Avanti Popolo! Forward, People!

REvolutionary Songs: Italy

of the Italian working Class

song by Clezio Beaoca, a Sicilian street singer
Giovanna Dalbasi, former toffeld worker and street singer
the community of FSG D'Arora
rice harvesters of Reggio Emilia
Tomaso D'Argento, construction worker from Calabria
Tino Sempoli, rice harvester from Cremona
women working in a factory in Milano
women workers on the Capannone Rice Worker's Cooperative
sheepherds and farmers of Sardinia
partisan song sung by Il Nuovo Camicione Italiano
the Cannone Popolare Venedig from Venice
Rudi Amoretti, Fausto Amodei, Ivan Della Mera, Guido Bartoli
Alfredo Bandelli, Paolo Pietrangeli, Giorgio Mafial, and others

Recorded in Italy
Edited with documentary notes by Sandro Portelli
Traditional Political
Music in Italy

Not long ago, 250,000 people marched through the streets of Rome singing an old traditional song. They were the metal workers, engaged in a struggle for a better work contract. Millions of workers, the most popular Italian political song, "Ban-diera Rossa" (Song of the Red Flag) which calls on all workers to unite and fight for the world which is rightfully theirs.

Traditional culture infused the entire demonstration. All the contingents were led by steel drum bands utilizing the metal cans and tools of their work. An old Sicilian song was heard with new words made for the occasion: "Sign the contract, you spineless bosses!" A traditional street theatre performed by Fiat workers from Turin depicted robots with signs saying "This is the way Agnelli (Fiat's owner) wants us!" Another group from Napoli staged the boss's mock funeral and the hanging of Prime Minister Andreotti, starring the folk-theatre character Pulcinella.

Italy is enormously rich in "folklore," "big ballads," folk songs, religious songs, pre-Christian rituals, poetic and musical forms ranging from the 2,000 year old Sardinian choral style (using ancient folk instruments like the "launeddas" still played on the island) to contemporary topical songs, still thrive everywhere. As Alan Lomax discovered when he led the first intensive field research in the mid-50's, Italy was a good country to start with your improvisations.

On the other hand, no such creation as "the folk" exists in Italy. The fascist's attempts to speak of a 'common national heritage' failed, because people in Italy were aware that their working-class culture does not belong to everyone. The rich tradition of "high culture" has tended to obscure the fact that peasants in the countryside, and later urban laborers, have continued to cherish and develop a culture of their own, quite individual and apart from the official one. Class divisions in Italy have always been very sharp and open, making efforts to appropriate the people's culture unworkable.

The survival of the ancient style of group singing in Sardinia is a case in point. The official explanation for its persistence was that the people of Barbargia, the most secluded part of the island, were simply not influenced from outside because of their geographical isolation. Then one day Gigante, one of the leaders of the Italian folk revival, recorded a song in the oldest Sardinian form, in which the former shepherd Giuseppe Maretto sang:

Pro merito 'e Lenin,
Todas las naciones
Comunismo,
inalzarse a sa
Gloria.
Pro merito 'e Lenin,
Tentanza sa
Vittoria
sas forzas de
Ho Chi Minh.
Ho Chi Minh.

The shepherds of Barbargia were clearly well acquainted with events in the rest of the world. They knew the side of events with which they identified was clearly not the side of the ruling class.

Other Italian workers have also made songs about Vietnam. For example, a group called The Aggius singing in Venice, one of their songs was fighting for their freedom." Two days after the invasion of Cambodia by U.S. troops, I was collecting songs in the hill country south of Rome, the "President of the United States, who comes on the evening news, when you have run out of factories you will have to lose this war." It wasn't a very good verse, and later he improved it when he and a friend traded verses for over an hour about the struggle in Indochina and its link with the coming local elections. What was important about his initial attempt was that this man was expressing his reactions, in a traditional form, to events which he had not actually experienced personally but had learned about on the TV evening news. The fashionable theory that "true folklore" survives best

when in isolation from TV and radio, like some relic of the quaint past, denies the reality that people's culture is a living force, rooted in conditions and experiences of daily life.

Contemporary Italian working-class culture is open to influences far beyond the limited horizon of its community. When people have been able to use their own forms for something more than reminiscing, the traditional forms such as ballads and ritual songs have grown and developed best. One traditional "big ballad" (similar to the English and Scottish ballads anthologized by Francis Child) called 'The Mother's Curse', describes a girl who leaves home to follow a man haunted by her mother's condemnation. She eventually drowns in the sea, and the man turns out to be the devil. The ballad was changed when millions of Italian peasants began emigrating to the United States:

Mamma mia, Mother dear, give me damni cento 100 lira
Sire che in America for I would go to voglio andar. America.
Cento lira io I will give you 100 te le do, ma in America ma in America but I won't let you no o p o n i no. go to America.

The old curse engendered by the desertion of the family and the breach of our common heritage is transformed into a comment on the fact that, by emigrating, people were solving their problems individually rather than struggling with the rest of the community.

Another illustration is the somber, tragic ballad called "Fior di Tomba" (Flower of the Tomb). This ballad of unrequited love, similar to "Barbara Allen" where people pass the lovers' graves to see the roses entwining and to make pitting remarks in the final verses, which is a new lift on the anti-fascist resistance war of 1943-45. This time, the final verses gave rise to the best-known of all the partisan songs, "Bella Ciao" (see song texts). Later, the rice harvesters of the Piedmont paddies changed the song again. This time it became one of


the finest songs of women workers
in our tradition:

Alla mattina, every morning when
appena alzata I get up,
o bella ciao... o bella ciao...
in risaia mi I have to go to
tocca andar. the ricefields.
E fra gli in-
setti e le zan-
bees and mosquitoes
o bella ciao... o bella ciao...
un duro lavoro I have to work
mi tocca far. very hard.

The transformation from lovers to
freedom fighters to workers is a common trend. So now, "Fior di
Tomba" is almost forgotten, while
the variant "Bellissima" is sung all
over the world, with new verses being
added every day.

Innovation and change are essen-
tial qualities of "folk" music, and
they are strong in Italian people's
culture. The worker's songs have
not dwelt on their dusty past, but
have changed with history and the
daily news. The classic song of the
eight-hour day movement has reflected
the growth of the worldwide revolu-
tionary movement in its new verses.
The oldest verses said:

Se otto ore vi
seem parochial
prorrate voi a
lavorar
e capirete la
differenza
tra comandare e
lavorar.

In 1917, new verses were added about
the Russian revolution which was suc-
cceeding; in 1949, the rice-harvesters
added their admiration of the Chinese
revolution (see song texts).

This is not the only instance
where Mao Tse-tung has entered Ita-
lian folksong. In 1971, I recorded
a three-hour improvised singing con-
test between a sharecropper and a
construction worker in Rome on the
subject of who they liked best, Lenin
or Mao. Contemporary Italian folk
music has a well-developed world view,
and it is the sentimental narrative
and religious song which are disappear-
ing from tradition because of

competition from pop songs on the
radio and the decline of religious
feeling. Political-traditional
music is as lively as ever, because
it is the one body of song that still
serves a basic need of the masses
of people: the expression of poli-
tical and class struggle.

Culture is not something that
the workers have invented simply to
ease their problems or prettify
their daily lives, but rather it is
a tool with which they continue to
change society, to organize, and to
communicate news and slogans. This
is why a strong working-class move-
ment is a guarantee that folk music
and related arts will be kept alive,
changing and growing. The Italian
folk music revival of the early six-
ties was seen by its founders as a
way of supporting workers' movements.

Today, "urban folksingers" write and
sing almost nothing but political
material, and some of their songs
such as Fausto Amedei's "Per i morti
di Reggio Emilia" and Paolo Pietran-
gelli's "Contessa" become part of the
living oral tradition of the working
class. Worker's songs and street
theatre form part of a cultural al-
ternative to the values and concepts
pushed in the culture of the ruling
class. Through cultural means, the
Italian working class is constantly
challenging the ruling class in the
factories, schools and streets, and
its presence is felt in every aspect
of life. The strength of this cul-
ture helps desmystify the bourgeoisie,
to show that it is far from invinc-
ible, and helps demonstrate that the
present ruling class and system is
hardly the only choice open to the
Italian people.

-Sandro Portelli
A Few Words
From the Editor
of the Record:

This record is intended as a
communication between the working
class of Italy and the working class
of the U.S.A. It includes some of the
best traditional and contemporary
political songs to come from the
class struggle over the past 70 years,
documenting the degree of political
development among the advanced
workers and revolutionary intellec-
tuals. Their artistic value makes
them more effective politically, but
the reverse is also true. These
songs have become so strong, so clear,
so deep and so beautiful because they
come from a high degree of political
awareness.

During several visits I made
to the United States in the 60's,
I saw that with the Black liberation
movement and Vietnam war resistance
mounting, few American militants
were occupied with European events.
Most people knew little about our
worker's movement, and I remember
an American friend's amazement at
seeing "Italian faces that are on
our side!" while on a visit to my
country.

