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## FROM 'WHITE TERROR' TO 'RED TERROR' WITH THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION OF HUNGARY

After the foul memory of the very first communist regime back in 1918 and the "White terror" enforced by regent Horthy's conservative semi-dictatorship after 1919, revolutionaries in Hungary should logically have turned to anarchism. However, the Hungarian anarchist movement, which played such a heroic part under the German occupation was non-existent before 1944. The cream of the anarchist groups formed in Budapest at the turn of the century had been liquidated, first, by Bela Kun's Bolsheviks and the remainder by Horthy's gendarmes. After Horthy took power the country was cut off from virtually any influence that libertarians abroad might have had over people likely to follow them. The complete state control of the life of the mind and the very considerable influence exercised by the Catholic Church over the masses doomed what few members survived from those old anarchist groups; they rallied around the elderly militant Torockoi. Anarchist ideas were utterly unknown to the people: leftist intellectuals latched on to socialist and radical movements instead. There was nothing to presage any resurgence in libertarian activity.

However, come the war against the Soviets, a war into which Hungary was dragged, the Magyar conscience was rattled by political developments and looming catastrophe. A few youngsters aged between 15 and 21 managed to arrive at and articulate anarchist beliefs. Their elders were virtually all stultified by long-time military and nationalistic education. For the newly fledged libertarians, establishing contact with the older militants was all but impossible and their political education was zero. Aside from a few groups active in Budapest, the capital city being the cradle of all intellectual and political life, they survived in isolation, clueless as to what they should be doing.

Not until March 1944 when German troops embarked upon their "friendly" occupation of Hungary did their anarchist consciousness grow and some of them sought to make contact with the resistance that was beginning to organize itself. That resistance encompassed members of the outlawed Christian-Nationalist Smallholders' Party, whose legendary leader Bajcsy-Zsilinsky was soon arrested and executed, socialists made impotent by internecine squabbles and intrigues dividing them, badly organized liberals, radicals condemned to inactivity by the fact that their leaders were Jews kept under surveillance by the state: the strongest elements in the resistance were the royalist or pro-British nobility, plus the underground Communist Party. The former did most of the fighting against the Germans, were the only ones to sabotage the army and to have effective networks for the rescue of the main targets of persecution – Jews and Polish and French refugees. As for the Communists, they had the slickest organization and the

most financial backing: however, they confined themselves to making propaganda, building up an audience within other resistance factions and getting ready to emerge from this period unscathed and, come the liberation, to throw themselves into the fight against other parties that would have been weakened by the losses sustained. The anarchists were not regarded kindly by these resisters. Everybody looked upon them as a present and future danger. Which is why the first libertarian action did not come until June 1944. A small band of anarchist students led by a 15 year old poet of aristocratic origins nicknamed Christ (currently a refugee in France) mounted an attack in a small northern town on a Gestapo premises, hoping to trigger rioting in the town which they had been leafleting for some months past. Due to an unpredictable mishap, this gambit failed. One student was wounded and Christ and one other arrested. After 18 hours of fruitless interrogation, the two detainees were handed over to the Hungarian police. In the prison of the town they managed to establish a connection to those of their comrades who had given the Germans the slip and from his prison cell Christ drew a plan for a sabotage operation. At the same time as he was being transferred to the notorious political prison in Budapest's Margrit Avenue, his group were setting fire to an army supply depot: this was the group's final operation as it dispersed immediately thereafter.

In the political prison Christ made contact with Aton M, a young Yugoslav arrested during an attack on a military plant on the Hungaro-Yugoslav border, an attack orchestrated by a team of Hungarian and Yugoslav anarchists, which continued its operations right up until the end of the war in the Bacska region in the south. That group, numbering about a hundred members, was certainly the largest in the resistance, apart from the "General de Gorgey" group operating in the Bakony forests. Many sabotage operations and attacks mounted against German and Hungarian troops in Backsa must be chalked up to this group, about which I have never managed to establish detailed information. The Yugoslav and Christ, along with a royalist prisoner, started to organize a prisoner mutiny which failed at the beginning of October: the two anarchists survived thanks to the loyalty of the royalist who was shot.

At the same time, a student, PM (currently a refugee in Italy) managed to set up a quasi-anarchist clan in Budapest; it had support from the communists. Its operations were restricted to distributing leaflets and maintaining liaison between the resistance and the anarchist groups.

