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Strangers Everywhere

About some anarchists arrested in Lecce
and a world where no one can feel at home



On Thursday, May 12, in a massive show of force, the Digos (Italian political police) arrested five anarchists in Lecce, Italy. The arrested are Annalisa Capone, Angela Marina Ferrari (Marina), Cristian Palladini, Salvatore Signore and Saverio Pellegrino.

The police show of force in this situation could appear absurd. In operation “nighttime”, as the cops termed this series of raids, searches and arrests, one hundred and fifty cops were deployed in the region of Lecce alone. These included canine units, border cops, postal cops, units from the Central Antiterrorism service, bomb specialists, a helicopter and so on.

Charges against the arrested anarchists include:

- subversive association with the intent of terrorism and the subversion of the democratic state;

- attacks against the Cathedral of Lecce and Father Cesare Lodeserto's house; Lodeserto was the director of the "Center for Temporary Residence" (CPT, i.e., concentration camp for undocumented immigrants) in San Foca, Lecce, until he was arrested for private violence and kidnapping in relation to his treatment of inmates at the "center";
- instigation to revolt, during a march in front of the CPT that ended in conflicts;
- attacks against ATMs of Banca Intesa, where the Regina Pacis Foundation, the organization through which the good priest ran the concentration camp in San Foca, kept their funds;
- telephone "harassment" against collaborators in maintaining the operation of the CPT;
- "defamation" of these collaborators in flyers;
- dirtying the entrance of the house of one of these collaborators with paint;
- organizing an unauthorized march against the Benetton corporation that is taking over large portions of Patagonia (the southern portion of Chile and Argentina) and driving the Mapuche people off their land;
- dirtying the windows of a shop owned by Benetton;
- damaging pumps at an Esso gas station; Esso is the European branch of Exxon, fuel suppliers for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- occupying the empty and unused space, Capolinea;
- writing messages on walls.

These charges refer to actions that have taken place over the past two years.

In addition to these arrests, ten other people were informed that they were under investigation, eight for subversive association with the intent of terrorism and two for unauthorized demonstration. The cops closed down and seized the anarchist occupied space, Capolinea, and carried out searches against anarchists all over Italy (in Lecce, Aosta, Turin, Trento, Trieste, Chieti, Cagliari, Taranto and Catania).

Update: the repression spreads

Since I began to put this together, there have been several more arrests, searches and investigations in Italy. On Thursday morning, May 19, in Sardinia, fifty-six searches were carried out and seven anarchists there were arrested. I don't have their names yet. In addition, on Wednesday morning, several Moslem immigrants in Milan and Turin were arrested, accused of being "international terrorists". Even the pacifistic, institution-friendly *disobbediente* have been struck by the repression. Three of them were arrested in Bologna, charged with "subversive association" for occupying a university hall for two days and distributing photocopies of expensive academic texts. In addition, on May 26, the Italian state carried out dozens of searches and arrested ten anarchists in the areas of Rome and Bologna accusing them of involvement in bombings that occurred in the late autumn of 2003. Again, the associative crime of subversive association with the aim of terrorism is central in the investigation, since this does not require proof of actual individual participation in the specific actions involved. It is a ploy of the state to criminalize anarchists simply for communicating with each other and sharing a desire to destroy the state and capital. There is a clear attempt to suppress all desire to revolt or even just dissent in Italy. As the repression spreads so must revolt, the true face of solidarity. At this point five of the anarchists arrested on May 26 have been released (though they are still under investigation).

Here are the names and addresses I currently have available for the anarchists hit by these later arrests:

Valentina Speziale
Casa Circondariale
Borgo San Nicola, 119
73100 Lecce
Italy

Danilo Cremonese
Casa Circondariale
Via Fonte Secco, 88
61100 Pesaro
Italy

Some of Those Responsible

The Italian state

Banca Intesa

The Regina Pacis Foundation

All police and border guard institutions – the Department of Homeland Security in the US

Red Cross – this “humanitarian organization” plays a major supportive role in the various concentration camps for undocumented immigrants throughout the world. It also intervenes in areas where war or other disasters occur to play a pacifying role on potentially rebellious populations

Benetton and its subsidiaries and partners: HMSHost – runs food franchises in airports and truck stops. They have connections with Burger King and Pizza Hut to name a few; AltidasUSA – an America subsidiary of Benetton, through Aldeasa S.A., involved in cigar distribution, including Don Diego, El Producto, H. Upmann, Montecrist, Dutch Treats and Supre Sweets; Selective Beauty; Mat-tel – recently went into partnership with Benetton: Boyner Group; Tecnica; Nordica; Rollerblade; Sisley – this clothing subsidiary of Benetton was the first in which the microchips were placed; Philips – one of the companies supplying the microchips; LAB ID – in partnership with Philips, supplying microchips.

