I — An Explosive Day

The dapper, middle-aged gent who boarded Tram 23 at the Piazza Missori stop did not give the impression of some pop-eyed individual talking to himself, or haranguing the crowd in disjointed sentences. Yet, immediately after paying his 70 lire fare he stared straight ahead and exclaimed: "What was that? A burst boiler or a bomb?"

A few of the passengers on the tram trundling towards Porta Romana continued poring over their newspapers or chatting among themselves, but those closest to the middle-aged gent gazed at him, partly stupefied and partly intrigued. Then the unsolicited speaker started again:

"Coming from the Piazza Fontana, an inferno ... there are ambulances, police, carabinieri there .. there's been an explosion at the Banca dell'Agricoltura .."

No one on board the tram, which was, moving away from the centre of Milan, knew anything as yet. It was a little after five o'clock on the afternoon of yet another Friday in the run-up to Christmas. But this was no ordinary Friday. This was Friday 12 December 1969 and less than half an hour earlier, at 4.37 pm., a bomb had taken the lives of 14 people (a further two died in hospital) and injured upwards of one hundred. It was a massacre, as the first helpers to reach the scene were to say.

The Piazza Fontana bomb was not the only one. Another device was found close to the Banca Commerciale Italiana in the Piazza della Scala. At 4.25 pm., an employee of the Banca Commerciale, Rodolfo Borroni, spotted a black bag abandoned near the entrance to a lift. He picked it up in the belief that it must belong to some absent-minded customer. The bag was heavy. Borroni opened it, together with some colleagues, and discovered a metal box, a rectangular plastic envelope and a black disc with graduated marking from 0 to 60.

Nothing else. Someone suggested it could be a bomb. The bag was taken by brigadiere Vincenzo Ferrettino, carried into the court-yard of the bank and placed on the ground. It was a crucial piece of evidence, but four hours later, at 9.00 pm, Teonesto Cerri, engineer and ballistic expert, had it blown up by a TNT charge applied to its lock. Guido Bizzarri, an army NCO and artificer with more than forty years of experience behind him would later tell reporters:

"I would have defused it, but nobody asked me to. There was more danger in blowing it up than in opening it."

This was one of the first mysteries of that 12 December. It was soon to be joined by another. On 7 February 1970, it emerged that in the bag containing the bomb there was also a piece of coloured glass that Milan police had forwarded to the Criminalpol in Rome for examination. The analysis showed it was coloured glass used in the making of liberty lamps, similar to the glass used in Pietro Valpreda's workshop in Rome. Valpreda was a Milanese anarchist who had recently moved to the capital.

And it was in Rome that the sequence of explosions on that incandescent

day ended. Between 4.40 pm. and 4.55 pm, in an underground corridor at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in the Via Veneto, there was an explosion that left 14 of the bank's staff injured. Within the space of ten minutes, after 5.20 pm., another two less powerful devices exploded at the National War Monument in the Piazza Venezia. This time there were only four people injured — one carabiniere and three passers-by.

So ended the day of massacre. The radio and television broadcast their first reports, whilst newspaper staffs set up the banner headlines for the 13 December editions.

II. OPEN UP, THIS IS THE POLICE

'Horrific massacre in Milan', was *Corriere della Sera*'s 13 December headline. 'Foul provocation', screamed the front page of *Il Giorno*. 'Massacre in Milan. A terrorist plan for Italy?' asked *La Stampa*. 'Horrific attack leads to awful massacre in Milan. Fits in with fascist provocations and reactionary intrigues', suggested *L'Unità*.

But whereas the major newspapers confined themselves to reporting the facts — on the front page at least, and were not yet venturing any hypotheses, except for the PCI newspaper — there were already clear ideas emerging as to the identity of the perpetrators and brains behind the previous day's massacre.

On the evening of 12 December itself, the prefect of Milan, Libero Mazza, sent Christian Democrat prime minister Mariano Rumor, a telephone message that did not beat about the bush:

"Credible hypothesis that immediate inquiries should focus on anarchoid groups as well as extremist fringe. Following consultation with the judicial authorities, strenuous steps already underway to identify and arrest those responsible."

The suggestion was plain. And it certainly would not find the officers in charge of the investigation all at sea. Luigi Calabresi, a Special Branch officer at the Milan Questura (police headquarters), was already targeting leftwing extremists. Motive? Look at the targets: banks and the war monument.

As far as he was concerned they were a dead giveaway. His immediate superior, Antonino Allegra, was even quicker off the mark. The running of the investigation seemed to be following a ready-made script. Indeed, those arrested were primarily anarchists and members of the extra-parliamentary left, with only a few far right activists.

THAT 12 DECEMBER Paolo Finzi was in bed with a temperature. A touch of 'flu. He was barely 18 years old and a student at the Giosuè Carducci liceo in Milan where he was active in the school anarchist group. Another member was Fabio Treves who was to earn fame several years later as a musician and city councillor.

Shortly before midnight there was a knock on the door of the Finzi household. It was the police. Paolo's dismayed parents, Matilde and Ulisse,

were told bluntly: "We have to escort your son to the Questura because because he one of the main suspects in the Piazza Fontana massacre."

Matilde Bassani Finzi was not the sort of woman to shock easily. She was 51 years old and had been an active antifascist since the late 1930s, as a member of Soccoro Rosso (Red Aid) in her native town, Ferrara. From 1943 she played an active role in the resistance in Rome, working with the Bandiera Rossa (Red Flag) groups. She was a woman tempered by her past.

But that night Matilde Bassani worried for Paolo, the youngest of her three children, Paolo Finzi, who had been taken to the fourth floor in the Via Fatebenefratelli, the offices of the Milan Special Branch. The premises were crowded with leftwingers, mostly, except for four fascists who were chatting with the police.

Paolo spotted Giuseppe Pinelli. He knew him as one of the 'old hands' from Milan's Ponte Della Ghisolfa anarchist group. But there was another anarchist there, older even than Pinelli and whom Finzi knew as a friend of his parents: Virgilio Galassi. Galassio had been a militant in the libertarian movement since the war, but by 1969 he was no longer active. Yet he too was among the suspects rounded up. Why?

The reason is as straightforward as it is laughable: he worked for the training section at the Banca Commerciale Italiana, where the unexploded bomb had been discovered. But he didn't remain long at the Questura and was released after the bank's president, Raffaele Mattioli, intervened on his behalf.

The hours passed. The prisoners were summoned into another room, one at a time, where they were interviewed. It was the usual routine. Alibis were checked, opinions sought on what had happened and one final question:

"Who do you think it was?"

But the question was superfluous; the police assumed from the start that the bombing had been the work of anarchists.

The detainees were then moved downstairs to the holding cells. By the afternoon of 13 December it was all over and nearly everyone released.

But the police continued with their inquiries — or, rather, arresting leftwing militants. Unlike Paolo Finzi, Fausto Lupetti was not a boy: he was 26 years old, but he was in the frame. A member of the Italian Marxist-Leninist Party which a few years earlier had split into two factions, a black and a red, Lupetti, a publisher, belonged to the latter. What is more, this "pro-Chinese" was unusual inasmuch as he lived in a commune in a large apartment in the Via Mosso, off the Via Padova in Milan.

At 6.00 am. on 13 December the members of the commune were wakened by the arrival of the police. Everyone was taken to the station for questioning. Lupetti also caught sight of Pinelli who was probably the best known anarchist 'face' in leftist circles in Milan.

"I remember the ground in front of him was strewn with cigarette butts", recalled Lupetti who was taken later that evening to the San Vittore prison where he remained until 29 December, along with Pasquale Valitutti known as

'Lello', a young anarchist, and Andrea Valcarenghi, the leading light of the Onda Verde group and, from 1971 onwards, the man in charge of the monthly *Re Nudo*.

On 15 December the *Corriere della Sera* carried the front page headline: 'Twenty seven extremists held in San Vittore. Most are members of neo-anarchist groups tied to international organisations'. The thrust of the article, written by Arnaldo Giuliani, says much about the climate being created at the time:

"At the end of the first forty hours on inquiries, the investigation into the Piazza Fontana massacre can be summed up as follows: 1) so far, upwards of one hundred and fifty suspects drawn from opposing extremes have been arrested; 2) at 8.00 pm. yesterday, 27 youngsters most of them members of anarchoid groups suspected of connections with international anarchist movements were being held in San Vittore."

The anarchist trail was explored in greater depth in the inside pages. A headline on page five read: 'Anarchist old hands from the Diana among those rounded up in extremists' dens'. The author of this report, Enzo Passanisi, profiled the Milan anarchist movement, as if to familiarise readers with the ambience in which the outrage might have been hatched:

"Italian anarchists are gathered together into a federation, the FAI [...] But mostof Milan's anarchists, numbering up to two thousand — with active members and sympathisers — espouse an autonomous line. They consist of circles and groups, only one of which, the Sacco e Vanzetti group whose members are mostly older anarchists, is affiliated to the FAI. The other dozen groups are broken down according to their respective fields of activity.

"For example, the Lega anarchica milanese (Milan Anarchist League), which is active in the university sector, has members in eight institutions of higher learning. There is also the anarchist trade union. It is worth stressing that the policy line espoused by the movement [...] preaches subversion of society and the seizure of power by the masses directly through popular assemblies and labour communes, eschewing both government and parliament after the example of the Ukrainian Republic set up during the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Russian Whites."

Having described the 'likely' perpetrators, Passanini went on to describe the bomb. But not the one in the Piazza Fontana, but the one at the Diana theatre on 23 March 1921.

As an 'historical precedent', Passanisi had raised this matter with some anarchists from the Ponte della Ghisolfa. The answer he got was:

"A mistake. The intention was to strike at the magistrates staying in the hotel adjoining the theatre: the judges who were holding Malatesta in prison without a trial. Agents provocateurs from the police managed to get the target altered at the last minute and there was a massacre. A massacre that we have always deplored."

This left the door open for Passanini to comment:

"There is always a margin for error between the attack that is acceptable to the anarchist line and the one that it repudiates. Could there have been a mistake made last Friday too?"

But the comparison between the bank bombing and the Diana bombing had been made as early as the evening of 12 December by Alberto Grisolia in the *Corriere della Sera*, the daily newspaper run by Giovanni Spadolini, who was more of an historian than a journalist.

"It's akin to the Diana", Grisolia told Giulio Polotti, class of 1924, the then secretary of the UIL in Milan a socialist deputy. (In the 14 December edition of the *Corriere della Sera* Grisolia wrote: "In terms of the seriousness of the attack, the only precedent in Milan is the Diana attack theatre attack [...]".)

Polotti, chairman of the Fondazione Anna Kuliscioff, recalled that Friday afternoon:

"There was a meeting of the three unions at the CISL premises in the Via Tadino to discuss plans for the strike over renewal of contacts. The news of the explosion reached us at around 5.00 pm., and so, in my capacity as a deputy, I made my way immediately to the Piazza Fontana to see what had happened. I stepped into the bank concourse and, horror!, trod on the arm of one victim. Then I climbed to the first floor, where the mayor Aldo Aniasi, prefect Libero Mazza, questore Marcello Guida and Cardinal Giovanni Colombo also arrived. By that point it was unmistakable — there had been a bomb. I telephoned Antonio Giolitti in Rome who told me there had also been explosions in the capital. After my telephone call I bumped into Grisolia who spoke to me of the bombings having an historical precedent in the Diana outrage."

There was a similar atmosphere in Rome. The *Corriere della Informazione* wrote in its 14 December afternoon edition:

"Extremists of every hue did not sleep undisturbed last night. Throughout the city, police carried out a massive round-up of extremists of every persuasion, individuals involved in movements that have never made any secret of their subversive intentions."

Further on the writer of the article, Fabrizio De Santis, adjusted his aim: "These are clearly people who will shrink from nothing. They seek not only to strike fear into the population and signal their existence as challenging revolutionary elements. They seek to kill."

The psychological and social climate was in place. All that was required was a monster to plaster all over the front pages.

III. TO HEADQUARTERS BY MOTOR BIKE

GIUSEPPE PINELLI had been at home at 6.00 am. that 12 December. Home was the apartments at 2, Via Preneste in Milan, in the San Siro district, a strange mixture of mansions, small bungalows with garden and swimming pool and petit bourgeois condominiums. Pinelli had just come off the night shift where he was a driver in the goods yard at the Porta Garibaldi station. One hour later his wife Licia woke their daughters Silvia and Claudia. She made breakfast and

walked them to school. Then she did some errands before making her way home. At around 11.00 am., they had a caller whom she did not much like — Nino Sottosanti. Licia was washing the floor. "Go through and I'll wake him', she told Sottosanti. Then she left to collect the girls.

By the time she got back, Pinelli and Sottosanti were talking about Tito Pulsinelli who was in jail with some other young anarchists in connection with the 25 April 1969 bombings at Milan's Central railway station and at the Milan Show grounds. Pulsinelli had also been accused of being the perpetrator of the attack on the Garibaldi police barracks on 19 January 1969.

Sottosanti was in a position to provide Pulsinelli with an alibi for the night in question. Why? Sottosanti was infatuated with the young Pulsinelli and they had spent the night of the attack together. Pinelli, a member of the Croce nera anarchica,*was obliged, in that capacity, to come into contact with this ambiguous individual who friends included a number of far right extremists.

Sottosanti was a former Foreign Legion volunteer, an admirer of Benito Mussolini and one-time care-taker at the Nuova Repubblica premises. At the rallies that were held from time to time in the Piazza Duomo, Sottosanti was known simply as "Nino the fascist" or "Nino the Mussolinian".

(* a defence organisation formed in Italy in April 1969 modelled on the Anarchist Black Cross in Britain. Initially its role was to provide support for the Spanish anarchists in their struggle against Francoism, but increasingly it became involved in defending Italian anarchists hit by repression by the police and magistrates)

At 2.00. pm., Pinelli and Sottosanti left to change a 15, 000 lire money order for Sottosanti, reimbursing him for his travel expenses. The order was drawn upon the Croce nera account with Bureau No 11 at the Banca del Monte in Milan. First they stopped for a coffee at a bar in the Via Morgantini. The pair went their separate ways in the Via Pisanello, where the bank was located. Sottosanti left for Pero where Pulsinelli's parents lived. According to Lucio Pulsinelli's statement, he arrived there at 4.30 pm.,

Pinelli caught the No 13 to the Porta Garibaldi station where he posted a letter to Paolo Faccioli, another of the anarchists arrested in connection with the 25 April attacks.

The letter was a simple one, but it says a lot about Pinelli:

"Dear Paolo, this is a belated reply to your letter as I have little time available to write as I would like to do. But, as your mother will have explained to you, we will be keeping in regular contact and up to date on everything. I hope the situation with the lawyers has been cleared up. I should like you to carry on working, not for the sake of any privileges it might earn, but to keep your mind occupied, hour after endless hour. The hours you spend studying will certainly not be enough to fill your day. I have invited the comrades from Trento to keep in touch with those from Bolzano to avert any duplication of activity. Anarchism is not violence — which we reject — but we are loath to be subjected to it either. That is a reasonable and responsible position and the bourgeois press also accepts that. We can only hope that the bench will grasp it as well. No one can fathom the magistrates' conduct in your case. Since your

mother does not want me to send you money, I will send you books, non-political ones as they would only return political ones. Have you read 'Spoon River Anthology', a classic of American poetry. As far as other books go, you must let me have the titles. Here, on the outside, we are trying to do our best. Everybody sends you their best wishes, with special best wishes from me and in hope that we shall see each other soon. Yours, Pino."

At this point a reconstruction of Pinelli's afternoon becomes complicated. A few patrons of the bar in the Via Preneste — Mario Magni, Mario Pozzi, Luigi Palombino and Mario Stracchi — insist that Pinelli played cards with them from 3. 00 to 3. 30 until around 5.00 - 5. 30, confirming the alibi supplied by Pinelli to brigadiere Carlo Mainardi who questioned him.

But the examining magistrate, Gerardo D'Ambrosio, in his findings of 27 October 1975 (the one that cleared everyone in connection with Pinelli's death, inventing a new category in world medicine "active misfortune") argues that these witnesses are confusing events with the previous day. He focused on the fact that the bar owner, Pietro Gaviorno, refuted their statements and insisted that Pinelli had coffee with a stranger and then left.

D'Ambrosio found a conflict in the timing of Pinelli's movements, mainly due to the fact "that public security officer Carmine Di Giorgio insisted he was almost certain that he did not play cards that day. " Di Giorgio was another patron of the bar and his "near certainty" carried much more weight than the certainty of the others. D'Ambrosio, therefore, was able to argue that the latter were confused:

"Moreover, it is not insignificant, apropos of the errors concerning the day of the card game, that Pozzi, Palombino and Stracchi were present when Magni was interviewed by reporters. The suggestion which might have flowed from that is evident."

In any event, after playing cards, or not, Pinelli made his way to the premises of the Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfa at 31 Piazzale Lugano. There he met Ivan Guarnieri, another member of the Croce nera (Black Cross), and another young anarchist, Paolo Erda. At what time? Sometime between 5.00 and 6.00 pm.

Pinelli travelled by motor bike, a Benelli, as usual. It was past its best, but it was his pride and joy. He drove to the Circolo in the Via Scaldasole, arriving shortly before 7.00 pm. This was a recently opened anarchist club in a basement of a crumbling apartment block close to the Porta Ticinese. There was a lot of restoration work yet to be done. Pinelli also wanted to speak to an anarchist recently arrived from Sardinia, Sergio Ardau, whom he knew he could find there.

Before reaching the Circolo, Pinelli stopped to buy some cigarettes. He was a chain smoker. And it was from the tobacconist that he first heard the news about the Banca dell'Agricoltura. Pinelli found Ardau at the Via Scaldasole, but he was not on his own. There were also three police officers there, led by the head of the Milan Special Branch, Luigi Calabresi.

"Ah. so you're here too", Calabresi told Pinelli. "Come to headquarters. You can follow us on the bike."

Ardau was escorted to a car by the police. En route, Calabresi told Ardau: "There is a definite anarchist hand in these attacks." Then he asked after "that criminal nut-case Valpreda," adding:

"You two are good guys, but you have to face the fact that louche types like this nutcase Valpreda with his gang of youngsters and their criminal hotheadedness force us to take serious steps that may well backfire on you as well. We cannot tolerate any longer that which we tolerated in the past. Remember, 14 people have lost their lives and don't you or anybody else tell me that it was the fascists. This is an anarchist job, there's no question about that. You should be helping us to track them down and stop them before they kill again."

This was the conversation as Sergio Ardau remembers it. Meanwhile, Pinelli was following behind. It would be his penultimate trip. His final one would be from a fourth floor window of police headquarters in the Via Fatebenefratelli.

IV. THAT'S HIM! THAT'S HIM!

THE PIAZZA DUOMO was packed with people. The trade unions had supported this rally. Thousands of Milanese huddled in the cathedral square. The Duomo was overflowing with people. The archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, officiated at the funerals of the 14 victims. Prime minister Mariano Rumor represented the State, while mayor Aldo Aniasi represented the city. Absent from the Piazza del Duomo on the morning of 15 December was a figure of some importance in this affair — not only important but crucial: the unwilling protagonist, Pietro Valpreda.

Valpreda was a 36 year old Milanese anarchist who, in his younger days, had lived in the Via Civitale in the San Siro district, a few hundred metres from the first marital home of Pinelli and his wife Licia Rognoni. Valpreda lived the typical life of a suburban kid. He had a couple of convictions: in 1956 he had been sentenced to four years in prison by the Milan court of assizes for armed robbery and a second conviction, for smuggling, dating from 1958.

He began to take an interest in political and social issues after his release and devoted himself to reading the works of anarchist thinkers: Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta. He also studied modern dance and toured with a few cabaret acts. He also had had the occasional television booking.

In the early 1960s poor circulation forced him to undergo an operation on his legs His involvement with the Milan groups was fitful, but when he was in Milan he usually sought out the anarchists from the Circolo Sacco e Vanzetti at 1, Viale Murillo near the Piazzale Brescia. From May 1968 onwards, he began calling in at the Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfa, the Milanese anarchists' new premises.

Valpreda was of average height, agile, ever ready with a witticism spoken

in a typical Milanese accent with its slightly rolled 'r'. Early in 1969, he moved to Rome where he began to frequent the Circolo Bakunin, groups affiliated to the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation). After falling out with them, he broke away, with Mario Merlino, Roberto Mander, Emilio Borghese, Roberto Gargamelli and Enrico Di Cola to set up the Circolo 22 Marzo at 22, Via del Governo Vecchio. By now his theatre work had dried up and he was to all intents unemployed, so he joined with Ivo Della Savia (who was replaced by Giorgio Spano when Della Savia left the country in mid-October) to open a retail workshop in the Via Boschetto where he made liberty lamps, jewellery and necklaces. Among the materials he used were coloured glass settings. Curiously, one very like much like them turned up in the bag that held the bomb at the Banca Commerciale. Valpreda had also been in Milan from 7 to 12 December, having left Rome the previous evening to answer a summons from judge Antonio Amati.

At eight o'clock on 15 December, Valpreda, accompanied by his grandmother Olimpia Torri, went to the chambers of his lawyer Luigi Mariani at 39 Via San Barbara. He was due to report to Amati, the investigating magistrate handling inquiries into the 25 April attacks at the Fair and at the Central Station in Milan. Amati considered himself an expert on anarchists and attentats. Shortly after the Piazza Fontana explosion, he 'knew' immediately that it had been a bomb and that that nobody but anarchists could have planted it — and said as much in a telephone call to the investigating officers at Milan police headquarters.

Valpreda made his way to the Palace of Justice with Mariani and Luca Boneschi, another of his lawyers. The two lawyers left him there, arranging to meet after the questioning. Valpreda left his grandmother to wait for him and knocked on the door of Amati's chambers. This was at 10.35 am. In he went to be greeted by the judge with an exclamation of: "Ah, there you are!" "Yes, I was in Rome so couldn't come any earlier. You know, I'm a dancer and actor and I have to move around for reasons of work", Valpreda replied.

Judge Amati cut him off with a flurry of questions: "But who are you anarchists? What do you want? Why this great fondness of yours for blood?" This exchange (real or imagined?) took place in the judge's chambers, but somebody got wind of it and it was to turn up in the columns of the following day's *Corriere della Sera*.

It was Giorgio Zicari, a very particular brand of reporter. At the time, in 1969, he was a secret service informant, but he was not so much an inform-ant as an inform-ee, someone through whom the secret services funnelled news or — rather — confidential whispers.

It was then then minister of Defence, Giulio Andreotti, who lifted the veil on Zicari's rol. In an interview with journalist and erstwhile secretary of PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti Massimo Caprara, published in the weekly *Il Mondo* on 20 June 1974, Andreotti admitted that Zicari was 'an unpaid informant for the SID' and that later he 'shifted across to the Confidential Affairs Bureau of Public

Security.'
* Zicari's returned to journalism years later, with the Monto group, as managing editor of Il Corriere di Pordenone.

Zicari had been in the right place at the right time — as he would be on many subsequent occasions: he had apparently exclusive access to confidential information from police headquarters and the courts.

From his privileged vantage-point, Zicari watched as Valpreda left after being interrogated by Amati at 11.30 am. He watched as Valpreda was led away by two police officers who held him, forcibly, under the arms and took him to a side-room of the court where they handcuffed him and took him to police headquarters.

Valpreda's grandmother, Olimpia could not understand what was going on. She called out to 'my Pietro' but the policemen marched him off to the Via Fatebenefratelli where, after a brief interrogation, he was left on his own in a room. He was then taken to Rome's police headquarters in the Via San Vitale there where he was awaited by Umberto Improta, a Special Branch inspector (who later went on to become Milan police chief s), Alfonso Noce, another police officer, police brigadieri Remo Marcelli and Vincenzo Santilli who took the first official statement at 3.30 am. on 16 December.

Prior to that, however, between 2.00 and 3.00 am., Valpreda had gone with the officers to a field adjacent to the Via Tiburtina to search for an explosives dump where nothing was found.

Valpreda allegedly made the following statement: "As we were going down the Via Tiburtina, before leaving for Rome that last time, we were just about level with the Siderurgia Romana foundry and the Decama works, about two or three hundred metres from the Silver cinema [...] when Ivo Della Savia, pointed out a clump of bushes and said : ' I have some gear stashed there, not too far from the street at the foot of a shrub that is not too tall'" And he added: "He was not specific as to what he was talking about, but we took the reference to 'gear' to mean explosives, detonators and fuses ."

Why did Valpreda make that admission? Simple. Mario Merlino had been the first of the 22 March group to be questioned by the Rome police, but as a witness not as a suspect.

At 1.45 pm. on 13 December Merlino made a statement to this effect: "Concerning the bombings [...] I am in a position to state that my friends Emilio Borghese, Roberto Mander and Giorgio Spano spoke to me on separate occasions of the existence in Rome of their cache of weapons and explosives [...] Nearly six weeks ago, at the premises of the Circolo Bakunin in the Via Baccina Spano, talked about attacks in general and told me he had knowledge of a few facts and details concerning the attacks mounted in Rome ..."

