 Hot Autumn from the perspective of class composition was the leading role played by non-unionised internal migrant workers from the South (contemptuously referred to as *crumiri* [scabs] in the 1950s by the PCI-dominated North Italian workers), whom the 'workerists' identified as the 'mass worker'. In addition, there was the 'new working class' of white-collar technicians, scientists, professionals and off-line office and service personnel, previously excluded from blue-collar union-management deals and again formerly considered as 'scabs' by blue-collar workers. Sergio Bologna, who worked as a technician at Olivetti in Ivrea, Piedmont, in the early 1960s has focussed much of his research and analysis on the struggles of the techno-scientific working class composition in the 1970s. The recently-formed New Left groups, based on the 1967/68 students movement, were heavily involved in the Hot Autumn and even more so in it aftermath, particularly *Lotta Continua* in Turin, *Potere Operaio* in Porto Marghera (near Venice) and Milan, and *Avanguardia Operaia* in Milan. The autonomous workers broke from the PCI's 'economist realism' and the unions sectorial demands by chanting "We want everything!", demanding major wage increases delinked from productivity, decreases in work rhythms and the end of wage differentials between the various grades of blue-collar and white-collar workers. The strikes were organised locally by factory assemblies over which the unions had no control and which co-ordinated at a city or regional level. 13,000 workers were arrested and 35,000 were dismissed or suspended, but by December 1969 the employers had conceded their demands (Brodhead 1984). The 1970 Workers Charter (*Statuto di Lavoro*) officially recognised these gains and the reality of workers self-organisation within the factories by instituting the Factory Councils and the *scala mobile* (see note 24). The largest outbreak of industrial unrest since 1920/21 soon spread to working class districts, where the emerging women's movement as well as the students (many of whom came from working class families) and the New left groups became active in the self-organised neighbourhood committees (*comitati di quartiere*) which organised rent and bill strikes, the self-reduction (*autoriduzione*) of transport prices and housing occupations to demand an overall improvement in working class living standards.

[22] I agree with Lumley (1990, n12, p45) on a preference for the use of the anglicised "operaism" and "operaist" (which will be used in this thesis henceforward) rather than 'workerism' and 'workerist' "...since the English [version] carries certain pejorative connotations which the Italian term does not".

[23] Red Bandanas; used to hide their identity during internal factory demonstrations and *spazzolate* [sweepings] against non-strikers, foremen and managers. See also case study in chapter 4.

[24] The expression coined for the State's unsuccessful attempt to develop the *Mezzogiorno*'s economy in the 1960s by building huge industrial plants, such as the iron and steel works at Bagnoli, near Naples, in rural areas without the necessary infrastructure or a trained work force.

[25] Literally, 'escalator'; a sliding scale system that was supposed to protect wages against inflation through automatic annual pay rises. It was considered to be one of the main gains made by the post-1968 workers movement, but was gradually dismantled, with the acquiescence of the CGIL-CISL-UIL trade union leadership, under the austerity policies of the late 1970s. Seen by neoliberal economists as a principal cause of inflation itself, it was abolished by a decree of the Craxi government in 1984, a decision ratified by a

referendum in 1985, characterised by low participation and little public discussion. Its abolition represented a major defeat for the overall workers' movement and deepened the PCI's crisis.

[26] The issue of 'practising communism in everyday life' is one of the main differences between the Italian *Autonomia* of the 1970s and the German *Autonomen* of the 1980s and 1990s, since most *autonomi* probably remained living at home given the difficulties of squatting flats and economic survival outside the family, while most *autonomen* probably live outside the family and in squatted communes and houses, given a more extensive welfare state and greater tolerance of squatting. As a result, the politics of the personal and the need to combat sexism and racism in everyday life as well as at the political level is more present in the *Autonomen* than it was in *Autonomia* (Katsiaficas 1997).

[27] *Lavoro nero*: the post-Fordist sector of precarious, short-term, low paid, deregulated and illegal sweatshop labour now done by the *extra-comunitari* (non-EU) immigrants.

[28] For an analysis of the decline in union and autonomous worker militancy in Fiat's Mirafiori plant in Turin during the mid to late 1970s, leading to the historical defeat of the 1980 strike, see Golden (1988). Her research work was sponsored by *Laboratorio Politico*, a PCI think tank journal founded by the ex-operaists Asor Rosa, Cacciari and Tronti, to examine the PCI's policy change towards the Factory Councils (CDF) following its realisation of having lost hegemony, leading Lama and the leadership of the CGIL to decide to redimension the CDFs' powers as they could not be directed from above. The decision to delegitimise the CDF coincided with a major capitalist offensive to restructure industrial production, introducing new technologies which expropriated workers of their knowledge of the productive cycle and forcibly reimposed factory hierarchies, using the instrument of the *cassa integrazione* (redundancy arrangement under which workers received 90% of their salary for one year) to expel the most militant 'vanguards' (Interview with Primo Moroni first published by Democrazia Proletaria (1989) and also by the Centro di Documentazione Fausto e Jaio, Centro Sociale Leoncavallo, Milan, 4.01, [web: http://www.ecn.org/leoncavallo/storic/moroni.htm].

[29] According to Ruggiero (1993), among the approximately 200 armed groups which proliferated during the 'second wave' of terrorism in the late 1970s, there were also several feminist armed organisations which carried out armed actions against doctors who, as 'conscientious objectors', refused to carry out abortions in the public sector while doing them clandestinely in the private sector.

[30] Introduced in 1975, before the terrorist upsurge of the *Anni di Piombo* (Years of Lead) of 1978-82, this fiercely contested measure based on the unrepealed fascist *Codice Rocco* was the first in a raft of emergency legislation still on the statute books today. It gave the police and *carabinieri* increased power to use lethal force, resulting in 350 deaths up to 1985, according to Balestrini and Moroni (1997, p661).

[31] Scalzone and Persichetti (1999) nevertheless accuse Negri and other OWA intellectuals of rewriting their opinion of the BR after their arrest in 1979 and later 'disassociation' from terrorism. For instance, they claim that Negri temporarily collaborated with the BR in founding the journal *Controinformazione* in 1973, although Negri (1988a) claims that he left as soon as he realised that the BR were involved. They conclude that the ambivalence of Negri and others on the BR and terrorism has contributed to the failure to find a political solution to the 1970s and an amnesty for the remaining political prisoners and exiles.

[32] The acronym used to describe the triumvirate of Craxi, Andreotti and Forlani, which dominated institutional politics in the 1980s. Bettino Craxi was the PSI leader (1976-1993) whose government of 1983-87 was one of the more durable since 1945. He skilfully outmanoeuvred the PCI and became the DC's closest ally in the 1980s, championing the introduction of Thatcherite neoliberal reforms. He became the most illustrious political scalp of the 'Clean Hands' judicial crusade against corruption in business and politics, dying in exile in Tunisia in 2000 before he could be extradited. Giulio Andreotti was the *eminence grise* of the DC regime, leading various rightist coalition governments before being tried in the mid 1990s and eventually acquitted for long suspected links with the Mafia. As Moro's main rival within the DC, he was also suspected of indirectly promoting his murder by insisting on a hard-line stance of non-negotiation with the BR after he was kidnapped. Forlani was a senator, government minister and senior figure within the DC who gained notoriety in the early 1990s by calling for a historical revision of the role of the Resistance in the liberation of Italy from nazi-fascism and for criminal investigations to be carried out on a series of revenge killings of fascists in 1945 in the traditionally communist Emilia-Romagna region.

[33] The name given to the five-party coalition governments led by the DC and the PSI that dominated the 1980s.

[34] The influence of Heller (1974) on the Italian autonomists theoretical and political praxis was evident.

CHAPTER TWO:
PERSPECTIVES - NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, MARXISM AND *AUTONOMIA*

"We must recognise the working class not only as an object of exploitation, but also as an object of power, not only as a passive subject constructed through the dispositives of capitalist domination, but also, and above all, as the active subject that constitutes itself and projects a new society starting from its own needs and desires." (Michael Hardt[1])

1) Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the development of new social movement theories (NSMT), particularly those of Alberto Melucci (1980, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1994, 1996), an Italian sociologist and arguably the leading theoretician on new social movements (NSM) from a primarily cultural, 'post-Marxist' perspective, and Manuel Castells, (1977, 1978, 1983, 1997), a Spanish sociologist who has developed theories about urban social movements from a principally political, 'pro-Marxist' viewpoint (Buechler 1995) in order to have an overview of the most relevant social theories informing this research project. I will then outline the debate between various forms of Marxism and NSMT, particularly over the 'newness' and historical significance of the NSMs, as well as within Marxism itself over this contentious issue. Finally, I will outline my own perspective on new social movements that will underpin the analysis of *Autonomia* in this thesis.

2) New social movement theories: Touraine, Melucci and Castells

In the following section, I will compare the main new social movement theorists and their rival schools of thought in the study of collective action to identify better the potential lacunae that offer space for new research. I concentrate on NSMT as it has focussed on the Western European social movements of the last 40 years and, as a form of post-Marxism, has the issue of social class closer to its theoretical core than other social movement theories. First, however, it is necessary to briefly outline the main sociological approaches to the study of social movements in order to place NSMT within an overall analytical framework. Resource mobilisation theory (RMT) has been the dominant paradigm in North America since it challenged the functionalist precepts of Smelser's collective behaviour theory (CBT) in the 1960s. McCarthy, Zald and Tilly are among its main exponents and its

central premise is that "rational actors [engage] in instrumental action through formal organisation to secure resources and foster mobilisation" (Buechler 1995, p441). Another predominantly North American theoretical perspective is social constructionism, based on the works of Snow, Benford, Gamson and Hunt. It brings a "symbolic interactionist approach to the study of collective action by emphasising the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism" (ibid.). The European NSMT of Castells, Touraine, Habermass and Melucci, developed as "a response to the inadequacies of classical Marxism for analyzing collective action [due to its] economic [and] class reductionism" (Buechler 1995: 441-2). NSMT looks instead to "other logics of [collective] action based in politics, ideology, and culture outside political economy and the sphere of production", as well as "other sources of [collective] identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality beyond the industrial proletariat" (Buechler 1995, p442). Buechler concludes that there are two essential types of NSMT, a political version whose 'general orientation' is 'pro-Marxist' (Castells), and a cultural version whose general orientation is 'post-Marxist' (Melucci). The contribution of the fourth main theoretical stream on NSMs, political process theory, a more recent attempt to combine RMT's focus on the 'how' of collective action with the 'why' focus of NSMT by emphasising the relationship between NSMs and the state, will be discussed in the concluding chapter since its principal exponents, Tarrow, della Porta and Diani, have closely analysed the Italian NSMs, including *Autonomia*.

All versions of NSMT share a model of "societal totality", which Buechler (1995, p447) defines as an "attempt to theorize a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action", and which is "perhaps [its] most distinctive feature". In the political version this societal totality is "advanced capitalism" whose "image of power" is "systemic" and "centralised", while in the cultural version it is the "information society" whose image of power is "diffuse" and "decentralised" (ibid.). The political analysis is state-oriented at the macro and meso levels, while the cultural analysis is more meso and micro level, being focused on civil society and everyday life. Regarding movement activity, the cultural version claims that collective action "eschews strategic concerns in favour of symbolic expressions", while the political version sees it as retaining a "role for instrumental action towards strategic goals" (ibid.).

On the debate over whether NSMs are demonstrably 'new' or just the contemporary versions of 'old' movements that existed throughout the 20th century if not since the 1789

French Revolution (Tarrow 1991 and Brand 1990), both the political and cultural versions of NSMT reject this viewpoint. The former posits their 'newness' by recognising their antagonistic role without rejecting that of working-class movements, while the latter regards them as having displaced working-class movements as the dominant form of collective action. Regarding the question of 'movement orientations', of whether NSMs are 'reactive' or 'progressive', the cultural version sees new movements as defensive and rejects the category of 'progressive', but the political version of NSMT claims a potential for progressive orientations if the NSMs are allied with working-class movements. On the evaluation of movements, the political stance sees political movements as the most radical and cultural movements as apolitical, while the cultural overview sees cultural movements as the most radical and political movements as co-optable. As for the 'social base' of the NSMs, the cultural version of NSMT has "analyzed [this] in terms of nonclass constituencies or issues and ideologies", and the political "in class terms via contradictory locations, new class, or middle class" (Buechler 1995, p457).

By comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the political and the cultural versions of NSMT, I aim to identify some of the lacunae in NSMT's approach to such hybrid and anomalous movements as *Autonomia*. Starting from their general orientations, both the pro-Marxist (political) or post-Marxist (cultural) versions assume an orthodox, Leninist, version of Marxism, directed towards the state and a vanguardist model of political party-promoted social change based on the industrial working class. This conflation ignores recent neo-Marxian theories of the state and social transformation that problematicise orthodox Marxism as much as NSMT has sought to do, but from the Marxist perspective of political economy, none more so than Italian autonomist Marxism[2]. In fact, NSMT and particularly its post-Marxist variant have been criticised for their over-hasty abandonment of political economy, based on "generalisations made from very partial views of only certain movements" (Adam 1993, p316). Adam concludes that theory on NSMs needs to include the political economy of social movements and that theoreticians need to "learn from the analyses generated by theses movements themselves" (ibid.).

Regarding the societal totalities outlined by all forms of NSMT, the cultural version of NSMT's 'information society' presents the production, symbolic coding and distribution of information, knowledge and culture as the line of social demarcation rather than classical sociological or Marxist concepts of social class based on socio-economic categories. This

approach focuses on the centrality of cultural modes and norms in collective action and identity, but understates the role of perceived or real social and economic marginalisation processes in the mobilisation of new social movements. With its idea of power as decentralised and diffused throughout civil society, the ambiguous relationship between NSMs and the state, based on negotiation and confrontation, integration and repression, is also minimised. For the political version of NSMT, 'advanced capitalism' is the societal totality and power is seen as systemic and centralised, tying in with structuralist and orthodox Marxist views of the capitalist state as the embodiment of power against which NSMs must construct instrumental actions towards strategic goals in an essentially defensive stance. Herein there is a link back to the cultural version via Habermas' notion of NSMs as defensive phenomena seeking to defend private and public lifeworlds from colonisation by the state and the capitalist economy, although he does recognise a resultant state legitimisation crisis (Habermas 1981). The result is that the cultural version of NSMT recognises the subjectivity of NSMs and their diffused cultural power within civil society but as essentially de-politicised phenomena devoid, or even wary of transformational force vis-à-vis the economy and the state.

Conversely, the political version identifies the political struggle of collective action for objective counter-power, with the state as its interlocutor and society and the economy as the site of this contestation, if in an objectifying state-oriented mode. It minimises, however, the 'everyday' sphere of cultural experiences and intersubjectivity that can lead to mobilisation, form collective identities, drive contestation and constitute the 'newness' of NSMs compared to the 'old' social movements based principally on the organisations of the industrial working classes. What is needed, therefore, is a theory of new social movements that seeks to verify the extent of both their internal subjective cultural power within civil society at the micro and meso level of analysis and their external objective political power versus the state and the economy at the meso and macro level of analysis. Such a theory could then be used to enter the four principal debates that Buechler (1995) has identified on, firstly, the 'newness' of the NSMs; secondly, whether they are progressive, reactive or purely defensive; thirdly, whether cultural or political movements are the most radical; and lastly, whether their social base is composed of 'contradictory locations', 'new middle classes', 'non-class constituencies' or social agglomerations around issues and ideologies. The question of the social composition of NSMs is central to

the debate between NSMT and various Marxisms over their significance in contemporary social conflict.

3) Marxism and new social movement theories

The debate between Marxism and NSMT over the legitimacy and efficacy of the model of the new social movement as a method of explaining the intensification of social conflict in Western societies since the late 1960s has been reinvigorated since the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent collapse of 'real' socialism, giving rise to neoliberal theories about the 'end of history', meaning the end of class struggle. This debate is central to the analysis of a social movement such as *Autonomia*, a part of which came from the Italian dissident Marxist 'operaist' tradition, while another 'creative' element attempted to go beyond Marxism. NSMT's critique of the Marxist analysis of class struggle can itself be described as a form of post-Marxism, attacking classical Marxism's analysis of class-based social conflict with the post-industrial thesis, according to which post-war systemic changes have precipitated the end of the capital - labour conflict as the central contradiction of contemporary society. The birth of the welfare state and the public services-based 'new middle class' in the 1950s and 1960s, the supposed social base of the NSMs, has displaced the industrial working class as the main actor in social antagonism.

Touraine (1977, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1992) rejects classical Marxism's economic and political determinism, according to which the development of productive forces and the dynamic of class relations inevitably give rise to social and political conflict. He also criticises its denial of the multiplicity of concerns and conflicts within movements, leading to a construction of the image of movements as homogenous actors with a high level of strategic ability. He claims that classes are not defined only in relation to a system of production, a basic tenet of Marxism, and that there has been a shift in the principal arena of conflict from the economic to the cultural field. His theories are equally opposed to both functionalist ideas of 'collective behaviour' and Marxist theories of social life, which both reduce social action to structure, integrative in the case of functionalism or conflictual in Marxism. According to his post-industrial programmed society theory, new social classes have replaced capitalists and workers as the central actors of conflict. The category of social movement, "an agent of conflict for the social control of the main cultural patterns" (Touraine 1985, p785), defines both the rules by which society functions and determines the specific goal of sociology. His 'social movement society' thesis states that society is the product of reflective social action

and the way in which society functions reflects the struggle between two antagonistic actors for the control of 'historicity'; the interweaving of a system of knowledge, a type of economic accumulation and a specific cultural model. The control of historicity is the object of an ongoing struggle between classes, taking the form of SMs, and is defined by relations of domination in which the central contest is over who will control society's growing capacity for self-management. The state for Touraine is merely the repository of society's increasing capacity to control historicity and therefore the central conflict of post-industrial society will not be focussed there. Consequently, according to his theory of 'social action', the behaviour of a SM actor is guided by cultural orientations and set within social relations defined by an unequal connection with the social control of these orientations (Touraine 1981). He identifies four types of society (agrarian, mercantile, industrial, programmed/post-industrial), each with a pair of central antagonistic actors locked into one central conflict. However, in the programmed society, where the control of information is the principal source of social power and where conflicts shift from the workplace to research and development, the elaboration of information, biomedical and technical sciences and the mass media, it is uncertain whether the different NSMs, united only by their oppositional attitude, will be collectively the main adversarial movement as no single class or group represents a future social order (Touraine 1988). NSMs are caught between two logics: the system seeks to maximise its control of production, money, power and information, while social subjects seek to defend and expand their individuality and autonomy. However, while the analysis of conflicts and movements is at the centre of his general theoretical model, Touraine has been unable to define a constituency for collective action (a general problem among NSM theorists), despite his insistence that each societal type has one single central conflict.

According to Scott (1990), neo-Marxism (in particular the structuralism of Althusser) sees new social movements as anachronistic, an ironically similar opinion to that of functionalist collective behaviour theory. They are defined negatively as 'not-quite-class-movements' or 'petit bourgeois'. As with institutions in functionalism, class movements provide the norm against which other forms of activity are measured, and so new social movements are found to be 'deviant' cases. The implication is that the only true social movements are class movements. Classes are deemed to be structural entities rather than social actors, with one appropriate ideology for each major class location. Any internal disagreements over where the true interests of the working class lie are attributed to 'false

consciousness'. Thus, the common assumptions of functionalism and neo-Marxism, particularly their deductivist view of social-scientific explanation, override their supposedly diametrical political differences (Scott 1990).

The normative point of departure of the post-Althusserian Castells is diametrically opposed to functionalism. Collective behaviour is thus not an interruption of the normal social processes of integration, but reflects the contradictions endemic in such processes. Castells (1973) describes NSMs as primarily urban social phenomena found in advanced capitalist societies. His theoretical object of analysis is urban politics, distinguishing 'the political' (structures assuring the domination of one social class) from 'politics' (power relations). The 'urban' is defined as both an organisation of space and a process of collective consumption. Conflict in late capitalist societies is centred on issues of consumption (housing, schooling, health) rather than production (the factory, the workplace). Thus, the "sphere of the reproduction of labour power" prevails over the labour-capital competition for space and facilities. Labour's response is defined as "collective consumption trade unionism", which does not challenge the basis of social relations, but instead seeks to win a larger share of collective goods. NSMs are defined as "an organised system of actors" who are "agents, whose most obvious expression is in social classes" (ibid). Scott (1990) critiques Castells' radically anti-social action approach, similar to Smelser's (1962) CBT, for its failure to account for the presence or absence of mobilisation. Castells is accused of only identifying the structural pre-conditions of NSM activity, social relations in their anthropological sense being excluded from his rationalist theory of science. Castells' argument is bound to the Marxist distinction between classes for-themselves and in-themselves, which leads him to assume that a shared position is a sufficient condition for mobilisation along the lines of social base. The supposed 'partiality' of non-class based movements for non-production linked demands leads Castells to ignore their value orientation. As a result, he fails to explain why certain 'stakes' (and not others) become issues. All subjective elements as influences on group formation and issue selection are excluded. Thus for Castells all real conflicts are class conflicts around the issue of the ownership and control of the means of production, with 'collective trade unionism' as only a partial manifestation of this conflict. However, Scott (1990) describes Castells' theories as ultimately unhelpful in the analysis of NSMs. The focus on issues of collective consumption has meant that NSMs are seen as reformist and/or partial. The contradiction is located in the sphere of production and the reform/transformation dichotomy assumed. As

for production, Castells describes a need to expand the concept away from the classic manufacturing model to include the production of urban space, leisure and other forms of collective consumption. Regarding the reform/transformation dichotomy, conflict is seen in terms of the classical class model, excluding reforms from being transformational or existing authorities from being innovatory (Scott 1990).

Scott (1990) concludes that the limitations of these general theories of social movements (functionalist and neo-Marxist) mean that all questions relating to social agents and the context of their actions are ignored: Why does mobilisation occur? Why does it take the specific form it does? He describes both functionalism and Marxism as general deductivist theories: both deduce an understanding of specific events from a higher level of theory and both treat social structure as coherent and unproblematic. They restrict themselves to the identification of the structural preconditions for NSM activity as mobilisation depends on other context specific factors: emotive issues, potential leading actors, the reaction of authorities and calculations of the benefits of action versus inaction.

NSM theorists, in particular Touraine and Melucci, have reacted against universalistic interpretations of NSMs such as those put forward by orthodox Marxism. Instead, they have returned to the actual conditions for NSM activity to take place, understanding NSMs as rational reactions to conditions in late 20th century capitalist society. The societal critique from within NSMs is taken seriously and is not treated as a mere indicator. For Scott (1990), in their move away from the structural determinism of functionalist and neo-Marxist analysis they have reasserted the centrality of the social agent in a desire to find a substitute for the structural category of class.

Orthodox Marxism's response to NSMT's critique of its structural determinism has been to posit the question: what is 'new' about NSMs? The result has been a debate both within Marxism and between orthodox Marxism and NSM theorists over the meaning and validity of designating certain movements as 'new' and others as 'old'. In the Marxist mainstream view this 'newness' depends on designating a social base other than the 'old' working class. They suggest that NSMs are not as distinct as proponents of the paradigm claim. According to Plotke (1990), NSM discourse overstates their novelty by selectively depicting their goals as primarily cultural and by exaggerating their separation from conventional political life. Tarrow (1991), a non-Marxist political process theorist, also

advances the theory that NSMs have grown out of pre-existing organisations with long histories that have been obscured by NSM discourse. Their 'newness' is due more to being studied in the early stages of their formation within a particular cycle of protest (principally that of the late Sixties and the early Seventies) than to the structural features of advanced capitalism. For Tarrow the end of the protest cycle in the mid-1970s meant that social movement activity decreased with a return to conventional political forms. Thus, the proponents of the 'newness' of NSMs mistook a temporary, cyclical phase for a new historical stage of collective action. Brand (1990) is the most sweeping critic of NSM theory, claiming that NSMs are the latest manifestation of a cyclical pattern evident for over a century. NSMs and their predecessors appeared in cyclical phases in response to cultural crises and as critiques of modernisation. He describes the latest cycle of NSM activity as motivated by moral-idealistic and aesthetic-countercultural critiques of modernisation, wedded to a pessimistic critique of civilisation. Similar periods of cultural critique prompted analogous 'romanticist' movements in 19th century Britain, Germany and the USA. NSMs are therefore extensions of past movements, the latest version of the long wave of social protest movements that have been romantic, cultural, idealistic, anti-modern responses to societal evolution and modernisation.

This not exclusively Marxist critique has forced the proponents of NSM theory to specify the 'newness' of NSMs. Dalton and Kuechler (1990) claim that while NSMs do draw on a long-standing humanistic tradition, their newness lies in their postmaterialist value base, their search for pragmatic rather than purely political solutions, their global awareness, and their resistance to spiritual solutions. They represent a new social paradigm challenging the dominant goal structure of Western societies by advocating postmaterialist, antigrowth, libertarian and populist themes. Their political style involves a conscious avoidance of institutional politics, maintaining their distance from established political parties. This combination of ideological bonds and political style distinguishes NSMs from their predecessors in the history of collective action.

Offe (1990) emphasises their post-ideological and post-historical nature. The lack of any positive alternative from institutional politics and the presence of a specific socio-political target in the form of a privileged class cause NSMs to avoid any accommodation with existing power structures and to resist standard forms of co-optation. For Eder (1985) NSMs are inherently modern. Only in modernity can their distinctive challenge to the

cultural orientation of society be formulated. They provide an alternative cultural model and moral order, which defends normative standards against the strategic, utilitarian and instrumental goal seeking and decision-making of elites. They are movements towards a more democratic formulation of collective needs and wants within society. Cohen (1985) claims that NSMs are distinguished from the utopian and romantic movements of the past by their visions and goals for social development. While utopian and romantic movements wanted the de-differentiation of society, economy and the state into a premodern utopian community, NSMs defend the structural differentiation of modern society and attempt to build on it by expanding the social spaces for 'nonstrategic action'.

There is, however, no firm consensus among NSM theorists about the newness of NSMs. Buechler (1995) states that the term, 'new social movements', inherently overstates the differences and obscures the commonalties between past and present movements. The strategic value in trying to break from the Marxist tradition of seeing the 'old' labour movement as the primary agent of history has led to a shift of focus to other constituencies. NSM theory seems to imply they have no prior history to the cycle of protest in the 1960s, whereas all the main NSMs of students, women, counter-cultural youth, homosexuals, minorities, environmentalists, and for peace and civil rights have identifiable historical predecessors in the early 20th and even the 19th centuries. There is more continuity between supposedly old and new movements than implied by NSM theory's false dichotomy between NSMs and old forms of labour organisation. For Buechler (1995), evidence exists to confirm the NSM character of many 19th century labour movements. Thus, the new elements in NSMs can only be specified by locating them and their predecessors in their appropriate sociohistorical contexts.

In conclusion, it can be stated that while most classical Marxist trends are dismissive of NSM theory, some of the more recent and less orthodox versions are more open to its claims. For orthodox Marxism, NSMs are essentially 'petit bourgeois', romantic and idealist phenomena, which are often politically reactionary and always peripheral to the continuity of the central capital-labour conflict. While structuralist neo-Marxism describes NSMs as 'partial' phenomena, it recognises their role without rejecting that of working class movements and accepts their potential for progressive orientation, but only if allied with labour movements, for example the student-worker alliance at the heart of the French May 1968 movement. Political movements are described as 'radical', while cultural

movements are 'apolitical'. The social base of NSMs is analysed in class terms via the "contradictory locations" of the "new middle class". The Gramscian version of neo-Marxism, as in Laclau and Moufe (1982), extends Gramsci's theory on capitalist hegemony to hypothesise that "unfixity" has become the condition of every social identity. Their premise is that there is no logical relation between socialist objectives and the position of social agents in the relations of production. NSMs are neither marginal to the working class, as held by orthodox Marxists, nor are they the revolutionary substitute of the politically and economically integrated working class, as Marcuse (1972) claims, nor are they inherently progressive, as posited by NSM theory. Thus, the political meaning of an NSM depends on its hegemonic articulation with other struggles. Autonomist Marxism, a current based on the work of CLR James and Italian 'operaism'[3], has a much broader definition of the working class than classical Marxism, emphasising working class subjectivity (self-valorisation) and self-organisation and generally opposes the determinism of orthodox Marxism. Cleaver (2000 [1979]), one of its principal exponents, focuses on the 'nonfactory working class' struggles of women, youth and minorities. He accepts that the working class is divided and that as a result of not being monolithic there is both a need for and the reality of the circulation of struggles between its different sectors. There is a hierarchical division between waged/productive labour (the industrial working class) and unwaged/reproductive labour (women, students, the unemployed). The different sectors of the working class seek autonomy from official working class organisations and from each other. Autonomist Marxism's class composition theory holds that NSMs are a manifestation of the recomposition of the working class since the 1960s, given that at each stage of class recomposition the appropriate form of organisation changes. The NSMs have, therefore, a central rather than a peripheral role in the class conflict with capital. Their primarily cultural orientations are not 'apolitical', as both Melucci and Castells concur, but have political meaning in the context of their role in the class struggle.

The debate between NSM theorists and their Marxist and non-Marxist critics over the novelty of NSMs has made the core claim of the appearance of demonstrably new social movements problematic. The central conceptual question remains: are NSMs similar enough to each other and different from 'old' movements (mainly of labour) to support the distinction? The NSMs' differences from each other on issues and constituencies mean the claim for newness depends on 'postmaterialist values', informal organisation and cultural orientations. However, it is not difficult to find earlier movements that were also non- (if

not 'post') materialist, informally organised and articulated by mainly cultural themes. The category of NSMs obscures continuities with their historical predecessors and exaggerates the differences between past and present movements. Only a few movements closely approximate the ideal type of NSM, representing only a small proportion of the forms of collective action found in modern society. Nevertheless, an examination of the history of NSMs shows that something 'new' does seem to be happening in late 20th century collective action. Their public and quasi-political expression and exploration of private, subjective problematics like identity or 'the politics of the personal' has caused a shift in emphasis and orientation in many other social movements.

4) Conclusion

In this review of the perspectives and debates between and within the main theories on new social movements and various orthodox and heterodox Marxisms, I have tried to identify weaknesses and lacunae in their discourses. The 'cultural' version of NSMT (Melucci and Touraine) overemphasises the cultural aspects of NSMs, while minimising their primarily political goals, forms of organisation and impact on the state and civil society. The 'political' version of NSMT (Castells) ignores the cultural impact of NSMs at the symbolic level and sees them as 'partial' phenomena, unable to impact on the state unless in alliance with the institutional structures of the Historical Left. Both versions tend to ignore the historical links between 'old' and 'new' social movements in order to emphasise the 'newness' of the NSMs. Classical Marxism treats NSMs as potentially reactionary and essentially marginal to the central organised labour-capital conflict in Western societies, while neo-Marxism, whether structuralist or Gramscian, has similar limitations to those of 'political' NSMT: NSMs are politically significant only when in alliance with the historical Left. Ultimately, all of these perspectives on NSMs attempt to undermine the political significance of NSMs since the 1960s, when compared to institutional politics. Moreover, the centrality of the issue of the NSMs 'newness' in the debate between NSMT and Marxism seems to be a diversion compared to other more important aspects. I argue that the academically imposed division between culturally oriented new social movements and political 'class struggle' is false, as is the attempt to divide these movements into 'bad' residual/violent/political and 'good' emergent/non-violent/cultural elements.

Autonomist Marxism has attempted to bridge this gulf, although it can be criticised for conflating contradictory phenomena such as feminism and youth counter-culture with class

politics, and for failing to go beyond the 'workers' centrality' focus of classical Marxism. Despite these limitations, however, it represents a form of political and sociological analysis that has emerged from within the Italian NSMs themselves and is therefore directly related to their social composition, forms of organisation and struggle, mobilisations and aims. It emphasises the autonomy of the working class from capital, that is of 'living labour' from 'dead labour' (Tronti 1972 and Cleaver 1991). It valorises difference and identifies as central to the class struggle those sectors seen by classical Marxism, neo-Marxism and 'political' NSMT as 'marginals': housewives, students, youth, 'precarious' workers, the unemployed and 'Third World' peasants, i.e. those who organise 'spontaneously' and autonomously from the structures of the historical Left, often as NSMs. It uses oral history and sociological research through the revival of Marx's 'workers' enquiry' to generate theories from the raw material of everyday grassroots struggle, rather than 'top-down' macro analyses. Thus, my own perspective on NSMs in general and *Autonomia* in particular is predominantly influenced by autonomist Marxism, while recognising its limitations.

NOTES

[1] Pete Baumann's web page, 3.01, [web: http://members.es.tripod.de/pete_baumann/autonomial.html].

[2] Although Cleaver (2000 [1979]) was the first to formulate this version of 'dissident' Marxism, it has not always met with the approval of Italian operaists and post-operaists, such as Negri, who tend to resist such a categorisation and regard themselves simply as 'Marxists who have reread Marx' (Partridge, 1981).

[3] See Wright (2002) for an analysis of the development of 'operaism' and Italian autonomist Marxism.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHOD AND SCOPE

"and so they started the gradual removal from the cupboard to the boots of the cars I was wretched I knew I'd never see my archive again it would rot in the cellar of some police station or court house it would vanish just as in years to come all the comrades archives would vanish deliberately destroyed by them all the newspapers all the magazines all the leaflets all the documents all the posters all the publications of the movement destroyed vanished all bundled in cardboard boxes and plastic rubbish bags and burned or thrown on rubbish tips tons of printed matter the written history of the movement its memory dumped among refuse consigned to the flames through the fear of repression a fear well justified because all it took then was a leaflet found in a search to put you in prison for a year or two" (Balestrini 1989, p87)

1) Introduction

In the previous chapter I identified autonomist Marxism as my predominant theoretical perspective on NSMs by critically evaluating the contributions of NSMT and classical and neo-Marxism. I have therefore chosen to research *Autonomia* from a 'critically sympathetic' viewpoint. In this chapter, the method and scope of my research on *Autonomia* as a new social movement is identified by firstly outlining some of the main premises and problems related to research questions, methodologies and strategies. Secondly, a critical evaluation of the research methodologies used by NSMT attempts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of previous research on Italian NSMs and *Autonomia*. Thirdly, the method and scope of this research project is outlined, consisting of a combination of life history method-influenced semi-structured in-depth interviews with *Autonomia* activists and non-*Autonomia* observers to produce an oral history based on 'collective historical memory'; the analysis and use of primary source documents and texts produced by *Autonomia*; and the analysis and use of secondary sources produced at the time or since on *Autonomia*. The problems related to these particular methods and the consequent limitations to the scope of the thesis are also discussed. The central research question and its related theory questions concerning the four main themes of the thesis - the refusal of work, political organisational forms, counter-culture and antagonist communication, and the use of political violence – are then outlined. Finally, following a comparison of the main types of research model in the social sciences, a

specific research strategy, based more on validity than reliability given the limited scope of the research project, was adopted to operationalise the working hypothesis outlined in chapter one.

2) Premises and problems: research questions, methodologies and strategies

In order to construct a valid research methodology and strategy, based on a series of research questions and a working hypothesis, the premises and problems connected with the definition of the research object, the reflexivity of the researcher and their relation with the research object need to be explored. Looking firstly at the issue of the researcher's affinity with the research object, much has been written on the dangers of the researcher's direct emotional and personal involvement with the research subject and the distortions and bias that can result (Melucci 1988). Classical empiricist and positivist social scientific methodology requires the researcher to distance themselves from the topic of research in order to achieve an 'objectively' critical approach, so minimising interference with and manipulation of the process of gathering and analysing data from primary sources by the prejudices and preconceptions of the researcher, consciously or otherwise (May 1997). However, as 'subjectivist' and 'idealist' theorists have posited, such an 'objectivist' approach may hide the role of social scientists as 'central social actors' themselves in a research process which is fundamentally at odds with positivism and empiricism's attempt to transfer the laws of natural science to social science. The aim of social research, therefore, should not be the empirical gathering and validification of 'facts' but the hermeneutic interpretation of human behaviours and the meanings with which social actors invest them (ibid). Indeed, a certain level of 'personal involvement' by the researcher in the research object is both implicit and motivational, providing the researcher does not try to hide or deny influences based on interests, values, ideologies, theories and prejudices, but makes them explicit in order to expose their implications for the research (Ford et al. 1995).

Research on a still highly contentious and politically 'hot' issue such as *Autonomia* makes the issue of personal involvement by the researcher even more relevant. This is partially due to the fractious relations between the intellectuals of *Autonomia*, some of whom remain in prison or exile, and those of the DS (ex-PCI)[1]. The latter have tended to hegemonise the presentation of recent Italian history, particularly in the academy and to a certain extent in the mass media, as one of deviance, subversion and terrorism, or at best of the ultimate

futility of social movement mobilisation, compared to participation in the established political parties, as a means of effecting social and political change. This in turn leads to the definitive question regarding the partiality of the social researcher: 'which side are you on?'

This of course was the very question asked of the intellectuals associated with *Autonomia* by their judges during the 'judicialisation' of Italian social contestation in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Ruggiero 1997). Initially there would seem to be only two possible answers, both then and now: 'with the state' or 'with *Autonomia*'. In reality, there were many 'sides', both within the state and *Autonomia*, neither of which were homogenous entities. Nor were the political parties and trade unions of the institutional and New Left, who attempted or refused to mediate, depending on their fluctuating political agendas. As far as possible, the researcher should remain 'neutral' in such a conflictual scenario, primarily to gain access both to human and textual primary sources from as many different perspectives as are necessary to ensure the validity and reliability of research outcomes.

In the case of *Autonomia*, there is also the question of the criminalisation of a whole intellectual tradition, namely the 'operaism' and autonomist Marxism rooted in the experience of a series of journals and newspapers from the early 1960s onwards. This process of intellectual marginalisation was personified by the apparent persecution from 1979 onwards of Negri and other academics from the Faculty of Political Science at Padua University by judges linked to the PCI. Negri's conviction on the charges of 'criminal association' in the organisation of terrorist acts, an accusation founded almost entirely on the judges' interpretations of his theoretical writings, caused his then publisher, Feltrinelli, to recall all his publications from sale to be pulped (Negri, 1997). The result has been a fear among Italian academics of researching or even of talking publicly of *Autonomia* and indeed of the whole period of the 1970s, now often considered by 'revisionist' intellectuals as obsolete and irrelevant in the post-Cold War era, a 'growing pain' of Italy's transition from a South European backwater to the world's fifth economic power over the last 30 years. Furthermore, most of the present research on the 'collective historical memory' of the 1970s has been conducted by academics and activists close to *Autonomia* and its successors, the 'antagonist movement', the COBAS and the 'occupied social centres', most notably by the journal '*Per il '68*', with a wealth of interviews and primary texts now accessible through the internet[2]. Although partially mitigated by the above, there is also the issue of the

destruction of entire personal archives of primary sources by the archivists themselves during the repression of *Autonomia*, intimidated by the consequences of being caught in possession of textual materials then considered subversive and proof of involvement in criminal conspiracies against the state, as graphically recounted in Balestrini's (1989) fictionalised account of a group of *Autonomia* activists in the Milan hinterland.

As a non-Italian my research methodology is also influenced by 'standpoint feminism', which emphasises the possibilities for women social researchers as 'strangers' in the public realm:

> "The stranger brings to her research just the combination of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference, that are central to maximizing objectivity. Moreover, the 'natives' tend to tell a stranger some kinds of things they would never tell each other; further, the stranger can see patterns of belief or behaviour that are hard for those immersed in the culture to detect." (Harding 1991, p124; cited in May 1997, p21)

This quotation is used cautiously as the researcher in my case is neither a woman nor a complete stranger to the world of Italian autonomist collectives with which he was politically involved in the late 1980s while living in Turin. However, feminist methodologies generally criticise the myth of academic 'disengagement', presenting social research instead as a two-way process that the researcher's past experiences necessarily both motivate and affect, as do those of the researched (May 1997). The biographical link of the researcher with their research object impinges on facilitating access to interviewees and primary texts, but also renders the reliability of their interpretation more questionable from an empiricist viewpoint.

3) Research methodologies on Italian new social movements

Reflexive research is based on the filtration and interpretation by social theory of the data and findings produced by methodology. The methodological approach of the main social movement theorists towards Italian NSMs will be critically evaluated. The aim of this section is to explore the debate over the validity of different methodologies of research on NSMs, before concluding with the reasons for my choice of research methodologies and strategy in the final section of this chapter. The research methodologies chosen as most representative were Tarrow's RMT-based empirical data analysis from a 'newspaper of

record', Touraine's 'sociological intervention', Melucci's 'provisional alliance' form of participant observation, and della Porta's use of life histories.

The debate continues among social movement and collective action researchers over the validity and reliability of qualitative versus quantitative data, the argument following similar lines to the rest of the social sciences. However, probably the majority of social movement researchers have used qualitative methods based on the interpretation of meanings, rather than the analysis of quantitative data. This could be accounted for by the relative lack of reliable official statistics on political protest and collective action, and the often contentious nature of those that exist. Another reason is that the study of collective action necessarily relies on mainly textual and discursive primary sources produced by the social actors involved. However, there have been recent attempts to use a more rigorously empiricist approach (Tarrow 1989), adopting a primarily quantitative approach based on the interpretation of data from a single 'newspaper of record' through which a discrete 'cycle of protest' in Italy from 1968 to 1973 was identified. However, such reliance on a single source of data, such as a 'newspaper of record', which itself can be considered more as an actor in the social and political conflicts than a neutral observer of events (a fact which Tarrow admits) leads him to ignore or minimise the emergence of the politically and culturally more radical cycle of social conflict during the mid to late 1970s. Tarrow should have extended his periodisation to at least 1978 to gain a complete picture of the 'long wave' of the Italian '68 and its impact on the social and political development of contemporary Italian society.

Tarrow's methodology is based on an empiricist mix of social theories from RMT and social constructionism. His strategy was to:

> "study empirically the actions of protesters and their interactions with others and with authorities over time in order to see to what extent the magnitude and the forms of social and political conflict observed fit this model of participation, movement organization, competition, violence, and decline." (Tarrow 1989, p27)

Influenced by Gamson (1990 [1975]) and Tilly's (1975, 1978, 1984) broad conception of collective action, patterns of collective behaviour and processes of mobilisation and demobilisation, Tarrow (1989, p28) was also interested in their use of newspaper and documentary sources, "able to relate accounts of collective action to the reactions of elites, opponents and allied groups over time". Following the example of Tilly, he used newspaper

sources to study both "qualitative and quantitative aspects of (...) protest events over time", and like Gamson, he was more interested in the outcomes than the internal dynamics and subjective processes of protest (ibid.). Tarrow accepts Melucci's criticism of his methodology that:

> "what is observed (...) is in fact the product of the relations and meanings that constitute the structure of the action. The event of protest is the objectified result (...) of a texture of meanings and relationships, of a constructive process which is the basis of the action." (ibid.)

However, Tarrow (1989, p28-29) does not agree with Melucci's conclusion that such "objectified results" are unimportant and unrelated to a NSM's "subjective" relations and meanings, as it may lead to "outcomes that either satisfy or disillusion people with collective action [and] because it is visible, not only to the observer, but, more important, to the elites, opponents, and potential supporters who make decisions and take actions about the movement."

He concludes that since it is "publicly observable collective action [that] interests [him], the public newspaper record is almost an obligatory source of data" where techniques of computerised interactive data entry and retrieval allow for textual analysis as well as for the quantitative content analysis of newspaper records (Tarrow 1989, p29). The newspaper-based data were extracted from what Tarrow considers to be Italy's "main national newspaper of record" for the period researched, *Il Corriere della Sera*. Tarrow (1989, p30) admits, however, that it may be seen by some as "an arm of the Italian establishment" and thus hardly objective or neutral on the issue of radical oppositional social movements, but is still valid as a source of data "if we posit that the responses of elites and authorities to protest are conditioned by previous protests, what better instrument could we want than the newspaper that they read?"

Beyond the immediate criticism that this is a rigidly empiricist, not to say positivist, way to study such an internally complex and externally diffuse phenomenon as social movements, this statement reveals Tarrow's over-riding focus on the instrumental response of elites to social movement protest actions, to the apparent detriment of an accurate record of the subjective motivations of individual participants constructing collective identities and pursuing strategic political goals through involvement in social movement protest actions.

Tarrow (1989, p30) justifies his choice of newspaper of record for four reasons, the first of which is that "it is the oldest independent national newspaper (...) and has the ambition of being a newspaper of record", although he does not clearly define what he means by 'independent'. The second reason given is that it was "politically moderate and not controlled by [any] single party or movement" (ibid.), again a contentious claim given the private ownership of the paper, the owners' likely political sympathies and economic interests, and the fact that it was so hated by much of the Milan social movement sector for the perceived bias of its news coverage and editorial stance that its head office became a regular target for violence during demonstrations and riots in the 1970s. Thirdly, being published in Milan, it was 'close to the heartland of both industrial and general social protest'; and fourthly, being read by northern Italian business circles, it contained a wide coverage of industrial conflict, but then so did many newspapers, including those of the institutional and extraparliamentary Left. Tarrow acknowledges the well-known risks of relying on newspaper reports of protest and concludes by qualifying his use of this source, in that a newspaper of record:

> "provides a general framework in which to analyze the forms of collective action [which] is the starting point for (...) analysis, rather than its boundary, thus needing to be enriched through comparison with other textual sources such as movement documents, statistical records, and interviews with observers and former participants." (Tarrow 1989, p31)

Melucci, in common with most collective action sociologists, has concentrated his research on contemporary NSMs. Consequently, he has developed a form of participant observation, 'provisional alliance', based on a fundamental critique of Touraine's (1985) investigative model of 'sociological intervention'. By intervening directly in the processes of 'self-production' and reflection within the anti-nuclear and ecological movements as part of his project to discover the principal oppositional movement within post-industrial society, Touraine claimed that sociological research could "help people at the grass roots to launch a more successful and effective struggle for social change" through a mutually beneficial exchange of expertise and information (Papadakis 1989, p237). These attempts to intervene directly in the internal dynamics of social movements were generally met with suspicion if not outright hostility by participants, concerned to protect the autonomy of their organisations from what were seen as authoritarian and manipulative interventions from academics identified as allied to or compromised by the very institutions of power that the

social movements were contesting (ibid). Melucci has criticised sociological intervention as comparable to 1950s' North American 'action research' methodology, which placed the researcher in a 'missionary role' and led to the risk of confusing objective scientific research with subjective political agitation. Furthermore, Touraine had not sufficiently addressed the problem of the researcher-actor relationship, so ignoring the distorting effects of affective dynamics (Melucci 1989). However, Melucci's empiricist rejection of the researcher as a social actor in their own right and of research as an experience involving real relationships with other social actors in favour of an unproblematised emphasis on academic objectivity and detachment, also seems to deal inadequately with affective dynamics. A conscious decision to 'neutralise' them, so creating what he admits to being an 'artificial environment', can also lead to distortions in the data produced from participant observation. Melucci's answer to this issue is a formally agreed 'provisional alliance' between actors and researcher, involving a mutually beneficial interchange of research data (information) and feedback on the state of the NSM researched (knowledge), but in a much more detached fashion than Touraine's sociological intervention and with no attempt to create 'natural' conditions. This exchange of knowledge and information is an 'alliance' in that both sides potentially gain from the experience and 'provisional' in that it is temporary and the artificiality of the researcher-actor relationship under these conditions is formally recognised, as is the researcher's decision to focus on the processes rather than the content of the observed social interactions. However, as with sociological intervention, it remains problematic in its essential instrumentality as a research method.

Della Porta, who has written several studies on Italian social movements and violence in the 1970s (1988, 1990, 1994, 1995), is well known for her use of the 'life-history method' (LHM), where, in common with in-depth interviews:

> "the source of information (...) is the activist (…) attention is focused on individual experience (…) questionnaires are not normally used [and] no attempt is made to codify the information resulting from interviews and the latter are not analysed through quantitative techniques." (della Porta 1992, p168-9).

They are "based on oral in-depth interviews [conducted] within the frame of a research project (...) involve interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee [and] a scientific intention in the telling of a story" (ibid.). Having distinguished LHM from some overlapping approaches such as personal documentation, the use of biographical materials, life career and

autobiography, della Porta (1992, p169) identifies its advantages as a research method on collective action, particularly for the sociology of political activism in terms of "understanding cognitive framing and motivational processes".

LHM belongs to the tradition of oral history, whose use has been twofold: to offer "'alternative' sources of information concerning political events or organisations [and provide] material for the study of mentalities and political cultures" (ibid, p170). Several oral histories of left-wing social movement activism in the 1960s and 1970s in Italy have been carried out, for example by Novelli and Tranfaglia (1988), focusing on "generational conflict (...) the diffusion of symbolic violence, the escalation in the forms of action (...) the evolution - through fission and secession - of the New Left" (della Porta 1992, p170). Della Porta (1992, p171-2) shifts her attention to "mentalities, symbols and ideologies", and to the "systematic distortions of reality which are thereby introduced into narrations [where] research aims not at grasping 'reality' but rather at its perception". She identifies Montaldi's (1971) highly influential study, *Militanti politici di base* (Rank-and-file political militants), as:

> "an early example of a research strategy centred on the analysis of memory and imagery [where] the author traces the language and attitudes of the interviewees back to their ideological beliefs, and tries to explain the latter by looking at the wider social context, [showing] that general ideological principles make 'sense' in the narrow context of the power relations that the activists experience in their everyday lives." (della Porta 1992, p172)

In Passerini's 1988 study (cited in della Porta 1992, p172) of former members of left-wing underground groups, "attention shifts (...) from the 'factual level', to the 'psychological and symbolic dimension', to 'history' which includes the symbolic sphere and the mentalities, the 'strategies of the imagination', the 'stages of the imagery', and the 'silences'."

Studies of social movement activism based on oral histories and LHM have shown the need for sources independent of 'official' ones, that "take into account the perspective of the actors involved" and understand "the way in which history is transformed in individual cognition, how public events intervene in private life, and how perceptions of the world influence action" (della Porta 1992, p173). Della Porta has used LHM to highlight the roles of primary, secondary and political socialisation processes, social networks and movement counter-cultures on influencing and radicalising political behaviour, and ultimately to seek

the answer to a question that seems to obsess many Italian new social movement theorists: "how and why do 'normal' political activists end up being 'terrorists'?" (ibid., p174). She concludes that:

> "life histories offer useful material in showing how the interplay between reality and its perception in the creation of meanings and motivations - that is, 'the social construction of reality' (Bergman and Luckmann 1966) – occurs." (della Porta 1992, p180).

The main difficulties for sociologists with the use of LHM are identified as the reliability of the sources, the representativeness of samples, the comparability of the results of interviews, and the degree of manipulation in the presentation and the interpretation of results (della Porta 1992). Regarding the first problem of reliability, oral historians have pointed to the similar unreliability of supposedly more 'objective' written sources such as biased official statistics, and selectivity in the reporting of information. Suggested remedies include: discussing the internal incongruities of the narration with the interviewees themselves; comparing different biographies; using an inter-disciplinary approach to separate the 'real' from the interviewees' interpretation (which begs the question of on what basis does the researcher perform this separation); applying communication theory to the life histories to control the interactions between interviewer and interviewee; checking the data from the interviewees' with those from other sources, such as mass-media accounts, movement documents, interviews with (undefined) 'experts', police statistics and trial records, which may well be heavily distorted themselves (ibid.). Regarding the reliability problems produced by the interviewee's "collective clichés", "individual preferences", and the neurophysical and psychological distortions of memory, it is claimed these can be countered by knowing that:

> "[S]ocial movement activists have characteristic patterns of 'distortion' in their narrative, such as the presence of non-common oratorical skills, (...) a very strong tendency to look for justifications for their behaviour (...) in line with their political and ideological beliefs, and to link their own individual choices to an historical - class or generational - destiny [resulting in a tendency] to avoid (...) describing their private life, and to concentrate on the social characteristics of the environment and on their 'political' biography (...) [Thus] life histories are better suited for recounting an activist's perception than the 'reality' itself." (della Porta 1992, p182).

The second problem identified is the virtual impossibility of achieving pure representativeness in a sample of life histories, due to the over-riding fact that the 'universe

of activists is rarely known' and the practical problems related to LHM, such as that of finding enough activists, particularly from the most radical NSMs (like *Autonomia*), available to tell their biographies, caused by the "widespread general mistrust of sociological studies" and the "mistrust of the attempt to understand political choices through private events" (ibid.). There are also the practical problems of the time and expense of carrying out, transcribing, translating and presenting a number of life histories adequate for a representative sample, which della Porta puts at around 50. She claims that the related problems of the representativeness of the sample and the generalisibility of the results can be overcome if certain criteria are followed, namely that "participants should be selected on the basis of the relevance of their experience, a sufficient expressive capacity and an interest in the research", participants from as many social 'types' (social groups, generations, genders, political affiliations, forms of participation) should be represented and that "[l]ife histories should be collected until a 'saturation of knowledge' occurs" (Bertaux 1981, cited in della Porta 1992, p183). Here, della Porta can be criticised for her apparently exclusive use of ex-terrorists who have either 'repented' (co-operated with the police in implicating others) or 'disassociated' themselves publicly from their previous political activities, opening her to the accusation of promoting a distorted version of Italy's recent past, despite her claim to use non-official sources.

On the issue of the comparability of the results of different life histories and the process of selection inevitably operating during the interview, whose "outcome is strongly influenced by the (...) interaction between (...) interviewer (...) and interviewee", the following course of action is suggested: an outline used for orientating different interviewees on the same range of topics; questions relating to family background, composition, educational atmosphere, school experience and peer groups, aimed at bringing out the "evolution of political commitment" and the "meaning of political choices in everyday life" (della Porta 1992, p184). Careful preparation of the interviewer and the location for the interview, contracting reciprocal limits and rights, and a standardisation of procedures and questions could all help to improve comparability, although, since the results are greatly affected by the quality of the interviewer-interviewee relationship, true standardisation is "virtually impossible" (ibid.).