Regent Horthy, theoretically in charge despite the presence of German troops, dismissed Szotay's pro-German government that October and appointed [pto]

**Inside: Pinelli, Library News, Reviews**

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a liberal-minded general as prime minister: the latter mounted an anti-German coup on 15 October. The coup attempt was drowned in blood, but a number of political prisoners were freed by it. In the confusion they managed to hide their files, which enabled them to remain at large after the coming to power of the leader of the Hungarian Nazi Party, Szalasi. Christ emerged from prison with an anarchist of Russian extraction, one Alexei Korsakin, who died recently in Paris. They promptly made contact with Torockoi who decided to launch the Hungarian anarchist movement, the only practical component of which was the youth group run by Christ and PM. About ten groups were formed immediately, each ten to fifteen members strong. Soon attacks were being organized against Nazi depots in the suburbs. In just two weeks, these groups carried out 9 attacks, the upshot being the destruction of three military vehicles and an army telegraph post wiped out in Vecses in the northern suburbs, four Nazi soldiers killed and a battery attacked. Not to mention the cutting of telephone wires, distribution of leaflets, streets strewn with scrap metal causing considerable damage. The capital was turned upside down and there was chaos at that point. US aircraft were relentlessly bombing the centres of industry. German, Hungarian, Italian and Romanian troops were seen parading through the streets. The black market and smuggling reached into every area. The Danube swept south with the corpses of Jews and resisters executed under cover of dark on the quayside in front of the Swedish Consulate which issued diplomatic protection certificates to victims of persecution (the consul, Raoul Wallenberg, who rescued 10,000 Jews, was murdered by Russian troops after the liberation). Crowds of people wearing huge yellow stars on their chests would queue between 5 o'clock and 6 o'clock, this being the time when Jews had permission to step outside the newly founded ghetto. The bloodied corpses of executed resisters were often left exposed in the city squares all day long. And from time to time young men could be seen in the city wearing the [Hungarian] Nazi symbol, the Arrow Cross, but also with broad red scarves worn around their waists: these were anarchist militants, aping Alexei Korsakin's legendary red sash. Their worst enemies were the green-shirted Nazis, members of the militia displaying the death's head emblem, the SS and the fanatics from the Youth Army which had taken over from the partly mobilized police force at the time in their khaki uniforms and black ties. In the resistance the fellows in the red sashes were beginning to acquire an almost legendary status, which was not at all to the liking of the Communists who claimed with barely disguised impertinence to be the leaders of the resistance. At the second get-together of the Anarchist Movement, held in the barn attached to a house I used to live in, PM informed us of a number of conditions upon which the Communists were insisting in spite of the pact between us: the anarchists were to perform sentry duties and work in the Communists' clandestine presses, and distribute a given number of Communist tracts. And to worm their way into resistance groups and furnish the Communists with any intelligence they gathered. After a 5 hour debate, those proposals were rejected. The response of the Communists was not long in coming: on 7 December, 26 anarchist

militants were rounded up by the police, followed after 2 days by a further 41, including PM, the only person who might have pinpointed who had betrayed us. PM's group, the only group untouched along with the group known as the Sz.F, of Libertarian Youth, and led by Christ, then split: one third stuck with us, the remainder joining the Communist Party. Torockoi, approaching his 80th birthday, promptly handed over the leadership of the movement to Christ and Korsakin: the mangled anarchist movement responded with a formidable effort: agitation by Korsakin triggered a riot in the central district of Budapest and this was the only popular uprising of the resistance period as reported, by the way, by all the Allied radio stations. Radio Moscow passed it off as a Communist operation. A small crowd led by anarchist militants, displaying their red sashes to the people for the very first time, overran two units of the Hungarian river navy, moored on the Danube in the very heart of the city. One of those boats was the personal property of the head of state. It was set on fire and the other half-wrecked. This operation was so unprecedented that the authorities made no arrests. The next night, the Sz.F group slipped into the catacombs located under the fort and the royal palace on the small Varhegy hill and blew up one of the munitions dumps that the Germans had installed there. The Movement's newly reorganised third and final team was captured and shot while mounting an attack on a Nazi Party residence. The movement found itself reduced to about twenty militants and bereft of support. The munitions seized by the Sz.F group before they blew up the dump in the catacombs were quickly used up in a number of more conventional attacks in the suburbs and during one operation that destroyed a small railway bridge in Kispest. Now, Christ had for some time been in touch with a resistance group run by the anti-Nazi nobility. It was decided that an alliance with them was the best course. In spite of the differences in their motivations and political outlooks, there was perfect harmony between that group and us and I cannot but pay tribute to the two officers who, in the wake of the liberation, were as decent as political adversaries as they had been brothers-in-arms. One of them died recently while a deportee in Russia and the other has fled to South America. Displaying heroic courage, they saved the lives of five anarchist comrades arrested by Hungarian troops: the two officers immediately hotfooted it to the barracks where our comrades were under interrogation, at extreme risk to themselves, and passed themselves off as military police personnel and took charge of transferring the prisoners to the political prison. The ploy succeeded.