When questioned, again as a witness, Merlino (who would later be indicted with Valpreda and the other anarchists from the 22 March Group) said other things that were to condemn his comrades.

He declared: "On 28 November, on the occasion of the national ironworkers'

rally in the Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, at about 11.00 am., while the students who later joined the workers' march were assembling, Roberto Mander told me he needed explosives as the political situation was developing so quickly and it was time to act. Furthermore, on the 10th or 11th of this month, at around 8,00 pm., in the Via Cavour, after I had mentioned a few things that I had been told by Emilio Borghese, Roberto told me that they did indeed have a dump on the Via Casilina." A moveable dump, then, that had moved from the Via Tiburtina to the Via Casilina. Having more to do with bragadaccio than with dynamiting activity, perhaps, Merlino continued: "One or two evening prior to the encounter with Mander [...] at the premises of the anarchist Circolo 22 Marzo, Emilio Borghese told me he had a cache of explosives, detonators and arm in the Via Casilina. He specifically stated that he had [..] a substantial amount of detonators and a smaller quantity of explosives [...] I remember he went on to say that he had gone to the dump several days previously in the company of Roberto Mander and Pietro Valpreda, in the latter's car, and had removed or left [...] a quantity of explosives."

Here is the first contradiction. If Mander had ready access to the famous dump, why did he need explosives? And why had he turned to Mario Merlino? It is a mystery, one that Mander himself, a 17 year old high-school student, the son of an orchestra leader, tried to dispel in a 15 December interview with the police: "On 28 November, the day of the foundry workers' strike, I mentioned to Merlino the possibility of bombs being set off to create incidents. That is to say, we discussed if it might help the foundry workers in the event of clashes with the police.

The following week Merlino asked me if it was true that I and Valpreda had an explosives dump in the Via Casilina. I asked Merlino to check where these rumours were emanating from. On that occasion I asked him if there was any chance of his getting hold of explosives for the purposes of carrying out some sort of symbolic act. Over the next few days I put the same request about explosives to Borghese who had told me he did not have any to hand."

Then Mander stated: "I ought to stipulate that when I visited the Via Tiburtina witjh Ivo Della Savia, where I had been told there was a dump of materials — fuses and detonators I seem to recall — there were no explosives."

In a later statement, Mander added: "I believe Valpreda is more an expert in the handling of explosives than I am. For years he has been active in anarchist groups — and he was also implicated in the Milan Fair attacks. I believe he was involved in other attacks as well."

The members of the Circolo 22 Marzo began pointing the finger at each other. Merlino insisted: "Let me add that today at police headquarters, after I said that the detective had queried the existence of an anarchist explosives cache in the Via Casilina, Mander replied: 'They know about that then?' [...] Borghese also told me that he had access to other explosives but I don't know where they were kept."

Roberto Gargamelli, the 20 year old son of a Banca Nazionale del Lavoro

official, refused to be sucked into this police-orchestrated game and at 5.00 am. on 15 December made the following statement:

"During meetings with Valpreda, whether singly or with other comrades, I never heard him speak of explosives. I mean that I never heard Valpreda, Mander or Borghese mention acquiring explosives, nor did I ever hear talk of there being an explosives dump or arsenal in the Via Casilina or the Via Tiburtina where Mander or Borghese supposedly had a cache of such material."

But who was this Merlino character who was so determined to throw suspicion on to his comrades? He was a 25 year-old philosophy graduate, son of a Vatican employee (employed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith department). In 1962, at the age of 18 , Merlino had been active in far right groups, especially Stefano Delle Chiaie's Avanguardia Nazionale. He also had connections with Pino Rauti, the Ordine Nuovo founder who now leads the Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore and with the MSI deputy Giulio Caradonna.

Caradonna, a prominent hard-lineItalian fascist, led the 200-odd Giovane Italia activists (Mario Merlino among them) in the 17 March 1968 fighting with the leftist students squatting in the Faculty of Letters at La Sapienza university in Rome.

In April that year Merlino went to Greece, on a trip sponsored by the ESESI, the league of Greek fascist students in Italy — organised by Pino Rauti and Stefano Delle Chiaie. On his return, Merlino underwent a political conversion. He adopted the dress of the more radical left, grew a beard and moustache and began frequenting groups from the extra-parliamentary left. He launched the Circolo XXII Marzo, which, in a way, led to the later Circolo 22 Marzo. He distributed leaflets singing the praises of the student revolt in Paris and carried a black flag emblazoned "XXII MARZO" at a demonstration outside the French embassy. By September 1969 he was a member of the Circolo Bakunin in the Via Baccina, where he made no secret of his fascist past, claiming he was an ex-*camerata* — and an anarchist sympathiser. Within the Circolo Bakunin he associated with those militants who complained the most about its political line and by the end of October he had joined with these to launch the Circolo 22 Marzo.

Merlino remains to this day a figure who defies description. Even after they had been arrested and jailed, Valpreda persisted in defending Merlino, arguing that even a fascist had a right to a change of mind and that the climate created by contestation had shattered many of the certainties of members of the far right.

The fact remains that links with the *camerati* and above all with Delle Chiaie survived his alleged conversion to anarchism. Thus, when he saw the police had him cornered — when his status switched from witness-informant to suspect-under-investigation — Merlino had only one person to turn to for an alibi for the afternoon of 12 December — Stefano Delle Chiaie, a man who would eventually be indicted for perjury. So much so that in January 1981, in

an interview with the weekly *L'Europeo*, Merlino acknowledged his debt of gratitude to Delle Chiaie:

"He told the truth and even now, 11 years on, he continues to do so [...] But that is not the only reason why I hold him in such high regard. In relation to the Bologna bombing, for example, he was the only one with courage enough to say certain things, to own up to his own responsibilities in regard to terrorism, be it red or black Unlike certain people, like Rauti or Almirante, who engaged in the splitting of hairs, if not trotting along to police headquarters to hand in the membership lists of *Terza Posizione*."

Whereas Valpreda showed solidarity with Merlino, he had misgivings about someone that he could not quite identify:

"There was a spy in our ranks [...] The police knew our every move and whatever was said at the Circolo", Valpreda wrote to his lawyer Boneschi on 27 November 1969.

His intuition was correct, but Valpreda did not yet know the identity of the spy who so diligently briefed the police on everything being done by the young anarchists from the '22 Marzo'.

Who was it? It was "comrade Andrea". That was the name by which the anarchists from the Via Governo Vecchio knew him. His real name was Salvatore Ippolito, he was a public security agent given the task of infiltrating the Roman anarchists. Two people — Merlino and Ippolito — therefore were monitoring the tiny group. The former reporting to Delle Chiaie, the latter to his superior officer at police headquarters, commissario Domenico Spinella.

But the ace up the police's sleeve was neither of them. It was super-witness" Cornelio Rolandi, a Milan taxi-driver. Rolandi approached the carabinieri and then the police to make a statement. He claimed to have driven the man who planted the bomb in the Piazza Fontana.

Rolandi was taken to Rome, where he arrived at 5.00 pm. on 16 December, and an identification parade was hastily organised. Valpreda was lined up with four policemen (Vincenzo Graziano, Marcello Pucci, Antonino Serrao and Giuseppe Rizzitello). Also present were: Rome prosecutor Vittorio Occorsio (who was to perish on 10 July 1976 at the hands of an Ordine Nuovo commando led by Pierluigi Concutelli and Gianfranco Ferro) and Guido Calvi, Valpreda's defence counsel.

Prior to the ID parade, Rolandi declared: "The man I am speaking about is 1.70 to 1.75 metres tall, aged about 40, normal build, dark hair, dark eyes, without moustache or beard. I have been shown a photograph by the carabinieri in Milan that I was told must be the person I should recognise. I was also shown photographs of other people. I have never had this experience before." Rolandi then picked out Valpreda. Valpreda asked him to look more closely, but Rolandi responded with: "That's him. And if that isn't him, then he's not here."

It was on the basis of this evidence — the absurdity of which would later exposed — a monster was created. The press could now crow success: "The

terror machine has been cracked."

V. WE DIDN'T KILL HIM

HAD THE interrogation reached a crucial point or was it proceeding according to the usual routine? Was he excited or relaxed? Had the suspect's alibi fallen apart or did it still stand? Was the atmosphere in the room calm or violent? Was the window shut, partly open or wide open? These are questions that cannot be answered with certainty because the witnesses contradicted themselves time and time again. Contradicting each other and themselves. The final hours of Giuseppe Pinelli's life are locked in the accounts of his police interrogators, whom a large segment of public opinion holds responsible for his death.

The truth was laid to rest with Pinelli in Musocco cemetery in Milan and later, in 1981, in Carrara cemetery.

That night Inspector Luigi Calabresi, officers Vito Panessa, Giuseppe Caracuta, Carlo Mainardi and Pietro Mucilli and carabinieri lieutenant Savino Lograno were interrogating Pinelli on the fourth floor at police headquarters. Then the anarchist railwayman flew through the window.

At midnight on 15 December, *L'Unità* reporter Aldo Palumbo left the press room at headquarters for a cigarette. He was standing in the courtyard when he heard a thud, followed by a further two thuds. Something had bounced off the cornice of a number of storeys. Palumbo raced over to find a body sprawled in the flower-bed. He raced off to fetch the police and his colleagues. Was this at midnight or several minutes before midnight? Or were we already into 16 December? Another unresolved question.

The exact time of Pinelli's fall was to become another teaser in this tortuous tale. Was the request from headquarters for an ambulance made before Pinelli fell, or afterwards? That is a mystery. One that Gerardo D'Ambrosio attempted to clear up with his celebrated finding of "active misfortune" that left everyone in the clear while fully rehabilitating Pinelli. D'Ambrosio wrote:

"Pinelli lit up a cigarette offered to him by Mainardi. The air in the room was unbearably stale, so he opened the balcony window and went over to the rail for a breath of fresh air. He suddenly suffered a dizzy spell, made a clumsy attempt to save himself, and his body tumbled over the rail into the void." There you have it all.

D'Ambrosio gave no consideration to the huge contradictions in the police statements. According to them, Pinelli threw himself from the window exclaiming: "This is the end for anarchy!" The police rushed to stop him. Panessa claimed he managed to grab Pinelli and was left holding one shoe. But the reporters near the corpse saw a shoe on each foot. Also, Pinelli's hands and arms were uninjured. Had he fallen, he would have raised them instinctively to shield his head. There was no sign of the injuries (bleeding from the nose and mouth) normally encountered in such cases.None of these contradictions were of any relevance to Judge D'Ambrosio.

D'Ambrosio merely uttered a few critical words regarding the conduct of

the interrogators.

To recap: Pinelli was arrested at the Circolo Scaldasole with Sergio Ardau at 7.00 pm. on 12 December and followed them, voluntarily, to police headquarters on his motorbike. His first interrogation did not take place until midnight. They asked him about that "nutcase Valpreda"

Ardau was transferred on Saturday, 13 December, to San Vittore prison, while Pinelli remained in Special Branch custody.

On the morning of 14 December a police officer terlephoned Pinelli's wife to say: "Madame should let the railways know her husband is unwell and will not be reporting for work." His tone was friendly: no need to complicate matters with his employers. At 9.30 am. on Monday 15 December the anarchist was visited by his mother, Rosa Malacarne, who found him calm, smiling and relaxed. At around 2.30 pm. his wife, Licia, had a telephone call from the Special Branch: "Madame should ring the railways and tell them her husband has been arrested pending inquiries. Do you understand? You should say he is under arrest." No more fair play: Pinelli ought to know his job was at risk.

At 10.00 pm., there was another call, this time from Calabresi himself: "Madame should look for her husband's pass-book." (The railway worker's log, recording his travels. Ten minutes later, Licia Pinelli telephoned police headquarters back to say she had found the pass-book and at 11.00 pm., an officer arrived to pick it up. Calabresi had another card to play. He resurrected the possibility that he might be implicated in the train bombings on the night of 8-9 August (as Allegra had tried to do some time before).

Pinelli's last interrogation took place in Calabresi's room. The inspector himself claimed he left the office before midnight — before Pinelli went through the window — to bring his superiors up to date with how the interrogation was progressing.

Shortly after 1.00 am. on 16 December, a couple of reporters went to Pinelli's home to tell his wife that her husband had had fallen from a window at Milan police headquarters. She immediately telephoned Calabresi: "Why didn't you tell me?" To which the inspector replied: "We hadn't time. We have a lot of other things to be doing..."

Pinelli, in the meantime, had been taken to the Fatebenefratelli hospital where three reporters Camilla Cederna, Corrado Stajano and Giampaolo Pansa turned up. Cederna managed to interview Nazzareno Fiorenzano, the duty doctor, who said : "There is no discernible cardiac activity, no pulse, horrific abdominal injuries, a series of gashes on the head. We have tried everything, but nothing can be done. He won't last long."

It was 7 April 1970, four months later before Fiorenzano was questioned by the deputy prosecutor, Giuseppe Caizzi. It was this man, Caizzi, who was to wind up the investigation into Pinelli's death on 21 May 1970.

And the outcome? No culpability. Pinelli had died as the result of "a wholly accidental circumstance."

The file was passed to the chief examining magistrate Antonio Amati who

closed the file on 3 July. On 17 July, in a courtroom all but closed for the holiday period, Caizzi applied to have another file closed: the application by Pinelli's wife and mother to bring a case against police chief Marcello Guida.

On what basis? We have to return to the night of 15-16 December and to the office of police chief Guida (who had been Mussolini's governor on Ventotene prison island in 1942). With Guida are Allegra, Calabresi and Lo Grano. It is the early hours of 16 December as the press are ushered in to hear Guida declare apropos of Pinelli's death: "He was strongly implicated in abetting the massacre ... he was an individualist anarchist ... his alibi had fallen through ... what else can I say? ... he saw that he was done for ... an act of despair ... in short, a sort of self-incrimination."

These are the contemporaneous notes Cederna wrote in his note-book.

Then it was Allegra's turn. His view of Pinelli had changed recently, because some reports had shown the anarchist in a new light. In his view he was possibly implicated in the Piazza Fontana bombing. This was noted by *L'Unità* reporter Renata Bottarelli.

Bottarelli also noted Calabresi's contribution to the press conference: "First he told us that at the time of the fall he was elsewhere; he had momentarily gone to Allegra's office to brief him on the crucial progress that, he reckoned, had been made during the comparison of evidence. He had in fact cited his dealings with a third person whom he obviously was not in a position to name, leaving him with the impression that knew a lot more than in fact they did. He observed that Pinelli seemed startled and, disturbed by this, ordered the interview be suspended while he briefed Allegra on this turn of events. It was not, in any case, a proper interrogation."

Calabresi later gave a different versions of events. But, on the morning of 16 December Guida issued a statement that was, to say the least, bewildering:

"I swear to you that we didn't kill him! The poor wretch acted in accordance with his own ideas. When he realised that the State, which he fought against, was closing in on him, he did as I would have done — were I an an anarchist".

Remember, though, that Pinelli's alibi had not in fact fallen through: under questioning, Mario Pozzi had confirmed that Pinelli had played cards with him on the afternoon of 12 December, and a grinning Pinelli had thanked him for it.

Nearly a month later, on 8 January 1970, Calabresi told reporters: "We were caught off guard by his action, not least because we did not think that his position was serious. As far as were concerned, Pinelli was still a decent guy and would probably have been going home the next day [...] I can say that we did not regard him as a key witness, but merely as someone to be heard."

Someone to be heard, yet someone who was being held illegally. His police detention should have expired on the evening of 14 December and the magistrate charged with the investigation, deputy prosecutor Ugo Paolillo, knew nothing about the arrest. Just as he was also in the dark about Valpreda's having been moved to Rome. In fact, Paolillo had already had the investigation taken out of his hands. From now on everything would be decided at police

headquarters in Milan and in the Rome courts .

VI. A DOG HAS DIED

"THEY'VE THROWN Pinelli from a window at police headquarters. Let's demonstrate in the Via Fatebenefratelli and have ourselves arrested. They'll have to push us all out of a window in order to silence us", Amedeo Bertolo told Luciano Lanza (the author) in pained but excited tones over the phone. That was shortly after 7,00 am. on 16 December. The grapevine was set in motion. Everybody was alerted. I was stunned but I threw on some clothes and was out of the house within minutes.

I lived in the Porta Venezia area so I cut through the public gardens into the Piazza Cavour and made my way on foot towards police headquarters in the Via Fatebenefratelli. There were no anarchists to be seen yet.

I waited. The minutes dragged by. Nobody.

Then I realised that a few people, almost certainly plain-clothed police, were staring at me. I tried to appear unfazed, although it was not easy. I waited.

After nearly an hour, although it seemed like hours, I saw Enrico Maltini from the Ponte della Ghisolfa group arrive. We waited for the others so we could all go inside together and surrender ourselves to the police. Our intention being to make a political issue out of it, but nobody else had shown up.

We were beginning to feel uneasy. The police had all but surrounded us. "Let's make a phone call", Maltini suggested. He rang Bertolo whose his wife, Antonella, answered and all but shrieked at us: "They arrested him on the stairs". That immediately sparked a round of phone calls to the others.

The outcome was always the same. They had all been arrested. At this point Maltini and I realised we were virtually the only Ponte della Ghisolfa members still at large. We conferred briefly about what to do. Maltini, who was also a member of the Croce nera anarchica (Anarchist Black Cross), suggested: "Let's go see Boneschi."

When we arrived at Boneschi's chambers, one the lawyers acting for the anarchists, we found him at his desk. His were modern chambers, with white upholstered furniture — but Boneschi's face was whiter still. Eyes circled in black were the only signs of life. He saw us and could not help but make a gesture of bewilderment: "But how ... are you still at large? Clear off out of here ... they're rounding everybody up here."

But the lawyer was mistaken and by the early hours of that afternoon nearly all the detainees had been released. While he was being held at the local police station in San Siro, Bertolo heard one police officer call out cheerfully: "A dog has died. One dog less to worry about". It was a reference to Pinelli. Not that the other detainees received any better treatment — their alibis were checked out and there were threats and bullying. But in the end they were all released.

And so began another flurry of phone calls calling the anarchists to meet at Conca del Naviglio, near the Circolo in the Via Scaldasole.

Their first act was to issue a press statement. Bertolo sat on a bench and

scribbled a short text that closed with a message of defiance: "For every anarchist that falls, ten will take his place. *No pasarán!*" (No pasarán being the slogan used by the Spanish antifascists during the civil war against the mutinous generals.)

At that point another anarchist arrived: "The students are holding a rally at the State University to decide on their response to Pinelli's death." One of those present undertook to deliver the press statement to the ANSA agency (it was to be ignored by every newspaper) while the others decided to move on to the State University. But when they arrived there was a surprise waiting for them: the students had assembled for a meeting,— to discuss study plans, not repression or Pinelli's death. One of the student leaders, Andrea Banfi, told the dumbfounded anarchists that the gathering was about to break up and that they could address it, if they wished.

And so, nearly an hour later, I took the floor. I read out our statement and stressed the gravity of the situation. Moves were afoot to trigger a backlash whoivh would damage the most radical trade union movement and the revolutionary left. Suddenly, Banfi, Salvatore Toscano and Popi Saracino, three student leaders, intervened. Later they would claim to have been the first to waken up to the "fascist danger".

The following day, 17 December, the anarchists from the Ponte della Ghisolfa held a press conference on their own premises. A few reporters showed up, including Enzo Passanisi from the *Corriere della Sera* and Pier Maria Paoletti from *Il Giorno*. The anarchists defended themselves by launching an attack: "Pinelli was killed, Valpreda is innocent and the massacre is the State's doing."

It was at this press conference the phrase "state massacre" was coined, a slogan that was to become a watchword of demonstrations and counter-information efforts and would provide the title for a famous book about the Piazza Fontana events. Next day the *Corriere della Sera* carried the banner headline: 'Ranting press conference at the Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfa. No recrimination between the anarchists.'

Passanisi's article exemplified the way the Italian press dealt with the Piazza Fontana massacre in the immediate wake of Pinelli's death. He wrote: "Terrifying police machination designed to rescue the system, is the watchword. Anarchists are being blamed in order to cover for the fascists. Valpreda? Never did anyone any harm, aside from a few youthful peccadilloes like armed robbery and laughable thievery."

"Pinelli? Given that he had no reason to kill himself, it could only have been the police, directly or indirectly, materially or psychologically. A diabolical machination in fact which the youngsters from the Piazzale Lugano counter with their own truth, argued with a Fidel-like conviction from which they are not in the least disposed to resile. "

"Were the massacre and the contemporaneous attentats errors or not? A grand strategy, a grand international strategy and, obviously, a fascist one."

"The youngsters from the Circle, reeling from the shock of the past few days, do not realise that they have overstepped the mark somewhat in this counter-accusation gambit." "Between the attacks on 25 April, in August and last Friday, there is a connection: a logical continuity the underside of which is a government and police frame targeting the anarchists. The dead of the Piazza Fontana are to be chalked up to the 'sixth sense' of the police that throws innocents into jail and leaves the guilty parties operating 'outside of the law' undisturbed. Guilty parties for whom the ministry of the Interior covers up but into whom inquiries should be mounted." Passanisi closed with the sarcastic observation: "But left us sleep easy in our beds. These young anarchists mean to rescue Italy from fascism."

VII. THE FURY OF THE HUMAN BEAST

"THE TERROR machine has been blown apart. It is now only a matter of picking up the pieces. The beast responsible for the fourteen lives lost in the Piazza Fontana and perhaps also the death, the suicide in the Via Fatebenefratelli, has been arrested and locked down: his face is here on this newspaper page. We must never forget it. The beast made us cry and brought the taste, the bitterest taste of pain and rage to our hearts of hearts. Now we can begin to breathe again and start to get the measure of the diabolical adventure. The butcher's name is Pietro Valpreda, he is thirty seven years old and has never amounted to anything in his whole life. Apart from one elderly aunt who irons his shirts and brushes down overcoat, he has fallen out with his entire family. She helps him out. He comes from the madcap world of be-bop and rock, a world where the men are men and the girls are too. He has dabbled outdoor dances and dances on the city centre streets. Available also for stage work in musical revues, he used to play the boy, one of those with arching pencilled eyebrows, dressed in the most foppish trousers, like some soubrette walking or leaping down from a staircase of glittering neon lights. What a short-lived, unhappy and poorly paid profession. This wretch is also unwell. The circulation in his legs is not as it should be. He has Burger's disease, a savage ailment that causes a blockage and could bring on an embolism and death. Step by step, Pietro Valpreda is on the road to becoming a monster."

This was the opening paragraph of an article published on the front page of the *Corriere d'Informazione* of Wednesday 17 December 1969, over the by-line of Vittorio Notarnicola. The editor was Giovanni Spadolini who was adding this job to his post as number one at the *Corriere della Sera*. The article was overshadowed by two large photos — one of the taxi-driver Cornelio Rolandi and a photo of Pietro Valpreda. The bold capitalised headline read: 'VALPREDA DONE FOR'.

The morning papers that day, formally less sensational, took a clear line, albeit with some circumlocution. They accepted Valpreda's guilt unreservedly. *Corriere della Sera* proclaimed: 'Anarchist Valpreda arrested for collusion in the Milan massacre'. *La Stampa* opted for: 'Anarchist arrested for colluding in

massacre. Inquiry into suicide at police headquarters in Milan'. *Il Giorno* went for 'Charged with massacre'. *L'Unità* chose: 'Arrest made for massacre'. *Avanti!:* 'Arrested for collusion in massacre'. I*l Resto del Carlino* declared: 'An anarchist arrested for massacre'. *Il Messaggero* went for: 'Criminals arrested'. *Il Tempo*: 'Murderer arrested: anarchist Pietro Valpreda'. *Paese Sera* opted for: 'Man identified by cab-driver reported for colluding in the massacre'. *Il Popolo*: 'Anarchist arrested over Milan massacre'. *Il Mattino* plumped for: 'Terrorist who carried out massacre arrested'. *Roma*: 'Arrested: the monster is an anarcho-communist dancer from Canzonissima'.

Television was not far behind. Reporter Bruno Vespa, speaking live from the police headquarters in Rome during the evening show of 16 December, stated: 'Pietro Valpreda is a culprit, one of those responsible for the massacre in Milan and the attacks in Rome. There had to be no question about that.'

So it looked as if the file could be closed. The police had tracked down those responsible in record time. The sole basis for these accusations was the taxi-driver Cornelio Rolandi's statement — and it was barely credible.

At 4.00 pm. on 12 December, Rolandi was in his Fiat 600 in the Piazza Beccaria when a customer asked him to take him to the junction at the Via Santa Tecla. When they arrived the fare asked Rolandi to wait while he got out, carrying a black bag. He returned after a few minutes and they drove to the Via Albricci where Rolandi dropped him.