ENDESA – the Spanish multinational electric company that has been damming the Biobio river in Mapuche territory.

REPSOL-YPF – a Spanish multinational energy company exploiting and poisoning Mapuche land to find new oil sources.

Meridan Gold – a Canadian mining company given rights to mine on the “Benetton land” in Patagonia.

The Chilean and Argentine states – that encourage all this.

Those responsible for the slaughter in Iraq and Afghanistan surround us, though obviously the **US government** and companies such as **Exxon** (Esso) deserve particular attention.

I do not know whether those arrested had anything to do with the activities for which they are charged, nor do I care. Guilt or innocence do not interest me since such terms belong to the justice system and the state. My solidarity is based on seeing my own struggle in that of the comrades, seeing possibilities for complicity and mutuality, even across and ocean.

No home in this world

The real crime of the comrades of Lecce is that they have quite openly expressed their solidarity with rebelling immigrants in the CPTs and with the Mapuche fighting against being dispossessed in South America, as well as their disgust for the war in Iraq. In doing so, they have recognized what they have in common with the undocumented immigrants, the Mapuches losing their land and the Iraqis having their homes destroyed before their very eyes by self-proclaimed “liberators” – that they too are among the dispossessed and exploited who increasingly have no place in this world, no home, who are strangers everywhere they go.

Undocumented immigrants and democratic concentration camps. The number of immigrants roaming the globe trying to escape repression, war, poverty and starvation is growing exponentially as this world falls apart. Social, economic, environmental and political disaster are everywhere. So the immigrants in the CPTs in Italy have their brothers and sisters throughout the world, not all of whom are in concentration camps. In Italy as elsewhere, undocumented immigrants in *and outside* of these concentration camps have begun to rebel. It only makes sense that anarchists would respond with solidarity, since they are also strangers in this world. In fact, the undocumented immigrant is simply the most blatant expression of the precarious reality that capital is imposing on all of the exploited at present. Capital and the state are spreading devastation into every corner of the globe, poisoning those lands that they haven’t yet stolen, where a few still manage to create their lives on their own terms. Just as the homeless within the borders are not simply individuals who love sleeping in doorways and under bridges, so the immigrants from outside the borders are not carefree nomads wandering for the love of adventure. Desperate conditions of poverty, environ-

mental devastation, war and political repression have forced them to take to the road in hopes of finding anything even slightly better. And for their desperation and poverty, they find themselves criminalized, defined by a racist propaganda as dangerous and undesirable elements. In every country, capital needs cheap labor. The most desperate, those who live in daily fear of capture and deportation, are the most easily blackmailed. If they do not accept the worst of conditions at the lowest pay, they are not needed and can be turned over to the authorities. In turn, the rulers present these immigrants to the local exploited as a threat to their own precarious jobs, using this as blackmail to enforce servility among all of the exploited. This makes it easy to use racist and nationalist ideologies to prevent solidarity between immigrants and “native-born” exploited who are deluded into believing that they have more in common with the masters who exploit them than with those who have been forced into desperate wandering. But those in power understand the real threat of those that they have excluded. If the nazis began to build their concentration camps as the places of exception for holding those who, in their eyes, constituted objective threats to the state (political dissidents, homosexuals, Jews and gypsies) simply because they did not fit in, the various refugee camps, holding centers and “Centers for Temporary Residence”, as the Italian humanitarians so euphemistically call them, are the concentration camps of the modern democratic states – not metaphorically, but literally, because they are places for holding those who are perceived as objective threats to that state, outside of the arena of civil rights, stripped of all but that bare minimum recognized as “human rights”. This exposes the poverty of the democratic state of rights, in which there are only ciphers whose values are defined in abstract terms that prove, in the end, to be economic.