On returning to the U.S. in
1973, I found a different climate.
The left seemed smaller, but it was
beginning to develop a Marxist analy-
sis. The essential role of the
working class in effecting any changes,
which seemed so under-estimated in
the 60's, was beginning to be better
understood. This, in turn, meant
that more Americans were interested
in hearing about the experiences of
the most advanced working class
movement in the capitalist west.

People asked me about Antonio Gramsci,
Italy's principal contributor to
Marxist theory; they seemed to be
informed about the role of the Com-

unist Party in Italy; and many
knew about the major revolutionary
groups such as Lotta Continua and

Il Manifesto. I was amazed to
discover that the Manifesto's political
positions, for instance, had been
translated and circulated, not only
by national magazines but also by
local groups in Appalachia and else-
where.

This record is an answer, in
part, to some of the questions. It
is not my work alone. The songs
included were collected or written
during more than a score of years
by singers, militants, and research-
ers who work with Nuovo Canzon-
ieres Italiano (The New Italian Song),
which was the first politically-
oriented group to research, sing, and
record the songs of the Italian
working class and to use them as cul-
tural tools in the revolutionary
struggle.

Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano
is today perhaps the only organiza-
tion which bridges the entire spec-
trum of the left, thus providing a
forum for provocative confrontation.
Totally self-financed, it has been
instrumental in developing an aware-
ness of people's culture in Italy,
and it is still the vanguard organiza-
tion in this field. Through its
research institute, Istituto Ernesto
de Martino, it has collected the
greatest wealth of this type of
materials in Europe. Its record
label, I Dischi del Sole, has the
largest and most qualified catalog
of folk music and political song in
Europe. The references of these
songs by revolutionary intellectuals
have been written within this framework,
begun in the late '50's with
Ivan Della Mea, who was encouraged
by the anti-fascist poet, founder of I Dischi del Sole. Through
this work, a whole body of poetry
and music has been added to the
culture of the left.

There is one thing that distinguishes
all of these songs: none of
them is mere propaganda for a
specific group or party. All of them
are tools for communicating ideas
which can help build toward unity on
the left and in the whole working
class, from the bottom up. All of
them offer the protagonists a chance
to speak for themselves. It is in
this spirit that they are offered
to a new audience in the U.S.A. I
hope they prove useful.

-Sandro Portelli

Side 1, Band 1:
Lamentu ppi la Morti di Turiddu Carnivali
Lament for the Murder of Turiddu Carnivali

This long ballad was written
by a Sicilian poet, Ignazio Bottitta,
about the murder of Salvatore Carne-
vali, a leader of the farm workers' union.
Carnevali was killed on
May 16, 1953 by the mafia, the repres-
sive paramilitary organization of the
lumpen proletariat which serves
the big Sicilian landowners. *

Christian Democrat governments
which have ruled Italy with U.S.
backing since the end of World
War II, have subjected to armed reprin-
sonal peasants and farm workers
fleeing for better pay and condi-
tions, and for the right to own the
land on which they work. The most
infamous of these crimes was the
massacre of Communist peasants by
armed bands, supported by police
and landowners and led by the out-
law Salvatore Giuliano, at Portella
Della Ginestra, Sicily, in 1947.

These crimes have continued against
the Southern workers as they try to
take over the lands promised them
by the agrarian reform.

Ciccio Busacco, one of the
greatest Sicilian street singers,
sings and tells the story of the
death of farm-worker leader Sal-
vatore Carnivali. Continuing in
a strong tradition of Sicilian folk
music, theater, and puppetry, street
singers like Busacco display on their
many-colored placards scenes of
crimes and important events.

These placards combine the styles
of self-taught painters and avant-
garde cartoonists in a rough but
articulate audiovisual technique.
Ciccio Busacco himself is young, ag-
gressive, filled with the "devilish
sacred fire" which Garcia Lorca
calls "duende". A perfect figure
of a Mediterranean, Busacco infuses
his gestures with a burning passion, stronger than any law. His
repertoire is based on certain 'clas-
sic' texts, which are the foundations of his fame. Always in touch with
current events, the street-singer
brings his texts up to date on the
latest style of crime. Inevitably,
he deals with the crimes of the mafia,
Here comes Ciccio Busacca to sing for you the story of Turiddu Carnivalli, the socialist who died at Sciarà, killed by the Mafia. For his weeps his mother, and for him weep all the poor people of Sicily because Turiddu Carnivalli was murdered for defending the bread of the poor. And now, hear, because there is much to hear, in the story of Turiddu Carnivalli. The story says: He was an angel, yet he had no wings. He was not a saint, and yet he wrought miracles. He climbed to heaven without ropes or ladders, and came back down without any support. Love was his capital, and he shared his wealth with all. Turiddu Carnivalli was his name, and like Christ, his death was a murder.

As a child, he never knew his dear father, and his unfortunate mother stood beside him sharing his sorrows and his grief, and sharing his hard-sweated black bread. Christ from heaven blessed him, and told him, "Son, you shall be killed at Sciarà, the bosses, those souls of hell, kill those who want freedom."

Sciarà, for those of you who don't know, is a small town in the province of Palermo, where the Mafia still wields power today. Therefore, Turiddu's days were numbered. But he saw death and laughed in its face, because he saw also his suffering brothers, trodden by the foot of tyranny, their flesh wasted by toil, placed on the torture block, and he could not stand the lawless rule of the land barons and the Mafia...

E' arrivato Ciccio Busacca per farvi sentire la storia di Turiddu Carnivalli, lu suciastolu che mori a Sciarà ammassato dalla mafia. Ppi Turiddu Carnivalli chianci su' matri e chiancini tu' lu puvureddi nella Sicilia perché Turiddu Carnivalli morì ammassato ppe' divendre lu pane de le puvureddi. Ed ora sentiri perché c'e' di sentirsi nella storia di Turiddu Carnivalli. La storia vi dici:

Anciulu era e nun aveva ali nun era santu e miracoli facia, 'n cieliu acchinavu senza cordi e scalci e senza affidamenti nni scimmëa; era lu 'amuri su' capitali e 'sta ricchizia a tutti la spartà; Turiddu Carnivalli nnumanatu ca cumu Cristu mnu muriu ammassatu.

Di nicu lu patruzzu nun canuscelu, appi lu matri svinturata a latu cumpagna a lu duluri e a lu piniu ed a lu pane mivuru scattatu; Cristu di 'n cieliu lu bintidichu ci dissi: "Tigghiul, tu morì ammassatu a Sciarà lu patrana, armi addannati, ammassau a cuiu voli libratiu."

Sciarà per qualcuno che non lo sa è un paese della provincia di Palermo dove ancora oggi regna e comanda la mafia.

Quindi, Turiddu aveva lu jorna cunti ma'nucchini la morti e ci ridia ca videvi li frati cununmati su tu' luedi di la tirannia li carni di travagghiu macinati supra tu' cippu a furinni tumula e suppurtaru nun puttlu l'abbusu di lu baruni e di lu mafiussu...

(NOTE: Due to time limitations, the record band ends here. A summary of the balance of the song, which runs some twenty verses more with long spoken intervals, follows here:)

So he bravely gathered the poor, he gathered the bare-earthen sleepers, the trident-faced, the breathless non-eaters, and he made a league and a force of this flesh. He made it a weapon with which to fight the mighty in that forlorn dark village where history had found a wall. He told the field-hand: "You are naked, and the earth is dressed in great pomp. You sweat on it like a mule, and you stand straight and skinny. And when the harvest comes, the boss grabs it all, while you open your hands and fill them with tears. But don't be afraid. The day draws near and the Messiah comes: socialism, with its cloak of wings that carry bread, peace and poetry. Come if you will, if you are holy, if you are an enemy to the tyrants, embrace this faith and this school which gives love and makes men happy. Socialism lifts men from the ground and raises them high. It runs like fresh spring water and makes all whole where it passes. And it says: 'The flesh is not alone. We are all equal. Work for each other, since bread must be worked and sweated for.' He told the field hands, 'You sleep in dens, on the bare ground like rats in the sewage. You feed on beans and apple cores. October leaves you dry-lipped and June leaves you with debts and callouses. Only the twig of the olive is left to you, and only the straw of the
wheat." He said, "The earth belongs to those who work on it. Take up your flags and hoes!" And before the sun was up, they made rows and ditches, and the earth looked like a table all decorated and alive, made of flesh like a person. And beneath the reddening of those flags every field hand looked like a giant. The carabinieri ran quickly to where he was, with guns and chains. But they told them: "Stand back! There are no thieves, no murderers here. Here you will find only the sorrowful workers. If you are looking for robbers and bandits, you will find them in the palace with their lovers." The marshall stepped forward and said, "The law does not allow this!" But Turiddu answered boldly: "This is the law of oppression. There is a law which does not err or lie, and it says: bread for empty bellies, clothing for the naked, water to the thirsty, and honor and freedom for the working man." But the Mafia used guns instead of reason, because the bosses did not like this law. They were like mad dogs against the poor workers. One night, as Turiddu came home, he was threatened by the Mafia: "watch what you are doing, we have warned you so many times!" He came home with these words on his mind, and could not eat the soup his mother had prepared for him, nor would he speak to her. The next morning, the Mafia kept its promise. As he went to work, he was killed, shot twice in the face. We will never forget that morning, May 16, 1926. The dawn glistened in the sky, and the high castle walls of Scilla looked down at the sea like an altar over a coffin. Between the castle and the sea, a great cross was seen in the clear morning air, a dead man at its feet. The song of the birds mixed with the broken cries of the poor. His mother was warned by a neighbor. She dressed herself in a hurry and ran to the police station to see her son. But they wouldn't let her touch him. "Before the night is over," she said, "I will find the murderer and I'll pull out his heart with my own hands!" My dear son, if it were not for the faith in socialism which you taught me, and which now opens my arms and gives me courage, I would lose my mind. You spoke to me like a confessor, and I to you like a penitent. And now, undone with so much sorrow, I want to speak out those commandments. I want to die with those same feelings. Son, I have stolen your flag. I am your mother and your true comrade."