Regarding the problem of the "high degree of subjectivity in the interpretation and presentation of results" (ibid.), two possible solutions to guarantee a more objective

interpretation are indicated: analysing life histories with the help of quantitative methods and publishing the interviews exactly as they are recorded. Della Porta (1992, p185-6) rejects both as "extremist" and opts instead for "restructuring" the interview data along chronological or thematic lines. She also recommends the use of "summaries" of the interviews, based on a semi-codified scheme, to ensure a more objective treatment and rationale to the selection of those parts of the interview to be presented (ibid.).

Finally, the validity of LHM is compared with other qualitative research methods on collective action, including in-depth interviews, surveys, content analysis of the movement's press, participant observation, network analysis, and experimental techniques. In-depth interviewing offers advantages over LHM if the aim of research is to gather information on political organisations and social movements, being less time-consuming, and because 'the more oriented towards public events a research project is, the less useful the life-history technique' (della Porta 1992, p187). If the aim is to collect information about organisational processes, participant observation is a more adequate technique. Thus, LHM is "more suitable for the research of the cultural and symbolic dimensions of a social movement" (ibid.). Regarding comparable methods to LHM, opinion polls "can offer reliable and quantifiable information on the perception and value-orientation of activists"; content analysis "can provide a detailed description of the ideologies involved (...) through the indirect method of observation"; experimental research design "tends to concentrate on an analysis of movement identity"; and network analysis "provide[s] better information concerning formal and informal organisational ties, but [has] less to say about the quality of personal affective ties" (ibid.). She concludes that:

> "In comparison with these techniques, life histories produce better knowledge concerning that series of phenomena which lie in the margins between private and public, real and imaginary, subjective and objective. They permit understanding not only of individual psychology, but also group phenomena; not only movement ideology, but also movement counterculture; not only organisational stories but also the dynamics of small networks. Where other techniques offer static images, life histories are better suited to describe processes (...) [T]he more a social movement (...) is embedded in a counterculture, the more life histories offer a favourite technique for the study of activist motivations." (della Porta 1992, p187-8)

She ends with a warning that LHM must be combined with sociological concepts and hypotheses to promote the selection of material from a vast potential bank of individual

experiences within collective action, otherwise through these "stories life appears to be deprived of relations and structures, and appears similar to a chaotic magma" (Gallino 1962, p68, cited in della Porta 1992, p188).

Her conclusion seems to tie in with my own need for a methodology that combines the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis, the private and the public spheres of collective action and individual motivation. However, the use of LHM alone would have its drawbacks, particularly the technical and practical problems it poses in terms of the huge investment in time and money to achieve a sample large enough to be valid in terms of comparability and representation. Overall, LHM seems to offer an appropriate approach as a research method, with its emphasis on individual psychology and cultural processes, to provide insights into a 'counter-cultural' NSM such as *Autonomia*, which can generally be said to have placed an emphasis on the importance of individuality within the collective experience of social struggle and was also influenced by the feminist belief that 'the personal is political'.

4) Research Method and Scope

Having evaluated the main research methodologies used in investigating Italian NSMs, I now outline my own research method and its scope, the research questions and my choice of research model. In the concluding section of the chapter I show how this research strategy combines with the autonomist Marxist theoretical perspective and methodology to form an overall research strategy. The research method chosen was a combination of primary sources from semi-structured in-depth interviews[3] with a LHM element included, and from documents and texts produced by *Autonomia* and related SMOs and NSMs. The findings produced were then compared and contrasted with those from secondary sources.

4.1) Interviews and 'Collective Historical Memory'

The main methodological problem related to the use of interviews is that of 'memory' and the temptation for previously involved actors to rationalise the past *ex-post*, consciously or otherwise, in order to present a modified, enhanced image of themselves and of the movement or organisation in which they participated. The debate over the validity and reliability of remembered accounts and of the distortions produced by the neuro-physiological processes of memory itself continues (see above quotations from della Porta

1992). In the case of this thesis the memory distortion process was further exacerbated by the distortions produced by the translation of interview transcriptions from Italian into English, since no two languages, no matter how well translated, can be perfectly matched. Furthermore, the 'distance' from events involved with a historical method meant that it was difficult to identify and compensate for such distortions. However, there is less doubt over the cultural value of oral history in presenting new versions of past events, often from a grass-roots perspective, which often jar with and help to problematise official accounts, themselves the products of partial retellings and slanted interpretations of social phenomena. In Italy there has been a revived interest among both present and past NSM activists and sympathetic academics and intellectuals in recuperating and reassessing the oral and scriptural 'collective historical memory' of the 1970s, reflected in a surge of alternative print and cyber publishing in 1997/98 on the 20th and 30th anniversaries of the '77 and '68 Movements, partially to oppose a prevalent historical revisionism which now minimises the importance of that era, partially to pass on some important lessons to a new generation of activists.

A further problem connected with 'historical memory' can be described as the opposite of the above: an unwillingness or a difficulty in remembering or of wishing to recount the past due to feelings of guilt or trauma related to the events themselves, from an inability to come to terms with the past resulting in its wholesale rejection, or simply from a desire to put an experientially powerful past which may threaten to dominate the present behind you in order to live in the here and now. The 'removal' (*rimozione*) of the past has been one of the chief characteristics of ex-1970s NSM actors, a behaviour that interacted with the supposed 'Reaganite hedonism' and 'new individualism' of the 1980s. However, even among those who have not renounced their past activism, 'remembering' can be problematic:

> "After I was acquitted I was asked a lot to reread events from my point of view, and it's something I have never wanted to do, because I believe that a history must be recreated that is not a judicial history of those years. But I don't know why I don't feel like being the one to do it. When I wrote an article on the feminist movement in Italy in the 1970s, it took me a year to do it. I really don't want to reflect on those years, it was very heavy for me. I had many uncertainties about making judgements, for example, even if the Seventies were marvellous for me."[4]

From a social scientific viewpoint, the partiality of even structured interviews and their openness to manipulation by both interviewee and interviewer tends to make them a problematic primary source on most subjects, but above all with those where there may be some former or continuing involvement by the researcher. Also influenced by Montaldi's (1971) *conricerca* methodology, whereby the researcher and the researched collaborate to find common meanings and interpretations, I used a combination of semi-structured in-depth interviews and a structured interview questionnaire to generate primary qualitative data. Both types of interviews were divided between questions dealing with 'life history' and others directly related to the main research themes[5]. The aim of the interviews was not to gather quantifiable data on past events, but to reconstruct qualitatively the internal political dynamics, social composition and historical trajectory of a social movement from the perspective and through the experiences of the individual actors.

A total of 24 interviews with informants from Milan, Padua, Venice, Rome, Turin, Bologna, Livorno, Naples and Bari were conducted. There were two group interviews, both in Milan, while the others were individual, two of which were conducted via email. All but three of the interviews were conducted during two field trips to Italy in 1998 and 1999. I have also supplemented the data with a further 24 internet-published interviews with informants from Milan, Rome and Padua. The 28 interviews published in C.Del Bello (1997), mainly from Rome *Autonomia* but including one with the "enemy" ex-DC Interior Minister and later President Cossiga, were also referred to, but are not included in the table below since their geographical origin was not always clear. The sampling was geographically based due to *Autonomia*'s 'localist' nature, in an attempt to reflect the divergent political, ideological and social composition tendencies within the movement: Rome and Padua were dominated by Organised Workers' Autonomy (OWA), Milan by 'diffused' *Autonomia* and Bologna by 'creative' *Autonomia*, while the other cities and regions were a mixture of all three tendencies with 'diffused' *Autonomia* the dominant tendency. Most of those interviewed were former 'core' activists, rather than intellectuals or 'leaders', given that the writings of *Autonomia*'s intelligentsia on the 1970s have been profuse and are widely available in both Italian and English. Most informants were also involved in OWA, mainly because this part of ex-*Autonomia* is more visible and accessible today, while demobilisation was stronger in other sectors. Only two informants had been involved in the area of 'armed' *Autonomia*. The reluctance of informants from this

background to come forward is partially explained by the continuing legal process regarding those involved in acts of terrorism during the 1970s, further complicated by the emergence since 1999 of a 'new' Red Brigades. Only two non-*Autonomia* informants were interviewed due to logistical problems, although published interviews with other non-*Autonomia* informants are referred to. However, a significant minority of those ex-activists interviewed was highly critical of *Autonomia*, while all of those interviewed readily adopted a self-critical stance towards both *Autonomia* and their own activism. As well as questions relating to the four main themes of the thesis, a list of individual 'life history' questions was included in order to invite informants to reflect on their experience in *Autonomia* from a personal and expressive perspective rather than one of the abstract theoretical detachment typical of male Marxist political discourse. Furthermore, I was concerned that their analysis should not be overly 'top down' and macro, so that meso and micro level insights, anecdotes and analyses could emerge. A further shortcoming in the interview process was that only four women were interviewed, which was an inadequate reflection of the level of women's activism within *Autonomia*. Again logistical and resource problems were partially responsible: potential women informants were much harder to find and some of those who were invited to give interviews either refused or preferred to be interviewed 'off record', possibly feeling diffident towards a male researcher. However, the same lack of female representativity was even greater among Internet-published interviews, thus casting doubt on whether female participation in *Autonomia* was really as high as some male informants claimed, although C.Del Bello (1997) contains 10 women interviewees out of 32[6]. The relative lack of a 'female memory' on *Autonomia* reflects a historical tendency in all societies for that voice to be silenced or ignored, alienated from or conflated (along social class lines) with male discourse, even among the autonomous libertarian Left. I attempted to offset these imbalances and gaps by privileging the use of interviews from other sources for these categories of informants, although only one further Internet interview with a woman activist was found. Thus, I do not claim that the interview sample is representative of its local population, which would be hard to calculate as *Autonomia* was not a formal membership organisation and there are no records of numerical participation, apart from court transcripts, which are unreliable given their overtly political nature[7]. The interviews, therefore, represent more a cross-section of the different tendencies within the movement than a representational numerical

sampling. (See figure 1 below for a breakdown of the interview sample by region, political tendency and gender.)

Figure 1: Distribution of interview sample (internet interviews in brackets)

City /Region	Organised Autonomia	Diffused Autonomia	Creative Autonomia	Armed Autonomia	Non-Autonomia	Men	Women	TOTAL
Milan & Lombardy	1 (1)	8 (3)			1 (3)	7 (7)	3	10 (7)
Padua & Veneto	3 (11)	3			1	6 (11)	1	7 (11)
Rome	1 (2)	1 (1)			(3)	2 (5)	(1)	2 (6)
Bologna			1			1		1
Turin	1					1		1
Central Italy		1				1		1
Southern Italy				2		2		2
TOTAL	6 (14)	13 (4)	1	2	2 (6)	20 (23)	4 (1)	24 (24)

I allowed the interviewees flexibility in answering questions so that debate and discussion could develop, particularly in the group interviews. I attempted to achieve a number of interviews that was both sufficiently ample to be representative of the different forms of *Autonomia* and manageable enough to compare and contrast factual discrepancies, opinions and biases between and within informants. The informants were chosen for their known expert interest in, knowledge of or previous involvement with *Autonomia*. The average length of the interviews was ninety minutes, which was sufficient time to cover both the main research questions and the individual 'life history' questions in depth. Although I had anticipated that some of the informants would prefer to remain anonymous, in fact no one specifically requested it. However, I have only quoted the names of informants who are recognised public figures in Italy, otherwise referring to the informants on the basis of their geographic origin. Most of the interviews were carried out on two field trips to Italy in 1998 and 1999, during which other qualitative data was collected from archives[8]. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Italian and I translated the transcripts. This is mentioned in

references to interview data so the reader can be aware of the possibility for translation distortion.

4.2) Documents and texts

Given the problems caused by the limited reliability of translated interview data concerning the past, the main primary source for research was therefore textual: namely, the vast body of literature (books, journals, newspapers, bulletins, documents, transcripts from 'free radio' station broadcasts, leaflets, court depositions, graffiti and slogans) produced by *Autonomia* activists in the 1970s and 1980s, much of which is now available through websites. The even larger body of secondary textual sources forms the third angle in the triangulation process of research verification. This source is mostly composed of historical self-analyses and critiques of *Autonomia* as a movement by former activists and movement intellectuals. Furthermore, there is the secondary literature produced at the time and since by outside observers, academics, intellectuals and journalists. To summarise, qualitative data from the following primary textual sources was analysed and interpreted:

i) Leaflets, newspapers, periodicals and audio-visual materials produced by *Autonomia* during the period researched.

ii) Websites, a CD and email lists containing documents from and interviews on *Autonomia* in the 1970s.

iii) Articles on *Autonomia* published at the time by national 'newspapers of record' (*La Republica*, *La Stamp* and *Il Corriere della Sera*) and New Left dailies (*Il Manifesto*, *Lotta Continua*, *Il Quotidiano dei Lavoratori*).

iv) Extracts from court documents and transcripts of court proceedings relating to the '7th April' trials.

Problems with analysing the usefulness of the primary and secondary textual sources began with locating them, particularly those primary sources that had not been consulted before or were still being organised. Happily, a network of archives established by social movement activists and intellectuals still exists throughout Italy, based in various 'occupied social centres' and 'free radio stations', which facilitated access to collections of journals and newspapers from the 1970s. Access to these archives, as well as those in the UK and elsewhere outside Italy, was not a problem, given the researcher's contacts, as well as the availability of both primary and secondary texts on various websites. The Calusca City

Lights bookshop and archive in the Conchetta social centre in Milan contained probably the most complete collection of primary sources associated with the Italian 'libertarian left' social movements of the 1970s, including *Autonomia* and its related ideological traditions of Italian *operaism* and autonomist Marxism. The Red Notes and Texas Autonomist Marxism archives contained photocopies of rare materials unavailable elsewhere as well as complete catalogues.

Further problems with these primary texts are the closely related ones of language and bias. *Autonomia* was often characterised by its innovatory and hybrid use of Marxist terminology and libertarian discourse to break down, transcend and sometimes ridicule the categories and idioms of both historical, orthodox Marxism and of New Left (NL) 'revolutionary' Marxism Leninism. However, some of the more convoluted pieces by Negri and other intellectuals manage to be of an almost impenetrable density and highly prone to the neo-Leninist jargon of '*politichese*', ironically the *lingua franca* of the Italian libertarian left social movements, despite their sharp disagreements with the Marxist Leninist parties and groups. Nevertheless, linguistic innovation and communicative experimentation was particularly practiced by the 'creative' tendency centred on the free radio stations, the 'metropolitan indians', the 'proletarian youth circles' and the feminists of the '77 Movement. However, not all the movement practiced self-criticism or reflexivity with enthusiasm, resulting in sometimes bitter sectarianism between the different factions of *Autonomia* as well as with the NL organisations and the Historical Left (HL). The HL was identified, particularly after its tremendous rupture with the '77 Movement, as the 'new police', an 'absolute enemy' that had betrayed the working class and its movements to bail out the capitalist state at its most vulnerable moment. A further problem was the sheer volume of texts and transcripts available to the researcher, forcing severe limits in the selection and editing processes in order to identify potential answers to research questions. Thus, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) helped to identify the sub-text of messages, signs, symbols, myths, meanings and negotiations, both within the movement and with the rest of organised civil society, the political parties and the state. Finally, the risks of distortion and bias in interpreting documents and texts that are deeply embedded in a specific historical context meant that, as with the interview data, the validity of the research outcomes was far stronger than their reliability. The data was reliable enough to make 'localised' generalisations about Italy, but not to be able to make generalisations about broader populations.

4.3) Research questions

Following Wengraf's (2001) comparative semi-structured depth interviewing research model, a central research question, instrumental to the operationalisation of the hypothesis outlined in chapter one, was identified:

What is the political, social, cultural, theoretical and historical significance of the Italian new social movement of the 1970s called *Autonomia*?

This was then broken down into a series of 'theory questions', which formed the basis of both the interview questionnaire and textual analysis:

1) What are the different meanings of the term 'autonomy', both in its individual and collective senses? How do these apply to *Autonomia*?

2) What was *Autonomia*? Can it be considered as a separate social movement or was it an 'archipelago' of loosely interlinked SMOs, a political tendency within a broader coalition of the NSMs of women, youth, students and 'non-guaranteed' workers?

3) What accounts for the different forms of autonomy within *Autonomia* ('workers' autonomy', 'organised autonomy', 'creative autonomy', 'diffused social autonomy', and 'armed autonomy')? Did these collectively amount to a new form of 'post-political' politics (Lotringer and Marazzi 1980), or were they more a continuation and intensification of New Left 'revolutionary politics'?

4) What was the relation between the 'autonomous' project of *Autonomia* and the new social movements, and the 'hegemonic' project of the institutional Left (PCI and trade unions)?

5) What was the relationship between *Autonomia* and other allied NSMs (students, feminists, homosexuals, anti-nuclear, New Left, '77 Movement)?

6) What was the 'refusal of work'? How was it practiced by *Autonomia*?

7) How was the concept of 'autonomy' embedded within the various models of political organisation adopted within *Autonomia*?

8) To what extent was *Autonomia* a 'counter-cultural' movement? What forms of 'antagonist communication' and political language did it practice?

9) What was the relation between *Autonomia* and the organised political violence of the clandestine armed groups?

10) What were *Autonomia*'s long-term social, political and cultural effects and how are they discernible in contemporary Italian civil society and social relations?

4.4) Research model

In order to construct a research model to test the working hypothesis by endevouring to answer the above research questions, two research models were compared. The first step in the 'classical' model of research in the social sciences (Kidder and Judge 1986) is the construction of a theory about social relations, leading to a hypothesis. From this flows the development of a research strategy involving the operationalisation of the hypothesis, designing a study to demonstrate or refute the hypothesis, conducting it, data analysis, drawing conclusions, writing up and publishing the study. This model is adopted by Ford et al. (1995), based on an elaboration of dependent and independent variables, components and indicators. However, Popper (1972) ascertains that the aim of research is to refute rather than to confirm hypotheses since alternative explanations will always be available to prove hypotheses. Thus hypotheses, like theories, work in terms of theoretical constructs and are examined by research in two ways: as relations between constructs, and as relations between constructs and their indicators. Therefore, the problems of analysis and the drawing of conclusions are distinct from the process of designing the research and data collection.

Rose (1997) describes some of the key notions of the classical model of research, based on independent and dependent variables, construct, internal and external validity and reliability; that is, the extent to which measuring instruments tell the same story from one day to the next. The initial concern might be the exposition of either a practical problem or a conceptual interest. This is followed by a review of the literature to explore previous evidence and theorisation, leading to the adoption of a theory and the formulation of a hypothesis by deduction. The next stage is the design of the research and the selection of measuring instruments, followed by data collection, the analysis of the results, the drawing of conclusions and the publication of findings. Rose argues that this approach is better suited to the natural rather than the social and human sciences, as it represents a mythical account of a research plan. The variables in the social world are more difficult to isolate and test than in the natural world, on the basis that social reality has a fundamentally different character from the natural world and is defined by its participants and constructions. Thus, "if social reality is a question of meanings, then research must be a qualitative attempt to grasp meanings, not a quantitative attempt to test relationships" (ibid, p4).

In contrast, Silverman (1985) offers an alternative, inductive model of research, aiming to develop hypotheses that can be tested in a 'classical' way, as Glazer and Strauss' (1967) grounded research. There are five aspects to Silverman's alternative model, commencing with the birth of research from theoretical concerns, puzzling datum or from methodological questions. The literature review follows, aiming to identify ignored or under-researched areas, or to find failings in earlier work. Then comes the specification of the research problem, involving the discussion of such issues as the theoretical issue of interest, the research of macro or micro processes, and the use of naturally occurring data as opposed to the classical means of surveys, interviews and questionnaires, leading to the adoption of a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The study is then conducted and the choice of methods will be decided by the attempt to understand meanings and actions, involving the use of ethnographies or elaborated accounts of actors, meanings and contexts. The theoretical elements are allowed to emerge during the research process, with theory tending to refer to systematic accounts of relations between a limited number of variables in particular settings (Rose 1997). Finally, implications are explored dialogically as interpretations of the data and not as objective 'findings'.

My research model combines elements of both the deductive and inductive approaches. My hypothesis was deduced from previous readings, informal research and personal experience as a social movement activist, leading me to surmise that a noticeable gap existed in both Italian and English-language studies on Italian NSMs of the 1970s. *Autonomia*, one of the major movements of that era, had either been minimalised as residual and fundamentalist (Lumley 1990, della Porta 1996, Melucci 1996) and thus arbitrarily grouped with the completely separate phenomenon of the clandestine terrorist formations, or it had been researched by Italian movement intellectuals in an essentially partisan manner (Balestrini and Moroni, 1997[1988]; DeriveApprodi, 1997). The two approaches effectively represent opposed camps in a still active political-cum-academic debate. However, the process of qualitative data collection through interviews and textual analysis, combined with the necessary improvisations of fieldwork and the resulting data analysis, has led to constant modifications and reassessments of the original hypothesis. The qualitative nature of the research project and the difficulties of researching a movement still criminalised in the eyes of officialdom and mainstream opinion, added to the logistical problems of funding travel and research, led to the adoption of a flexible methodological approach, allowing for

improvisations such as the use of internet-published documents and interviews. Although a 'classical' model of research has been followed, the testing of hypotheses has interacted with and been reformulated by the research process.

5) Conclusion: towards an autonomist Marxist research strategy on new social movements

Autonomist Marxism is based to a large extent on Italian workerism (operaism), a 'dissident' form of Marxism which identified the theoretical weaknesses of classical Marxism, particularly its inability to recognize and analyse an emerging 'class composition', the (sometimes) migrant, fordist 'mass worker', in the late 1950s (Wright 2002). The operaists used a version of Marx's 'workers' enquiry' (a relatively empiricist form of collaborative social enquiry between researcher and researched, often carried out by the 'researched' themselves) to investigate the nature of this new 'class composition' and how and why it organised autonomously from trade unions and political parties in a growing wave of localised strikes and factory struggles in the early 1960s. So was born both a new form of Marxism and a new form of sociological enquiry, closely related to and influenced by Montaldi's *conricerca* (collaborative oral history) methodology, which was to evolve into Italian and eventually international autonomist Marxism by the end of the 1970s. Opposed to both classical and structuralist Marxism's predominantly 'top down', abstract and deterministic approach to social research, operaism and then autonomist Marxism envisaged social research as a politically significant action in which the researcher/research object divide had necessarily to be eliminated, where in fact the 'researched' were the 'researchers'. While seemingly opposed to any notion of scientific objectivity, this approach demanded in reality a high degree of reflexivity and self-criticism if politically as well as sociologically significant results were to be obtained. A militant group of autonomous factory workers would only be interested in co-operating with a sociologist in researching themselves if the result was a more effective form of organising struggles for a better quality of life. Thus, critical objectivity was based on direct social needs, rather than being an academic practice related to ideological (*viz* the ongoing theoretical conflict and competition for material resources and intellectual hegemony between Marxist, neoliberal and post-modern academics within the social sciences) or social-policy production goals, with the state or the economy as the usual intended beneficiaries. The operaist method had a superficial similarity with both 'social action' research methodology and Touraine's 'sociological

intervention'. However, the essential instrumentality of these two methodologies in which power relations between the researcher and the researched are never adequately resolved, separates them from the operaists' 'workers enquiry' and *conricerca*. Nevertheless, the emergence of the NSMs of students, women and urban youth as the 'new social subjects' to replace the industrial working class as capitalism's main antagonist invoked a crisis in operaism and its method of research, with some leading theorists and academics (most notably Tronti, Asor Rosa and Cacciari) returning to the fold of the PCI where 'workers' centrality' remained sacrosanct. Also within *Autonomia* (and still now within autonomist Marxism) there was debate and division around the issue of 'workers' centrality', with Negri adopting a post-operaist stance which favoured the NSMs, while Sergio Bologna and Revelli continued to focus on struggles at the point of production. Bologna sees *Autonomia* as in direct continuity with the 'workers' autonomy' of the 1950s and 1960s, focussing instead on the relation between the intellectual and technical elites within the overall movement for working class autonomy and the rest of the movement as the point of methodological intervention (Cuninghame 2001). The dispersion of new conflicts throughout the social territory in the 1970s made the 'workers' enquiry' approach more problematic and the intellectuals and academics most likely to conduct such research were either too occupied with political organisation or coping with the effects of repression, a situation which still continues today in the case of Negri. Negri has also been criticised for never effectively changing his neo-Leninist focus from production-related struggles to the NSMs (Katsiaficas 1997)[9], and for failing to provide empirical evidence for his theory on the post-Fordist 'socialised worker', (the successor to the 'mass worker' as the essential antagonist of capital from the mid 1970s) (Wright 1996). As Katsiaficas (1997) concludes, neither autonomist Marxism, nor radical feminism nor 'deep ecology' can fully explain the complexity of post-industrial and post-modern identities, desires, needs and struggles of 'autonomous social movements'. Sympathetic researchers therefore need to adopt a combination of all three perspectives in order to explain adequately such complex social phenomena. However, in practice and given the researcher's individual biases and interests, such a synthesis of sometimes profoundly contradictory theories would be hard if not impossible to achieve. More likely and probably more fruitful is a continuing dialectical debate between these theories and their accompanying methodologies on the nature and significance of 'autonomous social movements'.

Thus both autonomist Marxism and certainly Italian workerism have had an ambiguous and conflictual relationship with the study of NSMs and have yet to convincingly prove the link with notions of class struggle based on the capital-labour conflict. However, their methodological strategy, based on a critically reflexive and interactive collaboration between the researcher and the researched to find new politically and sociologically significant meanings, remains valid and underpins my research strategy. This seeks to combine autonomist Marxist and NSMT theoretical perspectives and methodologies to produce new findings on *Autonomia,* which hopefully will be of use to contemporary 'autonomous social movement' activists, as well as to those studying NSMs.

NOTES

[1] See glossary for an explanation of acronyms.

[2] See bibliography for a list of relevant websites used in research.

[3] See Wengraf 2001 for a complete description of this method.

[4] Informant from Padua, interviewed in Italian in June 1999.

[5] See Appendix 2 – Questionnaire.

[6] Several informants claimed that female participation in *Autonomia* was significantly higher than in the NL groups. A gender breakdown of one third female, two-thirds male was also proffered.

[7] However, some informants claimed that the different sectors of *Autonomia* had between one and two million participants nationally, making it second only to the PCI as the largest force on the Left.

[8] See bibliography for list of archives consulted.

[9] This criticism now seems outdated with the publication of *Empire* (Negri and Hardt, 2000), where Negri's analysis of globalisation seems more influenced by Foucauldian theory on 'bio-politics' than by Marxism.

CHAPTER FOUR:
WORKERS' AUTONOMY AND THE REFUSAL OF WORK

"Tutta la produzione all'automazione"

(Slogan of the'77 Movement)[1]

1) Introduction

This chapter deals with the historical core of *Autonomia*, namely the theory and practice of workers autonomy and the refusal of work from 1973 to 1980. These can be seen as an evolution of 'operaism' (Italian workerism) and the development of the autonomous workers movement (AWM)[2] that was researched in the *Quaderni Rossi* (QR)[3] and *Classe Operaia* (CO) journals in the 1960s and became massified during the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969. Having examined the theory and practice of 'workers autonomy' and the 'refusal of work', I will investigate the struggles of the *Assemblee Autonome Operaie* (AAO/autonomous workers assemblies) and their ambiguous relationship with the *consigli di fabbrica* (CDF/factory councils). The AWM saw itself as a 'resistance movement' against industrial and technological restructuration and its political basis, the 'Historical Compromise' between the PCI and the DC. Various forms of the refusal of work, wildcat strikes and industrial sabotage were the AWM's main 'weapons' in this struggle. Also examined is the AWM's relationship with non-industrial workers, particularly in the growing service sector and the radicalised sections of the professions, as well as with unpaid labour, like the 'house workers' of the 'operaist' section of the women's movement, the movements of the unemployed in the South, and the university and school students' movements.

As the AWM of the 'mass worker' began to lose ground in large-scale industrial conflicts, *Autonomia* became more involved in the conflicts of the 'socialised worker'[4] in the new, post-Fordist, 'diffused factory'; the decentralisation of the industrial economy into a network of medium and small factories, including 'black economy' sweatshops (*lavoro nero*) and the exploitation of family work, which permitted the creation of a non-unionised, flexible and 'intelligent' work force. A further section examines the increasingly conflictual relationship between the AWM and the PCI and its associated CGIL trade union confederation. This internecine struggle led to the disintegration of working class solidarity

within the factories and the expulsion by management and unions of the New Left (NL) and autonomist activists. Political repression combined with the growing tensions caused by post-Fordist automation, the decentralisation of production and its resultant mass redundancies, culminating in the debacle of the 'March of the 40,000'[5] and the defeat of the October 1980 FIAT strike - the event widely accepted as signifying the end of the post-1968 'long wave' of political and social upheaval. The chapter ends with a case study of what Negri (1979) termed the 'Workers Party of Mirafiori'; the strike and occupation of the giant FIAT plant in Turin by the 'Red Bandannas' (*fazzoletti rossi*), the most militant autonomous workers, in March 1973, representing the highpoint of the AWM.

For Melucci (1996, p209), the historical workers' movement was "a ritual reference point for collective action until the 1960s". The working class' antagonistic role in capitalist development ended when the problems of "industrialization, the conquest of nature, and the subjugation of the workforce to the requirements of large-scale industrial production" was superseded by the complex 'information society', where "claimant and political pressures still exist [but] cannot be related to the wage-earning condition as such" (ibid.). Thus, "the complexity of human systems, mass economic and political markets, and the equilibrium of the ecosystem" mean that "the image of a homogenous' workers movement assuming responsibility for global transformation (...) belongs to the realm of ritual celebration" (ibid.). In the Italian context, the workers struggles of 1968-72 simply "brought the industrial relations system to the level of the other advanced industrial countries", and by riding the tiger of the AWM, the unions, "traditionally weak inside the factories and distant from the decision-making centres of economic policy (...) boosted their numbers [and] became a recognized partner in negotiations at the level of the company and national economic policy" (ibid, p263). Crouch and Pizzorno (1968, cited in Melucci 1996, p263) state that the regaining of union control over the most combative sectors (metal and chemical workers) after 1972 and the effects of economic crisis and industrial restructuration transformed the unions into organs of political control, so incorporating the base structures of representation created by the 1970 Workers' Charter into their organisational structure. Thus, the AWM was, unwittingly, a motor for the expansion of trade union control over industrial conflict, the modernisation of industrial relations and the integration of the unions into the mechanisms of political consensus and economic regulation.

While agreeing with Melucci's observation that the historical workers movement was no longer the central antagonist of capitalism by the 1960s, autonomist Marxism counters Melucci's argument that the NSMs represent the end of class-based conflict and politics by positing the locus of the 'social factory', populated by the new antagonist figure of the 'socialised worker':

> "conjugated between 'old' class theory and analysis of 'new' social movements, whose recognition demands [the] rejection of fundamentalist Marxisms which nullify the importance of gender, ethnicity and cultural community [and] opposes strains within the new social movements which abandon the critique of capital, and attend to issues of class in as tokenist fashion as Marxists have often done to matters of gender and race." (Witheford 1994, p100)

Thus, it will be argued that the AWM, despite its clear links with the historical movement of the industrial working class, needs to be considered as part of the NSM sector in that it organised among the most marginalised sectors of the industrial working class (South Italian migrants and younger workers), some of whom were in contact with and were culturally closer to the students, feminists and counter-cultural youth of the NSMs, than were the more 'guaranteed' unionised workers. Furthermore, while the AWM remained a 'mass worker'-based movement until its demise in 1980, it also contained non-industrial and unwaged workers and, increasingly, the 'socialised worker' of the post-Fordist hinterland, as 'Workers' Autonomy' became *Autonomia*.

First, however, the concept of 'work' itself needs to be defined. According to Berardi[6] (1997, p65), the notion of capitalist work is to be understood as:

> "salaried work, alienated work, that is activity which is not owned by itself, that does not know its finality, that does not belong to the subject who performs it, and whose products are expropriated, subtracted, counter posed to the work itself (...) Work is that form of activity for the transformation of nature that is expropriated, alienated and used for man's domination of nature and of man."

Marx (1975) emphasized the alienation of waged labour from the labourer, causing the worker to become relatively 'poorer' (both morally and economically) the more wealth he produces, and that work does not only produce goods but also the worker as an objectified good. The alienation of work was increasingly seen as the removal of time and opportunities to live a full life, particularly by the '77 Movement, rather than simply the exploitation of industrial labour (Berardi 1997). Foucault's thought conceived the formation of modernity as a disciplinary system which made 'time for life' available to

salaried work, but at the expense of every material quality. Under Deleuze and Guattari's theme of 'desire', capitalism was recognised as a system for the expropriation of human time:

> "It is in the ambit of lack (*manqué*), of need, of the qualitative impoverishment of human time that it becomes possible to found the capitalist economic system (...) the concept of *manqué* is close to the Sartrean concept of *rareté*, namely scarcity understood in an anthropological rather than an economic sense." (Berardi 1997, p73-74)

Thus, capitalist work was understood by that part of *Autonomia* closest to the '77 Movement and the 'marginality' of mass youth unemployment as more the anthropological expropriation of 'time for life' than the alienation of the worker from his or her product[7].

2) Workers' autonomy, the 'mass worker' and the 'refusal of work'

Workers' autonomy was both a social phenomenon within Italian factories from the mid 1950s onwards and the name of the more 'organized' sector of the *Autonomia* social movement. The extent to which these phenomena were interconnected will be ascertained in this and the following chapter. The gradual spread from the mid 1950s onwards of industrial workers' autonomous self-organisation outside official trade union structures was inextricably linked to the practice of the 'refusal of work'[8], as theorised by the operaists. The individual and collective refusal of work was in direct opposition to the traditional socialist ideal of the 'dignity of labour' and the notion of working class 'productivism' as the engine for social progress and the defeat of capitalism. Hence this practice was anathema to the official trade unions and had to be organized autonomously, although their members no doubt practised it unconsciously at first and then more openly alongside the AWM during the 'workers' hegemony' in the factories of the 1970s.

The 'Hot Autumn' cycle of factory conflict from 1969 to 1973 saw the self-organized working class gain major concessions on their demands for wage parity between blue and white-collar workers, for reduced rhythms and work loads, for the protection of their health from toxicity, pollution and industrial accidents, and for the 'self-reduction' (*autoriduzione*) of the social costs of living. The new labour law of 1970 ended pay differentials among shop floor workers, delinked wages and productivity (an historical concession which effectively removed the underlying rationale of the post-war Keynesian-Fordist deal) and introduced the *scala mobile*[9]. Following the 1970/71 national contract

dispute, further gains were won, including the introduction of the "150 Hours" programme, an unprecedented experiment in workers' education[10]. By 1973 both workers' autonomy and the refusal of work were entrenched realities within the factory system. But, even as the AWM reached the peak of its influence in 1973, the basis of its defeat and that of the entire post-war working class movement in 1980 was being laid by both management and the unions: the former through the gradual introduction of post-Fordist technological restructuration and productive decentralisation on the one hand (the 'diffused factory', according to the operaists); the latter via the reintroduction, by the unions in alliance with the more moderate sections of the workers' movement, of the delegative principle through the CDF, the most controversial gain from 1969/70. Ironically, while the broader movement of *Autonomia* was gaining strength during the decade, its historical antecedent, the AWM, was in gradual decline. This development was theorised by Negri (1988), as the result of the "decomposition" of the "mass worker" induced by capitalist restructuration and the resultant "recomposition" of the new central actor in the class struggle, the "socialized worker", sited more in social struggles outside the factory. This theory was to prove highly controversial within *Autonomia* and its intellectual milieu, accentuating the divisions between Negri's circle around the journal *Rosso* and Sergio Bologna's around *Primo Maggio*[11], whose analysis continued to privilege struggles at the point of industrial production.

'Workers' autonomy' was defined by the autonomists themselves as the workers' self-organisation of the practice of the refusal of work:

> "[T]he working class, factory by factory, workshop by workshop (and also, sometimes, as general movement) displays in forms of struggle, in objectives, in organized forms, a refusal of capitalist work together with a refusal of the 'reconciliation' with work proposed by the reformists. Refusal of work and extraneity which are not occasional, but rooted in an objective class condition which capitalist development always reproduces again and at higher levels: the new power of the working class derives from its concentration and homogeneity, from the fact the capitalistic relation now extends beyond the traditional factory (and in particular in the [...] service sector) producing also there struggles, objectives and behaviours tendencially based on extraneity from capitalist work." (*Rosso*, 1973, p2)

Workers' autonomy had been a widely used expression by the unions in the 1960s, but a formulation subordinated to that of 'union autonomy', understood as the independence of the trade union organisation from the political game of the parties, an important principle

even if it contained ambiguous elements of subordinated contractualism and the depoliticisation of industrial conflict. Workers' autonomy, for the operaists, signified instead the self-organisation of struggles beyond the control of both union and party political logics. But in 1973, following the Mirafiori occupation, the term acquired a much more radical connotation:

> "[T]he worker presence, the solid proletarian community can organise the social conditions of production, exchange and society autonomously from bourgeois legality. Autonomous from the law of exchange (...) of the performance of work (...) of private property (...) proletarian sociality defines its own laws and puts them into practice in the territory militarily occupied by the bourgeoisie." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p436-7)

For the autonomists the 'refusal of work' signified that:

> "[W]ithin the structure and hierarchy of social relations controlled by waged labour live (...) a tissue of communication and organisation which detains information, knowledge, thought, to which it is both opposed and an alternative. It is a social structure that is born in the struggle and lives for the struggle: for more money, for less work, for less toxic and demanding labour, to 'feel better' or at least not to die of factory [work]. But it is a social structure which is already power over production and of production because it is made exactly of the same elements which form the service of work, only in reverse: that of non-collaboration, of subtraction of resources and availability. It is the worker's knowledge of the productive cycle, the capacity to block, subtract and sabotage. It is the science of resistance, with its capacity for impact - always - on the distribution of wealth and the organisation of work. It is like saying social power, social knowledge, are divided between command and resistance; that social relations are split, organised together from work and from the struggle against it; that production is not a neutral dynamic, 'economy', but the site of conflict and mediation between these two enemy powers. There is not only exploitation in this society but also autonomy from it and struggle against it." (Castellano 1980, cited in DeriveApprodi 1997, p347-8)

So the refusal of work was in reality seen by some autonomists as more the embryonic constitution of post-capitalist social relations in the present, starting at the point of production, than merely a widespread form of resistance to capitalist exploitation.

Balestrini and Moroni (1997, p426-7) also see the refusal of work as an interpretative model of social dynamics and historical transformation. In their opinion, the entire history of scientific, technological and productive development can be read as the history of the refusal of men and women to dedicate their attentions, their efforts, their abilities and their creativities to material reproduction. This historical refusal produced the original division into social classes; some refused to work, making others work in their place by enslaving

them. But, they conclude, the practice of the refusal of work, controlled and directed by "collective social intelligence", could instead realise a use of technology and machinery capable of liberating humanity from the "slavery of wage labour".

Linked to the theory of the refusal of work was the discussion on technology and on the overall structure of scientific knowledge, which became central to the operaist political and theoretical debate in Italy in the early 1970s on the question of class composition.

2.1) Class composition and recomposition

The operaist notion of class composition represented social, political and organisational forms through which the working class constructed its subjective identity and its consciousness in terms of the determinant structure of the productive system, in the relationship between the Marxist categories of 'living' (the workforce) and 'dead' (machinery and plant) labour and the technological and organisational conditions of the process of work. Class composition was first identified in QR as the subjective and conscious elaboration of the objective conditions of the productive process. The notion found its philosophical roots in the thought of 1920s Left Marxism, and particularly in the Lukacsian notion of the "ontogenesis of social consciousness" (Lukacs 1971, cited in Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p428), questioning how social consciousness was formed and the processes through which a mass of individualised, separated persons, fragmented within the productive process and their socio-economic condition, succeed in transforming themselves into an active movement, in producing a common political viewpoint, in elaborating styles of behaviour and horizons of awareness which are substantially shared (Balestrini and Moroni 1997). Essentially, it examined the transformation of the 'workforce' into the 'working class': how factory discipline dissolved into organized rebellion, with the separation of diverse social groups into a revolutionary movement capable of submerging and overwhelming the status quo (ibid.).

In reply to the questions raised by Lukacs and starting from the determinant technological conditions of work, Negri, S.Bologna and others from *Potere Operaio* (PO) posited the theory of "class recomposition". The notion of class composition as "conscious, organized subjectivisation of the collective behaviours of a community involved in the process of massified labour" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p428), led to a consideration of the technological system, of the relations between different technologies and socially

productive activity, conscious activity, perception, memory and imagination. They examined how a particular consciousness, a form of political organisation, ideology and social imagination corresponded with certain technological and organisational conditions in the productive process. In their opinion, conditions for socialisation were more present within the factory of the 1920s, where "workers had a sphere of sociality and productive autonomy in which the human-machine relationship was both individualised and relatively personalised, and ability was differentiated" (ibid.). It was possible, therefore, to appreciate why the workers of that historical period defended with pride their productive function and claimed the right to manage, control and organise their work and its social destination and utility. For the operaists the situation in the large factory of the 1960s was, however, completely different. Taylorism and the introduction of automation, the assembly line, the standardisation of work rhythms and speeds had all rendered the factory a completely asocial arena, where communication between workers was almost impossible given the noise and physical separation, where the workplace was depersonalised and structured in an authoritarian, repetitive manner, designed to impose specific speeds, movements, gestures and reactions on an increasingly dehumanised and mechanised operator. Thus, the class recomposition of production line workers began with this subjectively perceived condition of dehumanisation.

Class recomposition in this context necessarily led to the refusal of work in various forms and levels of intensity: mass absenteeism[12], occupations, wildcat strikes, internal factory marches to isolate and drive out non-strikers, sabotage, 'go slows', the destruction of finished goods and machinery, the deliberate production of defective goods, and the use of violence against the foremen and shop floor managers who imposed factory discipline. Thus for the operaists, "working class intelligence" refused to be "productive intelligence" and expressed itself instead in sabotage and the construction of areas of anti-productive freedom from work:

> "Life began to reflower exactly where it had been most radically cancelled and extinguished, among the production lines, in the factory workshops, in the bogs where young proletarians smoked dope, made love, waited for the foreman to chuck bolts at him (...) The factory, which had been conceived as a dehumanised concentration camp, began to become a place of study, discussion, freedom and love." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p430).

2.2) Technology and industrial restructuration

Alongside class recomposition and the refusal of work were the problematic issues of productive restructuration (decentralisation, automation and mass redundancies) and of the technological revolution of the Seventies (computerisation, robotics, biogenetics and communications). Restructuration is seen as "the reorganisation of a system, the reacquisition of its functionality and of its finalised performance in response to internal and external factors of disturbance which have perturbed, distorted or totally convulsed its function and structure" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p431). By 1970, the mass insubordinacy of factory workers and students had subverted the profit-based economic system and the disciplinary system of what Cleaver (1979, p57-8) describes as the "social factory":

> "[T]he 'factory' where the working class worked was the society as a whole, a social factory. The working class had to be redefined to include nonfactory workers (...) students, women and the unemployed in Italy, but also similar struggles elsewhere in Europe and the United States as well as those of peasants in the Third World."

But even as this socio-economic earthquake was happening, think tanks and strategic planners were looking to reactivate some of the fundamental functions of capitalistic production. Above all it was vital to reactivate productivity, drastically reduced by insubordination and absenteeism, and discipline, which had been completely undermined by workers' solidarity, the egalitarianism evident in the demand for an end to pay differentials among shop floor workers, and a general climate of anti-authoritarianism. These had been the pillars of the post-war, boom-producing, European Keynesian 'quantitative strategy' productivity deals between centrist governments and trade unions, whereby the class struggle for higher wages and a shorter working day became the motor for ever increasing productivity and profitability. However, the capitalist planners knew they could no longer count on brute force to reimpose productivity and factory discipline. The guaranteed ferocity of the response to repression, as illustrated by the 'battle of Corso Traiano' in July 1969 when most of the working class districts of Turin erupted in several days of civil revolt, as well as numerous violent pickets and marches in cities all over Italy, ruled this out. However, the 'Strategy of Tension' of 'destabilising to stabilise', involving the use of indiscriminate no-warning bombs planted in public spaces by 'counter-mobilised' neo-fascist terrorists in collaboration with 'mad elements'[13] within the secret services represented the state's attempt to both intimidate and prevent any possible alliance

between the PCI (the largest communist party outside China and the USSR) and the movements by simultaneously discrediting the revolutionary Left (the Piazza Fontana bombing of December 1969 was initially blamed on anarchists) and invoking the 'silent majority's' support for an authoritarian backlash.

In the wake of the international crisis of the Keynesian model in the early 1970s, it was therefore necessary to introduce a restructuration process "of ample proportions, capable of substantially reducing the quantitative weight of the work-force in production, i.e. to modify the organic composition of capital, increasing the importance of the dead labour of machinery and labour-saving devices relative to living labour' (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p431). The aim was to reduce the qualitative importance of the conscious working class. The first effects of capital's restructuration counter-offensive had already begun to be felt by 1973, steadily growing throughout the decade until industrial 'downsizing' became the norm in the 1980s and 1990s.

Already in 1969 the perspective within which the restructuration process would take place was being debated within the AWM. Technological advances were discussed, as was the possibility for a post-industrial transformation of society and production. Capitalism was about to take advantage of the refusal of work by transforming it into organized savings in labour costs via automation. The operaists considered the capitalist application of 'technological innovation' as fundamentally inimical to the working class, in contrast with the PCI intellectuals' belief in the beneficial neutrality of 'scientific progress':

> "Capital itself is offering us a deadline (...) Technological progress, as the violence of the bosses and their State, is not and cannot be an element of negotiation. On this basis, we want the anticipated rupture immediately, to defeat the bosses and build unity to consolidate and relaunch our political organisation" (*La Classe*, 24 May 1969, cited in Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p432)

In fact, the debate on the nature of technological progress is seen as being at the origin of the split that emerged in the theory and practice of the NSMs in the 1980s:

> "Here was the root of the unresolved ambiguity of the social movements towards capitalist innovation, towards the continuous technological and symbolical revolution that capital introduced into society, unceasingly manipulating boundaries and representations, decomposing organized forms and convulsing social and political identities." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p432).

Hence, the refusal of work had always been a mainspring of capitalist development, which was essentially "the capitalist theft of the worker's invention who finds a way of making his piece quicker to make time to smoke a cigarette in peace" (ibid., p432). Without workers' struggles and withdrawal from exploitation, without sabotage and absenteeism there would be no development. Development technology was, therefore, basically a management device, which attempted to remove a segment of living labour, an operator, or an entire section or type of job. It was capital's response to the refusal of work. This, however, raised the question over whether restructuration, innovation and technological progress had always to be viewed as inimical. Other parts of operaist thought had proposed the promise inherent in technological restructuration for increased 'free time' and the conditions to reduce the dependence of life on work. The intention of management, however, was to maximise overall profit, eliminate pockets of insubordination and realise a tighter mechanical control over human labour (ibid.).

Italian workerist theory and practice soon found itself before a contradiction and in a certain sense has remained caught in the trap. The technological revolution of the 1970s was not only the cause of the crisis of workers' autonomy, but also the trigger for the dissolution of the factory-based working class and of manufacturing industry as the predominant mode of production. Paradoxically, through restructuration the working class objective of reducing necessary labour had been realised, but the interests of capital dominated the social and political conditions under which this transformation had been conducted. The effects of restructuration were a greater rate of exploitation, greater dependency on 'black economy' and casualised, flexibilised labour, and a politically ruinous division between the employed and the unemployed. The AWM had failed to implement its programme of workers' control over the entire process of productive transformation. Trade union mediation and political radicalism had confronted each other without finding common interests, such as a general reduction in the hours of work and the redistribution of socially necessary labour time. In synthesis, it was a struggle about workers' control over the conditions of the post-industrial transition, deindustrialisation and the transformation of the entire world of production. However, as the focus of social conflict shifted from the factory to the social factory during the second half of the decade, particularly with the advent of the '77 Movement, the AWM was increasingly absent from the world of industrial production, as militants were expelled or deserted the politically

recuperated environment of the factory for the more rewarding struggles outside (Balestrini and Moroni 1997).

3) New organisational forms within the factory

The AWM's main problem was how to organise resistance to restructuration and promote workers' autonomous control over production. The criticism of the unions' role of mediation and compromise was three-fold (Balestrini and Moroni, 1997). Firstly, at the most basic level, the unions' mediatory role in contractual conflicts with management was challenged. The second level was more complex, the logical conclusion to the radical critique of the unions as the institution of mediation, namely that as such they were implicitly within the capitalist dynamic as a tool for the bargaining of the selling price of the labour-force. The third level of criticism saw the unions as an instrument for control and division, introduced into workers' struggles by the political organisation of capital. This position was supported by the theoretical research of the operaist journals, particularly CO:

> "[B]y dividing workers' struggles into an economic dimension (managed by the unions) and a politico-democratic dimension (managed by the party) the [official] workers' movement had offered management the possibility of nullifying [their] transformational power, and had reduced the factory vanguards to impotence and division' (cited in Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p423).

The AWM aimed to transform the triennial negotiations over national industrial wages and conditions into a major political conflict, and so remove the unions from their hegemonic position. The Hot Autumn became a struggle against the top-down institution of bargaining the price of labour and its use - the wage and working conditions - between the unions and management. This had to be replaced by constant mobilisation and uninterrupted contestation. Conflicts over bargaining would be used to destabilise the factory system, the capitalist division of labour and management "despotism", so creating the conditions for "workers' power" in the factory (ibid.).

3.1) The Factory Councils

The Factory Councils (CDF) were an attempt to gather together different political positions and restore hegemony to the unions in a unitary organisational form, capable of expressing the will of the rank and file. The Hot Autumn created the conditions for the generalised spread of the CDF throughout the factory system, but it was to be a conflictual experience

from the start. The union bureaucracy looked askance at these elected organisms, which usurped their specific role of contracturalisation and negotiation between workers and management. Furthermore, the CDF in the more backward factories were the object of constant management attacks, fearing their capacity to co-ordinate disruptive initiatives, which had until then had no organisational channel or were dispersed in spontaneous actions. While participating, the CDF were also criticised by the left wing of the workers movement, particularly by the factory militants of PO and LC, as well as by the AWM. First, the reintroduction of the delegative principle could weaken the emerging practice of self-organisation from below on the shop floor. LC was to respond to the CDF's first election of delegates with the slogan "We are all delegates!" Secondly, the CDF's essential subordination to the unions' mediatory role was observed. The principle on which the AWM had relaunched its struggles since 1968 was the rigid separation of autonomous struggle from union negotiation. This permitted the maximum room for manoeuvre for actions and the constitution of new organisational and productive forms, without linking the outcomes of workers' organisation to agreements with management or allowing unsatisfactory deals negotiated by the unions to pass. However, the CDF reintroduced the link between struggle and negotiation, providing the right conditions for a union restoration of control over workers' self-organisation. The union bureaucracy provided official recognition and protection for the CDF, as well as responsibilities for its delegates "in obvious hopes that the councils will become absorbed by the union apparatus" (Cantarow 1973, p24). Wherever the AWM weakened, the unions attempted to impose a number of union functionaries as delegates on the CDF to neutralize their autonomy, as happened at Pirelli (the birthplace of the CDB in 1968) in Milan in 1972 (ibid.).

The debate on the CDF was bitter and inconclusive. The majority of the NL-linked 'vanguard workers' participated, considering them an important site for self-organisation, but also for winning a dominant position *within* the unions (Cantarow 1973). A section of the AWM participated from a critical standpoint, hoping to convert them into the basis for an "alternative political programme":

> "The task of the workers' vanguards during the present time is (...) not only to struggle to transfer real decision-making power to the delegates' councils, it is also, and above all, the task of beginning to construct with, and within the councils the first foundations of a new political economy that will inform future demands by the rank-and-file; the first elements of an alternative political program to the one imposed by the bureaucracy." (Turin CPO document, cited in Cantarow 1973, p24)

However, a radical minority remained implacably opposed, determined to build alternative forms of organisation in opposition to the unions. An extract from a 1973 document of the Milanese AWM in Alfa Romeo, Pirelli and Sit-Siemens, stated:

> "The hypothesis that the [CDF] is the instrument for grass-roots organisation which the working class has been able to impose as an expression of the growth of its autonomy, is not exact. It is clear instead that faced with rank and file initiatives, with the development of workers' autonomy, which often escape the control of the union leaders, [the latter] have been forced to concede a more grass-roots organisational model, which at the same time can give them a greater degree of control. Weighing up things since [their] constitution (...) we cannot but observe that the unions have always controlled them sufficiently. They let them function when [the CDF] sanction what has been established according to their line and they block them as soon as grass-roots' needs prevail."[14]

Autonomia's relationship with CDF delegates and 'factory vanguards' linked to different cultures and projects was symptomatic of its internal contradiction between movement and political organisation:

> "While the NL groups oscillated between the refusal of the delegates as union functionaries or even new leaders, and acritical exultation of the CDF exactly when they were being emptied and enclosed, *Autonomia* formed collectives, co-ordinations etc., which oscillated between the nature of the representative organisms of the struggles (and were therefore in competition with the CDF) and that of organisms linked to a particular project (that of *Autonomia*). In this second case, the problem of the relationship with the councils remained unresolved, as was (...) the problem of the construction of instruments of debate and of the organisation of all the vanguards." (Borgogno 1997, p44)

Ultimately, the factory councils, while maintaining a structural autonomy from the unions, were absorbed into their decision-making process during the decade. They did not become "the embryo of a new, revolutionary union democracy in Italy", or the basis for "a single industrial union over which the rank and file will maintain firm control via the councils" or indeed for a "future working class party", as Cantarow (1973, p24) had hoped for. Their ambiguous nature and sectarian divisiveness weakened their credibility among the mass of factory workers, who despite their growing radicalisation and desire for autonomy, but in the absence of a credible alternative, "still look[ed] to the unions for their economic security" (ibid.).

