Carleton University

At the Limits of Politics: Italian Autonomia and the World Social Forum

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Abstract

This thesis explores the interrelation between an organic crisis and a state of exception and their effect upon subjectivity and the structure of the state through a historical analysis of Italy from 1969 to 1979. I argue that rapid industrialization of Italy weakened its institutional framework, creating the conditions necessary for an organic crisis. The Italian state responded by declaring a state of exception and unleashed a campaign of terrorism against its own population. In these circumstances a unique political configuration, *Autonomia*, emerged that not only astutely analyzed the political and economic changes occurring in Italy, but created new forms of resistance that further ruptured the fabric of Italian society. In the final chapter I argue that the Italian experience of the 1970s prefigures, in many ways, our present epoch of neoliberalism, post-political politics, and empire; with the World Social Forum sharing a number of characteristics with *Autonomia*.

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Chapter I: Setting the Stage for a Decade of Disorder. The Creation of Italy's Organic Crisis (1948-1969)

Introduction

This thesis will be developed chronologically, with the first two chapters rooted in a historical analysis of the political, social, and institutional conditions in Italy from roughly 1948 to 1979. An analysis of this thirty year period in Italy forms the majority of my thesis. This period, as I will demonstrate, was a particularly tumultuous time in Italian history which still shapes the present contours of Italian society. The first chapter covers the period from 1948 to 1969. My argument, broadly speaking, in this chapter is that the rapid industrialization of Italy following the end of the Second World War created an organic crisis in the country, with the Italian state increasingly unable to govern effectively. The organic crisis was both instigated by and led to a change in the dominant form of subjectivity from the mass worker to the socialized worker. It was a group of then obscure dissident Italian intellectuals, known as the Autonomists, who both recognized this transition was occurring and its significance. This new form of subjectivity demonstrated the potential to operate outside of the institutional framework of society and create its own institutions, capable of realizing the new needs that were a product of its condition. This possibility was briefly realized with the massive student and workers strikes in the Autumn of 1969. It is on this note that the first chapter concludes.

The second chapter concerns events that occurred in Italy from 1970 to 1978, however my primary focus is on the advent of the global economic crisis in 1973 and the second wave of massive unrest that struck the country in 1977. In this chapter I show how the organic crisis in the country developed into a state of exception, demonstrating

in the process the interrelation between the two concepts. The enactment of a state of exception by the Italian state of course had a profound effect on its structure and the manner in which it viewed itself vis-a-vis the rest of Italian society. Numerous changes occurred in order to allow the Italian state to effectively conduct the state of exception, with the most prominent being the creation of parallel system of governance that superseded parliamentary procedure and democratic oversight. Three different political actors arose or were significantly modified as a result of the state of exception. First, the emergence of the state of exception spurred the Italian Communist Party to adopt Eurocommunism as its guiding philosophy, severing any pretense towards radical politics. Second, in response to attacks by neo-fascist groups aligned with the Italian state on working class organizations the Red Brigades were formed. Originally conceived as a defensive organization they eventually morphed into an insular elitist clique that regarded itself as the only proper mechanism through which revolutionary change could occur. Third, Autonomia, a diffuse political formation in which many Autonomist intellectuals played prominent roles, was created in this period and sought to pursue a form of politics apart from the Italian state and established institutional actors. I analyze the first two political actors separately and then show how their actions along with the ongoing state of exception being carried out by the Italian state created the highly pressurized political environment in which Autonomia developed. I view the formation of Autonomia through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor politics, which posits that it is only in truly extreme circumstances that new political forms develop and politics progresses, spurred on by actors which exist outside of the realm of traditional politics. The failure of Autonomia however was that it remained trapped in the realm of minor politics,

incapable of institutionalizing itself, which would have provided it with increased range of action and allowed it to more effectively weather and respond to unexpected events. Such an event occurred with the assassination of the President of the Italian Republic, Aldo Moro, by the Red Brigades. His death unified the disparate elements of the Italian state and provided the justification necessary for the crushing of the vibrant social movements in the country.

The final chapter applies the concepts and analysis that I employed in the first two chapters to contemporary politics and argues that the historical experience of Italy and the theoretical analysis and concepts that were created in order to understand and provide a framework for meaningful action during this period can be and are being utilized today by the anti-globalization movement. Specifically, I focus on the creation of the World Social Forum as an attempt by the anti-globalization movement to provide more direction and coherence to the multiplicity of struggles that comprise it. I believe that the World Social Forum and the anti-globalization movement that is its foundation share many similarities with the Autonomia movement in Italy. Both movements primarily operate outside the sphere of traditional politics, the state, and practice a politics more rooted in daily lived experience, rather than striving towards the completion of some grand political project. The major problem that both movements face is how to deepen and broaden their struggle, to ensure the new social strata are activated and that their radical perspective on politics and society is able to penetrate the experience of daily life. This requires the establishment of a new institutional network, one that critically analyzes the foundation of current institution arrangements and attempts to create new institutional structures that break with the current paradigm. Autonomia failed to coalesce into such an

arrangement, while it is questionable whether the World Social Forum, in its present form, is capable of doing so. It is on this point that I conclude, arguing that it is necessary for contemporary politics to be reinvented in order to respond to the dramatic challenges that we face globally as a species in the present age.

The Italian experience of the 1960s and 1970s was in many ways exceptional, when compared to other Western states. However, despite this, what occurred in the country during that period holds a continued resonance, both in regards to the dominant method of political organization today and the resistance that exists in opposition to it. Therefore when the question is posed, “Why Italy?” Why focus on this particular country and this specific historical period?” my answer is twofold. First, I believe that during these years Italy occupied a unique role, both in the important position that it assumed internationally in the context of the Cold War, and for the significant processes of transformation that were occurring within the Italian state and Italian society. Second, much can be learned from the experience of Italy and applied to our present context. New insights in the ways politics could be conducted that sought to give expression to the potentialities of new social subjects that arose as a result of the restructuring of the Italian economy and the creation of new mechanisms of control by the Italian state were all a product of these turbulent years. These developments can be applied to understanding the contemporary framework under which politics is conducted and can also demonstrate that many of the circumstances which presently exist are not completely unprecedented but are, rather, alterations of a paradigm, and express tendencies that are completely within

the sphere of Western liberal societies.¹ Italy is only one particularly pertinent example of the expression of these tendencies.

As will become clear by the final chapter, the Italian experience is a model, not only for the reactionary politics of fear which have dominated political discourse since September 11th 2001, but also for a new form of revolutionary politics. It is only through the development of new forms and methods of radical politics that the dire situation which faces us today can be effectively responded to. Italy provides an example, both of the application of these regressive practices, and of the creation of new political forms in response. In this sense, then, Italy can serve as a model for understanding how societies are shaped under extreme circumstances and how the very nature of the political is transformed as a result. Echoing Michael Hardt, “I take Italian revolutionary politics as a model, because it has constituted a kind of laboratory of experimentation in new forms of political thinking that help us conceive a revolutionary practice in our times.”² Social movements are crucial precisely because they can ignite the process which creates the new perspectives and organizational forms necessary to overcoming the persistent presence of fear and seemingly unending war which is an indispensable part of the present structural framework through which politics is conducted and intimately related to this, the manner through which the individual is conceptualized and operates in the world.

¹ By this I mean, as will become apparent both when the case of Italy in the 1960s and 1970s and the United States today is examined, is that it is not uncommon for states professing to be founded upon liberal principles to take actions which violate these principles, all the while claiming that these actions are necessary in order to maintain the very principles which are being violated.

² Michael Hardt, “Introduction: Laboratory Italy” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 1.

My goal in this first chapter is to demonstrate how the rapid industrialization of Italy served as the basis from which an organic crisis was created in the country. First, I will elaborate upon my understanding of what an organic crisis is, and why it is the best concept to capture what occurred in Italy. In chapter two, my argument will become more complex, as I will show how this organic crisis lead to the creation of a state of exception in Italy and the strong interrelation that existed between them. For now however, in this section, I will simply focus upon examining what exactly an organic crisis is and why one resulted from the Italian industrialization process.

Terminology and the Condition of an Organic Crisis

Before I analyze what constitutes an organic crisis, I will offer a brief description of the terminology that I will use to clarify the form of the interactions that occur during an organic crisis. Advanced capitalist societies are very complex. The specific manner in which capitalist production is organized, the state apparatus, and social groupings outside of the state are all interrelated and articulated through each other. Together they constitute a particular capitalist society within the territorial limits of a state.³ The state is the key point of contention in capitalist societies. While a range of actors and institutions exist outside of the state in capitalist societies the state itself serves as the forum that organizes the hegemonic fraction of capital in capitalist society and provides mechanisms through which it can express itself and guide society in a particular manner. Thus,

³ I am not arguing that capitalist processes exist within the structure of the state. Rather I am saying that specific capitalist societies can be said to exist within the territorial borders delimited by the state. Of course this is a great simplification of the argument, since capitalist societies are not limited by sovereign borders and in fact extend beyond them and interact with each other in a trans-sovereign space, but for the sake of my analysis I am assuming, that a unique Italian capitalist society can be said to exist which resides within the territorial borders of the state of Italy.

following Poulantzas, I argue that the state cannot be understood as a homogenous entity. As Bob Jessop put it, “Poulantzas emphasized that the state is neither a monolithic bloc nor simply a sovereign legal subject. It must be understood as a strategic field formed through intersecting power networks which constitutes a favorable terrain for political maneuver by the hegemonic fraction. It is through constituting this terrain that the state helps organize the power bloc.”⁴ The state then serves as the point of expression through which power struggles and the various social forces in society are given a definite form, formatted in particular ways through their interaction with the terrain of the state.

The contradictions that beget an organic crisis are economic in nature and are found within the organization of the capitalist mode of production. The forces which vie for dominance within the state have an economic basis and hence a stake in processes by which accumulation occurs in society. “A given state presents the characteristics of several forms of state, due precisely to the coexistence of several forms of the Capitalist Mode of Production...But one form of the state shows dominance in the complex unity of a given state, and so attributes its distinctive concrete features to it.”⁵ As the different segments which vie for power in the state have different economic interests, the state is comprised of many different competing economic elements, with one specific element hegemonic over all others. What binds all of these elements together is that they are interested in perpetuating the capitalist mode of production, although they may have different visions of how contemporary capitalism should be organized. Therefore, any crisis that exists in the capitalist mode of production will eventually have repercussions

⁴ Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1985), 125.

⁵ Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1973), 155.

concerning the organizational form of the state. Yet it should be noted that the relationship between a crisis in some element of capitalist mode of production and the redistribution of power within the state apparatus is not a directly causal relationship, many other factors can and will intervene shaping the reorganization process.⁶

The entire institutional matrix of a society is not contained within the apparatus of the state. The state does, however, play a crucial role within society. As Poulantzas argues, "...the state has a function of order in political class conflicts, and also for global order as the cohesive factor of unity. The state prevents political class conflict from breaking out in so far as this conflict reflects the unity of a formation. The state prevents classes and society from consuming themselves..."⁷ The state in advanced capitalist countries is not society. Rather, a whole range of institutions exists outside of the state, where they influence the state to follow a particular trajectory and express itself in a certain manner and likewise are themselves influenced by the state to carry out particular functions in a specific way. These groupings of institutions are generally referred to collectively as civil society, or when directly referencing the state, as the private sphere, in contrast to the public sphere of the state.⁸ These institutions both contain and organize social forces which find expression within the state apparatus and those that do not. In the first category, the institutions which directly form part of the state apparatus are primarily concerned with clarifying how social elements⁹ are expressed within the state, as well extending their influence of these elements within the space of civil society. In the latter

⁶ Ibid., 118.

⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁸ A misnomer, since in liberal capitalist societies both exist together within a single sphere, in a symbiotic relationship, influencing each other's course of action and organizational form.

⁹ These social elements are inherently capitalist in nature as this is the terrain upon which the modern state operates.

category, institutions which function outside of the state, in the realm of civil society, are empowered because they organize and guide latent social forces which exist within society but lack the ability to directly express themselves and achieve meaningful ends without the guidance of these institutions.

The institutions of civil society refine the instrumental and ideological functions that are necessary for any capitalist society to function smoothly. The state plays the largest role in perpetuating an ideological vision that can be ascribed to society and absorbed by the populace, in the final instance turning towards coercive means to assure that it is adhered to. The institutions of civil society, also occupy a crucial position, by allowing for the expression of differing perspectives and analysis, within certain limits of course, that can then be channeled back into the state, and utilized to shape and reshape society to ensure that it maintains the requisite amount of cohesiveness required for economic accumulation to continue. "If the particular and the general, private property and the social state contradict each other, this does not make them separate attributes, each of which fosters a separate and independent theory of the state. The ideological and the instrumental are intimately riveted together within a single theory of politics, paradoxical perhaps, be unified nevertheless."¹⁰ Thus the interactions between civil society and the state allows for a more comprehensive ideological and instrumental apparatus to be constructed that penetrates down to every level of society, gathers together an array of social forces, and assembles them in such a way that they are made comprehensible and capable of being articulated within a capitalist society. Challenges to

¹⁰ John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge: Coercion and Consent in Marxist Political Theory* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 28.

this order can emerge from critical civil society organizations, but the primary force of contestation comes from social movements.

With the construction of such a totalizing and fractious apparatus it may appear that modern capitalist society is rife with contradictions and because of this its future is only tenuous and uncertain at best. While it is certainly true that capitalist society is inherently contradictory the interaction between civil society and the state that exists in Western liberal democracies provides the most stable foundation yet discovered upon which society can be based. This is because, as Gramsci noted, rather than simply opposing all forms of dissent, the expression of dissent is allowed, but is constrained and manipulated within certain frameworks. This is made possible because of the multilayered form of contemporary liberal democratic states, which are highly flexible and able to recoup social energies and direct them towards nonthreatening ends. “The massive structure of modern democracies, whether one is talking about the organization of the state or the complex associations of civil life, represents for the political art the equivalent of trenches and the permanent fortifications of the front...”¹¹ Its sheer complexity and allowance of variability endows capitalist society with the ability to respond to and absorb challenges to its existence by creating an ideological and material framework that creates a spectrum of potential and acceptable action. Naturally this spectrum delimits some action as unacceptable. The institutions of civil society and the organs of state are of course capitalist in nature. While the expression of dissent and conflicting points of view is allowed for, they must be within certain acceptable limits.

¹¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), 235.

Institutions or social forces which challenge the existence of capitalism itself are not acceptable.¹² Usually this is not a concern, as the institutions of civil society are typically focused upon modifying the capitalist process, not overturning it. However, if a capitalist society is struck by a deep and prolonged crisis the ideological framework which underpins it may begin to falter as the reality of lived experience differs from the narrative of existence created by the dominant ideology. Ideologies project themselves as the natural method for understanding society, making it possible to orient oneself within society. In times of crisis however the stability and consistency that the dominant ideology is supposed to offer is revealed as false. In this instance reforms will be attempted, drawing upon the perspectives of the non-hegemonic fractions within the state and various institutions within civil society.

However, occasionally, for a number of reasons, the factors which have led to the onset of crisis cannot easily be overcome. Typically this is because the extent of the factors which caused the crisis, both in number and in magnitude, are too large for civil society and the state to respond and adapt to without significant alterations to both the ideological and material apparatus of society. The crisis is further exacerbated if it results in the increased politicization of society, that is, if the average person becomes directly concerned with the functioning of society and deems the existing avenues available to him or her to be inadequate. In a situation of seemingly irresolvable crisis combined with the increasing dissatisfaction of a continually expanding portion of the population with

¹² Those who seek the overthrow of the capitalist economic system and its replacement with a different economic system, whatever that may be, are typically shunned from mainstream discourse. If they attempt to organize and actually challenge the current order they are usually quickly repressed. A different response is engendered by those who only seek the modification of the capitalist economic system, not its replacement. While they may be mocked if their opinion differs from the conventional wisdom of the period, it is rare that they find themselves on the receiving end of a police baton.

the present arrangement of society, the probability that an organic crisis may arise becomes progressively greater.

The notion of organic crisis originates in the work of Antonio Gramsci. Organic crises are the result of deeply rooted contradictions within a social structure that may persist for some time and require drastic action to resolve.

Organic phenomena give rise to historic-social criticism which concerns the large groupings, those beyond the immediately responsible people and beyond the leading personnel...A crisis appears which sometimes lasts for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable contradictions have appeared in the structure, and that the political forces working positively for the preservation and defense of the same structure are exerting themselves nevertheless to heal them within certain limits and to overcome them.¹³

An organic crisis extends beyond the actors that are initially directly affected by the crisis, to the whole of society. Typically in modern capitalist societies only a narrow band, “the leading personnel”¹⁴ in Gramsci’s terms, are directly concerned with and involved in political processes. With the onset of an organic crisis, however, the masses of people, which are typically inert and who are usually directed by the leading personnel, become directly involved within the political sphere. This expanded political involvement tends to raise the level of political consciousness within society.

During an organic crisis the traditional political actors (i.e. mainstream political parties, trade unions, and establishment intellectuals) attempt to overcome the deeply rooted contradictions which exist primarily through the utilizations of minor adjustments,

¹³ Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 166.

¹⁴ In contemporary societies these leading personnel would be senior members of the political class, powerful politicians for example. This segment of society would also encompass influential media personalities who distill current political activities and explain them to the rest of the populace.

which attempt to preserve the present order. During a regular crisis such procedures would usually be sufficient, even if the problems in question were significant, because the leading figures in society can portray these changes as groundbreaking, and with these figures serving as the limits to political expression the possibility that the crisis will expand can be foreclosed rather quickly.¹⁵ However, during an organic crisis large masses of people have begun to be politicized, severely limiting the effectiveness that such small reforms can have. As the crisis spreads and the existing contradictions within society become more apparent, the institutional framework of society degrades to such an extent that the traditional methods of responding to change are no longer effective. As a result, the dominant ideology, which informs how the institutions of government and important civil society actors operate within society and provides a justification for their actions to the rest of society, becomes increasingly ineffective. The "... great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."¹⁶ Thus an organic crisis represents a transition period between two forms of society. During the actual organic crisis the composition that society will assume in order to overcome the crisis is unclear. The characteristics of the new societal period are determined by the struggle of various social forces during the organic crisis to assert themselves. Regardless of the methods that are employed to end it, organic crises have a

¹⁵ This does however require strong, engaged institutions that have the resources and the ability to quickly respond and shape the discourse of the crisis, something that was lacking in the Italian case.

¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), 276.

transforming effect upon society, calling into question the fundamental tenets upon which it is based.

The transforming effect that organic crises have in the society in which they occur is due, in large part, to the capacity that exists during them for both the institutions of the state and the social forces which arise during the organic crisis to act outside of the traditional framework of action which defined the society before the advent of the organic crisis. "There are always periods when the State has problems with its own collective bodies, when these bodies, claiming certain privileges, are forced in spite of themselves to open onto something that exceeds them, a short revolutionary instant, an experimental surge."¹⁷ The failure of the state to properly control the crisis and exercise its governing role over society forces it to take unprecedented actions to reform itself and reassert its control. While the state is reforming itself in an attempt to overcome the crisis social forces within civil society, depending on their extent and persistence, can decisively influence this process. However, the effect of these social forces is not simply limited to an effect upon the organs of the state. By their very existence they demonstrate that segments of society which were formerly apolitical are becoming politicalized, making the decay of traditional social institutions only more apparent. "...politics has spread out into sphere from which it has traditionally been excluded and where, hence it has to be reinterpreted...The politicization of uncustomary spheres goes hand in hand with the desertion of ossified institutions."¹⁸ Hence, not only is the institutional

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 366-367.