Anyone familiar with Milan city centre will find this strange. The taxi rank in the Piazza Beccaria is 135 metres from the entrance to the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura. It is 117 metres from the Via Santa Tecla to the bank.

In order to spare himself a journey of 135 metres, Valpreda allegedly made a return trip 234 metres, with the added risk of possible recognition by the random taxi driver he asked to make the trip.

This is how Rolandi remembered that afternoon: 'My taxi was boarded in the Piazza Beccaria by the guy with the bag; he was clutching a black bag in his hand. I looked at him in the rearview mirror and spotted right away he had the long sideburns in fashion these days. He asked me to drive him to the Via Albricci via the Via Santa Tecla. The trip was quite a short one, but in the Via Albricci there are lots of airline offices. I thought he might be a passenger off on a flight. I stopped in the Via Santa Tecla, as requested by the fare. I said that the Via Albricci was not far away and that he could walk it, but he told me to wait as he was pressed for time. Off he went with the bag. He returned after a short time, but without the black bag. I drove him to the Via Albricci where he paid the 600 lire fare and left.' (Franco Damerini, 'Intervisto a Milano con il teste-chiave in *Corriere dell'Informazione*, 17 December).

Apart from the fact that under the fare structures of the time the cost of that short journey, complete with tip, ought to have been no more than half of the 600 lire mentioned by Rolandi, there is evidence that throws doubt on this reconstruction of events. It comes from Liliano Paolucci, director the Milan school principals' associations. Paolucci caught taxi 3444 (Rolandi's taxi) with

his daughter Patrizia on the morning of 15 December and observed that the taxi driver was obviously a novice, continually taking the wrong turn. Once his daughter had been dropped off at her school, Rolandi confided in Paolucciwho taped his recollections of the conversation on Sunday 21 December in order to have a definite record of this strange encounter:

'To the best of my recollection, this is the story told to me by the taxi-driver. It was about 4.00 pm. on 12 December. I was in the Piazza Beccaria when I saw a man of around forty years of age entering the Piazza Beccaria from the Galleria del Corso. He came up to me in flawless Italian with no regional accentand: "Banca dell'Agricoltura in the Piazza Fontana." I replied: 'But the Banca dell'Agricoltura is only a few steps away — 50 metres away, signore. You'd be better off walking it." He said nothing, opened the door and stepped into the taxi. I had a good view of him. He was carrying a briefcase, a fat briefcase that appeared very weighty. Off we drove to the Banca dell'Agricoltura, within five or six minutes. He got out of the taxi, walked briskly into the Bank and came out equally briskly within 40 or 50 seconds, a minute at most. He got back into the taxi and he said:. ..' At this point Paolucci interrupted asked him why the man would be coming from the Galleria del Corso. Rolandi's response was priceless: "Don't you know that the Galleria del Corso is a notorious hangout?' A claim he repeated three times.

Even more mysteriously, though, Rolandi was later to deny that he had ferried Paolucci and that he had spoken with him. Even more strangely, the police and the magistrates never confronted Rolandi with Paolucci to compare their differing versions of events. That was not the only oddity, as Paolucci himself pointed out to the reporter Enzo Magri who interviewed him for the weekly *L'Europeo* of 9 March 1972:

'At 9.15 am. on the Monday, I, a citizen, reported a serious matter. [...] I gave chapter and verse in my report. Yet how did the police react? They did not jump on it, never rushed round to see me and never even contacted me by phone. Bear in mind that Cornelio Rolandi had yet to approach the carabinieri in the Via Moscova, where he would report at 1.35 am. that day. So this Rolandi could have been a nutcase, but equally he could have been telling the truth. And they say the truth has to be sought out before anybody gets the chance to eradicate it [...] I, however — the only person with any knowledge of a disconcerting truth — was called by the telephonist at police headquarters half an hour after my call and told: "I am the police officer who took your call. Are you aware perhaps that you didn't ask the taxi driver how the man whom he dropped off outside the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura was dressed?"'

These were not the only contradictions Paolucci mentioned. There was another witness too — a very important one. This witness insisted that Valpreda was in bed sick on 12 December. Who was it? Valpreda's great aunt Rachele Torri who lived in the Via Vincenzo Orsini in Milan.

This was how the great aunt remembered that afternoon: 'Pietro was in bed with a fever. He was about to fetch the overcoat that he would need the

following morning if he was to keep his appointment with Judge Amati. Well, I went instead. It must have been 7.00 - 7.30 pm. and I remember that as I was boarding the E bus in the Piazza Giovanni dalle Bandere a lady opened a copy of *La Notte* and I caught sight of some headline about deaths. I asked her if there had been an accident and she replied that there had been bombings. I got off in the Piazza del Duomo and cut through the Via Dogana to catch the No 13 tram to Pietro's parents' place in the Piazza Corvetto. I stopped at the newsagent's and bought a copy of *La Notte*. When I arrived at my niece's flat I told her that Pietro had arrived, ill, which was why I had come to fetch his overcoat. Pietro's sister, Nena, urged me to get him to eat something and gave me the overcoat and some shoes. I then went straight home and told Pietro his sister had asked him to eat something. Then I gave him the newspaper.' (Interview with Rachele Torri published in *A- rivista anarchica* of February 1971).

The next day, 13 December, Valpreda met with his lawyer Mariani and went with him to a meeting with Judge Amati. The judge was not available so they left him a note saying Valpreda would call again on Monday the 15th. He then made his way to the home of his grandparents, Olimpia Torri Lovati and Paolo Lovati in the Viale Molise, where he remained until the morning of 15 December.

His sister, Maddalena and girlfriend, 33 year old Elena Segre, a translator who lived in an apartment block in the Viale Lucania where Valpreda's parents lived, called to see him. Segre dropped by to see Valpreda at around 6.00 pm. on Sunday the 14th.

In an interview with Giampaolo Pansa in *La Stampa* on 18 February 1970, Segre stated: 'Pietro was here at his grandparents' place. I rang the bell and they let me in. He was on the settee pushed against the wall over to the left, wearing blue pyjamas and he got up to meet me ...' Pansa interrupted to remind her that her evidence had already been taken by Ernesto Cudillo, the examining magistrate, and by Vittorio Occorsio, the public prosecutor and that therefore if she told lies they could arrest her.

Segre replied: 'Listen, the guy was there on the Sunday! What can I do about it if I saw him there? He greeted me. We hadn't seen each other for a long time. He sat on the sofa-bed as did I and he was sitting on my right, facing his two grandparents. We chated [...]'

So Valpreda had an alibi for the days from 12 to 15 December — alibis that showed he could not have been in the Piazza Fontana and contradicted his incredible taxi trip.

By that time it was hard to argue Valpreda was guilty. But the police and magistrates had certainly not acknowledged defeat. And so, a little over a month later in early February 1970, they brought out a few Roman witnesses to testify that Valpreda had been in Rome on 13 and 14 December. If Valpreda's relations were telling lies about those two dates, then they had lied about 12 December too and so the taxi driver Rolandi's testimony would stand.

Who were these witnesses? Ermanna Ughetto, stage name Ermanna River,

Enrico Natali, Gianni Sampieri, Armando Gaggeggi and his wife and Benito Bianchi — all avant-garde theatre folk who appeared regularly at the Ambra-Jovinelli theatre in Rome.

But when Valpreda was brought face to face with these witnesses on 6 March, there were clearly two conflicting versions of events. The Roman witnesses claimed to have met in Rome Valpreda on 13 or 14 December. Valpreda argued that the meeting they referred to had taken place about ten days earlier — shortly after Valpreda had been released from the Regina Coeli prison on 25 November.

In fact, Valpreda had been arrested on 19 November following a fracas with fascists in the Trastevere district. But there was another detail. During a medical inspection prior to his entering prison, Valpreda had bruising around his left eye, bruising that had cleared up by the time he was arrested on 15 December. Some of the witnesses remembered the bruising when they claimed they had met Valpreda after the Piazza Fontana massacre. This was another contradiction that does not appear to have raised doubts in the minds of Cudillo and Occorsio, who indicted Valpreda's relatives for perjury. Inexplicably, though, no action was taken against Segre who made the same claims.

To add to the charge sheet, on 7 February Beniamino Zagari from Milan police headquarters stated that the bag containing the unexploded bomb in the Banca Commerciale Italiana contained a piece of stained glass similar to that used by Valpreda in the manufacture of his liberty lamps. An unforgivable oversight by the anarchist bomber.

According to the police, the discovery of this incredible evidence dated back to 2.00 pm. on 14 December 1969, but nobody spotted the coloured glass until February. Valpreda's defence counsel, Guido Calvi, was easily able to cast doubt on this "heaven-sent" discovery.

As the judges saw it, Valpreda arrived in Milan in his Fiat 500 on 12 December. At 4.00 pm. he took a taxi to plant his bomb in the Piazza Fontana. On the morning of 13 December he accompanied his lawyer Mariani to see Judge Amati. He failed to find him and left a note to say that he would return on 15 December. Then he left for Rome in his beaten-up Fiat 500.

That evening he bumped into the danseuse Ughetto and went to dinner with her. On Sunday 14 December he was back in the bar near the Ambra-Jovinelli theatre where he was seen by others who would be able to give the lie to his alibi. He was still in Rome as of 9.00 pm. By 8.00 am. the following day he was back in Milan with his lawyer .

Technically, using a different car perhaps, this was feasible. But it defies belief that Valpreda would have put together a false alibi that could so readily be rebutted by so many people. Just as it defies understanding why Valpreda's relatives and his girlfriend Segre, with whom he had not spoken at the moment of his arrest, were able to confirm what Valpreda had said. Cudillo and Occorsio had a different version of the truth — Valpreda was guilty. Not only

was he a liar, but his parents were also lying. Especially when Rolandi was telling the truth and was in for the 50 million lire reward from the Interior ministry. Cudillo and Occorsio made sure this truth was written into the record in an interrogation 'for future use', perhaps they foresaw Rolandi's death on 16 July 1971.

VIII. - THE PONTE DELLA GHISOLFA CROWD

Giuseppe Pinelli's death marked the first deep fracture in a bewildered Italian public opinion. The mountain of charges levelled at Pietro Valpreda and the other anarchists from the Circolo 22 Marzo still stood. But Pinelli's 'fall' from the fourth floor at police headquarters — someone well-known and well-respected in leftwing circles in Milan — had left many bewildered. The contradictory evidence from the police, the false statements from police chief Marcello Guida and the unlawful detention had not gone unnoticed.
And when, on 27 December 1969, Pinelli's widow and mother filed a complaint and sued Guida, some newspapers began to back-pedal over Pinelli's guilt and suicide. 'The suit concerns ongoing and aggravated defamation. The complaint relates to breaches of professional confidentiality'.

Police chief Guida allegedly committed both offences immediately after the railwayman's suicide by issuing statements to the press 'that he ought not to have done' and venturing 'assessments, interpretations and opinions' which the two Pinelli women regarded as defamatory of the person of their deceased relative" wrote Giampaolo Pansa in *La Stampa* on 28 December. He went on to say: "The three young criminal lawyers assisting the two women in this matter — Domenico Contestabile, Marcello Gentili and Renato Palmieri — have spoken. The charges brought by the lawyers are based on three points. Namely, that immediately after Pinelli's death the police chief stated 'in further press conferences' that all of the railwayman's alibis had collapsed.

According to the three lawyers, this involved 'grave and unfounded' claims that Guida allegedly repeated several times [...] The police chief's second 'offence' — that he was quick to draw a connection between the charges against Pinelli and 'the alleged suicide' by telling everyone that Pinelli had killed himself because he was compromised by the police officers' questioning [...] The third 'charge' against Guida (and the most serious one in the view of the three lawyers) was that he had named Pinelli as guilty of 'dynamite attacks'.

In short, many people wondered, if Pinelli were innocent, why did he kill himself? Why did three thousand people walk behind the anarchist' s coffin on 20 December in spite of the atmosphere of police intimidation? These were questions that ate away at the official truths of the police and magistrates. Who had lied about a fellow born in Milan in 1928 in the working class Porta Ticinese district?

Of stocky build, medium height, black whiskers and goatee, Pinelli left school after elementary level to work first as a waiter and later as a warehouse man. But leaving school early did not mean that he had given up on books: he

read them by the hundreds. He was a passionate self-educator. In 1944 he had been a runner for the resistance in Milan, the Brigata Franco where he became involved with a group of anarchist partisans. That meeting left its mark on his life and his anarchist activism can be traced back to those years.

He won a competition in 1954 and joined the railways as a labourer. The following year, he married and was to father two daughters, Silvia and Claudia.

In 1963 some youngsters set up the Gioventú libertario (Libertarian Youth) group and brought a breath of fresh air to the political atmosphere of Milan. Even though he was 35 and the others were little more than 20, Pinelli got on well with them. He became a natural point of contact between newcomers to anarchism and the older militants who had survived fascism.

Then things took a turn for the better. In 1965 he helped found the Circolo Sacco e Vanzetti in the Viale Murillo. The Milan anarchists hadn't had their own premises for ten years, but in 1969, the youngsters found premises in the Piazzale Lugano and dubbed it the Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfa, only a few metres away from the bridge of the same name overlooking countless gardens.

This was the time when the winds of May in France were blowing through Europe. Pinelli lived through the frenzy of those days: students were challenging the authorities and the workers were showing signs of running out of patience with the traditional unions. This atmosphere offered a tremendous opportunity to Pinelli who was trying to revive the USI (Unione Sindacale Italiana), the libertarian trade union which, under Armando Borghi's guidance in the 1920s, included among its membership a young Giuseppe De Vittorio, who was to win fame as the secretary of the CGIL.

The first of the CUBs (united rank and file committees), trade union structures independent of the three big trade union centrals, the CGIL, the CISL and the UIL, were coming into being. The most pugnacious of these CUBs was the one at ATM, the Milan tram company. It was led by a fifty year old who had been active in the anarchist movement in the immediate post-war years.

There was considerable affinity between the tram worker and Pinelli the railway worker. The CUBs found the Ponte della Ghisolfa premises the most appropriate place to get together (until the climate created by the bombs on 12 December and the campaign against the anarchists prompted the members of the CUBs to look for other premises). Pinelli was forever on the look-out for chances for confrontation, reaching out to those who had lost patience with the official unions. Another circle was opened in the Via Scaldasole, a favourite meeting place for students galvanised by the revolt in Paris in May '68. The situation was excitable to say the least, but unlike the 'chaotic' structures the newspapers wrote about later, the Milan anarchists (and they were not alone) did have well defined small groups of militants who knew one another well.

In Milan the Gioventù Libertaria changed its name to *Bandiera Nera.* This group included, in addition to Pinelli, another worker — Cesare Vurchio, born in Canosa di Puglia in 1931. Pinelli worked closely with Vurchio. They were of a similar age and both had families to support. The rest of the members were

youngsters, some of them still students.

One of these youths, Amedeo Bertolo, although only 28 years old, already had some experience inasmuch as he had been involved in a spectacular incident in 1962 — the abduction of Spain's vice-consul in Milan, Isu Elias. It had been the first political kidnapping since the war.

What was the reason for the abduction? Early in September 1962 a young Spanish anarchist, Jorge Cunill Valls had been condemned to death by a court martial in Barcelona for anti-Francoist activities. Speed was essential.

Bertolo — who had met Cunill in person a month earlier, during a 'mission' organised by the clandestine Spanish Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (FIJL Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation) — quickly set the abduction in motion on 29 September, together with a half a dozen anarchists and 'restless' socialists.

The kidnapping dominated the front pages of the international press for days and triggered a campaign of anti-Francoist solidarity and brought considerable pressure to bear on the Franco regime at several levels — from street demonstrations to the 'humanitarian' intervention by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI (1963-1978). The death sentence on Conill was commuted after three days to one of thirty years imprisonment and Isu Elias was immediately released.

His kidnappers were quickly identified and jailed. The last of these, Bertolo, who had fled to France, spontaneously and quixotically surrendered himself at the courthouse just as the trial in Varese opened. The trial itself was covered by much of the Italian press as an indictment of the Spanish fascist government rather than of the young Italian anti-Francoists.

On 21 November all the accused were found guilty but received nominal sentences. For Bertolo (who, in April 1969, was to be among the founders of the Croce nera anarchica, dissolved after Valpreda's release in 1973) the sentence was six months imprisonment for the kidnapping and 20 days for unlawfully bearing arms. In their judgement, the judges, presided over by Judge Eugenio Zumin, recognised that the accused had 'acted on motives of particular moral and social import'. They were all found blameless and released on parole.

IX - IT ALL STARTED IN APRIL

During the feast of the Liberation, 25 April 1969, a bomb exploded in the FIAT stand at the Fiera campionaria in Milan. It was nearly 7.00 pm and 20 people were injured, though none of them seriously. Shortly before 9.00 pm. a further explosion ocurred in the Central Station at the bureau de change of the Banca Nazionale delle Communicazioni — again, fortunately, with few people injured. No lives were lost, but that was only by luck. Both bombs had been activated by a timing device.

Figures released the Interior Ministry stated that these terrorist attacks had been preceded by 32 other attacks. By the end of the year the number of explosions and arson attacks stood at 53. But other sources counted as many as

140. Why the disparity? Because only those attacks for which someone had been denounced or arrested made it into the ministry's figures. Attacks by persons unknown were not included in the official statistics.

In the case of the 25 April bomb attacks (with their echoes of the partisan war and 'leftwing' targeting of those standard-bearers of Italian capitalism, FIAT, and Italian financial institutions), there was a trio on the job that was to become famous by the end of the year — Inspector Luigi Calabresi, his superior Antonino Allegra and Judge Antonio Amati.

All three took off on the anarchist trail. They rounded up fifteen anarchists of whom they detained four — Paolo Braschi, Paolo Faccioli, Giovanni Carradini and his wife Eliane Vincileone.

Whereas the first two were very young and virtually unknown in leftwing circles in Milan, Corradini and Vincileone enjoyed a certain renown. He was an architect and they both had a wide circle of acquaintances. They were good friends, indeed, of the publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli and his fourth wife Sibilla Melega. This led to Corradini and Vincileone being depicted as the organisational brains — the master-minds — behind the attacks.

Corradini was regarded by the Special Branch as an anarchist theorist because he had been in charge, in 1963, of running the monthly *Materialismo e libertà*, a paper deemed to have broken new ground in anarchist circles, but one that had been short-lived, running to only three issues.

In addition to this foursome there was also Angelo Piero Della Savia, who was extradited from Switzerland and Tito Pulsinelli who was picked up in Riccione on 22 August. Pulsinelli was arrested with Enrico Rovelli who was, however, soon released. He dropped out of the investigation and joined the ranks of Inspector Calabresi's informants. His role was finally exposed during the inquiries into the attack carried out outside police headquarters in Milan by Gianfranco Bertoli, an individualist anarchist, on 17 March 1970. Rovelli turned up a year later, still at large on the streets of Milan, as the organiser of big rock concerts and manager of the celebrated Rolling Stones Club on the Corso XXII Marzo.

The anarchists were charged with both of the 25 April bomb attacks (conveniently, this ocurred three days after the parliament was due to debate draft legislation on disarming the police and which, in view of the climate at the time, was set aside) and of another 18 lesser offences. The anarchists allegedly confessed to a number of the latter offences, but consistently rejected the charges relating to the 25 April bombings. When it came to court, they retracted their 'admissions', stating these had been extorted by Inspector Calabresi.

Corradini and Vicileone were freed from prison on 7 December 1969 for lack of evidence and their alibi having been confirmed by Feltrinelli and Melega, (although the latter were indicted for perjury, a charge that was to collapse when it eventuallycame to court).

The trial opened on 22 April 1971, nearly two years after the initial arrests. The accused were cleared of the Fiera campionaria and Central Station attacks

on 28 May, after 36 sittings , but were convicted of six of the minor attacks. The sentences handed down were: Della Savia — eight years: Braschi — six years and ten months: Faccioli — three years and six months. These sentences were later reduced by the Court of Appeal in April 1976. Pulsinelli was cleared of all charges.

The trial ended with a substantial repudiation of the inquiries made by Inspector Calabresi and of Judge Amati's examination. The charges brought against the anarchists relied mainly upon two witnesses, that of Rosemma Zublena and another whose name was to crop up again — ballistics expert Teonesto Cerri.

Zublena, Braschi's former lover was twenty years or older than him and proved totally unreliable under cross-examination. She accused the young anarchists of the bombings, claiming that Braschi and the others had told her about their activities. Cornered by the defence lawyers, who exposed the contradictions in her evidence she tried, unsuccessfully, to claim Giuseppe Pinelli as the source of her information. Finally, after more pressure, she came out with the statement that said it all: 'I have merely repeated what Calabresi knew.'

Even the prosecution counsel, Antonio Scopelliti, in his final summing up told the court to ignore her evidence: 'The court should pay no heed to this witness who has stained a number of the pages of this indictment with her gross and cumbersome presence [...] The role of witness is not suited to Zublena and the trial records have plainly exposed her weakness as a witness."

Cerri, by contrast, stuck to his accusations by alleging theft of explosives from a quarry in Grone — a theft that had never been reported and which those in charge at the quarry denied had ever taken place. Yet, flying in the face of all reason, the jury confirmed the theft from the quarry. Why? — to justify the sentence handed down for the six minor offences and, incidentally, to show that Valpreda could have had explosives in his possession.

Even more seriously, however, the court chairman, Paolo Curatolo, ignored a document published at the beginning of December 1969 in the *Observer* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Britain. International experts had pronounced the document reliable. This was a secret memorandum addressed to the Greek Foreign Affairs minister in which premier Giorgios Papadopoulos was briefed on the results of a provocative campaign mounted in Italy by the Greek government over some time — with the connivance of fascist groups and "some representatives from the army and the carabinieri." The report speculated about the chances of a rightwing coup d'etat through an escalation by action groups which had been in operation for some time past.

The 3-page dossier assessed the activities of Luigi Turchi, a Movimento Sociale [Italiana] (MSI) deputy and by an unidentified Mr P. It read: "Only on 25 April was it possible to mount the actions scheduled for earlier. The alteration to our plans was forced upon us by the fact that it was hard to gain access to the FIAT pavilion. Both actions have had a considerable impact." The

other action had been the Central Station explosion.

But then another even more sensational development occurred. On 13 April 1971 — a few days prior to the opening of the proceedings in Milan — Giancarlo Stiz, the examining magistrate in Treviso, issued warrants for the arrest of Giovanni Ventura, a 27 year old publisher and bookseller from Castelfranco Veneto, Franco Freda, a 35 year old prosecution counsel from Padua and Franco Trinco, a 28 year old student.

Judge Stiz accused them of conspiracy to subvert and 'procurement of war materials' but also — above all— of planning bomb attacks in Turin in April 1969 and on the state railways in August 1969. Freda and Ventura would later be sentenced to 15 years in 1987 for these outrages and for the 25 April 1969 bombings in Milan.

However, there was one worrying detail with regard to this matter. Gianni Casalini of the Padua Nazi group (and an SID informant code-name Turco) had told the secret services he had driven to Milan with a Ivano Toliolo, a confidant of Freda's, who had brought with him a bag containing explosives. But Gianadelio Maletti, director of the SID's D division, decided to bury this information.

What happened in August 1969?

Ten trains travelling between Northern and Central-Southern Italy were targeted by eight bombs which exploded between one o'clock and three o'clock on 9 August — another two failed to explode. Twelve people, passengers and railway employees, were injured. The cost-benefit outcome for the perpetrators was certainly not favourable. A lot of logistical effort had been deployed (the bomb on the Pescara-Rome train had needed the direct involvement of Freda and Ivan Biondo, also from the Nazi group in Padua) even though the desired effect was not produced. A climate of alarm was created, but no life had been lost.

Investigators Allegra and Calabresi again headed down the anarchist trail. Allegra, the head of the Milan Special Branch, put this allegation to Giuseppe Pinelli who laughed in his face. Ont that occasion, too, August 1969, the press ran with the police misinformation. On 13 August *La Stampa* carried a piece by-lined g.m. entitled 'Anarchists have gone to ground to escape questioning'.

'In the wake of the train bombings ' wrote the Turin daily's correspondent, 'the Milanese anarchists dropped out of circulation. Partly to go on holidays, partly to to avoid police questioning, they have sought a change of air. Some were reounded up last April on charges relating to a flurry of attacks, of which the one at the Fair in Milan was one. Notwithstanding the evidence gathered by the police, those arrested still denied all the charges: perhaps the courts will establish the truth. The Milan anarchists have 'gone to ground' and the premises of La Comune at 39 Via Lanone and of the Ponte della Ghisolfa group have been closed. After the Fair bombing, it seemed as if the young anarchists' organisation had been smashed: in reality, their black flag was never taken down: the ranks have been reshuffled in accordance with new criteria to render

it more difficult to identify new recruits.'