3.2) The Autonomous Workers' Assemblies

The dissolution of PO and the institution of the CDF imposed the question of organisation on the autonomous movement both within and outside the factory. The compact nature of the 1968-69 students and workers movements was due in no small measure to the influence of operaist intellectuals and political leaders such as Negri and S.Bologna in PO and Sofri in LC. However, with the decision of the groups to dissolve themselves as an obsolete political form, gone or put under intense strain were also the organic links between movement and factory. How did the emerging but disarticulated movement of *Autonomia* seek to maintain these links, given the rapid social and industrial transformations then taking place throughout society?

The answer can be found to some extent in the autonomists' practice of organic localism, resulting in a diversity of loci for work-based struggle by no means limited to the large industrial factory. Turin *Autonomia*'s activists were mainly based in FIAT and organised through the CPO, but, despite the centrality of the FIAT mass workers' struggles to the development of operaist thought since QR and the 1962 Piazza Statuto riots, were in a minority compared to LC in particular. The main links between *Autonomia* and the AWM were to be found elsewhere. In Rome, the *Volsci* organized among the city's dominant service sector, the "co-coordinating committee of the autonomous organisms of service workers" (*Rosso*, 1975b, p5) bringing together the Policlinico hospital workers, ENEL energy workers, rail and postal workers, RAI television journalists and Al Italia air crew. In Milan, the remnants of the *Gruppo Gramsci* and PO worked with the autonomous workers of Sit-Siemens, Alfa Romeo and Pirelli, and later among the extensive network of post-Fordist small factories in the North known as the '*indotto*' (hinterland), co-ordinating the different assemblies through their CPO. In the Veneto region, *Autonomia* had its historical roots among the Montedison petro-chemical workers in Porto Marghera (Balestrini and Moroni 1997).

Certainly, the relationship between *Autonomia* and the AWM was more problematic than it had been with the NL groups, with their more rigidly Leninist belief in 'workers centrality' and the subservience of the struggles of other sectors of the working class to those at the point of production. This is partly explained by the socio-cultural friction between the generally 'guaranteed' factory 'mass workers' and the 'socialised workers' of the 'diffused factory' who saw themselves as even more exploited as marginalised 'non-guaranteed'

workers. Here, an *Autonomia* activist from Padua describes his resentment at the instrumental nature of the relationship between the Veneto Collectives and the Porto Marghera autonomous workers:

> "There's the rationale: let's use someone for our project. (...) there is the argument: who's using who? Then there were groups of workers, also inside PO, who said 'Enough of the group, we are the future project!' So those who are external have to readjust to us, to our forms: the Workers' Committees, the Autonomous Assembly of Porto Marghera, the Alfa Romeo Assembly etc. With an exclusive dynamic (...), that's the problem. So we had understood fuck all, because the workers, with a closed mentality, spoke for themselves and practically used others. The others said: 'We're not workers, what the hell do we have to do?' You have to give out leaflets outside. You can only do the donkeywork. So all the emphasis of that year [1974], of people going to Turin, in reality they ended up badly, because in this donkey work argument one side was loaded with work and then found it counted for nothing, treated like shit. They used you, but if someone had a problem they sent you home. People didn't eat, they were there every morning to hand out leaflets, do pickets, they really bust themselves, but the organisation was done by the Workers' Autonomous Assembly. But the argument we made was that the organisation had to be inclusive, that beyond the strategic argument the complexity was in the fact that we were all in this organisation (...) made up of students, workers, [that] it would be better if it called itself an inclusive organisation and not one calling itself workers, even if autonomous."[15]

The principal nature of *Autonomia*'s presence in working class conflict was its "anti-restructuration resistentialist practice, [its] revival of the late-communist mythology of civil war and proletarian justice", which Balestrini and Moroni (1992, p446) judge as "wrong and limiting". *Autonomia* in the factory described itself as a "resistance movement" against capitalist restructuration, basing its strategy on an overestimation of the mass worker's capacity to resist. So, the politico-cultural identity of the movement was tied to that of labour's social composition and the refusal to adjust to the new technological forms for the organisation of work (ibid.).

Contemporaneously with the end of PO, the absorption of the CDF by the unions and the crisis of the groups, the first Autonomous Workers Assemblies (AAO) were constituted, although Bobbio (1988) mentions the creation of the 'unitary workers assemblies' (AOU) by LC, PO and other NL factory militants at FIAT, Pirelli and Alfa Romeo in 1971. The AAO were created as organisations broad enough to organise all the 'factory vanguards' and in competition with the CDF. As well as militants from PO, they also contained members of LC and *Avanguardia Operaia* (AO), who conserved their relations with their

particular political organisations. However, the experience of the AOU in particular and the AAO in general was considered a failure by LC and AO, which had largely withdrawn from such 'mass organisms' by 1973. With the dissolution of PO, the AAO became the structural base for the new organisation of *Autonomia*. The main force behind the AAO was a complex network of political activists formed by the struggles of the early Seventies, above all at FIAT in the 1972-73 cycle of strikes and occupations, which produced the unprecedented phenomenon known as the "Workers Party of Mirafiori" (Negri 1979a). The assemblies' activities were linked with those of the newly emerging 'area of Autonomia', principally the student political collectives (CPS) and the autonomous collectives organized in the working class districts of the metropolis, as part of a vast, informal network of conflict in society, in schools and in factories. However, the assemblies did not rely on these links for their contacts with the outside world, producing their own publications such as *Senza Padroni* (Without Bosses) at Alfa Romeo, *Lavoro Zero* (Zero Work[16]) at Porto Marghera and *Mirafiori Rossa* (Red Mirafiori) at FIAT. While some of the assemblies, particularly at Alfa Romeo, survived until the 1990s, fusing with the revived COBAS[17] autonomous service and public sector workers' movement of the late 1980s, most fell victim to the wave of repression and mass sackings conducted after 1979, as S.Bologna indicates:

> "[T]his history of real workers' autonomy, of the *comitati di base* (rank-and-file committees), workers of 1968, still exists in some factories, for example in Alfa Romeo in Milan. The leaders of the present CDB of Alfa Romeo are leaders who emerged in 1969/70. So, they are people with a history of twenty to twenty-five years of struggle, who have been sacked five or six times and have been reinstated." (Cuninghame 2001, p94)

Their failure to overcome sectarian internal divisions, particularly between *Autonomia* and LC, or to become sufficiently embedded and trusted (although often their platform of demands received more support among workers than the unions' did) to replace the unions and the CDF as the majority workers' organisation, left them isolated and open to the accusation by the PCI after 1978 of being 'terrorist fellow travellers'.

4) Workers' autonomy among non-industrial and unpaid labour

While the AWM organized its resistance to work and restructuration through the autonomous assemblies in some of the main factories of the North, a wider form of autonomy and democratisation spread throughout the entire working class, including

unwaged sectors such as housewives, students, the unemployed and military conscripts, reaching as far as significant sections of the middle and professional classes.

Some ex-PO theorists, active in the feminist movement, concentrated on the category of unpaid reproductive labour, which was seen as vital for the reproduction of living labour and therefore capital, particularly Dalla Costa (1972) on women's unpaid housework and Del Re's work on women and the welfare state. On the basis of this work, a section of the women's movement close to PO and LC, *Lotta Feminista*[18], began a campaign known internationally as 'Wages for Housework', linking up with Selma James' campaign in the USA and Britain[19]. In June 1974 *Rosso* (the newspaper of Milanese 'Organised Autonomy'), as part of a debate between those demanding wages for housework and those who saw this as a 'ratification' of housework, published a report by the Padua Committee for Wages for Housework[20] on three days of discussion with the feminist movement in Mestre. A large number of housewives, teachers, shop assistants and secretaries had gathered to denounce their triple exploitation by their employers, their husbands and the state, rejecting the misery and appalling conditions of work that all imposed: "Our struggle is against factories, (...) offices, against having to sit at a check-out counter all day (...). We are not fighting for such an organisation of work, but against it" (*Rosso*, 1974, p34). They rejected the view of the political parties and extra-parliamentary groups that women's emancipation lay in employment, instead demanding that the state, whose most basic cellular structure was the family, pay them wages for their unpaid housework since they were 'producing' its citizens and workers. Also denounced was the inadequacy of the few 'social services' provided, the lack of crèches and nurseries for housewives as well as for employed women, and the abuse of women's bodies by the 'masculinist' health system. They called on women to reclaim their bodies and take control of their lives:

> "We women must reject the conditions of pure survival that the State wants to give us, we must always demand more and more, reappropriate the wealth removed from our hands everyday to have more money, more power, more free time to be with others, women, old people, children, not as appendages but as social individuals." (ibid.)

The operaists also saw the work of students as essential to the reproduction of the skilled labour force and of capital as intelligence and knowledge, their studies for entry into the labour market being considered as unpaid labour. This was one of the theoretical innovations that helped operaism in 1968-69 to break down the historical divide between

two of mature capitalist society's main antagonist groupings – the industrial working class and the hitherto mainly middle class university student – and build the alliance which was to form the basis of the Hot Autumn and the 'Long Italian '68'. Here again the question of class composition would be crucial in explaining the arrival of the students as a radical mass movement, not simply for the much-needed reform of the university system but for the radical transformation of society. As the Italian economy expanded and society urbanised during the 1960s there was a growing need for qualified professionals and technocrats in both the public and private sectors. Thus, the social basis of university recruitment was widened to include large numbers of working class school leavers. Simultaneously, the 'Miracle' of relative economic prosperity since the 1950s meant that many working class families could afford for the first time to put at least one child into higher education. The radical politicisation and polarisation between extreme Left and Right of educational institutions, including even the 'middle schools' for 11 to 14-year-olds, a process in which the party-based students and youth organisations, such as the FGCI[21], were squeezed out, was another typical aspect of Italian urban life in the 1970s and the basis for the politicisation of many of *Autonomia*'s activists[22]. Thus the 'proletarianisation' of the student body, many of whom, particularly the *fuori sede* (non-residential), studied and worked part-time, often in industrial jobs, favoured the student-worker alliance of 1968-69.

By 1974, there were mass mobilisations of school students and their parents, particularly women, throughout Italy against the dilapidated and under-funded education system, one of the first areas of public spending to be effected by post-Oil Crisis austerity measures (Red Notes 1975). Both parents and children demonstrated and occupied schools left empty in protest against an acute shortage of classroom space, equipment, materials and teachers which left large areas, particularly in the poorer South, operating part-time education with a shift system. Furthermore, inflation and austerity measures forced the price of schoolbooks beyond the reach of many working-class families. While Malfatti, the DC Education Minister, ordered the sacking of militant Left teachers, the overall number of teachers was reduced as 600,000 prospective teachers applied for 23,000 positions. The government's running down of the education system in working class areas was balanced by its introduction of the 'Schools Councils', made up of delegated parents, teachers and students, with the aim that similarly to the CDF in the factories, "they would institutionalise the struggle in the schools and re-establish political control by the right-

wing" (ibid., p14-15). The education cutbacks were also seen as a political attack on a key social antagonist, which had allied itself closely to the AWM since 1968. In October 1974, 45 secondary schools and adult education colleges in Turin went on strike in solidarity with the FIAT national strike of October 17th and 4,000 students and teachers marched through the city centre to picket the main gates of the Mirafiori plant. An analogy was drawn between the number of people losing their jobs and the rising number of working class children being failed in exams and expelled from the education system. The same month there were school strikes and demonstrations all over Italy making the common demand for an end to part-time schooling, smaller classes, immediate building programmes for new schools and classrooms, no cuts in the numbers of teachers, improved hygiene and facilities, local councils to make available funds they were holding back, free transport, books and equipment for students, and free day centres for pre-school children. Links were made between the committees campaigning against the education cuts and the AWM. In Rome, 3,000 construction and engineering workers joined a demonstration against education cuts. Students and workers set up joint commuter committees to oppose the increase in public transport fares. Women were especially active on this issue, as they were on virtually all social issues in the mid 1970s, the peak of the mass mobilisation phase of the women's movement, marching on schools, organising pickets, occupying class rooms, setting up road blocks, all with the demand for better schools and day-care facilities (ibid.). These mobilisations were self-organized with the participation of *Autonomia*, the NL groups, particularly LC in the South, as well as some of the unions, but were otherwise characterised by their autonomy from and hostility towards the major political parties.

A major section of the movement of the unemployed (*il movimento dei disoccupati organizzati*) in Naples also became part of '*Autonomia meridionale*', the relatively ignored part of the movement in the less developed South. However, here too *Autonomia* was involved in factory struggles, both in large factories, such as the Italsider state-owned steel production plants in Taranto and Bagnoli, and in the small factories of Calabria, and in the struggle against sweat-shop labour and the 'black economy', which was even more widespread than in the North and Centre, given the far higher rates of unemployment and underemployment[23]. Conversely, *Autonomia* was also involved in the mass struggles against industrial closures in the South, historically the first region to be affected by deflationary measures. But it was among the self-organized unemployed movements in Naples and Catanzaro that '*Autonomia meridionale*' made its greatest impact, through the

demand for an adequate 'guaranteed social wage' from the state to counteract the social devastation caused by endemic unemployment and economic underdevelopment. The historical struggles of the unemployed for work in Naples, Italy's poorest city, and throughout the *Mezzogiorno*, appeared to be in contradiction with the movement's refusal of work. In fact the unemployed were seen as performing 'unpaid labour': through their necessary search for a source of income they helped to depress wages in the south and ultimately throughout the national economy as a 'reserve army of industrial labour', so performing a vital function for capital. The Naples unemployed were well aware of their capitalist function, campaigning through sometimes violent mass marches and pickets of the city council's offices for a 'guaranteed social wage' (*salario garantito*) and increased welfare, so that they would not be forced to accept depressed wages and could delay their entry into the labour market if necessary.

Certainly, mass unemployment wrecked havoc with working class communities and families in the industrial North, used to secure and rising incomes for the previous 20 years, and there was a significant increase in the number of suicides among redundant factory workers in cities like Turin in the early 1980s. However, for the 'No Future' generation of the 'socialised worker' and in particular for the '77 Movement, unemployment was seen as an inevitable fate which could be turned into a positive personal and collective opportunity given the right conditions: not only to 'refuse work' but to found the late 20th century "society of non-work", based more on "exodus" from work as the defining identity formation experience than resistance to work in the workplace, as Virno (1996) argues. How successful this refusal to be blackmailed by unemployment was is debatable. The implosion of *Autonomia* and most of the NSMs in the early 1980s, the sharp rise in heroin addiction and the suicide rate among under-30s, and the search for individual neo-mystical solutions through membership of religious cults (Melucci 1996) seems to indicate an extensive collective psychological crisis due to the loss of the solidarity and bonds of communities of struggle (including those based in the workplace), resulting in high levels of individual atomisation, alienation and despair. An informant described the 'implosion of subjectivity' he witnessed on returning to Padua from abroad in 1979 to find the piazzas, where young people socialised almost permanently during the '77 Movement, deserted, replaced by a withdrawal into private life, heroin addiction and compulsive television viewing[24].

Regarding the radical democratisation and politicisation of significant sectors of the professional classes, S.Bologna describes what he considers to be one of the most significant aspects of what he describes as "The Italian Revolution" of the 1970s:

> "Something very interesting happened after the great workers' struggles of 1969-73 (...). Because 1968 in Italy had set in motion a mental revolution throughout various social strata, at the level of various professional functions and vocations. There was a complete transformation [with] struggles inside hospitals, within the field of medicine (...) At this point, a large part of the bourgeois class, or if you prefer, the liberal professions such as lawyers and judges, became involved in the movement; for example, there were 'democratic judges'[25] (...) A doctor could set up an assembly, a grassroots committee of doctors and begin to create an alternative medicine, begin struggles against the medical hierarchy, against the pharmaceutical factories and pharmacological medicine, against the hierarchical relationship between doctor and patient. So began this long march within the medical institutions, which was, in my opinion, one of the most interesting aspects of the Italian revolution. (...) The same thing happened among judges, among lawyers; something among artists but very little, but very little among writers with a few exceptions such as Balestrini[26]. This was a phenomenon of the greatest importance." (Cuninghame 2001, p95)[27]

University lecturers had been radicalising since the 1950s, but this process accelerated in the late 1960s with almost entire departments becoming centres of political activity linked to the NL groups. In the case of PO and *Autonomia*, the Institute of Political Science at Padua University, where Negri, Dalla Costa, Del Re and Ferrari Bravo taught, was to provide many of its leading theorists. Here a hard struggle was fought, first to obtain secure employment in a notoriously corrupt and nepotistic environment ruled over by the 'barons' (senior academic figures linked to the main political parties), and secondly to maintain academic autonomy and freedom of speech in the harsh political atmosphere of the late 1970s:

> "I struggled a lot at the university for my position, I was precarious [even if] I had a scholarship. We invented the position of *ricercatore* (researcher) and so to obtain this position we struggled within the CGIL trade union where I was considered an autonomist. They expelled me when I was arrested in 1979, but they couldn't expel me before because I had the support of the majority of the university workers' assembly. I believe that we have always had this line of conduct, in the sense of starting from your own conditions, but having the majority of the people on your side, as did the collectives within the university, which had a large amount of support. It also helps to understand why when I was arrested many members of the trade unions went to testify that I was an autonomist, because they had suffered some major defeats within the assembly. It's also true that many other university workers went to declare that I had only done absolutely legal things (...) I discussed a lot in this Institute about my struggles and interventions. These had the same dimensions, between 1977 and

> 1979, as had many workers' struggles. (...) At that moment what was important to me was to structure a work relation... and that gave me a large following within the university"[28].

5) The autonomous workers' movement, the PCI and the trade unions

As the Seventies wore on, relations between the AWM and the official labour movement became increasingly strained. After the irreconcilable rupture between the '77 Movement and the PCI, the AWM found itself in open conflict with the union federations (CGIL, CISL and UIL), but also increasingly with 'vanguard workers' linked to the remaining NL groups and active in the CDF. As the effects of the economic crisis and industrial reconstruction intensified, and the federations began to dominate the CDF, the AWM became a 'minority within a minority' (only in Alfa Romeo in Milan, and in the Policlinico hospital in Rome was it in the majority) and adopted a sometimes violent posture towards its opponents in the factories and against the restructuration process in general. Following the Red Brigades murder of Aldo Moro in May 1978, the PCI and CGIL carried out a relentless campaign against all those workers suspected of participating in or supporting terrorism. Employers, with tacit union support, quickly took advantage of the atmosphere of fear within the factories and throughout society to isolate and dismiss the most active members of the AWM and to clampdown on leftist activity within the workplace in general. A series of bitter rearguard struggles ensued in which the AWM fought a losing battle against the employers, the unions and those vanguard workers of the more moderate groups (PDUP and AO) who opposed its extremist stance against the CDF and its use of violence and industrial sabotage (Scavino 1997). By the defeat of the last major FIAT strike in 1980, the AWM had only a residual presence in most of the large factories, although the Milan Alfa Romeo factory ("the only Italian car factory not to be 'robotised' in the 1980s"[29]) is still a bastion of the COBAS, the main autonomous workers' structure since 1985.

The focus of industrial conflict had switched, for both the AWM and *Autonomia*, to the post-Fordist 'diffused factory', where the unions were virtually absent and the workers' social composition was very different. The 'proletarianised students' and 'socialised workers' of *Autonomia*, many of whom worked, usually temporarily, in the integrated network of small, deregulated, provincial factories and 'black economy' sweatshops (*covi di lavoro nero*), shifted their strategy of refusal from collective resistance to individual 'exodus'. Increasingly those autonomous workers offered the chance of redundancy

payments (*cassa integrazione*[30]), instead of resisting to the last to protect their jobs, saw their exit from a relatively secure factory job to a more precarious existence as a part-time, temporary or self-employed 'autonomous worker' as an opportunity for personal growth, rather than the 'anxiety' of being unemployed that many more traditional industrial workers experienced (Conti et al 1979). For the most active 'trouble makers' of the AWM, employers were often prepared to offer substantial redundancy payments to secure their exit, resulting, for example, in a proliferation of alternative bars and restaurants in the Ticinese area of Milan, run by ex-Alfa Romeo workers[31].

5.1) The 'Historic Compromise'

Della Porta and Diani (1999) surmise that one of the key preconditions for a social movement to impact successfully on the political process is to seek and gain strategic alliances with institutional forces in order to counteract state repression and vilification by the mass media, so being able to take full advantage of the existing political opportunity structure. This theory holds true for the movements of 1968, which enjoyed the relatively benign neutrality of the PCI, if less so for the AWM of 1969-73 which certainly did not. However, *Autonomia* did not and probably was not able to seek such potential alliances, although the AWM had a more open relationship with the unions at least until 1977. The main reason for this extreme divarication between the PCI and *Autonomia* was the Historic Compromise (HC). Also called the 'national solidarity pact' and the 'pact of producers', rather than a rupture with the past it can be seen as being in continuity with the PCI's institutional strategy since 1946 of the 'Italian way to socialism' and the 'politics of the new majorities', involving an equilibrium between reformist practice and revolutionary ideological language (Balestrini and Moroni 1997). The effects of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and particularly the Hot Autumn deepened the contradictions inherent in such a dual strategy, bringing profound disquiet among the grass roots of the West's largest and most cautious communist party. Consequently, it was forced to adopt a more open stance towards the 'new minorities' of the 1968 students and workers movements and to reorganize its presence in the major industrial factories where the Southern immigrant workers, a social strata devoid of any official communist tradition, were playing a key role in struggles autonomous from the unions and the institutional Left. Already in 1966 at the PCI's Genoa organizational conference the problematic relationship between the working class and the party had been put centre stage and the decision made to reconstruct its presence in the factories, which nevertheless remained minimal in Italy's

largest factory, FIAT's Mirafiori plant, in 1968 where PO and LC faced little competition from the PCI when organizing among the workforce[32]. The PCI's overriding concern with the general interests of the economy and the nation-state made it unreceptive and unattractive to the "antiproductivist, egalitarian and radically anticapitalist" AWM (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p470). Following 1968-69, the PCI found itself caught between two contradictions. Its vote and social influence increased rapidly, thanks to the effects of the students' movement and the NL groups, some of which remained essentially sympathetic. Conversely, it had lost its authority and hegemony among the new factory vanguards, "extraneous from the productivist myth, and above all [from] the statist culture of the official workers' movement" (ibid.), and thus its control over factory struggles, key to its political contractual power. Thus, the PCI began its move towards the *ceti medi* (middle Italy) to oppose the working class extremism of the Hot Autumn; a policy seen by both the AWM and significant sectors of its own grass-roots as an outright concession to the Right.

1973 was the key year in the process of division between the PCI and the AWM. On the one hand, the autonomous occupation of the FIAT Mirafiori plant in March showed the AWM and other factory vanguards that it was possible to self-organise direct action in the factory against the open opposition of the unions and the PCI. On the other, the coup d'état in Chile in September against Allende's elected socialist government, following the two attempted fascist coups in Italy in 1963 and 1970, the 'Strategy of Tension' bombings since 1969, and the Greek Colonels' coup of 1967, convinced party secretary Berlinguer and the rest of the PCI's leadership that frontal conflict with the capitalist classes, both Italian and international, was not possible, even from a majoritarian position, as this would inevitably provoke a fascist response. Instead, it was necessary to propose an alliance of the two main politico-social forces, the official workers' movement and Christian Democrat populism to form a pact of 'national solidarity'. The severe politico-economic crisis of the mid 1970s led the DC and PCI to agree a common strategy to stabilise the Italian state and organise social consensus for the economic austerity measures needed to cut inflation and boost productivity. Under the terms of the HC, the PCI agreed to abstain rather than oppose the Andreotti government in return for which it received considerable influence and input on legislation, particularly regarding law and order.

The Historic Compromise led the PCI from its relatively neutral position in 1968 vis-à-vis the NSMs to open conflict with the radical '77 Movement and eventually with the AWM in the workplace. From the passing of the 1975 Reale Law, which effectively introduced a state of emergency, the PCI did not oppose repressive legislation against both the armed organisations and the antagonist social movements. According to *Autonomia*'s intellectuals, the real aim of the PCI and DC's repressive measures, like its austerity pact, was to 'normalise' social protest and so guarantee the restructuration of key areas of the economy, particularly manufacturing. As repression increased towards the end of the decade, not only NSM activity declined but also the overall number of social conflicts and industrial disputes.

In effect, the HC and its consequent austerity and social control measures divided the urban working classes into two categories: a 'guaranteed' sector tied to the unions and social co-operation with capital, and a new 'non-guaranteed' class, consisting of students, women, and unemployed youth trapped in the 'black economy', but also a growing sector of part-time, temporary and casualised service sector and professional workers with few rights and little union protection, known as the *precari* (precarious). This deep division was to be the main root cause for the crisis of the Left brought to the surface by the '77 Movement (Balestrini and Moroni 1997). Also included among the 'non-guaranteed' were those industrial factory workers, whose jobs were most at risk from restructuration, such as those mainly young workers made redundant at the Innocenti (a subsidiary of British Leyland) plant in Milan, who joined forces with local autonomist groups in an attempt to occupy the factory in autumn 1976, but were forcibly repelled by those workers (mainly older, unionised and linked to the PCI and the NL groups) whose jobs had been guaranteed through an agreement with management. Innocenti was later to be shut down completely in the mid 1980s. This was the first in a series of setbacks for the AWM that was to culminate in total defeat by autumn 1980.

Balestrini and Moroni (1997) go so far as to accuse the PCI of indirectly pushing sections of the 'non-guaranteed' into the arms of the terrorist groups through its policy of complete closure and relentless repression of the '77 Movement. The PCI's claim that the 'working class has become the state'[33] following their virtual victory over the DC at the 1976 general election was considered by the AWM and others as an inflammatory provocation given the defeats inflicted by the restructuration process and a deliberate repudiation of the

autonomous nature of the overall workers' movement since 1969. Nevertheless, restructuration could have resulted in a united campaign by the Left for a 35-hour week with no pay cut, as happened in West Germany, to protect jobs and living standards from de-industrialisation were it not for the PCI's decision to reject any proposal coming from the AWM or anywhere else to its left. In April 1977, the autonomous workers' assemblies, parts of the '77 Movement, and a national workers' assembly at the Lirico Theatre in Milan united around the slogan 'work less so that all can work'[34]. This was rebutted by the PCI as a provocation.

For the AWM and *Autonomia*, the Historic Compromise period between 1973 and 1979 represented an attack by the 'partyocracy' (*partitocrazia)* on the workers' autonomy that had inflicted an historical defeat on the Italian state and employers in 1969/70, forcing major concessions. It was also seen as the prime example of the 'autonomy of the political' from the social and economic, based on the traditional socialist belief that the state, whose conquest electorally or by force was paramount, was the principal and essentially neutral arena for the regulation of economic and social relations. Revelli (1978, p72-73), in defining the 'autonomy of the political', accuses both the PCI and (implicitly) the BR of a fetishistic obsession with state power:

> "[T]he most subaltern and at the same time most suitable form for capitalist mystification and fetishisation (...) whether it presents itself in its 'revisionist' version, which sees the state as the only totalising site for conflict and the possibility of controlling its apparatus as its principal objective to which all else is to be sacrificed; or in its 'insurrectionalist' version, which proposes the concentration of all available forces on the terrain of direct conflict with the state. The old Third Internationalist degenerations have returned in a new form (...) assuming the class struggle to be internal to the conflict between states – without taking into account the profound and ultimately decisive internal modifications in the productive process on which the basis of the neo-capitalist model was founded".

The PCI, transforming itself from a "party of struggle" to a "party of government" and in preparation for the exercise of power after decades of permanent and often ineffectual opposition, adopted a "simplified if not regressive" attitude towards the demands of the NSMs:

> "[O]n the terrain of party organisation, it opened its doors to modernising technocrats; on the cultural terrain it lauded morality and austerity; on public administration, it argued strongly for spending cuts, consequently allying itself with the detractors of the Welfare State; on industrial policy, it pushed the unions towards moderation on salary increases and the rigid bureaucratic

> control of grass-roots organisations; on the social terrain it ran up the flag for the repression of different movements (...) Overall (...) it practiced a politics of 'law and order' and with a vigour and firmness that could not but evoke the ghosts of Stalinism (...) the alliance between the [DC] and the PCI came to represent, in the eyes of the social movements, of workers and of society in general, a fundamentally reactionary phenomenon. (...) For the workers, the expression 'the PCI in government', once the symbol of hope, appeared as a confirmation of their defeat in the factories and as an acceptance of the costs of social restructuration. The shock waves within the unions continued without respite. In the schools, the neighbourhoods and the cities where the counter-cultural organisations and alternative movements were well rooted, the shock was even more violent. The new generations considered the politics of the PCI as archaic, (...) its militants as traitors and its destiny to kill freedom." (Negri, date unknown)

Regarding the NSMs and social reform, the PCI was lukewarm towards the feminist campaigns to defend divorce and abortion rights in the early 1970s. However, thanks also to the electoral support of some of the NL groups, it almost overtook the DC as the largest party in the 1976 elections. During the 1970s, it took control of many city councils and regional governments, including most of the largest conurbations such as Milan, Turin and its showcase, Bologna. Its rapid electoral growth was boosted by a fresh intake of ex-NL activists with experience in NSMs, bringing with them innovative ideas. However, the NL's high expectations of the PCI were to be severely disillusioned by the Historic Compromise period during which it became identified as the 'enemy' of the radical NSMs, particularly *Autonomia*.

The rapid advance of industrial restructuration with its mass redundancies in 1979 forced the PCI to rethink its strategy of 'national solidarity' with the centre-right. Its inability to capitalise on its electoral successes of the mid 1970s and its alienation of much of Italian youth, a significant sector of the industrial working class and what remained of the NSM sector and the New Left led to political decline in the 1980s.

5.2) The 'diffused factory', 'black market work' and the 'socialised worker'

The social consensus and political unity of the party system produced by the Historic Compromise, along with the severity of the economic and political crisis of the mid 1970s, helped the institutional Left's offensive against the AWM in the large industrial plants. Simultaneously, *Autonomia* became increasingly centred on the conflicts of the 'diffused factory' (*fabbrica diffusa*). The Negrians of *Rosso* had already begun to theorise this shift

through the conceptual figure of the 'socialised worker' (*operaio sociale*), a category first developed by Marx in *Grundrisse* and now reworked as the 'recomposition' of the 'mass worker', decomposed by post-Fordist restructuration and technological change. The fragmentation of large-scale, centralised, industrial production into the dispersed network of small factories, workshops and informal family businesses, where industrial relations laws hindered union organisation and promoted labour deregulation and flexibilisation, was conceptualised as the 'diffused factory', the precursor of the now dominant Toyotist 'just in time' mode of production. The Italian capitalist class had learnt its Hot Autumn lesson well and invested heavily in the break up of the labour force into smaller, more flexible units, Italy being one of the first nations to embark on this process. In the Emilia-Romagna region, the heartland of the PCI, the co-operative movement linked to the PCI rapidly adapted to the post-Fordist model, so creating what became known as the 'Third Italy'.

However, the initial result was the intensification and extension of industrial conflict as the diffused factory's workers and potential recruitment pool campaigned against the very existence of this model. In this newly deregulated framework, working overtime and weekends became the norm, so preventing new jobs from being created and ensuring the super-exploitation of a relatively well-educated 'intelligent' work force with a remarkably high turnover rate. Working conditions in terms of health and safety were far worse than in the large factories. Worse still, as mass unemployment rose the growing desperation among young school leavers and university students to find some means of income made them vulnerable to the 'black economy', whose sweatshops operated outside the law without much difficulty. In these *covi di lavoro nero* low pay, long hours, unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, compulsory overtime, weekend working, lack of job security, union rights, holiday, sick leave, accident and injury or pension rights would have made them the envy of any Mexican or U.S. *maquiladora* owner. The *covi* were not seen by *Autonomia* as a deviant form of capitalist enterprise but an integrated element in a flexibilised network of production aimed at providing cheap services and products for national and international manufacturing industries.

Closing down the *covi* and preventing their spread became *Autonomia*'s chief industrial campaign, but was ultimately a lost cause given the rapid international momentum of the neoliberal production model. A combination of tactics was used varying from violent and intimidatory marches around the 'free enterprise' zones sprouting in the industrial

hinterland, aimed at preventing overtime and strike-breaking, to targeted acts of violence such as the burning of factory owners, manager's and foremen's cars, to acts of industrial sabotage carried out by workers themselves. The aims were two-fold: first, to prevent any further deterioration in working conditions which the culture of economic crisis and austerity fostered by the party system was promoting; second, to act strategically against the new post-Fordist organisation of labour in a revolutionary sense. In Rome, where the use of political violence was more widespread than elsewhere, the campaign against the *covi* also involved arson and physical violence against their owners. Balestrini (1989) describes the Saturday marches carried out by the autonomists, in alliance with radical elements in the unions, around the Milanese industrial hinterland to disrupt and sabotage the 'diffused factory'. He also recounts how working class families commonly carried out piecework in their homes to supplement their incomes, a practice which was to become even more widespread in the 1980s.

Overall, the struggle against the diffusion of deregulated and flexibilised forms of post-Fordist labour organisation and industrial process was seen as central to both defending the gains of 1969-73 and to deepening capital's crisis. For *Autonomia*, the gradual replacement during the 1970s of the mass worker by the socialised worker as the key productive actor and antagonist subject, while representing a defeat for working class communities in terms of redundancies and income loss and posing a new organizational challenge in the post-Fordist 'dispersed workplace', represented a step forward in the struggle against the factory system. In many ways, the shift in focus from the 'internal' struggles of the large industrial factory to the 'external' ones of the 'dispersed factory' was a precursor of contemporary struggles against neoliberal workplace deregulation and labour flexibilisation in the advanced capitalist countries.

5.4) The repression of the autonomous workers' movement and the defeat of the workers' movements

As the decade drew to a close, the AWM both in the large plants and the 'dispersed factory' found itself internally divided by sectarian spats between autonomist and NL activists over tactics, and increasingly isolated and outmanoeuvred by both the revived fortunes of the unions and the intensifying speed of restructuration. The failure of the AWM and the '77 Movement to co-ordinate and reinforce each other eliminated both as potentially majoritarian social forces, leaving them weakened and vulnerable to socio-

economic marginalisation and political repression. On December 2nd 1977 came the final rupture between the unions and some of the factory vanguards attached to the more moderate NL groups on one side and the AWM on the other. A major national demonstration had been called for in Rome by the FLM, the federation of metal workers and historically the most militant union, in a final attempt to unite factory workers and the movements against the government's austerity policies. The Milanese 'workers' Left', particularly the autonomous workers of Alfa Romeo, proposed a national meeting on the same day to relaunch the now flagging '77 Movement and AWM. However, the movements were profoundly divided on whether to participate in the FLM's march or express their repudiation of the unions' collaboration with restructuration through a separate autonomous march. On the day, in an atmosphere of severe tension with thousands of heavily armed police on the streets, the FLM's stewards prevented any split from the march to the two separate autonomous meetings at Rome University, which thus failed to aggregate sufficient forces to make either a success. Meanwhile, 200,000 trade unionists marched through Rome, accentuating their strength and the weakness and isolation of both the AWM and the remnants of the 1977 Movement:

> "Those who had pretended to represent class autonomy, in opposition to the unions, were unable to avoid isolation and severe military control, which starkly revealed the political fragility of the now heavily redimensioned national network of autonomous organisms. And also the different initiatives of the 'movement' in the afternoon at the university only confirmed how the worker Lefts, globally understood, were absolutely not a political subject able to have an autonomous role in the general political struggle nor to condition the developments of the antagonist movements." (Scavino 1997, p27)

It was clearly the end of the 'factory pact' that hitherto had guaranteed a diverse and quarrelling militant working class unity of sorts. It was also seen as a signal by the *Confindustria* that it had the full consent of the official workers movement in launching a campaign of political expulsions from the large factories. In February 1978, following the fall of the government of national solidarity, the union federations formally adopted what became known as the 'EUR line', that of the corporativist collaboration with government economic policy and the normalisation of industrial relations which has since characterised Italian trade unionism. The 'Moro Affair' a few months later led to the isolation and criminalisation of *Autonomia* and the antagonist NSMs, the AWM included. By the end of the decade, the final battles against restructuration were fought with only a residual presence of the autonomist committees and assemblies in the factories. However, at the

height of the '77 Movement the potential fusion of the autonomous youth, students, women's and workers movements had briefly seemed to promise a revival and revolutionary upturn in factory and workplace struggles.

Following the Moro Affair in 1978, the overall level of repression and fear intensified throughout civil society causing demobilization and a mass withdrawal into private life on the one hand and the increasing resort to armed, clandestine, organised violence on the other, leaving a vulnerable minority in NSM activity. As political and democratic spaces closed down for the NSMs, a similar process occurred in the workplace. It became much easier for the institutional Left to tar its political opponents in the AWM and the NL 'factory vanguards' as terrorists and fellow travellers. Lists of suspected terrorists and sympathizers were drawn up by the unions and passed to management in the same way that the PCI called on the public to denounce anyone suspected of terrorism. The BR's response was to turn on local PCI and union activists in the factories, some of whom were killed or kneecapped. This fratricidal conflict, pitting worker against worker, finally destroyed what remained of the tenuous unity of the CDFs and played straight into the hands of management who now felt secure enough to take on the most militant autonomous workers and sack them.

FIAT's management, as usual, led the way, dismissing 61 of the most militant NL and AWM activists in late 1979 for "moral behaviour not consistent with the well-being of the Company" (Red Notes 1981, p71). The unions reacted sluggishly given that some of the workers were accused of using violence and abuse during strikes and because they, like the PCI, were keen to see them disciplined. With the initiative in hand, FIAT announced the redundancies of 14,500 workers in September 1980, "the biggest mass sacking in Italian history" (ibid.). A sense of profound outrage filled the working class districts of Turin, fuelling the desperate last stand of the 'mass worker', a similar situation to the British miners' strike of 1984-85. However, the national unions were paralysed by confusion and the PCI had only just ended the HC, no longer useful to the elites as a policy of all-out repression and criminalisation of the Left had taken its place. It was left to what Revelli (1982) described as the "gate people", an amalgam of older PCI workers with a Resistance background, the remnants of the southern immigrant 'mass workers' and the 'new starters', younger workers with a practice of mobility and casual work far removed from the older generations, along with their families, communities and supporters to organise strikes, mass

demonstrations and the non-stop picketing of the Mirafiori and Rivalta plants and the dozens of FIAT subsidiary factories in and around Turin. The PCI intervened at last, with Berlinguer addressing a mass meeting of workers outside Mirafiori. When Lama, the head of the CGIL, attempted to do likewise he was driven out, as in 1977 from Rome University, the workers aware that the union federations were negotiating virtual capitulation over the head of their union, the FLM. The main slogan was "Do as in Gdansk – Occupy!" (*Solidarnosc*'s historical strikes and occupations were happening simultaneously in Poland). The turning point came five weeks later on October 15th when a march of 40,000 managers, foremen, white collar and some blue collar workers demanded a return to work, chanting "work is defended by working" and threatening to attack the pickets outside Mirafiori[35]. This was a "grey movement (...) the synthesis of our antithesis (...) materially and structurally anti-worker" (ibid, p106-108), that hoped to avoid imminent white collar restructuration from computerisation through a strategy of loyalty to management and opposition to blue collar struggles – the antithesis of the blue-white collar alliance of the Hot Autumn. The impact of the 'March of the 40,000' was devastating and immediate. Within days the strikes were called off and the unions had agreed to the redundancies and to FIAT's demand of 'managers' right to manage' and choose those they wished to sack, mainly older workers linked to the AWM, the NL groups, but also to the PCI. In the 1980s it became as dangerous for a FIAT worker to be a member of the PCI or to be seen reading *L'Unitá*, the PCI's daily newspaper, as in the 1950s. FIAT returned to being the "sleeping giant" of the Fifties, "weighing like lead on the class situation in Italy", as Revelli (1982, p96) had feared. The struggle, according to Revelli, had been lost from the start, FIAT silently laying the foundation for their victory over the mass worker from 1973-74 when the automation of production lines began. For the rest of the decade FIAT had effectively operated at a loss as a form of social welfare, accepting the reality of autonomous worker control on the shop floor while waiting for the right combination of political and economic circumstances before making its move:

> "This was a period in which FIAT was used by the employers more as a means for the enlarged reproduction of political mediation (and social consensus) rather than as a means of production of commodities, and it was clear that the union was able to survive, as a shadow, a fetishistic form of a hypostasised 'worker's power'. But it was also clear that, as the class composition which had made the material and social base of that model of the union broke up, so the moment was approaching in which the boss aimed to settle a few accounts." (ibid, p99)

The rest of Italian manufacturing industry quickly followed suit, launching a wave of mass lay-offs and redundancies, including in 1982 a third of the workforce of Alfa Romeo, the AWM's bastion. Post-Fordist deindustrialisation and restructuration allied to the Left's divisions and a social atmosphere of fear brought about by the resurgent terrorism and draconian state repression of the 'Years of Lead' had put paid to the 'mass worker' as the key antagonist actor of the 1970s and with it the AWM. It was now left to the far more uncertain figure of the 'socialised worker' to occupy its place, a process that had already begun in 1977.

6) Case study: "The Workers' Party of Mirafiori"

If 1973 marked a turning point in the history of the Italian working class movement and in the organisational configuration of the revolutionary left, its central event was the dramatic conclusion to the contractual dispute, resulting in the occupation of FIAT's Mirafiori plant, the culmination of the AWM's struggles since 1968. The previous two years had been characterised by the crisis of the NL groups and a slowdown in factory struggles, while simultaneously the NSMs became more active in the metropolitan areas and the movement's centre of gravity shifted from the factory to the arena of 'social appropriation'. The FIAT occupation marked a key conjuncture in this shift from factory to society, as well as sounding the death knell for the NL groups, their role as the factory 'vanguard' now emptied of significance (Balestrini and Moroni 1997).

In Turin in March the balance of power in the conclusion of negotiations on the new national contract began to swing away from management. The union demands were for the end of pay differentials between blue and white-collar workers (*inquadramento unico*), equal treatment over holidays, a 40-hour, five-day, week with Saturday off and a reduction in the amount of compulsory overtime. The restructuration process had already started that year with the decision to stall shop floor recruitment and the introduction of the first 'labour saving' machines. However, an unsatisfactory deal seemed to be emerging, putting the unions under intense criticism from the workforce. The FIAT workers initiated forms of autonomous struggle, until an all-out strike was launched in mid-March, rapidly spreading throughout the various sections and workshops of Mirafiori and other FIAT factories. Daily internal marches swept through the offices and shop floors, preventing non-strikers, foremen and managers from working. On the 27th a deal was about to be struck by the unions, which was considered unacceptable given the number of hours (170) on strike. On

the morning of the 29th, LC and PO leafleted workers at the factory gates, calling for the relaunch of the all-out strike. It immediately became clear that the mood was particularly angry and news began to filter out about an occupation, confirmed by the workers placing red flags on the factory gates. How the occupation had been organised remained a mystery, but something fundamentally important was happening:

> "[T]he new social composition of the workers brought models of behaviour (...) based on their everyday life experiences (...) into the factory which had nothing to do with the traditions of the communist movement. [They were] no longer emigrants from the South, but young, scholarised, Turinese and Piedmontese, formed by the experiences of the student and neighbourhood struggles. The occupation of Mirafiori constituted the first demonstration of the liberated young proletariat, which was to constitute the social network of struggles in the following years, leading up to the explosion of 1977." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p435)

Through the experience of the occupation the "refusal of work had become a conscious movement" (ibid.). But such a radicalised workers' movement was unwilling to confine itself to factory struggles, immediately exposing the weakness of the groups, while imposing the broader question of its own organisation. During the occupation, Mirafiori "took on the air of an impregnable fortress" and the security forces kept their distance. Faced with such a determined show of strength management soon caved into all the workers' demands, accepting the imposition of egalitarian measures (ibid.).

However, 1973 was also the year of the Oil Crisis that was to presage the end of the Keynesian-Fordist model and the birth of the post-Fordist, neoliberal mode of capitalist development. Rapid structural changes occurred in response to the planetary scale of the social 'refusal' represented by the radical NSMs: inflation rose sharply, formerly robust economies stagnated (the term 'stagflation' arrived), the era of full employment ended, entire social strata were marginalised and impoverished, 'black economy' sweatshops and boites and the taking in of work by families proliferated; the late 20th century 'underclass' and casualised 'flexploitation' began to emerge. In Italy this process was called "metropolitanisation" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p436) and produced a new kind of worker, first seen in the Mirafiori occupation, with their own forms of behaviour, needs and organisation:

> "The meaningless shouts, no longer with slogans nor threats nor promises, of the young workers with red bandannas tied around their foreheads, the first metropolitan indians[36], those shouts announced that a new season was beginning for the revolutionary movement in Italy. A phase without

> progressive ideologies nor faith in socialism, without any affection for the democratic system, but also without respect for the myths of the proletarian revolution." (ibid.).

The very radicality of this new form of worker's autonomy from all previous political traditions, including the vanguardist pretensions of the NL, also invoked the crisis of the operaist groups. A few months later PO, learning from its Mirafiori lesson and its vicissitudes with the growing women's movement, dissolved itself at the Rosalina convention. LC too began the process of diaspora and disaggregration that eventually ended it in 1976 as a political organisation. In 'The Workers' Party of Mirafiori', Negri (1979b, p65) argues that the armed occupation represented not only the defeat of the unions and the obsolescence of the groups, but also the "death of and the transcendence of spontaneism", necessitating the construction of a new form of political party which could only be undertaken on the back of a "workers' enquiry"[37] into the new class composition that the Red Bandanas represented. It is significant that this analysis was written shortly before the dissolution of PO and Negri's expulsion from the group and shows that he was perhaps already outlining what would become the attempted national party of Organised Workers' Autonomy (see chapter 5). The attack on 'spontaneism' as an explanation for autonomous social conflict was a trademark of the operaist tradition, influenced by Montaldi's rejection of the term. S.Bologna, although often in disagreement with Negri, shares this view, preferring the term "microsystems of struggle" to explain the sudden explosion of autonomous behaviour by factory workers:

> "What we could call 'spontaneity' is, in reality, the formation of microsystems of struggle which are already very mature politically, because they have been determined by a generation of militants who came from the Resistance. Or else, they were worker militants who had already been trade union leaders, who broke individually and gradually, in silence, with the unions, and developed their own autonomy." (Cuninghame 2001, p93)

The 'Workers' Party of Mirafiori', however, failed to spread nationally, either within the factories or in civil society, emphasizing the fragility of the AWM's loose network of localised organisms compared to the national bureaucracies of the unions and the institutional Left. Like the '77 Movement, of which it was an anticipation in terms of its class composition and behaviours, it was a moment of explosive autonomous practice which opened entirely new vistas for social transformation and temporarily united diverse social and political elements within the broader movement, before fragmenting into

sectarianism and relative impotence in the face of fundamental and historical structural changes in Italian and international socio-economic relations.

7) Conclusion

The AWM's struggle for equality in pay and conditions for blue and white collar workers, for 'less work and more money', for the democratisation of labour relations and the unions, and against technological restructuration, union bureaucracy, the post-Fordist 'diffused factory' and the labour 'black market', and above all against capitalist work as alienated activity, helped to change the nature of the Italian workplace and its institutions, and was a major contribution to the radical changes that took place throughout Italian society in the Seventies. Undoubtedly, its revolutionary project of autonomous worker control over production was defeated by the effects of the post-Fordist transformation of the economy and the reimposition of union hegemony in place of workers' autonomy because of political repression and the Historic Compromise's politics of austerity. What has been its legacy for contemporary Italian industrial and social relations? Can it be considered a NSM or was it simply the extremist wing of the last stand of the industrial mass working class, the oldest social movement?

The strength of the resistance to and consequent slowness in the introduction of neoliberal economic and social reforms in contemporary Italy, when compared to the UK and the USA, can be explained, at least partially, by the continuing existence of a very radical working class political culture linked to the experience of the AWM. Workers' self-organisation autonomous from the unions and the official Left (now represented by the DS, the RC[38] and the remains of the PSI) continues to be widespread, particularly in the service sector, where the COBAS have organised extensively among teachers, health, telecommunications, energy, public transport and government workers since the mid 1980s. More recently, they have linked up with the remnants of the AWM committees, for example at Alfa Romeo in Milan, who are now organised as the SLAI-COBAS. However, while the COBAS has a national co-ordinating group, there is still much division over whether to remain a network of autonomous local organisations or become a national trade union with the incipient risks of bureaucratisation and compromise with government economic policy. The number of strikes, pickets, industrial disputes, mass demonstrations and direct actions by Italian workers remains the highest in the EU, if at a much lower level than in the 1970s. However, the difference from then is that the nature of these struggles is

exclusively defensive, aimed at protecting past concessions and slowing down rather than preventing the introduction of the liberalisation of the labour market dictated by the EU. The union confederations have long since adopted the strategy of close co-operation with government economic policy now typical throughout the advanced capitalist countries, even if this strategy has been angrily opposed by its own members, as happened in the second 'hot autumn' of 1992.

When ascertaining if the AWM was a NSM, i.e. an essentially new social phenomenon, or part of the historical workers movement, the answer is probably both. The AWM can be considered to be a NSM in its organizational practice, its social composition, and above all in its radical break with the traditional beliefs of the historical workers movement and classical socialism. The AWM was composed of a mixture of mainly young 'socialised workers' in the 'diffused factory' and older, often Southern immigrant, 'mass workers' in the large factories. This mixture of social and cultural compositions would have made an attempted national trade union structure out of the question. Thus, the AWM's basic organizational model of localized factory committees and assemblies, with some participation in the CDFs, but with no more than citywide co-ordination and a minimal national co-ordination network, makes it similar to the classic 'localised network' organizational model of the NSMs. The strength of this model was to make it far more receptive to the needs of workers and changes in the workplace than the union bureaucracies, while minimising links with the hierarchical and nationally organised NL groups. However, the lack of a national co-coordinating capacity comparable to the unions ultimately left it vulnerable to repression and in an isolated, minoritarian position. After 1973 and the switch of emphasis to the struggle against the 'diffused factory', its social composition became almost identical with that of *Autonomia*, most of whose militants were involved in workplace struggles as well as those of 'social appropriation'. However, for the antagonist youth of *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement, being a 'worker', once the essence of proletarian identity, was more a condition to be avoided and certainly secondary to the counter-cultural and feminist influences on individual and collective identity formation. Conversely, particularly among the older 'mass workers' and those allied with the neo-Leninist position of Organised Autonomy, the workerist ideals of 'workers' centrality' and the primacy of the struggle at the point of production remained deep-felt and this part of the AWM remained very much part of the historical workers' movement.

Even if a significant, perhaps the most representative part, of the AWM espoused its 'revolutionary' operaist version of 'workers' centrality', as much as the official workers' movement clung to a reformist version of this classical Marxist notion, the most innovatory aspect of the AWM was its fundamental break with the traditions of Marxist-Leninism, labourism and scientific socialism over the question of work itself. The theorization of the refusal of work developed by dissident PCI and PSI operaist intellectuals through a re-reading of Marx and the use of Marx's 'worker's enquiry' to examine at the grass-roots the rapidly changing composition of the working class in the late 1950s and early 1960s was met and surpassed by the practice of the Southern immigrant blue collar and North Italian white collar workers of the Hot Autumn. Rather than being the prime source of working class dignity and pride, the reason for which the working class had its historical destiny to develop capitalism and so transform it into socialism, capitalist work was to be refused and technological innovation fought where it removed workers and imposed more work on those remaining. However, a profound ambiguity remained within the AWM, *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement over the issue of technological innovation, significant sectors of all three believing, perhaps naively, that it could liberate the working class from the drudgery of manual labour and the factory system, but only if under the control of the workers' themselves. Given this radical standpoint on the 'refusal of work', political confrontation with trade unionism and reformist social democracy, tied to notions of the general interest of the nation state and the national economy, became inevitable. In this sense, the mass worker's refusal of work and desire for autonomy from authority, whether managerial or of union bureaucracy, was in harmony with the student's rejection of 'academic authoritarianism' and the 'misery' of university life, counter-cultural youth's rejection of the technocratic 'greyness' of life based on work and a career, and the feminist rejection of patriarchal authority and desire for autonomy from male politics and the nuclear family, the site of endless, unpaid and devalued work for women. Furthermore, the refusal of work was the protection of the worker's health from industrial accidents and illness caused by constant contact with toxic materials, noise and dangerous machinery. As S.Bologna claims, the green movement in Italy began in the factories and developed through journals like *Sapere*, where worker intellectuals, such as Marra, researched work-based health issues with medical professionals, helping to form the theoretical and empirical basis for the contemporary environmental and alternative health movements (Cuninghame 2001).

The AWM and *Autonomia* were defeated by a combination of internal weaknesses and external political, economic and historical forces, leaving a residual presence today as the COBAS, and the *centri sociali* and 'free radio' networks. However, their struggles against work and the factory system in their Fordist and post-Fordist versions can be said to have made a significant contribution to the major changes in Italian economy and society since 1980, which had their roots in the turmoil of the 1970s. One of the most important aspects has been the creation of a "society of non-work", one of whose most antagonist subjects is the recomposition of the 'socialised worker' as the "autonomous [self-employed] immaterial worker", central to the information and cyber economies (Virno 1996, Negri 1994). For the socialised and immaterial workers (for recomposition does not mean substitution), a work-based identity is no longer possible even if it were desired. Work cannot be at the centre of life, as was the experience of the mass worker and its historical antecedents, the craft worker and the professionalised worker, when its structures of time and space have been flexibilised and decentred to the point of amorphous fluidity. The refusal of work and of poverty now takes the form of 'exodus' in all its varieties, including the mass migrations of economic and political refugees from the peripheries to the centres of the globalised economy, rather than static resistance at the point of production. Yet, in Italy, this phenomenon has been contradictory in antagonist terms. The creative energy of the '77 Movement, its antagonist subjectivity self-alienated by the processes of political removal (*rimozione*) and social atomisation, has been extensively mobilised by the 'mass media revolution' of the 1980s, creating an army of media workers at the service of Berlusconi and the New Right's rise to power (Berardi 1997).

NOTES

[1] "Automation for all production."