**Bandiera Rossa**

The Red Flag

This is the most important fighting song of the Italian working class. The melody is reminiscent of several traditional and patriotic songs of the mid-1800s, although no written documentation exists from before World War I. An apparently republican version from the 1800's has been found among Italian emigrants in Bosnia, Yugoslavia.

There are hundreds of verses, but the most popular ones are:

**Avanti popolo**

Forward workers, on to victory. The red flag shall win.

**Tuona il cannon**

The cannon roars, and revolution is what we want!

**rivoluzione**

We want the factories, we want the land, and no more war; Thus, we shall win.

**vogliamo far.**

E se la Russia

gives us the guns, then civil war, then civil war!

**vogliamo la terra e non più guerra si vincera.**

and if Russia
gives us the guns, then civil war, then civil war!

**ci dà il fucile, guerra civile.**

E se la Russia
gives us the guns, then civil war, then civil war!

**ci dà il fucile, guerra civile.**

and if Russia
gives us the guns, then civil war, then civil war!

**vogliamo far.**

This version was recorded by Franco Coggiola in the town square of Filo d'Argenta (province of Forlì, Emilia), during the May Day festivities in 1965. The song is played, as is often the case, by a brass band. These lively bands are numerous, especially in Emilia where there is a strong tradition of folk music as well as a popular interest in opera and other classical forms. This particular band is from Consellice (province of Ravenna), and is directed by M. Corrado Zaccari. The whole community of Filo d'Argenta - a very small town with extraordinary traditions of class struggle and anti-fascist resistance - joins in.

(verse and chorus are repeated twice)
Sacco and Vanzetti

This song was sung by street-singers all over Italy in the twenties, when fascism had already effectively stifled most of the people's music and poetry. It was not suppressed because Mussolini took up, for nationalist reasons, the case of Sacco and Vanzetti as "persecuted Italians".

In 1927, Mussolini wrote to the U.S. ambassador in Rome: "I hope Governor Fuller will provide an example of humanity, which will show the difference between the methods of bolshevism and those of the great democratic American republic; at the same time, it will take a cause for agitation away from the hands of the subversives." A fascist paper "La Tribuna" summarized this position: "Does it matter that Sacco and Vanzetti, in their destructive subversivism, have renounced their own country? Wherever there are Italians, there is Italy." ** Of course, in the minds of the people, Sacco and Vanzetti were never viewed apart from their revolutionary faith. The song itself, which originally ended with "Long live the King", was later changed in oral tradition to "Down with the King".

Giovanna Daffini, who sings the song to the violin of her husband Vittorio Carpi, was perhaps the greatest Italian traditional singer. A rice-harvester in her youth, and later a street-singer, she joined Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano (New Italian Song, a politically oriented cultural organization) and contributed her wide repertoire of traditional, political, and work songs. Her proletarian culture and experiences strengthen her unique musical style, which blends the aggressive singing of the rice fields, the sophisticated traditions of dance and opera music, and the popular songs that she sang at parties and weddings to her last days.

On the twenty-third of August, in Boston in America, Sacco and Vanzetti went to the electric chair. And with a shot of electricity, they were sent to the next world.

At about eleven thirty, the judge and the high court walked into the death cell. "Sacco and Vanzetti, listen now, tell us if you have anything more to say."

Sacco and Vanzetti, calm and serene, "We are innocent. Open up your jail." But they replied, "There is no mercy. You must go to your death."

Then the good father confessor comes into their cell, offering them holy religion. Sacco and Vanzetti, with deep feeling, "We will die without any religion."

And the whole world proclaims their innocence. But President Fuller*, he gave no clemency. "I don't care what country they come from, we are killing them, and we have the right!"

"Goodbye dear wife and son, and to you sister dear. The coffins have been prepared for us both. Farewell, friends, we keep faith in our hearts. Up with Italy, and down with the king!" (2x)

Il ventitré agosto, a Boston in America, Sacco e Vanzetti sopra la sedia elettrica. E con un colpo di elettricità all'altro mondo li vollero mandar.

Circa le undici e mezzo, guidice e la gran corte entranpo poi tutti quanti nella cella della morte. "Sacco e Vanzetti, state a sentir, dite se avete da raccontar."

Sacco e Vanzetti tranquilli e sereni: "Noi siamo innocenti. Apriete la galera."

Ma lor risposero, "Non c'è pietà. Voi alla morte dovete andar."

Entra poi nella cella il bravo confessore, domanda a tutti e due la santa religione. Sacco e Vanzetti, con grande espression: "Noi morirem senza religione!"

E tutto il mondo intero reclama la loro innocenza. Il presidente Fuller non evve più clemenza. "Siano pure di qualunque nazion. Noi li uccidiamo con grande ragion."

"Addio moglie e figlio, e te sorella la cara. E noi per tutti e due c'è pronta già la bara. Addio amici, in cuor la fè. Viva l'Italia e abbasso il re!" 2x

* quote from Sacco e Vanzetti, I Documenti Terribili, edited by Carla Stampa, Milan, Mondadori, 1971, p. 68.

** ibid., p. 134
Se Otto Ore Son Troppo Poche
*If Eight Hours Are Not Enough*

The "Eight Hour Song" has become one of the standard fighting songs of the Italian working class because it is easy to adapt to new conditions. This version of the song probably originated during the eight-hour struggles in 1905-6, among the agricultural workers of the Northern Po Valley. Earlier versions varied according to the development of the right for a shorter work day, with the number of hours corresponding to the demands. The song kept growing with later struggles, and verses were added about the Russian and Chinese revolution.

The singers here are a group of rice-harvesters from Novellara, (province of Reggio Emilia), the Italian region with the oldest socialist agricultural background. Rice-harvesters, mostly women, have a great tradition of folk song and political militancy which evolved during the struggles of the migrant seasonal workers from Emilia and the Piedmont who were in turn strongly influenced by the militancy and organization of the auto workers and others in nearby industrial Turin. Although their numbers have diminished in recent times, the rice-harvesters are always prominent at party activities and women's demonstrations.

Italian rice areas are mostly in the provinces of Turin, Vercelli, and Novara, in Piedmont. The living conditions of the rice-harvesters facilitate political unity and cultural communication since they live for forty days, at harvest time, in large dormitories isolated from the nearby towns. As agricultural wage-workers organized in a semi-industrial manner working in groups, they can easily sing together on the job. The militant folk tradition of the rice-harvesters is similar to that of North American and British miners, in that it lies between traditional agricultural folklore and the new industrial working class culture.

Mario Scelba, mentioned in the song, was minister of interior in the years from 1947 to 1954. He was very active in repressing people's movements and organizing special anti-strike police units. His name is found in many folk songs which express popular hatred for him. Piazzale Loreto is a square in Milan, where Mussolini was hanged in 1945 by the Italian masses.

If eight hours are not enough, why don't you do the work yourselves? Then you will see the difference between giving orders and doing the work. (2x)

O Mario Scelba, if you don't stop arresting the workers, we will do like we did to the Duce and kill you at Piazza Loreto. (2x)

O Mario Scelba se non la smetti di arrestare i lavoratori Noi ti faremo come al Duce Piazza Loreta t'amizzeremo. (2x)

E noi faremo come la Cina suoneremo il campanello. Innalzeremo falce e martello E grideremos, "Viva Mao Tse-tung!" (2x)

E noi faremo come la Russia suoneremo il campanello. Innalzeremo falce e martello E grideremos, "Viva Stalin!" (2x)

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Tarantella dei Baraccati
*Squatters' Tarantella*

This song was collected in Rome, on the night between March 14 and 15, 1970. A group of about 120 families from several Roman ghettos occupied a new luxury apartment house from which they were kicked out two days later by the police. As a sign of protest, and as a way of continuing their struggle for decent housing, the squatters camped for five nights on Capitol Square (the old monumental square built by Michelangelo on the site of the foundation of Rome, where the city government now sits.) They tried to build fires to warm themselves against the cold spring night, but the police prohibited them. Some squatters brought out tambourines and harmonicas to accompany a student supporter who played his guitar, and they started dancing the tarantella in a big circle in the square to keep from freezing. It was a good example of the completely material way culture is created and used by the working class.