The article closed with some fantastic allegations: 'Up until some time ago the anarchists in Milan were few in number, bereft of resources and unorganised. Now someone had taken it into his head to exploit their utopianism. The anarchists have been wooed and funded by the totalitarian right and the leftwing extremists.'

Notwithstanding back-up from the press, the police in several cities failed to arrest or charge anyone — but the climate was right for a clamp-down on extremists. And so, in Milan, at dawn on 19 August, 150 police and carabinieri forced their way into the former Commercio hotel, now rechristened the Casa dell studente e del lavoratore. The building, due for demolition, was in the Piazza Fontana, directly opposite the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura branch.

Squatted after a student meeting on 28 November 1968, the premises had become a regular meeting-place for the far left: the newspapers described it as 'a headquarters of Maoist and anarchist contestation.' The police burst in on 58 sleeping people who were rounded up for identification. Three were arrested and released on 22 August. Immediately after the police forced entry, a demolition team went into action and within hours the premises had been reduced to rubble.

X - NAZIS IN DISGUISE

Mestre, June 1968. Early that month a rash of flyposters appeared singing the praises of Mao Tse Tung. Car-owners found their vehicles daubed with slogans extolling the leadership of the Chinese chairman. An act of daring by Venetian Maoists? No. The perpetrators were three young activists from the city's neo-Nazi Ordine Nuovo group: Delfo Zorzi, Paolo Molin and Martino Siciliano. Siciliano was the one who confessed to the provocations on 6 October 1995 to M Guido Salvini, the Milan magistrate who investigated the Piazza Fontana outrage from 1989 to 1997: 'we did the graffiti on vehicles parked in the area in order to annoy the residents and take the provocation as far as it would go.'

On 15 May 1969, seven members of the fascists *Giovane Italia* were arrested in Palermo charged with attacks which had taken place between April and the day before their arrest. They had attacked the Regina Pacis church, the carabinieri stations in Castellammare and Pretoris, the recruit training barracks and Ucciardone prison. In Legnano, on 15 September 1969, 26 year old Ettore Alzati, a travelling salesman, and 19 year old Ermanno Carensuola, a haulage firm employee, were arrested. They confessed to throwing a petrol bomb at the entrance to a club where an *Avanti!* festival was taking place. But the arson attempt failed as the bottle smashed without exploding. They then tried to set fire to posters advertising the event, but with the same disappointing outcome. Before leaving, and now weaponless apart from some paint, they daubed a huge circled A on a wall.

They stood outside the Club Turati and daubed 'Long live Mao' on the wall. Alzati and Carensuola were rightwing extremists, members of the Legnano

branch of the MSI.

Three instances from among so many that prompt the question: what was happening? Had even fascists and Nazis been touched by the events of May 1968 in France? What were the origins of these strange groups who described themselves as Nazi-Maoists? Why were rightwing extremists mounting attacks and trying to blame the anarchists? Was this spontaneity or part of some plan?

Croce Nera Anarchica members in Milan, Giuseppe Pinelli for one, favoured the latter explanation. In the first issue of the Anarchist Black Cross Bulletin, published in June 1969, they wrote apropos of the Palermo incidents: 'Emotionally disturbed though the neo-fascists may be, we are not so naive as to believe in seven of them going ga-ga at the same time. Plainly, their actions were part of some plan.'

The bulletin's editors explored their hypothesis: 'For fascists to strike at "anarchist" targets is explicable only if the objective is 1) to whip up a panic about subversive attacks in order to justify a police crackdown and a tightening-up by the authorities, 2) to bring anarchists (and, by extension, the Left) into disrepute.

It is an essential part of the first of these purposes and would suit the second, that some innocent person be injured or, better still (if more dangerously) killed.' The article ended with a prophecy. 'What has happened in Palermo bears out what we said immediately after the 25 April attacks in Milan (at the Fair and the railway station): the attackers do not come from our ranks. And the police's insistence in arresting and detaining anarchists gives rise to grave suspicions.'

After the train bombings on 9 August, the *Croce Nera* bulletin (No 2, August 1969), stated: 'Where there is an authoritarian regime in place, in the lead-up to the advent of some important statesman, special checks are carried out and hotheads, subversives and anarchists are detained by the police, some to help with inquiries, some on criminal charges: all as a precautionary measure. So, in this ghastly year of 1969, we wonder: what on earth is going on in Italy?'

The bombs on 12 December 1969 answered that question.

The *Croce Nera* bulletin editors had an inkling that something was afoot but obviously were not yet in possession of all the facts. For instance, they were not to know that the 'Chinese manifestos' operation and the other terrorist operations mounted by fascists which purported to be the work of anarchists or Maoists, represented the prologue to the 'strategy of tension'.

They had no way of knowing that the idea of having posters printed up by the tens of thousands and distributed for sticking up by Nazi-fascist groups originated with Federico Umberto D'Amato, head of the Confidential Affairs Bureau of the Interior Ministry. The details of that strategy had also been worked out in the document *Our Political Action*, seized from the premises of Aginter Press in Lisbon in 1974.

Aginter Press was a rightwing terrorist organisation run by Ralph Guerin Serac (an alias of Yves Félix Marie Guillou, born in France in 1926) and was one

of the mainstays of international fascist subversive activity.

The document stated that in addition to infiltrating pro-Chinese groups, propaganda operations should also be mounted that appear to emanate from their political adversaries— all for the purpose of adding to the climate of instability and creating a chaotic situation.

The Croce Nera people did not know at the time that the provocations and false trails were being overseen personally by D'Amato (holder of masonic membership card No 1643 in lodge P2). This only emerged later following statements to Judge Guido Salvini by Vincenzo Vinciguerra (the person responsible — with Carlo Cicuttini — of the Peteano attack on 31 May 1972 in which three carabinieri were killed and one wounded), a member of both Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale. Vinciguerra, a self-described 'revolutionary Nazi', had dissociated himself from his former comrades on the grounds that they were being manipulated by the secret services.

Throught 1969 the fascists persisted in carrying out attacks or spectacular actions and portraying them as the work of anarchists or leftwing extremists. The practice was to continue for years.

One more example. On the night of 15 October 1971 a bomb exploded outside Milan's Catholic University in Gemelli Square, causing some exterior damage to the building Who was behind it? As Siciliano explaned to Judge Salvini on 18 October 1994: "It was a spur-of-the-moment thing after a dinner in Marco Foscari's house at 19 Via Piceno in Milan. Those present were Foscari and his wife, Gianluigi Radice and his wife, Giambattista Cannata aka Tanino, and myself."

Siciliano arrived from Mestre with a mortar shell with no detonator. After dinner, the group decided to mount an attack which would be blamed on far left groups. Siciliano prepared the bomb using material Fornari had in the house: a detonator, firing powder and a fuse. He packed the space where the fuse should have been with firing powder, then fitted the detonator and fuse.

Once the technical business was over, the group discussed targeting. They decided on the Catholic University as they had the student card of a leftwing student at the university in the Piazza Gemelli. They had stolen it during mugging.

Cannata went with Siciliani in the former's Fiat 500 while the others stayed behind with the women. The idea was to leave the student card near the site of the explosion, but unfortunately they had forgotten to bring it with them. No matter; the fuse was lit and the device left near the railings as the pair hot-footed it back to the car and fled the scene. But without the leftist student's card the action did not have the desired effect. To confuse matters further, there was another bomb attack on the Communist Party's premises around the same time. As Angelo Angeli was to complain later, in a letter to Giancarlo Esposti (both neo-Nazis) the two incidents were effectively linked in the newspaper reports.

But the neo-Nazi groups did not only mount operations posing as leftists. They had been training for insurgency and attacks on leftwing party premises

and leftist militants well before 1969. Training and ideological indoctrination took place at paramilitary training camps around the country where arms and explosives were collected and stored. It was in one of these camps in Pian del Rascino that Esposti met his death in 1974.

Early in 1965, Siciliano, Piercarlo Montagner and Zorzi were in the car of Triveneto area Ordine Nuovo leader, Carlo Maria Maggi, bound for a marble quarry near Arzignano del Chiampo in Vicenza province, an area well known to Zorzi who had been born there. They broke into the explosives store and stole nearly 40 kilos of ammonal, detonators and other explosives and slow-burning fuses. It was a major haul, one which was too big to fit all the material into the car, so they hid part of it — well away from the quarry. They then returned to Mestre while Zorzi set about hiding their booty.

A few days later they were back in Arzignano. This time they travelled as far as Vicenza by train, then by Pullman to Arzignano. They hid the explosives and fuses under their coats and made their way back to Venice.

Ordine Nuovo's Venetian militants grew increasingly active throughout 1969. They trained regularly in the use of gelignite. The bomb that exploded in Milan on 12 December consisted of a kilo and a half of gelignite.

Zorzi had procured the dark red sticks of explosives through Carlo Digilio who had been sold them by Roberto Rotelli, a Venetian smuggler who specialised in salvaging valuables from shipwrecks. "Rotelli told me he meant to sell the explosives, for which he had paid about 5 million (lire) of the proceeds of his cigarette smuggling. Rotelli came up with Zorzi's name as a potential buyer and I replied that he seemed to fit the bill", Digilio told Judge Salvini on 13 January 1996. Ane he added: "Zorzi was very concerned that the purchase should be kept a secret and I reassured him that none of us had anything to gain by talking about it."

Trieste 3-4 October 1969. Within a few days of this date, Italian president Giuseppe Saragat was due to pay a state visit to Yugoslav president Tito. Zorzi, Martino and Giancarlo Vianello met in the Piazzale Roma in Venice where they collected Maggi's large car from the garage. In the boot were two metal containers each filled with gelignite and attached pre-set timing devices. All that remained was to connect them up to the battery.

The whole operation had been prepared by Digilio, also known to the trio as Otto, a former legionnaire apparently well-versed in the use of weapons and explosives. But, unknown to the young Ordine Nuovo members, Digilio had another nick-name — Erodoto (Herodotus). This was his CIA agent code name in the Venice region. It was a name he had inherited when his father Michelangelo — also a man with US intelligence services connections — died in 1967. Zorzi's team set off for Trieste. Their first target was the Slovene School in the Rione San Giovanni. They planted the first bomb on a widow-sill after connecting up the battery and scattering anti-Slav leaflets. They then headed on to Gorizia and target number two. But forty minutes passed and they heard no boom. Forensics was to establish that the battery was completely flat:

'Evidently somebody had had other plans for the operation, because a mistake of that sort strikes me as impossible" , was Siciliano's comment to Judge Salvini on 18 October 1994.

It was daylight by the time they reached Gorizia. They waited for darkness to fall, then placed their bomb and leaflets by the pillar at the front of the old railway station. Then it was off to Venice. But the outcome was the same as before: the bomb was discovered, unexploded.

This prompted Giancarlo Rognoni — head of Ordine Nuovo in Milan, the La Fenice (Phoenix) Group, to restore the honour of his Venetian comrades and on 27 April 1974 two La Fenice militants blew up the Slovene School.

Fascists and neo-Nazis continued with their outrages for years, virtually right up until the end of the 1980s. Some have left a lasting impression in our collective memories — the Piazza della Loggia bombing in Brescia, the Italicus train bombing in 1974 and the bombing of Bologna railway station in 1980 to name only the most famous of them. But there were others that did not make it into the papers, even though they were important.

Take, for example the Calabrian town of Gioia Tauro, on 22 July 1970, when a TNT charge tore up part of the track outside that town. Six passengers were killed and another 54 injured. Investigators initially indicted four railway workers for culpable homicide, but this was no accident that could be put down to carelessness or negligence. It was an outrage that would be followed by further outrages against Calabrian trains.

According to evidence given in 1993, the perpetrators were allegedly Vito Silverini and Vincenzo Caracciolo (who died in 1987 and 1990 respectively). Apparently they had been paid to commit the outrage by the leaders of the Comitato d'azione per Reggio Capoluogo (Make Reggio the Capital Action Committee), effectively a Calabrian fascist pressure group.

Two Calabrian anarchists, Angelo Casile and Giovanni Aricò carried out a counter-investigation into this outrage and both men were killed on the night of 26-27 September 1970 — along with three other anarchists — when they skidded into a truck that had braked suddenly on the road from Reggio to Rome. Leftwing counter-investigators published some nonsense about the dynamics behind this incident. One thing they did say was that it was a calculated rightwing murder and it was no coincidence that the crash had taken place on to a stretch of road (about 60 kilometres from Rome) close to one of the estates of Prince Junio Valerio Borghese.

However, on 26 March 1994, Aricò's cousin, Antonio Perna, presented himself before Judge Salvini and gave a statement that the day before he set off for Rome, Aricò had confided in him that he had taken considerable important documentary evidence about the Gioia Tauro attack to Veraldo Rossi (known Aldo), a member of the FAI in Rome and editor of the weekly anarchist paper *Umanità Nova*. Perna claimed that when Aricò set off he had that documentary evidence with him, but no trace of it was found at the scene of the accident, nor were the address books of the five victims ever returned to their families.

Furthermore, Casile, one of the dead youths, had been interrogated that summer by Judge Eugenio Occorsio (investigating the bombings of 12 December 1969) and he had given a deposition that he had seen Giuseppe Schirinzi, an Avanguardia Nazionale member in Reggio Calabria, in Rome immediately after the cenotaph bombing and that in the heat of the moment he had accused him of being the perpetrator of the attack.

On 7 December 1969, only days before Casile ran into him in Rome, Schirinzi was convicted (with Aldo Pardo) for the attack on police headquarters in Reggio Calabria. But Schirinzi was no bomb-maker; he was a prominent member of Avanguardia Nazionale. In April 1968 it was he who went with Mario Merlino (the provocateur who helped Valpreda launch the Circolo 22 Marzo in Rome) on the crucial trip to the colonels' Greece. He had also tried to ingratiate himself into the Reggio Calabria anarchists' circle — known, ironically, as the 22 March Circle — in the summer of 1969.

XI - THE COMMUNIST PERIL

The fact that from the mid-1960 onwards fascists and Nazis stepped up their efforts to obtain arms and explosives was no casual matter. The strategy of tension theory was being elaborated— and elaborated openly. In Rome from 3 to 5 April 1965 leading exponents of the right gathered in the Parco dei principi hotel for a symposium on "Revolutionary Warfare", organised by the Alberto Pollio Institute of Military History.

Prominent figures who attended included Ordine Nuovo founder, Pino Rauti; Guido Giannettini,journalist and SID agent; and Edgardo Beltrametti and Enrico De Boccard, two journalists who went on to set up the Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato (State Defence Nuclei). Twenty or so students had also been invited. Among these were two whose names would crop up over and over again throughout those years: Stefano Delle Chiaie (the head of Avanguardia Nazionale) and his pupil, Mario Merlino.

While Rauti's and Giannettini's contributions drew applause, it was the university lecturer and Orientalist, Pio Filippani Ronconi, a cryptographer with the Defence Ministry and the SID who electrified the audience. The papers read at the symposium were published later that year as *La guerra rivoluzionaria* by the Gioacchino Volpe publishing house. The book enjoyed what was essentially a "militant" readership among the various far right groups. For instance, Paolo Molin from took a copy to show to Ordine Nuovo activists in Venice, including the members of the cell run by Delfo Zorzi.

The topic of the Parco dei principe symposium was the appropriate short term strategy to be adopted in the face of perceived communist advances and to keep Italy within the western orbit. In his paper "Hypothesis for a Revolution", Filippani Ronconi suggested a security provision organised a various levels — operational as well as hierarchical. The grassroots would be professionals — teachers and small industrialists — people capable of carrying out only wholly passive and non-risky activities, but the sort of people in a

position to boycott communist promoted initiatives.

The next level consisted of people capable of "bringing pressure to bear" through lawful demonstrations: these were people who would rally to the defence of the State and of the laws.

"At the third, more skilled and professionally specialised level" Filippani Ronconi argued, "would be the very select and hand-picked units (set up anonymously and immediately) trained to carry out counter-terror and possible 'upsets' at times of crisis to bring about a different realignment of forces in power. These units, each unknown to each other, but coordinated by a leadership committee, could be recruited, partly, from among those youngsters who were currently squandering their energies to no effect in noble demonstrative ventures."

With regard to the senior level of the organisation, Ronconi added: "A Council should be established above these levels on a 'vertical' basis to coordinate activities as part of an all-out war against subversion by communists and their allies. These represent the nightmare which looms over the modern world and prevents its natural development."

Texts on the threat of communism were nothing new, but here was something which was qualitatively new — and it was not just a theoretical essay. The organisation outlined by Filippani Ronconi was already being set up and would shortly become operational.

In 1966 2,000 or so army officers received a leaflet through the post from the Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato. Its authors aimed to play on the servicemen's pride: "Officers! The perilous state of Italian politics demands your decisive intervention. The task of eliminating the infection before it becomes deadly is one for the Armed Forces. There is no time to lose: delay and inertia represents cowardice. To suffer the vulgar rabble who would govern us would be tantamount to kowtowing to subversion and a betrayal of the State. Loyal servicemen of considerable prestige have already formed the Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato within the Armed Forces. You too should join the NDS. Either you join the victorious struggle against subversion or subversion will raise its gallows for you. In which case it will be the just deserts of traitors."

The authors and distributors of this leaflet were Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, two of the main protagonists of the outrages.

Another individual of some note in this tale appeared on the scene at this time: Guido Lorenzon. Lorenzon was an officer on the establishment of the base in Aviano at the time who was among those who received the leaflet. He mentioned it to his friend Ventura and — surprise, surprise — Ventura admitted that he was one of the authors of the document. He would eventually be convicted with Freda in 1987 of incitement to crime.

Along with the Freda and Ventura, someone else was working to set up the Nuclei di Difesa dello Stato network — which shadowed the better-known, but more dangerous secret army organisation, *Gladio*.

After a refresher course with the Third Army Corps in Milan in the autumn

and winter of 1966-1967, Major (now colonel) Amos Spiazza, in charge of the army's I (Intelligence) Bureau in Verona was tasked by his superiors "individually and by word of mouth" to shadow Gladio's structure in his home city. As Spiazza told Guido Salvini on 2 June 1994: "I was also informed that, on a region by region basis and province by province, personnel with similar characteristics needed to be recruited, in units as water-tight as possible and trained in three man teams [...] using the services of instructors from the local units [...] These Nuclei adopted the designation of Legions [...]. In this way I set up the Fifth Legion with 50 hand-picked people ".

Spiazza, who had been front-page news in 1974 over his involvement with the Rosa dei Venti subversive network, continued: "At meetings [...] there was pressure for ever closer collaboration with the Corps, with existing political associations such as the Friends of the Armed Forces, the Pollio Institute, *Combattentismo attivo*, in order to bind our efforts into active endeavour to defend, support and make propaganda on behalf of the Armed Forces and the values for which they stand."

Spiazzi's involvement was not limited to training: he organised conferences and debates, contributed to the journal of General Francesco Nardella's Movimento di Opinione Publica (Nardello was a member of Licio Gelli's P2) and was in touch with Adamo Degli Occhi, a Milan lawyer who led the demonstrations of the alleged *Maggioranza Silenziosa* (Silent Majority), and with Junio Valerio Borghese's National Front (Borghese had been commander of the Decima MAS and had defected to the Salò Republic in 1943).

He stated: "Every single thing I did outside the service within the context of these activities was known to my I Bureau superiors."

From the Veneto region to Lombardy, and, more precisely, to the Valtellina, Carlo Fumagalli was a mythic figure as far as his men were concerned. As a commander during the resistance, he had headed a non-aligned unit, *I Gufi*, made up of "white" partisans. His group had worked closely with the American wartime clandestine service, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, later the CIA), for which he received the Bronze Star at the end of the war. Fumagelli maintained his links with the American intelligence services and at the end of the 1960s he was ready to help influence the Italian political system towards a presidential structure with an even more emphatically pro-NATO stance.

Fumagalli had set up the Movimento di Azione Rivoluzionaria (MAR) and to provides cover for its illegal activities, he ran a garage which specialised in off-the-road vehicles and associated activities. He wholeheartedly adopted the strategy of provocation through attacks intended to be blamed on the left, but the coup d'etat for which he yearned had none of the pro-nazi connotations of his "allies". Not that this stopped him from mounting spectacular operations.

Milan, 7 January 1971. A fire started in the Pirelli-Bicocca tarpaulin depot in the Viale Sarca took ten hours to burn out. The damage was estimated at a thousand million lire at the time. During the fire a 30 year old worker,

Gianfranco Carminati, lost his life. Years later Gaetano Orlando, the man regarded as the MAR"s ideologue admitted: "The MAR group's plan was that the attack should be put down to the Red Brigades which were on the rise at the time".

"I remember the Pirelli attacks at the beginning of 1971 and can confirm that our organisation had nothing to do with big fire at the Pirelli-Bicocca tarpaulin depot" was the claim made on 23 July 1991 by Roberto Franceschini, the then leader of the Red Brigades in Milan, who has since severed all ties with terrorism.

Exactly one month earlier, on 7 December 1970, a number of armed columns led by Prince Borghese from the Fronte Nazionale entered Rome. Among the main financial backers of the operation were Remo Orlandi, a Rome builder and Borghese's right hand man, and Attilio Lercari, from Genoa, the administrator with Piaggio. The objective was to seize the main political headquarters, the RAI station and the airport, while Stefano Delle Chiaie's men (Avanguardia Nazionale personnel) were to seize control of the operations centre at the Interior Ministry. The ministry would be handed over to the carabinieri while the AN people rounded up political opponents for internment on the Aeolian islands. Ships provided by Genoa shipping magnate Cameli were on stand-by to transport them.

It was a classic coup d'etat. But something went awry, or somebody backed out. After a frantic round of phone calls the would-be coup-makers pulled out of Rome. Roberto Palotto and Saverio Ghiacci who, with other Avanguardia Nazionale militants, had succeeded in getting inside the Interior Ministry (with the help of Salvatore Drago, the duty physician at the ministry and P2 member), had to evacuate the building at speed. But the coup attempt was not confined to the capital.

"The Major told us to wear civilian clothes and maintain a state of readiness", remembered Enzo Ferro one of Spiazza's junior officers doing his army service in the Montorio barracks in Verona in December 1970. "We were due to be brought to the Porta Bra district in Verona, to the premises of the Associazione mutilati e invalidi di guerra, where the *Movimento di Opinione Pubblica* bulletin was published. [...] We were told that we were to step in and could not back out and that, on reaching the muster-point, we would be armed and taken into the area where we would be providing back-up for the *coup d'etat*. Every civilian and military cell would be involved. But Major Spiazzi told us in person around 1.30am that orders standing-down the operation had been received from Milan."

"In Venice too [...] on the night of 7 December, arrangements had been made for people to muster at specific points. Muster they did, but shortly after that the stand-down orders arrived, much to the disappointment of all those present [...] The rendezvous point was the Naval Dockyard — that is the area outside the Naval Command. In connection with these initiatives I reported regularly to Verona (to the FTASE command), which I then briefed on various

developments" explained Carlo Digilio, who was linked with the Venice Ordine Nuovo group and had been a CIA asset since 1967. The agent to whom Digilio reported was Sergio Minetto, head of the CIA network in the Triveneto area. Minetto, of course, denied his part in the affair. The FTASE to which Digilio alludes was the general command of the Atlantic Alliance in Southern Europe.

"In Reggio Calabria, "recalled Carmine Dominici, a member of Avanguardia Nazionale — led in that city by the Marchese Felice Genoese Zerbi — "we were all mobilised and ready to do our bit. Zerbi said he had been given carabinieri uniforms and that we would be going on patrol with them, also in connection with the drive to arrest political opponents named on certain lists which had been drawn up. We remained in a state of readiness almost until 2.00 am., but then we were all told to go home."

Other evidence, again collected by Judge Salvini, revealed that in many places around Italy, servicemen, civilians and carabinieri were on stand-by to act in support of the *coup d'etat* in Rome.

The man who called a halt to the operation was in fact its mastermind, Licio Gelli who was also to have supervised the kidnapping of Giuseppe Saragat, Italy's president. Gelli was later to exploit the involvement in the coup of a number of high-ranking officers for his own blackmail purposes and long-term intrigues.

But the verdicts handed down in November 1978, November 1984 and finally by the Court of Cassation in March 1986 cleared the conspirators of all charges. As for Gelli and the conspiratorial activity of the members of lodge P2 over many years, a definitive ruling from the Court of Cassation on 21 November 1996 found that Gelli should be sentenced to — but not serve— 8 years, solely for the offence of procuring sensitive intelligence, thereby closing the case begun in 1981, when the Guardia di Finanza discovered a list of 962 names of P2 lodge members in Gelli's home, the Villa Wanda, in Castiglion Fibocchi.

That investigation had been taken from Milan magistrates Gherardo Colombo and Giuliano Turone and transferred to Rome. The prosecutors in the capital had done their duty and stymied the investigation.