¹⁸ Augusto Illuminati, "Unrepresentable Citizenship," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 166.

framework of society being restructured during a period of organic crisis, but the nature of the political itself is being altered and extended into new spheres. These two elements are directly related to one another, as the reorganization of the state must account for the existence of this new political reality in order for its transformation to be actually meaningful and to overcome the factors which caused the crisis.

This new political reality is created by the actions of forces within society that have begun to move outside of the institutions of society. Such a possibility occurs because of the degeneration of these very institutions, which have lost their ability to control and direct these forces. However, as I have noted, just because these institutions have lost some degree of their prominence does not mean that they remain inert, as large sections of society did before the onset of the organic crisis. Rather they seek to respond and adapt to the changing situation, in the hopes of regaining their lost control over the social forces that they had formerly governed. The most important of these institutions are those which directly comprise part of the state apparatus, although in advanced capitalist societies all institutions, and the social forces which comprise them, are related to the state in some manner: "...even struggles that go beyond the state are not extraneous to power: they are always inscribed in power apparatuses which concretize them and which also condense a relationship of forces. Given the state's complex articulation with the totality of power mechanisms, these very struggles always have long-range effects within the state."¹⁹ How precisely the state responds to the challenges created by such a situation of course depends upon the nature of the state, its historical

¹⁹ Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 141.

development, the usual format of its interactions with other non-state actors, as well as the struggles in civil society and the balance of class forces.²⁰

The reaction of the state will invariably be multifaceted, just as capitalist society cannot be governed in a singular, direct fashion, an organic crisis cannot be overcome by simply employing a limited range of tactics. Part of the state's response will undoubtedly be reactionary. Its coercive powers will be mobilized in an attempt to suppress the social forces which have moved outside the acceptable range of action. While suppressing those tendencies it regards as extreme the state will also make attempts to appeal to "responsible elements"²¹ by promoting changes in the structure of society that, while progressive, and resulting in alterations to the expression of power, maintain the basis of that power, by retaining the capitalist mode of production.²² The state, along with the institutions of civil society which underpin it, will never reform capitalism out of existence,²³ they will simply seek to ensure that it is rearticulated into a format that is

²⁰ The form of the state will have a decisive influence in this regard. If the state is fascist, it will simply bring the tanks into the streets and crush any sign of distention. If the state is liberal democratic, however, the response will be more multifaceted.

²¹ Defined as those who support the state and society in its present form and will continue to do so, regardless of the actions the state takes.

²² The archetypal example of such a process would be the one that culminated in the New Deal in the United States. The New Deal was formulated to assuage the social movements that were proliferating across the country in reaction to the economic disaster of the Great Depression. The New Deal itself included many groundbreaking revisions to capitalism in the United States and expanding the role of the state in society, creating the welfare state model. Crucially however the basis of capitalism in the United States was maintained and salvaged by the New Deal.

²³ A solely parliamentary road to socialism is not possible, nor is it conceivable the capitalist state could be gradually modified into a socialist one simply through the passage of a series of laws, the claims of social democracy to the contrary. While such a reformist path can win important changes, it cannot on its own end the capitalist mode of production. This can only be done through the mobilization of large masses of people in a sustained manner.

meaningful and convincing enough to the critical mass of society²⁴ necessary to ensure that the such a change congeals into a stable formation.

Such a project of rearticulation requires a transformation at both the ideological and material level of the state, with a confused and muddled process a prerequisite to determining the nature of each. This process is provoked by, and occurs within the period of, an organic crisis. While the onset of an organic crisis is made clear when social forces become free of their institutional constraints and seek to establish a new terrain of action outside of the present trajectory of society, the ability to act outside of one's traditional sphere of action is not limited to these social forces alone. The state as well can move outside of the legal framework which it has created to regulate and justify its actions, thereby providing it with legitimacy and a sense of rationality. As Carl Schmitt notes, "All law is situational law. The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. He has the monopoly over this decision. Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or rule, but as the monopoly to decide."²⁵ The state then has the ability to move outside of its own traditional sphere of action as well and onto new unfounded terrain. While Schmitt argues that it is the state, by having the ultimate power to decide, that determines when an exceptional situation has occurred, as I will argue in Chapter Two when I more fully integrate the concept of organic crisis with the state of exception, in the case of Italy, as is frequently the case, it is not from the state that the declaration of an

²⁴ I do not mean a critical mass in terms of class, but simply in the numerical sense. Obviously in order for a society to be stable the majority of its members must adhere to the percepts by which it is governed.

²⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 13.

exceptional situation originates. Rather, the declaration of a state of exception by the sovereign is a response to, and recognition of, the social forces which have created the exceptional situation by moving outside of the institutional framework of society. The state of exception is purely reactionary. It does not create a new social arrangement on its own. Instead the necessity for the state to deem the present circumstances exceptional, as well as the contours of its actions in the exceptional period, is determined by the social forces which have arisen as a result of the organic crisis.

The state may not create the exceptional situation, but it does have a distinct advantage in responding to it. "The crisis creates immediately dangerous situations, because the different strata of the population do not possess the same capacity for rapid reorientation or for reorganizing themselves with the same rhythm. The traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained personnel, changes men and programmes and reabsorbs the control which was escaping it with a greater speed than occurs in the subordinate classes."²⁶ While it is social forces that determine the onset of the organic crisis, as well as many of its characteristics, it is usually the state which decides how specifically the crisis will end, simply because it holds a decisive advantage due to its superior organization and resources. First, however, the state must establish some semblance of coherence, with the general aspects of both its ideological and material levels clear, and with a reciprocating connection established between them. Then, the state, acting in concert with allied forces in society, can struggle to assure that this

²⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 175.

transformation becomes the new foundation upon which society will rest.²⁷ In doing so the prevailing discourse, determining what will be contained within and what will be placed outside of the dominant ontological and epistemological stratum, is created and perpetuated.

In overcoming the organic crisis, it is not necessary for the contradictions which caused it to be eliminated. As Colin Hay argues, "...to prove politically viable a state project need not overcome or resolve the contradictions of the old regime...a political project capable of respecifying, and downsizing, the legitimate expectations of its citizens from the state, whilst policing coercively any breakdown in legitimacy amongst those forced to bear the brunt of such diminished expectations, may prove stable."²⁸ In other words, through a process of depoliticization, by actively supporting the inertia of society through a variety of means, the organic crisis may be overcome. As I will argue in chapter three, the contemporary political culture of the West is precisely one of depoliticization, where significant resources are employed in the attempt to make the populace passive and disaggregated. The experience of Italy, where the final result was the depoliticization of that society,²⁹ can serve as a valuable guide for understanding our present context.

²⁷ Left out, for now, is the necessity of the transformation that must occur in the capitalist mode of production as well. For the purposes of coherence of my argument the capitalist mode of production has been temporarily subsumed within the material basis of the state. Although the state is rooted in the capitalist mode of production and plays an important role in its reproduction, it should be clear that the state cannot be seen as the equivalent of the capitalist mode of production. The present organization of the capitalist mode of production is expressed through the state and is highly significant in determining the operation of the state in society. Thus any change in the capitalist mode of production will eventually alter the organs of the state, or at least shift the balance of power within and between them.

²⁸ Colin Hay, "Crisis and the Structural transformation of the state: Interrogating the process of Change," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(3) (1998): 325.

²⁹ A depoliticization that was created by the state, which actively pursued means to traumatize society.

One final point that I wish to explore before I begin an examination of the causes of Italy's organic crisis is the creation of new forms of subjectivity that occurs during an organic crisis. Antonio Negri notes that, "The crisis reactivates subjectivity and makes it appear in all of its revolutionary potential at a level determined by the development of productive forces."³⁰ This means that during a period of crisis the dormant characteristics of subjectivity are made apparent and the potential exists for subjectivity to shift, assuming new characteristics as a result. The material basis of society of course plays a role in prefiguring this process as subjectivity arises from the material and ideological circumstances of a society and demarcates the framework of potentiality for the individual. Subjectivity is a product of the composition of society, containing within it all the potentiality and contradiction which is inherent within the present stage of society. "The production of subjectivity is the material to which the antagonism applies itself. The production of subjectivity makes the fictitious elements of antagonism explode and displays them in the foreground."³¹ Subjectivity determines what is within the horizon of the possible for the individual, and in doing so it is inherently a collective phenomenon, as it shapes the outlook and innate knowledge of all individuals in a society, within a range of variance of course. Organic crises herald the creation of new subjectivities, as the institutional matrix which formally produced subjectivity and allowed for an expression for specific elements of it has collapsed. The real solution to an organic crisis then is the constitution of new institutions which can create possibilities for new subjectivities to express and enrich themselves. "When a social mutation appears, it is not

³⁰ Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1984), 2.

³¹ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 132.

enough to draw the consequences or effects according to lines of economic or political causality. Society must be capable of forming collective agencies of enunciation that match the new subjectivity, in such a way that it desires its own mutation. It's a veritable redeployment."³² The degree to which this occurs is determined by the success of the social struggles that occur during the organic crisis. If the social forces which comprise the emerging subjectivity achieve a large measure of success, then the institutions that form in the wake of the organic crisis will better serve to express the inherent potentialities of the new subjectivity and provide for a diverse and unique range of action. If, however, these social forces are in large part repressed then the state will restructure its organs and the institutions of society in order to contain the new subjectivity, severely restraining the possibility that unique developments in society will occur.

Establishing the Conditions for the Organic Crisis: The 1948 Election and The Industrialization of Italy

In the case of Italy, it was the latter result that occurred, but the decade long period of organic crisis in the 1970s had profound effects upon Italian society. To fully comprehend this organic crisis an examination of its basis in the rapid industrialization of Italy that occurred after World War Two is necessary. Sweeping change occurred in Italy following the end of the Second World War, the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini was over and a new constitution was drafted with the first democratic elections in decades held in 1948. The transformation of the Italian state appeared to be at hand. The reality, however, was different. While the leadership of the fascist regime had either been killed

³² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "May '68 Did Not Take Place," in *Hatred of Capitalism*, ed. Chris Krau and Sylvere Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 209-210.

or imprisoned, many of its functionaries remained in their positions, a direct result of the emerging geopolitical climate of the Cold War. “So quickly was Italian and German Fascism replaced by Russian Communism as the international *bête noire*...that immediately after the war the social groups which had supported the Fascist regime managed to climb back into their former positions of influence.”³³ Total amnesty for 40,000 members of the fascist regime was granted in 1946. The outcome of this decision was the lengthy persistence of fascist dominance over the Italian bureaucracy and its security services. In 1960 out of a total of 64 first-class provincial prefects, (the highest level of state representative at the provincial level) all but two had served under Fascism, as had all 241 deputy prefects, and 135 Questori (provincial chiefs of the state police). As late as 1973, 95 percent of senior civil servants had been appointed before the fall of Mussolini.³⁴ Undeniably the composition of the Italian state would cast a long shadow over any significant efforts to question the basis of power in Italy.

Perhaps of even greater significance than the failure to purge fascists from the state apparatus were the results of the 1948 general election which saw the conservative Christian Democrats (DC) triumph over the Popular Front,³⁵ an electoral alliance between the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and their establishment of a more than four decade long hegemony over the Italian state.³⁶ A large part of the blame for the electoral victory of the DC and the failure to purge the state

³³ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 37.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Within the Popular Front itself the PCI was obviously the dominant party. Its membership and resources were vastly greater than the PSI, which at the time lacked even a policy independent of the PCI. The PSI was reduced to playing a clearly subservient role.

³⁶ One that would last until the DC collapsed in 1992 under the weight of judicial investigations which exposed systemic corruption at the upper echelons of the party.

institutions of fascists must be laid upon the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), which after the war was by far the most powerful left-wing group in the country and exerted a powerful influence upon Italian society. In what in their mind was in the best interests of national unity, the leadership of the PCI actively sought to demobilize the widespread left-wing militancy that existed in the country after 1945. Tens of thousands of Italians had been members of the resistance. As many as 12,000 people had taken a direct part in partisan warfare in the north alone.³⁷ Many Italians looked towards the PCI for leadership, as it had played a pivotal role in the Italian Resistance. “The heroism of the anti-fascist resistance, dominated by Communist insurgents who liberated town after town ahead of Allied forces, set the tone for the new Italian Republic.”³⁸ In such an atmosphere the PCI had an immense amount of prestige, and it was expected that it would use its influence to push for radical change following the conclusion of the war.

The PCI rightly rejected the suggestion of some of its more fervent supporters that it launch an armed insurrection in order to lay the basis for the establishment of a Communist state. With tens of thousands of Allied troops in the country and Italy firmly placed within the Western sphere at the Yalta Conference, ruling out any Soviet intervention, such an adventurous path would have been suicidal. In this sense, then, the PCI was not an extremist party. Instead, it had the opposite affliction, its defeat and repression after the fascist victory in 1922 made it far too cautious; rather than potential, it saw danger everywhere. Traumatized by the experience of 1922, the PCI endeavored to the utmost to ensure that it was seen as an inoffensive and responsible political party:

³⁷ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 36.

³⁸ Charles Killinger, *The History of Italy* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 10

“...the mental habitus and traditions of PCI leaders prompted them to see above all the dangers, rather than the opportunities and to assess the situation very pessimistically. The fear of a repetition of the trauma of 1922 dominated their thought. The DC, they reasoned, at least kept large masses of potential supporters of a fascist or authoritarian solution within the fold of democracy.”³⁹ In the post-war era the PCI’s overriding strategy, formulated by Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the PCI since Gramsci’s imprisonment in 1927 (and until his death in 1964), was one of inter-party agreements and electoralism. Only by pursuing such a path could the PCI ensure its continued existence in what it deemed to be harsh circumstances.

Yet, by orientating itself towards the DC and away from its own supporters the PCI severely undermined its strength.

The primacy accorded by Togliatti to inter-party agreements...made caution and electoralism the hallmarks of communist action. Restraint had to be constantly exercised to reassure the Christian Democrats of communist intentions; numeral gains at election were seen as the principal instrument of shifting the balance of power in Parliament and thus in the country. As a result, the most powerful weapons in the hands of the left, working-class militancy, was virtually discarded in the major political battles of the time.⁴⁰

What the PCI failed to realize, was that the DC and the interests it represented,⁴¹ were always going to oppose anything labeled communist, despite the PCI’s utmost attempts to

³⁹ Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981), 204.

⁴⁰ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 83.

⁴¹ The Christian Democrats can best be defined as a brokerage party. It contained a large number of competing groups including powerful industrial and financial capital interests, rural Catholic farmers, large landowners, and various elements of organized crime. It also had a very complicated relationship with the Vatican, which at times saw the party as its own personal outgrowth, although the Christian Democrats always maintained a degree of independence from the Church. The party had a strong tendency towards factionalism; various sects always existed and competed with each other for positions of influence.

dissociate itself from anything remotely radical. Furthermore, by focusing the crux of its strategy on parliamentary politics the PCI elevated to primacy a terrain which was unfavorable to any form of revolutionary politics. While the strength of a party in Parliament is surely of importance, care must be taken to ensure that it does not become the sole axis upon which the party bases itself. More than any other political party, as a communist party supposedly seeks to alter the very fabric of society, it must remain bonded to its basis of support in society in order to retain its dynamism and have a source for inspiration and motivation. This is necessary as the party attempts to represent societal expressions, which, because of their very nature are unable to be fully represented in any parliament organized around capitalist principles. Instead, the PCI adopted a strategy directly contrary to these propositions, greatly hampering the success of progressive forces in the country.

While the PCI adopted a strategy that was doomed to failure and one that should have been repudiated after the disastrous results of the 1948 election, outside factors also had a profound influence on the course of events. The United States, which had expended a large amount of resources and men liberating the country, was not about to let a resurgent communist party seize control. Establishing a pattern that would last long after the election, the United States would regard interference in Italian domestic affairs as its prerogative.⁴² In addition to overtly expressing its displeasure at the possibility of a communist government and waging a vicious propaganda campaign against the PCI, the United States also covertly provided funding to the DC and shipped weapons to the

⁴² The first memorandum of the newly formed National Security Council (NSC 1/3) called for military support for underground operations in Italy, establishing a trend of high level American involvement in Italian affairs.

country, to be used in case of a PCI victory.⁴³ “American intervention was breath-taking in its size, its ingenuity and its flagrant contempt for any principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country...George Marshall warned that all help to Italy would immediately cease in the event of a Communist victory.”⁴⁴ In desperate need of economic aid following the devastation of the war, it is perhaps this last threat that tipped the balance of power away from the PCI. Even if the PCI had adopted a different strategy, it is highly improbable that it would have triumphed in such a climate. The DC won the election with 48.5 percent of the vote; the Popular Front received 31 percent.⁴⁵

The victory of the DC and the acquiescence of the PCI in defeat would shape the course of Italian political and social life for the next two decades. For the success of the DC went beyond simply winning an election that was stacked in its favor, it represented the defeat of the upsurge of working-class militancy that had followed the end of the war. Progressive movements of all kinds would now lie dormant for the next two decades; while the DC’s electoral victory embodied the formerly intimidated capitalist class, which now pressed its advantage and went on the offensive. “The political victory had immediate pay-off, for the landlord and property owners, who, with police protection stepped up the rate of evictions, cleared squats and affirmed the rights of property...The years from 1950 to 1959 were characterized by a long term decline in working class organization in the face of employers’ attacks.”⁴⁶ Italy’s economic miracle, its

⁴³ James Miller, “Taking the Gloves off: The United States and the Italian Elections of 1948,” *Diplomatic History* 7(1) (2007):45-47.

⁴⁴ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 115.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁶ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 20.

transformation from a largely agrarian society to an industrial one in less than twenty years, would thus occur under the specter of working class defeat. The contours of Italy's industrialization would be particularly unfavorable to the disadvantaged members of society.

Prior to 1950 Italy had only a few pockets of industrialization and these were almost entirely within the historic industrial triangle of Genoa, Milan, and Turin in the far North-East of the country.⁴⁷ "Of out a total active population of 37.1 percent in 1951, 20.5 percent worked in agriculture and 8.5 percent in industry. Save the occasional outpost of Northern-owned capital, there was no modern industry....land in the South was concentrated in the great landed estates owned by a parasitic class often of absentee landlords..."⁴⁸ The situation in the South was ameliorated somewhat by the passage of a series of land reform laws in 1951 that established a system of commercial farming in the South, but the situation was still a desperate one. In that same year the combination of electricity, drinking water, and inside lavatory could be found in only 7.4 percent of Italian households, for example.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The reasons for the chronic underdevelopment of Italy's southern regions are complex, but the late unification of the country was one of the key factors. Italy only became a country in 1870. From the fall of the Roman Empire until that point it had been fractured into a number of kingdoms and city states. While the North of the country was exposed to a variety of European influences, the South, due to its geographical position, was isolated from the rest of Europe. With the beginning of industrialization on the European continent in the 18th and 19th centuries the gap between the North and the South only widened, as Italy's Northern regions absorbed the changes happening in the rest of Europe. The South was largely passed over, remaining mired in a feudal society, and developing its own culture and traditions that were distinct from those of the North.