[2] I use the acronym AWM to identify an objective social movement. It was not a self-proclaimed political movement or organisation.

[3] A Marxist sociological journal of the early 1960s founded by Panzieri and Alquati in Turin, which set out to analyse the class composition of the new wave of factory militancy preceding the Piazza Statuto Revolt in Turin in 1962 through the use of Marx's 'workers' enquiry'. Many of the leading operaist intellectuals, such as Tronti, Asor Rosa and Negri, became involved in its editorial committee.

[4] A category in fact first used by Marx in *Grundrisse* in 1858, this further development of the concept of the 'mass worker' by Negri (1979) was an attempt to theorise the new class composition of the 'diffused factory'; the product of the new social movements, industrial restructuration, 'marginalisation' and the 'refusal of work become movement'. It remains a more controversial and less well-defined social figure than the 'mass worker'.

[5] There seems to be some confusion over the number of demonstrators: 20,000 according to Revelli (1982, p106), but 40,000 according to Red Notes (1981, p71), which is the more usually accepted number.

[6] Franco Berardi ('Bifo') was probably the main intellectual of '*autonomia creativa*' (creative autonomy). Specialising in communicative theory and practice, his Marxism has always been heavily tempered by existentialism, situationism, anti-psychiatry, Foucault and Deleuze, thus presenting an interesting counterpoint to the more workerist writings of Negri, Bologna, Scalzone and Piperno. He is known as 'Bifo'

from when he signed abstract paintings at school with this pseudonym. He became an 'anarcooperist', and entered PO, participating in the '68 movement in Bologna university, from where he graduated in aesthetics. In 1970, Feltrinelli published his first book, *Contro il lavoro*. In 1975, he founded the journal 'A/traverso', that became the mouthpiece of the 'creative movement' of Bologna. In 1976, he participated in Radio Alice and the relationship between communication technology and social movements becomes the centre of his thought and action. In 1977 he escaped from Bologna where the police wanted him for 'instigation of class hatred by means of radio', and went to Paris, where he met Guattari and Foucault and published *Enfin le ciel est tombè sur la terre,* on the '77 Movement. Returning to Italy he published *La barca dell'amore si è spezzata* on the repression and defeat of the movements, before moving to New York, where he collaborated with the journal 'Semiotext(e)', and from where he sent articles to the Milan review 'Music 80'. He then travelled in India, Mexico, Nepal, and China, returning to Italy in 1985, when he helped to open TOPIA, a centre of 'mental ecology'. He began to concentrate on the phenomenon of the data transmission network, publishing in 'Alfabeta' the article 'Communicative Technologies' on the outbreak of the social and cultural phenomenon of the Internet. In 1989, after a period of study in California, he published the pamphlet 'Cyberpunk', followed by *Piu' cyber che punk*, *Cancel*, *Politiche della mutazione* and *Mutazione e cyberpunk*. In 1991, he participated as actor and scriptwriter in the film 'Trasloco' by Renato De Maria. In 1994, he organized, with the University of Bologna, an international convention, entitled 'Cibernauti', published in four volumes by Castelvecchi. Recent publications include *Come si cura il nazi*, *Neuromagma*, *Exit, Il nostro contributo all'estinzione della civilta, Dell'innocencenza* (another reflection on the 1977 Movement) and *La nefasta utopia di Potere Operaio* (an interpretation of the history of PO). (Source: Mediamente (RAI), 3.01, [web: http://www.mediamente.rai.it/home/bibliote/biografi/b/berardi.htm].)

[7] Marx's concept of workers' alienation has four dimensions, one of which is alienation from labour as "life activity" (See 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' in 'Early Writings', 1975 [1932]). This is generally under-recognised by classical Marxism. The autonomist Marxist definition of capitalist work as "expropriation of time for life" can therefore be seen as embracing Marx's critique of alienation. This is interesting because Italian autonomist Marxists (for example, Negri under Althusser's influence) generally dislike the humanism of the "young Marx". I thank Massimo De Angelis for providing me with this insight.

[8] For a basic definition in English of this and other key operaist and related Marxist concepts (Constituent Power, Exodus, General Intellect, Immaterial Labour, Mass Intellectuality, Power, Self-valorisation), see Virno and Hardt (1996, p260-3).

[9] See Chapter 1, note 24.

[10] Under the '150 ore' programme, promoted by the PCI-linked unions, all workers had the right to attend training or university courses for 150 hours a year during work time. In fact employers paid for 250 hours a year per person as most courses required workers to attend outside work hours as well. Many workers were able to complete degrees or gain qualifications as skilled technicians, so being able to rise up the job classifications to the next level and gain the 'new professionalism' the PCI hoped would both give blue collar workers a distinct career structure, thus damping down conflict, and benefit the economy through an increased skill level. However, the AWM was highly critical of this initiative, accusing its union promoters of being "obscurantist and counterrevolutionary to block the possibility of (...) consciousness [of the levelling down, rather than up, and deskilling effects of technological restructuration] and the process of egalitarian struggles begun in 1969, by introducing mystifying concepts like 'the new professionalism', 'skills training', etc." (Cantarow 1973, p25)

[11] An operaist historical journal that took a more independent line on developments within the social movements and the class struggle of the 1970s than journals linked with 'Organised Autonomy'.

[12] An average of 15-17% of the 60,000 workers at the FIAT Mirafiori plant in Turin were absent on any given working day during the 1970s, according to a Turin informant interviewed in Italian in September 1990.

[13] The 'schegge impazzite' (literally 'maddened shrapnel') theory was used by the press to explain the still unsolved an *Lotta Feminista*[13] d unpunished chain of bombings from the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan in December 1969 to the mass murder of 81 rail passengers in Bologna Station in August 1980 to the final bombing of a passenger train in December 1984. About 150 people were killed by the 'Strategy of Tension' bombings (See Bale 1989, Coglitore and Scarso 1992, Feltrinelli 1992 and various authors 1971). Further indiscriminate and unclaimed bombings took place in the early 1990s as the leadership of the Mafia were finally imprisoned and the Tangentopoli corruption trials began to roll-up the DC-PSI regime. Most recently, there was a wave of unclaimed and unexplained bombings (but no casualties) in and around Genoa in the days leading up to the G8 counter-summit in July 2001, which Berlusconi sought to blame on Osama Bin Laden.

[14] Discussion document of the Assemblea Autonoma della Pirelli-Alfa Romeo and Comitato di Lotta della Sit Siemens, 'L'autonomia operaia e l'organizzazzione (Milano febbraio 1973)', Milan, 6.01 [web: http://www.zzz.it/~ago/operai/autop.htm].
[15] 'Liberiamo gli anni '70', memoria 7 (1974), Padua, 8.98 [web: http://www.sherwood.it/anni70/crono.htm]
[16] 'Zerowork' was also the title of an influential U.S. autonomist Marxist journal of the 1970s, formed by Harry Cleaver, George Caffentzis, John Merrington (their London-based contributing editor) and Peter Linebaugh, who were in contact with the operaists. The Zerowork group metamorphosed into the present Midnight Notes Collective during the 1980s.
[17] See Gall (1995) for an analysis of the COBAS movement.
[18] Feminist Struggle: see chapter 21 of Lumley (1990) and chapter nine of Balestrini & Moroni (1997, [1988]) for analyses of the differences and debates within the Italian feminist movement.
[19] This is an example of the continuing close links between the US Marxist-Humanists of the Johnson-Forest Tendency (pseudonyms for CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya, Trotsky's former personal secretary who had however broken with Trotskyism) and the operaists of PO. See chapter one of Cleaver (2000, [1979]) for the influence of the Johnson-Forest group and *Socialisme ou Barbarie* on the operaists.
[20] *Comitato per il salario al lavoro domestico* (PD).
[21] The FGCI was the youth wing of the PCI and was often *Autonomia*'s main rival in schools and universities, particularly in the struggles against the *Decreti Delegati*, the reform to allow students and parents to elect representatives in the schools governing bodies. *Autonomia* opposed the reform for similar reasons it rejected the Factory Councils: the re-introduction of the practice of delegation represented the thin end of the wedge of 'normalisation' by the reformist forces of the Historical Compromise. Some of *Autonomia* and PO's leaders and intellectuals (Oreste Scalzone, Franco Piperno and Vincenzo Miliuci) came from a FGCI/PCI background. The FGCI's national leader in its battles with *Autonomia* was Massimo D'Alema, who became Italy's first centre-left premier in 1999.
[22] Interview in Italian with three informants from Milan, July 1998. Another Milanese informant described how at high school, autonomist activists would carry industrial wrenches (*chiavi inglesi*) as a sign of their militance and as a warning to neo-fascists and reformist students not to challenge their hegemony in certain schools in working class districts. For a vivid description in English of the autonomist high school students' struggles, see Balestrini's 'The Unseen' (1989).
[23] Interview in Italian with Lanfranco Caminiti by email, February 2001 (LC01). For a biographical note, see endnote 33 in Chapter 5.
[24] Interview in English with an informant from Venice, London, June 1999.
[25] A reference to *Magistratura Democratica*, an organisation of radical judges who tried to oppose, or at least slow down and 'democratise', the wave of repressive and anti-terrorist legislation that engulfed the autonomous social movements from the mid 1970s onwards.
[26] Nanni Balestrini, poet, novelist, member of the influential 'Gruppo '63', *Autonomia* activist and historian of the movements of the 1970s, he lived in exile in Paris during the early 1980s. His major works include *Vogliamo Tutto!* (We Want Everything!), an account of the Hot Autumn in Turin from the point of view of a South Italian worker at FIAT; *Gli Invisibli* (1987) (translated and published in 1989 as *The Unseen*), the fictionalised story of a group of *autonomi* in the Milan hinterland at the time of the '77 Movement; *L'Orda d'Oro* (The Golden Horde), a history of the Italian movements of 1968 to 1978, co-authored with Primo Moroni.
[27] Based on an interview in Italian with Sergio Bologna, Mexico City, June 1995. Bologna participated in *Quaderni Rossi* and *Cronache Operaie* in 1964, before founding *Classe Operaia* with Mario Tronti, Toni Negri and Romano Alquati. As an employee of Olivetti, he participated in the first attempts at unionising the new white-collar workers in electronics and data processing. In 1966, he began teaching at Trento University and contributed to *Quaderni Piacentini*. In late 1968, he edited the first two issues of *Linea di Massa*. With Negri, Oreste Scalzone, Franco Piperno, Mario Dalmaviva and others, he founded *La Classe* (May 1 1969). In September 1969, *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power) was founded; Bologna, Negri and Piperno made up its first national secretariat. In 1970, he became a professor of the History of the Workers Movement at Padua University, in the same department with Negri and Luciano Ferrari Bravo. In November, he left PO because of disagreements over the organisation's general policy. In 1972, with Negri he edited the first four volumes in Feltrinelli's 'Marxist Materials' series. He founded *Primo Maggio*, a review of militant history, in 1973. During the 1970s he contributed to *Sapere*, a research journal involving militant workers and radical scientists, as well as to the three dailies of the Italian new left; *Lotta Continua, Il Manifesto, Il Quotidiano dei Lavoratori*. In 1978-79, he supported the policy of returning to 'workers' centrality', the analysis of the large factories, and above all to the problems of the workers in the goods transportation sector (a specialism maintained up to the present). During the 1980s, he lectured at Bremen University, where a unique group of Marxist social researchers, influenced by Italian workerism, had gathered. His 'History of the Mass Worker'

was published in *Common Sense* in 1992, when he co-founded the journal *Altre Ragioni* with Ferruccio Gambino. During the 1990s, he wrote much on the self-employed 'autonomous worker' as an alternative to Negri's theory of the 'immaterial worker', the successor of the 'socialised worker' as the central antagonist actor of the late 20th century. (Biographical note based on Bologna 1980b, p180.)

[28] Interview in Italian with Alisa Del Re, Padua, 2 June 1999 (ADR99). The informant comes from the Friuli region in Northeast Italy and moved to Padua to study political science in 1963. She is presently a Professor of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science at Padua University, where her work centres on the issue of women and the Welfare State. She was arrested on political charges on April 7th 1979, along with other academics from the Institute of Political Science, including Toni Negri and Luciano Ferrari Bravo. She was imprisoned for two years, followed by a year of house arrest under Italy's emergency laws. She escaped to Paris with her children in 1983 when about to be re-arrested and remained in exile until 1986, teaching at the Université Paris 8. She became politically active as a student and was never a member of any political party until she joined the Greens after her return from exile. She was nominated as a candidate for the 'Non Solo Rossi, Non Solo Verdi' List, a local alliance of the Padua Greens and ex-autonomists from Radio Sherwood, in the local government elections of June 1999.

[29] Interview in Italian with three informants from Milan, July 1998.

[30] The most significant part of the otherwise minimal Italian welfare system, guaranteeing the payment of 93% of a worker's wage for one year after redundancy and during lay-offs. It has frequently been used by FIAT and other manufacturers to ease politically, with the unions, the use of mass redundancies, both temporary and permanent.

[31] Interview in Italian with three informants from Milan, July 1998.

[32]According to Ferruccio Gambino: "My big surprise [on arriving in Turin in 1968] was the PCI's absence in the factories. It had little or no presence in the large factories of Veneto either. Writing about the PCI in the 1940s, Santo Pede described its relationship with the working class as 'very vague'. The social composition of the PCI in the 1960s consisted of artisans, teachers, farm workers and people who had been ruined by fascism and were now trying to put their lives back together, like Jews and anti-fascists. In southern Italy it was a party of landless peasants. In Milan, the PCI had a presence in the large factories like Alfa Romeo and Pirelli in the 1960s. As a result, there was no organised network of autonomous workers. The PCI became a mass party in 1947, thanks to the reaction against the post-war repression of workers, which led to the rapid growth of the CGIL trade union confederation. As Adalberto Minucci, a former editor of *Per La Rinascita* [the main theoretical journal of the PCI] recognised, support for the PCI did not become massified until after 1968 and was due to the massive growth in social movements. Longo [the then PCI leader] tried to bring the student movement into the PCI, but was stopped by Amendola and the bureaucrats. Scalzone [a leader of the students' movement and later an important figure in *Autonomia*] met Longo twice in Botteghe Oscure [the PCI's national HQ in Rome]." (Interview in English, Padua, June 1999 [FG99])

[33] *La classe operaia si fa stato.*

[34] *Lavorare meno per lavorare tutti.*

[35] In the late 1990s, many of these *quadri* (white-collar technicians) were to reflect ruefully on their strikebreaking role when they too were re-structured and made redundant by FIAT. I thank Massimo De Angelis for this insight.

[36] The *indiani metropolitani* were the most visible presence of the 'creative autonomy' of the '77 Movement. See chapter 6 for a full analysis.

[37] Del Re describes the importance of the workers' enquiry to the political practice of PO:

"The workers' enquiry was critical in succeeding to understand what were the relations of work, how factories functioned, how the wage functioned. There were meetings in the factory or outside with the workers. You learnt how to read a wage slip, how to see wage differentials, to see what were the work processes. Also, how to understand the work processes in a chemicals factory, which is not easy compared to manufacturing factories. What were the points, for example, of possible sabotage or that could be blocked with a strike? There was a whole process of workers' intelligence that was mobilised. What were, for example, the productivity increases in the restructuration process? It's easy to see that there are productivity increases, but you need to see how they are made. Then [there was also] the formation of the collective will within the factory: the base committees, the trade unions, the refusal (of work), the unitary or single trade union. There was a whole series of problems born in the factory and we were the first external interlocutors, so we were able to understand more than many others, understand what were the mechanisms also of the class conflict in the most material terms. The objective of the workers' enquiry was to construct a solid political and organisational platform on which to structure objectives of power. These could be to do with wages or with health issues. For example, among the university students in PO there were many studying medicine who then all studied workplace medicine in order to be able to make a series of discourses within the factory on health. We have discovered 20 years later that the workers really were right, because many of them died of

cancer. There was a discourse on health that I only understood later. But they did it then and maybe if we had been more capable, less young, some things could have been done much better. Now, 30 years later, there are court cases against Montedison to compensate for these deaths. Only now in the 'enlightened' 1990s have we discovered that people die of work and at least their families should be compensated." (ADR99)

[38] The RC, led by the trade unionist Fausto Bertinotti, seems more open to the initiatives of the COBAS than the PCI was to the AWM.

CHAPTER FIVE:
FORMS OF POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND VIOLENCE - ORGANISED, DIFFUSED AND ARMED *AUTONOMIA*

1) Introduction: Revolutionary political organisation - movement or party?

Working class autonomy and self-organisation imply a rejection of the historical organisational forms of the class, namely the political party and the trade union, considered to be bureaucratic, centralised and hierarchical instruments of mediation and control rather than vehicles of struggle against capital. Following the FIAT occupation in March 1973 and the disintegration of the New Left (NL) groups, the question of organisation was at the centre of a continuous and ultimately inconclusive debate, first within *Potere Operaio* and then *Autonomia*. Was the loose network of localised collectives and committees that identified with the project of Workers' Autonomy to become centralised as a national party, (but avoiding the sectarianism and bureaucratism of the NL 'little parties') so as to effectively challenge the PCI for working class hegemony and eventually state power? Or was it to remain as part of the broader 'Movement' of the autonomous workers, women, students and youth urban movements, to radicalise them still further and so transform civil society from the grassroots, obviating the need to 'seize power' in order to transcend capitalism and create a communist society?

First, the three historical forms of revolutionary political organisation– the party, the trade union and the movement – will be outlined from various Marxist perspectives. This analysis will then be contrasted with sociological theories on the organisational nature of social movements. Second, the crisis of the NL 'vanguard party' model will be examined through the experiences of PO and LC, and how this led to the emergence of the 'area of *Autonomia*' after 1973. Within PO a critique developed of the NL 'vanguard party' model, to which it too had originally aspired. Both PO and especially LC's demise was conditioned by the feminist movement's influence on their women members and their consequent desire to self-organise autonomously. The nascent women's movement was the first in Italy to practice the classic NSM 'network' organisational model (the horizontal, decentralized network of localised committees) that was to become the international norm among NSMs during the 1970s. Within the 'area of *Autonomia*' two

organisational tendencies developed: the 'movementists' and 'Organised *Autonomia*', accentuating the socio-cultural variety of the movement, but also its disarticulation as a coherent, homogenous political force. Both attempted to break from the NL's ideological basis for organisation by creating structures adapted to the local conditions of class composition and forms of struggle.

Having explored the organisational and ideological differences between these two forms of *Autonomia*, a third form, 'armed *Autonomia*', will be analysed through a comparison of the contrasting 'armed party' and 'parallel structure' clandestine organisational forms, including an assessment of the relationship between *Autonomia* and the Red Brigades. Even before the collapse of the '77 Movement, the intensification of neo-fascist violence and the criminalisation of the antagonist movements after the 'Moro Affair'[1], a section of *Autonomia* had begun to reorganize itself into 'parallel structures', part legal political organisation part semi-clandestine armed group. The failure of 'armed *Autonomia*'s attempt to practice a form of mass armed struggle led some to leave and join the 'armed parties' of the BR and particularly PL, on the grounds they were the only effective forms of resistance to State repression after 1978. Since its inception, *Autonomia* had practiced various forms of political violence, including the use of molotovs during riots, 'armed marches' during the '77 Movement and anti-fascist 'proletarian patrols' (*ronde proletare*). However, its intellectuals had often criticised the BR in particular as anachronistic, statist and counter-productive, although a widespread sympathy with and ambiguity towards the 'armed parties' existed within *Autonomia* and the overall 'Movement'.

Finally, a case study on Organised Workers' Autonomy examines its differing organisational modes and social compositions in the Veneto region, Rome and Milan, showing that it too was a heterogeneous entity rather than a uniform structure. The arrest of most of its intelligentsia on April 7 1979 on terrorism charges marked the launch of the full-scale repression and criminalisation of *Autonomia*, along with all the NSMs and political organisations to the left of the PCI. Attempting to explain *Autonomia*'s relatively rapid disintegration as a mass movement after 1979, the roles of the PCI, the judiciary and the media, the experience of mass incarceration in the 'special prisons' (*carceri speciali*), the effects of laws permitting reductions in sentences in return for 'repentance' or 'disassociation', the exile of over 200 of *Autonomia*'s most active intellectuals and

militants, and the demobilisation of the NSMs and their withdrawal into private life (*riflusso*) and the psychological 'removal' of the past (*rimozione*), will all be evaluated.

The overall aim of this chapter then is to analyse the different forms of political organisation practiced by *Autonomia*, comparing them with NSM and Marxist organisational theories, to ascertain how innovative they were at the time and how influential they have been since.

2) Theories of political organisation

Political organisation, according to both Marx and Weber, is a form of rational social action in which individuals identify with each other on the basis of their perceived interests and needs, essentially economic, agreeing to co-operate and accept a level of discipline, whether hierarchical or self-imposed, in order to achieve a common goal (Hughes, Martin and Sharrock 1995). In the case of working class organisations, these goals have varied from the reformist aims of improving levels of income, working and living conditions and political representation within capitalist social relations, to the revolutionary aim of the total transcendence of actual social and economic relations and the constitution of a socialist and eventually communist society. Furthermore, the fundamental purpose of political organisation can be said to be concerned with different forms of power: socio-political power in the case of the party, socio-economic power in the case of the union and socio-cultural power in that of the social movement. In this section, social movement theories of organisation will be contrasted with Marxist analyses of the nature of the party, the trade union and the social movement.

2.1) Social movement theories of organisation

The three main types of SM theories – resource mobilisation theory (RMT), new social movement theory (NSMT) and political process theory (PPT) – have differing views on the nature of SM organisation. For Melucci (1996, p313), social movements' ability to resist their own "centrifugal forces" and defy their opponents depends on developing a "relatively stable organization and leadership", whose organisational characteristics depend on extent social conditions and their own composition. He disagrees with the Weberian sociological strand that deems organisation to be the "inevitable cause of the institutionalization and bureaucratization of collective action" (Zald and Ash 1966, cited

in Melucci 1996, p313), since it "oversimplifies the complexity of organizational phenomena and does not reflect the empirical reality of a great majority of actual movements" (Melucci 1996, p314). Starting from the premise that social movements are "actors engaged in a conflict directly or indirectly affecting the distribution of power within a society" and are "firmly committed to the building of their conflictual collective identities" (ibid.), he develops an analytical framework of SM organisation based on internal and external pressures and systems. Internally, there needs to be a system for "the allocation of resources and the production of symbols [including a] system of roles and the divisions of labour; (...) mechanisms and criteria for the distribution of costs and benefits; and (...) a structure of incentives" (ibid., p315). These in turn are linked to a "system of power [composed of] a structure for the distribution of power itself; (...) processes for the aggregation of demands and the formation of decisions; (...) mechanisms that guarantee the succession of the leadership functions [more or less centralised]" (ibid., p316). More relevantly to *Autonomia*, "the degree of autonomy of the different components of the movement" varies and there can be "overlapping [and] areas entirely removed from control" (ibid.). Regarding movements' organisational relations with their social environment, Melucci affirms that they need to gather "material" and "hidden" resources (support and consensus) "to survive in their particular social context." Therefore, movements must expand their organisational base and secure increasing support from the social groups they represent as well as from groups that are not overtly hostile. A further external variable is the response of an organisation's adversary, which hinges on "the degree of openness or the closure of the political system and of tolerance or repression" (ibid., p317). Moreover, the 'political opportunity system' can shape movements' organisational forms and cultures as open political systems promote pluralism and competition among organisational forms, while repressive ones encourage centralised and sectarian forms. Nevertheless, social movements can never be equated with a single organisation: "rather there are various organizations, and sometimes even parties, which claim to interpret and pursue the aims of the movement" (ibid., p323).

Melucci (1996, p326-7) rejects a typology of movement organisations, since classifications should instead be used as "analytical tools to make distinctions, to 'deconstruct' empirical unities, and to account for their complexity". Organisational goals are either "expressive" ("the satisfaction of the social and psychological needs of the movement's members through participation and solidarity") or "instrumental" ("the

attainment of specific goods external to the organization"). Requirements for affiliation imposed by the organisation can be "inclusive" (no rigid selection mechanism, a relatively low level of commitment, no specific duties and limited ideological training) or "exclusive" ("a rigid control over the processes of affiliation [requiring] intense ideological identification, a high level of commitment, and total discipline"). Movement organizations can also be analysed according to the "material", "solidarity" and "value" incentives they offer to their membership; the level of their isolation from or integration "with other networks of affiliation or communities"; the homogeneity or heterogeneity of their membership; the authoritarian or participatory forms of internal power; the leadership style which may be orientated "towards mobilization or toward articulation".

Regarding the different organisational structures for distinct phases in a movement's development, initially there is an "emergent structure [based on] a network of different groups or cells, linked by multiple, overlapping ties and a number of leaders in competition with one another" (ibid.). This encourages the "fragile early growth of a movement [by allowing] maximum adaptation of the organization to the environment" (1996, p328). While this organizational form is widespread in the auroral phase, it usually results in bureaucratisation and/or institutionalisation, but endures longer among "the less 'political' area of recent movements", including women's collective action, youth groups and religious groups (ibid.).

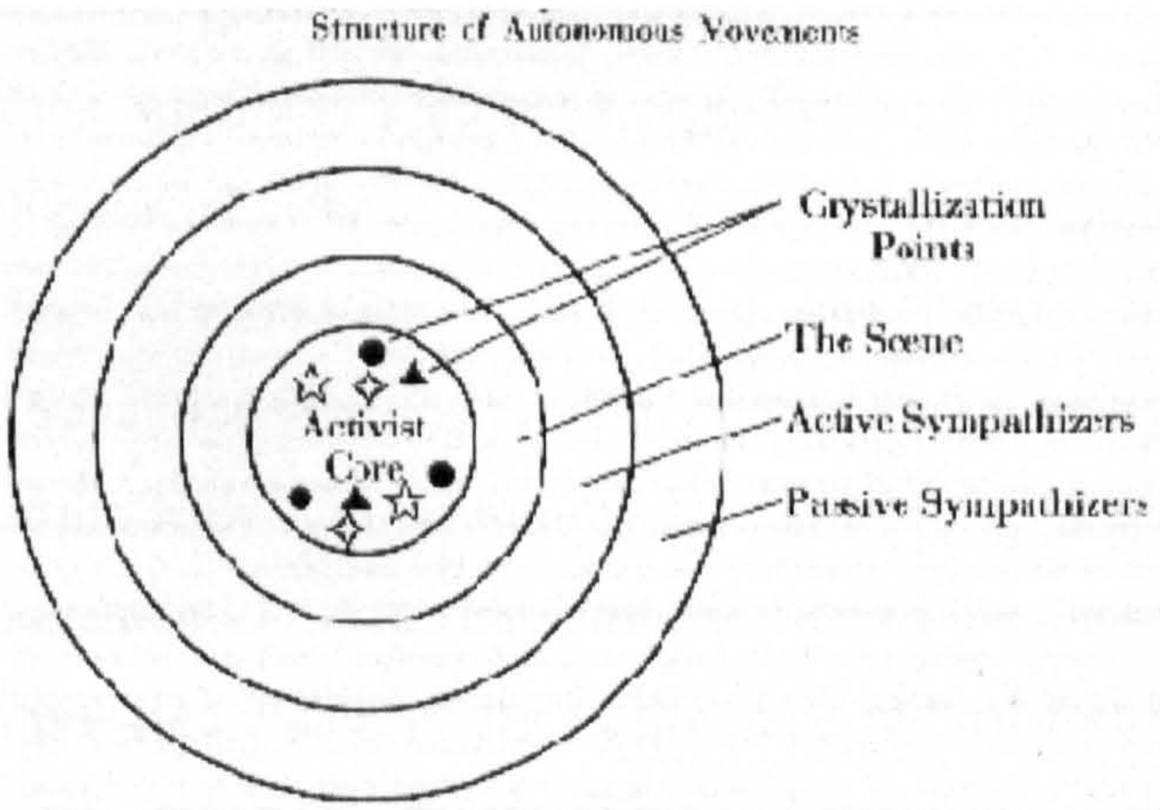
Melucci (1996, p328-331) sees NSMs as "self-reflective organizations" which remain separate from the "dominant cultural codes through the constitution and operation of organizational forms which prefigure the goals they pursue, and through their activity of visibly signalling the societal problems addressed". The membership of movement network organizations is not atomised as "individuals never join the movement on an individual basis alone but always through relational channels (...) providing a connection to those already part of the network". Consequently, the organisational forms of NSMs "mutate towards informality and into groups of primary foundation", while suggesting a "cultural pluralism based on the possibility of qualitative participation, which respects individual differences and needs". This in turn reinforces identity by unifying the "incongruities that organizations and actions contain within themselves. The challenge against the system is thus raised through the proposal of forms of action which are highly self-reflective".

Influenced by Melucci, della Porta and Diani (1999, p163), exponents of PPT, also claim that "a plurality of organizational models coexist within any social movement [depending on] different degrees of structuration, centralization of power and grassroots participation" and sometimes in contrast with the desire of late 20th century NSMs "to construct a new (...) participatory and decentralized (...) model of democracy". Thus, given that there is no fixed model for SMs, unlike parties, "organisational goals tend to be different in different phases [primary accumulation, high and declining] of mobilization". The chosen model and its evolution are "the product of complex processes of adaptation to the environment, attempts to change it, conscious strategic choices and acceptance of tradition [and so] structure [tends to] follow strategy" (ibid.).

Ruggiero (2001, p41-42) accuses RMT of "organisational fetishism". RMT "calls for the inclusion of the study of movements in political and organisational sociology", but it focuses narrowly on "the effectiveness with which movements and their organisations use resources in order to achieve their ends", while ignoring "who the actors are, what motivates them, or what wider historical or structural meaning a particular movement may have". He challenges RMT's focus on rational self-interest as "the main motive leading to participation in social movements" and its consequent normalisation of social conflict, by contrasting it with Simmel's (1971) notion of conflict as a form of "sociation" that is "neither the effect of self-interest not the result of calculating monads; rather it is the very essence of collectivity" (Ruggiero 2001, p42).

From the perspective of autonomous social movement theory, Katsiaficas (1997, p200) identifies a "horizontal – even circular – collective structure" in the German *Autonomen* of the 1980s and 1990s, a movement similar to and directly influenced by the experience of *Autonomia*. This structure "facilitates individual decision making and political development (...) collectives are able to act immediately and decisively without waiting for a central committee to deliberate and approve ideas" (ibid.). In figure 1, below, Katsiaficas' illustrates his notion of an autonomous movement structure.

Figure 1. Structure of Autonomous Movements



Source: Adapted from Hanspeter Kriesi, *Die Zürcher Bewegung: Bilder, Interaktionen, Zusammenhänge* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1984) p. 213.

The "activist core" consists of "crystallization points" composed of "collectives, action committees, (…) activist communes and (…) even hierarchically organized groups", their variety indicated by the different symbols (Katsiaficas 1997, p201). Along with unaffiliated individuals, "they constitute the base from which actions and programmatic impetus are initiated [and] rely on the next level, the scene", or in Italian terms the 'Movement', "for their everyday political-cultural sustenance". "Active sympathizers" participate in movement mobilisations and occasional meetings, while "passive sympathizers" are those who provide financial support, and read the alternative press. They are also academics who promote sympathetic ideas and actions through their teaching and writing and workers "who contribute ideas to colleagues". Given the "fluid character of these movements", there is mobility between levels and simultaneous participation at different points (ibid.). While the above model may not be directly transferable to *Autonomia*, it indicates the fundamental structural differences of autonomous political organisation with the 'party form' of the Historical and New Lefts, and underlines the profound social, ideological and philosophical divisions between these forms of collective action upon which their different structural formations are based.

According to della Porta's (1996, p48) analysis of the organisational trajectory of the "family of libertarian Left movements" (including *Autonomia*) from the 1960s to the 1990s, its "auroral phase" of the late Sixties was characterised by "an initially informal, decentralised and participative organisational structure, with an inclusive if totalising

involvement". The emergence of the NL groups represented an "evolution towards more structured and hierarchical groups [with a] tendencially exclusive participation". She outlines the limits of the 'assembly', the main organisational form of direct participative democracy, "from the point of view of real grass-roots involvement and the efficiency of decision-making". The organisational forms of the "phase of emergence and radicalisation" in the Seventies were the product of "the long process of the structuration and decomposition of the New Left [resulting in] the extreme decentralisation of some components of the movements (...) the bureaucratisation of the major [NL] organisations (...) and the 'implosion' into clandestinity of the most radical formations" (ibid.). She claims that two forms of a "tendencially totalising and exclusive organizational structure" prevailed, one "centralised, formal and elitist", the other "informal, decentralized and participative" (ibid., p89). In the Eighties, the "libertarian Left" movements underwent a "phase of institutionalization, characterised by the proliferation of grass-roots associations, with a pragmatic ideology" (ibid., p125).

However, lacunae appear in the SM organizational analyses when applied to the parabola of *Autonomia* and its subsequent formations, the 'antagonist movement' of the *centri sociali* and the COBAS. Above all, from the perspective of autonomist Marxism, they underestimate an essential dynamic, which is only alluded to as 'environment': the relationship between social or class composition and the organisational form. It will be argued that *Autonomia*'s emergent structure and organizational development was linked to a distinct social composition, as well as to other internal and external socio-economic, political and cultural factors.

2.2) The party, the union and the movement

In this section, Marxist analyses of the historical organisational forms of the working class – the political party, the trade union and the movement – will be outlined, endeavouring to ascertain to what extent these forms influenced *Autonomia*'s organizational structure.

Italy's working class political party, founded by mainly anarchist organisations as the Italian Socialist Party in the late 19th century before splitting and producing the PCI in 1921, was a classic product of Western modernity. Its roots lay in the millenarian, nationalist and early trade union and co-operative movements of the 19th century.

Typically it was hierarchical, centralised as a national organisation and characterised by a relative lack of internal democracy and a high degree of bureaucratisation and institutionalization, aimed at achieving its prime raison d'etre: to take State power originally by revolutionary/insurrectionalist means and after the 1944 Salerno Conference by reformist/parliamentarian ones, in order to transform capitalist society and create a socialist society in its place. Its original social composition was that of the industrial 'craft worker' and the landless farm labourer of the late industrial revolution, plus a smattering of middle class intellectuals, teachers and other professionals and technicians who formed its leadership. One such intellectual leader was Antonio Gramsci, the most important in the PCI's history and arguably of the entire Italian Left. Applying Machiavelli's thought to the early 20th century and attacking the Bonapartism of the bourgeois parties, he wrote that "the protagonist of the new Prince could not in the modern epoch be an individual hero, but only the political party (...) which has the aim of founding a new type of State (and which was rationally and historically created for that end)" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1991, p147).

Much of what Gramsci wrote on the political party has a poignantly anticipatory feel when applied to the history of the PCI in the Seventies:

> "It is difficult to deny that all political parties (those of subordinate as well as ruling groups) also carry out a policing function – that is to say, the function of safeguarding a certain political and legal order. (...) The problem arises of whether the great industrialists have a permanent party of their own. It seems to me that the reply must be in the negative. The great industrialists utilise all the existing parties turn by turn, but they do not have their own party." (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1991, p148-155)

This statement seems to encapsulate the PCI's Historic Compromise strategy of 'national solidarity' with its nominal class opponents, the DC, in opposition to the autonomous movements it sought to 'police', so objectively becoming a pro-capitalist party. It also indicates the essential ambiguity and conundrum of the political party as a vehicle for social change, and the notion of the Italian 'party system', including the PCI and the PSI, as one organic or fundamental party at the service of the "great industrialists". Furthermore, when writing on "the two types of party that reject the idea of immediate political action" (ibid., p149), Gramsci anticipates the crisis of stagnation and impotence often experienced by the PCI's followers before the machinations of their leaders: "[I]n the more recent period there is a type of party constituted not by an elite but by masses –

who as such have no other political function than a generic loyalty, of a military kind, to a visible or invisible centre" (ibid., p150).

"[T]hree fundamental elements have to converge" for a party to exist, Gramsci opines:

> "1. A mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organizational ability (...)
> 2. The principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces that left to themselves would count for little or nothing. (...)
> 3. An intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually." (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1991, p152-3)

When filtered by class composition analysis, the above seems to indicate that the working class political party is an organisational form which relies on an essentially passive mass support which can be mobilised, demobilized and controlled by a centralised leadership, with the "intermediate element" of the party apparatus mediating their power over the masses; a hierarchical model similar to that of the firm. Such mass passivity, if it ever existed, certainly came to an end in Italy in 1968-69 when a significant sectors of workers reached a high enough level of activity to self-organise autonomously not only from the PCI and PSI, but also later from the neo-Leninist NL embryonic parties.

On the relationship between the party and the unions, Gramsci compared "[t]he so-called pact of alliance between Confederation and Party[2]" with "a concordat between State and Church", in that it constituted "a gulf between represented and representatives" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1991, p226). Comparing the indivisibility of the party with that of the State, Gramsci argues that the party cannot allow itself to be subordinated to the unions:

> "The party, which is an embryonic State structure, can allow no division of its political powers. It cannot permit a part of its members to claim rights equal to its own, to pose as 'allies' of the whole. (...) To admit such a situation would imply the subordination *de facto* and *de jure* of (...) the party to the so-called majority of the represented: in reality, to a group which poses itself as anti-State and anti-party and which ends by indirectly exercising power." (ibid.).

Thus, Gramsci argues that the union confederation should be subordinated to the party, i.e. that socio-economic conflicts are subordinate to the political domain. Here Gramsci reveals a weakness in his critique of the party and the union. While criticising the

structural weaknesses and anachronisms of the party form, he nevertheless calls for union subordination to the party (the antithesis of workers' autonomy) on the basis of its indivisibility and homogeneity and for the party to develop considerable disciplinary powers to control its represented class as the path to cultural and political hegemony.

Dunayevskaya (1988) and James (1986), the North American 'Johnson-Forest' group which had a major influence on the development of operaism, criticised the political backwardness and intellectual bankruptcy of the Leninist 'vanguard party' model and the reactionary role of the Stalinist 'state-capitalist' communist parties in and beyond the Soviet Union. Arguably, and certainly according to Katsiaficas (1997), their sweeping critique can be applied to the NL 'little parties' (*partitini*), as much as to the reformist, 'Stalinist' PCI:

> "The working class has not created a new society. But the workers have undermined the old. They have destroyed all the old categories; they have no belief in the rationality either of the economic or of the political order. The 'vanguard', on the other hand, has done nothing. It is stuck in the mud of the old fixed categories, chief of which is 'the Party is to lead'. In the face of the movement from practice to theory – (...) especially during the present period of Automation – the Trotskyites and other radical parties continue to repeat the outlived thesis of the 'vanguard party' Lenin espoused back in 1902-03. This makes their intellectual abdication as complete as if they had never broken from the Communist Parties. It is equally true of those unaffiliated Marxists who, being incapable of breaking out of the old categories, let alone creating new ones, are compelled to return to Bukharin's attitude of blaming the workers for the betrayal of the Second International." (Dunayevskaya 1988, p284)

On the question of the emergence of the NSMs in the 1960s and their relationship with the 'old' social movements of labour and national liberation, prevalently organised in centralised political parties, trades unions and/or guerrilla armies, the macro analysis of Arrighi[3], Hopkins and Wallerstein (1989, p88-90) emphasises the inability of both the social democratic and communist parties (corresponding to the political traditions of reformism and insurrectionalism within Western labourism) to adapt politically to the radical transformation of the social composition of labour after 1945. This was caused by the introduction of the welfare state, the expansion of university education and the first wave of mass immigration into northern and central Europe from southern Europe and the 'Third World'. These parties were "locked into reflecting this traditional core of the working class whose numbers were no longer growing" and unable to "appeal politically

to the three growing segments of the wage-labour force: the salaried professionals, the 'feminised' service-sector employees, and the 'ethnicised' unskilled or semi-skilled labor force". Consequently, the "three major varieties of 'new' social movement have their social bases in these other groups: the peace/ecology/alternative lifestyle movements; the women's movements; the 'minority' rights / 'Third World within' movements". The NSMs were opposed to the Keynesian socio-economic structures produced by the institutional Left, regarding it as no longer "anti-systemic" or oppositional as it supported "both state policy and multinational policy vis-à-vis the Third World and socialist world" and had abandoned the "non-guaranteed" and marginalised sections of their own populations. In turn, the institutional Left's "traditional nineteenth-century view of the labour movement" regarded the NSMs as "middle class" (the salaried professionals) or "divisive" (women, minorities). Relations between the two sets of movements are divided into two phases, starting with a period of deteriorating relations leading up to the explosion of 1968, with tensions accentuated by the radicalising influence of ideological struggles in the 'Third World' (the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Latin American 'focoist' guerrilla struggles). This phase ended around 1975 due to the "political failure" of the most radicalised section of the NSMs - "Maoist parties, autonomist movements, urban terrorism" - as a result of repression, exhaustion, a "thin social base" and the end of the 'Third World' ideological struggles. "The new *conjuncture* of the world-economy" (the decline of the national Keynesian-Fordist pacts and the rise of the globalised, post-Fordist, neoliberal model) in the early 1970s produced the return of mass unemployment and rapid de-industrialisation, causing social democrats to "reassess their view of the new social movements just at the moment when [the NSMs] began to have some inner doubts about the validity of the 'new left' tactics evolved in the 1960s". The second phase in their relations, since 1975, has been "one of an uncertain minuet in old left – new left relations in Western Europe", the case of the German Greens and SPD being exemplary. Furthermore, "[b]oth sets of movements [were] more concerned with their relations to each other than to the other kinds of movements found in the socialist countries or the Third World". Extrapolating from and updating this analysis, the collapse of 'real socialism' and the emergence of a global anti-capitalist (but not anti-globalisation) 'movement of movements' in the 1990s has seen the complete transcendence of old left-new left relations, with much of the ex-NL attempting to form a global alliance with 'Third World' anti-capitalist movements, the institutionalised NL (the German Greens) and a minority of the old left (RC in Italy) vacillating between

support for this new movement and attempts to regulate neo-liberalism 'from within', while the bulk of the old left has effectively renounced its socialist roots to support global economic liberalisation.

Influenced by the growing international phenomenon of working class self-organisation autonomous from and, at times, in direct opposition to the institutionalised Left, the operaists of QR and CO developed their own critique of the historical forms of working class organisation, based on a preference for researching the content rather than the form of workers' struggles. According to Cleaver (2000, p67- 68):

> "These studies[4] founded a new Marxist understanding of both working class autonomy and organization. By showing how workers developed and discarded various forms of organization according to the concrete character of the class relation, trade unionism, social democracy, workers' councils, and the Leninist party were all shown to have been particular historical products. By shifting the focus of the study from the self-development of capital to that of the working class, these authors revealed the idealism of those Marxists who treat both the form of capital and the form of working class organization as eternally given (...). In this way they elaborated a theoretical framework for understanding the growing disaffection of Italian workers with their 'official' organizations as well as shifting their own frame of reference in such a way as to be able to 'see' emerging new forms of organization."

Commenting on 'Workers' Party Against Work' (1974), written in the aftermath of the FIAT Mirafiori strike and occupation of March 1973, Ryan (1991, p196) analyses Negri's discussion of "the problem of moving from the mass autonomous workers' movement to a workers' party organisation" which was to be core to 'Organised *Autonomia*'s project:

> "It is on the basis of an analysis of the relationship between crisis and working class action that the tasks of a workers' party organisation can be determined. (...) Negri praises Lenin's concept of the 'determinate social formation', but he also argues that the present-day working class composition requires a new concept of organization. Reformist organizations (i.e. the CPI) have blocked the continuity of organization within the class. The new organization must live the life of the class in an adequate way. Hence, although it is necessary to move from class composition to organization, the reverse must also be true. (...) Negri considers the possibility of a Leninist party, organized 'from above', and rejects it. The Leninist question of workers' alliances has been transformed into a problem of the unification along the internal lines of the proletariat, from below or inside, not from above. (...) [T]he Leninist concept of the party as the director of a passage to socialism must be rejected. (...) [A]ppropriation, the thematic of the contemporary workers' organization, comprehends the Leninist thematic of insurrection, as that which induces economic crisis and, potentially, breaks

the political aspect of capital's control. (...) Negri dislikes the word 'party' for this new organisation because it suggests the formal character of the Leninist party, its centralization, discipline and division of labor. Nevertheless, the word should be used, he concludes, because it indicates the independence of the proletariat as an organization as well as the uninterrupted character of the revolution. (...) In addition, the vanguard and the mass process, Lenin and Luxemburg, must be combined. The concept of a vanguard party of the mass must unify the struggle for the wage and the revolutionary struggle for power. It must also include armed struggle [because only it] can revise the structure of power."

But what does Negri mean by such an organization, a 'workers' party' that is not a party?

Ryan's (1991, p198-9) reply is that:

> "A party based on the present political class composition cannot be a top-down Leninist organization. (...) [It] does not constitute (...) an old consecration of the party; rather, what is acknowledged is 'the paramount necessity of its function'. With the State, the party should also be extinguished. And prior to that moment, the party is subordinated to the movement of the working class. (...) On the basis of this configuration of political class compositions, the vanguard workers are not officers of a red army but instead functions of workers' power. The more the working class constitutes itself as a social individual, the less there is a problem of power, the less party, the less vanguard delegation is conceded."

Negri also analysed the organisational problems of *Autonomia*, particularly the question of "bringing autonomy to the level of political direction", dividing the movement into three phases:

> "During the first, in the 60s, there was a diffuse molecularity of struggles. This diffusion tended toward reunification in a party during the second phase in the late 60s. The third period consists of the building of institutions of attack for the party and of the attempt to build a cycle of armed struggle and appropriation. The problem at this stage is how to construct an organization without the fetishisation of the party." (Ryan 1991, p199-200)

Furthermore, on the problem of autonomous organization, Negri displays his somewhat contradictory attitude towards the party form, defining it as "a function of proletarian power, a guarantor of the process of self-valorization (as wage and public spending pressure, the refusal of work, direct appropriation etc.)", before stating that "whenever in history the party becomes uppermost, the revolution is finished" (Ryan 1991, p215). In autonomy, however, "power dissolves into a network of powers; only a diffuse network of powers can organise revolutionary democracy. The independence of the class is to be

constructed via the autonomy of single, individual revolutionary movements. Unity will be the product of moments of power which are pluralistic" (ibid.).

The final form analysed is 'self-organisation' (*autorganizzazione*), the basis of the social movements of women, school and university students, and neighbourhood committees, whose emergence and rapid proliferation in the early 70s was separate from the NL groups and later *Autonomia*, but also intrinsically linked through the personal and territorial networks of what was known simply as 'the movement'. This was an amalgam of social movements, NL groups, unaffiliated individuals and grass-roots committees and collectives that was riven by profound ideological, organisational, cultural and gender differences, but had an essential 'umbrella identity' and was capable of uniting in action against the State and its 'party system', particularly during the referendum campaigns on divorce and abortion, and during the '77 Movement, while having a diversified relationship with the unions and the PCI. Statera (1983), a prominent Italian sociologist, describes how self-organisation became the dominant organisational model of the social movements:

> "[I]n the first half of the Seventies, in combination with the decline of the centre-left as the government formula, new forms of social and political participation of an extra-institutional type flourished in Italy. Neighbourhood committees, factory councils, school-family committees, tertiary sector workers' collectives, animation and drama collectives, were formed, articulated and developed on the crest of a wave of mobilisation which in its extra-institutional commitment and pursuit of concrete political objectives in opposition to and alternative from formal, legitimate, structures, found its own unifying impulse."[5]

He identifies the factory, the university and the neighbourhood as the main sites of self-organisation:

> "[I]n the factory, the traditional internal commissions, bureaucratised and conditioned by the indications of the union leaders, were swept away in favour of factory and workshop committees, designed directly by workers beyond every dosage of politico-union currents or components; in the universities the old 'little parliaments' [*parlamentini*], namely the elected representative organisms linked to the youth federations of the parties, were likewise done away with and collectives of militants, politically involved in the revolutionary sense, formed which tended furthermore to break out from the narrow limits of the universities to project themselves externally; in the cities, numerous committees and area and neighbourhood councils exploded, constituting mobilisations on a wide variety of issues (rent hikes, lack of services, land speculators), for the most part characterised by a tendency to avoid the mediation of the party-controlled services." (ibid.)[6]

In conclusion, the three perspectives deployed on the question of political organisation – post-Marxist social movement theories, orthodox Marxist Gramscianism and heterodox autonomist Marxism – seem to concur on the problematic nature of the working class party form and its subordinate trade union structures as the prevailing vehicle for radical social change. While all three criticise its shortcomings, both Gramsci and Negri, as Marxists, emphasise its continuing importance as the principal organisational form of the class, the former insisting on its dominance over other elements of the workers' movement, the latter on its subordination. The social movement theorists, as post-Marxists, recognise that historically movements have spawned parties and vice versa, with the 'political process' theorists implying that movements, having less influence over policy formation, are ultimately subordinate to their allies in the party system. The following section examines how the interaction between social movement and party organisational forms led *Autonomia* to attempt to practice a new organisational model, based directly on a particular class composition, the 'socialised worker'.

3) *Potere Operaio*, *Lotta Continua* and the crisis of the New Left 'vanguard party'

The evolution and crisis of the New Left 'vanguard parties' PO and LC led to *Autonomia*'s emergence as a movement network of localized collectives from 1973 onwards. The organisational transformation from the students, workers and counter-cultural youth movements of 1968/69 to a new version of a traditional leftist organisational form and then to a new form of movement will be analysed from the perspective of the internal changes in the socio-cultural composition of the 'revolutionary left' and the pressures from the external political and economic environment.