XII - WE WILL HAVE ORDER, BUT IT WILL BE A NEW ORDER

Two of the protagonists in our tale, Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale, were important and leading players. Why? According to the most recent evidence it was members of these organisations that carried out the outrages in Milan and Rome on 12 December 1969 . But they were not merely the operatives of terror. The relationship between the executors and the master-minds was more complicated than that. It was not a simple case of "Take this bomb and go and blow the thing to kingdom come". There was a web of complicities, promptings, assistance and mutual blackmail that added up to some of the most poisonous pages in Italian history. A history that witnessed the Interior

Ministry itself, in the shape of the man in charge at the ministry, Franco Restivo and many of his successors, especially Federico Umberto D'Amato, head of the Confidential Affairs Bureau (disbanded in 1978) as puppet-masters of the strategy of tension.

The bottom dropped out D'Amato's world (who died on 1 August 1996) when, at the end of that year, 150,000 or so uncatalogued files (from which some of the most compromising documents may well have been removed) were discovered in a villa in the Via Appia on the outskirts of Rome — and not just documents either. There was, for example, the dial of the timer used in the 9 August 1969 bombing of the Pescara-Rome train (the one carried out by Franco Freda himself).

This documentation, uncovered on 4 October 1996, after D'Amato's demise, by Aldo Giannuli, an expert appointed by Judge Salvini, added up to an alternative record of the goings-on at the Viminale Palace. They contained information on many of the stories bound up with domestic espionage activity. It was a secret archive that had never been shredded, simply deposited higgledy-piggledy in a dump— perhaps for possible future use.

At this point we need to go back forty years or so when, in 1956, Giuseppe Rauti, known as Pino, began to display signs of intolerance towards the "petit bourgeois and legalitarian" policy of Arturo Michelini, the secretary of his party, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). Michelini had been elected supreme leader of the Italian neofascists in 1954 and was regarded as too soft in the parliamentary confrontations between the Christian Democratic right and the "hard-liners" from Giorgio Almirante's faction.

Rauti was one of the hardest of hard-liners. He broke away from the MSI to set up the Ordine Nuovo study centre with Clemente Graziani, Paolo Signorelli, Stefano Serpieri and Stefano Delle Chiaie. In the Autumn of 1969, when Giorgio Almirante became secretary of the MSI, Rauti returned to the party and dissolved the study centre. This was only a formality as the Ordine Nuovo groups and organisation continued operating for several more years.

In 1958 Delle Chiaie began to cut loose from Rauti's apron strings and in 1960 this led to his launching Avanguardia Nazionale. This latter organisation was formally disbanded in 1966 to allow many of its members to rejoin the MSI, but in 1968 Delle Chiaie formally refloated the never disbanded organisation.

Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale were substantially the same ideologically. Their main theoretical reference point was the philosopher Julius Evola, whom Rauti had known in the later 1940s. Their programmes were based on the struggle against communism and capitalism and in support of a corporatist State, following the model of the revolutionary nationalist programme of the Fasci di Combattimento established in the Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan on 28 August 1919. That programme had been refined (in its presentation at least) by the Salò Republic (the volunteers of which had included the then 17 year old Rauti). The fight was also directed against the parliamentary system and all forms of democracy, in order to bring about an

aristocratic and organic State, borrowing the ideas of Nazi Germany. The ultimate goal was a New European Order.

In practice, both organisations shared Italian territory: Ordine Nuovo's groups were loctated primarily in the North, whereas those of Avanguardia Nazionale were based mainly in Rome and the South.

By the spring of 1969 they began to operate jointly. The Venetian leadership of Ordine Nuovo met the Rome-based leaders of Avanguardia Nazionale on 18 April 1969 in Padua, in the home of Ivano Toniolo, one of Freda's most loyal lieutenants. With the blessing of Carlo Maria Maggi, the boss of Ordine Nuovo in the Triveneto area and of the national leadership, Signorelli and Rauti. From then on the two organisations were to operate in concert with each other, at least in large scale operations. On 25 April the bombs exploded in Milan (at the Fair and at Central Station).

An operational axis had been formed stretching from Venice through Padua to Milan, down to the capital and as far as Reggio Calabria. And the personnel? Venice was represented by Delfo Zorzi, Martino Siciliano, Giancarlo Vianello (who infiltrated Lotta Continua in 1970, fell in love with a member of that group and eventually parted company with his fascist colleagues), Paolo Molin and Piercarlo Montagner — with "technical" backup from Carlo Digilio.

In Padua, under Freda's leadership, there were Giovanni Ventura, Massimiliano Fachini and Marco Pozzan. Giancarlo Rognoni was the acknowledged leader of the La Fenice group in Milan. In Rome, Delle Chiaie presided over Avanguardia Nazionale, while in Reggio Calabria its bulwark was the Marchese Felice Genoese Zerbi who could call on a sizable band of determined militants such as Carmine Dominici, Giuseppe Schirinzi and Aldo Pardo.

These were characters with chequered pasts. Freda and Ventura were eventually to be convicted of 17 attacks mounted between 15 April and 9 August 1969 (including the bombings in Milan on 25 April and the train bombings on 9 April). Rognoni was spared 23 years in prison by going on the run, primarily to Spain. And was in fact sentenced in his absence for an attack mounted by his lieutenant, Nico Azzi.

On 7 April 1973 a bomb exploded in a toilet on the Turin-Rome train, but the bomber, Azzi, however, did not get away unscathed. The device had explode while he was handling it — or rather it went off between his legs. He was injured, arrested, tried and sentenced to 20 years. Two other La Fenice members — Mauro Marzorati and Francisco De Min — ended up in jail with him.

The attack, planned in the presence of Ordine Nuovo ideologue Paolo Signorelli, was intended to distract the Milan magistrates' inquiries into the Piazza Fontana bombing — and as a focus for a Maggioranza Silenziosa demonstration planned for Milan on 12 April. Following the bombing someone was to have made a telephone call claiming responsibility on behalf of a leftwing organisation.

A strong character, tough, quick to use his fists, his face frequently marked by wounds, he was not impressed by the sight of blood and inflicted punishments personally on errant colleagues. But at the same time he was introverted and fascinated with both Buddhism and Evola's ideas. This was how Siciliano described his leader, Zorzi. This was the man who would confess on at least two occasions that he had had a hand in the 12 December 1969 bombing in Milan.

On 31 December 1969, Zorzi, Siciliano and Vianello were celebrating New Year's Eve with a visit to prostitutes in the Corso del Popolo in Mestre. "This was a *cameratesca* practice linked to the fascist notion of virility", Siciliano noted. They then went to Vianello's home for a meal, a drink and to sing fascist songs. The conversation then turned to the bombings of a few days earlier.

Siciliano told Judge Salvini on 8 June 1996: "Zorzi reminded us that according to our greatest theorists even blood can serve as a trigger for a national revolution which, launched in Italy, could be the salvation of Europe by rescuing it from communism. He picked up on the line that had already been given out in Padua — that the common people, stricken and defenceless, would clamour for a strong State, especially since the strategy anticipated that such serious incidents would be laid at the door of the far left."

According to Siciliano, Zorzi's closing remarks were: "He gave us clearly to understand that the anarchists had had no hand or part in anything and that they had been used as scapegoats simply because of their history — that sort of charge levelled against them was believable — and that in reality the Milan and Rome attacks had even thought up and commissioned at the highest levels and actually carried out by the Triveneto Ordine Nuovo."

In January 1996 Digilio told Judge Salvini what Zorzi told him in Mestre in 1973: "Listen, I was personally involved in the operation to plant the bomb at the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura". And, Digilio continued: "That was what he said, word for word and I remember it well, not least because of the seriousness of the words. Zorzi never mentioned those killed in the bombing but he did use the term 'operation' as if it had been a war-time operation."

At this point Zorzi explained to Digilio: "I dealt with things personally and it was no easy undertaking. I had help from the son of a bank director."

Zorzi moved to Japan after Judges Giancarlo Stiz in Treviso, Pietro Calogero in Padua, Gerardo D'Ambrosio and Emilio Alessandrini in Milan began chasing up the fascist trail in connection with the Piazza Fontana outrage.

In Tokyo, where he now lives, having married a Japanese woman by whom he has had a daughter, Zorzi runs an import-export firm which has made him a (lire) multi-millionaire; so much so that in 1993 he was able to make Maurizio Gucci a loan of 30,000 million lire — a fortune some suspect he amassed thanks to the protection of the Yakuza, the Japanese Mafia, and of the Italian and US secret services. His Italian defence counsel is Gaetano Pecorella who denies his client had any involvement in the Piazza Fontana carnage.

This is the same Pecorella who in the 1970s concentrated on defending

leftwing activists before switching in the 1990s to a mixture of clients ranging from Zorzi to Ovidio Bompressi, the former Lotta Continua member sentenced to 22 years for the murder of Inspector Luigi Calabresi.

"I was in Naples attending the oriental university, in which I enrolled in 1968", Zorzi stated apropos of 12 December 1969 in an interview carried by *Il Giornale* on 14 November 1995. That alibi has yet to be confirmed.

Another name, another fugitive. At the time he was being questioned by Judge Salvini, Digilio already had one ten year sentenced passed against him in his absence. In 1983 while a clerk at the Venice firing range, Digilio had been arrested for unlawful possession of ammunition. Although he had been freed after a few days, he realised other more serious charges could follow so he fled to an isolated house in Villa d'Adda in Bergamo province, moving on to Santo Domingo in 1985, on forged papers. He was arrested by Interpol in the autumn of 1992 and returned to Italy to serve his sentence: for resurrecting Ordine Nuovo, possession of detonators, dealing in weapons, possession of machinery for repairing and converting weapons and for forging documents.

Then we have the most famous fugitive of all: Delle Chiaie, known in Rome as "*il caccola*" before he was re-dubbed "the black primrose". During questioning at the Palace of Justice in Rome, he asked to use the toilet and vanished. That was on 9 July 1970.

Even though he was seen in the capital for several months thereafte,r the police never managed to recapture him.

After the failure of the Borghese coup, Delle Chiaie moved to Madrid where he could count on protection from the leading lights of Francoism, but in February 1977, by which time the Franco regime was no more, Delle Chiaie moved to the greater safety of Latin America.

On his return to Italy he refused to discuss this, even though Giorgio Pisanò, publisher of the fascist weekly *Il Candido,* sent him a clear message through his newspaper column. In an open letter published on 9 January 1975, Pisanò wrote: "Stay where you are and keep silent. If you return there are many things you need to explain: the arms dealing; the disappearance of funds entrusted to your care, your connections with Mario Merlino, or indeed your dealings with the Ministry of the Inerior's Confidential Affairs Bureau." Delle Chiaie kept on the run — through Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile.

He adopted a new identity, calling himself Alfredo Di Stefano, but in 1987 he was arrested in Caracas and his 17 years as a fugitive from justice was brought to an end.

An international warrant had been issued for his arrest. On what charges? The Italicus bombing, theft, conspiracy to subvert, aiding and abetting the Piazza Fontana massacre, membership of an armed gang. He went on trial in October 1987 with Massimiliano Fachini before the Court of Assizes in Catanzaro (the last trials relating to the Piazza Fontana incident). On 20 February 1989, both men were cleared on all counts after 90 court sittings, a finding that was confirmed on appeal on 5 July 1991.

XIII - WITH MURDEROUS INTENT

Back to the bombing, that is, back to 1969. The Milan bombs on 25 April 1969 injured only a few people. The same was true of the train bombing on 9 August. These devices had all used the same sort ofRuhla brand timer. The same brand which a strange fellow had bought in batches of three and four from the Standa store in Treviso. But the first one put to the test had failed.

On 24 July a bomb in Milan's Palace of Justice failed to explode so the terrorists called in an expert . Franco Freda had an electrician Tullio Fabris (who had installed some chandeliers for Freda in his studio in the Via San Biagio in Padua) explain to him how to connect up an alarm clock to a resistor that would then light storm lamps. Fabris gave Freda a technical run-down which he tested out on the trains. The experiment worked: eight out of ten bombs exploded. The two which failed to explode had used Ruhla time-pieces.

The next step was to switch to timers. Freda, through Fabris, ordered 50 60-minute timers from Elettrocontrolli in Bologna. On 19 September Freda travelled to the Bologna with Fabris to collect the Junghan-Diehl timers.

New gear, new trials. Lesson one: Fabris showed Freda (even prior to buying the timers) how to connect the battery, chromium-nickel wire and storm lamp to a timing device. Having seen the results for himself, Freda had Fabris buy a length of the wire. Lesson two: after collecting the timers, the electrician gave Freda and Ventura a quick run-down on timing devices and their use. Freda studiously took notes. Lesson three: Under Fabris's supervision, Freda and Ventura twice assembled a device. The trial went perfectly. Everything was now ready for the big one. In fact the bag containing the unexploded bomb left at the Banca Commerciale Italiana in Milan's Piazza della Scala was found to contain the dial from a Junghans-Diehl timing device. The bag was one of a batch made by the German firm of Mosbach-Gruber and imported into Italy. The bags used in the bombings were of two sorts: the brown City 2131 and the black Peraso 2131 models, and in Italy only three firms sold both sorts — Biagini in Milan, Protto in Cuneo and Al Duomo in Padua.

When the owner of the Al Duomo luggage shop, Fausto Giuriati, saw the photo of the bag in the newspapers and on television, he rang police headquarters. It took a few days before someone from the police called at his shop. Loretta Galeazzo, his shop assistant, said she had sold four bags of that sort to a well-dressed young man on the evening of 10 December. The Padua police forwarded a report to Milan police headquarters and to the confidential affairs bureau at the Interior Ministry, but it was three years before anyone called back to the Padua city centre shop. Even then it was not on any instructions from Milan or Rome. Who came to call? It was Carabinieri Alvise Munari, making inquiries on behalf of examining magistrate Giancarlo Stiz in Treviso.

Let us remain in Padua — the day before the bombings. Here is a reasonable reconstruction of events based on what we know so far. Freda, by now an

expert thanks to Fabris's training, put the explosive devices using the gelignite obtained by Delfo Zorzi, and wired them up to the Junghans-Diehl timers. He placed them in the bags bought from the Al Duomo shop in Padua and in another bag. He then passed the bags to the people whose job it was to transport them. Zorzi then left for Milan where members of Giancarlo Rognoni's La Fenice were waiting for him. They were to provide the operational base, a flat near the Piazza Fontana. Ventura on the other hand travelled to Rome to deliver his device to comrades from the Avanguardia Nazionale, answerable to Stefano Delle Chiaie.

On the afternoon of 12 December 1969 two bags containing two gelignite bombs wired up to Junghans-Diehl timers were planted in the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in the Piazza Fontana and the Banca Commerciale Italiana in the Piazza della Scala. A further device was planted in the underpass at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in Rome and two more at the tomb of the unknown soldier in the Piazza Venezia. The Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale members had carried out their mission almost to the point of perfection.

The only hitch was the failure of the device left at the Banca Commerciale in Milan, but lo and behold, along came expert Teonesto Cerri, as we have seen, who destroyed the incriminating evidence. But not completely. In the confusion he forgot to blow up the dial of the timer left behind in the bag.

It was that timer that would betray the Freda group and its partners Only five were ever used, the others were passed to Cristiano De Eccher to hide them.

De Eccher, a descendant of a noble family of the Holy Roman Empire, had a castle in Calavino near Trento. In 1969 he was 19 years old, a member of Avanguardia Nazionale, a Padua University student and in close contact with Freda. One of the few people with whom the aristocratic Freda used the familiar form of address, perhaps because of De Eccher's ancient aristocratic lineage. So De Eccher was a point of contact between the two Nazi groups. De Eccher hid the timers, but he was more loyal to Delle Chiaie than to Freda and was never to hand the timers over again. So much so that he provoked fury in the Paduan prosecution counsel who complained to a fascist colleague, Sergio Calore, "about being let down by a baron of the Holy Roman Empire".

Since Freda could not deny having bought the timers, he claimed that he had passed them to a certain Captain Hamid from the Algerian secret services who supposedly asked for them to us in attacks on Zionist targets. Spectacularly, the judges believed this, not at all disturbed by the fact that the Israeli secret service, Mossad, stated that no Captain Hamid existed. The judges appeared to believe that it was perfectly plausible that an Algerian agent should have approached a law officer in Padua to obtain timing devices.

Meanwhile the electrician Fabris made only partial admissions to the court. Why? He had been threatened three times into keeping his mouth shut — twice by Massimiliano Fachini and again by Massimiliano Fachini in the presence of Pino Rauti.

In fact the timers had not gone to Algeria. They remained in the care of De Eccher who was under the protection of carabinieri Colonel Michele Santoro. Some ended up with the La Fenice group in Milan and some with Avanguardia Nazionale in Rome, which had used a few in the attacks on the Reggio Calabria express trains on the night of 21-22 October 1972.

In 1973 La Fenice group militants prepared a plan to plant a few of these timers in a house belonging to Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (found dead in Segrate in March 1972) The house — in fact it was a chateau in Villadeati in the Monferrato— was the property of the Feltrinelli family who they scarcely ever used it. A few militants from Giancarlo Rognoni's group were to break into the chateau and hide the timers before tipping off the carabinieri. The purpose of all this was to steer the Piazza Fontana investigations back to the "red trail", at a time when D'Ambrosio was zeroing in on the fascists. But the scheme had to be shelved because Rognoni found it too far-fetched.

Two years earlier, Martino Siciliano and Marco Foscari from the Venice Ordine Nuovo had turned their attentions to Feltrinelli. Foscari had a family home in Paternion in Carinthia (Austria), not far from a chalet belonging to Sibilla Melega. Feltrinelli, whose was on the run at the time, often hid out in the chalet and it occurred to the two Ordine Nuovo members that they might kidnap him, ferry him back to Italy and leave him for the police to find.

So, armed with hunting rifles, behind the wheel of an off-road vehicle and accompanied by Foscari's game-keeper, a former Waffen SS member, off they went to grab Feltrinelli. They also had a bottle of ether to help them subdue the publisher, rope to tie him and a trunk in which to ferry him over the border.

But their plan was improvised and they were out of luck: "We had no problems locating the property where the chalet was, but Feltrinelli was npowhere to be seen and, anyway, the chalet appeared locked up. So we abandoned the plan as readily as we conceived it", Siciliano recalled.

So much for the timers. Now to the gelignite. The bombings on 12 December 1969 did not use all the explosives, some were used later by the Venice Ordine Nuovo group.

Mestre, 27 October 1970. Siciliano was putting together a time-bomb, but, unsure as to whether or not he had primed it correctly, it occurred to him to connect to a shared fuse wired to the gelignite. Piero Andreatta planted the device which exploded outside the Coin store in the Piazza Barche.

But the gelignite was used also in more telling and more lethal bombings. Delfo Zorzi handed Marcello Soffiati from the Verona group a bomb assembled using some of the explosive, which he took to Milan. There he delivered it to members of the Milanese Squadre d'azione Mussolini (SAM) (Mussolini Action Squads) who forwarded to Brescia.

On 28 May 1974, during a demonstration sponsored by the Brescia United Antifascist Committee and the trade unions in the Piazza della Loggia in Brescia the bomb exploded at 10.20 am., during a speech by Franco Castrezzati the provincial secretary of the FIM-CISL. Eight people died and nearly a

hundred people were injured. This incident triggered a falling-out in Ordine Nuovo ranks and relations between Zorzi and Soffiati deteriorated to the point where they became enemies. Soffiati could not forgive his Venetian colleague for implicating him in an operation of such significance, especially one that departed from the strategy adopted hitherto — planting bombs that could be blamed on the left.

XIV STICK IT TO THE ANARCHIST

Fascists planting bombs. Police arresting anarchists. That is the traditional view of this story. The orders came from above. The left had to be hit and the man in Milan to do it was Inspector Luigi Calabresi. Like his Roman political squad colleague, Umberto Improta, Calabresi carried out these orders with the utmost diligence. On the afternoon of the 12 December bombings, Calabresi was quick to zero in on "that criminal lunatic Valpreda". After all, it had worked for him after the 25 April bombings when he had jailed anarchists for the bombs at the Fair and at Central Station in Milan. But he was not happy when, only a few days earlier, on 7 December, Antonio Amati, the head of the Milan investigation bureau, had been obliged to free two of them — Giovanni Corradini and Eliane Vincileone — for lack of evidence. Now, faced with carnage of the Piazza Fontana, Calabresi was not going to make do with youngsters like Paolo Braschi and his friends. He needed an adult and Valpreda, at 36, was the right age. He needed someone like Valpreda who had had dropped his characteristic irony and self-mockery and was now given to hot-headed talk.

Hanging out in bars in Brera (once Milan's artists' quarter) Valpreda would launch into long, heated speeches which were increasingly tainted with a flavour of "fire and brimstone". The Brera was also teeming with police informers, and the value of an informant is determined by the "quality" of the intelligence he can pass to to police headquarters. Valpreda's speeches grew more exaggerated in the telling and re-telling. Was Valpreda all for confrontations during demonstrations? He was for urban guerrilla warfare. Did he ever talk about "exemplary actions" carried out by a handful of people, but capable of galvanising the masses? He wanted outrages carried out.

Valpreda laid himself wide open with his increasingly "purple" statements and when he joined forces with two young anarchists, Leonardo Claps, aka Steve, and Aniello D'Errico to launch the cyclostyled bulletin *Terra e libertà*, the organ of the I Iconoclasti group, group (that is, those three), he wrote a piece for the first (and only) issue in March 1969 entitled "Ravachol is back".

This was seized upon by the police to substantiate their thesis that Valpreda was bomb-crazy. Ravachol, was the pseudonym used by a French anarchist, François-Claudius Koehningstein, guillotined in 1892 and renowned in late 19th century Paris for his dynamite attacks on the high bourgeoisie. In the public's collective imagination Ravachol was the very stereotype of the anarchist. Yet, in that article, after listing a succession of small attacks (nearly all of them using something reminiscent of a letter-bomb, or big fire-crackers

rather than real explosives), Valpreda had closed his article with this comment: "Hundreds of youngsters are ready to organise in order to take their places as enemies of the State and to cry out 'No God and No Master', with Ravachol's dynamite, Caserio's dagger, Bresci's pistol, Bonnot's machine-gun, and the bombs of Filippi and Henry. Quake, bourgeois! Ravachol is back!"

If such mind-boggling prose left the police in ecstasy, it infuriated Giuseppe Pinelli. "I booted that twat Valpreda out of the Ponte [della Ghisolfa]", he told to his comrades from the Bandiera Nera group. After that, from the beginning of 1969 on, relations between Pinelli and Valpreda had cooled. And when Pinelli attended the Gruppi di iniziativa anarchica (GIA) — one of the three strands which made up Italy's organised anarchist movement alongside the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI) and the Federated Anarchist Groups (GAF) (the Bandiera Nera group to which Pinelli belonged was linked to the GAF) — convention in Empoli on 2 November 1969, the friction between them worsened. After the convention the anarchists gathered in a trattoria. Valpreda said hello to Pinelli but got no response. Indeed Pinelli used this chance to tell him that he did not regard him as a friend and therefore had no reason to acknowledge his greeting. Valpreda, his dignity offended in front of everyone, flew off the handle and threw a salt-cellar at Pinelli. It was the last time they set eyes on each other.

In Rome, Valpreda fell out with the anarchists from the Circolo Bakunin whom he called too staid and only good for making speeches. He argued on more than one occasion that the students and workers were shrugging off the old regime so time to strike was now. And so, with a group of youngsters in tow — Roberto Mander, Roberto Gargamelli, Enrico Di Cola, Emilio Borghese — he set up the Circolo 22 Marzo. This was the group joined by Mario Merlino, officially formerly of the Avanguardia Nazionale, and by "comrade Andrea", ie. Salvatore Ippolito, a public security agent. These two 'plants' were to be complemented, on and off and from the outside, by Stefano Serpieri (one of the founders of Ordine Nuovo with Pino Rauti and since the mid-1960s a regular SID informant). Serpieri's role was marginal but he wanted to ingratiate himself with his superiors. After all he still had to justify the retainer that he was paid by the SID.

Under such surveillance, the members of the Circolo 22 Marzo set about engaging in "politics". To them this meant taking part in demonstrations which usually ended in clashes, carrying out token actions such as — under Merlino's leadership — t7 October, throwing a petrol bomb at the door of the MSI branch in Colle Oppio). In short, raising their profile.