⁴⁸ Hilary Patridge, "Labour's Challenge to Capital in Fiat: The Influence of Southern Immigrants in a Changing Industrial Culture," *Labour History Review* 61(1) (1996): 78.

⁴⁹ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 214.

Italy's industrial revolution developed out of the long economic boom that all Western countries experienced after the end of the Second World War. Within Italy, the basis for industrialization was built upon the unprecedented migration of Italians from the South to the North of the country. Between 1950 and 1967, some 17 million Italians, more than a third of the population at the time, moved from the South to the North, seeking to escape the desperate economic situation.⁵⁰ This huge influx of people provided all the cheap, unskilled labor that the expanding factories of the North would need. "...Thanks to the inexhaustible reservoir of labor power furnished by the underdeveloped South, Italy was the only country in Europe that was not forced to rely on a foreign labor force during the period of Fordist growth."⁵¹ This seemingly unending labor pool was poorly paid and heavily exploited. In 1957 when the Common European Market was formed; Italy had by far the lowest wage rates.⁵² It was this cheap labor which fueled the Italian economic miracle. Italy experienced strong, sustained growth from 1950 until 1975. The GDP grew at an average rate of 6.7 percent every year from 1950 to 1960 and at an average rate of 4.6 percent from 1960 to 1975.⁵³ This economic growth naturally had a significant impact on per-capita income. "In the twenty years from 1950 to 1970 per capita income in Italy grew more rapidly than in any other European country: from a

⁵⁰ Eric Dowson, "The Italian Background," *Radical America* 7(2) (1973):8.

⁵¹ Carlo Vercellone, "The Anomaly and Exemplariness of the Italian Welfare State," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 82.

⁵² Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser, *Italy a Difficult Democracy: A Survey of Italian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 201.

⁵³ Michael Dunford and Lidia Greco, *After the Three Italies: Wealth, Inequality and Industrial Change* (Maden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 141.

base of 100 in 1950 to 234 in 1970...”.⁵⁴ Italian society was undergoing drastic changes, becoming more urban and wealthy.

However, Italy’s industrialization also had downsides. The Italian state did little to ease the transition to a modern industrial society. The housing situation in Italy remained particularly atrocious, with chronic housing shortages. “...Workers had to find accommodation where they could. People often had to sleep six to eight in a room and shanty towns spread around large cities. When apartments could be found, rent consumed up to 40 percent of a worker’s wages.”⁵⁵ Most of the housing that was built was unlicensed, concentrated in ghettos, and far from the center of Italy’s northern cities. Many lacked access to basic utilities.

With few labor rights in the country, a legacy of fascist labor laws that were never repealed, employers had a great degree of control over workers in the burgeoning factories of the North. It was, for example, perfectly legal for an employer to make inquiries into employees’ ideological and political opinions and use these as a basis for dismissal.⁵⁶ Further, there was no special law which recognized unions as a unique collective entity. “In the absence of specific public regulation, union activity came under the jurisdiction of private law. Collective bargaining was considered to be an expression of self-regulation of the interests of private individuals and thus regulated by the civil

⁵⁴ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 216.

⁵⁵ Eric Dowson, “The Italian Background,” *Radical America* 7(2) (1973):10.

⁵⁶ Roberto Romei and Silvana Sciarra, “The Protection of Employees’ Privacy: A Survey of Italian Legislation And Case Law,” *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 17(3) (1995): 6.

code.”⁵⁷ This lack of a special status in law denied Italian unions many of the capabilities that were commonplace in the rest of Europe and North America. The situation at FIAT, Italy’s national car manufacturer based in Turin, and its largest industrial corporation, as usual illustrated the tone for industrial relations in the entire country.

In 1921 FIAT was occupied and a red flag rose over its buildings, marking the beginnings of an insurrectionary period in Italian society. In the late 1960s a massive strike at FIAT would herald the start of Italy’s Hot Autumn. FIAT has historically served as a bellwether to judge the state of Italian labor relations. “FIAT was not just another firm, and Turin was more than an industrial town. The city was the heart of Italian capitalism...The firm was also an important factor in national politics and so received an unusual amount of attention for the press and the political class.”⁵⁸ In the 1950s the atmosphere at FIAT was one of repression. Internal security forces were created to root out and fire any potential militants. Foremen were provided with significant powers to discipline workers. “Management gave wide discretionary powers to foremen in sharing out of overtime and bonuses, in some cases providing special funds for these purposes. Division and competition between the workforce were further encouraged thorough an increasingly complex grading hierarchy, in which promotion was again dependent on the foreman’s assessment.”⁵⁹ Work in the factories of the industrial triangle was arranged around Taylorist methods and designed to give the employer as much power over the production process as possible. While a number of strikes did occur throughout the

⁵⁷ Bruno Caruso and Loredana Zappalà, “The evolving structure of Collective Bargaining in Europe 1990-2004 National Report: Italy,” *European Commission Report 0219-SI2.359910* (2003):7.

⁵⁸ Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,, 1989), 267.

⁵⁹ Hilary Patridge, “Labour’s Challenge to Capital in Fiat: The Influence of Southern Immigrants in a Changing Industrial Culture,” *Labour History Review* 61(1) (1996):74.

1950s, they were disconnected from one another and failed to win any significant gains. After the strike had ended the instigators were usually fired, while those who had scabbed and remained at work during the strike were rewarded with pay raises.

The few strikes that did break out were quickly damped by the national union apparatus. At the time in Italy, there were three major union confederations, each linked to one of the main political parties. The Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) was run by the Communist Party, the Italian Labour Union (UIL) by the Socialist Party, and the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions (CISL) by the Christian Democrats. Together all three unions only managed to organize about 30 percent of the industrial labor force by 1968.⁶⁰ While the CISL was linked to the ruling party of Italy, and in theory had the most influence nationally, the CGIL was by far the largest union confederation, always having at least double the membership size of the CISL,⁶¹ the second largest union confederation, the UIL, played a marginal role. All three parties agreed on the general course that industrialization was taking in Italy, regardless of the severe hardships that a large portion of the Italian population was experiencing. The implicit pact that existed between the three major national parties, and the three major trade union confederations along with them, effectively sealed off any possibility that the course of Italy's industrialization could be significantly altered.

Characteristically, the PCI misinterpreted the economic miracle that was the industrialization of Italy. It adopted a fatalist approach, assuming that if it simply waited capitalism in Italy would destroy itself and the PCI could then refashion society from the

⁶⁰ Peter Weitz, "Labor and politics in a divided movement: The Italian case," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 28(2) (1975):228.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

pieces. As Grant Amyot has argued, in the minds of the PCI leadership, “The expectation that war would soon break out, or that, at any rate, the capitalist world was heading towards an economic crisis was widespread. In this perspective factory struggles could only attempt to defend existing living standards and employment levels against the consequences of the crisis. The first signs of the economic miracle were therefore seriously misinterpreted by the Communists. Proposals to condition this capitalist development and influence its course were not pursued by the Party.”⁶² From the perspective of the PCI, then, the best that could be hoped for would be a slight increase in wages, but nothing so substantial that it threatened profit ratios and hence the rapid pace of industrialization. Completely absent from the PCI’s agenda was the issue of housing or any effort to assist with the cultural dislocation felt by southerners who had immigrated to the North.

While all the major political forces in the country supported Italy’s industrialization they did not actually comprehend what was occurring. There was very little planning or organization done by government to guide the course of Italian industrialization. Instead it occurred in a haphazard fashion, with strong pulls of attraction being exerted by the few regions in the country that had some level of industrialization prior to this period. Thus the industrialization of Italy was highly concentrated. In the ten year period from 1951 to 1961, the four largest urban districts in Italy Milan, Rome, Turin, and Naples-- had a population increase of two million, two thirds of the total national increase in population.⁶³ Naples formed one of the few

⁶² Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981):118-119.

⁶³ Eric Dowson, “The Italian Background,” *Radical America* 7(2) (1973):9.

exceptions to the widespread immigration to the North. Historically it has been the South's only major urban center, and so, accordingly, it also experienced a large population influx. However it was an isolated and unique case in the South, the vast majority of the economic processes unleashed by Italy's industrialization and the center of gravity in the country remained in the North.

While Italy was changing at the economic, cultural, and social levels as a result of its industrialization, its political institutions remained stagnant. "Italy seemed to have reached an impasse, a confrontation between irreconcilables: a liberal country modernizing at an exponential rate, and those traditions and forces of order who were still struggling to come to terms with democracy."⁶⁴ The political framework of Italian society had been set by the watershed 1948 election. The election had served as a pivotal moment, because it would determine the context within which Italian politics would be conducted over the course of more than four decades. The DC would always be Italy's governing party relying, depending upon the conditions, on minor parties on either its left or right for a political majority. Though it consistently polled in second place, the PCI was destined to be perpetually excluded from power. A communist party, even one that never ceased to profess its own moderation, gaining legitimacy by becoming part of the governing coalition, or even coming to power democratically in a Western, NATO member-state, was simply unacceptable within the geopolitical order of the Cold War.

In the two decades following the 1948 election, at both the political and the economic level, the path that Italy seemed to be set on was a narrow one, with a general overtone of moderately conservative government and, to a great extent, *laissez faire*

⁶⁴ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 40.

industrialization. However a series of events which begin in the early 1960s and culminated in Italy's "Hot Autumn" of 1969 made it quite clear that the general economic and political consensus that had been forged in 1948 was coming apart at the seams. The political framework which had been established in Italy post-World War Two had been designed when Italy was a primarily rural, agrarian, and deeply conservative society. Yet that country was quickly being left behind as Italy became an urban, industrial, and liberal society. Italy's political institutions, as well as the major political parties and their affiliated unions, had to just as rapidly reorient themselves to these changed circumstances, or they would be swept aside by the seismic shifts occurring in Italian society.

With the divide growing in Italian society between the old Italy and the new Italy that was emerging it was perhaps inevitable that confrontations would occur over the course of Italy's future. Indeed, accelerated change to the level of production tends to lead to social conflict, as recognized by Marx. "When the social conditions corresponding to a specific stage of production are only just arising, or when they are already dying out, there are, naturally, disturbances in production, although to different degrees and with different effects."⁶⁵ Italy's condensed period of industrialization altered social life at such a rapid pace that those who viewed Italy through the mold of 1948 found the new Italy that made its dramatic entrance in 1969 to be completely incomprehensible. Institutions at all levels had become ossified into a mode of existence that no longer existed; this can properly be called an organic crisis. "In 1968-9 Italy experienced an organic crisis, in which there was a massive withdrawal of support for the structures of representation, and

⁶⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 88.

an abrupt increase in political demands.”⁶⁶ With the elaboration of the roots of this organic crisis as existing within Italy’s industrialization complete it is now time to turn to the initial expressions of the organic crisis.

The Emergence of the Italian Organic Crisis: The Early Rising Students

I will argue that the initial period of organic crisis in Italy began in 1967 and ended in 1970. Within this period there are five elements that I would like to examine. The first, and the one that I will focus the most attention upon in the remaining portion of this chapter, is the wave of student and worker strikes, the links that formed between them, and how for a time both moved beyond their respective institutions and operated outside of them, forcing drastic changes in the institutional nature of Italian society in order for their control over these social forces to be reasserted. The second element I will consider is the nature of the labor processes that were present in this period and how they represented Italy’s transition beyond the Fordist production process that was common to traditional industrial societies and the emergence of what is now termed the post-Fordist mode of production. My third point will examine the connection between the changes in production and the concrete manifestation of an organic crisis in the worker-student strike waves had in altering subjectivity within Italy. My fourth point will be a utilization of what is referred to as either autonomist or operasimo (workerist) Marxism as a theoretical framework to examine and explain the changes in production and subjectivity which occurred in this period. I will also offer some analysis of the origins of this strain of Marxism. My final point, and the one on which I will conclude this chapter will be the response of the state to these events, its formulation of a strategy of tension. I will only

⁶⁶ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 9.

consider the initial event in the strategy of tension in this chapter, as it will be one of the central points of analysis in the next chapter.

Italy's long period of instability began with student unrest. The industrialization of the country had provided the basis, for the first time, for a mass post-secondary education system in the country. Italy passed a comprehensive education law in 1962 which transformed the Italian education system, which until that time had been the privilege of a select elite. The law significantly altered admissions standards, created more possible pathways towards obtaining admission to university. As late as 1960, 49 percent of children in Italy left school by the age of thirteen.⁶⁷ The 1962 educational law sought to place the Italian educational system upon the same footing as other Western countries. The next few years saw dramatic changes in both the number of students and their composition. The number of university students nearly doubled in five years. In 1960 total enrollment in Italian universities numbered 268,181, by 1965 it had risen to 404,938, with the proportion of students from working class backgrounds increasing from 14 to 21 percent.⁶⁸ However, while the population of Italian universities may have increased the resources allocated to them and the manner in which they operated were completely inadequate to producing the educated populace required for the further extension and entrenchment of advanced capitalist production processes.

While a larger intellectual class was beginning to be created in Italy as a result of admission reforms, the Italian university system suffered from a number of problems, which severely constrained the development of this educated class. First, a large number of Italian university students failed to complete their degree. In 1960, before the mass

⁶⁷ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

influx of students, only 14 percent of students dropped out, by 1974 this figure had risen to 28 percent.⁶⁹ Those who did complete a degree took an average of 7.5 years to obtain a four year degree.⁷⁰ The rise in dropouts and the prolonged amount of time it was taking to complete degrees can be attributed to a lack of funding provided to Italian universities. An increase in university funding would have allowed for the construction of more facilities and the hiring of more professors to deal with this influx and could have created scholarships to assist the increasing amount of students from working class backgrounds who lacked the financial means to complete university unassisted. Instead expenditure on education actually diminished as enrollment increased, from a total of 583,500 lire in 1960 to 540,700 lire in 1973.⁷¹

The students that did succeed in actually completing their education were subjected to outdated and subpar teaching methods during the course of their studies. "Italian cultural tradition saw the university as being devoted more to social class organization (reproduction of elites) and to the organization of the state (training of the civil service) than to economic development and the related need for professional skills...the university was kept strictly separated from society in order to avoid undue influence of the latter over its independence."⁷² The Italian university system was designed to be a cloistered system for the select few. While the process of entering the university had been changed, making it more equitable, little else had been changed. Besides the alteration of admissions policies

⁶⁹ Corrado de Francesco "The Growth and Crisis of Italian Higher Education during the 1960s and 1970s," *Higher Education*, 7(2) (1978):196.

⁷⁰ Roberto Moscati, "Italian university professors in transition," *Higher Education* 41(1) (1978):107.

⁷¹ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 55.

⁷² Roberto Moscati, "Italian university professors in transition," *Higher Education* 41(1) (1978):112.

Italian universities remained largely the same. It is unsurprising then that a large portion of students found themselves unemployed upon the completion of their studies, because the education they were receiving was not directly relevant to contemporary circumstances in Italy. In a survey conducted of nine Western industrialized states, (Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Sweden, Italy, France, Germany, and Japan) from 1960 to 1979 Italy had the highest differential between youth, defined as 25 and under, and adult employment. By 1970 youth unemployment rates were eight times that of adults, by 1978 it was more than twelve times.⁷³

Italy's youth were being educated in poor conditions and with learning material that was no longer meaningful, taking nearly double the time they should have to complete their studies, and finding themselves unemployed when and if they did somehow manage to receive their degrees. By the late 1960s the burgeoning student population had found the situation to be intolerable. The first student strike and occupation of a university occurred in the autumn of 1967 at the University of Trento, which was the only university in the country at the time to have a faculty of social science. The spark that ignited student unrest was a proposal by Luigi Gui, the education minister, to reintroduce restrictive admissions policies for Italian universities. The student unrest quickly spread until it involved thousands of high school and university students on numerous campuses. "In the winter of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968 student agitation in the universities grew to national proportions...The common denominator of

⁷³ Constance Sorrentino, "Youth Unemployment: An International Perspective," *Monthly Labor Review* 104(7) (1981):7.

the movement was opposition to the Gui bill under discussion in parliament...’’⁷⁴ Rather than increasing funding to universities and reforming the curriculum, the DC government attempted to return Italy’s universities to the state they had existed in prior to the admissions reforms of 1961. These moves only served to anger and radicalize current university students, as well as potential students making their way through high school.

Similar to the strong affiliations between unions and political parties, the student organizations that did exist on university campuses were often part of the youth wing of a political party. As with the unions, the largest youth wing in the country, the FGCI was part of the Communist Party. However, as student mobilizations began to gain momentum and spread across the country the official youth sections of the parties became totally ineffectual. Obviously, the students striking and occupying campuses were of left-wing persuasion, so the youth wings of the DC, which had proposed the hated education reforms in the first place, and the PSI, which had officially backed the DC government since 1963 and frequently held a number of cabinet positions, were going to be ignored, but students also broke en masse from the PCI. “Some of the students’ strongest disdain was reserved for the traditional forces of the left. The Communist Party was dismissed for the most part as an integrated opposition, incapable of fighting the system. The PCI’s youth movement, the FGCI, made little headway amongst the students and its representatives were often treated with derision in student assemblies.”⁷⁵ The PCI’s policy of stressing stability and democracy had come back to haunt it. For the first generation to be brought up after 1948, a return to fascism, which

⁷⁴ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 66.

⁷⁵ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 305.

the PCI feared above all else, was not on the agenda. Instead, the PCI's stances seemed to be conservative and oriented towards supporting the existing order of things, when it should have been seeking to push society to its limits by creating points of tension that could be used to effect meaningful change.

The wave of student strikes that began in 1967 and continued to grow as 1968 wore on represent the initial expression of the organic crisis in Italy. Students were the first to break with all the traditional institutions of Italian society, the importance of which was quickly realized at the time. "In the university struggles of recent months, we have seen the first example of a mass struggle without party control. The political significance of this experience must be exploited to the fullest; it must become a point of reference for a whole series of new initiatives and ideas."⁷⁶ By breaking free of the dominant framework of society and its associated dogma, students found themselves in a terrain that allowed for a great degree of experimentation, both in political strategy and tactics, but also in cultural pursuits. However, caution had to be taken to ensure that students did not become entirely utopian and isolated, engaging in endeavors that while interesting and unique had little or no bearing or impact on the large segments of society that were not students. To ensure the experimental space that students had begun to create could be maintained and expanded they had to connect their struggles to others in society. While in some ways standing outside of society, through dissolving their connection to a number of institutions in society, the student struggle also at the same time had remain a part of that very society in order to develop a coherent and effective analysis which could

⁷⁶ Alberto Rosa, "A Separate Branch of the Working Class," *International Socialist Journal* 5(26) (1968):198.

both explain their role within society and allow them to act in a manner that would further radical change.