On the issue of whether PO represented a break with the historical communist organisational model of 'the vanguard party', an ex-PO Paduan informant disagrees, placing it firmly within the Italian and international communist tradition of organisation, contrasting with the anarchists' historical opposition to the party form:

> "Let's tell the truth: we were all communists, [with] Lenin's thought in our heads, we were Maoists [with] a tradition tied to the concept of the Cultural Revolution and some of us were linked to the operaist tradition, with respect to some categories, such as the mass worker and class composition. But fundamentally some categories were unitary for everyone. Nobody was against the party or the organization, neither Negri, nor Piperno, nor [AO], nor [LC]. Everyone had some principles that came from outside the international communist movement's tradition. (...) Only the anarchists are

> historically anti-party from start to finish. Whoever defined themselves as a communist was for the party, for organisation. Everything they said later was false (...) because anyone against the party was an anarchist."[7]

The '68 movements pushed *Potere Operaio veneto-emiliano* (POv-e) into expanding from its base in the northeast. It linked up with the Milan-based operaist journal *La Classe* to form PO as a national organisation in 1969 as an attempt to secure the domination of the AWM over the students and broader 'proletarian' movements, but not before a split over the primacy of struggles around the wage with the Tuscan group *il Potere Operaio* and the Turin students' movement led to the simultaneous formation of LC. PO faced more difficulties in organizing in the more dispersed metropolitan environment of Milan, than in the relative social homogeneity of Turin, dominated by FIAT. Gambino's account supports Tarrow's (1989) observation about the crucial role of "movement organizers" in developing the SMOs of 1968/69:

> "In June 1969 I was asked to go to Milan to help build PO there. PO was well established in Turin by that time. The situation in Milan was desperate. (...) A variety of groups and individuals were present in the Pirelli CDB, including Fourth Internationalists, Bordeghists, PO and a few dissident members of the PCI, two of whom acted as 'informers', helping us to forestall the PCI's plans to prevent autonomous inter-factory co-ordination. There were meetings initially at the *Casa dello Studente* [Students' House] until an empty hotel in Piazza Fontana was squatted as a meeting centre. By that stage the autonomous workers in Pirelli felt they had enough support within the city and in other factories to go on strike. A network of Communist Factory Committees [*Comitati di Fabbrica dei Comunisti*] had also emerged. There were also contacts with activists from the Sixties counter-cultural and anti-psychiatry scenes, linked to the magazines *Re Nudo* [Naked King] and *L'Erba Voglio*[8], and anarchist groups (Ponte della Gasolfa group and 'Ludd'), who wanted to form 'an alliance against work'. However, Sergio Bologna's response was 'Let's not screw up'. He had been living in Milan for 13 years and was well aware of the police and neo-fascist infiltration of anarchist groups there[9]. Marxist-Leninists such as the Vietnam Committee supported the Pirelli strike, but the official *Linea Nera* [Black Line] Maoists of the PCd'I[10] didn't understand the strike wave in Turin and Milan, describing it as 'a bunch of anarchist strikers with no strategy'."[11]

The culturally enriching but politically problematic interaction between the 'spontaneous' autonomous workers, students, counter-cultural youth and women's movements and the 'organised' NL groups in the main cities after 1968, combined with repression and the unions' recuperation of the factory struggles to contribute to PO's decline. This, Gambino states, began as early as 1970:

"The first signs of trouble appeared during PO's first national conference in January 1970. The CGIL was already recuperating its position in the factories. People who had given so much in the previous two years were physically and mentally exhausted. They had been living on sandwiches for two years with little or no sleep. There was no money for printing leaflets or newspapers. Physical and psychological exhaustion was widespread within both PO and LC. There was a lot of geographical mobility and the amount of meetings was extraordinary, as PO tried to spread and establish itself in the smaller cities and towns[12]. (...) The two-pronged attack on the classical workers' movement had begun. After the Piazza Fontana bombing, a strong institutional hardening aimed at reimposing social peace, which some in the movement had underestimated, began to bring PO and LC to heel. (...) The second 'cold shower' came on July 3 1970 when [the unions] called off a national general strike against the government. If they had gone ahead with that strike, the government would have fallen and we would have found out about [the] Piazza Fontana [bomb]. With the movement still strong, there could have been a Left takeover that could have saved us from this long, long domination of the DC during the 1970s. There was no terrain for compromise because at the moment that the PCI and the CGIL had to make their case, they pulled back. Frankly, I think they were scared of the manoeuvres of the secret services. But they shouldn't have been, they had the majority of the population behind them. If you think that in 1970 50% of the population of Rome was under 25, that gives you an idea of what they gave up! Italy was a country of young internal migrants. That morning when I opened the paper and read the news that the general strike had been called off, I said to myself 'Now it's going to be a very steep road'. That's when both PO and LC started having trouble. They hadn't had enough time to put down firm roots. At the same time, the unions had renounced what they could have done and the moderate governments had introduced a series of economic measures to regain the initiative. It was like an archipelago: some islands of resistance here and there, Porto Marghera, Pirelli, even FIAT, a few factories in Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Naples and Messina. After the decision by the union confederations to cancel the general strike, we felt we no longer had interlocutors or openings. We began to see them as accomplices of the Italian system. The trade unions of the PCI and PSI were uninterested in a profound change in the political situation. The debate within the PCI also began to shrink. At the same time, the *Confindustria* [industrialists confederation] saw to it that there would be no more large explosive factories. They moved very quickly to decentralise production into smaller units. Bianchini's[13] contribution was so important because he tried to convince PO to pay more attention to the new productive network, but it fell on deaf ears. PO didn't have the personnel, the patience, or the tools to pick up on that. It had grown very quickly and people like Bologna and myself were unable to influence things either. PO couldn't become a party just of students and intellectuals. It wasn't like that in 1969 or in the first half of 1970 when we had conferences first in Florence then in Bologna. It was a good mixture of workers from large factories and students. By September 1970 at the Rome conference (...) it was no longer so, it had become a party of students and intellectuals. A big change took place in late 1970 and during the first half of 1971[14]. (...) There was also a considerable price to pay in December 1971 when PO decided to

link up with LC to organise the first major demonstration against Piazza Fontana and its secrets, to demand the truth. There was no authorisation by the police, but both PO and LC insisted that the march go ahead. However, the day before the march was due to take place LC backed down and the police arrested seven members of PO, caught with molotovs. (...) The arrests led to trials and generated differences within PO. It was already clear that repression had modified the entire framework within which one operated. The split between PO and LC became very serious, as the arrests were blamed on LC's abandonment of the march. For myself and many other people, there was a loss of energy somewhere after 1971/72. The rate of return on the time and energy invested was very low in terms of mobilisation. Less and less attention was being paid to what was actually happening. Many people wanted to talk, but very few were prepared to listen[15]. (...) The problem was one of particular conjunctures: either you build new structures and relations in a rush or else the wave will sweep you away - hurry up because the lion is about to wake! (...) We caused a crisis in the idea of a peaceful Italy that worked with its head lowered (...) in the idea of command. La Malfa[16] [said] that demands for salary rises would have destroyed the economic system. While LC spat on the problem of salaries in 1968, we were in the middle of it. But the backlash was strong, even if we had not succeeded in anything except the elimination of hired casual labour at FIAT (15% of the workforce had worked casually in the coachwork section for up to 12 hours a day). By 1972 these things had begun to disappear. PO functioned for four years until the reorganisation of the trade unions, the capitalist restructuring and the mass media's 'education' of public opinion contributed to its dissolution."[17]

Negri explains the significance of the dissolution of PO at the 1973 Rosalina convention and why the Italian judges in 1979 singled out PO's intellectuals and cadres as the chief 'organisers' of the social conflicts of the Seventies:

> "Potop was a complex phenomenon. Its most significant organisational characteristic was [its ability] to unify organically the working class vanguard in certain of the big factories in the north and the leaders of the students' movement in the big universities. This organic link produced very specific political personnel, capable of both mass action and theoretical analysis. Potop was perhaps the only group amongst those arising from '68 able to maintain an incredible homogeneity of political positions after its dissolution. This fact has caused the magistrates mistakenly to believe in an entryist operation conducted by Potop through the entire movement through its dissolution. Furthermore, Potop was for a long period – both in its group constitution and in the successive phase of dispersion – firstly the carrier of the debate on the refusal of work and second the initiator of the debate on the new metropolitan proletarian subject. *Autonomia* was really born, from the point of view of theory, as a product of the concepts developed by the Potop cadres who continued to work politically after its dissolution either individually or in small groups within the movement. (...) [I]n 1977 at the Bologna convention of *Autonomia*, nearly all the speakers on the Italian situation were ex-Potop comrades. Despite the many different approaches, the central argument that emerged – that which saw the working class tendency

towards refusal of work emerging within the social constitution of the metropolitan proletariat – was brought to the centre of the debate through the theoretical and agitational contribution of the ex-Potop comrades. Today the prisons are full of these comrades. (...) The institutions of power have thus singled out the leadership of Potop because of their evaluation of both the centrality of their theoretical arguments and the continuity of their political action. Personally I'm very happy this has happened: it's the proof that in the moment that some comrades and I, a minority but a far-seeing one, realised the enormous intellectual wealth Potop had accumulated and convinced of the poverty of the experience of the group, imposed its dissolution, we had taken a historic and fundamental step." (Partridge 1981, p134-5)

Negri also outlines the key role of the women's movement in PO's dissolution:

> "Between 1969 and 1977, there [was] a formidable women's movement. It was in the confrontation, often bitter, always important, with [this] movement that the debate [on the relationship between working class antagonism in direct production and proletarian antagonism on the social terrain] was pushed ahead. Without wanting to exaggerate (...) I believe that the reasons which lay behind the dissolution of Potop (...) essentially came from developments in the women's movement, from the positive transformation the frustration of the women wrought on many Potop cadres." (Partridge 1981, p135)

However, PO was an organisation with at least two souls. In contrast with its neo-Leninist emphasis on vanguard organisation and workers' centrality, was its "anti-productive, absenteeist" side, "against the work ethic" (Billi 1998, p1). This aspect of PO would strongly influence the 'creative' wing of *Autonomia*, whose main guru was Berardi ('Bifo')[18] from Bologna, a founder of the periodical *A/traverso* and of Radio Alice.[19] In '*La nefasta utopia di Potere Operaio*'[20], a reflection on the relevance of PO to contemporary Italian politics, Berardi criticises the emergence of a neo-Leninist line at PO's first national conference in Florence in 1970, which "suffocated the intuitions of the centrality of the analysis on class autonomy and composition" (Grispigni 1998, p2). The resulting "party of insurrection" was "incapable of sustaining the strongest expressions of class autonomy which (...) showed itself in numerous productive areas. The only conclusion could be the dissolution of PO, also as a result of the increasingly evident militarist tendencies which affirmed themselves within the organisation" (ibid., p2-3).

In an atmosphere of bitter controversy, PO formally dissolved itself as a national organisation at its Rosalina conference in May 1973, with the majority already involved in the creation of Organised Workers' Autonomy. The various autonomous workers'

assemblies had already decided to reorganise themselves nationally as OWA at their first national conference in Bologna in March. In December, the Milan-based *Gruppo Gramsci* dissolved itself into OWA, providing it with its most influential periodical, *Rosso*. However, parts of PO, particularly in Veneto, defied the conference's decision and continued in existence until the experience of the '77 Movement definitively put an end to their residuality. A small minority opted for participation in the nascent semi-clandestine 'armed parties', particularly the BR and NAP[21]. Overall, for a Paduan former member, "[t]he experience of PO registered for the first time the crisis of the party form proposed by the groups"[22].

LC's contradictory set of policies and practices, including militant antifascism, its increasingly militarist SdO, contractual 'counter platforms' in the factories and involvement in electoral politics, finally disintegrated at its final congress in Rimini in November 1976. The open enmity between its women members and the SdO[23] was a crucial factor in the decision of its leadership to resign so that LC's members could fuse with the growing strength of the feminist movement and *Autonomia*. However, a significant sector of ex-LC members, particularly the SdO, were attracted by the armed groups, with many helping to form Front Line (PL) and a few joining the BR, now dominant after absorbing the remnants of the suppressed GAP and NAP. The BR had recruited extensively among the factory 'vanguard' workers and successfully reorganised following its crisis in 1975 when most of its leadership was captured. Adding to the confusion and demoralization of the NL in the mid Seventies was the overall feel of a 'crisis of militancy'; voluntaristic, ideologised political activity within a hierarchical structure aimed at taking power, whether institutionally or by revolutionary means seemed to have reached its limits. This crisis affected above all women activists, particularly those who had practiced a 'double militancy' as activists within the NL groups, but also as part of the wider women's movement, two areas often in direct opposition. Those ex-NL women who decided not to withdraw from politics tended to concentrate exclusively on activism within the women's movement, whose mass mobilisations markedly decreased after the '77 Movement, switching instead to localised interventions as a 'submerged network' in civil society and the public services. This feminist diaspora probably helped them to avoid the worst of the repression of the left NSMs during the 'years of lead'. For *Autonomia* and the armed groups, the NL and feminists' crisis of militancy and the failure of the line of the 'government of the lefts'

and the 'long march through the institutions' was confirmation of the validity of their intransigent, but previously minoritarian, line vis-à-vis the State and its institutions.

4) The 'area of diffused *Autonomia*'

The 'area of diffused *Autonomia*' (or social autonomy) was the broader movement of workers, students, women and youth, who while identifying - some more, some less and some not at all - with OWA's neo-Leninist project, preferred to develop their antagonism to capitalist society through a horizontal network structure, guaranteeing the autonomy of each sector and local reality from any attempt at unification and homogenisation within a national party structure. This 'autonomy of the periphery from the centre' was closely linked to *Autonomia*'s different social composition (a mixture of "subproletariat and the intellectualised proletarian labour force. (...) The invasion of the university students without a future."[24]) from that of PO and the AWM.

Borio, an informant from Turin *Autonomia*, claims the emergence of 'diffused *Autonomia*' was, however, closely linked to that of the AWM, particularly in Turin:

> "*Autonomia* was born out of the necessity to respond to the crisis of the organisational form of the extra-parliamentary groups. From '72/73 to '75/76 was what some defined as the period of 'diffused *Autonomia*' (...) in which a myriad of collectives developed organisational forms which referred to the autonomy of the class and which were in most cases proposed or stimulated by 'Workers' Autonomy', [seeking] new forms of struggle [and] organisation (...) rooted in [working] class strata [and] social situations in the factory, the neighbourhood [and] the city. This was one of the fundamental differences between *Autonomia* and the combat organisations; while they tried to build a traditional, pyramidical, centralised structure on the Third Internationalist model, we tried to construct previously unknown organisational forms based on local struggles (...) Turin has always been a workers' city, at least until the end of the 1970s. Here [Workers' Autonomy] organised above all among FIAT workers, leading to the growth of the 'workers' collectives' that extended throughout the FIAT production cycle, from Mirafiori, to Rivalta, to Lancia of Chivasso, to Lingotto. Although it was hard for a 100 or so activists to make a major impact among 60,000 workers divided into two shifts, [Workers' Autonomy] often took the initiative on the organisation of strikes and the formulation of dispute platform demands"[25]

One of the key aspects of *Autonomia* that separated it from the 'bureaucratic legalism' of much of the NL was its practice of 'mass illegality' through squats, occupations of public spaces, the self-reduction (*autoriduzione*) of cultural as well as social costs, and forms of social expropriation such as 'proletarian shopping'. The NL, who continued to privilege

struggles at the point of production, attacked this as 'subproletarian' adventurism. *Autonomia*'s lauding of 'proletarian illegality against bourgeois legality' as an aspect of the 'refusal of work' extended to micro-criminal behaviours; the individual circumventing of the law in everyday life, typical of the proletarian *arte di arrangiarsi* (art of getting by), particularly in the South where poverty and mass unemployment were rife. Here, *Autonomia meridionale* (southern autonomy) became a diffused social force among workers, the unemployed and their communities, although relatively ignored by the late-1970s' press campaign against OWA, based more in northern and central Italy.

However, within this area, into which many ex-NL militants congregated, there was a concentration around certain node points (Milan, Padua, Rome, Bologna, Turin, Naples) the most important significant being the *Rosso* newspaper in Milan, which became the nearest approximation to a national mouthpiece in a sea of acronyms, each with its own publication and/or radio station. Connected to *Rosso* were the Autonomous Assemblies, but also those Padua-based Veneto Political Collectives (CPV) that had left PO. For a period, also the Autonomous Workers Committees (CAO) of Rome were involved in *Rosso*'s editorial team, before leaving in October 1976 to establish the *I Volsci* newspaper and later the still-broadcasting Radio Onda Rossa in May 1977. The Communist Committees for Workers Power (CCPO), composed of ex-PO and LC activists, organised in Milan, Turin, Florence and Naples, and published *Senza Tregua*, from which the Revolutionary Communist Committees (COCORI), where Scalzone was active, split. Meanwhile, the southern autonomous collectives of *Autonomia meridionale*, based mainly in Calabria, Basilicata and Naples, published *Comunismo*. Bologna, both the capital of 'creative' *Autonomia* and the 'jewel in the crown' among the PCI-led *giunte rosse*[26], also contained the Jacquerie Collective, formed by ex-LCists, and most famously Radio Alice, *Autonomia*'s prototype 'free' radio station, but also a reference point for the whole local movement. *Senza Tregua* was the main *Autonomia* group in Turin, although another group linked to *Rosso* published *Gatto Selvagio*, which in 1978-79 developed into the FIAT Workers Committee, formed by ex-'77 Movement activists who decided to militate inside FIAT. Additionally, there was the informal Collective of Proletarian Autonomy, which grouped together Situationists and Council Communists, changing its name to the Alice Centre in 1977. In Rome from 1974 to the early 1980s, the Roman Proletarian Organisation and Radio Proletaria agitated separately from the Autonomous Committees, although both identified themselves as part of *Autonomia*. Also in Rome

were the Communist Committees for Proletarian Power. A national 'alliance through action' was formed between *Rosso* and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (PCM-L), who, despite their ideological differences, jointly signed a series of leaflets and collaborated in different unitary organisms before the PCM-L's dissolution in the late 1970s, when most of its members joined *Autonomia*.

However, the above description only represented the tip of the iceberg of a vast network of local committees and collectives extending to the most isolated provincial towns, where not even the historical left had a presence and which may have had over a million activists[27]. The very extension and dispersion of an 'area' whose "confines are fading and mobile", let alone the libertarian and anti-authoritarian outlook of its social composition, weighed against any attempt by OWA to centralise it into a national party, even of a new kind, given *Autonomia*'s centripetal nature as a movement:

> "[I]n Bologna there are comrades who identify with both *Rosso* and *Senza Tregua*, but who also publish in another newspaper with national circulation, *A/Traverso*, one of the more original and interesting experiments on the theoretical and linguistic plane, in whose editorial committee can also be found members of *Rosso*, but also others who oppose it." (Borgogno 1997, p43)

This loose network of vying ideologies and strategies produced a variety of organisational models, varying from "[t]he completely public organisation but capable of practicing organised violence" to the "politico-military organisation founded on double public and clandestine levels, thus capable of doing both political agitation (with offices, newspapers and possibly SdOs) and armed struggle" to the "entirely legal and public group, which also participated in street fighting" (ibid., p44). Apart from a common identification with the project of working class and proletarian autonomy (hence the name, *Autonomia*), almost their only unifying feature was a common diffidence towards OWA's project of '*Autonomia* organised as a party', as exemplified by the periodical *Neg/azione* (1976), paradoxically in the neo-Leninist register (here tempered by some Situationist references to the 'society of spectacle'[28]) common to all elements within *Autonomia* before the linguistic experimentation of the '77 Movement:

> "Concluding, one can talk about the autonomy of workers who tend to deny their survival as such and to assert their life as communists, of the autonomy of the proletarianised who reject the mercantile-spectacular society, placing themselves against it (nobody believes outside it). Somewhat different,

instead, is the organization 'Workers Autonomy', still within political logic, Marx-Leninist ideology, the hypothesis of the 'revolutionary party', denying the contrast between the two concepts: of party, implying an ideology, a vertical structure, of leadership cadres, soldiers, sympathisers, members, of the militarised and of the non...; and of revolutionary, which denies all that and asserts itself, its own body, its own (communist) requirements. These comrades (Aut.Op.) start from a revolutionary truth: the need for the independent development of proletarian needs, to repropose, however, (professional) 'revolutionary militancy' and the party, only with the result of channelling these revolutionary requirements into the capitalist frameworks of 'politics' and 'ideology'. Although starting from antirevisionist premises (the refusal of the conscious figure of the party and the launch of the autonomous movement) [OWA] lets the party back through the window, so bureaucratising the very concept of 'autonomy'."

For a Livorno informant *Autonomia*'s organisational essence was 'counter power[29]', meaning: "to trace the dynamics of exploitation in the whole social terrain and make it a terrain of political struggle for power. (...) [with ideological roots that lay in the idea of] antagonism/separation as the key concept of an analysis (started by Panzieri and QR) of social behaviours, initially only those of workers".[30] Gambino, however, criticises *Autonomia*'s "subjectivist attitude" and "minoritarian stance":

"Not much attention was paid to the structures that limit one's freedom of movement, nor to political realities, such as: What do people do for a living? How many students are there in this group? What is the attitude to feminism?[31] (...) I never believed *Autonomia* when it talked about itself as if it was already an adversary. It fact, it was an 'area', an Indian reservation. Whoever accepted and gave birth to these terms accepted being minoritarian."[32]

Furthermore, Borgogno (1997, p44) challenges the self-representation of *Autonomia*'s constituent collectives as "broad, mass, or movement organisations" and therefore an advance from the narrow membership-based NL parties:

"[I]n reality [they] were constituted by their own sympathizers over which they exercised hegemony, as [LC] and [AO] had done previously with the 'political collectives' of the students' movement. Not the relationship with the [general] movement but the creation of their 'own' movement, of a movement with their own similarity and appearance. (...) Once again [as with the NL groups], the greater number of initiatives, numerical force and social visibility was inversely proportional to the real capacity to directly effect general power relations between the classes."

4.1) Southern Autonomia

Autonomia Meridionale represented a key difference from the NL groups which, with the exception of LC, along with the Historical Left had effectively abandoned the more economically and socially backward South to decades of DC clientalism, Mafia violence and chronic unemployment forcing continuous migration north. Caminiti, a former leading activist in southern *Autonomia* describes it as:

> "an attempt to organize on a territorial basis (...) the 'loose' local structures that identified with the themes and practices of the struggle for workers' autonomy. The fundamental stages were a meeting at Cosenza University in 1976, another during the Bologna conference in September 1977 and, finally, one at Palermo in January 1978. Its theoretical references went from the great tradition of not only Marxist southern thought (Salvemini, Labriola, Gramsci, Don Sturzo, Finocchiaro Aprile, Lussu, Rossi Doria), to the experiences of social organization (from the Sicilian *Fasci* of the late 19th century to the land occupations of 1948) and to the historical revolts represented by the struggles of the brigands (before and after Italian unification) and the Sicilian separatism of the post second world war period. (...) In all these [factory, school, university and anti-unemployment] struggles we always looked out for an opportunity, for the South, to invent and put into practice an economically, politically and socially autonomous, federalist, even perhaps secessionist experience. (...)[I]n the sedimentation of the theoretical, political and projectural parabola of workers' autonomy in Italy, less attention has been paid to the social phenomena in course in those years in the south, above all due to the accumulative effect of the focus of media reports on the arrests and trials in the north. Probably the degree of the concentration of experiences and *exempla* (the Bologna uprising, the continuous demonstrations in Rome, the battles in Milan, [*Autonomia*'s political] 'force' in Padua) was greater and more obvious in the north and centre, but the phenomena were the same in the factories (those 'cathedral of the desert' that had been the myth of the Left in the Seventies, because those new workers represented the 'heart' of change and social aggregation, and the modernisation model of Italian capitalism in the Sixties), from Nuoro to Melilli to Gela to Bagnoli to Taranto. The South, in a certain sense, represented just the 'real' watershed of (...) the refusal of work, of the 'conquest' of a guaranteed salary, also through the public services, to be torn from the State, of the end of the processes of migration towards Germany and North Europe in search of the 'factory' and therefore of the modernist illusion, and, not least, of an historical custom of mass illegality. Moreover, the 'adhesive' that had always held together the social dispersion of the South had been 'the intellectual', now decidedly in crisis because of both the changes in the nature of work and the fact that their role was no longer at the centre of society, assumed by other 'vehicles' (the mass media, above all). Overall, the socialised worker, the historical successor to the mass worker, composed of the unemployed, the precarious worker, of the black [labour market] and underpaid work, of the intellectual without hope of a job, was delineated perfectly in the South, where money and productive movements (whether legal or illegal) crossed the territory transforming it into the 'new factory'. The redistribution of income, mass schooling,

industrialization, urbanisation and the dissemination of 'new models of life' based on consumption in the Sixties and Seventies had caused a crisis in the rules and discourses of order that had bound together the South (from the church to the family): those rules that until the Fifties were described as immovable and entrenched for centuries by sociologists and anthropologists (from Banfield to De Martino). The impact had been more devastating here than in the North, but it could have been more fruitful in [producing] extraordinary changes. 'Separation' from the State was the rule of life in the South, adhesion to the institutional models of co-participation offered by the Left was practically nil (with levels of mass electoral non-participation that anticipated by a long way the levels now widespread in America, Europe and Italy), and with a resistance [based on] social and communitarian models of solidarity, also of *omertá*[33], which were not valid in themselves, but traced a still visible line between 'State' and 'the other society'. This possibility of a 'southern constitution' did not happen (although there have been moments in which it seemed to incarnate itself, like those endured after the 1980 earthquake), but it was part of the theoretical, conceptual, and practical baggage of southern *Autonomia*. Later, the South was only 'Mafia' and 'war on the Mafia' and the reconstitution of that 'great disaggregration' of which Gramsci wrote."[34]

5) Political violence and 'armed *Autonomia*': 'armed party' or 'parallel structure'?

In the mid seventies, both State repression through the Reale Law and other emergency measures, and neo-fascist attacks on NL and *Autonomia* activists increased. Contemporaneously, the BR intensified its 'attack on the heart of the state' and began to use lethal violence more frequently than in its first factory-based phase. The BR's 'armed propaganda' attempted to convince the 'revolutionary Left' that 'armed struggle' against the State could be massified. Ruggiero (1990, p164) argues that the armed groups practiced armed propaganda more than armed struggle:

> "The applicability of the phrase 'armed struggle' itself can well be refuted. Armed struggle hints at a ruptural point in a *continuum* where the pre-existing social conflicts are boosted and brought to a superior stage. Such a *continuum* was only intelligible in a very limited phase of the '70s, so that it seems viable to jettison the definition 'armed struggle' altogether and use 'armed propaganda' instead. The military episodes were in most cases not decodifiable as moments of a wider struggle, but as 'products' of this or that military group seeking self-promotion."

As a result of these three factors, a section of the 'area of *Autonomia*' was drawn into armed political violence as a strategy to 'raise the level of conflict'. With the killing of Moro in May 1978 and the effective banning of mass political action, the 'armed *Autonomia*' groups dramatically increased in numbers, reaching over 200 by the end of the decade. Many were 'flags of convenience' used by the collectives to carry out illegal

actions usually against 'things' (typically, acts of industrial sabotage and arson), rather than people. Here, the practice of and debate on political violence and armed struggle within *Autonomia* will be analysed, as well as relations between *Autonomia* and the BR. The discussion centred also on the most suitable organisational form for armed struggle: the 'armed party' model of the BR or the semi-clandestine 'parallel structure'.

'Militant anti-fascism' was a core practice of *Autonomia*, particularly during the 'April Days' of 1975 (*Rosso* April 1975). In February 1975 the trial of a PO militant accused of burning down the home of an MSI leader in Primavalle, Rome, took place resulting in armed clashes between leftists and fascists outside the courthouse, during which a Greek neo-fascist was killed. In April, following the fatal stabbing of Claudio Varalli by fascists in Milan and the death of Giannino Zibecchi at a subsequent demonstration, deliberately run over by a police jeep according to eye witnesses[35], a wave of angry anti-fascist marches swept through Italy and several MSI offices were attacked with molotovs and firearms by *Autonomia* militants and LC's SdO (Borgogno 1997). Miliucci, a still-active OWA leader, comments on the intense activity of neo-fascist groups in Rome, which led to clashes in schools, factories and on the streets:

> "[C]apitalism, when it does not succeed in dominating a movement through so-called laws or so-called institutions, inevitably resorts to malevolence (...) in this case fascism. In our country, fascist groups and those nostalgic about the fascist period remember that the Fascists and their leaders were never prosecuted and therefore have been able to calmly proliferate. [They] have always had the space to terrorise and intimidate the comrades in the schools in particular, [but] in San Lorenzo the Fascists have not dared to show themselves. Instead in the middle and secondary schools, [they] have tried to intimidate the student comrades with (...) iron bars and clubs. The behaviour of the police has always been one of constant protection of squadist actions. There has never been a clash for which the fascists have been prosecuted by the police."[36]

As to whether the police's apparent protection of fascist violence was "programmed" or part of a "natural relationship", Miliucci states that it was both:

> "[T]here is more of an identification of recruitment than sympathy [between fascists and police], because given the type of education and culture that has determined the police's forces of law and order, it is possible to understand that there is a shared cultural identity between the Fascists and the police."[37]

'Armed marches' were frequent during this period, particularly in Rome during the '77 Movement when two policemen and several demonstrators were killed or wounded in

gunfights during marches. Those who opened fire on the police during demonstrations in Rome and Milan had gone underground by the end of the year to avoid arrest (della Porta 1995). These killings provoked considerable anguish within both *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement and the debate on violence was always central. While the groups of 'armed *Autonomia*' attempted to differentiate their actions from the BR and the other terrorist organisations, their attempt to operate through semi-clandestine 'parallel structures' in tandem with the legal collectives created irreconcilable tensions within the movement, forcing them to adopt the same clandestinity and separation from the movements they had criticised the BR for. As Ruggiero (1990, p164) states, the logic of military organisation overcame the 'second wave' of armed groups' attempt to practice a new form of armed struggle: "all these groups underwent a very similar process: they accumulated military strength in a spiral which displaced or made unrecognizable the social objectives that very military strength originated from and was justified by". By the end of the decade, with the mass repression of *Autonomia* and the NL at its peak, many 'armed *Autonomia*' militants decided to join what they considered to be the last bastion of the 'revolutionary left', the BR, as the only organisation capable of challenging the State in such a repressive political climate.

Presenting 'armed autonomy' as a form of 'counter power', Gallo (1997, p97), from an internal perspective, states that:

> " [It] did not see armed action as the strategic end [as it was for the BR], but as a tactical means for liberation in the workplace and in life, for the emancipation of the territory from dominion (...) In the South, in Rome in particular, neighbourhood committees [and] committees of struggle gave life to self-defence and 'social liberation' initiatives (...) which were in many ways the most long-lasting and participative examples of 'counter power' (...) as [anti-fascist] vigilante patrols, proletarian decrees and diffused [workers'] enquiry in a reality tendencially close to the 'Third World'."

Caminiti, a southern militant, participated in an 'armed *Autonomia*' parallel structure. However, his group preferred to disband rather than allow clandestinity to separate it from mass social conflict:

> "I have never participated in any group that privileged armed struggle and the conquest of power as a method for revolution. The group with which I collaborated (in an autonomous way) disbanded in 1976 exactly as a result of the decision not to separate itself clandestinely from mass social struggles. I participated in a series of actions in this structure (...) the acquisition of weapons, self-financement through bank robberies, attacks on industrial

> structures. All the actions were aimed at supporting struggles and never to take their place. They served to strike specific objectives. But, the affirmation of a practice and ideology of the 'armed party' increasingly put this contradiction in evidence, and it became necessary to make a choice: we chose the self-dissolution of these 'parallel structures'."[38]

Referring to the rapid increase and diffusion of armed actions by the over 200 armed organisations of the late 1970s, della Porta (1995, p95) observes:

> "Networks of people who had already participated in the underground, formed other, smaller underground groups, and terrorists from the main armed organizations founded several small clandestine groups after 1979. As a militant observed, 'The real legacy of the armed struggle was … the [large] number of cadres' (…) able to build up an armed structure from nothing."

Thus, the very diffusion of military skills pushed the more extreme elements within *Autonomia* underground, and the armed organisations withdrew increasingly into clandestinity. While State repression increased dramatically to counter the wave of terrorist attacks in the late 1970s, little space was left for those radical groups that wanted to resist both institutionalization and terrorism. By the early 1980s, *Autonomia*'s network of small groups had practically disappeared: "[M]ost of their activists abandoned political activity, and a few joined the terrorist groups that (…) were the product of the encounter between the most radical wing of the New Left and the new radicalism of the mid-seventies" (ibid.).

5.1) Autonomia and the Red Brigades

Autonomia's intellectuals, particularly Negri, had often harshly criticised the BR for being out of touch with the social movements. However, this did not prevent *Autonomia*'s intelligentsia from being arrested in 1979 and accused of being the 'strategic leadership' of the BR. Parts of *Autonomia* had attacked the BR as a crudely anachronistic, Marxist-Leninist throwback to the Resistance, which only played into the hands of the state. However, other reactions varied from the ambiguous 'comrades who err' (*compagni che sbagliono*) to Negri's "syphilis of the movement". In fact, relations between BR and *Autonomia* political prisoners in the 1980s were often conflictual.

The 'first wave' of armed groups, from 1970 to 1976, consisted of larger, nationally organised, structures (BR, GAP and NAP), who were ideologically orthodox Marxist-Leninists, including some from a PCI background, and harked back to the *partigiani* of the

Resistance for legitimacy. Despite their origins within the NSMs - here I disagree with Lumley's (1990) argument that the BR and the '68 movements were completely separate phenomena - they were considered militarist, elitist, statist, politically detached and eventually as opponents by the movements, particularly after the 'Moro case' in 1978[39]. The BR's kidnap and murder of the senior DC politician boosted the State's campaign to marginalise, isolate and criminalise the remnants of the '77 Movement, *Autonomia* and the NL in general as *fiancheggiatori* (fellow travellers). Caught between increasing State repression and the growth of political violence, this process of politico-military enclosure led to the simultaneous collapse of the NSMs and the rise of the 'second wave' of armed groups, including PL and 'armed *Autonomia*'.

The BR emerged in 1970 as a semi-clandestine offshoot of a Milanese Maoist group, *Sinistra Proletaria* (SP), seeing themselves, in common with much of the NL, as integral to the reality of workers' autonomy: "autonomous workers organisations (Red Brigades) which indicate the first moments of proletarian self-organisation to fight the bosses and their lackeys on their terrain 'as equals', with the same methods they use against the working class: direct, selective, covert as at Siemens"[40]. During its initial phase in the early Seventies, it intervened in industrial struggles, particularly in Milan and Turin, carrying out a series of kidnappings and woundings of particularly hated managers and foremen, in order to ground itself in the factory conflicts. However, sensing the limited nature of the factory struggles by 1974, it switched its strategy from one of local support of workers' struggles to the more ambitious but also more politically authoritarian strategy of the "attack on the heart of the imperialist multi-national state"[41], kidnapping or killing judges, politicians and journalists as well as managers. Following an internal crisis caused by the arrest of its leadership in 1975, it reorganised into a completely clandestine structure of urban cellular 'columns', ready to intensify its attack on the institutions of the State and claim hegemony over the 'revolutionary left': "Heightening its image as an efficient and credible revolutionary alternative [to *Autonomia* and the remnants of the NL] was the second leap, [a combination of] demonstrative and cruel actions, [particularly] the BR's massacre of judge Coco and his escort in June 1976 in Genoa" (Borgogno 1997, p43). However, the BR, which Lumley (1990, p279) dubs as a "residual political form (...) fundamentally at odds with the idea of social movements that took root in 1968-9", enjoyed far more than a distant coexistence with the movements, according to its 'historical leader' Curcio (Sciajolo 1992). Certainly in its early years many

of BR's militants remained politically active in legal structures, such as the CPM, SP and the CUBs in the Milan area. A distinction can be made between the early BR of Curcio and Franceschini[42], which, despite its Maoist and Resistance 'residualities', maintained open links with the movements where its founders had originally militated, and the more clandestine and militarist BR of Moretti and Senzani of its later stage.

Within *Autonomia* and PO there was a variety of positions and attitudes towards clandestine armed struggle in general and the BR in particular, ranging from outright repudiation by many of the operaist intellectuals (although some supported the idea of a diffused semi-clandestine armed struggle) to the ambiguous majority position of the "comrades who err", to openly expressed sympathy, such as the 1977 Bologna Conference which ended with chants of "*rosse, rosse, Brigate Rosse*" and "Curcio leader". Gambino, an operaist, expresses the critical view of the BR:

> "The Seventies had a heavy cap of DC domination and confederation of industry hegemony, which was not contrasted by the Left parties whose numbers were increasing, but were unable to make any political impact. (...) The [BR] began to thrive in this absolute blockage of the political system. I didn't like them from the start, even when they were just this group of *Linea Rossa* Maoists in Verona, attacking *Classe Operaia* for being 'spontaneist'. In Milan they tried to imitate the Black Panther Party, calling the police 'pigs with big guns' in their leaflets as the CPM, when they were trying to raise the consciousness of [evicted squatters]. Later on, as the BR, they came here to Padua to do their first killing of two fascists in the MSI headquarters. (...) A lot of young people were disorientated; they didn't know what to think. Most of them would say: 'They're comrades who have got it wrong'. My reply was, when you see their leaders say that people in Italy are 'teleguided', what kind of respect for ordinary people do they have? (...) I think they had a lot of fantasies about reviving the old PCI-partisan tradition of armed struggle (...) Curcio's explanation of the Piazza Fontana bomb as the origin of the BR is a 'rear view' rationalisation[43]. In fact, they had already had their first meeting in October 1969 in Chiavari, before Piazza Fontana."[44]

A Paduan informant explains the essential differences in strategy, tactics and ideology, despite some initial sympathy with them during the transition phase between the end of the NL groups and the emergence of *Autonomia* in 1974:

> "People used to say: emotionally I'm more on the side of the [BR] than the groups and those who only talk, because at least they've 'taken the leap' and have the guts to take action. But their argument doesn't convince me when they say that all it takes is to organise an army, because the masses have already organized. It was necessary to guarantee the distribution of leaflets, to build the workers' committees, students' committees, the radios, to build another movement, not the official movement of the Communist Party, not

the classical workers' movement, as the BR did, saying 'the movement is there already, it is the unions, the PCI, it's necessary to infiltrate this, to carry out the armed struggle, and to push the vanguards of the Communist Party to be for a Revolutionary Communist Party'. We said instead that it was necessary to build another movement because we came from an operaist tradition of analysis, with a different methodological approach (...). Instead of the assault on the Winter Palace, a more complex concept of revolution [was needed] for the advanced countries. (...) [I]t is not possible to do what was done in China or Russia, where the poor were 90% [of the population]. In the Western countries where there is consumption it is necessary to create a discourse in which illegality and conflictuality form the basis, a counter power has to grow and only if it grows can it also give life to a dualism of power and therefore to flow into a revolution. [This was] a more modern concept of revolution than that found in classical texts (...) it was necessary to combine armed struggle with counter power. This was the third option that I chose, because I didn't believe in LC, I was very attracted by the [BR], [but the] simplification of its project didn't convince me. So, gathering this input that the combative experiences gave, I thought that we had to move on that terrain, we also had to do things. Because we couldn't criticise (...) and not act. To organize the actions of armed struggle within a project that is not that of being infiltrators or inside the Communist Party or unions, but within (...) an alternative communist movement, (...) which broke with the tradition of the communist party and that in reality had its own centres, radios, communication. It had an alternative social structure in which armed struggle was inserted. This is the third option that was born and developed in a very empirical manner (...) In the groups there was the SdO: some comrades (...) carried out training, with bottles and other stuff (...) Putting concrete initiatives into practice was almost nonexistent, however there was training for an armed insurrection, for civil war. What the delineation of events in '74 showed was that there didn't have to be separation between those who did politics and those who did politics and the armed struggle or only the armed struggle. The idea that practicing politics was to do everything at the same time was also maturing among the comrades, from the distribution of fliers to other things. This was the meaning of this passage [from the groups to *Autonomia*] that absolutely determined the original experience of the Collectives. (...) [T]his idea of counter power was clear [and] feasible [compared to armed struggle]: burn the boss' car, beat him up (...) In that factory the workers are better off, or at school, if I beat up a teacher or if I struggle on the [issue of] transport. I succeed in getting something; in a small way I succeed in building a form of satisfaction of some fundamental needs. You also succeed in taking some satisfactions for yourself, to feel better in the factory, the school, the neighbourhood, because you have organized. (...) This (...) was the fundamental difference between the vision of the BR and the fighting groups and our experience. Not everyone however had the same development as us, Rome had some aspects similar to those of Veneto. However, this was central to the transition from PO to the formation of *Autonomia*."[45]

Even the most militarist section of *Autonomia*, the CCPO from which PL emerged, expressed its condemnation of the disastrous effects of the Moro Affair on all the movements through its periodical, *Senza Tregua*:

> "This enormous movement of struggle has mainly developed in complete political autonomy, extraneous from any organisation. Thus, we want to underline the actuality of a mass revolutionary movement [and] its growth despite the contradictions in which it finds itself. As a result, it is not a matter of co-opting vanguards to a party project (...) [but] of on one hand developing political conflict to its maximum in the poles of struggle, and on the other of constructing links between situations (...) for the development of struggle (...) [T]he practice of the BR at the moment has put itself outside the processes of proletarian aggregation; it presents itself as a subjective party initiative, without contributing to the construction of an effective counter power to oppose the class enemy daily in the factories, in the [social] territory, in the schools. On the contrary, the kidnapping of Moro, if it has had disarticulating effects for the State, has provoked exactly the same effects within the class movement and the revolutionary sectors." (Cited in Segio 1997, 383)

Finally, Del Re, who as an operaist feminist was part of the 'area of *Autonomia*', reflects on the ambiguous attitude towards political violence at that time and the relationship between violence and organisational forms, presenting an opinion which is now widespread among ex-activists of the 1970s:

> "I found myself before a problem, that of the ambiguity of being inside a movement. What does it mean to know, not to participate or agree with, but not to intervene, even if you knew the intervention would not have been definitive or useful? I could have shouted in the newspapers I was against the [BR]. In the assemblies, I said I was against the murder of Moro, but what happened? Nothing. But (...) there is still the discourse of collective responsibility for various events that happened and which you know you didn't determine the outcome, but (...) you didn't do anything to stop them either. This has always been the most arduous problem for me, also when I was in prison and I had to think about all the events, basically because the judges asked me to (...) I don't feel guilty, because that could only be for things that I had determined (...) Maybe I thought that changes had a price. Then I accepted this, but now I wouldn't. (...) [T]he confines between politics and terrorism were frayed and ill defined, but if we had clearly defined them, maybe that would have been wrong as well. Maybe now I know where the confines are, but then it wasn't clear, also because the dimensions were so massive as to be really uncontrollable. One could also say 'No, I don't agree'. Many people thought like that but didn't say anything, because in any case it wasn't worth it, that in any case there were prices to be paid, even if we were all against murder. That was never a problem. To say no to political killing was very simple. But there's a limit which maybe sometimes was passed, for example on the structure of the party, on organisation, on decision-making. It's this rather which has never

> been investigated or criticised. How many times we pretended not to be a party! We weren't but we would have liked to have been one. It was very ambiguous."[46]

6) Case study: 'Organised Workers' Autonomy'

As the final section on the question of political organisation within *Autonomia*, this case study examines the structure and role of 'Organised Workers' Autonomy' (OWA) both within the 'area of *Autonomia*' and in relation to other social movements. Given the disparate and localised basis of even this more formally organised sector of *Autonomia*, which continued to privilege the party form, if under a different guise, to that of the movement, the study examines the contrasting local characteristics and compositions of OWA in its principal locations: in Milan, more linked to industrial factory struggles and the newer post-Fordist productive circuits, but to struggles around social appropriation and the self-reduction of social costs; in Padua, around the students' movement and youth issues, but also involved with struggles in the AAO, post-Fordist factories and sweatshops; in Rome, where a more 'populist' and council communist-influenced version of OWA militated among the unemployed and marginalised youth of the periphery, but also among service sector workers, with a strong emphasis on internationalism. Even though this area of *Autonomia* was the most critical of the BR, while practicing its own forms of armed struggle through semi-clandestine 'parallel structures', it was to be directly linked to the BR and accused by the judiciary and the press of masterminding the kidnap and murder of Moro. This was initially the principal charge against Negri and the other OWA intellectuals, academics and movement organizers arrested on April 7th 1979, the date marking the Italian State's intensification of the criminalisation of all leftist political opposition outside the party system.

Firstly, however, it is necessary to clarify any confusion over the term 'Organised Autonomy' itself, since contrasting versions exist among its former protagonists over its validity. For some, such as Negri and Dendena[47], it was a clear attempt to organise the movements of *Autonomia* and of 1977 into a revolutionary party structure of a new kind, based on the class composition of the 'socialised worker' rather than the 'mass worker' and capable of withstanding State repression and the militarisation of social spaces carried out by both the State and the armed groups after 1977. A Paduan militant defines OWA as:

> "Neither a mere acronym, nor a party in the classical sense, nor a monolithic structure with a single vertical and pyramidical leadership, but rather a complex organisational political form, articulated, diversified, composed of a large variety of organisations, but able to gather and coagulate its offensive capacity with respect to common elements of programme and strategy. This was also, compared to the Third Internationalist, ML tradition, an important element of innovation on the organisational and political levels." (Various authors, 1997, p1)

However, for others, such as Vesce[48], it was such a loose, divaricated reality that the term 'Organised Autonomy' can only be understood as a construct of the judicial system, imposing its own institutional framework on a political form that was otherwise beyond its comprehension. Del Re, like Vesce an April 7th detainee, concurs with this view: "By *Autonomia* I mean the 'area' of workers' autonomy rather than [OWA]. Within the various organised nuclei of *Autonomia* there were so many differences that to call them [OWA] is an intellectual exercise, which may be useful to define a political area."[49]

Conversely, S.Bologna analyses OWA as an elite within the social movement sector: "[W]e must consider Negri's or Scalzone's group or Roman *Autonomia* (i.e., all the part of the movement known as Organised *Autonomia*), as the political elite which intersected with a real movement." (Cuninghame 2001, p93). Thus this case study will ascertain to what extent OWA existed as a distinct political project or was an abstraction imposed as either a media-judicial construct or as an 'intellectual exercise'.

6.1) 'Organised Autonomia' in Padua, Rome and Milan

Based in Padua University and the Porto Marghera chemicals plant, but present throughout the Veneto region in northeast Italy were the Veneto Political Collectives. They also set up one of the first 'free radio stations' on the model of Bologna's Radio Alice, the still operating Radio Sherwood. Politically, this was one of the more recalcitrantly neo-Leninist areas of OWA, considering itself the final remnant of PO until the '77 Movement's impact moved political and social relations well beyond the reference points of the groups. Geographically, Paduan *Autonomia* was a red island in one of the most conservative and traditionally catholic areas of Italy, although the effects of emigration (internal migration to Turin and Milan began here in the 1950s before spreading to the south) and rapid industrialization and proletarianisation in the Fifties and Sixties and then post-Fordist restructuration in the Seventies were politically radicalising.

One of the main areas of struggle was at the university, one of Italy's largest despite Padua's provincial status, with a large percentage of non-resident students who fought for better housing and for meals to be provided free by the university. There was also sometimes violent conflict with PCI academics and the FGCI student organisation, particularly after criminalisation had struck Paduan *Autonomia* particularly hard in 1979[50]. The same year the periodical '*Autonomia*' began to be published, becoming the national mouthpiece of the remnants of *Autonomia* in the 1980s. Ironically, having been the most neo-Leninist part of *Autonomia*, today Paduan ex-*Autonomia* has shifted to a post-Marxist position, more prepared to work with RC and independent elements in the DS like the ex-operaist and mayor of Venice Cacciari than with the hard core of the 'antagonist movement', and is better known as *Associazione Ya Basta!* (AYB)[51] and the *Tute Bianche* (White Overalls, renamed *i Disobbedienti*, the Disobedient, since 2001)[52], two of the main organisations within the European branch of the global anti-capitalist movement.

In the mid 1970s Rome was one of the fastest changing cities in Europe, a cauldron of economic, social and technological transformation, involving above all the tertiarisation of the local economy, and riven by increasing social tensions caused by the rapid and poorly planned urbanisation of the Fifties and Sixties, producing shanty towns on its outskirts alongside barren high rise blocks of flats with inadequate services. It also had Europe's largest student population (over 100,000 in a city of three million inhabitants), most of whom worked casually in the service sector or in the black economy sweatshops associated with the post-Fordisation of the national economy, as well as a demographically young population, many of whom were unemployed migrants from other parts of Italy, particularly the poorer South. Even more than other cities, it was a political powder keg given the rooted presence in different working class districts of both the extreme Left and Right, resulting in continuous political violence between leftists and neo-fascists during the Seventies, the latter responsible for the majority of violent incidents both locally and nationally (Negri 1998)[53].

On 8th September 1974, a police attempt to evict families and youth squatting a high rise block resulted in prolonged rioting, including for the first time the use of firearms and explosives, throughout the outlying working class district of San Basilio, in which Fabrizio Ceruso of the CAO was shot dead by police. For Pifano, a prominent activist in

Rome OWA, this conflict marked a qualitative leap in mass violence against the State, as opposed to the clandestine violence of the armed groups (Moroni et al 1997). It also heralded *Autonomia*'s arrival as a violent media spectacle in the public imagination. Organised *Autonomia* in Rome was simultaneously perhaps the most extreme as well as the most variegated local reality of the broader movement, closer to Paduan than Milanese OWA with which there were serious ideological differences. It was the most 'populist' and 'insurrectionalist' branch, influenced by the council communism of the Twenties and the Luxemburgism of the NL group *Il Manifesto*[54], in which Miliucci, a still active historical leader of Rome OWA, participated after leaving the PCI in 1970. However, it organised more among university students and service sector workers, the dominant sector of Rome's economy, than factory workers and was particularly influential within the post-Marxist '77 Movement. Thus, it can also be said to be the most contemporary part of *Autonomia*, the area where the 'socialised worker' definitely prevailed over the 'mass worker', reflected in its more successful survival as a movement area than *Autonomia* in the North. While international solidarity with national liberation movements and armed groups in Europe was the most traditional aspect of *Autonomia*'s politics, it was given particular emphasis in Rome, where Pifano and others were arrested in 1978 while transporting missiles for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, so hastening *Autonomia*'s criminalisation. Rome OWA was split into two distinct areas between which relations were poor. The majority organised as the CAO, better known as the *I Volsci*, the title of their journal following their decision to leave the *Rosso* editorial committee in 1974, taken from the street in the central San Lorenzo working class district where most of their activities, including Radio Onda Rossa (ROR), were based. They were particularly active in university, service sector and housing occupation conflicts, helping to establish the 'soviets', an ideological attempt to put into practice the council communism of the Russian and German Revolutions among the most radical sectors of Rome's workers, students and proletarian youth. A minority organised instead as the Roman Proletarian Organisation with its Radio Proletaria, while still another group set up Radio Cittá Futura, which, like ROR, also continues to broadcast. These divisions continue today within a plethora of occupied social centres and radio stations that prefer to maintain autonomy from each other but come together sporadically to organise mobilisations.

While OWA enjoyed almost complete hegemony in Padua as the largest and most extensively organised Left structure (including the PCI), and was also the largest extra-parliamentary group in Rome, its situation in Milan – "Italy's only metropolis"[55] – was complicated by the high level of competition between *Autonomia*, the remnants of the New Left parties and the armed groups for political space, recruits and resources in a shrinking pool of political and socio-cultural opportunities (Tarrow 1989, della Porta 1995), pushing all of them towards more violent forms of action, including terrorism (Moss 1989). Milan, as Italy's main industrial and commercial centre, suffered the effects of post-Fordist restructuration and deindustrialisation, having 23% less jobs in manufacturing in 1980 than in 1971 (S.Bologna 1984), with a consequent shift from 'workers' centrality' to the 'struggle on the territory' as:

> "[C]onvergence, accumulation and multiplication of different experiences. The analysis of and theories on "urban capital" of the Faculty of Architecture, the themes of [LC] on reclaiming the city, the experiences of the Tenants Union [*Unione Inquilini*], the neighbourhood patrols against the fascists, the dislocation of political centrality from the factory and society worked on systematically by *Rosso*, finally the material, diffused, capillary presence of groups, movements, initiatives – made struggle on the territory in the Milan of the Seventies a kind of compulsory passage for every political experience, to become later 'the' political practice tout court" (ibid., pxi).

The Seveso disaster near Milan in 1976, a premonition of Bhopal in 1984 and Chernobyl in 1986, when an accident at the Icmesa chemicals plant covered a large area with highly toxic dioxin, resulting in the abandonment of the town of Seveso, raised the ecological question for the first time to the same level of importance as in other advanced industrialised countries. A major issue for the Milan movements towards the end of the decade was that of drugs, in particular the rapid spread of heroin addiction and dealing both within the movements and throughout the working class youth of the city. Conspiracy theories abounded, seeing the State as responsible for deliberately promoting drug addiction to weaken and divide a rebellious generation:

> "The obvious, provocative way in which heavy drugs were introduced into a market of political subjects led to an interpretation of the capitalist will to dominate the territory by any means, clean or dirty, which legitimated the idea of a self-defence of the collectivity of youth on which certain armed organisations and in particular [PL] constructed a part of their programme of territorial counter power." (S.Bologna 1984, pxi)

It was in this context and on these issues that the *Rosso* collective operated. It was composed of ex-members of PO and the *Gruppo Gramsci*, a small but influential NL

group thanks to the weight of its intellectuals, including Madera and Arrighi, which contributed its journal, *Rosso - giornale dentro il movimento*,[56] to Milanese and Northern *Autonomia*. Also contributing were Paduan intellectuals such as Negri and Ferrari Bravo. Bologna *Autonomia* also originally published *A/traverso* as a local supplement to *Rosso*. Its editorial collective was effectively the heart of Milan OWA, but other rival groups existed within the same area, such as the COCORI, composed of ex-PO and LC militants, whose main intellectual was Oreste Scalzone, the ex-'68 students' leader, and the journal *Senza Tregua*[57] of the CCPO, based on the dissident 'workers' current' of LC which was stronger in Turin than Milan. Also part of the Milanese OWA galaxy were the various Autonomous Workers' Assemblies in Alfa Romeo, Sit-Siemens, Pirelli, Marelli, Falck and Breda, publishing their own newspapers such as *Senza Padroni*. The Milan OWA was in fitful contact with the broader area of 'diffused' or 'social autonomy', based on an emerging network of squatted social centres (the Centro Sociale Leoncavallo was founded in 1975 and continues today in a much larger centre) and Proletarian Youth Clubs in the peripheral working class districts of Quarto Oggiaro and Sesto San Giovanni, which were to metamorphose into the Metropolitan Indians, the most 'creative' element of the '77 Movement: "[It was] a swarming process of diffused organisation whose real protagonists were young proletarians, marginal to the organised autonomous groups, but inserted into dynamics of spontaneous, magmatic, uncontrollable aggregation" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, p445).

However, at the centre of the various and not always articulated components of Milanese OWA and with an unrealised national organisational project of creating a party was *Rosso*:

> "[C]onnected to the experience of the autonomous vanguards, the organisational moment cannot be centralised [like] the groups, but rather the autonomous factory collectives where it is possible 'to make politics in the first person.' (...) [*Rosso*'s] greatest novelty consists in the awareness that the factory (...) is not the only terrain where the initiative of struggle has to develop. Other previously neglected social conditions assume an increasingly important role: those of women, youth, and the marginalised, never considered before as political subjects. Not immediately political but fundamental themes and problems are faced, such as personal relationships and the 'general conditions of life'. Subsequently, the newspaper individualized three different sectors of the public to address: the factories, which the section *Rosso fabbrica* was devoted to, consisting mainly of interventions by the autonomous committees of various factories (Porto Marghera, Alfa Romeo, Zanussi etc.) (...); '*Rosso scuola*', that included both

the broad debates and news of the various high school committees; '*Rosso tutto il resto*', where space was given to sectors of the youth movement organised outside the groups and of the feminist movement, that were fighting against marginalisation. (...) [It] was one of the first magazines to deal with the transformation (...) from the mass worker of the big industrial concentrations to the socialised worker of the diffused factory in the territory. (...) This new political subject was to have its moment of maximum expression in the '77 movement. At the beginnings of 1978 the magazine identified four sectors of intervention and debate: 1) directly productive work, 'for the reduction of the working day and for the conquest of time freed from work'; 2) public spending, 'as the central moment of capitalist control and the reduction of the costs of social reproduction'; 3) the nuclear state and the production of death; 4) the legitimisation of revolutionary action, against the repressive apparatus that the state mobilises for the perpetuation of its dominion." (Scordino and DeriveApprodi 1997)[58].