Valpreda was the oldest and could boast a sound command of anarchist thought. It was natural, therefore, that he became the most visible member of the Circolo 22 Marzo. The police of course knew this. After the 9 August bomb attacks Valpreda was picked up a dozen times. The police also tried to get him to crack by offering money (98,000 lire) and held out the prospect of his getting a contract with RAI. But Valpreda refused to bite and told the police to get

stuffed. So surveillance on the group was stepped up, even though it was not doing any more than many other extreme leftwing groups. Why all the attention? The answer is simple: Valpreda was being targeted. He would make a good scapegoat, should the political situation require one. It was not important that he was not doing anything particularly serious: he — an anarchist and a member of a group which in practice had cut itself off from other Rome anarchists — regularly made inflammatory speeches and claimed to have thrown the odd Molotov cocktail. His image fitted the bill. That he was innocent did not matter.

Only by using that sort of reasoning can we comprehend how, in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, Calabresi came to pester every arrested anarchist for news about "that criminal lunatic Valpreda". Calabresi knew about the falling-out between Pinelli and Valpreda, just as he knew that the Rome anarchist Aldo Rossi was not well-disposed towards "that guy from Milan who makes a mess of things unaided." Maybe he believed that levelling the massacre charges at Valpreda would not bring any response from the anarchists. The charges against him might not do their image any good, but after all the only people indicted would be Valpreda and one or two others from the Circolo 22 Marzo. But the inspector was mistaken. In part because there was also the matter of our having lost Pinelli.

An unforeseen event occurred. A tiny movement numbering only a few thousand supporters across Italy mobilised with a speed and determination that almost defied belief. A counter-information campaign was launched that — while it found the anarchists out on their own to begin with — had, within a few weeks drawn in ever-widening sectors of the left until it even engaged the un-politicised. By the end of January 1970, tens of thousands of Milanese were taking to the streets to demonstrate opposition to the repression in the wake of the Piazza Fontana massacre.

But the phrase "State massacre" had yet to enter the vocabulary of the left. Indeed, on 24 March 1970, the Milanese anarchists were on their own when they demonstrated under that catch-phrase. But over the succeeding months, other demonstrations, rallies, debates, public declarations by intellectuals and cultural figures set the seal on a profound change in the attitudes of many people. Valpreda turned from being a guilty party into an innocent and "the accidental death of an anarchist" became a Dario Fo farce that toured Italy and abroad, holding the police account up to ridicule. Virtually every Italian director signed up to a documentary on the various hypotheses that could have led to Pinelli's demise. These all read like an indictment of the police — above all of Calabresi. In short, the massacre was becoming a burden upon police, magistrates and secret services.

After three years, on 15 December 1972, parliament got around to voting on law no 773 (which came to be known as the "Valpreda law") which freed Valpreda from prison. Article 2 of this law allowed the granting of "temporary release to the accused who finds himself in preventive custody [...] even in

instances where binding arrest warrants have been issued." Which is precisely the circumstances in which anarchists from the Circolo 22 Marzo found themselves. On 30 December, Borghese, Gargamelli and, naturally, Merlino too, regained their freedom along with Valpreda. Mander had been freed several months earlier and Di Cola escaped to Sweden where he was welcomed as a political refugee.

The month *A-rivista anarchica* (which in those days was selling upwards of 10,000 copies) published an editorial in January 1973 entitled "Our Victory:" "Valpreda, Gargamelli and Borghesi are Free! [...] The government has budged under pressure from 'respectable' segments of democratic public opinion. It would be crass triumphalism for us to argue that we, the anarchists, the revolutionaries, got it to shift. Yet we are convinced, without bragging, that it represents a victory for us, not the democrats. First of all because we shook that democratic public opinion out of its customary slumber, we forced it to feel scandalised, to feel indignation. Secondly, because, in spite of everything, the repressive structures of the 'democratic State have, in the eyes of the public, emerged bruised from the affair, albeit given a fresh coat of democracy. The victory is ours, we say again, and we do not accept the defeatist pessimism of those who look upon the discharge from prison as merely a shrewd move by the authorities. It is that as well, to be sure {...} but the release of Valpreda, Gargamelli and Borghese remains substantially a defeat for the State and a victory for us."

However, the progress of the trials arising out of the Piazza Fontana carnage, which would conclude in 1991, were to show that whoever it was, within the State, who had devised the strategy of tension — he had certainly not acknowledged defeat.

XV ON THE TRAIL OF THE FASCISTS

Pasquale Juliano tried but it blew up in his face.

In the spring of 1969, the head of the Padua flying squad, Pasquale Juliano, developed an interest in the activities of a neo-Nazi group operating in the city. Some of his informants — Niccolò Pezzato and Francesco Tomasoni — had told him that the people responsible for the attacks on the homes of police chief Francesco Allitto Bonanno on 20 April 1968 and the office of university rector Enrico Opocher on 15 April 1969 were part of a group headed by Franco Freda.

Juliano organised a stake-out on the home of Massimiliano Fachini, convinced he was the quarter-master in charge of the group's weapons and explosives. One June evening, thanks to his usual sources, Juliano surprised Giancarlo Patrese (another member of Freda's group) at the house in possession of a bomb and a revolver. He ordered the arrest of Patrese, Fachini and Gustavo Bocchini, grandson of Arturo Bocchini, the one-time chief of police under the fascists. Juliano believed he had made a start on breaking up the bomb team, but instead he found himself caught up in an "affair" bigger than he was. Patrese confessed he had received the arms and explosives from none other

than Juliano's own informant, Pezzato, who had entered Fachini's house with him.

This account of events was denied by the building's concierge, Alberto Muraro, a one-time carabiniere. Patrese had entered on his own and left on his own, but his evidence was insufficient and Juliano was accused of having entrapped the three fascists.

The director of the confidential affairs bureau of the Interior Ministry, Elvio Catenacci then suddenly and unexpectedly intervened. Catenacci — the same official who conducted the investigation at police headquarters in Milan following Pinelli's death — ordered Juliano's immediate suspension from duty without pay and it was to be two years before he was reinstated and reassigned to Ruvo di Puglia, and it was not until 1979 that Juliano was to finally cleared.

A campaign of dissuasion followed. Pezzato and Tomasoni, the informants, were jailed and placed in the same cell as Patrese, who persuaded them to retract. Meanwhile, on 13 September, the concierge Muraro was found dead at the foot of some stairs. Accidental death, investigators concluded, without so much as an autopsy, as would be normal in such cases. 'One of these days you'll drop by to looking for me and I'll be found with my head caved in in the cellar or in the lift shaft", Muraro had confided to his friend Italo Zaninello shortly before his death.

Muraro had been due to present himself before the magistrate looking into the Juliano case two days later, on 15 September. The confidential affairs bureau had yet again intervened efficiently: Freda was not to be obstructed.

Notwithstanding the protection he enjoyed, Freda found someone else making inquiries about him — carabiniere maresciallo Alvise Munari.

Munari — whose family had worked the land around Bassano del Grappa for generations — had been commissioned by the examining magistrate in Treviso, Giancarlo Stiz, to investigate a lead resulting from a statement made by a teacher of French in Marrada, Guido Lorenzon, a member of the Christian Democratic Party.

Vittorio Veneto, 15 December 1969. Lorenzon visited Albert Steccanella, a local lawyer who told him a long and convoluted story about a friend of his, Giovanni Ventura, a publisher and bookseller from Castelfranco Veneto. Ventura, Lorenzon said, had mentioned the 12 December bombings to him on the afternoon of 13 December, after returning from Milan or Rome and showed sufficient familiarity with the events and places involved as make an impression on Lorenzon.

Lawyer Steccanella sensed Lorenzon's story might lead on to significant revelations, so he asked him to set it all down in a memorandum, which he did and delivered to him three days later. On 26 December, having realised the gravity of the facts provided by Lorenzon, the lawyer visited the Treviso prosecutor and related everything that his client had told him: that there was in the Veneto a subversive organisation which might just have been implicated in the massacre. This organisation was backed by Count Piero Loredan from

Volpato del Montello.

On 31 December Lorenzon called on the public prosecutor in Treviso, Pietro Calogero and told him about Ventura's confidences. The publisher had planted a bomb which had failed to go off, in a public office in Milan, in May; he had funded the August train bombings; he knew the underpass at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro where the bomb went off on 12 December like the back of his hand and could not understand how on earth the bomb in the Banca Commerciale in Milan had failed to explode. Also, in September, Ventura showed him a battery-operated timer. Furthermore, he was constructing a device for use against US president Richard Nixon during his forthcoming visit to Italy.

These were important revelations. On 12 February 1970, the examining magistrate in Rome, Ernesto Cudillo, was due to hear this witness from Venice, but he was not impressed by him. Even so, he could not completely ignore this encounter: on the afternoon of the following day, at the conclusion of the questioning of Pietro Valpreda, he asked the anarchist if he knew anyone by the name of Giovanni Ventura or Guido Lorenzon. "I don't know anybody of that name. The only two Venturas I have ever met and known are both dancers", was Valpreda's response.

Lorenzon was so overcome with guilt at his betrayal of his friend Ventura that on 4 January 1970 he told him that he had approached the magistrates. Ventura and Freda then put the French teacher under pressure to change or retract his statement. A see-saw of statements and retractions followed, but anomalous retractions at that, as Lorenzon himself later confessed to the judges: "It occurred to me to retract something which I had never stated. I had mentioned things that I had heard, things which I had never actually seen, but I had never stated, say, that Ventura had gone to the Piazza Fontana and that Ventura had planted the bombs on the trains, but he still told me everything that I later recounted. In my retraction, however, I therefore retracted something that I had never said, secretly hoping that that statement might then be taken for what it was, to wit, false. It was only a way of buying time because at the time the magistrate was away and I had to face Ventura on a daily basis."

Investigators finally kitted Lorenzon out with a tape-recorder to be used secretly in conversations with Ventura. The tapes were then forwarded to Rome, to Cudillo and his colleague Vittorio Occorsio, the prosecuting counsel who found nothing of interest in them. Occorsio, however, ventured the following statement: "Lorenzon's charges are without foundation. In the lengthy taped conversations the only point of note is that Ventura offered no confidences of the sort and therefore spoke in terms that plainly show that he had nothing to do with the events. There is nothing to suggest that Ventura was, even marginally, an accomplice in the outrages of 12 December 1969." Cudillo and Occorsio found Ventura "a decent guy" and Freda "a gentleman". In short, they were two upstanding citizens who had been unfairly slandered by Lorenzon.

These opinions were not shared by the Treviso magistrates. When the tapes were returned to Stiz at the end of 1970, there was a change of tune. After listening carefully to the taped conversations, Stiz immediately sent for Lorenzon who confirmed everything to him. Stiz continued with his inquiries, carefully scrutinising the book *Justice is Like A Tiller: It Goes Where It is Steered*, written by Freda as an attack on Juliano's investigation. He listened to other witnesses and on 13 April 1971 he indicted Freda, Ventura and Aldo Trinco for conspiracy to subvert the course of justice and, above all, for the bombings in Milan on 25 April and for the 9 August train bombings. But the trio's defence lawyers petitioned for the case to be heard before the judges in Padua on grounds of territorial competence. The accused were released.

A further change of scene. On 5 November, during restructuring work at the home of Giancarlo Marchesin, a leading socialist in Castelfranco Veneto (Treviso), builders discovered a crate filled with weapons behind a wall. When questioned by Stiz, Marchesin admitted that the crate had been given to him by Franco Comacchio on behalf of Giovanni Ventura. The crate (which Comacchio had received from Ruggero Pan, an assistant in Ventura's bookshop doing his military service at the time) had initially held explosives too, but Comacchio had hidden these in the countryside near Crespano.

On 7 November Comacchio went with some carabinieri from Treviso to collect the explosives. But without warning the carabinieri unexpectedly blew up the 35 sticks. But sticks of what? Judging by the characteristic smell of bitter almonds after the explosion, it must have been the by now famous gelignite.

Later statements by Carlo Digilio indicated that from 1967 the Ordine Nuovo groups in Padua and Venice had had a dump in the Paese area (near Treviso) where they had stored a large quantity of explosives and weapons in the use of which they were instructed by Digilio himself. It was later discovered that the few weapons shipped to Marchesin's home were a tiny, tiny part of the two groups' arsenal, which had been divided up after the Piazza Fontana massacre.

Questioned by magistrates, Pan began talking. Weapons and explosives had been passed to him by Ventura. Why? In 1968 Pan had worked in Ventura's bookshop and on 10 March 1969 he had been hired, through Freda's influence, as an attendant at the Configliaschi Institute for the Blind. The concierge there was Marco Pozzan, one of Freda's most loyal followers. Freda had tried to draw the young Pozzan into his group and confided a number of things to him regarding the attacks being mounted in Padua and in other cities. All of these details wound up in an affidavit that Pan wrote in jail, heavily implicating Ventura and Freda, especially in the train bombings.

At this point in the investigations the name of Ordine Nuovo founder and *Il Tempo* reporter Pino Rauticame up — along with another journalist, Guido Giannettini (an important figure of whom more anon. Rauti was also the author of the book *Red Hands on the Armed Forces*, published under the nom de plume Flavio Messalla.

Rauti was implicated by Marco Pozzan in subversive activity, along with Freda and Ventura. Pozzan insisted Rauti had taken part in a meeting of the group in Padua on 18 April, during which the bombings in Milan on 25 April approved). Stiz and Calogero dispatched maresciallo Munari to Rome on 4 March 1972 to arrest Rauti on charges of massacre. On 22 March, Freda and Ventura were indicted in connection with the Piazza Fontana outrage.

Invocation of that crime obliged the Treviso magistrates to hand its case over to their Milan colleagues and from then on it was in the hands of examining magistrate Gerardo D'Ambrosio.

Rauti denied all charges and Pozzan retracted — and was promptly smuggled out of the country to Spain with the aid of the SID. Renato Angiolillo, *Il Tempo's* publisher, and a number of editorial staff insisted that on the day in question, 18 April, Rauti had been at work in the editorial offices. So, one month later, on 24 April, D'Ambrosio freed Rauti on the grounds of insufficient evidence. The parliamentary elections were held on 7 May and Rauti was elected on the MSI ticket. The likelihood is that Pozzan implicated Rauti on Freda's instructions in order to have someone in the frame someone who could mobilise the MSI on Rauti's, and thereby also on Freda's behalf.

But D'Ambrosio was more fortunate with Ventura who admitted involvement in the May 1969 attacks in Turin and in July in Milan. More importantly, he implicated his friend Freda in the attacks. It was from Freda, the Padua lawyer, he had taken delivery of the bombs. Again, it had been Freda who had announced the August bombings before they happened. Point by point, everything in Lorenzon's confession in 1969 was confirmed — almost four years after the event.

But something else emerged from the interrogations by the judges in Treviso and Milan, something considerably more serious for Ventura. It was proved he had definitely been in Rome on the afternoon of 12 December 1969. Ventura finally admitted this, but clung desperately to a weak alibi that was to soon demolished — that he had gone to the capital because he had been informed the previous day his brother Luigi, a resident of a Catholic boarding school, had suffered a serious epileptic fit. The incident was true, but the date was false. According to Don Pietro Sartorio, the bursar of the home, Luigi Ventura had his attack at 12.30 p.m. on 14 December (on the Sunday rather than the Friday). Don Sartorio called a Red Cross ambulance and a physician who checked the boy over and said that no resuscitation was necessary — the fit having passed. The bursar informed the Ventura family of the fit and expressed his regret that he had not been advised of the boy's state of health.

Ventura had been caught out — but there was more. He claimed that on the afternoon in question, after phoning the school and discovering Luigi was feeling better, he had visited a family friend, Diego Giannolla in his law chambers. He then went to the Lerici publishing house to meet his partner Rinaldo Tomba — alibis which both denied. In the end he claimed he had spent the evening of 12 December in the home of a friend, Antonio Massari who put

him up for the night.

But that was not the only night Ventura had spent in Rome. According to the register of the Locarno hotel, he had stayed in Rome from 5 to 8 December as well as on the night of 10-11 December, only returning home on 13 December. Meeting up with Lorenzon that afternoon, he was excited about what had happened in Milan and Rome and initiated the loose talk that — after Lorenzon had reported it first to Steccanella and then to magistrates in Treviso — implicated Ventura and Freda in the bombings.

XVI "INSPECTOR WINDOW"

A shot from a pistol, then another, echoed through the Via Luigi Cherubini, near the corner of the Via Mario Pagano in Milan, then a man walked briskly from the scene, got into a car, and disappeared leaving Inspector Luigi Calabresi dead on the pavement. It was 17 May 1972.

So ended the life of the policeman that much of the left held responsible for Giuseppe Pinelli's death. While many of the newspapers of the extra-parliamentary left, especially the weekly *Lotta Continua*, openly accused the inspector, the most often repeated slogans during protest marches were: "Calabresi — assassin" and "Pinelli, I will be avenged." The walls of many cities were covered with posters depicting Calabresi with blood on his hands.

As far as a substantial sector of public opinion was concerned, the inspector, born in Rome in 1937, was no longer a glittering and decorated public servant, always dapper with his designer jumpers and claiming to be a "liberal" who voted social democrat. He had become a protagonist in the strategy of tension.

Lotta Continua's press campaign became even more outspoken when reporters monitoring developments at the Palace of Justice learned that the investigation into Pinelli's death was about to be wound up, with the police found blameless.

In fact, acting prosecutor Giovanni Caizzi closed the file on 21 May 1970. The intention of the editors of *Lotta Continua* was to provoke Calabresi — who had been rechristened as "Inspector Window" — to get him to sue the paper in order to reopen the "Pinelli case" before the courts. On 15 April, Calabresi brought charges against Pio Baldelli, *Lotta Continua's* editor-in-chief, for "ongoing and aggravated defamation through attribution of a specific act", to wit, responsibility for Pinelli's death.

But Milan's prosecutor-general, Enrico De Peppo, delayed for over a month before assigning the case to a magistrate for investigation, and pressed Caizzi to finish his examination in the meantime. The trial was to begin once Caizzi Pinelli's death had been declared an accident.

The court-room confrontation between Calabresi and Baldelli opened on 9 October 1970. It was a trial heavy with expectations and was prefaced in September by an appeal published in the weekly *L'Espresso* and signed by Italian intellectuals, university lecturers and politicians (including Elvio Fachinelli, Lucio Gambi, Giulio Maccacaro, Cesare Musatti, Enzo Paci, Carlo

Salinari and Mario Spinelli). Their public letter opened with a challenge: "Railway man Pino Pinelli died on the night of 15-16 December 1969 as a result of a fall from a window at Milan police headquarters. How, we do not know. All we know is that he was innocent."

After criticising the closure of the file on his death and the application to have the suit brought by Pinelli's loved ones against police chief Marcello Guida (who had libelled the anarchist) set aside, the signatories concluded: "We owe the magistrate our respect, but we cannot help but hold him jointly responsible for the death of Giuseppe Pinelli, a second time, by ascribing to him crimes not of his doing — and bearing the grave responsibility of murdering our faith in a justice that is no longer justice when it fails to reflect the conscience of its citizenry."

But there was also a film that was enjoying great success — *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* — directed by Elio Petri and featuring Gian Maria Volonté, with a soundtrack by Ennio Morricone. Audiences immediately identified the inspector played by Volonté as Inspector Calabresi.

In court, Calabresi was defended by Michele Lener, and Marcello Gentili and Bianca Guidetti Serra acted for Baldelli. The judge was Carlo Biotti and the prosecuting attorney was Emilio Guicciardi. The court was surrounded by an impressive deployment of police and carabinieri .

The opening session was packed to overflowing, with people shouting out "murderer" when Calabresi entered to give evidence.

The inspector spoke of Pinelli as a decent fellow with whom he had swapped views. He had even made the anarchist the gift of a book (Enrico Emanueli's *Un milione di uomini*) and Pinelli had reciprocated with a gift of Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*. He had handled Pinelli's interrogation because he was under orders and inquiries were being made in every direction. In short, Pinelli's questioning on 15 December had been relaxed, and only once did he utter the phrase: "Valpreda has talked." But that was as far as it went. And when Pinelli jumped, Calabresi was in the office of his senior officer, Antonino Allegra.

Calabresi failed to mention the threats he had been making for months against Pinelli when he realised he could not count on him to collaborate.

"During a picket mounted in San Vittore in September to demand the release of the anarchists arrested for the bombings on 25 April, Calabresi had approached Pinelli and — after an exchange of words — told him angrily: 'I'm going to make you pay' " recalled Cesare Vurchio from the Ponte della Ghisolfa circle, an eye-witness to that exchange.

The other police officers trooped through the court during the succeeding sittings. The script never varied, down to use of the same phrases and terminology: 'calm and relaxed"; "launched himself into the void"; "I received the news". They gave the clear impression that they were all going through a lesson committed to memory.

But there were noticeable departures from what they had told Judge Caizzi

previously. The times had altered. The interrogation had not ended at midnight but at 11.30 p.m. The window had not been wide open, but closed on one side. Savino Lo Grano, newly promoted carabinieri captain, originally said he had watched Pinelli throughout and saw him throw himself from the window. Now, in court, he claimed he had seen no such thing: he had been looking at the open window while two police officers, trapped behind the shutters, had been unable to stop the anarchist.

The greatest absurdity, however, came in the statement of brigadiere Vito Panessa. He contradicted himself and allowed his mouth run away with him, first admitting things, then deniying them. Finally he issued a denial that had the ring of an unwitting confession: "I have said that I am not in a position to provide details but, broadly speaking, bear in mind that there was no agreed story and it was, therefore, a matter for investigation ... Each of us went before Judge Caizzi and gave out the story that .."

Judge Biotti suddenly interjected: "Signor Panessa, you are rambling!" before asking Panessa: "What is this business about an agreed story?" Panessa answered: "It is not the case that there was an exchange of views between those of us who had been present: the following day we each went before the judge and told him what we could remember."

The case dragged on along similar lines for five more months, but in the end Baldelli's defence lawyers scored their first victory. Pinelli's body was to be exhumed and undergo fresh forensic examination.

What were Gentili and Guidetti getting at? They wanted to check if Pinelli's body still carried any sign of a karate chop delivered while under interrogation, the sort of blow that might have left Pinelli irretrievably disoriented and leading to the fall from the window.

And that was precisely what Lener did not want to hear.

Change of scene.

Lener moved that Judge Biotti be removed from the case and, on 7 June 1971, he was dismissed by the Appeal Court. On what grounds? The judge had spoken with Calabresi's defence counsel on 21 November 1970 when he allegedly said something about pressure from upstairs to ensure the case ended with Baldelli's acquittal, and he had supposedly told him that "both he and the other two judges were convinced that the famous karate chop had broken Pinelli's spinal column."

The removal of Biotti was the ace card played by Calabresi's defence at a point when it was perhaps still possible to establish — in spite of a year and a half's having passed — how Pinelli died. The trial quickly became bogged down.

A further investigation was launched into Licia Pinelli's — Guiseppe's widow — complaint to examining magistrate Gerardo D'Ambrosio wich led to manslaughter charges being brought on 4 October 1971 against the police team which had interrogated Pinelli: Calabresi, Lo Grano, Panessa, Giuseppe Caracuta, Carlo Mainardi and Pietro Mucilli . D'Ambrosio had the anarchist's

body exhumed on 21 October. But, as lots of scientists and physicians had argued, given the advanced state of decomposition, it was by then hard to discover anything.

Things moved on to the verdict passed on 27 October 1975. Calabresi — no longer a deputy inspector but now a full inspector — was by then three years dead. The verdict focused on "active misfortune" as the cause of Pinelli's death. D'Ambrosio cleared all the accused on the grounds that "the total lack of evidence that something happened is, under our procedural system, as well as under the system of other more progressive states, tantamount to evidence that a thing has not happened."

But the "Calabresi case" refused to go away. On 17 May 1973 a monument to the inspector was unveiled in the courtyard of Milan police headquarters to mark the first anniversary of his death. The ceremony was attended by Interior minister Mariano Rumor.

Gianfranco Bertoli, having recently returned to Italy from Israel, threw a bomb at the entrance to the headquarters. His intention — as he declared after his arrest — was to get the authorities paying tribute to Calabresi, but a police officer had kicked the device away and it had ended up among the crowd. Carnage ensued: four lives were lost and nearly 40 people were injured.

Bertoli claimedhe was an individualist anarchist. But nearly all the press described him as a fascist and cited a series of previous actions (attacks on leftwing party premises and others) which were to fall through during the trial.

Born in Venice in 1933, Bertoli — a member of the PCI's Youth Federation up until 1952 — had a record as a petty criminal and had been in and out of jail for years. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on 9 March 1976.

From 1993 Bertoli enjoyed an open prison regime. But his case still held a few surprises in store. It would seem (the conditional tense is de rigueur in this tale) that fresh information has since surfaced regarding those who had somehow incited him to carry out his deed — protagonists of the strategy of tension, perhaps.

So who killed Calabresi? There was silence on that front up until 2 July 1988 when Leonardo Marino, a former FIAT worker and ex-member of *Lotta Continua*, gave himself up to the carabinieri in La Spezia (he sold crepes from a kiosk in nearby Bocca di Magra). He wanted to come clean about his and his colleagues' part in the Calabresi murder.