Later in the evening, a group beneath the historical pillars started making up verses to old tunes about their struggle. "Five nights" refers to the duration of their action. "Beneath the hours" refers to the ancient mounted statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, which stands in the middle of the square.

The singer (who also plays harmonica and tambourine) is from Polistena (province of Reggio Calabria), the Southern-most part of the peninsula. His Southern origin influenced his verses, e.g. the "horns" in the second verse refer to the worst sexual fear of men from the South - that they will be betrayed.
by their women. That he'll resist even though he might get horns on his head is an indication of his will to fight. The fourth verse is traditional, and mentions emigration to America, an extremely common theme all over the South. The final verse mentions the "storielli" (a form of song) which was often used for romantic serenades, but this time he is serenading Mr. Clebio Darida, the Christian Democrat mayor of Rome.

Certain tones and images in the improvised verses are reminiscent of a religious ritual which is deeply imbedded in Southern Italian culture, the communal mass religious pilgrimages which many families undertake at least once a year to shrines in the South. Part of the ritual consists in spending the night in the open air outside of the shrines singing and playing. This singer draws from his cultural background while encamped in front of City Hall. His declaration - "I'm not going until I get what I want" - is akin to the songs at the shrines: "Io non mi movo di ca se la grazia Maria non mi fa" (I'm not going away if Mary doesn't grant me what I'm asking for"). In fact, on another occasion, this singer performed a pilgrimage song in which the worshipper threatens to withdraw his support from God if God doesn't behave (implying, of course, that God exists because the worshipper supports Him).

By using these religious symbols to describe the current struggle, the Calabrese immigrants who squatted in the houses and in the Capitol Square created a new, fighting context deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. In traditional Southern culture, the pilgrimage is the means used to obtain a solution to material problems (health, harvests, etc.) through prayer, humility, sacrifice, penitence, as well as insult and threat. The solution is sought from the power of God, which is strange, unknown, uncontrolled, certainly hostile - but which, by the very fact of being power, is the only force that can grant the "grace". That is, only God can make an exception to his own rules, and make allowances for what is ordinarily denied. This old "pilgrimage spirit"

has been utilized by the reformist parties which take people from the slums - in this same ritualistic, exorcistic, conciliatory spirit - to talk to mayors and city councilmen. The power - still hostile, strange, unknown - is the same one which day by day denies them a house and decent living conditions; but it alone is perceived as having the possibility of giving what it has so far denied.

The performer here alludes to the traditional wakes at the shrine to express a new fighting consciousness. He uses the aspects of his culture which teach him that his material needs must be reaffirmed with strength and decision. His traditional cultural tools, through which he attains autonomy of thought and action, come in handy - this time against the power of the State instead of the power of God.*

* from booklet accompanying the record Roma, la Borgata e la Lotta per la Casa, Instituto Ernesto de Martino, archivi Sonori SDL/AS/10 edited by Sandro Portelli.

I've been here all night, I'll stay here tonight too. and I'm only going away if they take me off to jail! (2x)

You'll find me at the Capitol. I've been here five days. And I'm not going away even if horns grow on my head! (2x)

You'll find me under this horse. You'll find me where I am. And I'm only going to leave if the marshal arrests me! (2x)

My uncle in America wanted to shave his beard. He didn't have any soap, so he used macaroni sauce. (2x)

Wake up, pretty girl! Darida, Darida, where are you now? etc... (verses can be invented endlessly)

Stanotte ci so' stato Domani notte pur.
Io mi 'ndi vai quando mi portano allo scuro. (2x)

Io mi trovo al Campidoju 'n capo di cinque giorni
Io mi 'ndi vai mutu se me spuntano le corna! (2x)

E io so' cinque giorni Che mi trovo sotto' u cavallo E tanto mi 'udi vaiu Se m'arresta 'o maresciallo! (2x)

Lo zio mio 'mericia vuliu la barba fatta. pe' mancanza di sapini s'a fio co'brodo dei maccaruni. (2x)

E svejati bella! Darida, Darida, addì stai accà?

(etcetera ad infinitum)
Guards giù' dalla Pianura

Look Down the Plain

This song probably grew from the textile strikes in Valsesia (Northern Piedmont) in 1897 in the struggle for the ten-hour day. Another later version in the Piedmontese dialect was found among industrial workers in Turin. This version became part of the rice-harvesters' repertoire (the singer is a rice-harvester from the province of Cremo, Lombardia). The last verse, which takes up the familiar "Bandiera Rossa" refrain, is a later addition. The song expresses clearly the anti-capitalist consciousness of the organized Italian working class.

Look down the plain:
The smokestacks don't smoke anymore! The bosses are so afraid
that they're protected by cara-
binieri.

Hundreds of workers have left their jobs
and they've taken up a great fight
to defeat the capitalists.

Black faces (black faces),
Calloused hands (calloused hands),
These are the emblems (these are the emblems)
of the workers.
In the mines (in the mines)
we dig out the gold (we dig out the gold),
While in our shacks (while in our shacks)
we have no bread.

Hurry up (hurry up), with this rev-
olution.
We are tired of suffering (tired of suffering).

Forward workers,
on to victory!
The red flag is going to win.
The red flag is going to win.
Long live the socialists and liberty!

Guards giù' dalla pianura:
le ciminiere non fanno più fumo!
I padroni dalla paura
son compagnati dai carabinier (dai carabinier)
A centinaia ne sono usciti
gli operai dal loro lavoro (dal loro lavoro)
e hanno ingaggiato una gran battaglia
ma per configurare il capital (il capital).

Face nere (face nere),
Mani callose (mani callose),
son gli stemma (son gli stemma)
degli operai
nelle miniere (nelle miniere),
scaviamo l'oro (scaviamo l'oro)
nelle soffitte (nelle soffitte)
ci manca il pan
fate in fretta (fate in fretta)
'sta rivoluzione (rivoluzione)
che noi siamo stanchi ma di soffrir
(ma di soffrir).

avanti o popolo all riscossa
Bandiera Rossa trionferà
Bandiera Rossa trionferà
Evviva i socialisti e la libertà.

Side 1, Band 7:

Noi Vogliamo L'Uguaglianza

We Want Equality

Women were a large part of the labor force in early Italian industrialisation. Rice-harvesters, mostly women, developed a strong tradition of militant singing. Women textile workers were also reputed for their militant songs and independent spirit, but their repertoire reflects the fact that most of the textile industry was located in traditionally "white", Church-dominated areas: Therefore the textile workers' tradition is less politically oriented than the rice-
harvesters, though equally militant.

Most of the women workers' songs had their masculine counterparts. The first verse of this song, for example, awkwardly transforms words like 'malfattore' and 'lavoratore' (rascal, worker) into feminine form, showing that this verse probably originated in a man's song. Very few songs express a special consciousness of women's condition. (This consciousness is more typical of the textile workers than among rice-harvesters because textile workers identified themselves with the general class struggle, in which the special oppression of women was recognized.) Therefore, the second and third verse of this song are particularly significant because the workers speak clearly as working women. All these verses are "floaters" migrating from one song to another, and sung to several different tunes. The line "sebbene che siamo donne" (although we are women) has become a standard with the women's movement and is the name of a militant Communist women's magazine.

This recording was made at a Folk Festival in Turin in 1965, the first organized in Italy. (The second and final festival was held the next year.) The singers are members of a rice-harvesters' co-op called "Cappuccini". They are often invited to sing at Communist Party activities.
We want equality, and they've called us trouble-makers. But we are working women who want no more bosses! (Chorus)
Down with slavery, we want freedom! We are workers! We are workers! Down with slavery, we want freedom! We are workers, we want freedom!

And we women will raise the blood-stained banners, and we will build the barricades for true freedom! Down with slavery...

And although we are women, we are not afraid! For the love of our children, we are joining the league! Down with slavery...

Side 1, Band B:
E Noi Che Siamo Donne
We Who Are Women

Do factory workers and other city people of the working class have a traditional culture in any way comparable to the agricultural workers who produced most of the music of the first side of this record? This question is being debated in Italy today by radical researchers of popular culture as well as by academicians in the field. The implications of a negative answer are clear: if urban workers have no culture of their own, all people's culture is traceable to an agrarian past. Flowing from this, intellectual bureaucrats could justify the monopoly of leadership at least in the field of culture. Denial of a cultural past opens the door to usurpation of the rightful and integral role of the working class in the struggle against capitalism. For example, some young rock and progressive musicians take the position that they will make music to fill the vacuum, even though they have no experience playing their music for the working class or working militantly with it.

An aspect of this is that very little investigation has been done on which to base such conclusions, and the assumptions are being made "over the heads" of the people directly concerned. (Rural folk music was pronounced dead twenty years ago because no-one had bothered to look for it. Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella, in their historic field work of 1954-55, exposed to an astonished academic world a rich and vital Italian rural culture.) As a matter of fact, no scholar has taken the trouble to look for urban working-class music before pronouncing it non-existent.