Milan was the main centre of the women's movement and women in *Rosso* and *Autonomia* often found themselves torn in two directions by their 'double militancy'. Many women in Milanese *Autonomia* were originally involved in the Via dell'Orso *coordinamento* before leaving in 1975/76 to join *Rosso* (although they considered themselves on the very periphery of OWA), while others chose the more militarist sections of OWA, joining the COCORI and eventually the UCC, the CCPO or PL. They contributed to the debates on violence and subjectivity both within feminism and *Autonomia*, from the position that "violence, [understood as aggressive self-assertion as an antidote to patriarchal representations of female passivity and subordination], is a basis for subjectivity"[59]. Otherwise, the principal areas of intervention were the factory and the refusal of work (together with LC's Women's Collective), discrimination in the workplace, black market labour (*lavoro nero*), prisons, sexual violence and *machismo* within *Autonomia* and the 'Movement' in general, and the body and health. Action was taken in hospitals, over the unequal doctor-patient relationship and the denunciation of those medical centres that refused to carry out abortions, and of the service in general which victimised women and did not meet their actual health needs. Another area of intervention was international "solidarism rather than solidarity", based on the feminist practice of 'starting from yourself' (*partire da se*). They were also in touch with radical separatist feminists, who used psychoanalysis for 'consciousness raising' and were close to the Radical Party, although relations with the broader feminist movement with its emphasis on the private sphere, consciousness raising and non-violence, were conflictual. A joint action of denunciation of the Catholic Church's negative impact on women's control over their own bodies and lives was the occupation of the Duomo, the city's main

cathedral and the main symbol of its official identity. Other actions were taken to contest the stereotyping of women in patriarchal capitalist society as passive consumerist sex objects, including against wedding dress shops and dating agencies. They also participated in Melandri's 'Free University of Women', where housewives and intellectuals carried out an interclassist work on the representation of women in capitalist society. The crossover between *Rosso* and radical feminism produced two magazines itself, *Malafemina*[60] and *Noi testarde*[61], making the 'politics of the personal' and the questioning of gender roles part of *Autonomia*'s collective identity, although conflict with OWA's 'workers' centrality' position was permanent.[62]

On 7th April and 21st December 1979 almost the entire editorial committee was arrested and incarcerated under the accusation of 'subversive association' and [forming an] 'armed gang'. Publication stopped in May 1979. In tracing the links between *Rosso*, *Senza Tregua*, and armed organisations such as PL, FCC, PAC, UCC, and FAC, della Porta (1995, p93-94) claims that OWA attempted "to use violent repertoires but to keep a legal 'mass' structure", as an alternative to the clandestinity and separation from the movement of the BR: "Nevertheless, the attempt to reach a precarious equilibrium between a legal structure for mass propaganda and a clandestine structure failed. (...) One consequence of the failure to integrate legal and clandestine activities was the emergence of organizations that were completely underground". Thus PL emerged as a splinter group of the CCPO in 1976; the FCC from a split within a SdO close to *Rosso* in 1977 following the killing of a policeman during an 'armed march' in Milan; the PAC in Venice and Milan consisted of former members of *Rosso*; and the UCC in Rome and Milan and the FAC in Rome and Turin were previous members of the CCPO. Activist networks associated with *Rosso* became increasingly involved in acts of political violence from 1976 onwards, including "planting bombs or throwing Molotov cocktails at cars or houses, and staging armed protest marches, 'proletarian expropriation' and robberies" (ibid., p95).

6.2) The repression of 'Organised Autonomia'

On 7th April 1979 16 people, including Negri, Vesce, Ferrari Bravo, Dalmaviva, Scalzone, del Re and Bianchini were arrested on warrants issued by the Paduan Public Prosecutor, Judge Pietro Calogero, a member of the PCI. Piperno and six others escaped arrest. All the arrested had been active in PO and some (Negri, Scalzone, Vesce, Ferrari

Bravo and del Re) in and around *Autonomia*. Several were academics at the Institute of Political Sciences of Padua University. They were accused of constituting the BR's 'strategic leadership' and Negri was further accused of direct involvement in the Moro Affair, an unlikely charge (given his various pronouncements against the BR and his high public profile) that was eventually dropped. Calogero's 'theorem', on which the principal accusations were based, held that:

> "[PO], through the ten years of its political history, had functioned as a centralised organisation, operating at two levels: the public (...), operating initially as [PO] and subsequently as *Autonomia Operaia*, and the clandestine (...), operating as the [BR]. It was claimed that this organisation had existed and functioned for several years, planning both mass struggle and terroristic activity, coordinating them the length and breadth of Italy, financing them, propagandizing them, and eventually coming to constitute effectively an insurrectional threat to the Italian State." (The Italy '79 Committee et al, 1982, p1)

The arrests were preceded by a vitriolic media campaign led by PCI and allegedly P2 masonic lodge[63] – controlled newspapers against *Autonomia* in general and Negri in particular, who was presented as the arch *professore cattivo* (evil professor), a media category designed to criminalise the academic input into the movements for leading the young astray with subversive writings and teaching (see Coppola, 2nd and 4th April 1981, and Criscuoli 7th April 1981). Bocca (1978) provides an example of the press' equation of *Autonomia* with the BR:

> "Today things have changed; with the red terror behind them, the extremist working class fringes can oppose, or attempt to oppose, trade union politics. Anyone who was at an assembly of workers in a factory like Alfa Romeo of Arese could have seen that the group of extremists, which comprises no more than a hundred individuals, is nevertheless capable of placing itself in the front row and of shouting accusations and insults that the Communist Party must bear." (Cited in Debord 1979, p6)[64]

The aim was to create a 'moral panic' in which public opinion would accept that "a domestic and international conspiracy existed to destabilise Italy's political and economic institutions" (The Italy '79 Committee et al, 1982, p1). The CIA had adopted an aggressively anti-communist interventionist role in Italian politics since 1945 and this appears to have increased in the late 1970s, with an American 'expert' identifying Negri's voice in conversation with Moro's family during the kidnapping and the constant supplying of background materials to the Italian press. The April 7th arrests were hailed as the "final defeat of terrorism and the victory of the State" (ibid.). Strangely, the

operation had left the principal terrorist group, the BR, unscathed. Although Judge Palombarini, a member of *Magistratura Democratica*, opposed the Calogero Theorem and rejected the charges relating *Autonomia* with the BR (see Filippini, 30th October 1981), the 'democratic tendency' within the Italian judiciary was unable to oppose such legally controversial measures as *pentismo* (unlike the ultra-conservative Northern Irish judiciary which rejected the use of 'supergrass' evidence against IRA suspects in the early Eighties), mainly because its principal political interlocutor, the PCI, fully supported what *Magistratura Democratica* described as a "coup d'état against the Italian constitution" (The Italy '79 Committee et al 1982, p1).

Between 1979 and 1983 some six thousand OWA, *Autonomia*, anarchist and NL activists were arrested and imprisoned under terrorist charges in the recently built network of 'special prisons' in the largest round up of political activists in Western Europe since 1945. According to Amnesty International (1986), the arrested were effectively interned without trial, remanded for up to five years on conspiracy charges, based on the unrepealed Fascist legal code's definition of 'criminal association', until most were acquitted and released in the mid 1980s. *Autonomia* collapsed under the effects of the arrests, with over 90% of those detained choosing to co-operate with the authorities, either as *pentiti* (repentant) or *disassociati* (disassociated), according to one informant[65]. There were also allegations of the torture of suspects. Most of the collectives of *Autonomia* disbanded or went into semi-clandestinity, although it was never officially outlawed as a terrorist organisation. Their existence as an integrated national structure had been impossible to prove in court, let alone their involvement in any attempt to 'overthrow the state through armed insurrection'.

Since Calogero had no direct proof to support his theorem other than the writings of the arrested, he relied on the testimony of 'repentant' members of *Autonomia* and the BR to incriminate the arrested. Gambino, who had not participated directly in *Autonomia*, was one of the few ex-PO core activists and Paduan academics not to be arrested. He attempted to organise a defence campaign for the arrested before being forced into exile in the USA and France by the testimony of Fiorini[66], the main *pentito* witness used in the April 7 trial:

> "We had a big conference in June 1979 and Ian McDonald, a British lawyer attended. When he saw how many people there were, he said: 'Ferruccio, you have organised such a big thing that in six months these people will be out of jail'. I replied: 'Ian, you don't understand the Italian state. In six months I

may well be in jail!' (...) So, they constructed this kind of trial whereby Fiorini (...) said that I had participated in the preparation of molotov cocktails in December 1971 in Milan. Although I happened not to be there at the time, he actually said that he saw me. By late 1979, it was apparent that the next wave of arrests would include me, so I quit and went to the United States. In 1981, it was clear that I could no longer stay in the U.S., (...) so I went to France, where I had to start all over again from scratch. Meanwhile, my family was still here in Italy. I had to leave just after the birth of our second son. I was only able to return in 1985. Then later Fiorini retracted and admitted he had made a mistake (...). In fact, I'm not really bitter with him, but with the magistrates who set him up and forced him to say what he was not otherwise prepared to say."[67]

Initially, the rest of the movement, with some NL parties expressing relative satisfaction, underestimated the impact of the arrests: "Organisations like [AO] and LC never understood the significance of the 7th April arrests. Their attitude was: 'Things aren't going so badly if it's only academics who end up in jail. None of us has been arrested'"[68].

6.3) Prison, 'repentance', 'removal' and exile

The question remains as to why OWA in particular and *Autonomia* in general collapsed so quickly as a result of the various waves of arrests of intellectual leaders, 'movement organisers' and then an indiscriminate haul of activists at all levels, most on the word of those previously arrested who had decided to cooperate with the authorities and 'repent', sometimes naming hundreds of other activists[69]. A combination of the 'special prisons', 'repentance', 'disassociation', the general withdrawal (*riflusso*) from political activism into private life throughout the movements after 1978, heroin addiction, the rise of neo-mysticism, and the exile of some 200 leading activists mainly in Paris, extinguished a movement which in 1977 had reached genuinely mass dimensions and had seemed capable of confronting the State.

According to Dendena, "a child was imprisoned" [70]. OWA had not had enough time either to root itself in local struggles and situations to a sufficient depth or to train and discipline its members enough to withstand concerted State repression:

> "The 'war machine' that the prosecutors pointed to was in fact a 'tank' that left pieces all over the place. [OWA] was a reality in which party discipline was unknown. We amused the judges with our account of this 'tank' that continually broke down and infuriated the public prosecutor who was desperate to prove that this 'tank' did in fact exist. As it should have done, let's be frank. Italy was not Peru or Argentina and as long as no one implicated others it should have been much more difficult for the State to find

evidence to use against us. There were no serious offences as political homicide was not part of our culture or practice. (...) Our defeat by the magistrates – *they* were organised as a war machine – was due above all to the individual weakness of those arrested, many of whom agreed to cooperate with the judges in return for a reduced sentence. We had not had the time to organise properly and construct a strong identity as a movement. Our members were also not sufficiently trained or well read, although we never had anyone recruited by the BR, unlike the 'diffused *Autonomia*', which provided hundreds of recruits for them, including the leader of the Walter Alasia column[71]. I put the blame for this on the [OWA] leaders who did not want to run proper 'cadre schools' and the bureaucratic relationship they had with the activists – 'do this leaflet today, go to that march tomorrow' etc. - which pushed them towards the armed groups. (...) I do not like to judge those who chose to be 'repentants' or 'disassociated', who adopted an individualist position towards the State of 'everyone for themselves'. I was not tortured myself and if I had been maybe I would have been one of the most important 'repentants'. But I cannot accept the speed with which most of the arrested gave in. The repression was bad, but Italy was not a South American dictatorship, spaces for resistance within prison did exist and it should have been much more difficult for the State to criminalise *Autonomia*, which was after all a legal and not a clandestine organisation. (...) I was lucky enough to have been involved in politics since 1968 through the *Gruppo Gramsci*, PO and then *Autonomia*, it was my whole life so it was easier for me to resist when I found myself alone in a prison cell, separated from the movement and my previous life. I kept myself going by teaching history classes. But for most of those arrested their time in *Autonomia* was a mere parenthesis compared to the rest of their lives; two, three, five years at most. For them prison was a disaster, suffering and nothing else. They wanted to get out as quickly as possible and forget the past. A child who has had a nightmare does not want to relive it. (...) There was a remarkable capacity for removal and reintegration into society. I have the impression that some of our worst enemies now are ex-*autonomi* who if they are not to be found in the New Right parties [Northern League and *Forza Italia*[72]] are certainly active in the construction of a neoliberal society.[73] (...) There was something nefastic about posing as invincible warriors and challenging the State head on, and then giving in immediately as soon as they were arrested."[74]

The *Autonomia*, NL and 'armed party' prisoners were initially able to construct a virtually 'liberated zone' within the prison system through their huge numbers even when dispersed throughout Italy. They forced a series of concessions from the prison authorities and in effect ran their own sections. However, the political struggle against the BR outside became more difficult if not dangerous within the confines of prison where the BR prisoners held sway and in some 'special prisons' the *Autonomia* prisoners felt themselves to be imprisoned as much by the BR as the State[75]. While *Autonomia* favoured working with ordinary prisoners to create a situation of mass struggle for the

reform of the prison system and its eventual abolition, the BR attempted to continue their insurrectionary line within the prisons, smuggling in arms and explosives which were used at Trani, near Bari, in 1981, the most important in a series of prison revolts. The *Autonomia* prisoners were taken by surprise by the armed revolt but participated, as did some ordinary prisoners. The extreme measures adopted by the State in recapturing control of the prison through a NOCS[76] attack and then physically punishing the prisoners, resulting in severe injuries, heralded a general worsening of prison conditions as the authorities tightened their control on the internal regime within the special prisons. The solidarity and organisation of the political prisoners, the basis of their success in winning concessions, was also undermined and then destroyed by the effects of the repentants' confessions. The BR and the other main armed organisations attempted to fight back through a policy of murdering any prisoner known to have cooperated with the authorities, even if they had only implicated themselves[77]. The sight of "comrade murdering ex-comrade" only increased the demoralisation and despair spreading like wildfire through the movement, both inside and outside prison. Many of the *Autonomia* prisoners took advantage of temporary releases in the early 1980s, following the dropping of charges relating to the Moro Affair, to leave Italy and become political exiles in France, Canada, the USA, Mexico or Nicaragua. The most famous escape was Negri's who was released in 1983 following his 'disassociation'[78] from *Autonomia* and election as a deputy of the Radical Party, the only parliamentary party opposing the emergency laws and mass arrests. When parliament voted by a narrow majority to suspend Negri's legal immunity, he pre-empted re-arrest by escaping to France on a fishing boat[79].

Exile has been experienced as a form of imprisonment by most (Ruggiero 1993). Only a small minority, such as Negri and del Re, already had strong links with Paris that allowed them to find well-paid and secure work as university lecturers and to continue political activity in France by collaborating with French left intellectuals on journals such as *Futur Anterieur*. The rest were 'normalized', with open political activity impossible and life a question of survival, having to live clandestinely with false documents, learn a new language, cope with a different culture and survive in precarious forms of employment, under the constant threat of rearrest and extradition. The French Socialist government of the Eighties, bound by its national constitution and under pressure from Foucault, Deleuze and other prestigious intellectuals who had protested against the Italian government's repression of first the '77 Movement and then *Autonomia*, recognised them

as *de facto* political exiles, refusing to extradite most of them. However, as a political and military ally of Italy through the EEC and NATO, it refused to grant them *de jure* political asylum, leaving them in a vulnerable extra-legal limbo. Surprisingly, French right-wing governments have also continued this policy. However, several *Autonomia* and armed group exiles have preferred to return to Italy to complete their sentences, given the difficulties of their lives in France and the impossibility of continuing as political activists "sentenced to normality" (ibid., p1). Even Negri, the most illustrious political exile, chose this path in 1997. Others have been arrested near the French border with Italy and summarily extradited without court proceedings; a signal to those in Paris that travel within France is risky. Scalzone remains in Paris, writing and campaigning for an amnesty which will allow the remaining exiles to return, meanwhile acting as a "father-figure, therapist and spokesperson" for the Italian political exile community (Jesurum 2000, p1).

Del Re describes the difficulties of exile and the political debates within the exile community in Paris:

> "I had to invent a new identity. In exile I met those [members of the BR and PL] who I was supposed to be 'leading' [according to the Italian judiciary]. (...) Exile posed two problems. One was political and it was that of the continuity of political struggle, also in violent forms, and so clandestinity etc. The other was that of integration and the recognition of defeat. There were about 300 exiles and we had assemblies that everyone attended, even if we were all clandestine. The second line gained the upper hand, that of asking for political asylum and to submit ourselves to what the French state demanded: to discontinue our political activity. This line passed because even those who remained clandestine did nothing else but that. They didn't regularise themselves so they had to find irregular jobs. It was a false alternative, more to do with pride. Among *Autonomia* exiles this was the line of Scalzone. But (...) they didn't continue with any violent activities. Quite the opposite; it was a clandestinity without activity or with irrelevant activities. However, this division among the exiles remained, even if the conciliatory line prevailed. The *irriducibili*[80] hardliners were not much liked by us from Veneto. There was even a territorial division between us and the Romans, between North and South. (...) The other consideration to make was a personal one. Certainly, each one of us had to measure our life skills, to adapt ourselves to a new language, a new way of living, to different professions. This was very important in my opinion. Many of us completely recycled our lives. I saw philosophers become computer technicians, mathematicians become building workers: something extremely radical. A few lazy people like me remained at university because it was the simplest thing to do, but also because I had already worked with the French. (...) My main difficulty was that of having to be clandestine with two children who

> had to go to school etc. I adapted myself like all 'illegal' immigrants: first clandestinity and then I applied for residence. It was a very similar experience to that of 'illegal' immigrants, like the *Sans Papiers*[81]. I didn't really have any contact with their organisations, although we moved in the same circles, the condition of being a clandestine immigrant being one of the main social problems in France. I tried to integrate myself into the French left milieu, which necessarily had contacts with clandestine immigrants. (...) And then it was hard work missing home."[82]

However, exile helped to internationalise the campaign against the repression of *Autonomia* and the Italian movements and to raise *Autonomia*'s international profile, which was to be influential in such countries as West Germany, Holland and Switzerland, where 'autonomous movements', making direct reference to *Autonomia*, became mass phenomena during the Eighties (Katsiaficas 1997). Paradoxically, *Autonomia*'s impact in France was to be far less influential, except in intellectual circles, due to the historical strength of Trotskyism and state-orientated Leftism in France (ibid.). Its impact in Britain, a country until very recently historically and geographically separated from the main political and intellectual currents of Europe with a consequent time lag, was limited to the 'Big Flame' NL group of the Seventies, a part of which, as Red Notes, helped to translate and disseminate key *Autonomia*, PO, LC and operaist texts, and to campaign on behalf of the April 7th prisoners. However, the main NL organisation, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), felt it had "nothing to learn from the Italian experience", reflecting a conservative and dogmatic stance towards political innovation that continues to afflict the British NL[83]. More recently, 'Reclaim the Streets' (RTS) have identified *Autonomia* as an important influence on their organisational and political strategies. Along with the AYB, RTS have been the European convenors of People's Global Action, a global social movement within the overall transnational anti-capitalist movement, marking the emergence of a new kind of global political activism that contests the 'global institutions of neoliberalism' and the 'free market' rather than prosecuting a class struggle for communism against the State: a by-product of but a far cry from the 'internationalist' but culturally specific experience of *Autonomia*.

At the beginning of the 21st century, over 20 years after their arrest, there are still some 300 political prisoners and exiles, including Negri, who voluntarily returned from exile in Paris in 1997 to complete his prison sentence and campaign for an amnesty for the remaining political prisoners of the Seventies. Despite President Cossiga's[84] declaration of the end of

the 'emergency' in 1991 (a declaration accepted by Curcio, the BR's historical leader) and his expressed willingness to find a permanent political solution for the remaining prisoners, the Centre-Left 'Ulivo' coalition governments of 1996-2001 failed to act on the question of a general '*indulto*' (pardon)[85] for political prisoners and the 'emergency' legislation still remains in force. In fact, following the killing of government advisors by the so-called 'New Red Brigades' in April 1999 and March 2002, many of those imprisoned between 1979 and 1986 are now once again under investigation, suspected of being the 'intellectual authors' of this latest outburst of terrorism, as they were under the disproved 'Calogero Theorem' in 1979, supposedly only on the basis of their publications and public statements. While Germany and Britain have managed to negotiate political solutions with the RAF and the IRA, leading to a final peace process and the release of the remaining political prisoners, and the Spanish government and ETA have attempted to do so, the Italian political system once again remains endemically 'blocked', unable and seemingly unwilling to negotiate closure with its defeated political enemies. However, there is now a danger that this vacillating stance could backfire by partially provoking a 'third wave' of organised political violence.

Summarising, while OWA was not a centrally organised national political party, clandestinely or otherwise, as the judges and media sought to prove during the April 7th Trials, it was nevertheless an 'organised tendency', based essentially on ex-PO militants and intellectuals, within the broader movement of *Autonomia*. Unresolved ideological, tactical and organisational differences particularly between the more neo-Leninist Roman-Paduan OWA and the more 'movementist' Milanese OWA prevented it from realizing its project of the '*Autonomia* party' as the best means to organise the struggles of the 'socialised worker' in a revolutionary sense. Thus, its attempted hegemony within *Autonomia*, let alone the 'Movement', was always contested. The organisational weaknesses of both OWA and *Autonomia* made it vulnerable to State repression, whose effects continue today.

7) Conclusion

We have seen that *Autonomia* emerged as a loosely coordinated network of localised collectives from the remnants of the New Left 'vanguard parties', whose organisational model was essentially in continuity with the Old Left. Within the broader 'area of social autonomy', OWA, in its different regional forms, unsuccessfully attempted to reconstruct itself as a political party. 'Armed *Autonomia*' attempted to practice a semi-clandestine form of mass armed struggle, based on 'parallel structures' as an attempt to create a

'counter power' to the State, rather than as an insurrectional strategy for the conquest of State power as practised by the 'armed parties'. However, the logics of clandestine military organisation and State repression ultimately forced the literally hundreds of 'armed *Autonomia*' and 'second wave' groups into adopting the same clandestine structures and *modus operandi* as the 'armed parties'. Also parts of OWA attempted to reorganise along semi-clandestine lines, but were thwarted by the impossibility of combining open political activity with illegal clandestine violence. The State's attempt to equate *Autonomia* with the BR and terrorism in general – the Calogero Theorem – may have been a crudely cynical enterprise. However, it served the purpose of mobilising public opinion through the press to at least passively support emergency measures of a dubious constitutional nature, initially used more against *Autonomia* and other antagonistic social movements than the terrorist groups themselves. In such a political climate of fear, repression and the effective suspension of basic human and civil rights, *Autonomia* rapidly dissolved, although some collectives remained active throughout the period and continue to do so, if in a redimensioned form.

It was previously thought that *Autonomia*'s loose, divaricated structure would be difficult to suppress, since unlike the orthodox organisational model of the NL parties, it had no obvious centralised leadership to be decapitated. However, the 'network' model of organisation, typical of NSMs, revealed its vulnerability to a concerted attack by the State. Ultimately, such networks depend on high levels of personal motivation and strong affective ties within affinity groups, which have proved vulnerable to their isolation from their base communities, rather than the 'spirit of self-sacrifice', party discipline and strong collective identity typical of the left-nationalist movements of Western Europe, the IRA and ETA, which have proved far more resistant to State repression. Thus, the strength of this type of social movement organisational model lies not in its capacity to resist repression (although *Autonomia* partially survived and has since evolved into a substantial contemporary movement if of a very different nature), but in its ability to mobilise significant social sectors who have been historically excluded from or underrepresented in the party form, whether institutional or 'revolutionary'.

Furthermore, it is debateable if the network model of *Autonomia*'s collectives was more an *ad hoc* solution brought about by the relatively sudden demise of the NL groups in a period of increasing social conflict demanding rapid organisational solutions, than a

conscious rejection of previous organisational models. Certainly, a substantial part of *Autonomia*, OWA, saw itself as an imminent party, if of a new kind and based on the 'socialised worker' rather than the 'mass worker'. Furthermore, as Borgogno (1997, p38-44) states, "organisations and groups even distant from each other in subjective terms (operaists, Marxist-Leninists etc.) were in reality close to each other in practical terms [and] often their subjective differences were reduced to the terminology they used."

In March 1977, the peak of the '77 Movement, *Autonomia* was visibly the main political force to the left of the PCI, the remnants of the NL groups either still operating in a dislocated fashion or present as individual activists (*cani sciolti*) within the '77 Movement, contesting OWA's attempt to hegemonise it. *Autonomia* now had a widespread network of local publications and radio stations and was capable of mobilizing major national demonstrations, such as the banned May 1st march in Milan. However, its hubris was to be brief and, as a movement, it became the victim of its own organisational success, sliding into today's ghettoised 'antagonist movement' through the processes of repression and demobilization, a fate typical of the contemporary European 'libertarian Left':

> "[F]rom autonomous organisation of the class (to be built) as a different and superior model compared to that of the extraparliamentary groups, *Autonomia* was the concept adopted by a new group with a more radical and less institutional line. It was a question of a move of purely nominal significance, while *Autonomia*'s militants were anyway recognised vanguards in the factories, schools and neighbourhoods (...) which became substantial in the 1980s, when *Autonomia* consolidated its political character as a vast area of militants united by a common culture and project, but external to the places of exploitation and daily conflict, when *Autonomia* would become the '*autonomi*'[86]." (Borgogno 1997, p44)

Autonomia successfully disputed the NL groups' institutional strategy of promoting the 'government of the lefts'[87]. However, it did not develop a sufficient critique of the NL organisational model, its style of militancy, or of the internal social relations of the collective movements, thus failing to rupture sufficiently with the NL groups and ultimately sharing their verticism, centralism, bureaucratism and masculinism (Borgogno 1997). Thus *Autonomia*, both organisationally and ideologically, represented more of an attempted than a real rupture from the continuities of the Old and New Left. The rupture, instead, was to come from the '77 Movement, with which *Autonomia* was the only NL or post-NL organisation able to interact, if in a highly problematic manner.

In conclusion, *Autonomia*'s attempt to organise the social conflicts expressed by a new generation of actors contained an unresolved tension between the 'movementist' desire to accentuate the autonomy of these conflicts through a decentralised, horizontal network, based on collective consensual decision making at the local level, and the 'organised tendency's aim of harnessing these conflicts into a revolutionary force through a revised version of the party form, based on 'parallel structures' of self-organised political activity and semi-clandestine armed struggle. The contradictions between these two models led to, on one hand the diffused form of armed struggle practiced by 'armed *Autonomia*' which ultimately only provided fresh recruits for the 'armed parties', and on the other an internally divided movement which was vulnerable to criminalisation and repression. From a NSMT perspective, *Autonomia*'s organisational experiments represented the pouring of the new wine of the most 'marginalised' NSMs into the old bottle of a revised version of an essentially residual organisational form, the Marxist revolutionary party, with disastrous consequences. For orthodox Marxists, *Autonomia*'s rejection of 'democratic centralism' and the historical party form, and its endeavour to organise 'marginal' sections of the working class as a movement, not in subordinated alliance with the organised labour movement but in opposition, made it at best 'adventurist' and at worst 'reactionary'[88]. From an autonomist Marxist perspective, however, *Autonomia* represented the first massified attempt in Italy to break from the Old, New and 'armed' Left's ideological and organisational method of the 'party form', in order to organise autonomously the emerging 'socialised worker's struggles against work and for the direct appropriation of social and cultural needs. In that sense it greatly influenced the future organisational forms of the Italian and to some extent the European 'antagonist social movements' of the late 20th century.

NOTES

[1] "At the moment of his kidnapping [by the BR] on 16 March 1978, Aldo Moro, the president of the Christian Democrat Party, was negotiating with Enrico Berlinguer on possible ways of bringing the PCI more fully into government." (Negri 1998, n8).

[2] "(...) i.e. the agreement of 29 September 1918, whereby the PSI and the CGL defined their respective fields of activity: e.g. the party would direct all political strikes, the CGL all economic ones 'without obstructing each other'." (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1991, p225, n21)

[3] Giovanni Arrighi, now one of Italy's most respected economic sociologists, was a member of the *Gruppo Gramsci*, a NL group whose newspaper, *Rosso*, became the mouthpiece of Milanese Organised Autonomy in 1973.

[4] By S.Bologna (1972) and Tronti (1972) on the struggles against capitalist planning and the organisational history of the European and American working classes.

[5] Settantasette website (discontinued): 'prima; l'autorganizzazione; "Di fatto nella prima metá degli anni settanta..."' , 3.97, [web http://www.taonet.it/77web.html].
[6] Settantasette website (discontinued): 'prima; l'autorganizzazione; "Cosí in fabbrica..."', 3.97, [web http://www.taonet.it/77web.html].
[7] Liberiamo gli anni '70, memoria 7 (1974), Padua, 8.98 [web: http://www.sherwood.it/anni70/crono.htm]. [memoria 7 (1974)]
[8] *Erba voglio* is a particular grass that allows you to satisfy all your wants. An old saying in Italy that mothers tell their children when they insist they want something is: "*l'erba voglio non esiste neanche nel giardino del re*" (*erba voglio* does not even exist in the king's garden). I thank Massimo De Angelis for this translation and explanation.
[9] Bale (1989) examines the neo-fascist infiltration of at least one Milanese anarchist group and the police and media's framing of anarchists for the Piazza Fontana bomb of 12 December 1969. Pinelli, an arrested anarchist, died after 'throwing himself' from a fourth-floor window during his interrogation.
[10] The *Linea Nera* PCd'I was recognised by Peking while the rival *Linea Rossa* [Red Line] was not. Some *Linea Rossa* Maoists helped form the Red Brigades in autumn 1969.
[11] Interview in English with Ferruccio Gambino, Padua, 1 June 1999 (FG99). From Asti in the Piedmont region, he comes from a strongly communist background. He won a scholarship and spent some years studying economics in the USA, where he met the autonomist Marxist historian George Rawick, and became involved in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. Returning to Italy in 1967 he helped to found POv-e and began teaching at the University of Padua. In 1968, he suspended his academic career to concentrate on political activism as a PO militant in Turin and Milan. He left PO in 1971 and concentrated on working with and researching the Autonomous Workers Assembly at Porto Marghera. He was not directly involved in *Autonomia*, but contributed to various operaist and autonomist Marxist publications in Italy, the USA and the UK during the 1970s, including a study of industrial relations at Ford's Dagenham plant. He organised an international solidarity campaign against the April 7th 1979 arrests and trials until forced into exile in the USA and France. He returned to Italy in 1985 and has since continued teaching at Padua University. With Sergio Bologna and others, he helped to found the political journal *Altre Ragioni* in 1991.
[12] FG99.
[13] Sergio Bianchini, an ex-PCI partisan and factory worker from the Veneto region, was a co-founder of PO and a keen observer of *Autonomia* and later the *centri sociali* movement, helping the *extra-comunitari* immigrants in particular to organise against racism and exploitation in the 1980s and 1990s. He co-edited the 1997 second edition of Balestrini and Moroni's history of the Italian movements of the 1960s and 1970s. He died in 1998. (Biographical information from a conversation with John Merrington, June 1994).
[14] FG99.
[15] FG99.
[16] An influential senator in the secular right Republican Party.
[17] Unpublished interview in Italian with Ferruccio Gambino by Andrea Del Mercato, 1993 (FG93).
[18] For a biographical note, see chapter 4 endnotes.
[19] See chapter 6 for case study on Radio Alice and *A/traverso*.
[20] 'The nefastic utopia of Potere Operaio', an ironic 'detournement' of Giorgio Bocca's article with the same title. Bocca, an influential centre-left political commentator, saw PO's project of the refusal of work and insubordination to capitalism as an irrational utopia.
[21] The Nuclei Armati Proletari was formed by mainly LC militants with some participation of Roman PO members to intensify the struggles against the prison system and involve ordinary prisoners in their own liberation. Particularly strong in Naples and the South, it had a brief existence and was repressed with some brutality.
[22] Memoria 7 (1974).
[23] The attempt by LC's SdO and some autonomists to violently force their way onto a national women's march in Rome in November 1975 as a protest against feminist separatism opened a fierce polemic within LC and throughout the 'Movement'.
[24] Interview by email in Italian with informant from Livorno (Tuscany), February 2001 (MU01). He is 40 years old, was a student during the 1970s and is now a tourist guide. He began political activity at 14 with school occupations. He was a militant in the 'Soviet' youth club of the Fourth International before entering *Autonomia* at 16, where he formed a group made up of former militants of the Soviet and others. He withdrew from political activism in the early 1980s due to the negative effects of repression and terrorism.
[25] Interview in Italian with Guido Borio, Turin, September 1990 (GB90). He was a core activist in Turin during the 1970s and is one of the few informants still active in the 'New *Autonomia*' of the 1980s and 1990s, although limited by the terms of 'semi-liberty' of the Gozzini Law (article 21) which allows political prisoners to work outside prison during the day on condition they do not become reinvolved in

their former political activities. Having militated in FIAT, Turin *Autonomia*'s main area of intervention, he was a founding member of the *Nuclei Comunisti Territoriali* (NCT), an 'armed *Autonomia*' group which carried out acts of industrial sabotage in the Turin area between 1979 and 1981. He was arrested for 'moral complicity' (a crime of guilt by association introduced by the still unrepealed fascist-era Rocco Code) in the accidental killing of a nightwatchman in 1980 by two NCT members who wanted to join PL and who later 'repented' and became 'crown witnesses' against Borio (who had refused to participate in the original action), thus gaining early release. After a series of trials, retrials and appeals throughout the 1980s, Judge Carnevale (a firm opponent of the use of 'supergrasses' in Mafia trials who was forced to resign in 1993 during the Tangentopoli/Mani Pulite scandals on suspicion of corruption and links with the Mafia) of the Supreme Court, unusually overruled an appeal judge's rejection of the *pentiti* evidence, ordering a retrial in 1991 at which Borio was retried on the same charges (so breaking the Italian Constitution's guarantees against double jeopardy) and resentenced to 20 years imprisonment. However, availing of the benefits of the Gozzini Law (unlike the most hard-line BR prisoners who have refused any prison reform, holding out for an unconditional amnesty, some for over 25 years), he was able to participate in the refounding of Radio Blackout in 1992.

[26] Regional, urban and local government administrations based on a PCI-PSI alliance (in contrast with the PCI-DC alliance at the national level), which proliferated throughout Italy after the PCI, supported by most of the NL, made huge gains in the 1975 elections.

[27] Interview in Italian with Umberto Gay, an ex-AO and DP member and now an RC councillor in Milan who has campaigned in defence of the autonomous Leoncavallo Social Centre, July 1998 (UG98).

[28] The Paris-based Situationist International of the 1960s, which had a key influence on the French May 1968 students movement, was also influential among the 'area of *Autonomia*', particularly its 'creative' element, with De Bord, Vaneigem and Sanguinetti's analysis of capitalism as a 'society of spectacle' based on the emerging power of the mass media (thus predating sociological theories on the 'Information Society') acting as a counter-weight to the prevailing operaism and neo-Leninism of *Autonomia*'s intellectuals. See the Situationist International Online website for some key texts translated into English.

[29] A further definition of *il contropotere* is provided by '*I Volsci*' (October 1978). (Memoria in rete, 4.01, [web: http://www.tmcrew.org/memoria/mao/index.htm], p10): "[T]he permanent exhaustion of power, the disintegration of the organs of dominion conquered through the dissemination, radicalisation and mobility of the revolutionary presence, through the hegemony of one class section within the class composition."

[30] MU01.

[31] FG99.

[32] FG93.

[33] The 'code of silence' of the Mafia's 'men of honour', impenetrable until the State strategy of bargaining testimony against fellow criminals for reduced prison sentences, first used against Autonomia in the early eighties, was extended to Cosa Nostra in the early nineties, producing a similar structural collapse.

[34] Interview with Lanfranco Caminiti in Italian by email, February 2001, my translation (LC01). Aged 51 from Messina, Sicily, he describes himself as an 'autonomous intellectual worker now (multimedia, book industry) and then [in the 1970s](school, university)'. His political activism began at 16 in 1965 when he joined the Italian Socialist Party's Youth Federation (FGSI), having had (like several *Autonomia* and NL militants) a background in Catholic youth groups. He was involved in the 1968 university occupations, joining spontaneous groups with political and organizational bonds with Marxist-Leninist groups and the operaists. He was a leading activist of *Autonomia meridionale* in the South, working on a series of journals and newspapers (*Mo'basta*, *Briganti*, *Comunismo*) until his arrest in 1978, accused of belonging to an 'armed gang' among other political charges. Imprisoned for seven and a half years in maximum security prisons, he has since been involved in the self organisation of autonomous intellectual workers in Rome and co-edited in 1997 *Settantesette, la rivoluzione che viene*, an anthology on the 1977 Movement.

[35] A graphic account of this tragic incident can be found in Balestrini (1989). It marked a watershed in the hardening of attitudes against the police and neo-fascists (a precondition for the extensive violence of the late 1970s) for many activists, including Jacopo Fo, Dario's son, who, in an otherwise rather frivolous account of his militance in the *Gruppo Gramsci* and *Autonomia*, recounts: 'A big [police] jeep launched crazily [into the crowd] (...) and ran over a comrade of the [anti-fascist] committees, Giannino Zibecchi, crushing his head. He was 27 years old. The photo of his brain on the asphalt is stamped on my memory. *Every time I have doubts about being a leftist I think about that image*' (1997, p122) (His emphasis).

[36] Interview in Italian with Vincenzo "Liglio" Miliucci of the Rome ENEL [state electricity company] autonomous collective (11-11-82), Welschen Archive, 11.99, [web: http://www.xs4all.nl/~welschen/archivio.html) (VM82). Born in Rome in 1943, he was secretary of the PCI's 'Mario Cianca' section and in the directive committee of CGIL electrical workers from 1968 to 1970. He left *Il Manifesto* in 1972, opposing its decision to participate in elections. He was a founder of the

ENEL Political Committee in 1971, which in 1972 joined with the Policlinico hospital's students and workers committee, the railway workers CUB and the FIAT workers committee to open an office in Via dei Volsci, which in 1974 became the headquarters of the CAO. He helped to launch Radio Onda Rossa (ROR) in May 1977, the periodicals *Rivolta di Classe* (74-77) and *I Volsci* (78-80). In 1983, he was a founder of the National Anti-imperialist and Anti-nuclear Co-ordination, participating in the direct actions leading to the closure of Italy's nuclear programme and the contestation of NATO bases in southern Italy and Sardinia. He was arrested in 1970 during clashes against NATO, in 1980 when ROR was shut down by police, and in 1986 for demonstrations against Reagan's rearmament programme. In the 1990s, he became a spokesperson of the COBAS-National Co-ordination (Translated from Del Bello 1997, p3). He was injured by police *agent provocateurs* disguised as 'Black Block' rioters during the anti-G8 demonstrations in Genoa in July 2001.

[37] VM82.

[38] LC01.

[39] However, this is a far-cry from erroneously asserting through the construction of elaborate conspiracy theories, as do Willan (1991) and Sanguinetti (1979), that the BR was a covert operation run by the Italian secret services and the CIA to 'stabilise by destabilising' the Italian state. Willan also asserts that Negri was a CIA-agent and that OWA too was part of the plot, in an attempt to shore up the 'Calogero theorem' (see end of this chapter). This paranoid vista, for which no empirical evidence has been presented, was also used by the PCI (and still now by the DS) to discredit most of those to its left as potential or actual fascist agents – again, the theory of the 'opposite extremes'. Nevertheless, a strong body of circumstantial evidence supports the view that the CIA and the Italian secret services did conduct a 'dirty war' against the Italian Left between 1969 and 1984, using a combination of neo-fascist terrorists and NATO's Gladio 'stay behind' network (see Coglitore and Scarso 1992). It is also probable that the Moro Affair and other BR killings were politically manipulated (including Moro's sacrifice) by those within the DC and the PCI who supported a 'state of emergency' solution to social unrest.

[40] From a leaflet of *Sinistra Proletaria*, an extra-parliamentary group close to the Red Brigades, announcing the latter's arrival on the political scene with the burning of the car of a Sit-Siemens manager, 20 October 1970. Cited in Balestrini and Moroni 1988, p221.

[41] The BR's theory of the *stato imperialista multinazionale* (SIM) was a rare moment of anticipatory analysis of the emergence of capitalist globalisation for such an otherwise doggedly orthodox Marxist group.

[42] Alberto Franceschini, an ex-FGCI member, was a founding member of the Red Brigades and came from one of the main PCI families in the PCI-dominated Emilia Romagna region. Several PCI members joined the BR, fearing an imminent fascist coup after the Piazza Fontana massacre, including Prospero Gallinari, supposedly Moro's executioner. The evident link between the PCI and the early BR was a constant source of embarrassment for the former and may well have been a contributing factor in its promotion of authoritarian emergency measures after 1975. Franceschini later disassociated himself from the BR, unlike the *irriducibili* (irreducibles/hardliners), including Curcio and Gallinari (both released in the early 1990s) and about 100 remaining political prisoners who refuse to campaign for a pardon (*indulto*), demanding instead an amnesty and a political solution.

[43] See Scialoja (1992).

[44] FG99.

[45] Memoria 7 (1974).

[46] ADR99.

[47] Interview in Italian with Ferruccio Dendena, Garbaniate Milanese, August 1998 (FD98).

[48] Interview in Italian with Emilio Vesce, Padua, June 1999 (EV99).

[49] ADR99.

[50] See Petter (1983) for the view of a PCI academic who was kneecapped during the conflicts with *Autonomia* in Padua University in the late 1970s.

[51] Meaning 'enough is enough' in Spanish, the slogan of the Zapatista indigenous uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, since January 1994. Co-organised by Radio Sherwood and the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan, it started as a Zapatista solidarity group in 1996, but has since become one of the main European organisers of the global anti-capitalist movement. However, Wright (2001) criticises the AYB's "tyranny of structurelessness" for allowing an unaccountable clique-style leadership to emerge, an accusation which could perhaps be backdated to OWA.

[52] An SdO-type organisation closely linked to AYB, it originally emerged from some of the northern *centri sociali* in the late 1990s as an alternative to both non-violent and violent direct action on marches, both in Italy and internationally. Its members wear white overalls as a reference to both the Leoncavallo SdO of 1994 which adopted the colour to mock Formentini, the Northern League Mayor of Milan, who said the

centri sociali were "populated by ghosts", and to the Zapatista philosophy of "a world where everyone has a place" (*un mundo donde quepan todos*), white being the combination of all the colours. Underneath their uniform they wear padding and body armour, which together with helmets and shields are used to protect them from police batons while they push against the police lines, either to stop them attacking the main body of the march or to break through. These tactics were successful during the 'Battle of Prague' in September 2000, but much less so at the 'Battle of Genoa' in July 2001, after which a reassessment of tactics may be taking place given the ferocity of the police repression of especially non-violent demonstrators. The *Tute Bianche* are now a decentralised transnational movement, the British version calling itself the 'Wombles'. It also helped to protect the Zapatista march from Chiapas to Mexico City in March 2001. It has been criticised for indulging in the 'politics of spectacle' (See Wright 2001 and Montagna 2002).

[53] "According to statistics from the Italian ministry of interior, 67.55% of violence ('affrays, guerrilla actions and destruction of property') committed in Italy between 1969 and 1980 were attributable to the far right, 26.5% to the far left, and 5.95% to others" (Negri 1998, p7, n7). However, according to Scalzone and Persichetti (1999) and della Porta and Pasquino (1984) the far left has been more violent than the extreme right, if unclaimed bombings are excluded. There were 380 deaths caused by internal political violence in Italy between 1969 and 1988 (when the 'old' BR carried out its last killing – further killing by the 'new' BR took place in 1999 and 2002) and slightly fewer than 2,000 were wounded. 128 were killed during armed actions of the far left, and slightly fewer than 100 are imputable to the extreme right. Unclaimed bombings against trains, in stations and in public squares provoked 143 deaths and 635 wounded. 68 militants of left armed organisations were killed. According to della Porta and Pasquino (1984, cited in Scalzone and Persichetti 1999, p54) there were 4,362 "episodes of violence" between 1969 and 1982: 1,173 ascribable to the left, 2,925 to the right and 264 to others. There were 6,153 "unclaimed actions": 1,792 ascribable to the left, 2,546 to the right and 1,816 to others. There were 2,797 "claimed actions": 494 by the Red Brigades, 107 by Front Line and 1,587 to others on the left. Overall, the left carried out 2,188 actions and the right 524. Furthermore, the police killed 200 during demonstrations, strikes and revolts between 1945 and 1980, while 26 police and *carabinieri* were killed during the same period, of whom 18 were killed during the Ragusa insurrection of January 1945 (Bermani 1997, p308-313).

[54] The group, founded by Rossanda and Pintor, two leading members of the PCI who left in protest at the party's failure to oppose the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, also published a national daily newspaper with the same name. *Il Manifesto* formed an unsuccessful electoral alliance with the PDUP, which along with AO/DP tended to look for a tactical alliance with the PCI and was opposed to *Autonomia*. While the group no longer exists, *Il Manifesto* continues to be published as Europe's only 'independent communist' daily.

[55] GB90.

[56] 'Red – a newspaper within the movement' was published in various formats in Milan as a fortnightly, but in reality was published irregularly, with about 8,000 copies sold throughout northern Italy per issue. A total of 32 issues were published as a 'new series' between October 1975 and May 1979, although an 'old series' had been published since 1973 by the *Gruppo Gramsci*.

[57] The name was taken from one of the 'militarists' sacred texts, Giovanni Pesce's autobiographical account of the clandestine urban guerrilla GAP organisation in Turin and Milan in 1943-45, a PCI-controlled partisan group from which Feltrinelli's GAP took its name in 1970. It includes a vivid account of the heroic death of Dante Di Nanni, also immortalised as one of the main Italian rock ballads of the Seventies by the 'Movement' band, 'Stormy Six'. This illustrates how influential the Resistance and its heroes were for the cultural identity of sections of the antagonist movements of the Seventies.

[58] '77: L'anno della grande rivolta, Roberto Scordino and DeriveApprodi, DeriveApprodi/CSOA La Strada, version 1, 1997 [electronic]

[59] Interview in Italian with three women informants, Milan, August 1998, and *Rosso* (14 February 1976, p9).

[60] Bad female.

[61] We stubborn women.

[62] This paragraph is based on the above interview.

[63] The P2 scandal broke in the early 1980s when its 'grandmaster', Licio Gelli, a former Fascist leader during the *Ventennio* with close ties with the Mafia and the extreme right, revealed the extent of his clandestine influence over the political, business, legal and media elites, including Cossiga who as minister of internal affairs refused to bargain with the BR during the Moro Affair, and Berlusconi, the owner of much of Italy's mass media and prime minister in 1994 and again since May 2001. It is also widely believed that Gelli was one of the principal architects of the 'Strategy of Tension' bombings of the 1970s.

[64] Debord (1979, p6-7) comments on this quote as follows, expounding his conspiratorial notion, typical among Situationists, that the BR were an arm of the State, and that the other armed groups were dupes: "Nothing is more normal than for revolutionary workers to insult Stalinists, thus gaining the support of nearly all their comrades, since they want to make a revolution. Do they not know, having been taught by their long experience, that the preliminary step is to expel Stalinists from meetings? Not being able to do this is why the revolution failed in 1968 in France and in 1975 in Portugal. What is senseless and odious is to pretend that these "extremist working class fringes" can reach this necessary stage because they have terrorists "behind them." Quite to the contrary, it is because a large number of Italian workers have escaped being enrolled by the Stalinist trade union police that the "red brigade," whose illogical and blind terrorism could only embarrass them, was set in motion, and that the *mass media* seized the opportunity to recognize in the "brigade" their advanced detachment of troops and their disquieting leaders beyond the shadow of a doubt. Bocca insinuates that Stalinists are compelled to put up with the insults that they have so richly deserved everywhere for the past sixty years, because if they did not, they would be physically threatened by terrorists that working class autonomy would hold in reserve. This is nothing but a particularly foul *boccasserie,* since everybody knows that at that time and long afterwards, the "red brigade" took great care not to attack Stalinists personally. Although they want to give this appearance, it is not according to chance that the "red brigade" chooses its periods of activity, nor out of its own inclinations, its victims. In such a climate as this, we inevitably note the broadening of a peripheral layer of sincere small-time terrorism that is more or less watched over and temporarily tolerated, like a fish tank in which some culprits can always be fished out in order to be displayed on a platter, but the "striking force" of the central interventions could only have been comprised of professionals, which corroborates every detail of their style."

[65] FD98.

[66] The law allowing for reductions in prison sentences in return for testimony against former associates was in fact called the *Legge Fiorini.*

[67] FG99.

[68] FG93.

[69] Marco Barbone, a former member of *Rosso*, implicated 150 people as the principal prosecution witness during the *Rosso*-Tobagi trial, in which most of its editorial committee, including Negri, were accused of the murder of Tobagi, a *Corriere della Sera* journalist in 1979. For a criminological analysis of this trial and the phenomenon of *pentismo*, see Moss (1989).

[70] FD98.

[71] A Milanese dissident branch of the BR, which politically was closer to *Autonomia* and PL, accepting the critique of traditional forms of armed struggle and attempting to practise a form of armed violence rooted in the community rather than imposed on it externally, as was the practice of the BR.

[72] The political party set up by Berlusconi in the space of a few months in early 1994, attracting members from and the popular vote of the old DC.

[73] FD98.

[74] Moroni et al (1997, p60-62).

[75] EV99.

[76] Italian army special forces, trained by the SAS.

[77] FD98.

[78] Controversy remains as to whether or not Negri and those who co-signed the document 'Do you remember revolution?' (Virno and Hardt 1996, p225-238) did effectively 'disassociate' themselves from *Autonomia*, so inventing a new form of cooperation with the State by which activists denounced their past but without directly implicating others in crimes, as was required of the *pentiti.*

[79] See Negri (1990) for an autobiographical account that appears from its title to draw comparisons with Lenin's escape to Finland in 1917.

[80] Literally, the irreducibles, a term usually used to describe those mainly BR political prisoners who refused to co-operate with the authorities and disassociate themselves from their actions and political beliefs or turn witness against their former comrades in exchange for reduced prison sentences.

[81] 'Without Papers', one of the major French, and later European-wide, social movements of the 1990s. Undocumented immigrants from outside Europe campaigned for regularisation and residence on the basis of the recognition of their international human rights and the dependence of the French and indeed all advanced capitalist economies on the cheap labour of 'illegal' immigrants and asylum-seekers.

[82] ADR99.

[83] However, the SWP as 'Globalise Resistance' has also recently joined the global anti-capitalist movement, even if it remains to be seen if this is not a classically 'entryist' attempt to gain hegemony over the movement.

[84] In January 2001 ex-President Cossiga, something of a 'loose canon' within the Italian establishment and Interior Minister at the time of the Moro Affair, also publicly admitted that the DC-led government should have negotiated with the Red Brigades to save Moro's life and that the indiscriminate liquidation of the extreme Left, which he had planned, had been a legal farce (Albiac 2001).

[85] Most if not all the remaining political prisoners reject the *indulto* proposal as a means of forcing them to admit that their political activities were misguided and therefore in need of 'pardon'. They insist instead on a general political amnesty for all the 'communist prisoners'. There is also the question of whether a blanket pardon would also allow the relatively few neo-fascist prisoners found guilty of the 'Strategy of Tension' bombings between 1969 and 1984 to be freed. The leftist prisoners and their supporters, along with a considerable section of public opinion, insist that there must be a full clarification of the role of the State and business sector, including DC and MSI politicians, the *Confindustria*, the judiciary, the secret services, the armed forces and the police, in those bombings (most of which remain unsolved and the perpetrators unpunished) and that the *indulto* proposal must not be used to provide false closure and let the guilty off the hook.

[86] Now a term used generically by the press to denote youthful leftist rioters of any left political current, including Greens and RC youths.

[87] Until their dissolution in the mid Seventies, the tri-partite 'revolutionary left' - LC, AO and PDUP *per il Comunismo* (a fragile alliance between PDUP and *Il Manifesto*) each with its own national daily newspaper (*Lotta Continua, Il Quotidiano dei Lavoratori* and *Il Manifesto* respectively) - dominated extraparliamentary politics and the sphere of the movements, its objective the 'government of the lefts' (*governo delle sinistre* - a hypothetical coalition of PCI, PSI and the NL parties) to replace the weakened and discredited DC regime, apparently in terminal crisis. By 1973, they had evolved into fully fledged national parties along historical left lines, capable of organising national demonstrations to intervene on all the major national and international issues, and with an increasingly bureaucratic and 'neo-reformist' political line, according to their critics in *Autonomia*.

[88] In fact, some members of the PCI and those NL parties that decided to enter the PCI in the early 1970s referred to autonomists as 'red fascists'. This opinion aligned with the PCI's theory of 'opposite extremes', according to which both the extreme Left and extreme Right groups were objectively the same in that both posed a threat to the achievement of socialism through parliamentary democracy, either by provoking or participating in an authoritarian coup. Hence the need, in the light of the Chilean experience, to have a 'historic compromise' with the 'democratic forces' of the centre-right to stabilise the ailing economy and protect the democratic institutions of the First Republic.

CHAPTER SIX:

YOUTH COUNTER-CULTURES AND ANTAGONIST COMMUNICATION - 'CREATIVE *AUTONOMIA*' AND THE '77 MOVEMENT

1) Introduction

In the cycle of political and social conflict between 1973 and 1980 - the parabola of *Autonomia* from birth to growth to suppression - 1977 was undoubtedly the key year. The mass movement that emerged during the spring - a shifting amalgam of students, unemployed and counter-cultural youth, women, homosexuals, unaffiliated activists (*cani sciolti*)[1], the remnants of the NL parties and *Autonomia* - was collectively categorized as the 'marginalised' or 'second society'. The counter-cultural and anti-political components that had been prominent in the 1968 movements returned to the fore, challenging the neo-Leninist and operaist premises of *Autonomia* and the NL through the ironic communicative action of the 'metropolitan indians'[2] (MI) and the linguistic 'transversalism' of what became known as 'creative *Autonomia*'. However, unlike 1968 there was no workers movement in tandem or potential allies in the institutional Left. The rupture with the political institutions was complete, the stakes were raised to their highest point and only one side could emerge intact from such an uncompromising confrontation. Whereas 1968 saw an explosion of antagonist movements, behaviours and mentalities that spread throughout Italian society, synchronizing with a profound process of social, economic and cultural crisis and change, 1977, as the culmination of that process, represented finally an implosion of that tendency and its dispersion throughout society in an individualised rather than a collective form. The outburst of political, social and cultural innovation and creativity represented in and by the '77 Movement ('77) ultimately fell into a void of repression and terrorism, its actors unable to maintain the tremendous momentum of February and March. The issues that had dominated *Autonomia*'s agenda since 1973 – the refusal of work, new organisational forms, anti-fascism, armed struggle and the construction of a territorial counter power – were absorbed and transcended in a matter of weeks. *Autonomia*, as the only remaining post-NL mass entity, was the only overtly political movement with a space and a voice within '77. However, Organised Workers

Autonomy's attempts to hegemonise the movement and to 'raise the level of conflict' with the State were the object of a permanent contestation, whose divisive effects contributed to the movement's crisis and premature demise. While revisionist post-Marxist sociological accounts (della Porta 1996, Melucci 1996, Lumley 1990) have emphasised the '77 Movement's violent, self-destructive aspect and minimised its long-term importance, sympathetic radical post-Marxist and autonomist Marxist accounts (Berardi 1997, Grispigni 1997, Katsiaficas 1997, Wright 2002) have stressed its innovatory contribution to the evolution of contemporary Italian civil society and social relations.