As these concentration camps for undocumented immigrants have spread throughout the world (and particularly the democratic states), they have become hotbeds of rebellions. Riots, hunger strikes and planned escapes are frequent. Those locked up inside are not resigning themselves to their imprisonment. This is why solidarity is possible. Since those locked up in these specialized prisons within the larger social prison are rebelling against the reality imposed upon them, we can find ways to intertwine

estry. The forces of domination, exploitation and repression are the same here as in Italy, Patagonia and Iraq, even if the specific methods of their functioning vary due to differing circumstances. We can find the links in the chain of exploitation that connect us with the comrades in Italy and with all the exploited and dispossessed in revolt and aim our attacks at these points. And this is true solidarity which gives substance to any support we may choose to give the arrested comrades, showing its basis in complicity rather than charity or duty.

Annalisa and Marina are currently under house arrest. Salvatore, Saverio and Cristian are in prison at the following addresses:

Cristian Paladini
Casa circondariale
Borgo San Nicola
73100 Lecce,
Italy

Salvatore Signore
Casa circondariale
Via provinciale
84131 Fuorni (Salerno)
Italy

Saverio Pellegrino
Casa circondariale
Via Lecce
85025 Melfi
Italy

An anarchist stranger in an alien world



form of resistance for those who are only now being dispossessed of the means by which they have created their lives, for us here, it must take the form of destructive attack. But despite the specific differences in how each of us struggles where they are, it is in this common struggle against the class relationships imposed by capital and the state that the real possibility for active solidarity and the interweaving of struggles exists.

Showing solidarity

Solidarity is not an obligation, but a choice based in mutuality. If I choose to express solidarity with any struggles, any comrades, any prisoners, it is because I see my battle to take back my life and live it on my terms within them. This is why the most essential aspect of solidarity is the continuation of the struggles and revolts we share with our comrades here where we are.

Understood in this way, solidarity is never with the suffering of others – that would merely be pity, not true solidarity. Rather it is precisely with the ferocity with which they refuse to accept their suffering. This is why questions of guilt or innocence are of no importance in relation to solidarity with arrested and imprisoned comrades. What matters is that we know that they are fighting the state and its servants and that currently the state has chosen to strike them fiercely for attacking it.

The five comrades arrested in Lecce, the ten under investigation and the dozens whose homes were invaded by cops all recognize what their daily revolt shares in common with others of the exploited who rebel. All of these comrades acted in their own way to express their complicity and solidarity with the rebellions of those in the CPTs, in Patagonia, in Iraq and in other places against this imposed existence.

In the same way, my solidarity with Salvatore, Saverio, Cristian, Marina, Annalisa and the other comrades in Italy starts from a recognition of complicity and mutuality, seeing my own rebellion in theirs. The greatest act of solidarity would be to find the places where my struggle can interweave with those they are involved in, and thus also with the revolts of undocumented immigrants, the Mapuche, the portions of Iraqi resistance that remain free of sectarian and nationalist rackets and act there. In this way, the threads of revolt can weave an ever-expanding tap-

our own struggles against the larger social prison that is our daily reality with their specific struggle. The destruction of these concentration camps for the undocumented requires the active destruction of this social order that turns the entire world into a prison-shopping mall.

One such concentration camp exists in Lecce, the CPT of San Foca, run by the Regina Pacis Foundation, a Catholic charity. Up until recently it was under the direction of Father Cesare Lodeserto. This contemptible lackey of god lost his position when it was found that he was torturing inmates at the camp. As if being locked up simply for being in desperate straits were not torture already. But the democratic state must keep its hands clean of excesses like those of Father Lodeserto. It needs its scapegoats to prove its own humaneness. In any case, the anarchists in Lecce recognize that the excesses of Lodeserto were simply an extension of the logic of the concentration camps and the world that creates them. They have no interest in making these hellholes more humane. They want to destroy them and the world that creates them, a world that has objectively estranged all of the exploited, stealing away our capacity to create our lives on our own terms. And so they expressed their solidarity with the rebellion of those inside the concentration camps, and this is the crime for which they have been arrested.

