

## CHAPTER 22

### CORSO TRAIANO: SERIOUS INCIDENTS AND ACTS OF VIOLENCE

“It has been another day of serious violence, with incidents and acts of vandalism in the big engineering factories during the strikes over the negotiations for the renewal of the national agreement...”

The leading elements of these disorders are a minority of workers (a few hundred) but they use intimidatory methods in order to provoke panic and chaos. Those responsible for these acts of hooliganism are to be reported to the magistrates immediately.

The worst events of the day took place at FIAT-Mirafiori. Yesterday morning, during an internal strike, about 250 workers marched out of the plant brandishing iron bars, sticks, iron railings and steering wheel columns. The demonstrators invited other workers to follow them, and a '*corteo*' of about 1,500 workers formed up and marched round the factory's perimeter road. On the way, the strikers turned over parked cars, broke windscreens and threw iron bolts. They then gathered in front of the Administration Block and, shouting appeals and slogans, called for the office workers inside to stop work. In order to avoid incidents, management sounded the hooter early for the end of work. But only a few of the office workers were able to reach the gates; the rest were blocked inside by the strikers.

In the meantime, the 250 workers from the *corteo* inside the factory had decided to march out of the factory and go to the nearby Salone dell'Automobile, where the opening ceremony for the Turin Motor Show was in progress. At the gates they were stopped by the police and asked to leave behind their sticks and bars. Only if this were done could they leave the factory. There was some verbal resistance. In the end, the sticks were deposited, and the police allowed the workers through.

The demonstrators moved down Corso Traiano towards the Valentino Park. At the junction with Corso Unione Sovietica, seeing that they had not been followed by other workers from the *corteo*, they went back into the factory. It was 11.00am. Taking up their sticks and bars, the group split up, forming two *cortei*. About 50 demonstrators set off for the canteens, where they tipped over the food warmers containing cooked lunches.

Another group of 100 demonstrators set off for the Body Plant. Here they smashed up completed car bodies with iron bars; about 30 are now complete write-offs. The strikers then blocked the assembly lines for the 850 and 600 models. Using their iron bars they smashed the windscreens of two cars and damaged others. Boxes full of bolts and components and piles of tyres were upended and the materials scattered through the shop.

The Company reports that during the invasion of the Paint Shop, groups of agitators armed with oxy-acetylene bottles and a blow torch attempted to sever the pipes connecting the paint tanks with the spraying machinery...

At the start of the afternoon shift, only one production line was able to operate, due to the damage, and could only be brought into production after a 2-hour delay. At 12.15pm calm returned to Mirafiori, and in the afternoon work continued without interruption in the sections where articulated strikes had not been called.

Other incidents occurred at FIAT-Rivalta. Yesterday morning the articulated strike was scheduled to finish at 10.00am. But at 10.30 the factory's 6,000 workers stopped work once again. They were incited to this action by a group of extremists, who went around the various shops calling on the workers to strike.

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[INSERT PICTURE]

Anno 105 Numero 252 – Giovedì 50 Ottobre 1969 .5

*Gravi violenze durante gli scioperi articolati Devastati a Mirafiori e a Rivalta i refettorie il reparto Carrozzerie*

*Cento auto e scocche rovesciate e colpite con mazze di ferro, sfasciati gli impianti di scaldavivande per gli operai – Danni alle linee di montaggio della 600 e della 850 – A Rivalta impedita la ripresa del lavoro in tutto lo stabilimento – Bloccata per 2 ore la strada provinciale – Oltraggi ad alcune dipendenti – I responsabili degli atti di teppismo saranno immediatamente denunciati alla magistratura*

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The demonstrators damaged machinery and dented parked cars with blows from their iron bars. They also entered the canteen and overturned the food-warmers containing cooked lunches. The carabinieri claim that 3 workers were stripped naked by the strikers. At the end of the shift a group of workers stayed inside the factory to hinder the re-starting of production. The Company states that production was at a complete standstill for the afternoon shift.

Another group of workers stayed outside the factory where, in the meantime, a coachload of extremists from the Potere Operaio group had gathered [t.n. Workers' Power]. At about 1.00pm a coachload of workers from Cumiana arrived at Mirafiori. The demonstrators forced the coach to stop, surrounded it and let down its tyres. The coach was stranded between Gates 7 and 9 of Mirafiori. In the meantime other extremists formed road blocks along the main road, which remained blocked for 2 hours.

The sides of the coach, stranded, with its tyres flattened, were used as a sort of blackboard, on which the extremists wrote slogans: "Mirafiori, Lingotto, We Are With You – Rivalta Workers In Revolt"; "Potere Operaio"; "Unity In Struggle".

During the afternoon tension mounted and the news reaching Turin from Rivalta began to cause alarm. Some provincial-level trade union officials hurried along to call on workers not to give way to the provocation of extremists who were calling for an occupation of the factory. At about 4.00pm things quietened down.

At FIAT-Spa Stura a *corteo* of workers broke down a gate and got into the spares department. At the starter motor plant some workers broke into the Administration Block through the canteen roof. In subsequent scuffles a supervisor suffered severe bruising.

FIAT has made a rough estimate of the damage arising from the day's disorders; they amount to about 100 cars and car bodies damaged.

In the evening the engineering unions (CISL, CGIL, SIDA, UIL) distributed a leaflet claiming 'the complete success of the day's strikes, which have seen a full participation by manual and clerical workers', and during which 'marches, meetings and assemblies took place at FIAT-Grandi Motori and Stura, and the factories of the

Nizza and Bienasco areas. Pickets were put on the Turin Motor Show. 1,500 workers from Lancia, Spa, Tonolli, Fergat, Osi, Ipra and Gustinelli marched from San Paolo to the Motor Show, where they gave out leaflets to the visitors. Articulated strikes were fully supported at FIAT-Mirafiori and FIAT-Rivalta, where strike action was extended for the full day.' In relation to the day's events the Union leaflet adds: 'The employers continue with their provocative tactics, refusing and prolonging negotiations, and in the case of Mirafiori announcing that non-productive time will not be paid to those workers not on strike.' The leaflet concludes: 'The Union denounces these provocations as open attacks on the right to strike.'"

[Translated from the FIAT-owned newspaper *La Stampa*, 30 October 1969]

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