But 17 days were to elapse before he signed a statement. Why? That remains a mystery. He was taken to Milan, and it was a further seven days before he made a full confession. Another mystery. On 28 July, in addition to Marino, Adriano Sofri, Stefano Bompressi and Giorgio Pietrostefani were arrested. Sofri had been the unchallenged national leader of *Lotta Continua* and Pietrostefani was the movement's leader in Milan.

A lengthy procession through the courts began. The charges were based exclusively on Marino's confession that he had driven the getaway car, Bompressi actually committed the murder. Sofri and Pietrostefani had given

the go-ahead. The initial verdict was handed down in July 1991. They were all found guilty as charged. The conspirators and perpetrator received 22 year sentences, Marino 11 years. On 23 October 1992, the Court of Cassation dismissed the verdict on the basis of insufficient motive. So, on 21 December 1993 the Appeal Court of Assizes cleared them all. The verdict was thrown out again on 27 October 1994, and a third Appeal Court confirmed the 22 year sentences passed on Sofri, Bompressi and Pietrostefani, whilst Marino, thanks to extenuating considerations, saw his case dismissed. On 22 January the Court of Cassation had the final word and confirmed the convictions.

XVII THE WILD GOOSE CHASE IS THE IMPORTANT THING

When the Milan anarchists from the Ponte della Ghisolfa circle accused the Interior Ministry of covering up for those guilty of the Piazza Fontana massacre at their press conference on 17 December 1969, the reporters present were incredulous and scoffed. They wrote about "youngsters reeling from the shock of recent days". But the facts have shown that that accusation was not without foundation.

In fact, we need to take a close look at what was being done in the 1960s and 1970s by the Interior Ministry's confidential affairs bureau, a powerful security-cum-espionage centre run by Federico Umberto D'Amato. Born in Marseilles in 1919 of a Piedmontese father and Neapolitan mother, D'Amato had risen to prominence in his youth when, in 1945, he had handled contacts with the intelligence services of the Salò Republicto recover the archives of the OVRA, Benito Mussolini's secret service. He joined the Viminale in 1957 as an ordinary official and rose through its ranks to head the confidential affairs bureau.

D'Amato was replaced on 30 May 1974, following the slaughter in Brescia, but he stayed on at the Viminale and in fact still controlled the bureau — just as he did when his formal superiors, Elvio Catenacci and Ariberto Vigevano were the directors.

He was obliged to retire in the mid-1980s, moving a lot of important secret files built up over decades abroad. These were tangible evidence of the power he had wielded over many Italian politicians, entrepreneurs, senior managers and intellectuals. But D'Amato was not just a super-spy — he was a man who appreciated the delights of the table and it was in that capacity he edited the weekly food column 'La tavola' in *L'Espresso* and the *Guide to the Inns and Restaurants of Italy*, published by the same paper. His passion for wine and good food caused his cirrhosis of the liver, and he died in August 1996.

When the student revolts erupted in 1968, D'Amato — who described himself as *a sbirro* (a plod) but was in fact a skilled double- and even triple-dealer and never let an opportunity go a-begging — was not worried about "students playing at revolution". His target was, as ever, the Communist Party.

It was his brainwav to commission the publishing of thousands upon thousands of pro-Chinese leaflets which he entrusted to Stefano Delle Chiaie for distribution through Avanguardia Nazionale and Ordine Nuovo members.

The latter stuck them up on walls in nearly every town in Italy. By providing a helping hand to the PCI's main competition on the left, D'Amato's aim was to stir up problems for the largest Communist party in the western world.

But D'Amato's activities did not stop there. Through his connections with Delle Chiaie and many other Nazi-fascist leaders, he was well-placed to manipulate the far-right groups. In practice, Delle Chiaie, the Avanguardia Nazionale leader, was remotely controlled by D'Amato.

The man from the Viminale was also Italy's representative in the Atlantic Alliance Security Office — NATO's espionage wing, and was therefore able to control the activities of men such as Carlo Digilio, the quarter-master of Ordine Nuovo's Venice group and an agent of the CIA and NATO's security service. It was Digilio who fed Delfo Zorzi with the explosives that were used in the bombs on 12 December 1969. Digilio, a conscientious fellow, reported back regularly to his superiors, as was his duty. D'Amato was, therefore, constantly informed as to the activities of Zorzi, Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura — as well as being a sleeping partner in them.

So who was ultimately responsible for the Piazza Fontana massacre? And if he controlled Delle Chiaie, is it conceivable that he was unaware of the latter's part in the bombings in Rome on 12 December 1969? The idea that D'Amato was implicated is anything but a fantasy, given that the confidential affairs bureau stepped in to protect the activities of the Freda-Ventura group.

An answer in the affirmative seems convincing. It was Catenacci, who posted flying squad boss Pasquale Juliano far from Padua just as he was about to arrest Freda, before Pasquale could complete his task. It was also Catenacci who immediately after Giuseppe Pinelli's death — having been promoted to deputy chief of police — conducted a secret inquiry in Milan police headquarters and took evidence from the police officers present at Pinelli's "flight".

Then, having given them absolution, he prepared the groundwork for Judge Giovanni Caizzi's dismissal of the charges against the police. Finally, it was d'Amato, the protector, who allowed Delle Chiaie to go on the run for 17 years.

D'Amato was one of the most powerful men in Italy and it may not have been a coincidence that the famous 150,000 files uncovered towards the end of 1996 came to light after his death.

In its strategy of chasing political wild geese and conjuring up false evidence or mounting provocations, the confidential affairs bureau had a sound ally, but one with whom it had serious differences, as happens in the world of espionage. That partner occupied the Palazzo Barachini, the headquarters of the SID .

General Vito Miceli held the top job at the SID on 18 October 1970, having taken over from Admiral Eugenio Henke who went on to become army chief of staff. In June 1971 General Gianadelio Maletti arrived to take over D Bureau at the SID — its most sensitive department — from Colonel Federico Gasca Queirazza. For top secret operations he established a base under the cover of

the Turris Film Company at 235 Via Cecilia, a street off the famous Via Veneto, and it was from these offices that one of his men, Antonio Labruna, head of the NOD, the SID's operations wing, operated.

When a discernable fascist lead surfaced in connection with the Piazza Fontana massacre and it become increasingly less concealable, the new bosses of the Italian secret services played their role well as misleaders and provocateurs. First they came up with false documents, which they fed to the judges in dribs and drabs. They then cobbled together a larger-scale operation. The carabinieri in Camerino, under Maletti's supervision, discoovered a huge arms dump near that town on 10 November 1972.

The dump contained three categories of weapon: World War Two matériel; a second category intended to give a left-wing signature to the dump — catapults, glass marbles, spray cans, bottles, cork stoppers, paraffin and sulphuric acid — the ingredients for making Molotov cocktails. The last category comprised 25 MK2 pineapple-style hand grenades (US-made), TNT, high-powered explosives (pentrite), an anti-tank mine and detonators, fuses and German-made timers. All accompanied by upwards of 600 blank identity cards and a coded card index.

The day after the discovery an article appeared in the daily *Il Resto del Carlino* — a newspaper belonging to the Attilio Monti group — over the by-line of Guido Paglia, an *Avanguardia Nazionale* member who had recently become a journalist. The article claimed that the coded card-index discovered in the cache was "incontrovertible proof of the subversive and paramilitary activities of certain leftwing extremist groups".

But Paglia did not stop there. Even although the coded documents had yet to be examined and decyphered, the reporter seemed to know already that the arsenal belonged to leftwing extremists from Rome, Perugia, Trento, Bolzano and Macerata. On 3 January 1973 four leftwingers from these places were charged. The only one missing was the terrorist from Rome.

What was it that led the Carabinieri to these four individuals? The answer was simple, if bewildering. The coded pages (every page was topped by an explanatory key) contained a list of 31 activists from the extra-parliamentary left. But Paglia, however, in a frantic hurry to get his scoop as well as complete his provocation, had jumped the gun somewhat. And knew about things that even the carabinieri were not yet in a position to disclose to him. Furthermore, the owner of the isolated house where the cache had been found had been there only a few days prior to the discovery — and there had been no weapons there at the time.

Briefly, this was the sort of set-up that would collapse even while the charges were being prepared. However, it took until 28 April 1976, three years later, for the matter to be brought to closure, with a postscript in the Macerata Court of Assizes when the Ancona prosecutor-general challenged the dropping of the charges. The accused's dealings with the courts finally ended on 7 December 1977 when they were cleared on all counts.

Meanwhile, light was being shed on the roles of Labruna and especially of Captain Giancarlo D'Ovidio, commander of the Camerino carabinieri who was to move on to the SID's D Bureau. They were put in the frame by secret service Colonel Antonio Viezzer, a P2 member, on trial for passing secret material to Licio Gelli.

The Labruna-D'Ovidio trail came to nothing, the examining magistrates having dropped the charges on the basis of legal arguments that many other jurists regarded as irrational.

But, in 1993 a further significant evidence came to light regarding D'Ovidio's role as the organiser of this provocation and the part played by Guelfo Osmani, an SID "asset". The Camerino affair, while it failed to have the effect the secret services had been looking for, it at least generated serious differences and divisions within far left groups with, for example, Italian Maoists being accused of "adventurism". General Maletti jotted down, in his own hand, in the margins of the report on Camerino the comment: "Good result".

Soon afterwards, Maletti's men faced even more taxing missions because their involvement in the 12 December 1969 bombings; lots of other terrorist activities were about to emerge into the harsh light of day..

In January 1973, Freda loyalist Marco Pozzan fled to avoid an arrest warrant issued by the Treviso magistrates. Massimiliano Fachini, who had overseen so many operations on behalf of his comrade Freda, contacted D Bureau. Fachini was well-known and Pozzan vouched for him and accompanied the fugitive to the offices of the Turris Film Company in Rome where he was met by Labruna and Guido Giannettini.

Labruna took Pozzan under his wing and had a false passport made out for him in the name of Mario Zanella (a name that turns up in the list of members of the P2 masonic lodge). On 15 January Labruna escorted Pozzan to Fiumicino airport where he handed him over to maresciallo Mario Esposito and the pair travelled to Madrid. On arrival in the Spanish capital, Esposito took back the false passport and flew back to Italy.

In March 1973, Giovanni Ventura was in Monza prison being questioned by the Milan judges Gerardo D'Ambrosio and Emilio Alessandrini. Ventura was looking for a way out and was beginning to confess. The easiest solution was an escape, something Maletti left to Giannettini to organise. Delfo Zorzi told Carlo Digilio to help Giannettini arrange Ventura's escape: "Arrange for him to escape. Otherwise Ventura is going to talk."

Agent Zeta, Giannettini's code name, contacted Ventura's sister, Mariangela and his fiancée, Pierangela Baretto and persuaded them his escape plan would work. He gave them two keys which — as was later established in court — opened the prison doors. He also gave them two cans of spray, which the D Bureau had obtained from a firm in Berne to dope the guards.

Once out of prison, Ventura was to be smuggled out to Spain, but he did not trust Giannetini, fearing perhaps that his real destination was not Madrid but

that he was to be eliminated once and for all during the break-out. But that was not the end of it; he would escape later, on 16 January 1979, during a stay in Catanzaro, when things were better organised.

Giannettini's turn came in April 1973. Agent Zeta, a SID officer since 1966 who operated under the cover of journalist, was now firmly in the sights of Judge D'Ambrosio who had been pressing the SID, unsuccessfully, for information about Giannettini. The latter, a key contact between the secret services and the Freda-Ventura group could not afford the luxury of answering questions that would hold his role up to scrutiny, so he chose to go on the run.

Using the SID's "travel bureau" he slept overnight in the Turris film company's apartment and was escorted out of the country the following day by the ubiqitous maresciallo Esposito. But with one difference, on 9 April the pair stopped off in Paris where Giannettini was due to to fly on to Madrid, and from there to Buenos Aires.

He escaped just in time. The Milan magistrates had Giannettini's Rome apartment searched in May and a warrant was issued for the arrest of Agent Zeta in January 1974.

Before leaving France, Giannettini gave an interview to journalist Mario Scaloja from *L'Espresso* in the spring of 1974 to let his bosses know how loyal he was (in case they abandoned him to his fate). He stated: "The sole aim behind naming me as a SID agent is to implicate military circles, especially the SID, in the Freda case. I will have no truck with this gambit."

But events were moving quickly. In an interview published in the 20 June edition of *Il Mondo*, Giulio Andreotti told journalist Massimo Caprara that Giannettini was an SID agent and that *Corriere della Sera* reporter Giorgio Zicari was an established informant. That was a direct signal to Giannettini that he should no longer feel safe — not even in Buenos Aires.

On 8 August Giuseppe Derege Thesauro was made Italy's ambassador to Argentina. At the Catanzaro trial the diplomat declared: "Giannettini did not hide it from anybody at the embassy that he was running scared and required protection."

Brought back to Italy, Giannettini stuck to his tactics to the end and refused to talk. He made vague allusions by way of signals to his superiors that he would keep mum as long as they stood by him. Hence the statements and depositions from SID chiefs and ministers hell bent on playing down Agent Zeta's record — the man who had kept them informed about the terrorist activities in which he participated along with Freda and Ventura.

The gamble paid off and the puppet-masters behind the outrages threw Giannettini a few crumbs to stop him talking. He was rewarded for his silence when the Court of Cassation finally dropped proceedings against him in 1982. But he was not left unemployed for long, being taken on by the rightwing financier and publisher Giuseppe Ciarrapico.

XVIII THE CARNEVALE VERDICT

The proceedings had been under way for only a few days before everything ground to a halt. The scene was the Court of Assizes in Rome and the trial, which opened on 23 February 1972, was that of the anarchists from the Circolo 22 Marzo, of Pietro Valpreda's relations and, in his absence, the Nazi-fascist Stefano Delle Chiaie for giving perjured evidence on Mario Merlino's behalf.

But the judges, however, soon realised that the matter was not within their competence. Prompted by some of the anarchists' defence lawyers — Francesco Piscopo, Giuliano Spazzali, Placido La Torre and Rocco Ventre — court president Orlando Falco chose to rid himself of what had become a hot potato of a trial. Even the public prosecutor Vittorio Occorsio tried to pin the shortcomings and partiality of the investigation on his colleague, examining magistrate Ernesto Cudillo.

It was as though he wanted it forgotten that he had launched the investigations. It was he who had arranged the identification by taxi-driver Cornelio Rolandi. Again, it was he who — in the indictment presented to the courts, as if to salvage the only piece of evidence on which he had built his indictment — had dened the glaringly obvious.

Occorsio wrote: "What Rolandi claimed in the preliminary section of the identification document — 'I was shown by the carabinieri in Milan a photograph that I was told must the person whom I should recognise' — should be taken to mean that when Rolandi was shown Valpreda's photograph at police headquarters, the taxi driver was asked to identify him — yes or no, of course — as the person he had carried in his taxi. Any inference in this connection regarding supposed and implicit solicitation of positive recognition is quite gratuitous." And in order to hammer home this convoluted reasoning, he concluded: "Indeed if the word 'should' was used, the obligation implicit in that very term refers to the judicial burden of the act of identification rather to the results thereof."

Faced with such untenable positions the Court in Rome switched everything to Milan on 6 March. The trial had returned, as judicial logic would have it, to the city where the massacre had occurred. But Milan prosecutor-general, Enrico De Peppo, was not having that. According to him, Milan could not offer the necessary neutrality in which to debate a matter of such delicacy. Furthermore — according to De Peppo — the city was virtually under the control of extra-parliamentary leftists eager to mount actions "designed to demonstrate — regardless of due process — the alleged innocence of Valpreda and the other co-accused." Actions that might provoke a response from the far right. He applied to the Court of Cassation to have the case relocated again, and on 13 October the case was placed under the jurisdiction of the Catanzaro Court of Assizes.

But it did not begin immediately. It was not until 27 January 1975 that proceedings opened, proceedings that would find the anarchists — Pietro Valpreda, Emilio Bagnoli, Emilio Borghese, Roberto Gargamelli, Ivo Della Savia and Enrici Di Cola; Valpreda's relations — Maddalena Valpreda, Ele Lovati,

Rachele Torri and Olimpia Torri — in the dock beside the indescribable Mario Merlino, the Nazi-fascists: Franco Freda, Giovanni Ventura, Stefano Delle Chiaie, Marco Pozzan and Piero Loredan di Volpato del Montello; fascists working for the secret services: Guido Giannettini and Stefano Serpieri, and SID officers: Gianadelio Maletti, Antonio Labruna and Gaetano Tanzilli.

Why this motley crew? The Catanzaro court combined two trials that led to irreconcilable results — the investigation by Occorsio and Cudillo and the later investigation by Milanese magistrates Gerard D'Ambrosio and Emilio Alessandrini. The latter case also relied on inquiries conducted by magistrates in Treviso and Padua and elsewhere — inquiries that had brought to light the part played by the fascists and secret services in the bombing strategy.

The first verdict was returned on 23 February 1979, after two years, one month and five days. Three life sentences — for Freda, Ventura and Giannettini, for the massacre and outrages. But Giannettini was the only one in court: Freda was on the run in Costa Rica and Ventura in Argentina. Maletti was sentenced to four years for procuring perjured testimony and Labruna and Tanzilli each got two years. Valpreda and Gargamelli were cleared of massacre, on grounds of insufficient evidence. and convicted on the count of criminal conspiracy. Valpreda was sentenced to four years and six months and Gargamelli one year and six months. Bagnoli was given a two year suspended sentence for criminal conspiracy; Merlino was cleared on grounds of insufficient evidence, but got four years and six months for criminal conspiracy.

The treatment doled out to Valpreda's relations— who had supported the anarchist's alibi — was somewhat ambiguous and the perjury charge was thrown out. The same line was taken with Delle Chiaie. And what of Elena Segre, Valpreda's friend, who had also confirmed the anarchist's alibi? She had vanished from the records. Another mystery.

The findings handed down in Catanzaro amounted to a contradictory sentence: it recognised the guilt of Freda, Ventura and Giannettini, but was still partly rooted in the case prepared by Judges Occorsio and Cudillo — hence the decision to dismiss the cas eagainst the anarchists on the basis of insufficient evidence.

But something else cast an ambiguous light on the verdict. Faced with reticence on the part of some of the VIP witnesses, the judges in Catanzaro opted not to take action themselves, and referred the trial records relating to ex-premiers Giulio Andreotti and Mariano Rumor, and former ministers Mario Tanassi (Defence) and Mario Zagari (Justice) back to Milan. The judges did, however, have grounds for pride in the contradictions into which General Saverio Malizia, Tanassi's legal adviser, blundered and had him arrested in the courtroom. He was tried immediately and sentenced to one year, but was soon released. This was followed by the usual outcome — the Court of Cassation annulled the trial and referred the case to the Court of Assizes in Potenza who cleared Malizia on all counts on 30 July 1980.

To the aid of the politicians came the judge from Milan, Luigi Fenizio (to

whom the investigation had passed when Alessandrini was killed by members of the underground Prima Linea organisation on 29 January 1979) who forwarded a order declaring their innocence to the parliamentary commission of inquiry. On 24 August 1981 the commission closed the file on the accusations against Andreotti, Rumor, Tanassi and Zagari and all four politicians were dropped from the investigation.

But the real sensation came at the appeal hearing when, on 20 March 1981, the Catanzaro court cleared the fascists and the anarchists on the count of massacre. So now no one was to blame for the Piazza Fontana. Freda and Ventura were sentenced to 15 years for conspiracy to subvert and for the bomb attacks of 25 April 1969 and 9 August 1969. In effect, the judges unpicked the logical continuity — underpinned by the evidence — which linked the three main 1969 attacks. They absolved Giannettini on grounds of insufficient evidence snd reduced the sentences passed on Maletti and Labruna.

The court of Cassation had this in mind when, on 10 June 1982, it entrusted a second appeal to Bari, to put paid once and for all to the proceedings against Giannettini, who was able to announce: "The implication of myself was prompted by political motives. The intention was to strike at the SID through me."

The same ritual was played out in the appeal court in Bari (Puglia) — with one outstanding difference: the prosecutor, Umberto Toscani, asked that Valpreda be found not guilty. But the judges chose to stick with tradition: doubt should serve the fascists as well as the anarchists. Meanwhile, they reduced the Maletti's sentence — who was on the run in South Africa — to one year, and that of Labruna to ten months.

With that verdict on 1 August 1985 the curtain was to be brought down on the Piazza Fontana massacre. The final act came in the Court of Cassation in Rome, which rejected every application for a new trial (the Cassation was in fact the central prop of this courtroom farce). It was the highest levels of the judiciary which had taken the initial investigation away from Milan and entrusted them to Rome. They were the ones who had argued that Milan was ungovernable and that the trial should be heard in Catanzaro. They had also conjoined the cases against the anarchists and the fascists.

On 27 January 1987, the first section of the Court of Cassation put paid to a trial that had spread out to occupy time and space. It was Judge Corrado Carnevale (who was later to earn fame as the "verdict-quashing judge") who was in charge of the most important section of the Court of Cassation and who distinguished himself as the "king of the nit-pickers", who put mafiosi, terrorists and bankrupts back on the streets.

Here are a few examples of this: on 16 December 1987, Carnevale annulled the Italicus massacre case, the main accused in which were the neo-fascists Mario Tuti and Luciano Franci. Earlier he had repealed the life sentence passed on the Greco brothers who had been found guilty of ordering the murder of Judge Rocco Chinnici. On 25 June 1990 Carnevale repealed the life sentence

passed on Raffaele Cutolo, head of he Nuova Camorra Organizzata. He also cleared Licio Gelli, on 15 October 1990, on charges of subversion and membership of an armed gang. On 5 March 1991 he ordered a retrial in the case of the 24 December 1984 bombing of the Naples-Milan express in which 16 people were killed and hundreds injured. The upshot of this was the repeal of the life sentence passed on mafia boss Pippo Calò. Such frantic activity could scarcely pass unremarked and in 1995 Judge Carnevale's performance was the subject of a book, *La giustizia è cosa nostra* (Justice is Our Thing).

Carnevale has repealed 134 life sentences — 19 of which were passed on the mafioso Mommo Piromalli — plus 700 years' imprisonment for 96 people charged with mafia membership, drug-dealing and murders.

In short, now the massacre was the subject of new court proceedings following the arrest of Delle Chiaie, Carnevale was the very man for the Piazza Fontana case. And so, on 26 October 1987, the seventh trial relating to the Piazza Fontana massacre — not counting the two aborted by the Court of Cassation — opened with Delle Chiaie and Massimiliano Fachini together in the dock. After 90 sittings, both men cleared of involvement on 20 February 1989, a verdict confirmed by the Court of Appeal on 5 July 1991.

XIX MASSACRE BY THE STATE

Mariano Rumor wasted no time. The day after the bombings of 12 December 1969, the prime minister called a meeting of the secretaries of the Christian Democrats, the Socialist Party, the Unified Socialist Party (the name used by the social democrats after the socialist split on 2 July 1969) and Republican Party. His aim was to rebuild a four-party coalition cabinet.

It was to take them over three months to come up with a new government line-up. The overall impression was that although the socio-political situation might be dramatic, in the palaces of Rome they were still using the same old alchemy in the allocation of ministerial portfolios likely to assuage the various political camps.

Mauro Ferri and Mario Tanassi, the two leaders of the new social democratic party, were behind a strong government which — riding the wave of emotion triggered by the bombs — sought to impose an authoritarian stamp on the country. They spoke for that "American party" (as it was known) which vehemently opposed Italy's progressive drift leftwards.

Rumor's real intention was to establish a centre government of Christian Democrats and the Unified Socialist Party that would crown, at policy level, the strategy that had led to the Piazza Fontana carnage. But the enormous turnout of trade unionists and leftwingers at the funerals in Milan forced him to think again. On the 15 December 1969 the Piazza del Duomo had been packed with leftwingers, rather than the expected fascists.

The situation that had developed since 1968 was worrying to broad sections of the middle and entrepreneurial classes. First the student unrest and then the labour unrest had fuelled their paranoia about the "red menace". The

traditional unions had for many months been unsuccessful at keeping their members' struggles within the parameters of the usual demands. So much so that on 3 July 1969 a general strike called to press for a rent freeze witnessed the FIAT workers in Turin's Mirafiori plant chanting an ironic slogan that had a threatening ring as far as the ruling class was concerned: "What do we want? Everything!"

That slogan had immediately taken off. Soon it was being chanted with growing insistence on marches. And in fact 1969 recorded 300,000 hours lost to strikes as compared with the 116,000 average for those years. Labour costs were on the rise, from 15.8 per cent (or 19.8 per cent in industry), increasing the wages component of the gross national product from 56.7 up to 59 per cent. A discernible shift in earnings was under way. A threat to the privileged classes of society and to those who only a few short years before had been the beneficiaries of the "economic miracle".