The Mapuche and dispossession. The Mapuche are an indigenous people of Patagonia the southern portion of Argentina and Chile. Like all indigenous people, they suffered from the original European invasion of the area. But for some time they have managed to create their lives on the basis of small-scale agriculture and animal husbandry in the region. This has become increasingly difficult as capitalist projects intrude more and more into this area. ENDESA, the Spanish multinational electric company has been building hydroelectric facilities along the course of the Biobio River in Chile, a project that has met with much resistance from the Mapuche including marches and demonstrations, but also sabotage of machinery. But perhaps the biggest and most devastating intrusion into the lives of the Mapuche in recent years has been that of the “progressive” multinational Benetton. This company, with its anti-racist, pro-environmental, progressive image, bought several hundred thousand acres of

land in Patagonia where the Mapuche had been living. Along with its own exploitation of the area, Benetton has granted mining rights and rights to search for underground minerals and hydrocarbon to various multinational companies, and has been involved in building highways, airports, railroads and so on in the area. If Benetton is the most devastating of the forces of capitalism dispossessing the Mapuche, the most bizarre and, in certain ways, telling is the Human Genome Diversity Project. It has requested five hundred specimens of genetic material from this tribe of about eight thousand to preserve in its storage facilities. The tribe has refused to cooperate, seeing this equation of people with a small group of molecules within their body as a symptom of what is wrong with this society in which everything, including human beings is simply a resource, a commodity. This massive dispossession of the indigenous people of the region has not been accepted silently. Mapuche resistance has been consistent and often fierce. Along with demonstrations and battles with the police, there have been attempts to occupy portions of the land Benetton took over. The Mapuche are not accepting dispossession and the consequent proletarianization that is being imposed on them quietly.

War and resistance in Iraq. The Iraqis have been watching their home get devastated from the beginning of the “first” Gulf War: by the intensive bombing of that war, by the sanctions and continuing bombing over the next twelve years and by the new officially recognized war of the past two years. I have no illusions about the resistance there. Portions of it, possible quite significant portions, are under the influence of nationalist or sectarian ideologies, embracing an artificial solidarity imposed by a collective identity. At the same time, despite the horrific circumstances, a large part of the resistance has remained truly social in nature, showing a clarity about who the real enemies are. While attacks against American military and “private”^{*} targets as well as against Iraqi police and military forces go on apace, inter-sectarian and ethnic violence has been minimal so far, despite a

^{*} Since a large part of the foreign private enterprise in Iraq is in the area of security and mercenary armies, a large portion of this “private targets are actually also military.

US policy that seems clearly intended to promote this sort of hostility between Iraqis. The resistance in Iraq, however deformed it may be by the circumstances there, is also a desperate fight against the destruction of their homes. For years now, the US and its allies have been forcing the Iraqi exploited into the role of strangers in their own land. There is seventy percent (or more) unemployment in Iraq. The only jobs available are service to the invaders. And these invaders destroy entire cities where hundreds of thousands of people once lived. A prime example is the city of Fallujah, which American troops devastated in the search for insurgents last November. The population was driven out or killed, houses were destroyed by the thousands and chemicals used in the siege continue to pollute what is now largely a ghost town. Only twenty percent of the original population has dared to venture back, and to enter the city that had been their home, they are forced to give their fingerprints and retina scan to the American invaders who keep them on file in order to monitor the comings and goings of the population. Truly the Iraqi population – all but the few willing to be puppets – are becoming strangers in their own home. This is what they are resisting.

There is a common thread that runs through each of these situations – the thread of the dispossession, proletarianization and exploitation that capitalism spreads everywhere. The system of capitalism indeed forms a totality, but its development is not the same everywhere. If we in the so-called Western world have been long since dispossessed of the means for making our lives on our own terms directly from what the earth offers, in other places this process of dispossession is going on right now. And the circumstances in which it is developing are quite different. Yet it is the recognition of the common thread that can provide the basis for solidarity in the battle against the impositions of the ruling order. The struggle of the Mapuche or the West Papuans is class struggle inasmuch as it is a struggle against the class relationships capitalism imposes, a struggle against being proletarianized. In the West, we were dispossessed and forced into the class relationships of capitalism long ago. But our struggle to take back our lives is also a fight against the class relationships that have defined our lives now for centuries. If this can take the