The students succeeded in doing this in large part because of how they defined themselves. In contrast to the traditional left in the country which defined them as privileged petit bourgeois whiners students explicitly saw themselves as members of the working class; occupying a different position than factory workers perhaps, but still sharing common interests with them. "Defining students as workers had two strategic functions: first opposing the traditional left wing opinion that they were nothing but petit bourgeois dilettantes; and second, affirming they were a social subject in their own right, using a rationale that would be acceptable within the subculture of the left."⁷⁷ In contrast then to the student protests in France in May 1968 students in Italy avoided falling into the domain of pure utopianism. Italian students succeeding in occupying for a time a point between the pure pragmatism of the PCI, which in large part denied that any radical change was possible, and the overwhelming utopianism that some students movements in other countries fell victim to.

A large measure of this strategic awareness can be attributed to the existence of strong working class traditions in Italy, organizations oriented towards the working class, flawed as they may be, having deep roots in Italian society.

In other countries, the students movement has grown out of a total political vacuum, a total lack of real opposition and this is sufficient to explain the often utopistic nature of their protest and their widespread inability to come down from the ideological to the political level. In Italy the student movement has grown out of certain political struggle and

⁷⁷ Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 149.

debate, which the working class parties have long nurtured and guided with their initiatives.⁷⁸

Even though the student movement and the workers' strikes were created largely in opposition to the working class organizations of the period, these organizations nevertheless played an important role in creating a base level of consciousness and providing a crucial level of knowledge that proved to be useful in informing and situating these movements. In Italy the vibrant new left that was emerging had the luxury of being able to counter-pose itself to a long tradition of "old" leftist action, one of the many ways in which the country and its experience in the 1960s and 1970s was unique when compared to other Western states. In other countries no such historical memory existed. Hence, in some ways, Italian social movements held a number of advantages when compared to similar social movements in other Western countries during the same period.

In its first month the focus of the student movement was clearly on the university. Student assemblies were organized on the occupied campuses. The future course of action was debated and a variety of activities were organized on campuses. A great deal of effort was also placed upon getting more students to go on strike and increasing the total number of universities occupied. However, perhaps due to the strong working class culture in the country, students did not see themselves as the motor force which would create and drive forward any potential revolution. While they saw themselves as members of the working class, there was a realization that students on their own did not possess the power to drastically alter society, what was required was the participation of a larger strata of society, one that in large part existed outside of the university campus.

⁷⁸ Alberto Rosa, "A Separate Branch of the Working Class," *International Socialist Journal* 5(26) (1968):192.

Deepening Crisis: Workers' Strikes and the Hot Autumn of 1969

Thus as student unrest continued and approached its first full year its orientation began to shift towards the factories of the industrial triangle and forming connections with the workers within them. "From the summer of 1968 onwards the student movement underwent a profound transformation. As students abandoned the universities and began picketing outside the factory gates, the movement lost its libertarian and spontaneous character. The accent was now on organization and on the need to lay the bases for a new revolutionary party which could wrest workers' loyalties away from the PCI."⁷⁹ These workers formed the core of the PCI's support. Causing a significant number of them to abandon the PCI and join the burgeoning social movements in the country would ensure that the present crisis in Italy would be extended and enriched through the involvement of more expansive parts of society. Although the students did not experience quick success in this endeavor their continued interaction with workers would establish a basis of trust and lay the groundwork for the massive series of strikes in these factories within a year's time in the autumn of 1969.

In Italy, as in many other countries across the world, 1968 would be a pivotal year. Yet, in many countries 1968 would be bittersweet, it would mark a brief climax for social struggles in many countries and the period following it would be characterized by a gradual downturn in terms of mobilization. For Italy, however, 1968 would be only the beginning of a protracted period of social upheaval. Instead of the social movements being subsumed and disaggregated within the institutional framework of civil society in the following years as they were nearly everywhere else, 1968 in Italy, with the

⁷⁹ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 312.

reorientation of students towards the factories and the early rumblings of discontent within these factories would signal the start of the abandonment of these institutions and the efforts to forge new ones. “In Italy, especially, the wave of mass struggles from 1968 onward marked in many respects, a sharp break with the laborist and state socialist traditions of the established working-class movement and at the same time gave new life to the communist political model in the body of the new movements.”⁸⁰ After 1968 a division was entrenched within Italian society. This division was between the traditional left represented by the PCI, which acted in collaboration with the Italian state and in alliance with the dominant civil society institutions. Together they sought to contain and end the crisis. In conflict with them were the new social subjects that constituted the organic crisis in the country. These new social subjects were responsible for inception of the organic crisis, yet they were also shaped by the response of the state and other institution actors to the crisis. The students were the first element of society to react, followed by the workers in the autumn of 1969. I will now turn to an examination of the massive wave of factory workers’ strikes and how these strikes and their connections with the student struggle and other social movements dramatically represented the possibility for social conflicts at a multiplicity of points occurring simultaneously. While individual struggle or antagonism may be rooted in different conditions, in the case of Italy, they succeeded in interrelating to one another. I will argue that the potential for these forms of struggle was created due to the socialization of capitalist processes throughout society, marking the real subsumption of society under capitalist production.

⁸⁰ Lucio Castellano et al., “Do you Remember Revolution?,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 226.

The 1950s, it will be recalled, represented for workers' movements, disorientation and defeat. The electoral victory of the DC and its firm control over the state apparatus along with the acquiescence of all major left-wing groups served to depress working class militancy. The first signs that the atmosphere might be changing, and a forerunner to events six years later, was a successful strike at FIAT in 1962, that youth began to flood Italy's universities due to the admission reforms. In 1962 workers at FIAT had disregarded the advice of trade union officials, left the factory, erected barricades in the streets of Turin, and clashed violently with police, in what became a two day riot in Turin's central Piazza Statuo that included workers as well as students. Not all of FIAT's workers rioted, indeed the majority of workers that did were younger workers, who had been brought up during Italy's industrialization, demonstrating the cracks that were beginning to form in the facade of its supposedly harmonious industrialization and signaling that the next generation of workers perhaps would not be as enthralled with the economic miracle in Italy as the preceding generation was.

After 1963, even though the GDP in Italy continued to rise at an accelerated pace the living conditions for workers deteriorated. The demand for workers in the factories of the industrial triangle was finally reaching its limit. A surplus of labor was gradually being created in the North. As a result, after 1963, real wages in the country began to decline and the rate of exploitation of workers began to increase as employers sought to gain greater profit ratios, assuming that the existence of a reserve army of labor in the region would provide them with the leeway to do so. "The period 1964-68 witnessed an increase in the exploitation of workers, with high rates of productivity growth, despite low investment. But although firms attempted to activate the reserve army mechanism the

working class resisted and maintained its overall cohesion, reinforcing its antagonistic attitudes and preparing a counter-attack.”⁸¹ The situation was ameliorated somewhat by the national union confederations. In Italy throughout the 1950s a number of arrangements had been reached by unions and different sections of industry in the country allowing for coordinated negotiations which provided some measure of support to the minority of workers that were unionized. However, at best, these sectorial agreements were only able to reduce the rate at which the real wage declined, not reverse the trend. Additionally, they failed to address the worsening working conditions inside the factories and ignored the situation of workers outside of the factory, where inadequate and poorly constructed housing remained a persistent problem.

Although the union confederations and employers had succeeded in large part in segmenting and containing workers' struggles within the factories prior to 1969, the situation in that year was radically different. Not only had battles raged on university campuses across the country for nearly two years, with students in the last year making real efforts to form connections with workers, sixty-nine labor contracts, covering nearly every sector of Italian industry, were due to be renewed in the fall of that year. Workers in the North were upset by declining wages and poor living conditions. Many of the workers were from the South and resented being forced to immigrate in order to find work. Most workers saw the unions as ineffectual, as they had failed to improve their living conditions. Workers who were unionized were perhaps better off however than the majority of the Italian workforce, which lacked the benefit of union representation.

⁸¹ Sergio Bruno, “The industrial reserve army, segmentation and the Italian labor market,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 3(2) (1979):145.

Infuriated by the perception that the union confederations would once again fail to win any substantial improvements from their negotiations, both workers who were members of unions, and those who were not began to picket, strike, and occupy the factories where they worked. "The explosion, when it came, left the main political and industrial organization of the working class in the role of bewildered onlookers of events they were entirely inadequate to control."⁸² The organic crisis in the country had spread to its industrial heartland and seemed to consume the institutional framework of norms and regulations that had been painfully established over the last decade to regulate and control the Italian labor market. Workers in the factories no longer viewed the unions, which were supposedly their organizations, as representative of them or their interests and regarded them as incapable of comprehending them and their circumstances.

While many organizations are not actually representative of a group's or a class's interests, the illusion that they are, and that they play a valuable and important role by representing these interests, is crucial to the continued existence of the institution. If those that are supposedly represented by an institution come to believe that, in fact, the institution does not represent its interests, or that it actually undermines them, and channels the possibility that exists in the represented in an unproductive and harmful manner that counteracts any potential struggles, then a situation is created where a break from these institutions becomes possible. It is the ideology of a society which generally informs and situates the action of individuals towards the institutions in society. However, ideology "...is necessarily false; its social foundation is not to give agents a true knowledge of the social structure but simply to insert them as it were into their

⁸² Hilary Patridge, "Labour's Challenge to Capital in Fiat: The Influence of Southern Immigrants in a Changing Industrial Culture," *Labour History Review* 61(1) (1996): 89.

practical activities supporting this structure. Precisely because it is determined by its structure, at the level of experience the social whole remains opaque.”⁸³ Yet when the material circumstances of a society directly contradict the current ideology, (in this instance one of growing prosperity and harmony brought about by industrialization) and the institutions which are empowered by and perpetrate this ideology lack the institutional depth to reorient themselves and modify the ideological architecture of society as necessary then the ideology of a society is liable to become static and inflexible. While large segments of a society may make an ideological break, believing that the dominant mode of thinking is no longer relevant, a crisis is only reached when an ideological break spurs a material break. On its own an ideological break is not threatening to the established order, it simply means that people no longer believe in the precepts by which society is governed. It is quite possible for a majority of society to no longer be enthralled to a particular method of thought and rather than taking action, instead become disillusioned and remain inert. Only when an ideological break leads to a material break, that is when people actually start taking actions that disrupt the normal functioning of society, by taking part in sustained mass protests for example, that the foundation is laid for the creation of an organic crisis.

In Italy an ideological break did translate into a material break as well, perhaps ironically in large part due to the instilling of a working class consciousness into society by the very same unions and political parties that were now being disregarded. Italy’s Hot Autumn of 1969 was a pivotal moment in the country, the effect of which on the next ten years of the country could not be overstated. At its height it involved more than five and a

⁸³ Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1973), 207.

half million workers, comprising more than 25 percent of Italy's total workforce were on strike, by its end more than 13,000 people had been arrested and 35,000 suspended from work.⁸⁴ Workers were moving far ahead of the labor unions, which were forced to follow them in order to maintain at least some semblance of credibility. A report from workers in Milan in 1971, after the explosion of 1969 had largely subsided, illustrates the fraught relationship between workers and union officials and succinctly summarizes the role of union officials. "The problem for the union is clearly not that of giving a militant outlet to the struggle, but rather that of holding it back so that it doesn't explode and make a mess."⁸⁵ Italian unions were fully integrated into the institutional framework of society, their interests lay in perpetuating it, not assisting workers in overcoming it.

Italy's unions utilized a cautious language, speaking of the necessity of avoiding extremist action and dangerous elements that would seek to push labor conflicts into adventurous territory. One group which unions saw as particularly threatening the sanctity of industrial labor was students. "As many student activists were then discovering their efforts to support industrial struggles and in particular to promote a rank and file control over them, met not only with frequent interest on the part of workers, but also hostility from union officials jealously protective of their turf."⁸⁶ Union officials attempted to isolate workers from students and other parts of society that were not directly associated with the struggles in the factories in order to contain the conflagration that was spreading across the country. Despite the limited ability for interaction that

⁸⁴ George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Edinburg: AK Press, 2006), 18.

⁸⁵ Autonomous Assembly of Alfa Romeo, "Against the State as Boss," *Radical America* 7(2) (1973):.63-64.

⁸⁶ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 98.

unions ascribed to workers, they were, in the large apart, interested in engaging with students. A number of student-worker assemblies were formed and conducted mass meetings inside the factories. An outgrowth of these assemblies was the creation of a number of United Base Committees (CUB). The CUBs were formed to organize rank and file workers and bypass the union hierarchy with the first being established at Pirelli, Italy's largest rubber manufacturer in June 1969.⁸⁷ The CUBs posed an explicit threat to the official unions as they represented the existence of a parallel structure that was organizing and directing workers and was inherently antagonistic to the union confederations as it subverted their control over the factory workforce.

The response of the state and the unions to the massive mobilization of workers and students along with the creation of their own institutions that clashed with the official institutions, which had been supposedly created to represent their interests, was twofold. First, significant concessions were made. For students the proposed restricted admissions standards were abandoned. Workers across Italy's industrial sectors received massive across the board wage increases averaging 23.4 percent in 1969-1970 and 16.6 percent in 1971.⁸⁸ Second, in the midst of these concessions the state provided mechanisms that eased the re-absorption of the workers into the now recognized and formally sanctioned union institutions. The centerpiece of this project was the passage in 1970 of a comprehensive labor reform law, the Workers Statute, which to this day still forms the core of Italian labor law. The Workers Statute forbids the use of private police in the workplace, personal searches, the abuse of disciplinary power, investigations into

⁸⁷ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 314.

⁸⁸ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 20.

employees' personal opinions and checks on their private life and discriminatory behavior on the grounds of union membership or activity. The Workers Statute also sought to ensure that union control was reasserted over the factories of the industrial triangle. The Statute "... was intended to promote the presence of trade unions at company level and to counter the proliferation of small groups which were threatening to evade the control of the major trade union organizations."⁸⁹ These small groups being the CUBs that were undermining union control. To assist unions, they were granted a number of privileges that were already commonplace in many other Western industrialized countries. These included the right for unions to convene meetings and conduct secret membership ballots and the availability of a space to display union notices.

Unions also took proactive steps to co-opt the newly formed independent organizations. Prior to the upheaval of the Hot Autumn the extent of union mobilization at the factory level were shop committees which had a small restricted membership, that in many cases was solely comprised of union officials or those appointed directly by these officials and failed to adequately represent the composition of the factory. In response to the events of Hot Autumn the union confederations moved to establish Factory Councils, which would extend and entrench their control of workers at the factory level, but also represented a progressive step as they would be more representative and responsive to worker concerns. "Workers in each section of a factory elected a delegate to the Factory Council... mobilization promoted the Factory Council as a new form of local worker power-in a sharp contrast to the 1950s, when union activity

⁸⁹ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, "Italy: Statuto Dei Lavoratori (Workers Statute)," <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/ITALY/WORKERSSTATUTE-IT.htm>.

and collective bargaining were highly centralized and none of the three national labor confederations were organized at the factory level.”⁹⁰ The Factory Councils in large part absorbed the CUBs and workers were reasserted into a newly structured organizational framework, with the addition of many important new benefits. Yet this was not the end of the organic crisis in Italy as this reformulation created another set of contradictions within Italian society that would lead to continual instability and confrontation between social forces and competing organizational forms for the next decade, this however will be examined in the next chapter.

Tracing the Origins of Italian Autonomist Marxism

For now, using the overview provided above as a basis, I wish to consider a number of tendencies that were unleashed by the Hot Autumn of 1969. My rationale for choosing to focus upon these specific elements is that while they existed prior to the events of 1969, it was during this year that they became fixtures of Italian political and economic life and would remain so for the next decade. While I will fully follow the development of each of these elements in the next chapter, here I will demonstrate how each was affected by what occurred during the course of that pivotal year, laying the foundation for my analysis in the next chapter. First, the events of 1969 demonstrated the relevance of what had until this point been a marginal strain of Marxist analysis that would remain a fixture of the Italian scene for the next decade, autonomist or operasimo Marxism. The Autonomists were a fractious group of Italian intellectuals that organized themselves around a complicated and often times confusing web of inter-related journals. “The truth is that autonomia has never been an organization, but rather an often

⁹⁰ Michael Reich and Rose Goldman, “Italian Occupational Health: Concepts, Conflicts, Implications,” *American Journal of Public Health* 74(9) (1984): 1032.

fluctuating ensemble of organizations. At the organizational level, it was non-existent. Autonomia was a movement.”⁹¹ Although most stood outside and to the left of the PCI a few prominent members such as Mario Tronti, were card-carrying members of the PCI, all be it dissident voices within the party. In 1961 a number of intellectuals, most notably Antonio Negri, Mario Tronti, Fabio Panzieri, and Romano Alquati condensed around what was to be the first Autonomist journal, Quaderni Rossi (Red Notebooks). The journal itself was only published for three years, until 1964 before its leading intellectuals split into a second generation of competing Autonomist journals, Classe e Operaia (Working Class) and Class e Partito (Class and Party), with a third generation of journals being spawned in quick succession following another series of splits.

My concern here is not to be drawn into tracing the origin and trajectory of every fraction within this abstract domain of thought and action. Rather, it is to demonstrate that from its very inception Autonomist Marxism was a very disaggregated field of thought that lacked any central directing force. This was true in both its initial stage, throughout nearly the entire 1960s, when Autonomist thought gestated in a number of academic journals, and its second period, from the student struggles and Hot Autumn to the end of the 1970s. The second period was the era of organized Autonomy or Autonomia, when groups of Autonomist intellectuals and elements from strata of society which were marginalized by the official PCI led left proliferated and engaged in new forms of political action and organization. My focus in this section is on the earlier period and drawing out some common tendencies that existed across the spectrum of the Autonomist movement and indicating how the relevance of these formulations was

⁹¹ Antonio Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects 1967-1983* (London: Red Notes, 1988), 246.

demonstrated by the events of Hot Autumn, propelling them to prominence within the Italian radical left.

Those who created and contributed to the Autonomist sphere of thought did so because they viewed the leftist and communist theory that was prevalent at the time as failing to comprehend the transformations that were occurring within the capitalist mode of production and the repercussions this would have upon the nature of the working class, subjectivity, and the institutional framework of society. “New labor processes and new workers foreign to the traditions of the labor movement did not spell the end of working class struggle...To make sense of these problems, and to develop a coherent political strategy adequate to the changing face of Italian capitalism: this was the unifying thread binding the disparate forces which Panzieri brought together in the first issue of *Quaderni Rossi*.”⁹² Further, the Autonomists felt that a fundamental error had been made by mainstream Marxist theory which had posited the relationship between the production process and the worker as one in which the production process was clearly predominant and shaped the subjectivity of the worker. Autonomists argued that in reality this relationship should be inverted. “We have worked with a concept the puts capitalist development first and workers second. This is a mistake...At the level of socially developed capital capitalist development becomes subordinated to working class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital’s own reproduction must be tuned.”⁹³ Changes in the capitalist mode of

⁹²Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 35.

⁹³ Mario Tronti, “Lenin in England,” in *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis: Italian Marxist Texts of the Theory and Practice of a Class Movement*, ed. Red Notes (London: Red Notes, 1976), 1.

production are spurred by the resistance of workers to them. Capitalism is a dynamic economic and social system because it succeeds in absorbing and channeling the antagonism of the working class and utilizing it to reformulate itself. Proposing that capitalist production processes are imposed upon workers and undergo alterations due to some inherent tendency within them (perhaps the progressive expression of an infallible set of economic laws) rather than in response to the working class is to advocate a vulgar economic view. A view that effectively ensconces the economy from society and leads one to the incorrect conclusion that the economy is some sort of privileged stratum that operates according to its own self-contained logic.