At this point we decided to save our strength for the political struggle that we could anticipate was coming in the wake of liberation. Alexei Korsakin was alone in voting against this decision. In the two weeks left before the start of the battle for Budapest, anarchist militants carried on playing their part in attacks on German vehicles but tended to act in support of the operations of a group to which we had ties, the chief interest of which was in counterfeiting documents for victims of persecution and distribution of captured weapons around the resistance groups within the army.

*Le Libertaire*, Paris, 8-9-1950

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### Part II

The battle for Budapest lasted 6 weeks. During the siege of the city and in the immediate wake of the liberation it was virtually impossible to keep in contact with the comrades. I think, though, that I am correct in saying that the personal activity of militants was not without merit while the battle raged and afterwards, when the volunteer labour brigades were burning the corpses of the 200,000 victims of the battle on the streets so as to spare the population the effects of plague, when thousands were still dying of starvation and at the hands of drunken Russian soldiers roaming the streets at will and murdering, without a second thought, those who resisted the continuous looting; this at a time when people were so wretched that a rat was worth 10 pengos. Two months before this, that rat might have fed a family for a day when there was not a loaf of bread to be had. But the cabarets and night clubs were starting to open up again in what few unscathed houses remained, for the entertainment of the knights of the black market and the new political masters. At a time when a starving, wretched populace was eking out a living in homes reduced to rubble and where women could be seen fighting with members of the labour brigades because they insisted, despite the ban, on trying to cut a hunk of flesh from some half-decomposed horse. When in the makeshift hospitals doctors were carrying out operations using kitchen knives and when 10 year old girls were dying there from the effects of rape; when a family with no dead members could be regarded as miraculous; when new and unknown faces were worming their way into civil service offices and ex-Nazis were swapping their Arrow cross insignia for the red star of the Communist Party, the only party that would look twice at them; back in those terrible times in the spring of 1945 the services that the anarchists rendered the people were indeed very considerable. The men in the red sashes popped up in the work details, in the hospitals, anywhere where they might be useful. The crash course that Korsakin had given them in the fight against the Nazis had put down roots.

When, in July 1945, Torockoi, who thought that the time had come for him to put his political gifts to work, reassembled the militants of the Hungarian Anarchist Movement, there were only 35 of us: only 2 comrades had survived from the 7 and 9 December 1944 round-up. One of them (PM) finally revealed to us the name of the Communist traitor. We discovered that a short time after blowing the whistle on the anarchist movement, the traitor himself had been arrested and executed by the Germans. Right from the very first gathering, three groups emerged within the ranks of the movement: like him, the comrades surrounding Torockoi were eager to see the movement legalized. PM was the rallying point for those who would rather work in concert with the Communists in the hope of redirecting that party once the bourgeoisie had been overthrown. The third and last group, led by Korsakin, supported by Christ, wanted to carry on the fight and resistance, the main targets this time being the state and the Russian army of occupation ...

At this point a coalition government backed by the four "democratic" parties (Smallholders, Communists, Socialists and Peasants) was carrying out the first

nationalisations, redistributing the land and overhauling the civil service. But under cover of this relative liberalisation, and social progress, the powers of a wholly Communist political police were looming. With the help of the occupying power that increasingly was the actual ruler of the country, the chief of the secret police, the notorious Gabor Peter, was executed three years later as a Titoist. In view of the heavy losses sustained by the movement plus the over-riding dangers attendant upon taking on the secret police with their spies everywhere, crushing their foes ruthlessly, [he] sought to find some space that might afford some relief to militants worn out from fatigue. He also hoped that, with some sort of above ground propaganda activity, the Anarchist Movement might become a rallying point for a rather sizeable chunk of the population and be in a position to try to establish a political situation that might facilitate the movement's aim of social revolution. Although leftists were calling the reforms implemented since the liberation the "bloodless revolution", it was becoming apparent to us – and this is something that all revolutionaries around the globe need to grasp – that the Stalinists had betrayed the worldwide revolution of the proletariat. PM "quasi-communists" were hoping to acquire considerable influence inside the CP in order to steer it away from Stalinism. The third faction rejected all compromise. But given the material weakness of the Movement, each group stated that it would stand by the group whose approach would secure majority support.