These songs are made in the course of struggle against capitalism, and when people are busy fighting and organizing they are unlikely to document themselves with tape machine and microphone, to let outsiders know even for ethnological purposes, where the relationship between researcher and worker is one of common cause, unexpected gems emerge. For example, the Tarentella of the squatters on this record was collected along with a great deal of other material resulting from a housing struggle being waged by the recently urbanized workers, because the researcher was also one of the militant organizers of the movement and therefore able to make the singers understand the political purposes to which the recordings were to be put.

Another example of the unity between folklorist and worker is a recording of songs and sayings of women working at the Crouzet factory in Milan, in which the worker's Council directed the entire process. It would be safe to say that no matter how politically-oriented or honest the folklorist, he or she would be barred from direct access to the workers unless an active working relationship in which the workers could see the connection to their struggle of the work being done to document it.

The present song is a good example of the new role of the folk process in urban environment. It is a traditional song of farm-working women of the early part of the century which already has experienced many changes. (Noi Vogliamo L'Uguaglianza is another version on this record.) The Crouzet workers are, however, not singing a version they learned from oral tradition but from a recording made in the early '60s by Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano. This group has been successful in encouraging the revival of many working-class songs of the past which have now taken their place in contemporary struggles.

The Crouzet workers have also made many new songs themselves, using familiar tunes. In this song, a significant change is the original "even though we are women" to the stronger "we who are women." At the factory, the struggle originated as a resistance to a plan to relocate the factory to another city, a move which would have created many difficulties for the workers and a loss of work for some. It grew to encompass all forms of women workers, and engendered a rapid growth of their political awareness.

One of the leaders of their workers' Council said the following about the struggle: "The most important thing we achieved was unity among the workers and organization in the factory. Every attempt of the bosses to speed up production was met with organized resistance and defeated. The boss didn't like this at all, so he tried to move the plant to Zingonia...Production and office workers decided to extend the struggle, because they knew that they couldn't win. Sympathetic students and members of other factory work..."
councils supported and joined our picketlines. First, we stopped the goods from leaving the factory. Then we had a slow-down, with two full hours a day on strike. During the first week we had two sit-ins, staying in the plant all night. And on Sunday, we marched through the office area, sweeping it clean of the office workers who were scabbing inside.

After several months of harassment by police and attempts to isolate the strikers from other factories and trade union support, the Crouzet workers were successful in winning their demands.

And we who are women, 
We are not afraid. 
We have perfectly good tongues
We have perfectly good tongues
And we who are women, 
We are not afraid. 
We have perfectly good tongues and we can defend ourselves!

(Chorus)
Oili oili oilia
and we will build the league!
We too are workers,
and we want freedom!

Freedom doesn’t exist because we’re not united. The scabs and the boss, the scabs and the boss,

Liberty doesn’t exist because we’re not united. The scabs and the boss should all be killed!

And all of you rich folks who are so full of pride, take your airs one peg down, take your airs one peg down.

And all of you rich folks who are so full of pride, take your airs one peg down and open up your wallet!

(Chorus)
E noi che siamo donne
paura non abbiamo.
abbiam' delle belle buone lingue,
abbiam' delle belle buone lingue,

E noi che siamo donne
paura non abbiamo.
abbiam' delle belle buone lingue,
e ben ci difendiamo!

(Chorus)
oili oili oilia
e la lega si farà
noi altri lavoratori
vogliamo la libertà.

La libertà non c'è
perché non c'è l'unione.
Crumiri col padrone,
crumiri col padrone

La libertà non c'è
perché non c'è l'unione.
Crumiri col padrone
son tutti da ammazzar!

E voi altri signorini
che avete tanto orgoglio
abbassate la superbia
abbassate la superbia

E voi altri signorini
che avete tanto orgoglio
abbassate la superbia
e aprite il portafoglio.

(Chorus)

The part of Sardinia from which this music comes is known as Barbagia, and its center is Orgosolo (province of Nuovo). Barbagia has long been a key area for ethnological studies. Many traditional practices like the extended family, community enforcement of the law, and family feuds have survived in this secluded region maintained by a pastoral economy. Orgosolo is known for its people’s militant struggle against the attempted takeover of their pasture lands by the army for a maneuvering ground.

Orgosolo and the neighboring villages were also renowned for banditry. Many of the outlaws were products of the miserable social and political conditions of the region. The people’s lives have been subject to poverty, military repression, the absolute power of the great land owners, and disregard of the local culture by continental authorities who imposed laws on the Sardinian people without even understanding their language. (The Sardinian languages are not dialects of Italian, but autonomous neo-Latin languages, closely related to Latin, Italian, and Spanish.)

Pasquale Tanteddu, an “outlaw”, wrote: “I was working with my older brother Pietro. We had a herd of sheep of our own, and also took care of a few orchards. My brother had been a partisan, and had understood the real conditions of exploitation and oppression which the rich carried out against us poor. Our consciousness of this enraged the landlords and their spies in our town. Since 1949, we had been sentenced to internment, through a fascist law still in effect which provides for politically
The lead singer and composer of the verses, Peppino Marotto, is head of the local farm-workers union, and has been a community leader for many years. All well-informed books and articles about Orgosolo mention his name. For twenty years he has been writing songs and poems about the struggles of the Sardinian people, and about the class struggle in the rest of the world.


Notebooks written in a dark cell by a wise man give light to the world. (Chorus response)
Notebooks written.

Life is too hard because the exploited people don't fight all the way for their sacred rights. (Chorus response)
In a dark cell, the exploited people don't fight all the way for their sacred rights.
Life is too hard. (Chorus response)

Gramsci has left his mother in Sardinia, his teacher in Turin, his bride in Russia. (Chorus response)
Gramsci has left with immortal flame, more than any star, may it grow ever brighter, "L'Unita" which he founded. (Chorus response)

His mother in Sardinia, more than any star, may it grow ever brighter, L'Unita, which he founded, and with immortal flame. (Chorus response)
Because of Lenin's wisdom, every nation wants communism to raise it to glory. (Chorus response)
Because of Lenin's wisdom, against the aggression of imperialism may victory go to the forces of Ho-chi-Minh. (Chorus response)

* L'Unita (Unity) is the Communist Party newspaper.

Quadernos iscrittos in d'une cella oscura da unu homme illuminan su mundu. (Chorus response)
Quadernos iscrittos

Sa vida es galu dura ca s'isfruttada zente non lotta fino in fundu pro sos sacros diritos. (Chorus response)
In d'una cella oscura Ca s'isfruttada zente non lotta fino in fundu pro sos sacros diritos.
sa vida es galu dura. (Chorus response)

Gramsci ha lassadu in Sardigna sa mama a Torino su mastru in Russia s'isposa. (Chorus response)
Gramsci ha lassadu Cun immortale vamma plieur de ogni astru d'ente luminosa s'Unita* chi ha fundadu. (Chorus response)

In Sardigna sa mama Plieur de ogni astru dixente luminosa s'Unita chi ha fundadu e con immortal vamma. (Chorus response)

Pro meritu 'e Lenin d'ognia nazione cherche su comunismo innalzar a sa gloria. (Chorus response)
Pro meritu 'e Lenin Contra s'aggressione de s'imperialismu tenzana sa vittoria sas forzas de Ho-chi-Minh. (Chorus response)
Goodbye, Dear

This famous song may have originated during the partisan struggle of which it speaks, and with which it has become identified. It probably originated soon after the war, and quickly spread among partisan and Communist organizations. There are several versions, most notable of which is the beautiful new text made by rice-harvesters in Zimilla. "Bella Ciao" was the ground breaking folksong and theater production which II Nuovo Camerone presented at the Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, 1964. (This was the first major presentation of Italian people's culture at a "high culture" festival; it was so incendiary that some of the singers were arrested on the spot for singing anti-military songs.)

The origin of the music, with its minor modes and the unusual hand-clapping, is traced by Roberto Leydi* to a children's ring game song from Trento, in the far Northeast corner of the country. Leydi traces the text back to a traditional ballad, "Fior di Tomba" which is widely known in Italy and in other European countries. (See introductory article.) Thus, although the song is not the best representative of a resistance song, it is a very interesting case of folk creativity. This recording was made by the singers of the "Bella Ciao" production in Spoleto.


"Bella Ciao"

English lyric © 1973 Barbara Dane

One morning early
we heard the rifles,
Oh bella ciao, bella ciao,
bella ciao, ciao, ciao,
One morning early
we heard the rifles,
we knew the enemy was here.

Oh partigiani,
Oh freedom fighters,
Oh bella ciao...
we must resist or we will die!

Oh we will join you
and fight together,
Oh bella ciao...
for if we don't we'll die alone.

And oh my brothers,
if they should kill me,
Oh bella ciao...
And oh my sisters,
if they should kill me,
take up my rifle in your hand.