In contrast, the Autonomists sought to firmly connect transformations in worker subjectivity with changes in the production process. This necessitated understanding the conditions under which workers actually labored, an area that unsurprisingly the PCI had a paucity of information on. Hence, many Autonomists conducted intensive studies and surveys of workers in the factories of the industrial triangle seeking to understand the prevalent labor conditions and how these conditions effected and responded to the current status of workers or their struggles. These projects formed an important part of the basis from which Autonomist theory would develop and earned the strain of Marxism that was being created its *operasimo*, or workerist label. Autonomist Marxism then had a fixation with understanding the contemporary class composition of Italian society. In their analysis Autonomists tended to privilege workers in the technologically advanced factories of the industrial triangle, believing that they held the key to understanding the present functioning of Italian society and its potential future path. “The workers of the large factories, at the cutting edge of social class unification display an absolute

hegemonic political and theoretical configuration within the current class composition.”⁹⁴

While the Autonomists clashed with the Marxist orthodoxy of the time and argued that only through the retooling of the present theoretical framework of Marxism could the new processes that they argued were occurring within capitalism be comprehended and new organizational forms crafted in response, in a sense they were also rather traditional as they returned to the original point of Marxist analysis, the factory, and made it the center point of their entire analysis, although as will be seen shortly, the autonomist analysis saw the relations of production present within the factory as extending outside of its boundaries to encompass and subsume the whole of society.

Besides its use of the factory as the locus from which it understood society the autonomist analysis was also characterized by a fixation upon obscure traits of Marxist thought, most notably the so called missing sixth chapter of *Capital* and the notebooks written by Marx prior to the publication of capital, the *Grundrisse*, especially its “Fragment on Machines.”⁹⁵ Autonomists sought out these particular works of Marx, reinvigorated them, and drew upon them to form a number of concepts and perspectives which radically broke from all then current interpretations of Marxism. First, as opposed to what was deemed the inherent objectivism of Marx in *Capital*, Autonomists, in particular Antonio Negri, argued that a study of the *Grundrisse* revealed a Marx concerned with the formation of subjectivity and the potential for its expression of revolutionary characteristics which prefigured the future communist society, rather than

⁹⁴ Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy* (London: Verso, 2005), 80.

⁹⁵ There is no section in the *Grundrisse* labeled “The Fragment on Machines”; this designation was arrived at by a number of Autonomist intellectuals for a series of passages which had as a general theme the role of technology in capitalist societies. It is commonly agreed that the Fragment on Machines runs from the end of Notebook VI to the beginning of Notebook VII, the page range being 690 to 712 in the version of the book that I have cited.

the objective motion of economic laws. “The Grundrisse represents the summit of Marx’s revolutionary thought; with these notebooks comes the theoretical-practical break which founds revolutionary behavior and its difference from both ideology and objectivism. In the Grundrisse theoretical analysis founds revolutionary practice.”⁹⁶ How revolutionary practice emerged within a capitalist society would become a major concern for Autonomist thought. Since Lenin’s formulation of the role of the revolutionary party and its role in carrying forward and completing a communist revolution Marxist theory had tended to come to the conclusion that revolutionary behavior and its articulation through the party, along with the founding of a new post-capitalist subjectivity, would only come about after the foundations of capitalism had been destroyed and the new communist society had begun to emerge.

However, the Autonomist intellectuals in the 1960s came to a different conclusion, arguing that the development of the technological forces of production had reached a stage where the form in which surplus value was extracted had changed. The extraction of surplus value in capitalism could no longer be posited as simply forcing a group of individuals to labor past the socially necessary time to produce a product, thus creating additional products, which could then be sold on the market creating profits for those that controlled the means of production. Inherent in such a conception of capitalism was that profits, the surplus value extracted from each individual, was generated through the activity of specific individuals who labored for a specified period of time and then left the workforce to pursue other activities. The profits from their labor were then invested and assumed the form of capital. What had changed in contemporary capitalism is that

⁹⁶ Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1984), 18.

capital was no longer generated through the accumulation of individual surplus labor, rather capital extracted surplus value from society as a whole, capital had become ‘socialized.’ “There is a social surplus labor which is taken from the working class and which ends up by socializing the very existence of surplus value. But social surplus value is nothing more than the profit of social capital...It is a process which has as its material bases and at the same time as its final objective, a maximum degree of socialization of production, socialization of labor power, and therefore socialization of capital.”⁹⁷ The creation of capital through the labor process was no longer confined to a specific point and a particular period of time, society and the collective elements which comprise it were being absorbed and utilized by contemporary capitalism. Capitalism was manipulating and reconfiguring every sphere of life, marking the transition from formal to real subsumption.

The Autonomists gleaned the concept of real subsumption from the missing sixth chapter of capital⁹⁸ and through an intensive analysis and progression of Marx’s thinking about the role of technology in advanced capitalist societies in the fragment on machines in the Grundrisse. The Autonomists posited that in its earlier stages, during the period of formal subsumption, capitalism took the laws and social norms of a society as they were and attempted to incorporate them into the capitalist system of production, altering them in the process, but leaving them to a large extent with their own separate self contained essence. As capitalism took root in a society and became more pervasive however it began to generate society in its own image. Capitalism was no longer an element of

⁹⁷ Mario Tronti, “Social Capital,” *Telos* No.17 (1973):101.

⁹⁸ Nicholas Thoburn, “Autonomous Production? On Negri’s New Synthesis,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(5) (2001): 77.

society; it became society, with everything in society now part of the productive process of capitalism.

Formal subsumption was cynical and pious, producing a split between one's one existence in the marketplace, subject to the axioms of capital and one's private existence, left to whatever piety or value one wanted to cling to. In contrast to this the cynicism of the real subsumption of the productive powers of the general intellect, is a cynicism without reserve, in which every aspect of one's existence, knowledge, communicative abilities and desires becomes productive.⁹⁹

Autonomists argued that the shift towards real subsumption and the creation of a fully capitalist society could be observed by the role that technology now played in the production process and its embodiment of the general intellect of society. Real subsumption, the Autonomists would argue, only became possible once capitalism had reached a technologically advanced stage.

Once capitalism achieves a high level of technological sophistication the role of the worker in regards to the tools he used and the machines he relies upon to assist him to create objects undergoes a perceivable change. The machine is no longer a cog in the production process which the worker utilizes. Rather, as production eventually nears or achieves total automation the worker and the method and rhythm by which she works is no longer determined by her, perhaps in reference to a machine, it is instead determined by the machine. At this point it is no longer the machine, but rather the worker that is a cog in a production process that is entirely governed by a network of machinery. Marx, considering the future development of capitalism, envisioned a world

⁹⁹ Jason Read, "The age of cynicism: Deleuze and Guattari on the Production of Subjectivity in Capitalism," in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 150-151.

in which machinery, not human ingenuity, played a decisive role in the production process.

The production process has ceased to be a labor process in the sense of a process dominated by labor as its governing unity. Labor appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system, whose unity exists not in living workers, but rather in the living machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism.¹⁰⁰

The process of production at this stage of capitalism, at the technologically advanced stage of total subsumption, is one in which all relations are mediated through a mechanical or technological process. Thus knowledge in a society is no longer developed or obtained through the work of an individual or the collective and accumulated action of a number of individuals; rather it resides within the technology, the machinery which that society has developed.

The general intellect of society, the collective knowledge and skills that have been obtained by a society, no longer remain, nor are they passed on solely within the realm of interactions between individuals. Rather, the general intellect now becomes a part of capital and because of this is now a part of the production process. “The accumulation of knowledge and skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is absorbed into capital, as opposed to labor, and hence appears as an attribute of capital...”¹⁰¹ This absorption of the general intellect is what socializes capital and signifies the real subsumption of capitalism. While it may appear that because of this the struggle of the working class is obsolete this is not the case. Only particular notions of working class

¹⁰⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 643.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 694.

struggle and forms of organization which are based upon them are now rendered ineffective. A society completely absorbed and intersected by capitalist processes requires the reformulation of political practice and strategy, necessitated by the emergence of a new form of subjectivity which corresponds to the present state of capitalism.

Transformations in Subjectivity: The Transition to the Socialized Worker

A central argument of the Autonomist analysis was that 1969 represented a watershed in the transition between the form of subjectivity common to industrial societies, the mass worker, and a newly emergent subjectivity, the socialized worker, which by the end of the 1970s would replace the mass worker as the dominant form of subjectivity. The Autonomists argued that sometime in the latter years of the late 1960s, because of the composition of its working class and the unique way in which it industrialized, Italy quickly moved beyond the era of the mass industrial assembly line, commonly termed Fordism, and entered a new stage of capitalism.

The very mobility of the internal migrations in Italy played a determinant role in the constitution of an actor in the social struggle, favoring the mechanisms of socialization and fostering circulation of struggles, models of life, and political organizations... This point is essential to an understanding of the social crisis that opened by the workers' struggle of 1969, the Hot Autumn, and the ferocity with which Italian capital subsequently embarked on the strategies of decentralization that marked a radical rupture with the Fordist system of large productive concentrations of labor power.¹⁰²

What occurred in Italy was a very rapid process of industrialization, followed by a brief period of a traditional Fordist mass economy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the

¹⁰² Carlo Vercellone, "The Anomaly and Exemplariness of the Italian Welfare State," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 84.

end of the 1960s however, prefigured by the nature of Italian industrialization, Italy was already beginning to be transformed along the lines of what would later be termed post-Fordism, with decentralization of industry and mobility of the workforce, along with a high level of technological sophistication as its primary characteristics. However, these changes in the Italian economy came later and were a response to the new subjectivity that emerged during the Hot Autumn of 1969. The basis of Italy's organic crisis was precisely the inability of institutions of economy and society to respond adequately to this new subjectivity. The institutional framework of Italian society had failed to acclimate itself to Italy's industrial stage about which it had at least some sense about what was occurring, despite how poorly it managed the process, the rapid onset of a new mode of economic and social organization was entirely incomprehensible.

The dominant subjectivity of the Fordist era was the mass worker. The mass worker was formulated by and fit into a production process of mass concentrated capital, in the Italian case the huge factories of the industry triangle. The mass worker was the worker of the assembly line working in common with thousands of other workers in a method of production that proceeded by discernable stages until a product was completed. By this very organization of labor however the worker is fundamentally disconnected from their work, to the extent that it is unclear how they have contributed to the process of production. "The fragmentation and simplification of the work process undermine the static relationship between worker and job, disconnecting wage labor from usefully labor entirely. With the mass worker, abstract labor reaches its fullest historical development."¹⁰³ The antagonism towards work that is implanted in the mass worker

¹⁰³ Guido Baldi, "Theses on the Mass Worker and Social Capital," *Radical America* 6(3) (1972):19-20.

develops into the radical characteristic central to the social or socialized worker of real subsumption, the desire to destroy work itself, to abolish the system of wage labor and found a new regime that evaluates labor on a fundamentally different basis. This realization of the social workers' capabilities did not occur instantly but was a gradual development that only began to reach fruition in the later part of the 1970s, when a fundamental break occurred. The Hot Autumn of 1969 was in some sense a rehearsal of what was to come as the institutional framework of Italian society had degenerated to such an extent that it became possible for social forces to become detached from what would typically be their governing institutions and move outside of them for a period. What the social worker actually was and the ramifications it had will be discussed further in the next chapter, but it is important to realize that the Autumn of 1969 was when the march towards the formation of the social worker began in earnest.

This transition would not represent simply an alteration in the methods of production, but would permeate through all levels of society. "The passage from the composition of the mass worker to that of the socialized worker does not merely mean a further perfecting of the productive force of labor, nor merely the proposition of a new system of needs; rather it means that...proletarian rebellion assails the entire fabric of the composition and the system of needs."¹⁰⁴ Capital, along with the institutional framework of society, would respond primarily in two ways that while different, were interrelated. The first would be to adapt, to reformulate itself in response to change in order to resume its directing role. The second would be to control and constrain the new social movements which represented the realization of the social worker. This would be done

¹⁰⁴ Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy* (London: Verso, 2005), 151-152.

through acts of terror and the creation of a pervasive climate of fear by the application of the state's mechanisms of violence, what in Italy would be called the strategy of tension.

Piazza Fontana: The Opening Act in Italy's State of Exception

In addition to the economic transformation of the country and the Autonomist analysis of its ramifications one last significant occurrence was ignited because of the events which occurred in the Autumn of 1969, the start of the strategy of tension. Italy had never really come to terms with its fascist legacy. There was no truth and reconciliation style commission and many officials from the fascist era remained in positions of influence. The result was that democracy in Italy was always tenuous at best, with a large component of the state grudgingly accepting liberal democracy at best and at worst actively seeking to undermine and overthrow it. These elements formed their own parallel state network, which conducted the strategy of tension through intermediaries, attempting to avoid any possible direct connections to themselves. This network, as well as the large amounts of assistance it received from the United State via NATO's highly covert Operation Gladio, will be traced in the next chapter. The event that signifies the start of the strategy of tension is the bombing of Milan's Piazza Fontana in 1969, a terrorist act that killed 17 civilians and wounded another 88, the first in a series of bombings that would mar Italian life for the next decade and a half.

The purpose of the strategy of tension was to create a climate of terror, through the bombing of civilian targets. These bombings were false-flag operations, carried out by neo-fascist groups and supported by the state; the blame however was placed squarely upon the radical left. "The principal purpose of the bomb outrages was to provide the excuse for military intervention. The perpetrators of the bombings frequently tried to

attribute responsibility for their attacks to left-wing or anarchist groups and police and secret service investigators eagerly followed up these leads.”¹⁰⁵ The goal was to discredit groups on the left and undercut electoral support for the PCI, while at the same time making people too frightened to become a part of the social movements that oriented themselves to the left of the PCI. This would lay the necessary groundwork for a coup d'état, with the justification provided that the security of the nation was in peril due to the wave of bombings perpetrated by various left-wing groups.

The Italian state already felt threatened by the persistent left-wing political culture in the country and especially during the events of Hot Autumn, when the inadequacies of the Italian society were on clear display. It had lacked a clear direction during Italy's industrialization and the forces unleashed by this process now threatened to seriously undermine the state's legitimacy. However this very crisis also assisted the state, by finally providing a unifying point for its disparate elements. As Colin Hay argues "...the state may acquire a rather greater level of unity and cohesion during the very process of structural transformation than it displays at other times, as its constituent institutions are modified and re-co-ordinated. Indeed, it is only during moments or phases of institutional transformation that the state displays anything other than a latent unity.”¹⁰⁶ Although the industrialization of Italy was transforming the country, its institutions had failed to provide a sufficient response, mired in a static formation set shortly after the election of 1948. The institutional framework established in this period, primarily the decades of DC control over state institutions that were only slightly modified from the fascist era, may

¹⁰⁵ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 22.

¹⁰⁶ Colin Hay, "Crisis and the structural transformation of the state: Interrogating the process of change," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 1(3) (1999):321.

have been capable of governing Italian society, had it remained a primarily agrarian one, with minuscule pockets of industry. The dynamics of Italian industrial however had completely changed the economic and cultural landscape. The political sphere would either be forced to adapt to this new reality or be swept aside.

It seems that Italy's Hot Autumn provided the shock that was necessary to the Italian state institutions to finally cause them to reach the conclusion that some sort of coherent response was required. The response involved a two pronged approach. First, making large concessions that would allow the unions and political parties of the country to regain some measure of control over the segments of society that they were supposed to represent. This succeeded to the extent necessary to prevent any further degeneration of Italy's state apparatus and civil society institutions. The second, and far more sinister approach, was the launch of the strategy of tension. Both of these approaches would to some extent ameliorate Italy's organic crisis, however its decisive conclusion would lie a decade further in the future.

While it may be horrifying that a state would target its own citizens to create the climate necessary for the fundamental reformation of its institutions, such an occurrence is unfortunately not all that surprising. Often, however, the state cannot directly employ such forms of violence without further undermining its legitimacy. In such circumstances therefore, where state structures are weakened to such an extent that a violent counter-attack with the aim of terrorizing the population into submission becomes a viable option, the state will support elements that can easily be dissociated from itself. While providing support to these elements the state will strive to the utmost to ensure that their basis of support within the state is obfuscated. "A weakened state structure is like a flagging

army; the commandos-i.e. the private armed organizations-enter the field, and they have two tasks: to make use of illegal means, while the state appears to remain within legality, and thus to reorganize the state itself.”¹⁰⁷ In an organic crisis then, in response to social forces moving outside of the range of the institutions which formally constrained them, the state as well will cast aside the legal framework which it has created to govern its action, and move outside of its own common institutional range as well. In this moment however the state will also employ the dominant ideology of the period and attempt to mask its actions, arguing that while the state itself has to disregard its own legal framework in order to respond to the crisis, the rest of society must remain constrained by it.

If this first chapter was an analysis of the concept of organic crisis and how one arose in the Italian context, chapter two will demonstrate how the organic crisis led to the imposition of a state of exception in the Italian peninsula and will argue that organic crises and states of exception are inherently interrelated, with the first spawning the second. By connecting each concept together in such a manner I hope to enrich them each in turn and provide an analysis that is more comprehensive than simply examining each one separately. I will also show how the new subjectivity of the socialized worker evolved as the organic crisis in Italy continued. Related to this development was the creation of Autonomia, a multifaceted social movement in which many of the Autonomist intellectuals discussed in this chapter played important roles. Autonomia would attempt to provide the means by which the new subjectivity of the socialized worker could express itself. Finally, both Autonomia and the socialized worker were

¹⁰⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), 232.

restrained by a variety of factors in Italian society. These factors foreclosed the possibility which existed for the socialized worker to create its own institutions capable of embodying its new potential. Instead the Italian state, through the repressive mechanisms employed under the rubric of a state of exception, would constrain the avenues through which the socialized worker could express itself by trapping it within a new institutional framework. This outcome only became possible with the destruction of the Autonomist movement in the country. The factors that led to this result will form the crux of the next chapter.

Chapter II: Violence by the State and Against the State. The Italian State of Exception and Its Consequences (1970-1979)

Introduction: The Brief Respite of the Early 1970s

In the last chapter I examined the root causes of the organic crisis in Italy and demonstrated that the crisis had its roots in Italy's rapid industrialization. The Hot Autumn of 1969 with its confluence of student and worker struggles and the drive by some segments within them to break with the orthodoxy of the PCI and its support for the post-1948 model of governance represented the initial articulation of what was deemed by the Autonomists to be the socialized worker. The lifespan of the Fordist regime of accumulation and production with the corresponding pursuit of Keynesian welfare policies by the state and the subjectivity of the mass worker was in Italy extremely abbreviated: "...the mass worker had been conceptualized and had become a reality just when its period of resistance was in fact about to end."¹⁰⁸ If, by the early 1960s, Italy, or at least the North of it, had reached a high level of industrialization with its economy transformed as a result, by the end of the decade, the rise of socialized capital and the post-Fordist economy along with it was already on the horizon. Italy's Hot Autumn of 1969 clearly represented the activation of strata that extended beyond the traditional notions of working class politics of the Fordist era, which primarily ascribed the potential for political action to only the narrow sector of the workforce in large industrial settings. While the political and economic elite of Italy may have thought that the decline in number and intensity of both student and worker strikes after 1971 had brought them a respite that would allow them to stabilize the country and adapt to the changed economic

¹⁰⁸ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 75.

situation, the high wage gains agreed to in order to end the crisis would create an inflationary spiral. This combined with the worldwide economic crisis of 1973 would plunge the Italian economy into a deep recession.