In this chapter, I attempt to evaluate the significance of the '77 Movement, particularly its internal element of 'creative *Autonomia*' by examining its social composition and historical trajectory from an autonomist Marxist perspective. The importance of the counter-culture, youth issues and communication are considered, as are 77's relations with *Autonomia*, the PCI and the State. The main cultural and political tendencies within the '77 Movement and their contemporary significance will be assessed: namely, its dominant characteristic of cultural and linguistic innovation, particularly in forms of communication; the emergence of a 'metropolitan culture' with its attendant 'new individualism'; its politics of the 'post-political'; and whether its legacy was more post-communist or 'anti-communist'.

2) The composition and trajectory of the '77 Movement

The first problem encountered in seeking to analyse this movement is its continuing defiance of categorisation and historicisation, in its transcendence of the notions of ideology and politics. Citing *Fatti Nostri*, a key text written collectively by some of the Bologna movement of March 1977:

> "No historian will exist, we will not tolerate that a historian exists who, absolving themselves from a greater function of language and offering their services to the idiom of power, reconstructs the facts, grafting themselves onto our silence, our uninterrupted, interminable, angrily extraneous silence". (Various authors 1977a, cited in Grispigni 1997, p8)

From a NSMT perspective, '77 represented the grafting of the new identity-based demands of youth onto problems created by the economic crisis, particularly the disequilibria between the graduate supply and labour market demand (Melucci 1996). Youth and graduate unemployment[3] had become a major social problem, emphasising the 'parking lot' role of universities. The movement seemed split between a quest for personal creativity and freedom on one hand and the protest against austerity measures and rationalisation on the other. It was characterised by the students' awareness of their own social marginality and imminent unemployment. It also contained a strong anti-nuclear movement, whose success can be judged by the fact there are still no nuclear reactors in Italy. It provoked a strongly repressive reaction from the state, with violent police action against large demonstrations, and the forcible closure of squatted youth centres and university occupations. Crude state measures, such as the banning of all public demonstrations for three months, the killing of a student by the *carabinieri* and the use of tanks in Bologna, and the killing of a feminist pacifist by plain clothes police disguised as *autonomi* in Rome led to the degeneration of collective action into violence and encouraged the hegemony of the "most extremist groups" (ibid.).

2.1) "A strange movement of strange students"

As in 1968, the spark for revolt was a misjudged attempt by the Minister of Education, Malfatti, to reform the universities. The December 1976 'Malfatti circular' proposed to return to the pre-1968 regime, removing what gains students and junior academics had won from the party-connected 'barons' of 'academic authoritarianism'. This represented a restructuration of the 'intellectual workers' of the university, parallel with that of manual factory workers (Balestrini and Moroni 1997). Despite the media's depiction of apathetic and apolitical students, the response to the 'Malfatti circular' was immediate and began in the supposedly 'backward' South, with the occupation of Palermo University's Faculty of Arts in late December 1976. In January 1977 the university occupations spread to Naples, Salerno, Rome, Bologna, Cagliari, Sassari, Pisa, Florence, Turin, Milan and Padua. Journalists and social commentators were quick to observe the novelty of this 'strange movement of strange students', composed

more of part-time, casualised, 'marginalised', often non-resident[4] 'student-workers', than the 'ordinary' students of 1968.

In one of the classic contemporary studies of the '77 Movement, Manconi and Sinibaldi (1978, p54-55) examine the 'precarious' social condition of the movement's participants:

> "[P]recariousness extends, in fact, throughout the whole gamut of the lives of these youthful masses. The use (...) of enrolment at high school as an expedient to remain kept by their families; university enrolment to put off military service; (...) working in May and June to be able to go on holiday; squatting houses or cohabitation to extract themselves from family life; they are all elements in the condition of 'precariousness' which is also (...) an existential choice and, for some sectors, a breaking up of certainties, a wish for personal 'destabilization'; for others, an acceptance of a way of life which, although imposed by comprehensive social relations, allows for a minimum level of subsistence and a certain autonomy of actions."

However, Gambino, an operaist, refutes precariousness as its dominant social condition:

> "The 1977 students were not precarious part-time workers in small factories. They were precarious here and there, but sporadically, in city jobs mostly in Bologna, Rome, Milan, Padua and Turin. Balestrini's [1989] description of precarious jobs in small factories in the Milan hinterland in 'The Unseen' may be true for [those living] near Milan. There was a small presence in the small factories, but not enough to achieve 'critical mass'."[5]

2.2) 1968 and 1977

The movement exploded onto the front pages of the press following the events of early February in Rome, including the first armed clashes between demonstrators and Cossiga's plain-clothed 'special squads' in Piazza Indipendenza, and the occupation of the 'university city' after a neo-fascist assault on leftist students. Several days of on-campus mass meetings, carnevalesque partying, 'happenings', street theatre and general 'creative chaos' followed and comparisons began to be made with 1968. The differences, however, were far greater than the similarities (Grispigni 1997).

First, the economic situation in the late 1970s was one of deep crisis, with unemployment or at best underemployment a certainty for most graduates, let alone school leavers. In 1968, the economic 'miracle' was drawing to a close but there was still something like full employment. In 1977, it was more a case of refusal 'by' rather than 'of' work, although this latter practice had become deeply embedded within the quotidian consciousness of youth, as they sought to satisfy their social needs outside the boundaries of wage relations. Although the movement also contained young factory workers, particularly the 'non-guaranteed' variety on temporary contracts or 'probation', there was nothing like the same reverence for the industrial factory worker, the 'mass worker' of FIAT and Porto Marghera of 1968-69. Rather, a mutual antipathy and incomprehension quickly emerged, a rejection on one side of the grey culture of the official labour movement and (operaism's) 'workers' centrality', and on the other of the 'hippies, freaks and drop-outs occupying the universities and stopping our children from attending their lectures'.

The national political situation had also greatly changed by 1977, and the '77 Movement found itself in antagonism with the first government since 1947 not to be opposed by the PCI, thus blocking any possibility for it to repeat its role of intermediary between the State and the social movements in 1968. Scalzone, a leader of the '68 students movement and a former member of the FGCI, was one of the few 'zombies' (thirty-something ex-'sixty-eighters') to gain credibility within '77, was not to be re-invited to the PCI's national headquarters in Via delle Botteghe Oscure[6]. For '77, the PCI of the Historic Compromise (HC), perhaps even more than the Christian Democrats, was the 'absolute enemy'. It was the first social movement to engage the PCI in hostilities rather than debate. The conflicts that followed did much to damage the PCI's 'tolerant' image and its reputation as an acute interpreter and anticipator of radical social changes, fuelling a crisis that became chronic in the 1980s (Grispigni 1997). Thanks to the development of its theory of the 'autonomy of the political'[7], ironically by the ex-operaists Asor Rosa, Cacciari and Tronti, now in direct intellectual combat with their former comrades in QR and CO, the PCI was seen by the social movements as more concerned with the politics of the 'Palace' than the streets, and as a

bastion of the corrupt and conservative 'party system'. For the PCI, the movement was, to say the least, a less than welcome complication in the midst of delicate negotiations with the DC to make the transition from a 'government of abstentions' to one of 'national unity'.

Internationally, 1968 had been a planetary revolt, whereas 1977 was limited to Italy with some echoes of cultural subversion among London punks, whose 'No future' anthem mirrored the supposedly nihilistic outlook of the 'second society', Berlin *Autonomen* and Amsterdam squatters who shared many of the values and behaviours of '77, extending them into the Eighties and Nineties. However, 1977 can also be seen globally as a 'year of change': the Chinese Cultural Revolution finally ended with the trial of the 'Gang of Four' for 'attempting to separate society from the economy'; Andropov (as head of the KGB) informed Brezhnev that the USSR was 'finished' if it didn't catch up with the West in the information revolution over the following five years; Apple Computers (and the Silicon Valley) were born in a California garage (Berardi 1997). The myths of '68 (Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, Che Guevara) were, however, long since dead, discredited or safely iconised, and their models of 'socialism', a 'world communist revolution' and '10, 100, 1,000 Vietnams' shrouded in failure. The '77 Movement was "the first social movement without a model country or a model system" (Grispigni 1997, p23).

2.3) Rupture with the PCI

However, the most important difference between '68 and '77 was without doubt the very different relations between the social movements and their historical mediator with the State, the PCI, which had been the main beneficiary, in terms of votes, from the upsurge of the social movements since 1968, almost overtaking the Christian Democrats in the 1976 national elections. It was not hard to predict the conflict between the '77 Movement and the PCI, but its ferocity, particularly after the expulsion of Lama, the leader of the PCI-dominated CGIL union, from Rome University on February 17 took most by surprise. It was clear from the start that the patterns of behaviour, attitudes, aspirations and demands of '77 were alien to the PCI's political

culture, based on "communist morality", "a sense of sacrifice" and the "dignity of manual labour" (Grispigni 1997, p24). The movement exploded exactly in those parts of the social terrain considered to be securely occupied by the PCI, namely the universities and 'Red Bologna', the capital of Emilia-Romagna, the main region of the 'Red Belt' of northern Central Italy and the PCI's showpiece for its local government strategy of cooperation with small and medium scale industry (The Third Italy). D'Alema, the then secretary of the FGCI, described '77 as made up of youth who:

> "moved within a petit-bourgeois perspective (...) which sees the profession or a job as a social promotion. It is no coincidence that the 'movement' is based on the marginalised, those most sensitive to the solicitations that bourgeois society has offered them. (...) [Instead the] development for which we are fighting is based on a spread of productive work, of manual work." (*La Republica*, 9th February 1977, cited in Grispigni 1997, p24)

The PCI's attitude of condemnation towards the "few dozen (...) trouble makers" of the "so-called movement" is best summarised by this quotation on the occupation of Rome University:

> "An occupation of the university was decided yesterday by the self-styled 'committee of struggle against restoration in the university'. The decision was taken at the end of a profoundly divided assembly (...) On the decision to occupy the university, the groups withdrew and this is a sign of the weakness of the agitation after the most extremist appeals to 'assault the city' had been isolated within the assembly, itself marked by strong divisions (...) Driving by, the gates of the university are closed: inside the occupiers add up to no more than a few dozen." (*L'Unitá*, 6th February 1977, cited in Grispigni 1997, p25)

This contemptuous attitude was to lead to the disastrous miscalculations that brought about Lama's (the CGIL's general secretary and a member of the PCI's national executive committee) attempt to forcibly 'normalise' the university and end the occupation on February 17th. The PCI's SdO that day, numbering about 300, was too small and divided (many factory workers left as soon as they realised they were not confronting 'fascists' as they had been told they would) to protect Lama and his mobile platform from first the bitter sarcasm of the MI, who drowned out his speech with mocking chants of "sacrifices, sacrifices", "*I Lama stanno in Tibet*" (Lamas are in Tibet) and "*Lama non l'ama nessuno*" (Nobody loves Lama). Then came the more

violent anger of the *autonomi* and students who responded to the aggression of Lama's minders against the MI with a hail of stones, driving them from the campus[8]. It has been conjectured that if Lama had come on his own, without any bodyguards and in a spirit of dialogue, he might have had more success in persuading the movement to end the occupation, as the movement at that early conjuncture was concerned not to alienate the PCI's working class base. In fact, contrary to the myths surrounding this now historical rupture with the PCI, efforts were made up to the last moment by elements within the movement through negotiations with the CGIL's school teachers union to avoid a confrontation which would divide the Left and leave the nascent and vulnerable movement isolated from the rest of society. As it was, Cossiga, in an operation that was may have been co-ordinated previously with Lama, profited from the chaos and mutual recrimination following the *cacciata*[9] and evicted the occupiers within hours. The damage done was irreversible and the split between the PCI and the movement had become an unbridgeable abyss, locking both into an increasingly bitter confrontation, particularly after Zangheri, the PCI mayor of Bologna, defended the *carabinieri*'s[10] killing of Lo Russo on March 11th and then used tanks against the Bologna movement. However, the anti-democratic nature of the PCI's attempt to end the occupation and the violent methods used also exacerbated growing doubts within its grassroots about the Historic Compromise, including the FGCI who were already marginalised within the university assemblies, as well as ending Lama's ambitions to succeed Berlinguer[11] as the party secretary (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, Bernocchi 1997).

2.4) The 'Two Societies'

The shock of Lama's 'defenestration' forced the PCI's intellectuals to analyse seriously a movement that until then they had only vilified. The counter-attack was led by the ex-operaist Asor Rosa in a series of articles in *L'Unitá*[12] in which he developed his theory of the "Two Societies": a "first society" made up of "guaranteed" social strata, attached to the unions and the political parties, whose interests were considered to be synonymous with those of the Historic Compromise and the prospective 'government of national unity'; and a "second society" composed of "non-guaranteed" marginalised social subjects, particularly the young unemployed and underemployed trapped in

lavori neri (black market jobs) with whom an institutional dialogue over the need for a politics of austerity to help the economy out of its worst post-war crisis was necessary if all but impossible:

> "It does not seem a coincidence that the dominant maxim of '68 - the alliance between students and the working class – which (...) relied on an expansive hypothesis of society, has today been abandoned in favour of slogans which aim at the welding together of the diverse sectors of marginalisation (...) The bulk of these sectors have 'broken themselves off' from the rest of society and now oppose it (...) The 'theory of needs'[13], born from this social magma, must therefore necessarily oppose every attempt to guide back to a coherent and unitary picture the different and often dramatically contradictory drives which block any solution to the political and economic problems of the country. It is not a question, in fact, from this point of view, of creating a new society: it is a question of the 'second society' launching an attack on the 'first', in order to break it up and destroy it, because exactly through this breaking up and destruction can the gradually emerging needs be satisfied without having to wait until tomorrow (...) It is necessary to recognise courageously that within this 'second society' some of our most authoritative maxims carry no weight. Austerity, for example, makes sense as far as it is addressed to the productive sectors of society, to the 'workers'." (*L'Unitá*, 20th February 1977; cited in Grispigni, 1997, p27-28)

For Asor Rosa, the interests of the "guaranteed sector" of the "first society" were represented by the party system and unions, while the irreducibly marginalised "non-guaranteed sector" of the "second society" self-organised in autonomous antagonist movements. This was also due to the failure of the historical workers' organisations to represent the non-guaranteed sectors, particularly youth, who were unprotected by labour laws and exploited in the growing sector of black market sweatshops. The fight against these sweatshops was one of '77's principal campaigns and several were attacked in Rome alone.

'Dissident' French and Italian intellectuals, including Sartre, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Barthes, who in July organised an international human rights petition comparing the PCI's repression of the Bologna Movement with Stalinist repression in Eastern Europe, interpreted the 'marginals' refusal to be integrated as a new form of 'post-political' politics, and as a form of 'third worldism' (the Viet Cong in the 1960s,

the metropolitan poor and excluded in the 1970s). For the PCI, the problem was to reassert 'workers' centrality' over the movements and "cast the mantle of PCI hegemony over all opposition forces in society [in preparation for] 'future government'" (Lumley 1990, p309). For Grispigni (1997), Asor Rosa's theory amounted to the first recognition of the movement's social complexity and cultural novelty, recognising the limits of a social democratic strategy of 'normalisation' and moving away from the conspiracy theory-type analysis which tended to typify the PCI's attempt to understand those movements, armed or otherwise, to its left. However, Asor Rosa's theory remained flawed, contradictorily accusing the movement of being both "hedonistically apolitical" and "politically anti-communist". It expressed no appreciation of the movement's attack on politics itself, one of its most novel characteristics, nor of the impending crisis in the Fordist productive model, based on the 'pact between producers'. The "first society", in fact, was also destined for defeat and the erosion and removal of its guarantees in the aftermath of the collapse of the 1980 FIAT strike. Furthermore, Asor Rosa attempted to make the new conflicts conform to an older model based on historical class divisions; a common mistake of orthodox Marxist analyses of NSMs. The great weakness of the "Two Societies" theory was to deny the importance of the autonomy and innovation practiced by the NSMs of youth and women in their struggles to establish new social identities (Lumley 1990).

2.5) The 'March Days' in Bologna and Rome

The movement's first national assembly in Rome on February 26-27th saw the end of '77's tolerant inclusivity and the first major split over violence and democracy, with the feminists, the MI and the moderate NL groups on one side, and *Autonomia* and LC on the other. The latter were accused of using intimidation to force out their opponents from the assembly and get their line passed, sympathetic with the 'armed groups', to 'raise the level of conflict' with the State (Bernocchi[14] 1997). Violence between occupying students and the PCI's SdOs also broke out in Turin and Padua Universities in early March. However, it was the fatal shooting of Francesco Lo Russo, a student LC member, by the *carabinieri* during a protest against the fundamentalist Catholic youth organisation 'Communion and Liberation' (CL)[15] in Bologna on March 11 which

triggered the most intense phase of the '77 Movement. Commenting on the 'March days', Palandri, one of the authors of *Fatti Nostri*, emphasises the massification of the movement was limited to certain cities and regions:

> "If you think that on March 11th there was something like 100,000 people in Bologna and on the 12th 200,000 in Rome (...) probably the area that involved people in the movement in various towns (...) must have covered approximately two million people. *Lotta Continua* had a print run of 20,000 and so did *Il Manifesto*, but people were not really reading (...) in March in the universities, the great majority of my generation was involved (...) not all, if you think on a national scale, most of the South was estranged and many of the towns in the North. There was just Bologna, Turin, Milan, Venice, Padua, Rome, Naples, but Florence and Genoa very little. Very major towns had very little going on, just some individuals keeping in touch with what was going on elsewhere."[16]

Thanks to Radio Alice the news of Lo Russo's killing and PCI mayor's defence of the *carabinieri*'s action quickly spread throughout Bologna, resulting in fierce street battles which convulsed the city centre and the occupied university for three days, only being brought under control by the decision to deploy tanks, leading to instant comparisons between 'Red Bologna' and Prague 1968. March 12 was both the apex of the movement's parabola in terms of its political impact and the beginning of its repression and isolation from the rest of society. In a highly charged atmosphere filled with a desire to avenge Lo Russo's killing, a huge national demonstration of over 100,000, ranging from 'armed *Autonomia*' to radical CGIL members of the factory committees, marched through the centre of Rome before being dispersed, as *Autonomia* militants burnt down banks and DC offices and engaged the police in a series of gun fights. Those from outside Rome found themselves trapped in unfamiliar streets in the middle of an urban guerrilla battle, and many were to have nothing further to do with the movement as a result (Bernocchi 1997). At the same time Bologna was convulsed by riots, with the university and centre barricaded 'no go' areas for the police. On March 13th police broke into and closed down Radio Alice 'on air', arresting those present for 'directing' the street fighting. The extraordinary levels of violence, including an almost insurrectional spread of the use of firearms during the March 12 demonstration, started the movement's long decline as the split between *Autonomia* and the rest of the movement became acute, leading to the exodus of the 'creatives', particularly the

feminists and the MI, and the emergence of the 'Group of 11', NL intellectuals associated with the newspapers *Lotta Continua* and *Il Manifesto* who called for the isolation of the *autonomi* from the rest of the movement. What previous interest the mass media had displayed in the movement's 'apolitical' and 'irrational' characteristics was now replaced by universal opprobrium and support for the government's campaign to ruthlessly repress it.

2.6) Violence, division and repression

The divisions within the movement over violence deepened and the exodus of the MI and feminists accelerated with the killing of policeman Passamonti by armed *autonomi* in Rome on April 21 during a second eviction of students from the university, temporarily reoccupied after the government's decision to implement the Malfatti educational reforms on April 15, despite their temporary withdrawal in January. The next day the DC Minister of the Interior Cossiga, supported by the PCI's shadow interior spokesperson, Pecchioli, the two *bêtes noires* of the movement, banned all marches in Rome until the end of May, including the traditionally untouchable dates of April 25th (National Liberation Day) and May 1st.

Nevertheless, on May 12th the movement decided to support the Radical Party's attempt to relaunch the campaign to collect signatures for eight referenda, including the abrogation of the Reale Law, in Piazza Navona in the centre of Rome. The peaceful but illegal action was violently dispersed and during the ensuing riot 'special squad' police, some with long hair and disguised as *autonomi*, shot dead Giorgiana Masi, a feminist Radical Party member. Two days later the chorus of criticism for Cossiga's actions and lies to parliament about the non-use of special squads against demonstrators was silenced by the killing of police agent Custra by 'armed *Autonomia*' militants in Milan during a demonstration to protest against the Masi killing.

On July 5th the polemic around the movement reached fever pitch with the publication in *Lotta Continua*, the movement's daily mouthpiece, of the appeal by a prestigious group of mainly French intellectuals against the growing tide of repression. The mass

arrests in Bologna, in particular, included journalists, writers and artists connected with the free radio stations and the plethora of periodicals produced by the growing number of small publishers connected with the movement. Their critique of Italy's "germanisation" and the construction of an "authoritarian democracy" was fiercely rejected by the PCI's intellectuals, who accused the French petitioners of being ideologically "anti-Statist" and "anti-communist". The National Convention Against Repression, which the petitioners called for and sponsored, was held in Bologna in September and saw the brief return of the 'creative' and feminist sectors. However, more interest was shown by most of the 100,000 participants in a festival of street theatre, happenings and concerts than the continuing attempts by OWA to hegemonise the movement within the confines of the Palasport. Zangheri, the PCI mayor of Bologna, had conceded this in the hope that peace would reign despite Berlinguer's provocative remarks a week earlier calling the movement *untorelli* (plague bearers).

The return to violence was swift with the killing of Walter Rossi by neo-fascists being avenged by a series of attacks on MSI offices and the burning of the 'Angelo Azzuro' bar in Turin, resulting in the death of a youth trapped inside. October and November saw a further increase in the repression of the movement, which finally split over supporting the metal workers strike and national demonstration in Rome on December 2, with *Autonomia* attempting to form a separate march, which was batonned off the streets and the rest of the movement supporting the FLM march[17]. However, most of those interviewed in Del Bello (1997) agree that the movement, while battered, diminished and split over the issue of violence and OWA's political methods, entered 1978 still very much alive. The end was to come with the blanket repression of all extra-parliamentary activity following the Moro Affair in 1978, the waves of mass arrests from April 7th 1979 onwards and the terrorism of the 'years of lead'[18], all of which left no political or physical space for a 'creative' movement like that of 1977.

However, Grispigni (1997, p110) concurs with those (della Porta 1996, Lumley 1990, Melucci 1996) who consider '77 a 'violent movement', but rejects their false

dichotomy of 'non-violent creatives' and 'violent autonomists', as if subcultural creativity and political violence were inherently mutually exclusive:

> "[I]t is necessary to emphasise that (...) the '77 movement is violent. We are still far from both the understanding of the subversive character of pacifism and the choice of non-violence, which will be the heritage of the ecological and pacifist movements of the 1980s, and from the reflections launched by the feminist movement in those years on the meaning of the practice of violence. From this point of view, undoubtedly, the movement does not innovate [new] instruments of political action, reproducing [instead] the classic behaviours of the radicalisation of political conflict. (...) The same people who one day dress up as metropolitan indians, or who experiment with new languages on the free radio stations or in the myriad of periodicals, are those who accept the terrain of violence at other moments."

3) Youth counter-cultures: Proletarian Youth Clubs and Metropolitan Indians

In the mid-seventies, due mainly to the rapidly emerging women's movement and its campaigns to defend the right to divorce (1974) and abortion (1975), following nationwide mobilisations and referendum campaigns, there was a profound transformation of civil life, customs and normative values (Melucci 1996). The youth movement of this period demonstrated one of main characteristics of NSMs: the formation of a separate youth identity since the 1950s. In the UK and USA this had been more subcultural or counter-cultural than the politically antagonistic identity of the students revolts in France and Italy. The 'youth issue' exploded in Italy in 1968, particularly among the student-workers of the factories. Youth as a social phenomenon had previously been hidden by the dominant Catholic culture based on the primacy of the family, where duty and obedience were more important than individual freedom and expression. The arrival of the 1960s' counter-culture of rock music, drug use and sexual liberation caused long submerged tensions to explode in the family and the schools in a hitherto deeply conservative society (ibid.).

Since the 1960s, there has been a strong counter-cultural influence among Italian youth that has combined with various forms of Marxism, including quite doctrinaire ones, from libertarianism to even Stalinism. In the rest of the 'developed world' these two elements of youth culture have tended to remain separate, if not opposed to each other.

Palandri describes the interaction between the counter-culture and Marxism that was a prevalent feature of Italian NSMs:

> "They tended to coalesce (...) for some periods [but] they were also separated. I belonged to an area where they touched each other. I was neither a pure hippy nor a pure Marxist. We were in between. But alongside what I did, there were, for instance, the Red Brigades who didn't mix at all and were very definite on where they were going. On the other hand, there was *Re Nudo* and others who wouldn't want to hear about politics (...) I wasn't ever in [RN], they were a bit too hippyish for my liking (...) for instance, I obviously did take drugs and all that, but I never thought that that would make an alternative world, whereas [RN] was very much into changing your diet and everything. It was almost a religious order, so it seemed to me."[19]

The experience of the 'proletarian youth clubs'[20] (PYC) was centred in the metropolitan periphery, such as the Quarto Oggiaro district in Milan where the effects of the mid-1970s economic crisis were worst felt. The satisfaction of the more complex aspirations of the individual had to be achieved 'here and now' and not postponed to the future election of a leftist government or the aftermath of a socialist revolution. Likewise, there was no demand for 'the right to work', but instead one for a 'guaranteed social income'. The ethics of sacrifice and austerity, central to the PCI's moral culture and political economy strategy, were rejected in favour of the 'right to luxury' in the depths of Italy's worst post-war economic crisis. Rather than demands, there were diffused behaviours and practices, such as *espropri proletari* (proletarian shopping) and *autoriduzione* (self-reduction), but now of restaurant bills and cinema and rock concert tickets, as well as of transport costs and household bills: "The superfluous [was] at the centre of [their] demands to the indignant consternation of politicians and journalists, intellectuals and industrialists" (Grispigni 1997, p14). An extreme version of the ideology of consumerism was proposed, including the need and the right to consume all kinds of products whatever the extant economic circumstances – in Marxian terms, the need for communist 'use values' to prevail over capitalist 'exchange values'. Indeed, even among the most libertarian sections of the social movements like RN there was preoccupation over the "death of [the collective ideals of] proletarian youth" (Grispigni 1997, p16), as this new, more individualist youth culture, based on 'subjectivity' rather than 'solidarity', overwhelmed the boundaries of the post-1968 counter-culture at the

Parco Lambro Free Festival in Milan in June 1976. The expropriation of alternative products, the protagonism of the spectators rather than the performers, feminist separatism and the growing visibility of the heroin problem led to its failure and seemed to signify the end of the ideal of the collective transformation of the status quo. The event that presaged the imminence of the '77 Movement was the riot by the PYC and others from the 'area of *Autonomia*' outside the La Scala theatre in Milan against the first night of the opera season in December 1976, the first display of a new kind of violence, more of urban youth gangs than of classical extreme Leftism, expressing the 'prepolitical' anger of the unemployed, marginalised youth of the 'dormitory suburbs', riddled with despair and a heroin epidemic, against the politics of austerity and sacrifice (Grispigni 1997):

> "[T]his year the first night at La Scala is - for the Milanese middle class - an occasion of political affirmation over the proletariat and a display of force (...) it is an insult against the proletariat forced to make sacrifices so that the bourgeoisie can go to its first night. The first night at La Scala is a political date today. The Proletarian youth present themselves, together with women, as the detonator and cultural vanguard of the explosion of the present equilibriums of power between the classes, but there is something more than 1968. The logic of sacrifices is the bourgeois logic that says: for the proletarians pasta, for the middle classes caviar. We claim our right to caviar: (...) because nobody can ever convince us that in times of sacrifices the bourgeoisie can go to the first night but we can't, that they can eat parmesan but we can't, or even force us to fast. The privileges that the middle class reserves for itself are ours, we pay for them. For this we want to conquer them and we do so as a matter of principle. (...) The right to take possession of some privileges of the middle class has been a new element since 1968, yesterday rotten eggs today self-reduction. Eight years later there is a new and extremely unpredictable social subject, whose distant roots can be recognized in the youth of '68, in the rebellion of the longhaired, in running away from home and in the first new music. A new social subject has entered with its own plans and with a tone of rupture on the scene of the class struggle, or better of daily life. It is the proletarian youth, the true one and not the labels that so many go sticking on themselves as is the case of the Antifascist Committees, suddenly transformed into youth clubs. Proletarian youth is something else, it is a movement whose force is founded on creativity (that it is not a more or less superfluous accessory, but is its substance), whose survival is bound by the ability to use force, because the situation for young people is: either total marginalisation or total power. (...) Grassi, "socialist" and director of La Scala has told us that it's right to make the middle classes who want to go the first night pay 100,000 lira, so that cultural production can be financed;

> we reply that the first night's takings must go to the centres of struggle against heroin, that culture must be for proletarians." ('Viola' 1976, cited in various authors 1977b, p107-9)

The PYC were also instrumental in establishing the first 'squatted/self-managed social centres' (CSO/A), originally as meeting places for youth deprived of any services or spaces by the Milanese city council. Most were either closed down by the police or fell into disuse once heroin addiction reached epidemic proportions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the first to be founded (by NL and *Autonomia* activists, unlike the PYC with which it had poor relations) in 1975 was the (still-thriving) *Centro Sociale Leoncavallo*, which based itself on the immediate social and educational needs of its local neighbourhood and in opposition to the property speculators who were already 'gentrifying' the centre of Milan, inviting local people to discuss how to use the space:

> "The last city administration never worried about meeting our demands and on the other hand they have never even used the funds paid by industries for social use (1% of local rates). The experiences of the workers' movement and of those in these last years in the neighbourhood have taught that only mobilisation and struggle produce concrete results: as in the factory or in the [self-reduction] of rents and electricity and telephone bills.
>
> [T]hinking that only struggle is able to resolve the problems of our neighbourhood, the base organisms of the neighbourhood have occupied and reactivated the [disoccupied] factory in Via Mancinelli and have also invited the new democratic [red] 'junta' of Milan to show in practice its wish to meet the social demands of a popular district such as ours by allowing the social use of the occupied building.
>
> (...) Here is a preliminary list of the social structures which are insufficient in our district or even completely missing:
>
> - A CHILDCARE FACILITY
> - A MATERNAL SCHOOL
> - AN AFTERSCHOOL
> - A PEOPLE'S SCHOOL
> - AN INTERCOMPANY CAFETERIA
> - A MEDICAL-GYNAECOLOGICAL CLINIC
> - A LIBRARY
> - A PEOPLE'S GYM
> - SPACES FOR PEOPLE'S THEATRE INITIATIVES, MEETINGS, DEBATES, CULTURAL AND SOCIALISATION INITIATIVES.

> With the building occupied, if we are supported by a mobilisation of the whole district we can cover some of these requirements." (First leaflet of CSO Leoncavallo, 18th October 1975)[21]

The '77 Movement surprised the NL as much as the Old Left with its break with the generation and politics of 1968, as the punks did with hippie values in Britain. They mocked the 'sixty-eighters'[22] almost as harshly as the Old Left bureaucrats, calling them 'zombies'. However, there was a contradiction in that they depended on 'ex-sixty-eighters' as intellectual militants who had founded the structures of the 'alternative city' (Lumley 1990). The counter-cultural youth who had been on the fringes of 68-73 protest cycle became central to the new cycle of the mid to late 1970s. The self-description of '*Autonomia*' was adopted as a blanket term to cover the 'new politics', both 'creative' and 'organised', a distinction which Melucci (1996) and others fail to make. British youth protest was expressed more through music, dress and subcultural forms, the punk movement being contemporaneous with the PYC and the '77 Movement. In Italy, youth subculture was linked to the political subculture of *Autonomia*, 'alternative' practices being politicised and made oppositional (Lumley 1990). There were also the problematic effects of the Old Left's reassertion of the 'workers' centrality' over the NSMs and the "cast mantle of PCI hegemony over all opposition forces in society" (ibid., p309). Between 1975 and 1979 urban youth entered the political scene as the protagonist in new forms of urban conflict, its identity having been repressed or displaced in the student-worker politics of 1968-73 (Lumley 1990). This identity was not perceived exclusively in terms of youth experience or situation, but emblematic of the situation of the modern metropolis. Thus, youth became coterminous with exclusion, marginality and deviance, and was treated by sociologists and institutions alike as a 'social problem'. This false image was appropriated and parodied by the MI who mocked 'Western civilisation' and its values, seeing unemployment as an opportunity for self-development rather than a personal crisis or social problem.

Youth politics developed in the 1970s out of the same counter-cultural environment as feminism, but was primarily male. Their origins lay in libertarian and counter-cultural

currents predating 1968, such as the American 'underground' drugs scene, Californian 'peace-and-love', Reichian notions of sexual liberation (including the gay liberation notion of 'coming out'[23]), and Maoist visions of cultural revolution (Lumley 1990). Counter-culturalists, like feminists, had a major role in the dissolution of the NL groups, both criticising the 'moralism' and 'work ethic' inherent in the political militant's sacrifice of private life for the 'public sphere'. The dissolution of the NL model of political activity was a precondition for the 'opening up' of politics to non-experts in Marxist discourse, as Palandri explains:

> "A lot of energy came from the dismantling of all the organisations and this structure of little groups with leaders, which released all these people in a social antagonism without leaders. And so *Autonomia*, the [MI], the marches in Rome (...) In 1974 I moved to Venice where I maintained links with an area called '*Controcultura*'. I worked a lot with the alternative press (...)Baraghini sent me home with *I Manuali di Autodifesa dalla Famiglia* [Manuals for self-defence from the family]: how you could use the Penal Code if you were beaten in the family. *Riprendiamoci la Musica* [Reclaim Music] was another great campaign on how to boycott or break into pop concerts. Or information on drugs: the distinction between 'heavy' and not 'heavy' drugs. In general they were talking a language with which I was very sympathetic. (...) I organised little student newspapers in which we were straddling this kind of counterculture, publishing little leaflets on drugs (...)."[24]

Another element in the youth movement of the mid-seventies was the "autonomous student collectives" (ASC). In the secondary schools students and parents demanded and practiced direct participation in decision-making, which had previously been regulated by institutionalised electoral rules and representative bodies. So were born in the early 1970s the ASC, one of the social bases of *Autonomia* and '77. They organised strikes, occupations, the 'trial' and expulsion of fascists, and *autodidactica* (self-teaching) where students in dispute excluded their generally conservative teachers and taught themselves, sometimes for months. Increasingly, conflict in and outside high schools took place not only against the FUAN and other neo-fascist youth groups but also with the FGCI, the PCI's youth wing, and with CL, a fundamentalist Catholic youth movement. In the most radical situations, autonomous students effectively 'liberated' schools from their function as total institutions for the inculcation of

capitalist integrative values based on work and the family, converting them into prototype 'social centres' (see Balestrini 1989).

The 'metropolitan indians' (largely non-violent demonstrators who used face paint and headdresses to signify their break from the 'seriousness' of politics and emphasise the theatrical and ludic aspects of protest) were the most visible element of counter-cultural creative innovation within the '77 movement. In Milan they emerged from a mixing of the experience of the PYC with 'Maodadaism', the 'drug culture' and 'transversalist' linguistic experimentation, particularly the use of sarcastic and ironic slogans against all forms of organised politics from the DC to Organised *Autonomia*[25]. Commenting on the occupations of Rome (where the MI were strongest) and Bologna Universities, the epicentres of the '77 Movement, Ronchey wrote:

> "His face is painted with the signs of a 'redskin'. He lives on a reserve. He calls himself a Metropolitan Indian. On the boundary walls is written: 'It's not 68, it's '77, we have neither future nor past, history kills us'. The arrival of the PCI and union activists makes him revolt: 'Out, out the new police!' Even if he is not of the underclass, he is a marginalised semi-intellectual facing the collapse of that 'industry of knowledge' whose raw material is grey matter. A strange student has stepped forward." (*Il Corriere della Sera*, 19 February 1977, cited in Grispigni 1997, p19)

Il Settantasette in general and the MI in particular also shared with feminism an emphasis on 'needs' and 'desires', influenced by Heller's (1974) "theory of needs", which transcended the discourse of "primary" physical needs (food, housing, services), accenting instead "secondary" psychological and cultural needs. Both the PYC and the MI interpreted this theory as the proletariat's 'right to luxury' (rock concerts, cinema, theatre, restaurants) in provocative opposition to the politics of austerity. However the MI's main contribution was a combination of linguistic experimentation and the use of Situationist *detournement* particularly in its slogans, but also in its leaflets, that used humour and mockery as political weapons in their struggle against total institutions and the patriarchal family, and for the legalisation of drugs and animal rights:

> "WE HAVE DANCED FOR A LONG TIME AROUND THE TOTEM of our Lucid Folly....
> (...)

THE SEASON OF THE GREAT RAINS HAS ENDED.... 10, 100, 1000 HANDS EVERYWHERE HAVE reached out to raise the axe of war. TO RAISE THE AXE OF WAR!!!! THE SEASON OF THE SUN AND OF A THOUSAND COLOURS HAS ARRIVED!!!!!

(...) Let our tom toms play louder than ever... Let our song reach all the tribes of the marginalised, hippies, apprentices, drug addicts, students, homosexuals, feminists, crazy poets and poetic crazy people, children, animals, plants to gather in a big HAPPENING of war and festivity (...)

To impose the pale faces' unconditional surrender on the approved objectives of the meeting of the People of Men on February 25 [we demand]:

1) Freedom for Paolo and Daddo[26] and all the arrested comrades;

2) The abolition of juvenile jails (as a first step in the abolition of all jails), the abolition of deportation orders[27];

3) The requisition of all vacant buildings for their use as centres of aggregation, and socialisation for young people as an alternative to the family;

4) Public financing for alternative centres for heroin disintoxification and of all self-managed cultural initiatives;

5) A general reduction in the prices of cinemas, theatres and of all cultural initiatives to the figure fixed by the youth movement;

6) The total liberalisation of MARIJUANA, HASHISH, LSD, PEYOTE, of the use, abuse, circulation and cultivation, with monopoly over all this practiced by the movement;

7) A salary for youth idleness;

8) Square kilometres of green for every human being and animal;

9) The immediate liberation of all the imprisoned animals in houses or in cages;

10) The demolition of the zoological gardens and a law for the return of all imprisoned animals to their country of origin;

11) The demolition of the 'patriotic altar'[28] and its substitution with all forms of vegetation, animals that stick to the initiative spontaneously, with a little pond for ducks, swans, frogs and other fauna and fish;

12) the alternative use of Hercules aircraft as a service to transport for free young people to MACHU PICHU (Peru) for the sun party. The meeting of the People of Men proposes the immediate practice at the territorial level of MILITANT ANTIFAMILY PATROLS to tear away young men and especially young women from patriarchal tyranny (...) to be able to live collectively the morning, the afternoon and the thousand nights to come!" (*Gli indiani metropolitani*, 3rd March 1977)[29]

However, not all of 'creative *Autonomia*' was entirely comfortable with the MI's ritualistic use of irony, while recognising its use as a linguistic weapon:

> "The game of reversal is impassioning the Roman movement; once the trick is discovered the game is easy. 'Sacrifice is not enough, you have to immolate yourself.' The trick is old, in France it has a precise linguistic expression '*detournement*' and it has long been used by the exponents of the historical vanguard, but (...) precursors could be found among the great English writers of the 18th century, Swift, Sterne etc, (...). What interests us is the sense of bitterness that irony leaves us with, its flattening action. Irony opens spaces, it unhinges, it reveals what cannot be hidden anymore. Explosive strength, nihilistic joy. Spectacular strength, strength that can only express itself through representation, expression of the sense of uneasiness and anguish, but a strength that presupposes the other, the enemy on which it is to be practiced. Our Father who art in heaven give us this day our daily Lama. Force that is expressed presupposing the State, it tries to corrode it, it thinks of itself as the humus of the revolt, but is not to be confused with the same revolt - 'it will be a laugh that will bury you.' (...) Irony lacks flesh and blood, it is only partially a practice of liberation, as partially is violence and its organisation. (...) Language that marks the space between our desires and the difficulty of their realisation." (*Zut*, 1977a)[30]

4) Antagonist communication: Radio Alice and 'Transversalism'

Another example of the central role of language within the NSMs in general and the '77 Movement in particular was the explosion in the independent production of leaflets, bulletins, newspapers, journals and 'zines', as were the chants, slogans, *dazebao* and endless assemblies in schools, university faculties and 'social centres'[31]. The urban youth movement, like the women's movement, had a wide range of resources and skills to mobilise. The mushrooming of 'free radio' stations (*radio libere*) in the main cities in the mid 1970s led them to become the sounding board and cultural laboratory of the

NSMs (Lumley 1990). Through phone-ins, ordinary people's rich store of experiences addressed the real problems of everyday life that were ignored by the mainstream media. The use of 'non-sense', music and words to go through the 'looking glass' of reality, helped to mirror the outside world. However, most radios closed down more through lack of skills and funds than police action (ibid.). There was a failure to articulate and develop autonomous practices, although the present network of free radio stations survives as a heritage of the '77 Movement, if in a less experimental and more directly political format.

77's evident capacity for cultural innovation and experimentation lay in its use of new languages and forms of 'antagonist communication', the latter defined as "the expression of real behaviours: not abstract reflections to be proposed, as a separate product from the struggles, extraneous from the reader who then acquires it in a bookshop" (Scordino and DeriveApprodi 1997, [Comunicazione antagonista, distribuzione, editoria], p1). The free radio stations, most famously Bologna's Radio Alice (as in 'Alice in Wonderland'), and to a lesser extent in the more 'political' Radio Sherwood in Padua and Radio Onda Rossa in Rome, became the sites not just of a localised dissemination of counter-information and subversive ideas, through the *cronisti a gettone* (telephone kiosk reporters) and phone-ins, but also the locus for continual linguistic experimentation through the use of 'transversalism', 'maodadaism'[32], 'nonsense' and a mixture of false and real news ('Let's spread false news that produces real events'[33]). Following the Constitutional Court's decision in June 1976 to liberalise the airwaves, a decision opposed by the PCI who wished local radio to remain under the same state monopoly as the three national TV networks, the free radio stations expanded rapidly from the major cities to smaller provincial centres and towns in a symbiotic relationship with the growth of the overall movement. The role of the free radio stations was no longer simply one of 'counter-information' in the classic leftist tradition, but more as the locus of the debate within the movement over the question of information and its circulation as communication. The communicative processes and flows of information were now being understood as a new site of the

class struggle, outside the factory's confines. In December 1976 the Bolognese magazine *A/traverso*, itself a product of the Radio Alice collective, affirmed that:

> "The terrain of information (and of informatisation as the subsumption of technical-scientific work in the productive process) has become the terrain on which the struggle for power between the working class and the capitalist state, and therefore language, writing, [and] intervention in the informational circuit, have become practices on which the material texture of class relations has been redefined, and not just their mere symbolic representation."

In late 1976 *L'Erba Voglio* produced together with the *A/traverso* Collective what became the movement's handbook for the theory and practice of subversive communication on the airwaves, *Alice é il diavolo sulla strada di Majakovskij: testi per una pratica di comunicazione sovversiva*[34]:

> "In conclusion, language is not a means but a practice, a completely material terrain, which modifies reality, power relations between classes, the form of interpersonal relationships, the conditions of the struggle for power (...) To blow up the dictatorship of Meaning, introduce delirium in the order of communication, let desire, rage, folly, impatience and refusal speak. This form of linguistic practice is the only one adequate for an overall practice which explodes the dictatorship of the Political, which introduces into behaviour appropriation, the refusal of work, liberation, collectivisation (...) It is due to this that the relationship between the movement and Radio Alice is not so much guaranteed by its contents, by the messages which Alice transmits, as by the gesture which it proposes as a collective and subversive linguistic operative." (Capelli and Saviotti 1976, cited in Grispigni 1997, p73)

The intellectual most intrigued by, and as a professor at the DAMS University in Bologna, one of the most informed about the transversalist discourse and praxis was Eco. He identified a fundamental change in the semiotic strategies of the NSMs from the moral seriousness of the operaists to the irony of the students and counter-cultural youth (Lumley 1990). The inherited wisdom of the Old Left was turned on its head ('More churches, less houses!', 'Sacrifices! Sacrifices!') and was used to torment the PCI. In an article entitled 'There is another language, italo-indian', Eco (1983) describes the 'new generations' as:

> "[L]iving a (...) multiplicity of languages of the 'avant guard' in their daily lives (...) The most interesting fact is that this language of the divided

subject, this proliferation of apparently uncoded messages, is understood and practiced to perfection by those who until today were extraneous to high culture (...) who arrived at the word through music, dazebao, festivals, pop concerts. While that high culture, which understood very well the language of the divided subject when it was spoken in a laboratory, no longer understood it when spoken by the masses." (Cited in Balestrini and Moroni 1988, p357)

A/traverso first appeared in 1975, having previously been published as a Bolognese supplement to *Rosso*. It attempted to be an organ of continuous and open research on the general problems of language, the private sphere, and of intelligence in confrontation with power, beyond the rigid ideological schemes of the organizations but also beyond the "banal" ground of the debate on the crisis of militancy and on the emergence of needs. Thus, approaches that are more complex were sought, connected to a cultural implant that went from Mayakovsky to Bataille, from the QR to Deleuze and Guattari. It was the project of a small cultural revolution born, not by chance, in Bologna, where the model of 'realised socialism' revealed itself to be oppressive, weak and unattractive. Here too was a certain parallel development with and a contemporary distance from the *nouveaux philosophes* who, from Henri-Levy to Glucksmann, produced a violent attack on the countries of the 'gulag'. 'Transversalism' was theorized within the major social themes but outside the constraint of worn-out ideological categories, such as the proletariat and the middle-class. As feminism had done, it opposed every ideological system; a strongly emerging radical antagonism broke with institutional entryism and the illusion of modifying the parties, unions, regions, schools [and] the cultural industry. The 'everyday' was lived as a 'revolutionary moment' in all its components, necessitating the constant deployment of inventiveness and creativity. From here came the ironic use of language, the 'non-sense', the claims to the right to travel for free (with perfectly counterfeited train tickets), the right to free cinema, not that of the outskirts but that of the premiers (for this reason the PYC occupied the centre of Milan in a rapidly growing series of 'self-reductions' that eventually involved thousands in 1976), and the theory of technical-scientific intelligence that made the traffic lights in Bologna go crazy and emptied the telephone kiosks' takings of half of Italy.

Radio Alice, founded by ex-PO militants, began broadcasting in 1974 as the first 'free radio station'. It broke all the terms of communication, something never done before in the Italian Left. The movement revolutionised language with conscious research, retrieving the printing methods of the tradition of the underground culture. By using newspaper clippings, handwriting and typewritten white paper, it created a new printing format that allowed flexible impagination going beyond previous typographic schemes (Scordino and DeriveApprodi 1997). Palandri describes his activism in Bologna's 'creative *Autonomia*', participating in Radio Alice and contributing to the 'counterinformational' project of *Fatti Nostri*, before writing his first novel, *Boccalone*, set during the '77 Movement:

> "When I came to Bologna in 1975 I began very soon to work with Radio Alice. At first I did a programme with some friends on poetry late at night. (...) meeting these people who were slightly older than us, who had been in the '68 movement and had set up the radio. And so I was involved in the radio and going to meetings and so on, but I was very much alone, a non-resident student. (...) [During the rioting following the killing of Lo Russo] there were a lot of phone-ins and we all listened. The police broke in and closed the radio. This was reported live because the people in the radio were very clever. They hid the microphones and left the lines open. After that there were numerous arrests. (...) *Fatti Nostri* was born out of the need for counter-information (...) The core of the book is these tapes of phone calls to Radio Alice during the three days of battle [in March] (...) [They] described what was going on, the way the police behaved. Then there was a very beautiful account of the killing of Lo Russo (...) In fact we wrote very little, just the introduction (...) the rest was 'movement material'. It did extremely well because (...) people were starving for something different from the official view of what we were. The book sold four or five editions in a couple of weeks. (...) '77 was a great moment of contact with the town (...) there were about a couple of months [February and March] of [university] occupation which were quite beautiful and very rich (...) again, it was one of these moments where there is this touching of the Marxist and the Hippy (...) the occasion for the occupation was the arrest of a couple of members of *Autonomia* in Rome and Padua, so Organised *Autonomia* took the lead and called for a meeting. At this meeting there were all these strange people who once belonged to the groups. They were all very rebellious, but it was difficult to tell what they were going for (...) they were going for nothing really. (...) We decided as a group of people who were not terribly Marxist (...) to do counter-information, because obviously all the national press was against us and we had the problem of telling the town that we were not monsters. This was very difficult [but] we did it in various

ways. One of the ideas which worked very well was that in Emilia every night men go into little groups around Piazza Maggiore and talk about football and politics. We decided to enter these groups and talk about ourselves (...) we gained a consensus from the town which was eventually very successful, because the mayor, Zangheri, was compelled to assist the convention in September (...) to accept, six months later, that the students were not delinquents. The big problem was to tell this, because we were treated by the national press, the trade unions, by everyone (in the same way) (...) There was no understanding from anyone, least of all from the PCI (...) The machine of opinion that had to be fought was so powerful (...) there was a consensus of all the political parties (...) everyone was saying that these students are going nowhere. And probably they were right, we *were* going nowhere, but we *did* exist! There were feminist ideas that were challenging the Italian *status quo*, ideas on drugs (...) there was (also) some foolishness. But all these things could be talked about and could be said. We felt there was a barrier, a very rigid reaction against [us]. (...) *Boccalone* is really a love story (...) [It] did very well because it was showing that we were not all into the problem of armed struggle. We were having love stories, building friendships, wanting to travel."[35]

5) *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement

Regarding *Autonomia*'s role in the '77 Movement, there have been hitherto two mutually exclusive interpretations (Borgogno 1997, p38): "The first (...) sees it as the most advanced and radical point of ['77]. The second, on the contrary, accuses it of having destroyed [the movement] with its violent practice and organisational separatism." The following section examines *Autonomia*'s controversial role within '77 and the validity of these opposing interpretations.

Melucci (1996, p268-270) has a dismissively condemnatory stance towards *Autonomia* and its role in '77, a representative position among Italian sociologists. Ultimately, '77 as a whole was destined for "counter-cultural marginality". For him, the more cultural part of '77 (the Bologna 'transversalists', the MI and the free radio stations) tried to save the specific content of their new demands that were tied to identity, collective expression and personal creativity, leading to the 'privatisation' and fragmentation of their collective impulses. The results were marginal experiences of expressive counter-culture and the 'new individualism', eventually leading to a search for purely personal, atomised identity in small religious groups, the recourse to drugs, especially heroin, and

even suicide. The need for "practical and political efficacy" gave legitimacy and space for "minority fundamentalist sects" (*Autonomia*). As a result, these "residual fringes of the institutionalisation process" were able to exploit the "disillusion and impotence" of '77 and "areas of marginality" created by the economic crisis of the mid 1970s.

A further characteristic of '77, particularly the 'creative area', was its "refusal of politics" (Grispigni 1997). This posed a challenge, even for 'post-political' *Autonomia*, whose 'organised tendency' still clung to the teleology of gaining State power. The 'area of diffused social autonomy', a magma of instinctive rebelliousness and violent extremism that first appeared on the streets of Milan in December 1976, expressed its refusal of the very notion of politics and its extraneity from the political process of the party system through the practice of the direct appropriation of socio-cultural resources:

> "Politics is sacrifice! To this the [PYC] have replied, saying: we want to live communism now, what is due to us we want to take ourselves starting from now; we only want to increase our strength compared to this society, to allow us to put our objectives into practice immediately. So when we wanted to go to the cinema, we just went and watched a film [paying a self-reduced price or not at all], we didn't bother organising a struggle and going on a march to ask for the lowering of the price of cinema tickets." (*Re Nudo*, February 1977, cited in Grispigni 1997, p17)

During 1977, the split between OWA and the 'area of diffused social autonomy', of which the 'creatives' were just one part, became clear. Palandri outlines this difference and the antagonism felt towards OWA, particularly in Bologna:

> "There were two ways in which we used the word '*autonomia*' (...) One is [Organised] *Autonomia*, often referred to as *Autonomia tout court*, which comes out of PO and is a rather structured group (...) And then there is a broader [social] *Autonomia*, the one I felt part of, which includes the [MI], which on the contrary didn't have any organisation and coalesced really around Bologna in 1977 and was never part of PO (...) Bologna was the happiest moment of this broader *Autonomia*, (...) it [was] the only town where there was not a strong BR presence (...). Instead [social *Autonomia*] was prominent culturally and intellectually. It had a sort of leadership (...) also in the physical battle, but not in terrorism. The broader church of *Autonomia* worked very well in Bologna, so much so that [OWA] was rather marginalised. (...) I disliked [OWA] intensely then, as I intensely disliked the Red Brigades (...) because I thought there was a plan, a utopia that they were putting over our shoulder, that we were their donkeys (...)