A seemingly pre-revolutionary situation existed in the country. Even though the revolution for which most students and a segment of the workers yearned for was not merely a distant prospect, but a practical impossibility. But what did that matter? Many honestly believed it was just around the corner, and many more were afraid that that was the case.

Even though the advocates of the radical transformion of society were a tiny minority compared with the total population, the nation's political axis was shifting to the left. Although harshly criticised by the extremist fringe, the Communist Party was preparing to expand into new areas. Caught on the hop by the student demonstrations at the start of 1968, the communist leaders from the Via Botteghe Oscure quickly deployed to make up the lost ground, especially in the field of institutional politics — parliament. So much so that on 28 April 1969 the debate began on disarming the Italian police in an attempt to turn them into British "bobbies". It only took the bombs in Milan on 25 April to consign that scheme to utopia.

The strategy of tension was under way. This phase involved a revamping and synthesis of what had already been devised in theory and put into practice since the mid-1960s by leaders of the far-right and important elements in the armed forces. Italian Nazis and fascists were eager to eradicate the "communist contagion" and in this they were aide, abetted, monitored and, ultimately, directed by the Italian and American secret services.

The CIA had been operating in Italy since the end of World War Two. In 1947 it had funded — through the AFL-CIO — the breakaway socialist party led by Giuseppe Saragat and helped by anti-Stalinist revolutionaries, the Iniziativa Socialista, led by Mario Zagari. Apart from the ideological motives which drove Saragat and Zagari, the CIA's dollars successfully undermined the Popular Front and facilitated the victory of the Christian Democrats on 18 April 1948 when they took 48.5 per cent of the votes. and won an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies.

That victory had almost been written off. On 20 March 1948, George

Marshall, the US Secretary of State, had warned Italians that in the event of a communist victory all US aid to Italy would dry up. In 1969 the CIA found its activities facilitated — the Italian president, Saragat, was a man who owed them a favour.

The CIA had one great foe — communism, just as the KGB used every method available to it to combat capitalism. But whereas in the Third World the two agencies fought on almost equal terms — with the KGB having the edge — in the west the CIA brooked no interference. So much so that in 1967 it came up with a brilliant resolution to the Greek crisis by installing its own man, George Papadopoulos in power by means of a coup d'etat. From this point on the "coup-makers" held the upper hand in the Agency in Europe — and would continue to do so right up until the mid-1970s.

After Greece it was Italy's turn and within the US-dependent SID the coup-maker faction was in the ascendant. From 1966 — the year he took office — the SID was led by Admiral Eugenio Henke and D Bureau was headed by Federico Gasca Queirazza, one of those who had been briefed in 1966 by agent Guido Giannettini on what the Venetian Nazis Franco Freda, Giovanni Ventura and Delfo Zorzi were planning.

Gasca Queirazza passed this information on to his superior, Henke, who in turn forwarded the information to Interior Minister Franco Restivo. Did Restivo pass on this information to his party colleague and prime minister, Mariano Rumor? No? That takes some swallowing, if only because the repeated unbelievable attacks of amnesia suffered by Rumor during the first trial in Catanzaro provoked such hilarity, in spite of the dramatic setting.

When Vito Miceli took over from Henke in 1970, the coup-maker faction was no longer simply diligently coordinating the attacks mounted by the far-right, it had taken the initiative as a direct organiser and Junio Valerio Borghese's coup attempt was part and parcel of this new dynamic. Miceli was also to stand trial for this later, but, as ever, nothing came of it.

When they struck on the night of 7 December 1970, Borghese's men were not nostalgic old codgers. They had substantial cover and assistance. Defence Minister Tanassi was briefed by Miceli on what was happening, as did the chief of staff, Enzo Marchesi. In fact, Restivo knew everything even before the plotters held part of his ministry for a few hours. But when questioned in parliament on 18 March 1971, after the news had broken, Restivo denied everything. Naturally.

The history of the coup in Italy remains unfinished business, as is the case of Piazza Fontana. History repeated itself in April 1973 with the Rosa dei Venti conspiracy which involved even greater heavyweights who were much better prepared than Borgese had been — officers such as Colonel Amos Spiazzi (who had been around the block earlier, on 7 December 1970).

The man who oversaw this proliferation of attacks and coup preparations was a leading engineer by the name of Hung Fendwich whose office was based in Rome's Via Tiburtina. But it was not located in the sort of secret lair that one

might imagine; it was in the offices of the Selenia company, part of the STET - IRI group, for which he worked.

Fendwich was the typical eminence grise who studied and refined plans, drew up analyses of the socioeconomic and political situation, but left the operational work — the "dirty work" — to men of more modest rank, men such as Captain David Carrett attached to the FTASE base (NATO command in Verona from 1969 to 1974), or his successor (up until 1978), Captain Theodore Richard based in Vicenza.

These men were led by Sergio Minetto, one of the CIA's top Italian informants. Minetto was the man to whom Carlo Digilio, their plant inside the Ordine Nuovo group in Venice, would have been reporting. As an operator it was he who prepared the explosives and trained Delfo Zorzi and Giovanni Ventura in the group's powder-magazine — an isolated house in the Paese district near Treviso.

The bomb attacks that erupted in Italy between 1969 and the mid-1970s (although they continued after that date) were regarded as overtures to a coup d'etat. Indeed, although the coup never happened, it was always in the air and indeed had a precise function. It sent out a clear and menacing message to the opposition — ie. the Communist Party.

But it was no coincidence that following the coup in Chile in September 1973 — which brought the number of military regimes around the globe to 47 — PCI secretary Enrico Berlinguer floated the idea (from the columns of the review *Rinascita)* of an "historic compromise" — ie. for a government agreement between the Christian Democrats, the Italian Communist Party and the Italian Socialist Party. But it was to take another 23 years before the Democratic Left Party, the PCI's heir, entered the government as part of a centre-left coalition.

The bombings crystallised the institutional political situation and in response the left presented the prospect of armed struggle. The ongoing outrages and the threat of a coup, among other things, drove many extra-parliamentary militants underground, including people such as the publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli.

All this gave rise to a vicious circle which, to some extent, served as an a posteriori excuse for the theory of "opposing extremisms'. The only hope was to trustwhoever was in power at the time — that is, the men who were rubber-stamping and providing the cover for what the Interior Ministry's confidential affairs bureau and the SID were doing under instruction from the CIA.

From the ministers came the directives and the secret services carried them out — and added more than a little initiative in the process. It was no coincidence in 1974, when SID officers brought Defence Minister Giulio Andreotti (in the fifth Rumor government) the recordings made by Captain Antonio Labruna with industrialist Remo Orlandini, a man who had been caught up in the Borghese coup attempt. Andreotti's advice was that they "do a bit of pruning". Translation? Purge the tapes of the most important names,

which is to say the names of high-ranking military personnel implicated in the failed coup attempt.

This behaviour was similar to that of his predecessor, Mario Tanassi (defence minister with the fourth Rumor government). In the summer of 1974 Judge Giovanni Tamburino asked the SID for information about the pro-coup activities of General Ugo Ricci whom he considered one of the men behind the Rosa dei Venti. The SID, who knew all about Ricci's activities, reported that the general was a man of unshakable democratic beliefs. But before forwarding that report the SID chief forwarded the judge's request to Tanassi who returned it with the annotation: "Always say as little as possible."

The practice of saying nothing or telling lies continued through the years. On 13 October 1985 the weekly Panorama published extracts from a document by Bettino Craxi, the prime minister, inviting the men of the secret services "to abide by a policy of noncooperation" with the magistrates questioning him.

Craxi never denied the veracity of that report. How could he? But he did bring pressures to bear on the judges to ignore it. So the politicians knew all about the secret service plots. — and were often the prime movers behind it. They knew that the fascists were being used to further the strategy of tension and they were either jointly responsible for this or direct promoters of it, like Restivo.

So there was raison d'etat behind the 12 December 1969 bombs — a matter of opting for terrorism as a means of holding on to power.

"12 December 1969 signalled a watershed in the history of the republic, in the history of the left, in the history of movements [...] because in effect on that date, along with 16 ordinary individuals there perished a significant portion of the first republic — a substantial portion of the machinery of state consciously plumped for illegality. It set itself up as a criminal power while continuing to man essential institutions and was permitted to do so (the 'State servants', policemen, judges, secret agents, politicians, secretaries, ministers, pen-pushers and henchmen who cooperated in the implementation of this crime and its cover-up by the laying of false trails, obstruction and ensuring the crime remained unpunished are numbered in the thousands). Since then, Italy has ceased to represent a constitutional democracy in the fullest sense", wrote the political scientist Marco Revelli in his book *Le due destre*.

That political analysis is borne out and documented in the investigation carried out by Judge Guido Salvini: "The protection afforded members of the Venice cell [...] was absolutely vital, insofar as the caving-in of even one of the accused would have led the investigators, level after level, right to the highest powers who had made the operation on 12 December feasible, and the repercussions from that might well have proved incompatible with the maintenance of the country's political status quo."

Such widespread collusion also raises doubts. How much did the main opposition party — the Italian Communist Party, now the Democratic Left Party — know about the Piazza Fontana massacre? A lot, to be sure. But how

much? And to what extent did the fear of bombs and coup d'etats taint the PCI's positions? To what extent was it induced by such fear to propose its historic compromise and then embrace coexistence? The answer to that can be found only in the archives in the Via Botteghe Oscure, which are as impenetrable as the Vatican's.

But we can offer one answer, an answer which— given the guilt that lies at the highest levels — can only be that the massacre of Piazza Fontana was a State massacre. And the State was, moreover, the mother of all the massacres.

THE TIME-TABLE OF BOMBINGS

A Basic Chronology

1969

25 April — Two bombs explode in Milan: one at the FIAT stand at the Trade Fair and another at the bureau de change in the Banca Nazionale delle Communicazione at Central Station. Dozens are injured but none seriously. Anarchists Eliane Vincileone, Giovanni Corradini, Paolo Braschi, Paolo Faccioli, Angelo Piero Della Savia and Tito Pulsinelli are arrested.

2 July
The Unified Socialist Party (PSU), created out of an amalgamation of the PSI and the PSDI on 30 October 1966 splits into the PSI and the PSU.

5 July
Crisis in the three-party coalition government (DC, PSU and PRI) led by Mariano Rumor.

5 August
Rumor takes the helm of a single party (DC) government.

9 August
Ten bombs are planted on as many trains. Eight explode and 12 people are injured.

7 December
Corradini and Vincileone are released from jail for lack of evidence.

12 December
Four bombs explode. One planted in the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in the Piazza Fontana in Milan claims 16 lives and wounds another hundred people. In Rome a bomb goes off at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, wounding 14, and two devices go off at the cenotaph in the Piazza Venezia, wounding 4. Another bomb is discovered, unexploded, at the Banca Commerciale in the Piazza della Scala in Milan. Four hours later, ordinance officers blow it up. Numerous arrests are made. Among those arrested is the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli.

15 December
the anarchist Pietro Valpreda is arrested at the courthouse in Milan and taken to Rome that evening. Around midnight, Pinelli falls from the fourth floor at

police headquarters in Milan.
In Vittorio Veneto, Guido Lorenzon visits lawyer Alberto Steccanella to report that a friend, Giovanni Ventura, may have been implicated in the 12 December bomb outrages.

16 December

Taxi-driver Cornelio Rolandi identifies Valpreda as the passenger he ferried close to the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in the Piazza Fontana on the afternoon of 12 December.

17 December

Press conference by the Milan anarchists at the Circolo Ponte della Ghisolfa. The Piazza Fontana massacre is described as a "State massacre".

20 December

Nearly 3 thousand people attend Pinelli's funeral.

26 December

Steccanella takes an affidavit written by Lorenzon to the prosecutor in Treviso.

31 December

Treviso prosecutor Pietro Calogero questions Lorenzon.

1970

27 March

Rumor forms a four party government (DC, PSI, PSDI and PRI).

15 April

Inspector Luigi Calabresi begins proceedings against Pio Baldelli, the director of the weekly *Lotta Continua* who had accused him of responsibility for Pinelli's death.

21 May

Milan examining magistrate Giovanni Caizzi asks that the file on Pinelli's death be closed and that it be recorded as an accidental death.

3 July

Antonio Amati, head of the investigation bureau in Milan agrees to Caizzi's request that the file on Pinelli's death be closed.

22 July

'Southern Arrow' train is bombed, killing 6 and injuring 139.

6 August

Emilio Colombo takes the helm of a four party coalition government (DC, PSI, PSDI and PRI).

9 October

The Calabresi-*Lotta Continua* case opens. The court is chaired by Aldo Biotti, with Michele Lener defending Calabresi. Baldelli's lawyers are Marcello Gentili and Bianca Guidetti Serra. The prosecution counsel is Emilio Guicciardi.

7 December

Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, leader of the Fronte Nazionale, leads an attempted coup d'etat. Licio Gelli, head of the P2 masonic lodge, is in charge of kidnapping the president of the republic, Giuseppe Saragat.

12 December

Demonstrations in Milan on the first anniversary of the Piazza Fontana massacre. Fierce clashes between police and demonstrators. Student Enzo Santarelli dies when struck in the chest by a tear-gas canister fired by the police.

1971

13 April
Treviso examining magistrate Giancarlo Stiz issues warrants for the arrest of three Venetian Nazi-fascists: Giovanni Ventura, Franco Freda and Aldo Trinco. The offences alleged against them are: conspiracy to subvert, procurement of weapons of war and attacks in Turn in April 1969 and on trains that August.

28 May
The anarchists tried in connection with the bombs in Milan on 25 April 1969 are found not guilty. However, some are convicted of minor offences: Della Savia is sentenced to eight years, Braschi to six years and ten months, Faccioli to three years and six months. Tito Pulsinelli is cleared on all counts. They are all freed from jail.

7 June
The Appeal Court in Milan accedes to a request by the lawyer Lener that Judge Biotti be discharged from the case.

16 July
Death of taxi-driver Rolandi, the sole witness against Valpreda.

4 October
Fresh inquest into Pinelli's death as a result of a complaint brought by his widow Licia Rognini. Milan-based examining magistrate Gerardo D'Ambrosio brings voluntary homicide chargers against Inspector Calabresi, police officers Vito Panessa, Giuseppe Caracuta, Carlo Mainardi, Piero Mucilli, Vito Panessa, and carabiniere Lieutenant Savino Lo Grano.

21 October
D'Ambrosio has Pinelli's corpse exhumed.

24 December
Giovanni Leone is elected president of Italy.

1972

17 February
Giulio Andreotti forms his first government: it is made up exclusively of Christian Democrats.

23 February
The Piazza Fontana massacre trial opens in the Court of Assizes in Rome. Judge Orlando Falco presides. The prosecution counsel is Vittorio Occorsio. The accused are Pietro Valpreda, Emilio Bagnoli, Emilio Borghese, Roberto Gargamelli, Enrico Di Cola, Ivo Della Savia, Mario Merlino, Ele Lovati Valpreda, Maddalena Valpreda, Rachele Torri, Olimpia Torri Lovati and Stefano Delle Chiaie. After a few hearings the court declares that it is not competent to hear to hear the case.

4 March
Treviso magistrates Stiz and Calogero have Pino Rauti, the founder of Ordine Nuovo and journalist with the Rome daily *Il Tempo*, arrested on charges of involvement in the subversive activities of Freda and Ventura.
6 March
The Piazza Fontana trial is relocated to Milan.
15 March
Death of publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. His bomb- mangled body is discovered at the foot of an electricity pylon in Segrate, Milan.
22 March
Freda and Ventura are indicted by Venetian magistrates Stiz and Calogero for the Piazza Fontana massacre in Milan.
26 March
The investigation by Stiz and Calogero is handed over to the Milan district authorities. It is handled by examining magistrate D'Ambrosio to whom public prosecutor Emilio Alessandrini is seconded.
24 April
Judge D'Ambrosio frees Pino Rauti for lack of evidence.
7 May
Early elections. Rauti is returned as deputy on the MSI ticket. *Il Manifesto* puts up Valpreda as a candidate but he is not elected.
17 May
Inspector Calabresi is killed in Milan.
31 May
A bomb concealed in a car goes off in Peteano (Gradisca d'Isonzo) three carabinieri are killed and one wounded.
26 June
Andreotti succeeds himself by forming a government with the DC, PSDI and PLI.
13 October
The Court of Cassation transfers the Piazza Fontana case to the Catanzaro jurisdiction.
10 November
An arsenal of weapons is discovered in an isolated house near Camerino.
15 December
Parliament passes Law No 733, known also as the "Valpreda Law".
30 December
Valpreda and the other anarchists from Rome's Circolo 22 Marzo still in custody (Borghese and Gargamelli) are released. Merlino is also let out of prison.

1973

15 January
Marco Pozzan, a Freda loyalist, is smuggled out of the country by the SID.
9 April

Guido Giannettini, Agent Zeta, is smuggled out of the country by the SID.

17 May

Gianfranco Bertoli throws a bomb at Milan police headquarters: 4 people lose their lives and nearly 40 are injured.

7 July

Rumor returns to the government, supported by the DC, PSI, PSDI and PRI.

28 September

Enrico Berlinguer publishes his first article in the communist weekly *Rinascita* broaching the "historic compromise".

1974

14 March

Rumor forms his fifth government with DC, PSI and PSDI support.

28 May

In the Piazza della Loggia in Brescia a bomb explodes during a demonstration organised by the United Antifascist Committee and the trade unions: 8 people are killed and almost 100 injured.

30 May

Federico Umberto D'Amato is replaced as head of the confidential affairs bureau at the Interior Ministry.

20 June

Giulio Andreotti, Minister of Defence, reveals in an interview with *Il Mond*o that Giannettini is an agent of the SID, whilst *Corriere della Sera* reporter Giorgio Zicari is an informant.

4 August

A bomb explodes on board the Italicus train on the Rome-Munich line as it passes through the San Benedetto Val di Sambro (Bologna) tunnel, killing 12 people and wounding 48.

8 August

Giannettini surrenders himself to the Italian Embassy in Buenos Aires.

22 November

Aldo Moro forms a DC-PRI coalition government.

1975

27 January

The Piazza Fontana case opens before the Court of Assizes in Catanzaro. The accused are Franco Freda, Giovanni Ventura, Marco Pozzan, Antonio Massari, Angelo Ventura, Luigi Ventura, Franco Comacchio, Giancarlo Marchesin, Ida Zanon, Ruggero Pan, Claudio Orsi, Claudio Mutti, Pietro Loredan, Gianadelio Maletti, Antonio Labruna, Guido Giannettini, Gaetano Tanzilli, Stefano Serpieri, Stefano Delle Chiaie, Udo Lemke, Pietro Valpreda, Mario Merlino, Emilio Bagnoli, Roberto Gargamelli, Emilio Borghese, Ivo Della Savia, Enrico Di Cola, Maddalena Valpreda, Ele Lovati Valpreda, Rachele Torri and Olimpia Torri Lovati.

1 March
Bertoli is sentenced to life imprisonment for the 17 March 1973 bomb attack outside police headquarters in Milan. This sentence is upheld on appeal on 9 March 1976.
27 October
Milan magistrate D'Ambrosio closes the file on the Pinelli death. According to the finding, the anarchist died as the result of "active misfortune". Meaning that misfortune resulted in his falling out of the window. All of those indicted for his death are absolved.

1977

1 October
Freda flees to Costa Rica. He will be arrested and extradited in August 1980.
23 November
General Saverio Malizia, legal adviser to Defence Minister Mario Tanassi is convicted by the Court of Assizes in Catanzaro of perjury. He is freed shortly afterwards.

1979

16 January
Ventura flees to Argentina.
23 February
The Court of Assizes in Catanzaro brings in its first verdict. Freda, Ventura and Giannettini are sentenced to life imprisonment for mass murder, outrages and justifying crime. Valpreda, cleared on the basis of insufficient evidence, is sentenced to four years and six months for criminal conspiracy. The same sentence is handed down to Merlino. Gargamelli is sentenced to one year and six months for criminal conspiracy. Bagnoli gets a two year suspended sentence. The perjury charges against Valpreda's relations and Stefano Delle Chiaie are thrown out; Maletti is sentenced to four years for aiding and abetting and perjury; Labruna gets two years and Tanzilli gets one year for perjury.

1980

4 April
Francesco Cossiga forms a DC- PSI-PRI government.
30 July
General Malizia is cleared by the Court of Assizes in Potenza after the Court of Cassation's repeal of the 23 November 1977 verdict of the Catanzaro Court.
2 August
A bomb explodes in the railway station in Bologna killing 85 people and injuring dozens more.
18 October
Arnaldo Forlani forms a four-party (DC-PSI-PSDI-PRI) coalition government.

1981

20 March

The Court of Appeal in Catanzaro clears Freda, Ventura, Giannettini, Valpreda and Merlino on grounds of insufficient evidence. Freda and Ventura are sentenced to 15 years for conspiracy to subvert, for the bombings on 25 April 1969 in Milan and on train bombings on 9 August 1969. Charges against Maletti and Labruna are dismissed.

28 June

Five-party coalition government (DC-PSI-PSDI-PRI-PLI) forms under Giovanni Spadolini.

24 August

A commission of inquiry decides to close the file on the charges against Giulio Andreotti, Mariano Rumor, Mario Tanassi and Mario Zagari of involvement in the laying of false trails by the SID.

1982

10 June

The Court of Cassation assigns a second appeal case to Bari, but leaves Giannettini out of the reckoning.

1985

1 August

The Appeal Court in Bari clears Freda, Ventura, Valpreda and Merlino of the charge of massacre on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Instead it upholds the 15 year sentences passed on Freda and Ventura and further reduces the sentences passed on Maletti (one year) and Labruna (ten months).

1986

1 August

Craxi succeeds himself as premier of a five-party government.

1987

27 January

The first section of the Court of Cassation, with Corrado Carnevale presiding, turns down all appeals and upholds the verdict passed by the court in Bari on 1 August 1985. Freda, Ventura, Valpreda and Merlino are at last left out of the judicial reckoning.

1988

13 April

Ciriaco De Mita heads a five-party (DC-PSI-PRI-PSDI-PLI) government.

2 July

Leonardo Marino, formerly with *Lotta Continua*, hands himself over to the carabinieri in La Spezia. After 24 days he confesses his guilt to the carabinieri in Milan, naming himself as the getaway driver in the murder of Inspector

Calabresi. He also points the finger at Ovidio Bompressi (another ex-member of *Lotta Continua*) as the actual killer, and at Adriano Sofri and Giorgio Pietrostefani, the two leaders of that extra-parliamentary organisation, as having ordered the killing.

1989

January
Examining magistrate Guido Salvini opens up a new investigation into rightwing subversion and the Piazza Fontana massacre.
20 February
The Court of Assizes in Catanzaro clears Delle Chiaie and Massimiliano Fachini of charges in connection with the Piazza Fontana massacre.

1991

12 April
Seventh Andreotti government, a four-party coalition (DC-PSI-PSDI-PLI).
5 July
The Appeal Court in Catanzaro upholds the verdict clearing Delle Chiaie and Fachini of the Piazza Fontana massacre.

1994

11 May
Silvio Berlusconi forms a centre-right government including the FI, AN, LN and CCD. For the first time in post-war Italy the AN or Allianza Nazionale (formerly the MSI) is in government.

1995

13 March
Judge Salvini issues an order for proceedings to be instituted against Nico Azzi, Giancarlo Rognoni, Mauro Marzorati, Francesco De Min, Pietro Battiston, Paolo Signorelli, Sergio Calore, Martino Siciliano, Giambattista Cannata, Cristiano De Eccher, Mario Ricci, Massimiliano Fachini, Guido Giannettini, Stefano Delle Chiaie, Gianadelio Maletti, Sandro Romagnoli, Giancarlo D'Ovidio, Guelfo Osmani, Michele Santoro, Licio Gelli, Roberto Palotto, Angelo Izzo, Carlo Digilio, Franco Donati, Cinzia De Lorenzo and Ettore Malcangi.
April
Following the order for proceedings tabled by Judge Salvini, Grazia Pradella and Massimo Meroni are appointed prosecution counsel. They will be supervised by D'Ambrosio.

1996

17 May
Romano Prodi forms a centre-left government including the PDS, PPI, RI, UD, the Greens and supported from without by the RDS. For the first time in

postwar Italy (since the governments in the immediate post-war years) the Democratic Left Party [PDS], formerly the PCI, is in government.

1 August

Death of Federico Umberto D'Amato, former chief of the confidential affairs bureau at the Interior Ministry.

4 October

Acting on behalf of Judge Salvini, the expert Aldo Giannuli finds 150,000 uncatalogued Interior Ministry files in a cache on the Via Appia on the outskirts of Rome.

1997

22 January

Sofri, Pietrostefani and Bompressi are finally convicted (this is their sixth trial) by the Court of Cassation and sentenced to 22 years in prison. Charges against Marino are thrown out.

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