And leave my body
upon the mountain,
Oh bella ciao...
and when the people pass they'll say:

The finest flower
on all this mountain,
Oh bella ciao...
is one who died to make us free!

Sta mattina,
mi sono alzato,
O bella ciao, bella ciao,
bella ciao, ciao, ciao,
Sta mattina,
mi sono alzato
e ho trovato l'invasor.

O partigiano,
portami via,
O bella ciao...
che mi sento di morir.

E se muovo
da partigiano,
O bella ciao...
tu mi devi seppellir.

E seppellire
lasci in montagna,
O bella ciao...
sotto l'ombra di un bel fior.

E le genti
che passeranno,
O bella ciao...
mi diranno che bel fior.

Questo è il fiore
del partigiano,
O bella ciao...
morto per la libertà!

Le Basi Americane

The American Bases

After World War II, Italy was briefly ruled by a coalition government of Resistance forces, including Socialists and Communists. The coalition dissolved in 1947 when Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi (Christian Democrat) returned from a visit to the U.S. with promises of economic support under the Marshall Plan in exchange for Italy's complete alignment with the Truman doctrine and U.S. cold war policies. This resulted in a fierce anti-communist campaign in which many former partisans were arrested (3,500 arrests occurred in the province of Modena alone between April 1948 and October 1949).* Amnesty and encouragement were granted to fascists.

A split in the unions was effected, financed by the AFL and CIO, and it is only now being healed. Workers accused of left sympathies were fired. Open attempts were made to modify the Constitution in authoritarian and dictatorial terms. A new doctrine, "continuity of the state", claimed that the new democratic republic was a continuation of the old fascist state, and fascist laws were kept on the books to be used against workers and militants. Fascist judges, generals, and bureaucrats were given back their positions in the state machine.

U.S. imperialism has assured Christian Democrat Party rule for 30 years. U.S. bases were established in many parts of Italy, used openly to support American aggression in Lebanon in 1958, but more covertly used during the Vietnam war. Entire regions, such as Friuli and Sardinia were doomed to economic depression because of the central role played by the U.S. military in the local economies (Friuli is near the Yugoslavian border and Sardinia is in a strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean). This policy of U.S. support is still enforced today. The U.S. promised more economic aid to Italy's crisis-ridden economy during President Giovanni Leone's visit in September, 1974, in exchange for renewed pledges of anti-Communism and subordination.
The practice of giving up national territory for U.S. imperialist purposes in the Mediterranean is not a thing of the past. In 1972, the island of Maddalena, near Sardinia, was turned into a nuclear submarine base. After Greece withdrew from NATO in 1974, many U.S. forces were moved to Sicily and Sardinia, and the southernmost Italian island of Pantelleria was transformed into a new U.S. base.

The Christian Democrat Party is an international agent of U.S. ideological and political rule. For example, it is widely known that the Italian Christian Democrats channelled funds to the Chilean Christian Democrats to subvert the Chilean economy and pave the way for the coup of 1973.

Rudi Assunzio's song, written in the early 60's, is rooted in the struggle against U.S. imperialism. It protests a fatalistic attitude in the left which had developed after many years of unsuccessful struggle against U.S. imperialism and Christian Democratic rule. Assunzio's work was influenced by the American urban folk singers and protest singers. He translated "Ave of Destruction" and "Master of War", adding new, more militant words. His style was influenced by rock and roll, but he was aware of the limitations of the style. He also was opposed to what he saw as "the general, paternalistic, apolitical approach of most American folk singers."

After working several years with one of the minor Maoist groups, Rudi Assunzio recently joined the Communist Party. No longer a political singer, he has turned to research in folklore and cinema.

* Pietro Secchia, La Resistenza accusa, Milano, Mazzotta, 1975, p. 72.
** "Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano," #7-8, page 38.

La cosa più penosa
in giorni come questi
è di trovar tra voi
le facce di sempre.
E invece sta cambiando
la storia di ciascuno
perché, da grandi fatti
matura una lezione.
(Tutti:)
Buttiamo a mare
le basi americane!
Cessiamo di fare da spalla agli
assassini!
Giriamo una pagina lunga di vent'anni
andiamo a guardare la nostra
libertà!

In una ragnatela
di fatti quotidiani
abbiam dimenticato
di essere compagni.
Nel mondo c'è una lotta
che non si è mai placata
rompiamo le abitudini
torniamo ad esser uomini.
Buttiamo a mare...

Non serve domandare
se poi ce la faremo
lasciamo alle parole
il tempo di aspettare.
O forse qui se aspetta
la rossa provvidenza
per cui gli altri decidono
e noi portiamo pazienza.
Buttiamo a mare...

The "continuity" of fascism in Italy was illustrated in April, 1960, when Christian Democratic Prime Minister Tambroni formed a government openly supported by the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), Italy's largest neo-fascist party. A mass mobilization forced Tambroni to resign on July 19, after several workers were killed by the police at anti-fascist demonstrations. This song is dedicated to five who died in Reggio Emilia on July 7, 1960; the next day, four more workers were killed in Palermo.

The message of the song is that the time for militant, anti-fascist resistance has come again. Therefore, there are many references to persons and episodes of the first resistance of 1943-5 and to partisan songs. For example, the last two lines of the first verse reflect a partisan song, "Fischia Il Vento" (The wind Blows). The same song is quoted in the last line of the fourth verse. Duccio Galimberti, mentioned in the second verse, was an anti-fascist lawyer and one of the founders of the armed resistance in Northern Italy. He was a leader of the Partito d'Azione, a progressive non-Marxist party which dissolved after the war, and a guerrilla organizer in Piedmont. Galimberti was killed by the fascists in the fall of 1944. The seven Cervi brothers, mentioned in the third verse, were young peasants active in the Resistance who were executed by the fascists on December 27, 1943. The sacrifice by this large family, as well as the moral strength of the father, Nolde Cervi (who became a monument of the Communist Party until his recent death), turned the Cervi brothers into a legend.

Fausto Anselmi, an architect from Turin, wrote this song immediately after the July, 1960, events. It was one of the first protest songs written by a young singer of intellectual background which became so popular among the working class that it can be considered a "folk song". He helped found the new
Comrade citizen, brother partisan, take my hand in these days of sadness.
Once more in Reggio Emilia, once more down in Sicily, comrades have died at the hands of the fascists. Once more, as it once was all over Italy, the wind screams and the storm blows.

At nineteen years Ovidio Franchi died, for those who are too tired or are as yet uncertain. Lauro Farioli died to atone for the sin of those who no longer remember Duccio Galimberti. They died while in their twenties for our tomorrow. They died like old partisans.

Marino Serri died, and Afro Tondelli too, but the eyes of their brothers continue to be dry. Comrades, let it be clear that this bitter blood they shed at Reggio Emilia belongs to all of us. It is the blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh, like that of the Cervi brothers.

The only true friend we have still on our side is the same one who was with us when we were in the mountains. And the enemy of today is still the same one we fought in our mountains and also in Spain. The song we have to sing is still the same: Broken shoes, but we must march on!

Comrade Ovidio Franchi, Comrade Afro Tondelli, and you, Marino Serri, Reverberi and Farioli, from now on you'll go with us, you'll stay by our side, and you won't leave us alone. Dead of Reggio Emilia, rise from your grave. Come out with us to sing: "Bandiera Rossa!"

Compagno cittadino, fratello partigiano, teniamo per mano in questi giorni tristi. Di nuovo a Reggio Emilia, di nuovo in Sicilia son morti dei compagni per mano dei fascisti. Di nuovo come un tempo sopra l'Italia intera fischia il vento e soffia la bufera.

A diciannove anni è morto Ovidio Franchi per quelli che son stanchi o sono ancora incerti. Lauro Farioli è morto per riparare il torto di chi s'e' già scordato di Duccio Galimberti. Son morti sui vent'anni per il nostro domani. Son morti come vecchi partigiani.

Marino Serri è morto, è morto Afro Tondelli, ma gli occhi dei fratelli si son tenuti asciutti. Compagni, sia ben chiaro che questo sangue amaro versato a Reggio Emilia è sangue di noi tutti. Sangue del nostro sangue, nervi dei nostri nervi, come fu quello dei fratelli Cervi.

Il solo vero amico che abbiamo al fianco adesso e sempre quello stesso che fu con noi in montagna ed il nemico attuale è sempre ancora uguale a quel che combattevamo sui nostri monti e in Spagna. Uguale è la canzone che abbiamo da cantare: Scarpe rotte, eppur bisogna andare!

Compagno Ovidio Franchi, Compagno Afro Tondelli, e voi Marino Serri, Reverberi e Farioli, dovrismo tutti quanti aver d'ora in avanti, voler altri al nostro fianco per non sentirci soli. Morti di Reggio Emilia, uscite dalla fossa. Fuori a cantar con noi, "Bandiera Rossa!"
This song is very popular among workers and students. Ivan Della Mea, the composer, is perhaps the best known political songwriter in Italy. In the early 60's he wrote a series of songs about Italian political history since 1948, as seen through the eyes of a child in a working-class family.