> Whereas, I think this would change if you allowed society to breathe (...) and indeed Italy changed a lot in the first half of the 1970s, through these two referendums [on divorce and abortion], through a lot of things which changed in micropolitics. (...) ['77] was defeated basically because [OWA] gained control of this area and became closer and closer, although probably not the same thing, to the choices of the [BR]: that you need an armed struggle, you need sabotage."[36]

For the operaist Sergio Bologna, '77 was instead, a "synthesis and transcendence of three generations" of autonomous workers and students' movements since the 1950s, which OWA was able to hegemonise only in Padua and to a certain extent in Rome:

> "They had no intention of taking power. In this sense, it was the most anti-Leninist movement possible. It did, however, have a very strong collective knowledge. They had read a lot of magazines like *Sapere* and were already a (...) generation where techno-scientific thought and computing were already playing an important role. The techno-scientific elite counted more than the political elite within ['77]. (...) What relationship did *Autonomia*, namely the Negri group, or even *Primo Maggio* [First of May][37], have with this movement compared to all the other Marxist-Leninist, Maoist political elites or groups like LC? Why were we the only ones able to have a dialogue with ['77]? Maybe because we succeeded in understanding what was the profound nature of this movement. We succeeded, therefore, in understanding better than the others that this movement broke all the rules and since we had never been much attached to rules ourselves, we could interpret it better than others, understand it or accept it better than others. (...) Certainly [OWA] tried [to have a relationship of leadership with the movement] and in Rome perhaps they even succeeded at times. Certainly they succeeded in Padua. Rome and Padua were the only two cities where [OWA] became inseparable from the movement. But in general I would say that as a movement it was something else. Thus, [OWA], apart from Rome and Padua, represented more of an attempt to interpret, to give identity to or give prospects, slogans more than anything else." (Cuninghame 2001, p96-97)

In one area of '77 *Autonomia* (including OWA) succeeded in playing a key role: the anti-nuclear movement, which also emerged on a European-wide scale in the mass demonstrations in Malville in France and Brucksdorf in West Germany the same year. Together with environmentalists, anarchists and anti-militarists, *Autonomia* was among the principal organisers of Europe's most successful anti-nuclear movement, which fought a highly effective campaign in 1977 to block the accord among the six parties supporting the DC government, including the PCI, for the construction of eight nuclear

power stations. The original national energy plan of December 1975 provided for the construction of 20 nuclear power stations by 1985. Today, Italy has yet to build one and put it into service, although it imports electricity generated by the controversial French Superphoenix 'fast breeder' reactor. Two 1000-megawatt stations were due to be built at Montalto di Castro with the approval of the Lazio region and its PCI president, Ferrara. The ENEL Political Committee of the Roman CAO, the autonomist organisation of the workers of the company due to build and run the stations, played a crucial role in counterinformation and initiating the campaign. The main initiative of the movement was a national demonstration entitled *Festa della vita* (Festival of Life) on March 20th, which saw 20,000 demonstrators occupying the Montalto site, creating a carnival of music and debate (Borgogno 1997). The accord was shelved and when further attempts were made in the 1980s to build a nuclear power station on the same site, again with the PCI's support from the perspective of 'scientific socialism' and the political 'neutrality' of scientific development, the combined effects of the Chernobyl disaster, the mass protests of the nascent Green movement and the direct action of OWA's successors, the Anti-nuclear/Anti-imperialist National Co-ordination, forced the final abandonment of all nuclear power station construction in 1986.

Following the successful campaign against the government's nuclear plans (in political terms the only concrete achievement of '77) and despite the divisions within the movement over the role of OWA, the different sections (between which there was also considerable mobility and interaction) of the movement were still united by a common experience of repression and capable of jointly organising an 'International Convention against Repression' in Bologna in September.

5.1) The Bologna Convention

Between 23rd and 25th September, around 50,000 participants in the '77 Movement invaded Bologna to take part in the Convention, called to find an overall strategy to resist the mass arrests, demonstration bans and the increasing use of lethal force against demonstrators, including the deaths of Francesco Lo Russo and Georgiana Masi and the wounding of several others. However, the issue of repression soon gave way to that of

the overall future direction and organisation of the movement. OWA, as the most structured part of the movement, attempted to impose its agenda on the discussions in the Palasport[38] and force the movement towards accepting its strategy of 'raising the level of conflict with the State' and adopting a more 'organised' and less 'spontaneist' form – a typical response of SMs in the face of repression, according to Tarrow (1989). However, the 'creative area' tended to refuse this debate, claiming instead that the movement had already 'won' in forcing the PCI-controlled council to concede the facilities and political space for the convention and in its success in changing the face of collective political and cultural action. Instead, it celebrated its 'victory' over the previously repressive 'red junta' by participating in the 'happenings' and street theatre that dominated the city centre. Within the Palasport the debates were often bitter, with a clear division emerging between 'militarists' and 'movementists'. The interventions of the French intellectuals present, some of whom had signed the petition in July against repression, tended to confuse matters further. The result was 'a lost opportunity' to reorganize and remobilise the movement whose crisis, both political and existential (terrorism and the heroin epidemic were already beginning to dominate the urban life of working class youth) had deepened over the summer.

Palandri describes the convention from the 'creatives' perspective, emphasizing its inconclusive nature:

> "It was a civil war situation in which allegiances were switching. We had the press that was all against us, but at the same time we were winning this counterinformation battle. In fact in September 1977 we managed to have 100,000s of people in Bologna for a peace conference, saying 'Let's look ahead!' From *Fuori!*[39], the gay movement, feminists, all the [NL] organisations, the Radical Party, Dario Fo, the lot! But nothing really came out of the Conference. It was the end. We all looked at each other and said: 'OK, we are the New Left. What shall we do now?' And we didn't really know (...) [OWA] tried to take control of the conference in the [Palasport]. Bifo meanwhile was on the run. There had been the appeal of the French intellectuals which provoked havoc (...) it was a very, very difficult moment."[40]

For Gambino, the most significant aspect of the convention was the BR's clandestine presence, sensing it could benefit from the movement's crisis and imminent demise:

"It was the largest recruiting market for the [BR] ever set up. That's when they recruited big (...) they had people in every commission, in every group. You had this commissar-like feeling. These people were silent, they didn't intervene in the discussions but they were taking notes and looking for faces. I think Moretti[41] is lying or he doesn't know when he says that the BR had nothing to do with ['77]. Of course, they had nothing to do with the movement in Bologna in its early phase. But there was this big meeting which actually took over the city, and they were there (...) to recruit. They were taking advantage of something others had started, as usual, trying to put their own stamp on a situation others had created."[42]

Bernocchi (1997, p245) - a member of the 'Group of 11' ex-NL intellectuals, which together with Rome University's *Comitato di Lettere* (Humanities Committee) and Radio Cittá Futura attempted to wrest political control of '77' from *Autonomia* – states that the Bologna convention saw the movement:

"express itself again for what it had been in its richness, variety and articulation. Factory vanguards (...), women, the southern non-residential students, the unemployed, partisans, the parents of arrested comrades, homosexuals, 'anti-nuclears', all had the need to express themselves as different components of a great movement, which in turn was but the tip of a much broader iceberg, the revolutionary opposition to the Christian Democrat State, to the historic compromise, to the politics of sacrifice, to social peace, to the diffused power which makes it possible for anyone to become a potential repressor of the marginalised, of the different. (...) Creativity, imagination and playfulness try to live, also with enormous difficulties, inside politics, within the desire for discussion, understanding, struggle."

He describes the acrimonious nature of the debates within the Palasport where, unsurprisingly, no overall strategy to revive the movement emerged:

"At the centre of the debate is the relationship between the movement and armed struggle. Some of the interventions explicitly place the terrorist groups within the movement, as the bearers of the radicality of the class struggle. So expressed themselves a Sit-Siemens worker, Scalzone and other [OWA] activists. In opposition, other speeches, including Bernocchi's, denounced the instrumentality with which the armed groups intended to use the movement and insisted on the necessity of breaking the political isolation and extending the social base of the opposition. (...) At the end two comrades from Bologna spoke without referring to the conflict taking place which had led in some moments to the prolonged chanting of opposing slogans and even physical skirmishes." (Ibid, p246-7)

Despite the negative outcome of the Palasport debates, which together with 'creative *Autonomia*'s preference for theatricality and playfulness ultimately emphasised the movement's post-political and non-instrumental nature, the convention closed with a large, colourful and peaceful march of 70,000 through the centre of Bologna on Sunday 25th September, stopping outside the city's prison where chanted demands were made for the release of those still imprisoned for the March riots, before ending with a Dario Fo performance rather than a traditional rally. It was to be the final reunification of '77's 'creative', 'movementist' and 'militarist' components, a brief revival of the movement's fortunes before the events of the following six months put paid to autonomous mass collective action in Italy for a decade.

6) Conclusion

The '77 Movement marked the end of a particular historical, cultural and political cycle and the beginning of a new one, which it anticipated and which, arguably, is still being lived in Italy and the advanced capitalist countries. '77 can also be seen as an intergenerational rebellion, a civil war of the Old Left and the moderate New Left against the radical NL and post-NL, of middle age against youth. To dismiss '77 as the last mass demonstration of extreme Leftism in contemporary European history risks oversimplification and ignores the movement's continuing significance for a broad section of Italian society. However, the question remains: what exactly did '77 want? A communist or a post-capitalist society? Or was it an existential rebellion without specific aims, a collective scream of alienation by urban subcultural youth from a society in which they were relegated to the margins?

Palandri opts for an existentialist and sociological explanation:

"I don't think there was an objective, at least not in the area I was part of in Bologna (...) it's very romantic to say that people want something and they get it. I think what happens is that society as a whole changes and some people, usually the young, are the expression of the transformation. They reveal the crack. Something at some stage cracks and it cracks there, because society is changing, it needs to develop. For instance, the attitude to work, to women, to the family, to abortion (...) there was an inability of society to grow along those lines that had been successfully followed for most of the century. The idea, for instance, of faith in progress (...) The

family changes a lot from a family which is rather patriarchal to a nuclear family and, possibly, in the future to a society of singles. Is this good or bad? I don't know. We were expressing the transformation. (...)What happens with ['77] is that there were these six very important months. Then there is this terrible *riflusso* [abandonment of politics and return to private life], which is what will usher in Craxi and Berlusconi in the Eighties and Nineties. For six months it's very interesting: the [BR], who had been fighting since 1972, put their struggle on hold to see what was happening. Then from 1978, [the kidnap and killing of] Moro is really when they say 'there is no possibility of a mass movement, we'll go on our own way' (...) Moro was the end (...) it was very sad, because that was the moment we all thought it had become very, very dangerous to be in politics. Most of us, like '*Boccalone*', like myself, started feeling the *riflusso*. There is this moment in which you play your identity collectively. It seems you are touching history in being with others. And then it doesn't happen, it doesn't work any more (...) and you start feeling: 'So what am I doing?' In that period I started taking heroin, many people did. There was a lot of self-destruction, either in terrorism or in drugs."[43]

For Gambino, '77 failed to escape its social and political marginality and was unable to grow, because unlike the '68 movements, it did not have the presence of a strong autonomous workers' movement as an ally:

> "Basically they were strangers in their own land. When they turned their heads it was not like in Corso Traiano [Turin] in 1969, when there were 5,000 workers behind the students. This time there were no workers. That makes a difference and I think they paid very dearly for that. It was a much more difficult situation than in 1969, there is no question about that. Whereas in 1968/69, there were people behind the students, in 1977 it was just the first front lines. It's not surprising that one of the armed groups was called 'Front Line'. How about the other lines?"[44]

The depoliticised, hedonistic and individualist 1980s had begun, a distorted amplification of cultural tendencies and behaviours that had first emerged during '77. In 'The Defeat of '77', Negri (1988b, p374) states:

> "We were probably defeated by the incapacity to produce a new social model from our refusal of work, to connect a programme to our practice. We were defeated by a lack of intellectual extremism. Coherently extremist instead was our adversary who used the new productive possibilities to isolate, marginalise and destroy us."

Evaluating the significance of the '77 Movement and within it of 'creative *Autonomia*', it can be said this was more cultural and social than political. Its social composition -

the 'socialised worker of the diffused social factory' from an autonomist Marxist perspective; unemployed intellectuals and the marginalised youth of the urban periphery from a sociological viewpoint - was anticipatory of similar, but less politically radical movements in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly the *centri sociali* and their continuing fascination with communicative innovation, now as much through telematic networks as 'free radio stations' and periodicals, but with less emphasis on linguistic experimentation. '77 represented the re-vitalisation of the subversive side of the 1960s counter-culture, but in an inhospitable environment of increasing conformism in official culture, mass unemployment and the closure of space for collective action by State repression and the terrorism of the extreme Left and Right. Although youth issues, such as the creation of social spaces alternative to the family and work, access to cultural needs and the struggle against mass heroin addiction, were represented in '77, they have remained largely unresolved[45]. In fact, '77 had more success in campaigning around more immediate environmental issues, particularly against nuclear power, anticipating the emergence of the 1980s' 'green' movement. Although the movement developed localised communicative networks based on alternative radio and periodical journalism, and was characterised by its remarkable linguistic innovation, which allowed it to constantly bewilder and wrong foot its political enemies, it was unable to prevent its growing political isolation. 77's relations with *Autonomia* were problematic and OWA's attempt to hegemonise its strategic direction led to constant friction with the feminists, 'creative *Autonomia*' and the remnants of the NL groups. OWA's objective of 'raising the level of conflict' with the State to take full advantage of the level of mobilisation and the economic and political crises was directly aimed at forcing the PCI to abandon its 'historical compromise' with the DC. However, its revolutionary political agenda based on violent direct action clashed with the feminists and 'creative *Autonomia*'s rejection of politics and the ex-NL's aim of involving the grassroots of the PCI and unions who were dissatisfied with the Historic Compromise. These four tendencies within '77 were increasingly divided by the effects of repression and the attempt to reunite them and revive the overall movement at the Bologna convention failed, as neither OWA nor the Group of 11 were prepared to reach a compromise position, the feminists were increasingly involved in creating alternative

social services and the 'creatives' had already decided to abandon the political terrain. Thus, the movement's long-term significance has come to be seen as primarily socio-cultural, with its dominant characteristics of counter-cultural and linguistic innovation, particularly in communicational forms. '77 represented the emergence of a 'metropolitan culture' with its attendant 'new individualism'. Italian youth subcultures effectively homologated with similar currents in Western societies, indeed inspiring new versions of antagonist youth cultures and forms of political action in supposedly more 'advanced' countries in the following decades. However, it also represented the definitive decline of the 'revolutionary Marxist' form of political action, based on collective solidarity, unity and ideology, only heightened by the slide of a significant section of that political tradition into terrorism in the late 1970s. Hence, '77 has been defined as a 'post-political' and even 'anti-communist' movement (Grispigni 1997). However, despite its rejection of many of the premises of the historic communist movement (including the Old and New Lefts and much of 'organised *Autonomia*') and its sometimes violent relations with the PCI (which it considered to be Stalinist rather than 'communist'), ideologically it considered itself (including the 'creatives') as a 'communist' and certainly 'anti-capitalist' movement. It threw open the whole question of what is communism and how capitalist social relations were to be transformed, rejecting any notion of 'taking power', indeed of 'power' itself. While it anticipated the rampant hedonistic individualism of the 1980s and the collapse of social solidarity and a strongly defined 'working class' collective identity, and despite the seismic changes induced by and since the Fall of the Berlin Wall, its questions on the nature of the transition to a post-capitalist society remain unanswered.

NOTES

[1] Literally, ' stray dogs'.

[2] *Indiani metropolitani.*

[3] Unemployment rose from 5.4% of the total workforce in 1975 to 7.7% in 1979, the highest in Western Europe. Unusually for an advanced capitalist country, female unemployment in 1975 (1.2 million) was double that of men (600,000), reflecting both the huge increase in the number of women in higher education and the lack of jobs for female graduates or openings in the labour market for any woman influenced by the feminist movement and keen to escape her traditional role in the family. ('La societá pre-77', Settantasette [discontinued], 3.97, [web: http://www.taonet.it/77web.htm].)

[4] *Fuori sede.*

[5] Interview in English with Ferruccio Gambino, Padua, June 1999 (FG99).

[6] A mocking chant of the MI against the PCI was "*Rendiamo chiare le Botteghe Oscure*" (Let's throw some light on the 'dark shops'), referring to the PCI's lack of transparent internal democracy and its involvement with the Machiavellian machinations of the DC through the Historic Compromise.

[7] See chapter 4, p27 for a critique of the theory of the 'autonomy of the political'.

[8] Some sociological analyses of the '77 Movement (for example Lumley 1990) have drawn a clear distinction between 'non-violent creatives' and 'violent autonomists'. However, this dichotomy is rejected by ex-participants such as an informant from Rome, who said that some autonomists took part in the mocking of Lama and some MI in the physical confrontation with the PCI SdO. He also rejects the view that it was a deliberately organised ambush of the PCI by *Autonomia*, as has been suggested in some recent revisionist accounts, saying that when the PCI SdO first arrived the few students guarding the university gates were manhandled and it wasn't until word had spread and several hundred activists arrived later in the morning that the confrontations took place. (Interview in Italian with an informant from Rome, Milan, and July 1998).

[9] Hunting (of Lama).

[10] Non-unionised paramilitary police, part of the army, and even more hated than the *Celere* (riot squad) of the unionised PS (State Police). The *carabinieri* until recently were not equipped with batons and used their rifle butts instead in riot situations. They were also the more likely of the two forces to open fire on demonstrators.

[11] "Enrico Berlinguer followed Palmiro Togliatti and Luigi Longo to become the third general secretary of the PCI in the post-war period. After General Pinochet's coup d'état in Chile, he put forward the notion of the 'historic compromise' (1973) and, within Europe, created a 'Eurocommunist' line that countered that of Moscow." (Negri 1998, n5).

[12] Published as a book later in 1977. See bibliography.

[13] Heller's 'Theory of needs in Marx' (1974) stated that 'secondary' needs for leisure, art and culture were becoming socially more important than 'primary' needs for food, housing and services in advanced capitalist societies. It was one of the key influential texts for the '77 movement, along with Deleuze and Guattari's 'Anti-Oedipus' and Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish'.

[14] Then a DP militant and member of the 'Group of 11' and now a historian of the '77 Movement and a COBAS organiser, where he works alongside his former political rivals in *Autonomia*, such as Miliucci.

[15] *Comunione e Liberazione*, on the far right of the DC and with suspected links to neo-fascist groups.

[16] Interview in English with Enrico Palandri, London, June 1999 (EP99).

[17] See chapter 4 for an analysis of this incident.

[18] *Anni di piombo* (1978-1982).

[19] EP99.

[20] *Circoli proletari giovanili*. See various authors (1977b) for an internal account of the PYC based on a large variety of leaflets and periodicals.

[21] Centro Sociale Leoncavallo, 4.01, [web: http://www.ecn.org/leoncavallo/storic/primvol.htm].

[22] *Sesantottini*.

[23] In fact the main gay liberation group within the 'area of *Autonomia*' was called *Fuori!* (Out!), along with the *Comitati Omosessuali*. In the 1980s *Fuori!*, in common with gay movements internationally, opted for a more institutional path, affiliating to the Radical Party and ARCI, a PCI-run national cultural organisation. See also note 30.

[24] EP99.

[25] The chants "*scemo, scemo*" (idiot, idiot) and "*via, via la falsa autonomia!*" (out, out the false autonomy) were used by the MI during its sometimes physical clashes with Organised *Autonomia* within the '77 Movement, especially when the latter openly displayed or used pistols against the police during demonstrations, as happened on several occasions, particularly in Rome.

[26] Autonomists shot and arrested by Cossiga's 'special squad' on a march in Rome in February 1977.

[27] Including internal deportation (*confino*), a repressive practice used against *Autonomia* militants, including Daniele Pifano, for the first time since the Fascist era.

[28] A huge marble monument built by Mussolini in central Rome known as the "typewriter" for its outlandish shape.

[29] 68 - 77 gruppi e movimenti si raccontano, 4.01, [web: http://www.zzz.it/~ago/settesette/volantini11-20.htm].

[30] 68 - 77 gruppi e movimenti si raccontano, 4.01, [web: http://www.zzz.it/~ago/autonomia/ironia.htm].

[31] Before the '77 Movement 3 national dailies, 200 other newspapers and 50-70 journals (five to six issues annually) were being regularly published by the NL groups, *Autonomia* and the feminist movement, distributed through an extensive network of about 30 alternative bookshops, also known as *Punti Rossi* (Red Points) as they were usually also meeting places. This led to many being closed down under the emergency laws from 1975 onwards. However, within the first four months of 1977, a further 68 new journals appeared, each with a circulation of 4,000-5,000, which were usually sold out, totalling around 300,000 sales nationally. These new journals "had the singular characteristic of having an incredibly similar type of communication, language [and] project without the vast majority of those who produced them ever having met" (Scordino and DeriveApprodi 1997, [Comunicazione antagonista, distribuzione, editoria], p2). Nevertheless, by 1978 this communicative model had become stereotypical, leading to its refusal by a readership who rejected literary products too closely associated with organisations and 'parties' (ibid.).

[32] This bizarrely eclectic concept, central to the 'neo-dadaist' wing of 'creative *Autonomia*', defies definition. Here is how it defined itself:

"Maodada is the old man-child President who says: '10,000 years are too long', and 'bomb the headquarters', as if he himself was not inside the headquarters. The Cultural Revolution was the most massive collective political phenomenon ever known in the entire history of humanity. Hundreds of millions of men, women, young people, crossed billions of kilometres on foot, by train and bicycle to rewrite history, to overturn Confucian conformism, to free human beings from the capitalist psychology that remained despite the socialist revolution. This process reached such a point of contradiction that those who rebelled against conformism used the most conformist violence, those who battled for liberation from the psychology of *arrivisme* were distinguished by the most unbridled *arrivisme*, those who struggled for equality exalted privilege, those who fought for the new culture spread and publicized lack of culture, those who desired liberty became the unintentional promoters of dictatorship.

During this process, of which it cannot be said either 'viva' or 'down with', art (that indefinable activity that consists in the production of semantically free signs, able to redefine the semantic picture within which they move) became daily life.

When, at the beginning of the century, the Dadaists arrived on the scene, the first thing they shouted was: 'Down with art! Down with daily life! Down with the separation between art and daily life!'

In ' 77 we said: Dadaism plus Mao. It was a Dadaist cry, not a Maoist cry. It was a Maoist whisper, not a Dadaist whisper. Will the great proletarian Cultural Revolution always shine radiantly?" ('77: L'anno della grande rivolta, version 1, 1997 [electronic])

[33] The slogan '*Diffondiamo notizie false che producono eventi veri*' was a widespread practice among the 'creative' radio stations, particularly Radio Alice (see *A/traverso* 1977).

[34] Alice is the devil on Mayakovsky's road: texts for a practice of subversive communication.

[35] EP99.

[36] EP99.

[37] A workerist journal which took a more independent line on developments within the social movements and the class struggle of the 1970s than OWA journals such as *Rosso*, *I Volsci* or *Senza Tregua*.

[38] A sports centre conceded by Zangheri, the PCI mayor of Bologna

[39] *Fuori!* (Out!) was the monthly magazine of the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* (Italian Revolutionary United Homosexual Front), the main organisation within the gay movement. It began publication in Turin in 1972 and had a national circulation. It is now closely associated with the Radical Party and has a markedly more moderate stance than in the Seventies, in common with most if not all gay organisations, including the former Gay Liberation Front in the UK. "The magazine was born with the precise intent to officialise the voice of the revolutionary Italian united homosexual front and in general of the movement for sexual liberation. (...) F.u.o.r.i. was established as a revolutionary Front, refusing the perspective of struggle fought exclusively for the attainment of political emancipation and the attainment of equal rights. The founders of the Front were the first to transform their awareness of their own profound unease into a revolutionary political question, refusing every mediation with power and the so-called illuminated culture, making their 'difference' a moment of organization and antagonism with the model of life imposed by capitalist society. The magazine was also often in contact with the thought and experiences of the feminist movement, publishing interventions against sexist and authoritarian society, for a common project of struggle against a system based on some men's exploitation of other men and of all men indiscriminately of women (...) F.u.o.r.i. was present in all the

political battles of an antiauthoritarian character during the Seventies, and was often critical of the 'male chauvinist and sectarian' practices of the extraparliamentary left." ('77: L'anno della grande rivolta, version 1, 1997 [electronic])

[40] EP99.

[41] See DeriveApprodi (1997, p396-398).

[42] FG99.

[43] EP99.

[44] FG99.

[45] Heroin addiction, although less visible than in the first half of the 1980s when parks and streets near high schools were littered with hypodermic syringes, is still a major social problem in Italy, now affecting most social strata, not just unemployed, 'marginalised' urban youth. According to a Milanese informant, around 300 skilled factory workers in northern Italy died from heroin addiction or overdoses in 1997 (Interview in Italian with three informants from Milan, July 1998).

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS – THE AMBIGUITY OF REFUSAL

What then is the sociological, political and historical significance of *Autonomia* as a social movement? Did it represent a new form of anti-capitalist political action, a clear rupture with the theoretical, ideological and organisational continuities of orthodox Marxism and the Old and New Lefts? Or was it the fundamentalist and marginalised residue of the institutionalisation process of the early 1970s, a violent and terroristic phenomenon destined to be repressed and historically minimised, as mainstream sociology has so far presented it? Or was its real significance as the first politically organised attempt in European if not world history to express a fundamental aspect of the historical class struggle between labour and capital, assuming labour to be a part of capital; that is the working class' drive towards autonomy from capital, to separate and free itself from what autonomist Marxists have termed as capital's boundless imposition of work (Cleaver 1979, De Angelis 1995)?

Such a discourse seems out of place in contemporary academic research, dominated for some time by conservative interpretations of post-modernism and post-Marxism, which hold that the concepts of 'capital', 'labour', 'class struggle', 'autonomy' and even 'social movement' are either mythicised constructs more than empirically proven social realities, or else they exist but only as fluctuating variables among many others in a globalised and polymorphous post-industrial society whose main protagonist is the 'free individual' (as entrepreneur and/or consumer) within the 'free market' in tandem with the state. Such intellectual developments are tied to the late 20th century decline of 'organised labour' as a major political and social actor, with a consequent pacification of industrial and class relations, along with the collapse of 'real socialism' and the restoration of free market capitalism in Eastern Europe as Marxism's final *denouement*. However, the 'end of history' thesis has focused more on ethnic, national and religious conflict as the prevalent sites of social conflict, ignoring or minimising contemporary social conflictuality along class lines, including the continuing 'proletarianisation' of the middle and professional classes in the economically advanced countries, which until recently had produced movements of the 'new social right' rather than

anti-capitalist phenomena. However, this may be changing with the advent of a globalised anti-capitalist movement since the 'battle in Seattle' in November 1999 in which the 'new middle classes' are prominent.

In this concluding chapter, I will re-examine my initial hypotheses and theoretical presuppositions in the light of subsequent research findings on the issues of work, political organisation, violence, counter-culture and communication in relation to the antagonist autonomous social movement, *Autonomia*. Finally, the ambiguities *Autonomia* expressed as a 'movement of refusals' will be outlined as well as its relevance to the emerging globalised anti-capitalist movement, which is particularly strong in Italy.

In adopting an autonomist Marxist perspective on the analysis of new social movements (NSM) and *Autonomia*, I compared the main new social movements theories (NSMT) of Melucci, Touraine and Castells with classical and neo-Marxist theories on NSMs, in order to identify weaknesses and lacunae in their analyses. The 'cultural' version of NSMT (Melucci and Touraine) overemphasises the cultural aspects of NSMs, while minimising their primarily political goals, forms of organisation and impact on the state and civil society. Castells' 'political' version of NSMT ignores the cultural impact of NSMs at the symbolic level and sees them as 'partial' phenomena, unable to impact on the state unless in alliance with the institutional structures of the Historical Left. Both versions tend to ignore the historical links between 'old' and 'new' social movements in order to emphasise the 'newness' of the NSMs. Classical Marxism treats NSMs as potentially reactionary and in any case marginal to the central organised labour-capital class conflict, while neo-Marxism, whether structuralist or Gramscian, has similar limitations to those of 'political' NSMT: NSMs are politically significant only when in subordinated alliance with 'organised labour'. Ultimately, all of these perspectives tend to minimise the political significance of NSMs since the 1960s, when compared to institutional politics. Conversely, autonomist Marxism (Negri, Cleaver) valorises difference and plurality within the overall working class, identifying as central to the capital-labour conflict those sectors seen by classical Marxism, neo-Marxism and 'political' NSMT as 'marginals': housewives, students, youth, 'precarious' workers, the unemployed, migrants and

'Third World' peasants, i.e. those who organise 'spontaneously' and autonomously from the structures of the Historical Left and often as NSMs. I have also argued that the sociological dichotomy between 'culturally oriented' NSMs and political 'class struggle' is false, as is the attempt to divide these movements into 'bad' residual/violent/political and 'good' emergent/non-violent/cultural elements.

I hypothesized that *Autonomia* was not a political organisation or party, but a broad, heterogeneous social movement, made up of differing and sometimes mutually antagonistic internal tendencies, namely 'Organised Workers' Autonomy' (OWA), the 'area' of 'diffused' or 'social *Autonomia*', 'armed *Autonomia*' and the 'creative *Autonomia*' of the '77 Movement, with marked local and regional differences. While the individual and collective practice of autonomy is a key characteristic of all new social movements, *Autonomia* was completely distinct from classical single-issue social movements, such as the European anti-nuclear movements, in that it encompassed a spectrum of diverse social actors and their contiguous social conflicts. Furthermore, it did not seek only to radically reform aspects of capitalist society (as do single-issue SMs) but to foment a 'mass insurrectionary counter-power' from the grass-roots of civil society which would directly challenge state power and cause a terminal crisis in capitalist socio-economic relations, so precipitating an immediate passage to communism without having to 'take power' and create a transitionary socialist society. The historical core of *Autonomia*, the autonomous workers' movement (AWM), embodied in practice the operaist theories on workers' self-organised autonomy and the 'refusal' of capitalist work, and can be considered as a new social movement (NSM) for its historic and antagonistic break with the parties and unions of the 'institutionalised' Left and their value system based on the 'dignity of labour'. Workers' autonomy through self-organisation led to a rejection of the historical organisational forms of both the Old and New Lefts, namely the hierarchical political party and its subordinate trade unions, and the adoption of an informal network of localised collectives based on consensual decision-making through direct democracy as the overall movement structure. 'Armed *Autonomia*' created 'parallel structures' of organised, semi-clandestine violence combined with legal political activism, in opposition to the clandestine model of the terrorist 'armed parties', and as a militant response

to state repression and neo-fascist violence. The counter-cultural youth movements and antagonist communicative action of 'creative *Autonomia*' within the '77 Movement represented a form of 'post-political politics' that broke with the neo-Leninist political practice and culture of OWA and the New Left groups.

In the light of the interpretation of research findings, to what extent do these original hypotheses about *Autonomia* hold true? The AWM can be considered to be a NSM in its organisational practice, its social composition, and above all in its radical break with the core beliefs of the historical workers movement and classical socialism on work. The AWM was composed of a mixture of mainly young 'socialised workers' in the post-Fordist 'diffused factory' and older, often Southern immigrant, 'mass workers' in the large industrial factories. However, particularly for the 'mass worker' militants of OWA, the operaist ideals of 'workers' centrality' and the primacy of the struggle at the point of production remained core beliefs. Thus, at least a part of the AWM can also be seen as in continuity with the historical workers' movement. Nevertheless, the AWM's most innovatory aspect was its fundamental break with the traditions of Marxism-Leninism, labourism and scientific socialism over the theory and practice of the refusal of work. Rather than being the source of working class dignity, the motor through which the working class had its historical destiny to develop capitalism beyond its inherent contradictions and so transform it into socialism, capitalist work was to be refused and technological restructuration fought where it removed workers and imposed more work on those remaining. Furthermore, the refusal of work was the protection of the worker's health from industrial accidents and illness caused by constant contact with toxic materials, noise and dangerous machinery, so contributing to the development of the ecological movement. For the 'socialised' and 'immaterial' workers of the late 20th century a work-based identity is no longer possible even if it were desired. Work cannot be at the centre of life, as was the experience of the mass worker and its historical antecedents, when its structures of time and space have been flexibilised and decentred to the point of amorphous fluidity.

Autonomia emerged as a loosely coordinated network of localised collectives from the remnants of the New Left 'vanguard parties', whose organisational model was in continuity with the Old Left. However, *Autonomia*'s network organisational model was possibly more an *ad hoc* solution brought about by the relatively sudden demise of the NL groups in a period of increasing social conflict demanding rapid organisational solutions, than a conscious rejection of previous organisational models. In fact, OWA, in its different regional forms, unsuccessfully attempted to reconstruct itself as a political party if of a new kind and based on the 'socialised worker' within the 'area of social autonomy', more than the 'mass worker'. 'Armed *Autonomia*' endeavoured to practice a semi-clandestine form of 'armed struggle', based on 'parallel structures' as an attempt to create a 'counter power' to the state, rather than as a militarist strategy for the conquest of state power as practised by the 'armed parties'. However, the logics of clandestine military organisation and state repression ultimately forced the scores of 'armed *Autonomia*' and 'second wave' terrorist groups into adopting the same clandestinity and separation from the movements for which they had criticised the 'armed parties'. The organisational and cultural rupture, instead, was to come from the '77 Movement, with which *Autonomia* was the only post-NL organisation able to interact, if in a highly problematic manner. *Autonomia*'s loose, decentralised structure should have been difficult to suppress, since unlike the orthodox hierarchical organisational model of the NL parties, it had no obvious centralised leadership to be decapitated. However, OWA's adoption of an 'insurrectionary' strategy to 'raise the level of conflict' with the state, based on the mistaken premise of being in a pre-revolutionary phase, plus the relative weakness of its collective identity and the individual fragility of its participants left it vulnerable to repression. *Autonomia*'s effort to organise the social conflicts expressed by a new generation of actors contained an unresolved tension between the 'movementist' desire to accentuate the autonomy of these conflicts through a decentralised, horizontal network and the 'organised tendency's aim of harnessing these conflicts into a revolutionary force through a revised version of the party form, based on 'parallel structures' of self-organised political activity and semi-clandestine armed struggle. *Autonomia* was defeated by a combination of internal weaknesses and external political, economic and historical forces, initially leaving only a residual presence in the mid 1980s. This has since developed into the contemporary COBAS, *centri sociali*,

'free radio', telematic and 'Disobedient' networks, now part of the global anti-capitalist 'movement of movements'.

The significance of the '77 Movement and of 'creative *Autonomia*' was more cultural and social than political. Although counter-cultural youth needs, such as the creation of social spaces alternative to the family and work, access to cultural consumption and the struggle against mass heroin addiction, were represented in '77, they have remained largely unresolved. Politically, '77 had more success in campaigning against nuclear power, anticipating the emergence of the 1980s' 'green' movement. Although the movement developed localised communicative networks based on alternative radio and periodical journalism, and was characterised by its remarkable linguistic innovation, it was unable to prevent its political isolation and criminalisation. 77's relations with *Autonomia* were problematic and OWA's attempt to hegemonise its strategic direction led to constant friction with the feminists, 'creative *Autonomia*' and the remnants of the NL groups. OWA's revolutionary political agenda based on violent direct action clashed with the feminists and 'creative *Autonomia*'s rejection of politics and the ex-NL's aim of involving the grassroots of the PCI and unions who were dissatisfied with the Historic Compromise. Italian subcultural youth effectively homologated with similar currents in other Western societies, inspiring new versions of antagonist youth cultures and forms of political action in supposedly more 'advanced' countries in the following decades. However, '77 also represented the definitive decline of the 'revolutionary Marxist' form of political action, based on collective solidarity and ideological unity, only heightened by the slide of a significant section of that political tradition into terrorism in the late 1970s. While '77 has been defined as a 'post-political' and even 'anti-communist' movement, it problematised the question of communism and how capitalist social relations were to be transformed, rejecting any notion of 'taking power', indeed of 'power' itself. To dismiss the '77 Movement as the last mass demonstration of extreme Leftism in contemporary European history risks oversimplification and ignores its continuing significance for a substantial section of Italian society. However, unable and unwilling to organise itself more formally to withstand repression, '77 also anticipated the 'new individualism' and 'media culture' of the 1980s.

Thus, *Autonomia* was not a political organisation or party, but a broad, heterogeneous social movement, although OWA aimed to organise the 'area of social autonomy' into a political party, if of a 'new kind'. It was unsuccessful, partly because OWA itself was a diverse, localist reality rather than a unified base on which a national party could be built, partly because the speed of events as the social conflicts intensified in the late 1970s and the escalation of repression and terrorism precluded such a long-term project. Thus, *Autonomia* can be seen as a refusal of the delegation, homogenisation, bureaucracy and institutionalisation of the political party as an organisational form, and as an experiment in different types of organisational forms: the localised collective, the 'parallel structure' and national co-ordination through an informal network. While no fixed organisational form emerged, either at the local or national level, during the 1970s, *Autonomia*'s version of the NSM informal, localised network effectively replaced the 'vanguard party' model of the NL as the dominant organisational form for Italian antagonist movements in the following decades.

The different tendencies within *Autonomia* - OWA, the 'area' of 'diffused' or 'social *Autonomia*', 'armed *Autonomia*' and the 'creative *Autonomia*' of the '77 Movement - can be seen as the constituent parts of an overall social movement. The basis for the putative unity of a movement of refusals (of work, of the party form, of clandestinity and of politics) is necessarily more oppositional than propositional. *Autonomia* defined itself as a separate current within Italian Leftism from the Old/Historical/Institutional Left (the PCI, the PSI and the unions) and the New Left (PO, LC, AO, PDUP-Il Manifesto, DP, the ML parties) through its organisation of the individual and collective practice of and desire for autonomy within a particular class composition. Individual autonomy recognised the freedom of the individual based on particular needs related to their position in the overall class composition and their differences according to gender, occupation, ethnicity and sexuality. Thus, an extreme version of egalitarianism was proposed where no individual or group of individuals could impose their particular needs over those of others. These differing, pluralistic needs and their satisfaction were defined as antagonistic to capitalist social relations, seen as a system which places

human needs in a hierarchy of priorities, above all of which stand the laws of surplus value, exchange value and profit. Collective autonomy meant the organisation on the basis of direct democracy of the plural, individual and antagonistic needs of the broader proletariat, and within that of the working class, into a political form capable of directly challenging the instruments of social mediation and control (the institutions of capitalist society, including parliamentary democracy, government bureaucracies and enforcement agencies, the media, the firm, the political party, the trade union and the 'total institutions'), whose function was to absorb individual and collective antagonisms and guarantee socially integrative systemic stability and security. Hence, *Autonomia*, while sharing the autonomy from the institutions of the capitalist state and civil society of many NSMs, did not endeavour only to reform facets of capitalist society, as did the single-issue movements of the 1980s. Instead, as an anti-systemic movement, it expressed the need of a substantial section of the new generation of the 'socialised' workers and proletarians of the emerging post-Fordist society to go beyond capitalist social relations *in totem* and create in the present 'liberated zones of communist counter-power' (later defined as 'temporary autonomous zones' or TAZ[1]), but without resorting to the statist strategy of both historical insurrectionary and reformist Leftism of 'taking power' and constituting a transitionary socialist state. If this indeed was its 'grand design' - *Autonomia*, unlike the NL and HL, eschewed prescribing blue prints of hypothetical post-capitalist societies - then obviously, like most if not all of the 'revolutionary movements' of the 20th century, it failed.

The relatively brief experience of *Autonomia* in 1970s' Italy embodied the ambiguity of revolutionary action in the post-industrial, post-modern era. The refusal of work was to be the means by which the working class liberated its 'time for life' from the shackles of capitalism. The failure of the AWM and the radical base of the unions, however, to gain control of the technological restructuration process instead of leading to "working less so that everyone can have a job"[2] resulted in 'fewer working far more' and under the precarious conditions of the casualised, flexibilised post-Fordist organisation of labour. The refusal of the party form was the logical consequence of the spread of the autonomous self-organisation of social conflict from the factory to the 'social factory', the working class urban communities, the universities

and secondary schools, the hospitals, offices, prisons and barracks. But did the decentralised horizontal network of localised collectives fully replace the statist pretensions of the neo-Leninist 'vanguard party'? Even if it did, was this not simply the substitution of the tyranny of the vertical structure with that of unaccountable structurelessness, visible hierarchy with invisible cliquism? These questions remain unanswered, although *Autonomia*'s legacy is that the search for an organisational model that is both participatively democratic and structurally transparent needs to be related to the incessant shifts of class composition, decomposition and recomposition.

The refusal of clandestinity was part of the dividing line between *Autonomia* and the terrorist formations to which the organisation and practice of violence could not be delegated, in the same way that workplace and social struggles could not be delegated to the trade union or the political party[3]. Yet the very variety of positions within *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement over the use of political violence, ranging from the non-violence of many but by no means all of the feminists and 'creatives' to the militarism of much of OWA, and its ambiguity towards the actions of the BR, laid it open to (ultimately unfounded) accusations of being fellow-travellers if not active terrorists, so hastening its criminalisation and repression. The attempt to extend the use of political violence through the use of the 'parallel structure' instead of heightening the movement's self-defensive capability led to its fragmentation as the different 'armed *Autonomia*' groups were forced to separate from the movement and disappear into clandestinity, some later merging with the once much-criticised BR.

The 'refusal of politics' was the expression of the alienation of counter-cultural youth and much of feminism with the overseriousness and macho self-importance of the 'revolutionary Marxist' politics of the NL and OWA. It was also an experiment in discovering a new language of antagonism, more suited to the playful needs of the generation of '77 than the dense jargon of Marxist discourse, and a new means of communication through the 'transversalism' of the 'free radio station'. But this 'impolitic' refusal of the stolid traditions of the revolutionary Left quickly disintegrated into the desperate search for individual solutions to the crisis of the movements, some through heroin addiction or neo-mysticism,

some through 'repentance' or 'disassociation'[4], some tragically through suicide, most through the return to the 'normality' of private life and the psychological 'removal'[5] of their transgressive past. Combined with their innovatory skills in the linguistic and communicational fields and chastened by their recent experience of repression, their 'new individualism' often found its apposite outlet in the mediarisation of Italian society in the 1980s and the rise of Craxi, Berlusconi, Bossi, the 'new social right'[6] and neoliberalism.

However, *Autonomia*'s ambiguities also emphasise its relevance to the history of the development of Italian, European and global social movements in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Many of the 300,000 global anti-capitalist demonstrators who protested against the G8 Conference in Genoa in July 2001 as part of the ongoing international campaign 'against neoliberalism and for humanity'[7] can trace their roots to *Autonomia*, particularly the 'Disobedient' (ex-*Tute Bianche*), the *centri sociali* and the COBAS, and to a certain extent the North European *Autonomen* (the backbone of the demonised 'Black Block') and, arguably, the British RTS. However, whereas violence was an accepted part of social conflict in the 1970s, it is now rejected by the vast majority of Italian NSM participants, partly because of the bitter and still unconcluded lessons of the past (224 Left political prisoners and a similar number of exiles still await an amnesty and the end of the 'state of emergency'[8]). Despite the killing of Carlo Giuliani, the first on a demonstration in Italy since Giorgiana Masi in 1977, and the brutal repression and torture to which the authorities subjected all sections, Genoa was a significant step forward by a growing, but fragile and easily divided global social movement. In the aftermath of the apocalyptical Manhattan Massacre on September 11th 2001 its future seems far more uncertain, as does that of all autonomous social movements faced with ubiquitous calls for the total control and surveillance of international civil society with a concomitant reduction of human rights and political space for radical dissent. It is almost a globalised version of the situation *Autonomia* and the antagonist NSMs faced in Italy in 1978 following the Moro Affair. Now more than ever the lessons of the recent past need to be recalled so that the nascent globalised autonomous social movements can survive and provide a radical, non-violent alternative to an era of planetary militarisation and unprecedented political violence and economic inequality.

NOTES

[1] See Hakem Bey, 1991.

[2] '*Lavorare meno per lavorare tutti*'; a slogan of the AWM, *Autonomia* and the '77 Movement.

[3] Interview in Italian with Teresa Ciaccio, Policlinico worker, Rome, 3rd November1982. Welschen Archive, 12.99, [web: http://www.xs4all.nl/~welschen/archivio.html].

[4] *Pentitismo* and *disassociazione*. See final sections of chapter 5 for an explanation of these two socio-judicial behaviours.

[5] *Rimozione*.

[6] *Nuova destra sociale* (NDS): the term used in Italy to describe the growth of the populist rightist movements of the Northern League, Forza Italia and the 'post-fascist' Allianza Nazionale (ex-MSI) in the early 1990s, which allied as the Pole of Liberty (1994 and 1996) and then the House of Liberty (2001) was to replace the *Pentapartito* coalition governments of the 1980s, dominated by the 'CAF' (Craxi, Andreotti, Forlani), as the main right of centre political force following the DC's demise during the Tangentopoli scandals, winning the national elections of 1994 and 2001. A particularly sinister aspect to the growth of the NDS was the rise of vigilante and 'nazi-skin' racist attacks against the *extra-comunitari* (non-EU) immigrants, which has increased markedly since the late 1980s, making Italy a net importer of labour for the first time in its history by 1990.

[7] The title of the first and second 'Intercontinental Gatherings' held in Chiapas, Mexico (under the auspices of the Zapatista National Liberation Army [EZLN]), and in Spain respectively. These meetings of about 5,000 social movement and NGO activists were both attended by large delegations from Italy (the largest from any one country), many of who were either former *Autonomia* activists or part of the post-*Autonomia* networks of social centres and free radio stations. The gatherings were highly significant for the founding of People's Global Action (PGA) in 1998 and the evolution of the contemporary global protest movements in a clearly anti-capitalist direction, but not as they are usually misrepresented in the mainstream media as 'anti-globalisation'.

[8] Scalzone and Persichetti (1999).

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[1] Available in Red Notes Archive.

APPENDIX 1 – GLOSSARY

Organisations, Publications & Radio Stations of *Autonomia*

Regional & National:

CNAN/AI -Anti-nuclear/Anti-imperialist National Co-ordination (*Co-ordinamento Nazionale Anti-nucleare/Anti-imperialista*) (existed during 1980s)

CCPO - Communist Committees for Workers Power (*Comitati Comunisti per il Potere Operaio*) & *Senza Tregua* (Without Truce) (Milan, Turin, Florence and Naples)

CPS - Student Political Collectives (*Colletivi Politici Studenteschi*) (major cities)

OWA/AutOp - Organized Workers' Autonomy (*Autonomia Operaia Organizzata*)

National Coordination of Autonomia (*Co-ordinamento nazionale dell'Autonomia*)

Comunismo (Calabria, Basilicata and Naples)

Rosso (Milan, Rome, Padua, Bologna)

Bologna:

A/Traverso (Through)

Radio Alice

Jacquerie Collective

Milan:

Alfa Romeo Arese AAO

COCORI - Revolutionary Communist Committees (*Comitati Comunisti Rivoluzionari*)

Senza Padroni (Without Bosses)

Padua & Veneto region:

CPV - Veneto Political Collectives (*Colletivi Politici Veneti*)

Lavoro Zero (Zero Work)

Porto Marghera AAO

Radio Sherwood

Rome:

CAO - Autonomous Workers Committees (*Comitati Autonomi Operai*)

Communist Committees for Proletarian Power (*Comitati Comunisti per il Potere Proletario*)

ENEL Autonomous Workers' Committee

Policlinico Autonomous Workers' Committee

I Volsci (named after Via dei Volsci, a street in the central San Lorenzo district where *Autonomia* had a particularly strong presence)

ROR - Radio Onda Rossa (Radio Red Wave)

OPR - Roman Proletarian Organisation (*Organizzazione Proletaria Romana*)

Radio Proletaria

Radio Cittá Futura (Radio Future City)

Metropoli

Il Male

Turin:

FIAT Workers Committee

Gatto Selvagio (Wildcat)

Mirafiori Rossa (Red Mirafiori)

Proletarian Autonomy Collective/Alice Centre

'Area of *Autonomia*'

'77 - 1977 Movement (*il movimento settantasette*)

ASC - autonomous student collectives (*collettivi studenteschi autonomi*)

CSO/A – *Centri sociali occupati/autogestiti* (occupied/self-managed social centres)

MI – *indiani metropolitani* (metropolitan indians)

PYC - *circoli proletari giovanili* (proletarian youth clubs)

Workers' Organisations & Trade Unions

AAO - *Assemblee Autonome Operaie* (autonomous workers' assemblies)

AOU - *Assemblee Operaie Unitarie* (unitary workers' assemblies)

CDB - *Comitati di base* (rank-and-file factory committees) (1968-73)

CDF - *Consigli di fabbrica* (factory councils)

CGIL – *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (Italian General

Confederation of Labour)

CISL – *Confederazione Italiana dei Sindicati Liberi* (Italian Confederation of Free Unions)

COBAS – *Comitati di Base* (Rank-and-file Committees, since 1985)

CPO (Milan) – *Colletivo Politico Operaio* (Workers' Political Collective)

CPO (Turin) – *Co-ordinamento Politico Operaio* (Workers' Political Co-ordinating Committee)

CUB – *Comitati Unitari di Base* (unitary rank-and-file factory committees, linked to AO)

FLM – Federazione dei Lavoratori Metalmeccanici (federation of metal workers)

SLAI-COBAS – *Sindacato dei Lavoratori Autorganizzati Intercategoriale – Comitati di Base* (Intercategorial Self-organised Workers Union – Rank-and-file Committees)

UIL – *Unione Italiana Lavoratori* (Italian Workers Union)

Political Organisations & Parties

AO - *Avanguardia Operaia* (Workers' Vanguard)

AYB – *Associazione Ya Basta!* (Enough is enough association) (Founded in 1996)

CPM - *Collettivo Politico Metropolitano* (Metropolitan Political Collective)

DC – *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democracy)

DP – *Democrazia Proletaria* (Proletarian Democracy)

DS – *Democrazia di Sinistra* (Left Democracy [ex-PCI])

FGCI - *Federazione Giovanile Comunisti Italiani* (Italian Young Communists Federation)

FUAN – *Fronte Universitario di Azione Nazionale* (University Front of National Action [youth wing of the neo-fascist MSI])

LC - *Lotta Continua* (Continuous Struggle) (Name of organisation and its daily newspaper)

MSI – *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement) (main neo-fascist party)

PCI/CPI - *Partito Comunista Italiana* (Italian Communist Party)

PCd'I - *Partito Comunista d'Italia* (Communist Party of Italy/Maoist)

PCML - *Partito Comunista Marxista Leninista* (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party)

PdUP - *Partito d' Unitá Proletaria* (Party of Proletarian Unity)

PO/PotOp - *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power)

POv-e – *Potere Operaio veneto-emiliano*

PSI - *Partito Socialista Italiana* (Italian Socialist Party)

PSIUP - *Partito Socialista Italiana di Unitá Proletaria* (The Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity)

RC – *Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation [ex-PCI & DP])

SP - *Sinistra Proletaria* (Proletarian Left)

Operaist Publications

CO – *Classe Operaia* (Working Class)

QR - *Quaderni Rossi* (Red Notebooks)

Libertarian publications

RN - *Re Nudo* (Naked King)

EV - *L'Erba Voglio* (see chapter 5, page 153, note 8 for translation)

Armed Organisations

AR – *Azione Rivoluzionaria* (Revolutionary Action)

BR – *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades)

FAC – *Formazioni Armati Combattenti* (Armed Fighting Formations)

FCC – *Formazioni Comunisti Combattenti* (Fighting Communist Formations)

GAP – *Gruppi Armati Partigiani* (Armed Partisan Groups)

Gruppo XXVIII Marzo – 28th March Group

NAP – *Nuclei Armati Proletari* (Armed Proletarian Nuclei)

NCT – *Nuclei Comunisti Territoriali* (Communist Territorial Nuclei) (only in Turin)

PAC – *Proletari Armati per il Comunismo* (Armed Proletarians for Communism)

PCC – *Partito Comunista Combattente* (Fighting Communist Party) (faction within BR since early 1980s)

PL – *Prima Linea* (Front Line)

RAF – *Rote Arme Fraktion* (Red Army Fraction) (German terrorist group which co-ordinated with BR and the French *Action Directe* during the 1980s)

UCC – *Unita Comuniste Combattente* (Communist Fighting Units) (became faction within BR since early 1980s)

Political Terms

AWM - Autonomous workers' movement (*autonomia operaia*)

HC - Historic Compromise (*compromesso storico*)

HL – Historical/Institutional/Old Left (*sinistra storica/istituzionale*)

ML - Marxist-Leninist

NL – New/Revolutionary Left (*sinistra nuova/rivoluzionaria*)

SdO - march defence organisation (*servizio d'ordine*)

Sociological Terms

CBT – Collective Behaviour Theory

LHM – Life History Method

NSM - New Social Movement

NSMT – New Social Movement Theories

PPT – Political Process Theory

RMT – Resource Mobilisation Theory

SM – Social Movement

SMO - Social Movement Organisation

APPENDIX TWO – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Central Research Question:
What is the political, social, cultural, theoretical and historical significance of the Italian social movement of the 1970s called *Autonomia*?

General questions:
1. What is the Marxist interpretation of the political concept of autonomy?
2. What were the ideological roots and political precedents of what became *Autonomia*?
3. What was the social composition of *Autonomia*?
4. What were the positions of *Autonomia* on the 'refusal of work'?
5. What models of political organization did *Autonomia* have?
6. Which struggles, conflicts and social movements was *Autonomia* mainly involved in?
7. How were relations with the feminist and homosexual movements? What influence did they have on *Autonomia*?
8. Which forms of political violence did *Autonomia* use and why? What were the terms of the debate on the use of violence?
9. Which forms of communication did *Autonomia* practice and why?
10. What were the objectives of *Autonomia*? Did it want "to take power?"
11 What vision did it have of an alternative society to capitalism?

Individual questions:
1. Name?
2. Geographical origin?
3. Age?
4. Gender?
5. Occupation now and then?
6. Parents' occupations?
7. Relationships with immediate family?
8. Age at which became politically active and how?
9. Political education?
10. Groups and political experiences before *Autonomia*?
11. The internal tendency of *Autonomia* in which you militated? For how long? The struggles?
12. Were you active in the '77 Movement? What experience did you have?
13. Did you participate in organised armed political violence? In which group? What experience did you have?
14. Were you arrested or imprisoned? For what? How long? What experience did you have?
15. Did you leave the political area of *Autonomia* ? When? Why? Did you return later?
16. Have you left politics? When? Why?
17. What do you think of your experience and militancy in *Autonomia* now?
18. Have you written anything on your experience or were you involved with a journal, newspaper or radio station?
19. Which are the most important books and texts on *Autonomia*?
20. Why did you accept to do this interview?