Thanks to his prestige as well as to the diminishing gusto apparent among the militants (remember that most of them were men who had yet to reach their twenties, had been fighting and working without respite for the previous year and were malnourished, to boot) Torockoi carried the day. He immediately applied to have the Anarchist Movement legalised and formally constituted. This was granted. Then permission was withdrawn on the orders of General Voroshilov, commander-in-chief of the occupation army. In spite of this, Torockoi managed to come to an arrangement with the country's leader whereby no obstacles would be placed in the way of anarchist activity as long as such activity could not be construed as sabotaging government policies. A press was immediately set up and propaganda activity begun. In the factory complex on Csepel island near Budapest the workers, let down by the anti-social performance of their new Communist trade unions, were showing sympathy for the only movement that genuinely represented their interests. Now the Communist Party, defeated in the elections from which the Smallholders emerged with an absolute majority, but growing in strength thanks to Soviet backing, had initially reckoned that the anarchist movement would focus its efforts on bringing down the government (in which the Smallholders had a majority) and undermining the Catholic Church which was turning into the most powerful enemy of the Stalinists. Once the Communist leaders woke up to the danger posed by anarchist competition in the ranks of labour, Gabor Peter turned his militiamen against us. Only a few arrests were made but it was predictable that the entire movement (which had grown to nearly 500 militants by September 1945) would be brought to a standstill, its members forced to hide from the police. Torockoi

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managed to gather together the leading militants for one last time. He asked Christ to oversee the struggle ahead which was going to be a battle with no quarter asked or given. The very next day, Torockoi was arrested and was never seen again. As in the wake of the German sloop, the anarchists replied by mounting an offensive: as Red troops were parading through the city, four anarchist students opened fire on them from a barn. Three officers and five Red soldiers were killed, before the assailants set their hiding place alight and committed suicide. Only their charred corpses were ever found. In the Csepel plants, anarchists sparked the only strike to occur in Hungary since the liberation: but before it could fully develop, it was snuffed out by Gabor Peter's militia: thirty workers – twenty four of them anarchist militants – were executed on the spot. Christ, still a member of the leadership of the leftwing youth movement, put up a dogged fight against Communist efforts to take over the movement and kicked up a stink: rehearsing to the membership of the movement the activities of their pro-Communist members and members of the Communist leadership (7 out of 11 were Communist), he called for the election of a new leadership plus expulsion of those members bent on shattering the unity of the movement. A split ensued, during which an entire branch of the youth movement withdrew. Christ was arrested, only to be freed by mistake after two days. He was forced to flee into the countryside. Alexei Korsakin was wounded at the same time in a scuffle between the police and the populace. PM withdrew from all political activity: a short while later he absconded from Hungary. The remainder of the Anarchist Movement was mopped up bit by bit. The last three militants – Korsakin, Christ and Christ's comrade, the one who had been arrested along with him by the Germans – met up again two years later in Budapest. By which point the contest over the country's future was between the State and the Church. Was there a place for anarchists in this contest? There was nothing we could do: we were outlaws, wanted by the police who had informers everywhere and we were bereft of all funding. Our former comrades were all gone or had renounced their beliefs and joined the Communist Party (only to be expelled in the first purge). All three militants decided to quit Hungary. Christ was the first to go, crossing the border safe and sound. Korsakin followed after two months. The third comrade was gunned down by police on the border.

I had occasion to speak with Korsakin and Christ in Paris last year. They were eking out the wretched existence of thousands of other political refugees and toying with the idea of getting involved in the French Anarchist Federation. "For the first time in five years I am safe and free", Christ told me. Then, just as two policemen passed nearby, he added: "Comparatively." He had worked in several factories but been driven out of every one on account of his anarchist propaganda among the workers. "I have only one weapon left", he told me. "Literature."