Born in Lucca (Tuscany) and brought up in Milan, Ivan Della Mea uses the Milan dialect for most of his songs, which describe current events, repression, and imperialism without sloganeering or over-simplifying reality. His best songs try to stimulate reflection and debate through conflict. Unlike most young political singers, Della Mea does not claim to speak in the workers' name, although he is probably closer in origin and experience to the working-class than most singers. Della Mea links his Communist militancy to his personal experiences. In "O Cara Moglie" he relates episodes and stories about his militancy at the factory gates in the late sixties. His new songs stress the need for united militant working class action, and criticize sectarianism of all kinds, including that of the Communist Party. He was very close to the revolutionary group Lotta Continua, "Fight On" for several years. Recently he rejoined the Communist Party, with which he has had on-again, off-again relations for some time.

My dear wife, tonight please tell our son to go to sleep because the things I have to tell you are things he mustn't hear.

This very morning, out on the job, with a smile from my shop chief, I received my severance pay. I've been fired without any mercy.

And the reason is that I struck for the defense of our rights, for the defense of my union, for my job and for freedom.

When we all unite in struggle, your boss, you know, has to give in.

I saw this at our factory gates: we called our comrades to strike, but the boss comes, nodes and calls, and one by one they start walking in.

Dear wife, you should have seen them: They came forward all stooped and bent, and we shouted, "Scabs! Blacklegs!" while they walked on not looking.

Those poor guys were a pity to see. But just behind them in the doorway the filthy boss was happily laughing. That's when I cursed them without mercy.

My dear wife, I was wrong before. Tell our son to come and listen. He must know what it will be like when he fights for his freedom.

(Repeat last verse)
Machinary

Gualtiero Bertelli, an elementary school teacher from Venice, is among the best song-writers connected with Il Nuovo Cannoneiro Italiano. Formerly a leader of the Communist Party in Venice, he later joined the Manifesto. When the Manifesto merged with the left-wing splinter of the PSIUP to form the new PSUP (Partito di Unità Proletaria per il Comunismo), Bertelli also joined. His songs have been as organic to Venice as Della Mea’s to Milan. Through his sensitive use of the Venetian dialect he describes the human and political condition of the Venetian proletariat, gradually being deprived of their livelihood by huge industrial settlements being built on the mainland near the lagoon. These plants pollute the water and the air to such an extent that Monstedion workers in Marghera are forced to wear gas masks on the job all the time.

This song contains some of the themes of working class struggles during the late 60’s. The workers’ exposure of old myths such as tradesmanship and professional careers and specialization, was part of an attack launched against the capitalist conception of the organization of labor in the factory, which had been the issue at stake since 1969, when the bosses forcefully asserted their intention to organize production as they pleased.

The ‘red autumn’ of 1969 reorganized work at the shop level. Workers eliminated top-down union control and organized their workplace around their own needs. Many new forms of struggle were invented. In an “articulated” strike, for instance, only one major shop would shut down, thereby stopping the whole production process while only a handful of workers were officially on strike.

This not only irritated the bosses, but also worried union leaders who could not control small, militant, rank and file strikes. Reduction of productivity was another method of protesting speedups. This was called “body skipping” in the auto industry. Each worker on the assembly line occasionally skipped one car body. The disruption of production achieved by body-skipping was so immense that a complete car was rarely issued from the lines, since the workers never skipped the same body.

Mother, my dearest mother, they say the worst hasn’t come yet. But I can’t remember when I ever suffered like this.

Three years in jail, or living like animals, is better than the pain that I have felt inside.

When I was sixteen years old, they hired me in the factory. I was lost and forsaken. They settled me in a job. Shortly they built for me a whole brand new life. I was a man with a trade, like those who go to school.

I felt like a new person, with a straight path ahead. The factory has turned me into a modern machine.

A dream with eyes open, now drained to the end, and it leaves my throat dry after the little taste I had.

I went on strike with the others. It was for my own rights. It was for my interest. They said that it was wrong.

They said I have no rights, and that you are not my mother. The factory has made me, and the boss is my creator.

Once I was not yet a man. Now I am like a screw. If I strike, I stop and then must be replaced.

We are like machinery, cheaply bought and paid for, and with this kind of blackmail, they can throw us away.

Workers’ consciousness about problems of health and working conditions increased radically. Workers began to refuse extra pay for breathing poisonous fumes or for working at dangerous sites, and demanded that these conditions be changed.

These new objectives, methods of struggle and forms of organization illustrate the ideological, political, and cultural consciousness of Italian workers.

Mamma mia cara mamma il peeggio non e morto ma io non mi ricordo d’aver mai così pena.

Tre anni di galera o viver d’animali e meglio della pena che dentro mi son trovà.

Avevo sedici anni che sono stato assunto ero un derelitto e m’hanno sistemà.

In poco m’hanno fatto tutta una vita nuova. Sono un qualificato come chi ha studià.

Io mi sentivo un altro dritto per la mia strada ‘na macchina moderna ‘sta fabbrica m’ha formà.

Un sogno ad occhi aperti che adesso mi si scusa e gia mi secca in gola quel poco che ho gustà.

Ho sciooperat anch’io erano i miei diritti erano i miei interessi m’han detto che ho sbaglià.

Che io non ho diritti, e non sei tu mia madre. La fabbrica m’ha fatto. Il padrone mi ha creà.

Prima non ero un uomo. Ora sono una vita. Se scioopereremo fermo, mi devono cambiàr.

Siamo degli ingranaggi, pagati a poco prezzo. Che con questo ricatto si possono buttar.
Squeezed like slaves, 
servants of their system, 
if you are once fired 
you'll never find another job.

Ballata della Fiat

Ballad of Fiat

Alfredo Bandelli, the composer of this song, comes from the ranks of the working class. A railroad station worker in Pisa (Tuscany) who worked at many manual jobs and even emigrated to Germany at one point, he was always a political militant. His songs were popularized by the group "Canzoniere Pisano", and then by other political artists (notably Pino Masi) who recorded for the Lotta Continua label without, however, mentioning his name. Bandelli is still a political activist, although his relationship to Lotta Continua has lessened.

The "Ballad of the Fiat" exemplifies Italian revolutionary thought in 1969 and early 1970, the peak period of workers' militancy in factories. Equal raises for all and abolition of ranks and categories, the egalitarian objectives of the struggle, became the goals of revolutionary groups who used their strength - gained from the great wave of student struggle of 1968 - to organize the factories and to prepare for the "red autumn" of 1969. (See previous notes.) One important political objective mentioned in the song, which is common to revolutionary and union strategy, is the extension of militant activism from the workplace to the rest of society in order to tackle bad living conditions in the working class quarters of towns, rising prices, inflation, worsening services, poor health, and bad schools.

The anti-union theme in the song, the idea that shop stewards were invented by the bosses to control working class militancy, has been also adopted by most major groups, including Lotta Continua, which saw unions as basically enemies of the working class. After 1969, however, unions increasingly advocated speeding up production in the factories in exchange for reforms in housing, health, services, schools, transportation, and in the fiscal system, all of which was to be negotiated with the government. The left argued that a suspension of the struggle in the workplace would inevitably strengthen the bourgeoisie, who would never permit such reforms to be made. Unions and the reformist Communist Party gave priority to top-level government talks before strikes, in pursuit of social reforms.

None of these reforms have been achieved to date.

In the Fall of 1974, rank-and-file discord against the growing cost of public services (mainly transportation and electricity) led to the practice of "self-reduction" in Turin and other areas. This meant that whenever rates increased, workers paid their unions instead of the billing companies. The unions, in turn, forced the companies to accept the payments at the old price. This method was opposed by the Communist Party leadership, and by some local unions, and it was met with a cry of "civil disobedience and disruption of the state" by the bourgeoisie. Direct action by rank and file succeeded, however, in most cases, even in the face of repressive acts which culminated in the arrest of three left-wing union leaders in Venice. In December, 1974, the government agreed to withdraw the expected increases in electric prices.

The last verse describes an event in Turin on July 3, 1970, when for three consecutive days an entire working class neighborhood fought police out of their quarter in protest against rising rents and prices. The revolutionary left considers this event the most outstanding example of militant working class response to exploitation and police repression in recent years.

Miraflori, mentioned in the song, is the seat of the largest Fiat works.

Mister Boss, this time
things won't go so nice for you. 
we are tired of waiting
for you to get us killed.

We keep on working,
and the union keeps saying
that we must wait,
and no one ever talks of struggle.

Mister Boss, we have awakened,
and this time the fight is on.
and this time how we must fight
we will decide for ourselves.
See how the scabs are running!
Hear the silence in the factory!
Maybe tomorrow the only sound
you'll hear
will be machine guns!

Mister Boss, this time
things won't go so nice for you.
From now on, if you want to negotiate
you will have to deal with no one
but us.

and you can't buy us this time
with a raise of five lire.
If you offer ten, we want a hundred.
If you offer a hundred,
we want a thousand.