My goal in this chapter is to trace a number of factors that either arose or matured in the early 1970s. All of these factors reached an explosive conclusion in the pivotal year of 1977. First I will argue that the organic crisis in the country developed into a state of exception. I will use this analysis as the framework for understanding the actions taken by and the transformations in the Italian state. I will propose that the state of exception in Italy began with the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan in 1969, continued with the state sponsored bombings and threatened coups throughout the 1970s, progressed into alterations to the Italian legal system, and concluded with the mass arrests that occurred in April 1979, provoked by the kidnapping and murder of the President of the Republic, Aldo Moro, by the Red Brigades. However, simply because a state of exception existed within Italy at this time does not mean the organic crisis in the country which provoked it was halted. Rather, it progressed alongside and intersected the state of exception. Within this unfolding alignment the regime of socialized capital progressed and the socialized worker sought to express itself through new forms of struggle. As well, the Autonomist movement in Italy became both more organized and more disaggregated as it sought to understand the changing dynamics of the socialized worker and provide it with a forum through which its potentialities could be expressed.

Yet, the social movements in the country, which found their basis in the condition of the socialized worker, and in which the Autonomists played an important part, was

restricted by three factors. First, obviously the terrorism of the Italian state would have a negative impact upon any social movement, striking fear into the population and weakening the necessary threshold of mobilization required to sustain a social movement. Second, the PCI (as was shown in the first chapter) adopted an orientation that supported the basis of socio-economic power in the country and sought to portray itself as a stabilizing force. During the 1970s this orientation eventually led the PCI to adopt Eurocommunism as its official policy. This represented a shift in the PCI's strategic thinking as it abandoned any claim that it was a revolutionary party and fully accepted the confines of the Italian capitalist state. Putting this policy into practice meant the intensification by the PCI of its battle against what it viewed as undesirable elements that were destroying the prosperity of Italian society: the disaffected youth, workers, and other marginal groups that did not fit into the PCI's vision, groups that formed the foundation for the vibrant social movements in the country. The third and final factor, and one that will be dealt with for the first time in this chapter, was the Red Brigades. Although they sought to strike at the heart of the state and hasten its collapse, through their terrorist actions the Red Brigades played into the hands of the Italian state, providing a justification and a rationale for its draconian policies and repressive actions against the social movements in the country, deepening Italy's state of exception.

The Italian social movements were thus hemmed in on three sides, by the state, the PCI, and the Red Brigades. Despite the extreme pressure which they were placed under, however, new forms of struggle and new theoretical understandings continued to be created by them. To understand both the pressure upon the social movements and the innovation that it spurred I will use the Deleuzian concept of minor politics which posits

that only in extreme situations does politics truly advance. "It is from very cramped and complex situations that politics emerges--no longer as a process of facilitating and bolstering identity, or becoming conscious but as a process of innovation, of experimentation, and of the complication of life, in which forms of community, techniques of practices, ethical demeanors, styles, knowledges, and cultural forms are composed."¹⁰⁹ The social movements in Italy and the theorizations and practices of the Autonomists represented a form of minor politics, they did not seek to occupy and generalize themselves across the political field, as any major politics would, yet they expanded and enriched politics by changing notions of what politics could be in part by creating new forms of political action. In the shadow of repression and rigid political orthodoxy experimentations in politics began in earnest. As I will show in the final chapter the experiences of this period hold valuable lessons that can be applied to understanding present circumstances.

Although the discord in Italy had lessened by a decline in mobilizations, when compared to the high point of 1969-70, unrest in the country was by no means entirely mollified. Militant actions by disaffected youth and workers continued to occur, with factories still going on strike and being occupied. Further state sponsored violence continued apace and was soon joined by the violence of the Red Brigades which began with kidnapping foremen and wealthy industrialists and releasing them unharmed a few hours or days later but eventually reached the level of targeted assassination. All of these actions occurred against a backdrop of deepening malaise as the Italian economy entered a steep decline, marking its first economic recession since the end of the Second World

¹⁰⁹ Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 8.

War. The dire economic situation in the country was caused by a combination of domestic and international events.

In order to subdue the strike waves rolling across Italy, as was noted in the last chapter, huge across the board wage gains were enacted. While these provided workers with a higher standard of living they also created an inflationary spiral. Italy's average inflation rate from 1960-1970 was a relatively low 3.5 percent, in the ten year period after this, however, Italy's average rate of inflation jumped to 14.7 percent, making its inflation the highest out of the G-7 countries.¹¹⁰ Rising inflation led to a corresponding rise in unemployment. "In the first months of 1971, industrial production receded an average of 3.5 percent, with a flat minus of 5.1 percent in the leading sectors, steel, machine tools, and construction. Once again, the traditional antagonism between levels of wages and levels of unemployment was exploited."¹¹¹ Yet, while inflation began rapidly to increase and industrial production began to decline the rate of unemployment from 1971 to 1973 remained relatively stable at about 5 percent and increased gradually throughout the decade, not reaching an average of over 10 percent until the mid 1980s.¹¹² The stable level of unemployment in Italy throughout the economic deterioration of the 1970s was due in large part to the strengthened labor protections in the Workers Statute. While the economic situation in Italy was tenuous from 1971-1973, with the increasing inflation and declining industrial productivity, overall the economy did relatively well

¹¹⁰ Bernard Katz and Siamack Shojai, *The Oil Market in the 1980s: A decade of Decline*. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1992), 98.

¹¹¹ "Italy 1973: Workers Struggle in the Capitalist Crisis", in *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis: Italian Marxist Texts of the Theory and Practice of a Class Movement*, ed. Red Notes (London: Red Notes, 1976), 24.

¹¹² Alessandro Vercelli and Luciano Fiordoni, "The Italian economy after the Bretton Woods era (1971-2001)" in *The Italian Economy at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, ed. Massimo Di Matteo and Paolo Piacentini (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 16.

continuing to grow at a steady pace, supported by the increased consumption levels of the Italian population, which was underpinned by the large wage increases. All of this changed drastically however, with the first oil shock of 1973.

The economic turmoil of 1973 and the Feasibility of the Refusal of Work under post-Fordism

The oil shock of 1973 affected all industrialized countries, leading to sharp rises in inflation and unemployment. For Italy however, which was experiencing high levels of inflation prior to the oil shock, the impact was particularly dramatic. "Rising labor costs, expansionary fiscal and monetary policies and the oil crisis caused severe inflation. Inflation was over 10 percent in 1973 and almost 20 percent in 1974... Things were so bad that private lines of credit disappeared and the government had to borrow to prevent a general collapse in economic activity. In 1975 inflation dropped a bit but still exceed 17 percent and the economy went into a recession, the first negative growth (-4 percent) since the war and the sharpest decline among the major economies."¹¹³ Forced to extend lines of credit to prevent an economic collapse Italy's debt as a proportion of the GDP reached 60 percent in 1975, compared to 35 percent 10 years earlier.¹¹⁴ In response to the surging inflation and debt Italy shifted from an expansionary to a highly restrictive monetary policy. Interest rates quickly rose from less than 5 percent in 1973 to over 13 percent by 1977.¹¹⁵ The changed international economic environment and the shift in domestic economic policy marked a break with the relative economic stability of the

¹¹³ Robert Meade, *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 70.

¹¹⁴ Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, "Fiscal Expansions and Fiscal Adjustments in OECD Countries" (Working Paper No.5214, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 1995), 2.

¹¹⁵ Sidney Homer, et al. *A History of Interest Rates* (Malden: Wiley-Interscience, 2005), 521.

1950s and 1960s and with it the end of the short period of Fordism in Italy. The changing economic circumstances and the response of the Italian state to them were not simply standard deviations from the economic model of the time, but rather they caused the start of a deep rooted process of transformation that altered the foundations of the Italian economy and would herald the move towards what would later be deemed the post-Fordist economy. “In Italy, the restrictive monetary policy and the ensuing appreciation of the lira caused a profound structural change in the economy and in particular in the manufacturing sector. The organizational, technological and financial structure of the firms was re-engineered in order to assure a higher level of flexibility. The same drive towards flexibility happened in industrial relations and in the management of the labor force.”¹¹⁶ This new organizational form of the economy would be one that placed social capital as the foundation of the economy; a shift that would eventually reorganize the economy at every level, from manufacturing methods to forms of work and would result in the clear privileging of mobile financial capital over stationary industrial capital.

These changes were precipitated by, in fact demanded by, the emergence of the socialized worker in Italy at the end of the 1960s. As I argued in the previous chapter the socialized worker prefigured the creation of social capital. Autonomist theory set itself apart from other variants of Marxist theory of the period by clearly recognizing that the changes occurring in the organization of capital were responses to the new forms being assumed by the working class in the current era and the corresponding new possibilities for and methods of political action, which were created as a result of the abandonment of

¹¹⁶ Alessandro Vercelli and Luciano Fiordoni, “The Italian economy after the Bretton Woods era (1971-2001)” in *The Italian Economy at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, ed. Massimo Di Matteo and Paolo Piacentini (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 21.

the Fordism and the turn towards post-Fordism in Italy. “Post-Fordism, in Italy, arose from the tumults of labor power which was educated, uncertain, mobile; one which hated the work ethic and opposed, at times head on, the tradition and the culture of the historical left, marking a clear discontinuity with respect to assembly line workers, with their practices and customs, with their ways of life. Post-Fordism arose from conflicts centered upon social figures which, despite their apparent marginal status, were about to become the authentic fulcrum of the new cycle of capitalistic development.”¹¹⁷ The significance of the 1970s in Italy was that it was a period where the struggles occurring would determine the nature of the institutions which would be created to oversee and control the new regime of social capital, the form of capital which made post-Fordism possible. Depending on the outcome, either the reorganization of the institutional framework of society would occur largely under the auspices of the state and those sectors of society that held significant power and influence due to their control of capital relations, or if the disparate social movements in the country somehow managed to impose their will the possibility existed, based upon tendencies that existed within the social movements, for the destruction of the concept of work itself and the potential for the creation of a new form of economic organization that would supersede the capital relation. If this had in fact occurred the 1970s in Italy would not have been the transition between one mode of capitalist organization and another, significant as that is, but could have been the start of a transition to a post-capitalist economy.

I will now seek to demonstrate how the social worker, in the abstract, represented that possibility. It was this potential that led to the organic crisis in Italy, causing the

¹¹⁷ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 98-99.

Italian state to enact a state of exception in response in order to regain control over the transition and foreclose the possibility for radical change. I already conducted an analysis in the last chapter of real subsumption as the contemporary stage of capitalist society and how the achievement of real subsumption effectively socialized capital, extending it to every sphere of human existence, collapsing the separation between work life and private life. The totally pervasive nature of capitalist relations made new forms of struggle possible, specifically it created the ability for different social and economic strata to unite simultaneously at multiple points across the spectrum of society,¹¹⁸ an event that in Italy was clearly demonstrated by the Hot Autumn of 1969. However, I have not, up until this point, examined how the reformulation of the nature of work that I have alluded to above effected society, specifically how it was intimately related to the passage towards the socialized worker and how this transition to new forms of labor led to segments of society engaging in actions that were rooted in the refusal of work itself, both as a concept and as a lived practice.

The nature of work in society is given a privileged place of analysis because it is the closest thing that exists to a universal condition. Changes in work and subjectivity are invariably linked, such is the case as well with the socialized worker and the post-Fordist forms of labor. Under post-Fordism however the concept of work itself, traditionally held

¹¹⁸ I do not mean to imply that different strata of a society have never before united into a common cause and pursued coherent forms of struggle in the attempt to achieve it, such experiences are in fact a part of every revolution. What makes a society under the real subsumption of capital unique is that because capital relations have penetrated every point of society, the possibility is created for a much wider range of action, beyond the confines of what is traditionally viewed as political. Further, the speed at which these struggles can emerge and link to one another is rapidly increased. The negative corollary to this is that with capital relations structuring every aspect of society, there is no longer a single or a few special points that can be focused and by overcoming them capitalism is progressed beyond, rather with the entire society enmeshed in capitalistic relations, the break must be total, every aspect of society must be transformed, a difficulty of a far greater magnitude.

to mean a relatively stable pattern of activity comprising a general framework of tasks occurring during a specific period that one progressed through and then went on to perform activities that were not deemed to be work, in short the idea of a “workday”, was destroyed and along with it mechanisms that disciplined one to respect the notion of work. “The workday may be an accepted unit of measure, but it is no longer a true one...the end of the society of work has occurred in the very forms prescribed by the social system of wage labor itself: unemployment resulting from reinvestment, flexibility as the despotic rule, early retirement, the task of managing all the free time created by the absence of full-time work...”¹¹⁹ Work was now stripped of the grandiose ideology that it possessed in the era of the Keynesian welfare state and Fordist production. In that context work had important cultural and social connotations attached to it, it was deemed to be more than a series of tasks completed in order to receive a wage, it was part of a larger social project, one that promised stability and gradually increasing prosperity. Yet with the end of work itself as a stable concept these notions were all called into question. Work was stripped down to its bare essentials, and clearly revealed for what it was, the imposed sale of labor time for survival constituted in the relationship of wage labor.

Thus the rise of the flexible forms of production that define post-Fordism damaged the very logic and rationale of work, by degrading the idea of work itself. A lessened significance¹²⁰ attached to work as a result of the socialization of capital and the disaggregation of work across the entire social spectrum fractured the notion of what

¹¹⁹ Paolo Virno, “The Ambivalence of Disenchantment,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 20.

¹²⁰ Not in a concrete, practical sense, in the realm of lived experience work is still an endeavor necessary for survival, but in the abstract cultural sense, it has lost a large part of its mystique.

work was. Work instead became, for large segments of the population, defined by its precarity and decoupled from its clear relation to a larger project believed in by members of a society. Under these conditions the valorization of the workforce could no longer be achieved by the process of work itself; rather valorization could now only occur through actions that are, at least in a formal legalistic sense,¹²¹ if not in actual practice, outside of the realm of capitalistic relations. Valorization of the working class then, could only occur by the working class itself, as self-valorization, defined by Harry Cleaver as "...a process of valorization which is autonomous from capitalist valorization--a self-defining, self determining process which goes beyond the mere resistance to capitalist valorization to a positive project of self-constitution."¹²² Thus under post-Fordism the function of valorization is primarily shifted away from capital and towards the working class. This is because at the present stage capitalism loses, in large part, its ability to engage in productive activity. The rise of financial capital and the consequential creation of vast amounts of self-contained wealth, with little connection to actual reality, and a tenuous linkage at best to any productive activity is the foremost example of this. "At this point of development, there is a material break in the dialectic between capital and the productive forces, the dialectic of variable and constant capital. Productive force becomes divorced from capital...the development of productive forces, now applies only to class

¹²¹ By this I mean actions that are performed that have as their basis the disruption of the process of capitalist rationalization, i.e. the profit motive. I recognize that in circumstances of real subsumption, it is nearly impossible for any action to be truly conducted outside of the realm of capitalist relations, but it those actions which consciously attempt to do so that I will analyze in a latter part of this chapter.

¹²² Harry Cleaver, "The inversion of class perspective in Marxian theory: From valorization to self-valorization," in *Open Marxism. Volume II: Theory and Practice*, ed. Werner Bonefeld, Kosmas Psychopedis, and Richard Gunn (London: Pluto Press, 1992), 129.

composition and to the process of proletarian self-valorization.”¹²³ Contemporary capitalism only retains some semblance of productivity through the absorption of activities which are marginal to capitalistic relations, primarily through the manipulation of acts of self-valorization so that they can be prefigured within the capitalist dynamic. Capital itself only remains productive by siphoning off acts of worker self-valorization.

The ultimate act of worker self-valorization, its logical conclusion, is the refusal of work. The refusal of work, at least as it was conceptualized by Autonomist theorists and practiced in Italy, did not mean the refusal of all activity; rather it meant the struggle against the requirement to subject oneself to wage-labor in order to survive: “...the refusal of work should not be understood as a rejection of activity and creativity. It is not a renunciation of labor tout court, but rather comprises a refusal of the ideology of work as the highest calling and moral duty, a refusal of work as the necessary center of social life and means of access to the rights and claims of citizenship, and, finally, a refusal of the necessity and value of capitalist command over production.”¹²⁴ Engagements in forms of worker self-valorization that draw their essence from the refusal of work are particularly difficult to be recouped by capital, as the continuation of work is pivotal to the maintenance of capitalism. It is ironic, though unsurprising, then that the idea of work as an ethic with positive connotations was undermined with the emergence of post-Fordism. In Italy the subjectivity of the socialized worker, whose articulation had led to the formation of the post-Fordist paradigm, would engage in new forms of protest that

¹²³ Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy* (London: Verso, 2005), 265.

¹²⁴ Kathi Weeks, “The Refusal of Work as Demand and Perspective,” in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri: Resistance in Practice*, ed. Timothy Murphy and Abdul-Karim Mustapha (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 121.

would be based upon the refusal of work, these actions would occur throughout the 1970s and would expand the notion of what was political, as well as subjecting an overlooked, but crucial aspect of society to sustained critique.

Interrogating the Idea of a State of Exception

Before examining this further however, it is important to understand the context within which these actions occurred. During the 1970s Italy was under a decade long state of exception, the reaction of the Italian state and a threatened and fearful elite to the wave of political protest in the late 1960s that had continued into the 1970s. The Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan was the first in what would become a series of bombings against civilian targets carried out by neo-fascist groups with the support and encouragement of important elements within the Italian state. I will begin with a theoretical analysis, expanding upon the brief exposition of the state of exception as a reactionary response to social forces in society that I undertook in chapter one. I will elaborate upon what a state of exception is, as well critique and expand upon certain facets of the analysis, demonstrating that a state of exception affects the legal, political, and cultural aspects of any society where it occurs, making it a highly relevant analytical tool for understanding periods of upheaval. After doing so I will then apply the framework of analysis which I have established to the actual occurrence of a state of exception based upon the historical experience of Italy in the 1970s. My focus will be primarily upon the dramatic changes in the Italian state that occurred; specifically the creation of a parallel state apparatus, P2, which was responsible for directing the Italian government's targeting of its own citizens, known as the strategy of tension. I will also

show that international actors, specifically NATO, through Operation Gladio, played an important role in establishing the basis for the strategy of tension, as well as providing the requisite support that allowed it to progress and become a fixture of Italian life. This will provide the basis for the next section where I argue that the state of exception was responsible for the creation of the Red Brigades as well as examining the effect of the state of exception on the orientation of the PCI.