Alexei Korsakin was near to death. Ten years of unrelenting fighting had undermined him physically and he could no longer withstand the deprivation. Psychologically, he was done for. He rambled on for hours about the wretched fate of the workers and peasants of "soviet"

Hungary. The people for whom he had fought for ten years, were more exploited, more wretched, more enslaved than during the darkest days of the Horthy dictatorship. Korsakin died in December 1949.

Comrades of France and the world over: pay him the tribute he deserved. And spare a thought sometimes for the hundreds of fallen members of the former Hungarian Anarchist Movement, the men in the red sashes who perished in action against their foes, your foes, the foes of human freedom: reactionaries, Nazis and Stalinists. Let us hope that their deaths may not have been in vain...

G. A. *Le Libertaire*, Paris, 22-9-1950

### Letter

'It seems to me that there is a severe lack of material on the post-1960 Spanish anarchist resistance in book form! This could be remedied at a stroke if somebody was to translate and publish Alberola's book [*L'anarchisme Espagnol et l'action Révolutionnaire Internationale, 1961-1975*] ... It would compliment Antonio Téllez's *Sabaté* etc, works on the earlier time of the struggle. Please consider it! While I'm on the subject, can you tell me if Téllez's book *Facerias* is available in English?' –R

*Spanish Anarchism and International Revolutionary Action, 1961-75* by Octavio Alberola and Ariane Gransac is exactly the sort of book we'd want to publish, so we will consider it. *Facerias* is currently being actively worked on for publication by AK Press. More news on that later.

### New Pamphlet

*George Brown, the Cobbler Anarchist of Philadelphia*  
Bob Helms traces the life of an anarchist shoemaker from freethinking Northamptonshire to Philadelphia's burgeoning anarchist movement of the 1890s. Never famous, and only occasionally infamous, Brown was typical of many of the militants who made the movement what it was, and his story sheds a fascinating light on a social movement in microcosm. ISBN 187360534X ISBN13: 9781873605349 60 pages, £3 (\$5)

Note: ISBNs become 13 digits from the start of 2007.

Watch out if getting your library to order our pamphlets!

### New website: Dead Anarchists

"History is often ruled by tales about a handful of super-stars, and with anarchism, the same thing happens, but with more likeable stars than usual. Voltairine de Cleyre once remarked that the whole movement seemed to operate out of Emma Goldman's suitcase. I held that same suitcase in my hand once, and that was fun. Anyway, when Emma or Voltairine, or Peter Kropotkin, or some other respected anarchist writer of the time arrived to give a lecture, they were not alone on a street talking to strangers. They slept at someone's house, ate dinner with someone, were introduced by a comrade, and fielded questions from many like-minded people. When a squad of policemen lumbered onto the scene, scores of people would feel the truncheon crash down on their heads. It's these smaller, local anarchist figures that make the fabric of the story, whereas the star characters make for wonderful embroidery...."

Robert P. Helms, editor, [www.deadanarchists.org](http://www.deadanarchists.org)

## News & Reviews

### Review – Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America Paul Avrich (AK Press, 2005)

#### Mourn not the dead

Mourn not the dead that in the cool earth lie –  
Dust unto dust –  
The calm sweet earth that mothers all who die  
As all men must;

Mourn not your captive comrades who must dwell –  
Too strong to strive –  
Within each steel bound coffin of a cell,  
Buried alive;

But rather mourn the apathetic throng –  
The cowed and the meek –  
Who see the world's great anguish and its wrong  
And dare not speak!

Ralph Chaplin

This weighty book is very reminiscent of another book I much enjoyed called 'Solidarity Forever' from which the above verse was taken, and was an oral history of the Wobblies/ IWW, whereas this book is far larger, lacks the photographs, but takes in the far wider anarchist movement. Another minor difference is that some of those whose words grace the pages of this vast book were not/ are not anarchists themselves – just people who happened to have known or been related to them, and those accounts are still a valid and interesting read.

What did strike me, particularly in the beginning, was the amount of disillusionment expressed, although perhaps this should not surprise me as I'm not much of an optimist myself, but it did at times become more depressing than inspiring – not that the purpose of this book is to inspire – but to remember our history before it slips from reclamation all together.

Having said that, it is not all depressing, as the words of Alberico Pirani, spoken to a reporter at the 50th anniversary of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti attest:

*"I'm international," Pirani said. "I ain't got no country. When you mention country and religion, wash your mouth out. That's the way you kill millions of people, for God and country and flag. Look at America – seventy three Gods, two hundred twenty six religions."*

Made me chuckle when I read it anyway.

