

CHAPTER 32

THE KIDNAPPING OF BRUNO LABATE – 1973

PREFACE: 1972-3 was a period of intense concern in Italy, when the fascists seemed to be on the move again, and when there began to be fears of a coup d'état. During this period, documentation was discovered revealing the fact that FIAT's management had been deliberately hiring fascists into its factories, to spy on workers, to stage provocations, to scab on strikes etc. Low-grade fascists were often beaten up by militants; their cars were burned or damaged (FIAT reported 800 employees' cars damaged in the period November 1972-January 1973); their lockers were ransacked inside the factory. February 1973 saw a further initiative, one of the early actions of the newly-emerging Red Brigades. This account is taken from a major article – *FIAT 1973: A Diary of the Struggle* – published in *Controinformazione* No. 0, 1973.

February 12th: At Mirafiori no strike action is planned for today. Only the FIAT 132 line stops work for one hour in the Meccaniche, against increased workloads. The Works Committee meets in the morning, to plan the strike programme for the week, and confirm the value of sectional strikes.

After the shift changeover at lunchtime there is a lot of talk about the Rome demonstration, when, suddenly, at 1.30 pm an armed group of the Red Brigades brings a man, with his head shaved, and chains him to the factory railings at No. 1 Gate, with a poster hung round his neck. The man is Bruno Labate, regional secretary of the fascist union CISNAL. Before departing, the commando-group distributes several hundred leaflets. The text of the leaflet is as follows:

"This is Bruno Labate, regional secretary of the Fascist CISNAL pseudo-union which the employers support in our factories in order to divide the working class, to organise scabbing, to set up provocations, and to infiltrate every kind of spy into the factories.

We have kidnapped him for a few hours to ask him a few relevant questions concerning:

- the responsibility of himself and a number of FIAT managers in the labour racket of southerners hired into FIAT via CISNAL;
- his responsibility for the organisation of provocations carried out by fascists in collaboration with the carabinieri and the police, as happened recently at No.17 Gate;
- the organisation of scabbing, in which Agnelli's foremen and Almirante's fascists divide up the job between themselves;
- the responsibility of himself and of CISNAL in the organisation of networks of spies within the factory, which has led to the sacking of a large number of militants;
- his meetings with the Minister of Labour, given that CISNAL is being involved in labour negotiations, albeit behind closed doors.

We also kidnapped him in order to show the falseness and absurdity of his statement, made in a right-wing newspaper, that there are 12,000 fascists at FIAT [...] and to let him see that Turin workers will not tolerate this sort of shit and are determined to eradicate any attempt by the fascist rabble to set down roots in the factories.

We have set him free, with his head shaved and without his trousers, in order to demonstrate the repulsiveness of the fascists, and the necessity to hit them hard, with every means available, wherever they crop up, until we free our city of them.

WAR AGAINST THE FASCISM OF ALMIRANTE AND ANDREOTTI!

ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM!

Hundreds of workers crowd in a circle around the fascist. He asks for help, and one worker replies: "Help you? They should have killed you". For over half an hour the explanatory leaflets are passed from hand to hand, and there is lively discussion about what has happened and what it meant.

In the next few days the Red Brigades circulates, among vanguard revolutionaries and inside the factory, a pamphlet called "War Against the Fascists in Turin's Factories". [...]

February 13th: As the second shift is coming out a group of fascists turns up at No. 1 Gate. The group includes Ordine Nuovo members, with S. Francia at their head. They appear to be asking solidarity from the workers, and they distribute a leaflet. But in fact they are carrying clubs and chains and are prepared for a fight. Caught by surprise, two of the first workers to emerge are attacked. The police are present, under the command of Dr Poli, as are the carabinieri, under Captain de Masi and Major Lungo: they try to arrest the two injured workers! However, as soon as the mass of workers begins to emerge, the fascists are forced to beat a retreat.

This episode focused a lot of attention on the question of fascists in the factory, and there were proposals for workers' vigilante squads – which were put into effect immediately the following day.

February 14th: The fascists return to the factory gates. This time they try their luck at the Meccaniche, at No. 16 and No. 18 Gates. But unfortunately for them, the workers come out of the factory in a march, and with something in their hands . . . and the blackshirts have no choice but to run off as fast as possible, down to No.7 Gate, where they get rid of their leaflets (these are immediately burned by workers coming out of the factory) and then run off down Corso Unione Sovietica.

This was to be their last adventure at the gates of Mirafiori. From now on they would not be coming to ask workers for 'solidarity' for their shave-headed leader!"

[**Note:** In the article that followed, in *Controinformazione*, there was the transcript of Labate's interrogation. He named very many fascists who had been installed in the factories, in the pay of FIAT management. These revelations followed similar, very well-documented allegations by *Lotta Continua* that FIAT also had a considerable number of Turin's police force on their payroll, for the organising of spying on workers, breaking up demonstrations, supervising hiring etc. All this information had previously been published in January 1972, in the pamphlet *Agnelli Ha Paura e Paga La Questura*.]

[Translated from *Controinformazione*, No. 0, 1973]

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**Extracted from: THE BOOK OF FIAT: Insurrection, insubordination,
occupation and revolutionary politics at the FIAT motor company – 1907-
1982**

Published: Red Notes / May Day Rooms

First published in 2020