The idea of state of exception was first and most substantially elaborated by Carl Schmitt, and has received a renewed prominence in recent years thanks to its formulation and application by Giorgio Agamben¹²⁵ to describe the political climate of the War on Terror. A state of exception is affected within a particular geographical area, one where a specific state holds dominion, and occurs for a definable length of time. Although as will be seen later, a state of exception tends to have deeply rooted and unpredictable consequences for any society subjected to one, influencing how institutions in society understand themselves and changing the nature of their interactions with the wider populace. A state of exception refers to a willful decision taken by the state to suspend or disregard the legal rules and norms which in ordinary times govern society. In doing so the state transforms itself into an entity with practically unlimited authority. “What characterizes an exception is principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order. In such a situation it is clear that the state remains, whereas law recedes. Because the exception is different from anarchy and chaos, order in the

¹²⁵ Walter Benjamin also used the state of exception in his work as well, but to a far lesser extent. Thus for the sake of brevity and because I find Agamben and Schmitt to be more directly relevant to my analysis, I will only refer to their work and overlook Benjamin’s, except insofar as Agamben draws on it.

juristic sense still prevails even if it is not of the ordinary kind.”¹²⁶ In normal circumstances laws and norms create a predictable environment, determining what is permissible and what is not and justifying themselves largely by demonstrating a coherence with reality. Perhaps most notably these laws and norms can be traced through a society and if one wishes it is possible to understand that they have assumed their present form because of a series of events in the past that have determined their present articulation. Put simply, the laws and norms in society have a history and draw a large part of their legitimacy from the fact they can claim that they are the product of the history and culture of the society in which they are rooted.

The laws and norms of a society provide a framework for understanding the operations of that society and allow individuals to understand themselves and their roles within society, providing a level of predictability to day to day affairs. With a state of exception all of this is swept aside. Invoking a state of exception¹²⁷ creates a profound sense of uncertainty in society as what appeared to rest upon solid foundations is revealed as merely contingent upon the circumstances and the whim--the “decision”-- of the sovereign. In this sense then, a state of exception is a profoundly negative act as it destroys the connection that formerly existed between norms and specific manners in which that norm was applied. As Giorgio Agamben notes “...the state of exception

¹²⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 12.

¹²⁷ The determination of when a state of exception is actually in place is not an entirely simple matter. A state, at least a liberal democratic one, would be extremely apprehensive to issue a blanket statement declaring that all laws have been suspended, lest its legitimacy be entirely eroded, although a state might very well say that certain key laws are no longer relevant or present a new interpretation of various laws that breaks with traditionally held values. The enactment of emergency detention measures that are swiftly invoked, carry harsh penalties, and are very difficult to challenge seems to be a universal component of states of exception. In the case of Italy, I believe that the indiscriminate bombing and killing of the civilian population, carried out with the knowledge and approval of the state, can reasonably be called a state of exception.

separates the norms from its application in order to make its application possible. It introduces a zone of anomie into the law in order to make the effective regulation of the real possible.”¹²⁸ A state of exception is thus the application of force by the state, without its usual foundation and rationale. It is the attempt to ensure an adherence to something indeterminate, since the violence of the state is now unconstrained from its former rationale that sought to ensure a relatively stable environment.

While the violence of the state during a state of exception is disconnected from the rationale which previously served to inform and justify it, it is not disconnected from all rationale; it still maintains coherence and a sense of purpose, the state has simply decided that the old institutional framework which formerly governed its actions must be discarded to allow it to more fully assert itself. It is in this action, in the sovereign decision that the role of the law in capitalist society is revealed. “...the main function of the rule of law and legality is not to conceal state violence...it is rather, to provide the necessary semantic, normative, and institutional framework for its full expression and exercise.”¹²⁹ With the former mechanisms by which the state’s violence was regulated no longer deemed adequate, (i.e.--its rule of law character) the state is free to act outside of the system of laws and norms that it had created¹³⁰ in order to contain and rectify the emergency. It would be ideal of course if this situation had not arisen in the first place, the destruction—or even “suspension”—of the legal and institutional framework and the

¹²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

¹²⁹ Andreas Kalyvas, “The Stateless Theory: Poulantzas’s Challenge to Postmodernism,” in *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*, ed. Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 128.

¹³⁰ This is not to imply that the state is solely responsible for the generation of norms in society, but the state does privilege certain norms and behaviors over others and punish those who deviate from accepted norms and standards of behavior.

application of repressive measures as a result, requires a large expenditure of the state's resources. Further, the institutions of the state are, to an extent, disoriented by the rupture and shift away from the preconceived notions that informed their actions, such an occurrence however is not unique, but is rather embedded in the architecture and logic of the state.

As paradoxical as it may appear, every legal system also contains within it the elements of its own negation. It is this potential for the legal order to override itself that is drawn upon by the sovereign during a state of exception. In principle this is an illegal act, as the law is negated, but this negation of the law is a function of the law itself. "Not only does illegality often enter into the law, but illegality and legality are themselves part of one and the same institutional structure."¹³¹ The expression of the illegality of the legal realm is what occurs during state of exception. The sovereign retains this ability because it is both a legal and an extralegal entity. The sovereign creates the legal order and allows itself to be submitted to it, but of crucial importance, and often overlooked, is that by constituting the legal order the sovereign also stands apart from it. "Sovereign is s/he who is simultaneously inside the space of order as the source of its constitutive principles and outside of it as something that cannot be subsumed under these principles, a surplus that in relation to the order is unfathomable, monstrous, and obscene."¹³² It is precisely that which is unfathomable and indescribable by the legal order that emerges in a state of exception. Thus while the sovereign is contained within the legal order and is in this sense a legal entity, it retains the potential to move outside of and negate the legal order,

¹³¹ Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 85.

¹³² Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom and Sovereignty* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 84.

because it is the source of legality and if it so chooses it can revoke its support for the present legal order.

As I mentioned above, the reason for the sovereign declaring a state of expectation lies in its perception that drastic action is needed in response to a perceived emergency. This emergency must have a cause. It is the sovereign who determines the factor responsible for the emergency, which is then portrayed as the enemy. Contained within the sovereign decision that creates a state of exception is the determination of an enemy. “As long as the state is a political entity the requirement for internal peace compels it in critical situations to decide upon the domestic enemy. Every state provides therefore, some kind of formula for the declaration of an internal enemy...whether the form is sharper or milder, explicit, or implicit...provided for in special laws or in explicit or general descriptions, the aim is always the same, namely to declare an enemy.”¹³³ The enemy is not a single person, but rather a group, a community, who is deemed to threaten the interests of the state. As Gopal Balakrishnan argues, Schmitt “...stressed repeatedly that the political friend and enemy were not private adversaries, but rather political communities whose very existence posed as potential threat to other political communities.”¹³⁴ Although the enemy is usually interpreted as an external threat in the form of an opposing state, the enemy can also come from within, forming a definable segment of society within a particular state.

Declaring an enemy fulfills the valuable role of providing a visible element against which the repressive apparatus of violence of the state can be arrayed as well as

¹³³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 46-47.

¹³⁴ Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 2002), 106.

providing a justification for the excesses that the state of exception will invariably lead to. The declaration of an enemy is not in itself unique, specific segments of the population are routinely targeted by the state. What makes the state of exception unique in this regard is that rather than simply being a regularized occurrence in the legal order, the legal order itself is deemed to be incapable of rectifying the situation and is hence cast aside. Further, rather than the containable form of violence common to everyday life and law, violence that only targets specific groups in society, deemed either by their actions or the possession of supposed innate characteristics that are deemed to be undesirable, the violence of the state of exception, one no longer bound by law, is an expansive violence as it targets the segments of society deemed to be responsible for the emergency which provoked the declaration of a state of exception, those that have supposedly threatened the very existence of society. With such a broad description of who the enemy is those that are deemed to match this description are necessarily an amorphous and shifting group, in comparison to more stable definition of the enemy that exists during normal periods.

Similar to my analysis in the last chapter, which in large part defined an organic crisis as the rupture of social forces from the institutions that were formerly tasked with governing them; a state of exception is a rupture of the sovereign from the legal order which it had constituted in its own image. In both instances, either the sovereign or social forces are moving outside of their usual range of action. In an organic crisis social forces are moving outside of the institutional framework of society and are struggling to articulate themselves in a coherent manner that will allow them to create a new set of institutions that will better respond to their condition. While in a state of exception the

sovereign has cast off constraints of the legal order in order to permit unrestrained action against a perceived threat. In the case of Italy the actions of newly activated strata of society, coalescing into the subjectivity of the socialized worker, created just such a threat. In response the Italian state deemed that the existent legal order was not up to the task of constraining this new social collectivity and so responded by declaring a state of exception. With the marginal elements of society, primarily students, workers who dissented from the political monopoly of the Christian Democrats and the economic monopoly of the union confederations, the Autonomist intellectuals, and disadvantaged economic groups that were left out of the Italian post-war consensus existing within the disparate subjectivity of the socialized worker, it was these groups who would become the enemy for the Italian state. The Italian state of exception was then a repressive response to the organic crisis which had arisen as a result of the emergence of the socialized worker.

It is clear then that by suspending preexisting and constraining institutional structures and the law, the organic crisis in Italy and the corresponding and following state of exception represent a point of rupture. However the rupture in this instance extends beyond what classical Marxists would refer to as the superstructure of society, and affected the base economic structure as well.¹³⁵ The organic crisis in Italy signified the end of the Fordist economic paradigm. The disruptive effects of the socialization of capital became clear in the autumn of 1969, yet at that time this transformation in the

¹³⁵ This is not to imply that I ascribe to this way of conceptualizing society, however I feel that in this instance, this metaphor is useful as it shows how the crisis extended beyond simple changes to a few laws, but penetrated multiple levels, comprising the entire social spectrum and enacted profound transformations at each point.

configuration of capital was a gradual process, that was slowly extending itself across the economic and social spectrum. The economic crisis of 1973 drastically changed circumstances as up until this point the Italian economy had experienced unpredicted growth. It was now abruptly plunged into crisis. It is at this point that the transition to the post-Fordist economy in Italy can clearly be said to begin. The organic crisis itself occupied the space between the collapse of Fordism in the late 1960s and the point at which the Italian economy stabilized and reconstituted along post-Fordist lines in the late 1970s. The depth that the crisis reached, due in large part to the strength of the social movements in the country, demanded a state of exception to guarantee the successful transition between two modes of capitalistic economic organization and to ensure that the terms the new socio-economic order would be based on were favorable to the Italian state and continued to privilege capitalist control over the means of production.¹³⁶ The Italian organic crisis and the Italian state of exception then both represent ruptures, comprising a transition stage between two different methods of political, economic, and social forms of organization. The difference between them however is that while the forces which activated the organic crisis in the country strove to enact radical change, the entrenched forces of the state and the vested interests of society that invoked the state of exception were a reactionary response that sought to quell society and allow for the return of a subdued political climate, one in which the state would be able to govern effectively and achieve its aims relatively unhindered. In the case of Italy, the intense politicalization of society that characterized the late 1960s and 1970s required that society be depoliticized. This could only be done through repression and instilling a widespread fear in society.

¹³⁶The latent fascist tendencies within the Italian state meant that the form the struggle to reassert control took was a wave of mass bombings designed to terrorize the population into submission.

While the forces that had caused the organic crisis sought to create new possibilities, the forces behind the state of exception sought to foreclose them and ensure the maintenance of dominant power relations.

To conclude this section it should be noted that the state of exception is, all things considered, a paradoxical phenomenon. It displays the ability of the sovereign to exist both inside and outside of the legal order, revealing that illegality is necessary for the continuation of any established system of legality. While the state of exception is a force of negativity, negating the legal order and commonly held norms, as well as proving detrimental to the potential for radical change, it also enacts positive change, in the sense that the norms and legal rules prevalent during the state of exception become an integral part of the transformed society. “The logic of a political system is not determined by some preconceived absolute ideal that is constructed outside of this system. Rather, it is the political decision on the exception that establishes the ultimate values in terms of which the norms of a particular polity will unfold.”¹³⁷ The actions taken during the state of exception as well as the arguments advanced to justify its existence, become the foundation of the new order. In this sense then, the state of exception never ends, it constructs society in its own vision, normalizing itself as its particular set of norms with the legal and political forms that it has privileged permeating themselves across society eventually fully institutionalizing themselves and becoming accepted wisdom.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ David Pan, “Carl Schmitt on Culture and Violence in the Political Decision,” *Telos* No.142 (2008): 67.

¹³⁸ Unless of course an unexpected rupture occurs which shatters the present order, an exceptional event of a different sort that is beyond the scope of my argument.

The Italian State of Exception: A Complex Interlocking of National and International Actors

The conflict in Italy was one between two different ways of how society would be organized, specifically whether it would determine the amount of influence that the state or the social forces which had broken free of their institutional constraints would have upon the reconstitution of society into a new formation. Ultimately, it would be the former who would in large part succeed; with the overwhelming terror it was able to inflict proving decisive.¹³⁹ It is to the particulars of this campaign of terror that I now turn. My emphasis will not be on the bombings themselves. I singled out the Piazza Fontana for attention because it was the first bombing and it prefigured the terrain of Italian politics and society for the next decade. My focus, rather, will be on the organizational networks that were created that made the bombings possible, because, while the bombings were undoubtedly significant events, the changes that occurred within the Italian state would in large part remain in place long after the bombings themselves had subsided.

The bombings themselves cannot be properly examined without placing them in context: Specifically, the important position that Italy occupied in Cold War geo-politics which spurred the United States via NATO and the CIA to provide the necessary resources that laid the foundation for the Italian state's campaign of terror. American interference in Italian domestic affairs was not unpredicted of course. As I examined in

¹³⁹ The social movements in the country also had a number of fatal weaknesses, their most crucial being their inability to articulate themselves in a coherent manner. They failed to assume an organizational form that would allow them to wield political power, the intense pressure they were placed under only served to further complicate matters.

the last chapter, the United States heavily influenced the outcome of Italy's 1948 election, an election that would establish the contours for Italian political life for the next several decades and create a precedent for American involvement in Italian affairs. "Against the backdrop of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Italy has been seen as a border territory, on a knife-edge between two sides. The reasons for what has been called a tragic frontier experience were both geographical (Italy was seen as being literally on the front-line) and political (the country had the largest Communist Party in the Western world...)"¹⁴⁰ Italy, then, had the misfortune of being located in a crucial position during the Cold War. Thus, perhaps if the dynamic of the Cold War privileged a different geographical location Italy might have been spared the brunt of American intervention.¹⁴¹ As it was, Italy was a key intersection of the Cold War, a microcosm of the conflict itself, with actors from the entire political spectrum represented.

The equipment necessary for the bombings, in terms of the actual explosives that were used, was provided by NATO, in coordination with the CIA. At the beginning of the Cold War, fearing a possible Soviet invasion of Western Europe, highly secret stay-behind armies were created, men were trained in guerilla warfare and weapons caches were hidden across the countries of Western Europe, under the rubric of Operation Gladio, taking its name from the Italian word for sword. "In case of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe the secret Gladio soldiers under NATO command would have formed a

¹⁴⁰ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 106.

¹⁴¹ Or, perhaps not. The United States seemed to consider anything outside of Eastern Europe and Russia itself to be in its domain and would act accordingly, making the Cold War the first truly global conflict. When compared alongside the World Wars, which were conflicts across several regions, the Cold War left no part of the globe untouched.

so-called stay-behind network operating behind enemy lines, strengthening and setting up local resistance movements in enemy held territory, evacuating shot-down pilots and sabotaging the supply lines and production centers of the occupation forces with explosives.”¹⁴² The original purpose, then, of Gladio was to create the necessary foundation that would allow a partisan force to be quickly established, with its aim to harass Soviet supply lines, inflict casualties, and provide intelligence to American forces. A crucial component of Operation Gladio was the weapons caches that were placed throughout Western Europe. In Italy alone there were at least 139 storage sites “...across the country in forests, meadows and even under churches and cemeteries...the Gladio caches included portable arms, ammunition, explosives, hand grenades, knives and daggers, 60mm mortars, several 57mm recoilless rifles, sniper rifles, radio transmitters, binoculars, and various tools.”¹⁴³ Gladio forces would thus be well prepared to make life difficult for any Soviet occupation forces.

The invasion itself never came however, and in its absence the orientation of Gladio shifted from an international focus, disrupting a Soviet occupation, towards playing a direct and malicious role in domestic politics, with its focus now being upon preventing the ascension to power of parties that were viewed as possessing the potential to disrupt the Cold War balance of power. Under this logic a Communist Party gaining any share of political power and some control over the state was viewed as a serious threat by the United States. Italy, as it has been noted, matched all of these categories with the largest Communist Party in Western Europe, a deeply rooted radical culture, and

¹⁴² Daniele Ganser, *Nato's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 12.

an unstable political climate. As a result Italy came under special focus for CIA, who under the rubric of Operation Gladio, established close connections to the Italian secret service and its domestic intelligence agency, the SIFAR. The CIA's influence over the SFIAR reached such an extent that it threatened Italy's status as a sovereign nation, with its intelligence network placed in a clearly subordinate role to the United States and making it difficult to determine if it was capable of distinguishing that Italian and American interests may diverge in some instances. "The secret service SIFAR was from the very beginning regulated by a top-secret protocol imposed by the United States which constituted a real and complete renunciation of Italian sovereignty. According to this protocol, which was coordinated with NATO planning, the obligations of SIFAR towards the CIA headquarters in the United States allegedly included the making available of all intelligence collected and the granting of supervision rights to the United States above all concerning the choice of SIFAR personnel which at all times had to be CIA approved."¹⁴⁴ The prominent role that the United States played in the affairs of Italy cannot be ignored. The transformations that occurred in the Italian state during this period of time surely occurred with the knowledge, if not the direction and coordination of the United States, although the level of its support is unclear. However it is important not to present the Italian state as simply a helpless pawn in the game of Cold War geopolitics. While the United States may have provided the approval for the events that were to follow, it was the Italian state that actually put things into motion. The latent fascist character of the Italian state, which was explored in the last chapter, was what allowed for the outrages that were to follow. Thus while the Italian state of exception had crucial international

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. ,66.

support and was not solely confined to domestic issues, but had broader implications, it was at the same time, a homegrown Italian phenomenon that only became possible due to the particular characteristics of Italy.

Even before the high point of political protest was reached in 1969 sectors of the Italian state were already laying the groundwork for what was to follow. In early May 1965 a conference organized by the Alberto Pollio Institute occurred in Rome's Parco dei Principi Hotel which brought together members of the Italian far right including extra-parliamentary groups, politicians from Italy's fascist MSI¹⁴⁵ political party and operatives of the SFIAR, all sharing the view that they were involved in a global war against communism, one that in order to ensure victory, would require them to act beyond the bounds of what would be deemed acceptable in liberal societies. The Pollio Institute conference is important because it was there that the idea of the "strategy of tension", the name given to the bombing campaign and threatened coup d'états in Italy, was first elaborated. "In the years following the meeting at the Parco dei Principi Hotel the counter-revolutionary strategy devised by the Pollio Institute was progressively put into effect in Italy, often involving close practical collaboration between the secret services and members of the extreme right."¹⁴⁶ The strategy of tension would involve the active support of the Italian state, but would be actually carried out by members of neo-fascist

¹⁴⁵ The Italian Social Movement-National Right was formed in 1946 by supporters of Benito Mussolini and included a number of members from the short lived Salò Republic. Initially the MSI was a para-legal organization as it refused to recognize the legitimacy of the post-war Italian republic. It eventually came to the conclusion that the failure to purge fascists from the Italian civil service at the end of the war would allow it to assume a comfortable position within the confines of the Italian state and so it became a proper parliamentary party. They played an important role in the 1959 election, with the Christian Democrats relying upon them for the support necessary for their coalition government.