As an interesting slice of social history, and in keeping alive in memory an account of these people and events, the book is a thoroughly interesting read and well worth the time spent on it. However, if you are looking for a coherent expression of anarchist ideology you will not find it here – merely the reminiscences of some of those who dared to speak, and all the more worthwhile for that.

Now I'll have to go back and read 'Solidarity Forever' again. I'll end this review with the words of Hugo Rolland, and his definition of what being an anarchist meant to him:

- To be a useful and responsible member of the society in which I was born.
- To be honest and decent with all persons with whom I come into contact.
- To help whoever was in need, the best I could.

- To respect everyone's ideas and beliefs, provided it is on the basis of reciprocity.
- To strive to correct and eliminate ills and social injustices.
- To oppose and fight – with arms if need be – all attempts to suppress freedom.
- To never hide the truth, never be hypocritical or resort to falsehood.

There are some of us who could learn a lot from the above – myself included.

MJR (September 2006)

[Note: this is not a light read, nor equally engrossing throughout, but essential groundwork for anyone looking at American, or even Italian or Russian anarchism (or the Anarchist Red Cross, or...). There are footnotes here which tell you more than some books (look at no. 495 on Louise Olivereau, anarchist and feminist poet for instance). It is a milestone which will inspire both anarchists and historians of the anarchist movement. Ed.]

### Joaquín Pérez Navarro 1907-2006

The Kate Sharpley Library collective are sad to report the death but also proud to mark the life of Joaquín Pérez Navarro, the last of the 'Friends of Durruti' group which challenged the 'collaborationist' line which the CNT adopted during the Spanish Civil War.

Joaquín fought in the July resistance to the military coup (which began the Spanish Revolution), on the Aragon front, and in the Barcelona Maydays of 1937 which were the last major attempt to defend the revolution.

He was sentenced to death by the Stalinists in 1938, later interned in France, and escaped to England in 1940. In England he worked in construction and also as a waiter. Throughout his exile he maintained his commitment to and involvement with the anarchist movement. His coffin was covered with the red and black flag of the CNT.

An obituary by Nick Heath was published in the *Guardian* Tuesday September 19, 2006 (used to produce the paragraphs above), and a biography was published in *KSL Bulletin* 43. Guillamón's book on the Friends of Durruti group is available from us.

### Credit

This issue produced October 2006 by the Kate Sharpley Library. Sorry about the small print. Thanks for your feedback, donations and help. Our website is about to be overhauled: feedback on content welcome.

### Library News: Subs

From this issue a new subscription is available, the Friend rate. For £25 (or \$40) a year you will get the bulletin but also whatever books and pamphlets we publish in that time. This is ideal for institutions (who can now get all our books and pamphlets without the trouble of creating individual orders for each one) and individuals who want to get everything we publish as soon as it comes out AND to support the library's work. We already have some friends who've set up donations by standing order, now you can join them with a one-off payment.