Signor padrone, questa volta
per te andrà di certo male.
Siamo stanchi di aspettare
che tu ci faccia ammazzare.
Noi si continua a lavorare,
e i sindacati vengono a dire
che bisogna aspettare
e di lottare non si parla mai.

Signor padrone, ci siamo svegliati,
e questa volta si dà battaglia.
E questa volta come lottare
Io decido soltanto noi.
Vedi il crampo che se la squaglia!
Senti il silenzio nelle officine!
Forse domani solo il rumore
della mitraglia tu sentirai!

Signor padrone, questa volta
per te andrà di certo male.
D'ora in poi se vuoi trattare
dovrai accorgerti che non si può.
E questa volta non ci compri
con le cinque lire dell'aumento
se offri dieci vogliamo cento
se offri cento, mille noi vogliamo.
Signor padrone, non ci hai fregati
con le invenzioni, coi sindacati,
i tuoi progetti sono sfumati
ora si lotta contro di te.
E le qualifiche, le categorie
noi le vogliamo tutte abolite
le divisioni sono finite
alla catena siai tutti uguali.

Signor padrone, questa volta
ormai a lottare si è imparato
a Miraflor s'è dimostrato
in tutta Italia si dimostrerà.
E quando siamo scesi in piazza
tu ti aspettavi un funerale
ma è andata proprio male
per chi voleva farci addormentare.

Ne abbiamo visiti davvero tanti
di manganelle e scudi romani
però si è visto anche tante mani
che a osare pietre cominciano a
andar.
Tutta Torino proletaria
alla violenza della questura
risponde ora senza paura
la lotta dura bisogna far.

No ai burocrati e ai padroni
cosa vogliamo? Vogliamo tutto.
Lotta continua in fabbrica e fuori
e il comunismo trionferà.
E no ai burocrati e ai padroni
Cosa vogliamo? Vogliamo tutto!
Lotta continua in fabbrica e fuori
e il comunismo trionferà
(repeat last verse)

The reaction of the bourgeoisie
to the workers' and student militancy
of 1968-9 took the form of police
repression, political maneuvering
and legal frame-ups. On December 12,
1969, a bomb placed in a bank in
Milan killed 14 people most of whom
were farmers. The police immediately
started looking for the murderer
among the revolutionary left, and
arrested anarchist Pietro Valpreda.
On December 16, another anarchist,
a railroad worker named Giuseppe
Pinelli, "plunged" to his death
from a fourth story window at the
police headquarters, where he was
under interrogation about the massacr
These events initiated a period
of repression against the left known
as the "strategy of tension." Workers
and Unionists involved in the 1969
"red autumn" activities were arbitra-
arily arrested. A union document
stated that at least 14,000 workers
and unionists had either been arrested
or placed on trial by the winter
following the massacre and the sign-
ing of the metal workers' national
contract.
The revolutionary left began to
raise doubts about the official
version of the massacre and about
Pinelli's death. (The Communist Party
initially accepted the official in-
vestigation report.) Lotta Con-
tinua waged a campaign to prove that
Pinelli had not committed suicide,
but had been murdered. When the
police chief, Luigi Calabresi, whom
Lotta Continua accused of killing
Pinelli, finally sued the organiza-
tion, the trial revealed such enor-
mous contradictions between the
stories of the police that the the-
thesis of murder appeared probable.
Not surprisingly, the trial was
interrupted at the point of victory
by a maneuver of Calabresi's fascist
lawyer in complicity with the court.
Pietro Valpreda's innocence of
the bank bombing became clearer
and clearer. Another investigation by
a judge in Padova proved that a
nazi-fascist group from Padova had
bought and placed the bomb in Milan.
The Secret Services and the Ministry
of Interior had evidence against them
but had either ignored or suppressed
it, while busily fabricating evidence
against the left. This exposed
a fact which everyone in the left
knew: the state had organized the
massacre through its secret police
organizations in which they used the
fascists as spies and infiltrators.
More evidence emerged about the
so-called "black plot." It was
proved through an investigation that the coup attempted by a former Fascist military chief, Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, in December, 1971, was known in advance by the Ministry of Interior and the Secret Service. No attempt was made to prevent it. The former army Chief of Staff, General Miceli is now in jail for complicity in the coup and for organizing fascist cells in the Army with a view to overthrowing the Constitutional system. Secret fascist organizations among the military were discovered, with links to the Padova group which had organized the Milan massacre. More massacres in Bologna and Cremona, in August and May, 1974, killed six and eight people respectively. The murderers have not been found, and were not actively sought.

Fascist complicity in the legal and administrative branches of the state is constantly being uncovered, while many leading Christian Democrats and Social Democrat politicians are either actively or passively supporting the "black plot". These leaders were appointed and kept in office by Christian Democratic ministers. It was proved that the same capitalists who illegally financed the Christian Democrats and their allies in exchange for political favors also financed the organized fascist faction in the army and paid off the Padova nazis.

The picture of a deeply rooted fascist organization in the army, police, and secret services is clearly taking shape. The threat of a military coup has frightened the Communist Party and unions into a position of moderation and complacency, and has spread a feeling of insecurity and the need for law and order throughout the country. The high court has, for the fourth time, postponed the trial of Pietro Valpreda in fear that the truth will be revealed there.

This song tells the truth about the "state massacre". The melody and part of the words are based on an older song about another "state murder", the killing of the Socialist member of Parliament, Giacomo Matteotti, by Mussolini's secret services in 1924. It is sung by Luisa Ronchini and the group Camioniere Popolare Veneto.
Contessa

This song means 1968-1969 for everyone in Italy. Its rousing chorus has become so familiar that it is almost a household tune. Its continual performance at demonstrations and political/social programs has become such a ritual that it sometimes seems to lose its very important meaning: that "the ideas of revolt have never died", and that only a class traitor could deny this truth.

Paolo Pietrangeli, the composer, is a Roman filmmaker and Communist Party activist. His recent documentary on neo-fascism is a brilliant denunciation of this phenomenon. Pietrangeli has written several beautiful revolutionary songs during the peak of recent struggles. Currently, he writes ironic, satiric, but very sensitive songs about the disillusionment and anguish of many revolutionaries, whose struggles in the late 1960's failed to bring about the hoped-for revolutionary change. Pietrangeli's songs are based on personal experiences, and refrain from using slogans and cliches, while some songs have become cliches in themselves due to their effectiveness and popularity.

The verses describe a conversation which the author may have heard. They reveal the revolutionary consciousness in people who, like Paolo Pietrangeli and many other young militants today, are not necessary of working class origins. This consciousness embodies a hatred for the rich and the bourgeoisie, for their stupidity and their hypocrisy. Pietrangeli's sincerity, not as a pretended proletarian but as a revolutionary intellectual who rejects his own class, explains why the anger expressed in the chorus is so effective. Typical is the two-part division of 'Contessa' which reflects Pietrangeli's love for musical forms derived from the folk tradition, cabaret, musical theatre, and all sorts of other musical experiences. This is how the Italian people's culture has acquired a new beautiful hymn, the "Bandiera Rossa" of the new revolutionary generations.

(solo)
"Have you heard, Countess, about Aldo's factory? A few fools in there made a strike. They wanted to have their salary raised. They were saying, imagine, that they were exploited! And when the police arrived, those few idiots shouted even louder. They stained the floors and the doors with blood. It may take some time to clean it up."

(chorus)
Comrades, from the fields and the factories, Take up your sickle and hammer! Take to the streets, hammer it down! Take to the streets, Bury the system!

You "decent people" who call for peace so you can go on doing whatever you please, If this is the price, we prefer war! We want to see you all in your graves. If this is the price, we've paid it already. No one in this world may be exploited anymore.

(solo)
"Imagine, Countess, what I found out from my relative about the factory occupation. Those people locked inside were actually professing free love! After all, my dear, it's really no wonder. These days even workers want their sons to be doctors! Imagine what it would be like if that came to be! There are no more morals, Countess!"

(tutti)
Compagni dai campi e dalle officine prendete la falce e portate il martello, Scendete gli in piazza e picchiate con quello! Scendete gli in piazza, affossate il sistema!

Voi gente per bene che pace cercate, la pace per far quello che voi volete, ma se questo è il prezzo, vogliamo la guerra, vogliamo vedervi finir sotto terra. Ma se questo è il prezzo l'abbiamo pagato. Nessuno più al mondo dev'essere sfruttato.

(solo)
"Sapessi, contessa, che cosa mi ha detto un caro parente dell'occupazione, che quella gentaglia rinchiuse la dentro di libero amore faceva professione. Del resto, mia cara, di che si stupisce anche l'operaio vuole il figlio dottore e pensi che anch'io non può venir fuori non c'è più morale, contessa."
(chorus)
If the wind blew before,
now it blows harder.
The idea of revolt
has never died.
If anyone says it has,
don't listen to him.
He who wants to
is a traitor!
If someone says that,
Spit in his face.
He has thrown the red flag
into the ditch.

You "decent people"
who call for peace...
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