## Pinelli Remembered

### Giuseppe 'Pino' Pinelli (1928-1969) the 17th victim of the Piazza Fontana bombing

He was born in Milan on 21 October 1928 to Alfredo Pinelli and Rosa Malacarne. The early part of his life was spent in his native Porta Ticinese district of the city. After completing elementary school he had to start work, initially as a waiter and later as a warehouseman. He carried on reading: this was a lifelong habit of his. In 1944 when he was 16 he took part in the antifascist resistance as a runner for the "Franco" Brigade, working with a group of anarchist partisans who were his first encounter with libertarian thought. In 1954 he joined the railways as a labourer. In 1955 he married Licia Rognoni whom he met at an evening Esperanto class; they soon had two daughters, Silvia and Claudia. In the early 1960s an anarchist youth group was formed in Milan (the Gioventu Libertaria) with a little over twenty members who included Amedeo Bertoli who in 1962 made headlines as a member of a group that kidnapped the Spanish vice-consul in Milan in order to press for (and achieve) the commutation into a prison term of the death sentence that had been passed on an anarchist in Francoist Spain. Pinelli – just 'Pino' to his friends and colleagues – at 35 was the oldest of the group, but that was not a problem: his cheerful, outgoing personality made him "good company". And when in 1965, after ten years without a local, one was opened in the Via Murillo, Pino was among the founders of the "Sacco and Vanzetti Circle". On those premises there was a get-together of young anarchists from all over Europe in 1965. After eviction, Milan's anarchists moved premises and on 1 May 1968 the "Ponte della Ghisolfa" Anarchist Club in the Piazzale Lugano on the outskirts of the La Bovisa working class district was opened. It was called after the former viaduct, the pillars of which can be seen from the Porta Garibaldi railway station where Pinelli worked. In 1968 the winds of challenge blowing from France reached Milan. Pinelli was active on many fronts: as an anarchist, he was one of those who kept the club open, organising an efficient book-service and he was one of the organisers of a busy series of evening lectures. Capitalising upon his free rail travel privileges (as a railway employee), he kept in direct contact with "outside" comrades, among them Luciano Farinelli in Ancona, Aurelio Chessa in Pistoia and Umberto Marzocchi in Savona. He was also in frequent contact with Alfonso Failla in Marina di Carrara, also holidaying there with his family. As a worker Pinelli was also involved in trade union affairs, especially helping to refloat the USI, a branch of which opened on the club premises. And the Milan Transport Authority's CUB (rank and file committee) chose the club as its own base, leaving only in the wake of the bombing on 12 December 1969: that move was prompted by the crackdown on anarchists. Anarchist circles in Milan were all excitement, with libertarian groups emerging in lots of high schools and in the factories there were anarchist workers and frequent early morning leafletting campaigns. Books, pamphlets were produced and some of the older newspapers underwent a revival. Milan's anarchists felt the need to open a second clubhouse, this time in the southern part of the city. Among those most committed to the

preparation and opening of the Via Scaldasole Club (in the Ticinese district) was Pinelli. On 25 April 1969 two bombings struck at the Central Station and the Show Grounds. Inquiries were directed towards libertarian circles and a number of anarchists were arrested: this was the start of a campaign of criminalisation that received a further boost in August when some train bombings were also credited to anarchists. There was also a rumour around to the effect that Pinelli, the anarchist railway worker, might be implicated. Pinelli and his "Bandiera Nera" (Black Flag) group bridled at this and took exception and denounced this black propaganda, launching – after the model of the British "Black Cross" at around the same time and the Russian Black Cross from the 1920s – the Anarchist Black Cross, specifically committed to concrete solidarity with arrested comrades, but also to publication of a counter-information bulletin. Pinelli was the highest profile anarchist in Milan and was regularly summoned to police HQ over applications for licences, meetings, etc. The person he dealt with more often than not was a young police inspector, approachable in his manner, elegant and friendly: Luigi Calabresi. So when, on the afternoon of 12 December 1969, right after the Piazza Fontana bomb outrage, Calabresi arrived at the Via Scaldasole Club and asked Pinelli to come to the station, Pinelli readily agreed, climbed on to his motor bike and followed the policeman's car. At headquarters, Pinelli found many of Milan's anarchists in one large room. They like him had been brought in for questioning about their alibis. Within 48 hours, the maximum "police custody" allowed under the laws at the time, those arrested had been released and a few had been transferred to San Vittore prison. Pinelli was detained at headquarters longer than the law allowed for. He was interrogated. Then, at around midnight on 15-16 December his body "flew" from a room belonging to the Political Bureau on the fourth floor and hit the ground. The initial conflicting versions of the police story suggested that the truth could not have been the official story of a "suicide". Pinelli died in Milan at the Fatebenefratelli Hospital on the night of 15-16 December 1969.

The political-legal follow-up to his killing, interwoven with the entire story of the Piazza Fontana massacre, especially with the "Valpreda affair" which over the years backfired on those in power. Clumsy attempts to hush everything up, culminating in the "active affliction" thesis put forward in his finding by Judge Gerardo D'Ambrosio, merely highlighted a truth that has yet to find its place in the official record. Dozens of books, movies, plays, art installations and songs were devoted to Pinelli and his murder and not just in Italy. Here let us cite only two of them: Nobel Prize-winner Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and Enrico Baj's massive painting *Funeral of the Anarchist Pinelli*.

Paolo Finzi, *Sicilia Libertaria*, December 2005

For more information on the Piazza Fontana massacre and the strategy of tension (the bombing campaign by fascists organised by elements of the Italian secret services) see *Secrets and bombs: Piazza Fontana, 1969* by Lucio Lanza (Christiebooks.com)

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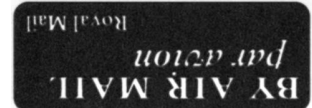
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