¹⁴⁶ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 45.

groups that stood at a distance from the actual organs of the state, providing the state with a plausible level of deniability. The most important of these extra-paramilitary neo-fascist groups was Ordine Nuovo, (New Order). Ordine Nuovo was originally a current within the MSI, but broke with it and became a separate organization in 1956, disappointed by what it saw as the MSI's moderation. Despite this formal separation the link between the MSI and Ordine Nuovo remained quite permeable with it not being uncommon for someone to be members of both organizations, or have former members of Ordine Nuovo in the MSI and vice versa.¹⁴⁷

The actual weapons used in the bombings that would terrorize Italy throughout the 1970s came primarily from the Gladio caches, making them untraceable. Thus weapons that were initially intended to be used against a foreign aggressor were turned against the population they were supposed to protect, with the justification that those on the Left, defined in the broadest sense, represented a potential fifth column, which if not actually laying the groundwork for a Soviet invasion, at the very least threatened the stability of the Italian state, hence making it appear vulnerable to foreign intervention. Yet, the complicity of the Italian state, NATO, and the CIA went beyond simply providing fanatical fascists with weapons and encouragement, a large number of them directly received training in the proper methods of how employ these weapons at a base in Sardinia established explicitly for this purpose.

Amongst the most important projects that SIFAR Director De Lorenzo arranged was the construction of a new headquarters for the secret army

¹⁴⁷ While it is certainly true that the MSI moderated itself slightly over time, its acceptance of the Italian Republic being one example, Ordine Nuovo always remained firmly in the fascist camp. Its motto "Our honor is called loyalty", one shared with the Waffen SS, being a clear indication of its orientation.

for which the CIA had provided 300 million lira. SIFAR and the CIA had agreed that for reasons of secrecy and functionality the Gladio centre should not be erected on the Italian mainland...Sardinia was chosen and land was brought. SIFAR Colonel Renzo Rocca, Chief of Office R that ran Gladio, was given the responsibility to supervise the construction of the new Gladio base where secret anti-Communist soldiers were equipped and trained by experts of the American and British Special Forces. The Gladio headquarters was baptized Saboteur's Training Centre...¹⁴⁸

It is clear then that the strategy of tension, the practical expression of Italy's state of exception, was far more complex than a few terrorists acting alone, instead it involved the active collaboration of the Italian secret service, foreign intelligence agencies, and NATO.

The purpose of the strategy of tension was to constrict and diffuse the sustained social upheaval in the country that had been present since the late 1960s. The mobilization of large segments of Italian society posed a threat to Italy's entrenched interests: the political and economic elite of the country. The obvious solution to the politicization of the Italian masses was to pursue a policy that would actively seek their depoliticization, thus providing the Italian state and its privileged elements with the space and the opportunity to ensure the recomposition of Italian society, a process that was necessitated by Italy's organic crisis and became even clearer with the economic recession of 1973¹⁴⁹, would happen on terms that were favorable to the Italian elite. The repressive response of the Italian state contained within its state of exception was

¹⁴⁸ Daniele Ganser, *Nato's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 68.

¹⁴⁹ As I have argued, Italy's state of exception was the response of the Italian state to the organic crisis in the country, which, through the inflationary pressure it exacted on the Italian economy, played a role in the economic recession of 1973. It was not the sole factor however, as 1973 was a crucial year the start of a world-wide recession that would mark the beginning of the end of the model of Keynesian economics and a corresponding welfare state, that had become dominant in Western societies after the end of the Second World War.

multifaceted, and comprised other important elements which I will examine later, but by far the most egregious and traumatizing was the series of bombings that, as I have demonstrated, were the result of a complex interaction between multiple institutional actors. Between December 12 1969 and December 23 1984 eight major bombings occurred which killed 150 and injured 818 civilians.¹⁵⁰ The bombings all occurred in populated civilian areas, from town squares to train stations, in the choice of their location and the high quality of materials employed (military grade C-4 seemed to be a particular favorite) it is fortunate that more were not killed and maimed. The purpose of the bombings was to instill fear in the Italian public. “Repression is never pure negativity, and it is not exhausted in the actual exercise of physical violence or in its internalization. There is something else to repression, something about which people talk: namely, the mechanisms of fear.”¹⁵¹ At its core then, the state of exception is not about violence, as the violence itself is but a means to an end, horrible as it is for those that directly suffer it; the true importance of the violence is in its far greater demonstrative effect, in the climate of fear that it creates and nurtures. It is fear that forecloses the potential for radical change, by destroying the solidarity required, and atomizing society into frightened singularities. A state of exception, with the propagation of fear as its central tenet, is therefore simply state terrorism.

While the bombings themselves formed the most visible and important part of the strategy of tension concurrent to them two other series of events occurred that while smaller in scope, demonstrate the progression of the strategy of tension. First, it was

¹⁵⁰ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 13.

¹⁵¹ Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 83.

hoped that by striking fear into the Italian population the bombings would cause it in large part to turn towards the state for security and in doing so against the PCI and the various Autonomist groups in the country, which were demonized by much of the mass media for, if not being directly connected to the bombings in some manner, then at least destabilizing Italy and creating the climate in which such events became possible. When the failure of this tactic became apparent as the PCI's share of the popular vote and mass mobilizations increased during the course of the 1970s, despite the bombings, a new, second, front was opened, with the Italian state now attacking its own security apparatus, and seeking to pin the resulting deaths squarely on the Left.

The archetypal form of this event occurred on May 17, 1973 when a bomb was thrown into the grounds of the Milan police headquarters, killing four and injuring another forty-five during a large ceremony in honor of Milan's recently slain Police Commissioner, Luigi Calabresi.¹⁵² Among the crowd, perhaps the most notable person in attendance was the Minister of the Interior, Maranio Rumor, who escaped unscathed. The actual culprit, Gianfranco Bertoli, was quickly apprehended. Although he was adamant that he was an anarchist who had acted alone, it was later revealed that he had been an informant of SIFAR and that the bombing itself had been organized by Ordine Nuovo.

“Despite attracting much less attention than the better-known Piazza Fontana bombing,

¹⁵² Luigi Calabresi was killed in revenge for his role in the death of Giuseppe Pinelli, an anarchist who was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the Piazza Fontana bombing. After being held for three days, without access to a lawyer, longer than was legally permitted under Italian law, he fell to his death from the fourth story of the Milan police station under mysterious circumstances during a police interrogation led by Calabresi along with two other officers. The police claimed that Pinelli overpowered them and threw himself through the window during their interrogation, committing suicide. However it was popularly believed by the Leftists in the country that he had been pushed out the window. Over two years later, in 1972, Calabresi himself was murdered outside of his home. Nearly two decades later in 1990, Adriano Sofri, former leader of the long defunct Autonomist group Lotta Continua was convicted of Calabresi's murder and sentenced to twenty-two years of incarceration, although he continues to maintain his innocence.

this attack and the related trail were extremely important... the episode can be viewed as a typical example of the strategy of tension, in so far as it presented all the usual ingredients associated with this strategy: an anarchist as the ostensible culprit, Ordine Nuovo as the organizer, other groups linked to the armed forces and the secret services both instigating terrorist attacks and obstructing the course of justice, and a coup d'état or the formation of an authoritarian government as the final aim."¹⁵³ The goal of these attacks was to generate sympathy for the state by portraying radical Leftists as bloodthirsty savages, (creating an internal enemy in Schmitt's terms) who lacked any concern for human life. In reality they were false-flag operations, attacks against the Italian state that were propagated by other sectors of and those close to the Italian state that were then ascribed to the Left in order to justify a vicious response from the state, up to and including a military coup. However, an attack at an event with someone as prominent as the Interior Minister present demonstrates that the strategy of tension was not a unitary endeavor in which all sectors of the state were involved in a coherent fashion. In actuality, the strategy of tension was directed by and engaged only a select few state functionaries.

The state is a complex organism and not all elements of the state were involved in Italy's state of exception, or for that matter even aware of Operation Gladio's existence. "In each country the military secret service operated the anti-Communist army within the state in close collaboration with the CIA or MI6 unknown to parliaments and populations. In each country, leading members of the executive, including Prime Ministers,

¹⁵³ Anna Bull, *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 34.

Presidents, Interior Ministers and Defense Ministers, were involved in the conspiracy...”¹⁵⁴ Italy’s role in Operation Gladio and the strategy of tension which ensued from and was dependent upon it, thus subverted democratic mechanisms and involved only the core of the state, namely the security forces, the intelligence service and members of the executive. Democracy is undermined in any war and Italy’s internal war was no exception. Perhaps, however, some solace should be taken in the fact that the strategy of tension did not involve a wider spectrum of society, influential as those that were involved in organizing and enacting the strategy of tension were, they felt it necessary to obscure their role, by having extra-parliamentary organizations such as Ordine Nuovo, actually carry out the attacks.

While the entire Italian state was not involved in managing the strategy of tension, the connection between the state and the neo-fascist groups which they had empowered was not straightforward either. The attack on the Milan police headquarters, with the Minister of Interior present, demonstrates the, at times, conflictual relationship between the state and these groups. Whether Rumor played an active role in the strategy of tension is beside the point. It is highly unlikely that he would organize an attack at an event where he himself would be present, thus exposing himself to harm or even death, and if he did play an important role in the strategy of tension, then this attack makes clear the confluence of forces that had been set loose. In its desire to crush the Left, the Italian state was attempting to direct forces which were difficult to control and could use their skills they had learned and the weapons they had been provided in unpredictable ways,

¹⁵⁴ Daniele Ganser, *Nato's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 1.

inflicting harm upon the state. Further, the state itself is not a unitary organism and regardless of these groups and the harm they might inflict on the state on their own accord, the potential also existed for them to be directed in ways that privileged specific segments of the state above the state's general interest. "It is absurd to claim that no pawn moved on the chess-board of terror without the hand of the CIA or the Italian secret services behind it. The conservative forces with an interest in the strategy of tension were often divided by fierce personal rivalries, they were sometimes seeking different and incompatible goals and they operated within a kaleidoscope of constantly shifting alliances. Relations between intelligence agencies and terrorists are rarely candid or straightforward."¹⁵⁵ Although the Italian state created the strategy of tension and had a large measure of influence upon the neo-fascist groups which it employed to do its bidding, the connection between them was not as direct as a state functionary ordering a member of Ordine Nuovo to carry out a particular act (although in some instances this is what occurred). Rather, as I have sought to demonstrate, circumstances were considerably more complex.

A State within a State: The P2 Parallel State Network and its Direction of the Italian State of Exception

Yet, an endeavor as complicated as the strategy of tension obviously required some form of direction, while the state routinely seeks to suppress subversives, something on the scale of the concerted bombing campaign and the attempt to frame the

¹⁵⁵ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 21.

Left required the formation of new apparatuses within the Italian state.¹⁵⁶ When the political and economic elite in a country feel threatened and are concerned about their capability to maintain power, the formation of a parallel state network, one that exists alongside the democratic mechanisms of the state, but subverts them, is not an uncommon development:

...the continuity of the state by the institutional perpetuation of an effective parallel state network...A network, as it runs through the various branches and apparatuses of the state; parallel, as it functions behind the façade of the state apparatuses, which carefully disguise it; state, as although often para-public, it provides a permanent recourse for the bourgeoisie in their struggle to maintain and safeguard their power.¹⁵⁷

The state of exception is an event of this significant magnitude, as it enacts changes at every level of the state and also drastically alters society, because of the formation of such a network becomes necessary. Further, the internal and often unacknowledged war that is directed against dissidents requires the articulation of a coherent strategy and actions that are aligned with and carry forward this strategy on the part of the state. Were the state to rely solely on the mechanisms that exist during relatively stable periods its reaction would most likely be scattered and inconsistent thus further undermining the security of the state. During states of exception the formation of these parallel state

¹⁵⁶ This is especially true in the case of Italy, as the Italian state was already weak before the crisis occurred. Were the Italian state in a stronger position, such as the United States, then the formation of a parallel governance network on such a scale would not have been required, because the state would have already had the mechanisms in place to deal with the crisis, the reaction would have been an almost predetermined structural response. To continue the analogy of the United States and Italy, the response of the American state to the political upheaval and terrorism of the 1970s was COINTELPRO. Although this required the application of resources, the creation of special units, and engagement in illegal activities crucially the formation of a parallel governance network was not required, because unlike in Italy, the potential for such action already existed in the structure of the American state, due to its strength and deeply rooted connections in civil society. Unlike the Italian state, the scope of the American state extended beyond its own direct institutional apparatus to influence organizations within civil society, demonstrating in practice Gramsci's metaphor of the modern Western state as one with a multilayered ring of defenses.

¹⁵⁷ Nicos Poulantzas, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships: Portugal, Greece, Spain* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 100-101.

networks should be expected, in fact it would be notable if they did not exist during such periods of crisis.

In Italy, the parallel state network was known as P2 or Propaganda Due. P2 was itself a secret Masonic lodge, which formed a state within a state and was where power in Italy truly resided. The lodge itself was established in 1966 by Licio Gelli, an extremely well connected financier who fought with Franco's forces in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and later served as liaison between Mussolini's government and the Third Reich, a position that brought him into frequent contact with Hermann Göring, Hitler's chosen successor. Gelli used his own personal contacts as well those of Italy's other Masonic lodges to build his circle of influence. "Gelli, who had been an extreme Fascist, entered Freemasonry in 1965 and was quick to notice that it lacked right-wing membership and support... He asked if he could re-recruit useful former Masons who had not been readmitted to Masonic life because of their contacts with Fascism. He brought them all back. There were certain officers near pensionable age, but they were precious to him because they gave him contacts with active officers."¹⁵⁸ From this base and with his own contacts in the world of finance and industry, (Gelli also ran a highly profitable textile and import and export company) he was able to ensure his access to all the important figures of Italian society.

The extent of the influence that P2 obtained in Italian society and even its existence was not revealed until 1981, when Gelli's villa was raided as part of an ongoing investigation into his role in the collapse of Michele Sindona's financial empire. Sindona

¹⁵⁸ Peter Nichols, "How Licio Gelli took over Italy's secret power centre," *The Times*, May 30, 1981, 14.

was himself a member of P2 and had clear connections to the Mafia; he was convicted on 65 counts of fraud, perjury, false bank statements and misappropriation of bank funds. During the raid on Gelli's villa a document called, "Plan for Democratic Rebirth", which called for the consolidation of the media, suppression of trade unions, and the rewriting of the Italian Constitution was found ¹⁵⁹ along with a partial membership list of P2 totaling nearly a thousand names. "The membership lists discovered in 1981 show that 195 high-ranking officers from all branches of the military belonged to the lodge. There were fifty-two officers from the carabinieri paramilitary police...Most significantly the heads of both the domestic secret service and military intelligence were affiliates."¹⁶⁰ P2 also counted among its member's politicians, from every political party, outside of the PCI and the Radical Party, prominent journalists, academics, and businessmen, and the future Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi. Including a broad spectrum of the Italian elite, P2 served as a place where they could network and strategize the future of the country.

The most significant aspect of P2 was the central role that it played in the strategy of tension, serving as a nexus through which all aspects of Italian society could be coordinated, in addition to providing valuable contacts for NATO and the CIA. "The idea is now emerging of a Gladio web made up of semi-autonomous cadres which-although answerable to their secret service masters and ultimately to the NATO-CIA command could initiate what they regarded as anti-communist operations by themselves, needing

¹⁵⁹ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 186.

¹⁶⁰ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 59.

only sanction and funds from the existing official Gladio column.”¹⁶¹ P2 thus ensured that Operation Gladio would continue to expand by providing new individuals who were willing to serve in the roles required. Further, outside of simply assisting in the terrorizing of Italian society, P2 allowed for a systemic attack against the Left in the country at the ideological level through its members who held positions as journalists, academics, or politicians. P2 can thus be seen as cumulative response of the Italian elite to the prolonged crisis that was racking Italian society. Here the response to the symptoms of the crisis, mass mobilization and growing popular acceptance of radical politics, the state of exception, was significantly expanded from its initial basis. Yet more importantly, it was the organization of the stratum of the elite into the P2 membership that allowed for the formulation of a coherent ideological vision (represented in part by the “Plan for A Democratic Rebirth”), one that society could coalesce around, something that had not existed since the eruption of the organic crisis in the late 1960s. P2 represented the rearticulation of power in Italian society, allowing the Italian state to regain, in Schmittian terms, the power of the decision, the ability to enact and enforce its will upon society.

Precisely what occurred in Italy in the 1970s and what deepened and prolonged the crisis, was that the Italian state lost the decisive power of decision, for a period, due both to its structural weakness and its lack of ideological vision. Other forces gained the potential to influence Italian life at a structural and systemic level, such an occurrence while rare, is not unprecedented:

¹⁶¹ Ed Vulliamy, “Secret Agents, Freemasons, Fascists...and a top-level campaign of political destabilization,” *The Guardian*, December 5, 1990, 12.

...it remains for the most part self-evidently clear where the focal point of the deciding will lies, which of the different possibilities is central for the normal, average life, and which type of the highest will emerges definitively or decisively at the key moment and determines the system type. A suspension, a combination, or confusion...In transitional intermediary periods, there is perhaps even a fortuitous balance of several types of mutually dependent, highest powers.¹⁶²

P2 hence played a crucial role at both the material and the ideational level, allowing Italy to overcome its organic crisis and creating a new foundation upon which Italian society could be based. At the material level the power of decision was regained through the terrorization of Italian society into submission which destroyed the potential of the alternative sources of power that were gestating, a process that will be explored more fully later in this chapter, with the crushing of the Autonomist movement. Ideologically, the interactions within P2 and the creation of documents such as the “Plan for A Democratic Rebirth”, gave the Italian state a coherent vision, a project which it could seek to will into existence.

The Red Brigades: The Impracticality of Guerilla Warfare in Italy

This project was not without adverse reactions and resistance however. The most immediate and the one that I will now turn to, was the creation of the Red Brigades. The Red Brigades were first formed in 1970 by Renato Curcio, a student at the University of Trento and his girlfriend, Margherita Cagol. Although the founders of the Red Brigades were students, the organization itself was based in factories of Milan and throughout its history the vast majority of their membership were workers from the factories of the

¹⁶² Carl Schmitt, *Legality and Legitimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 6.

industrial North.¹⁶³ The first cadres of the Red Brigades were workers who had become radicalized by their experiences in the United Base Committees (CUBs) that had formed in Italy's factories during the height of the Hot Autumn.

The first phase of Curcio's and Margherita's revolutionary work involved the development of bonds with the autonomous groups in the factories of Milan, which were looking for allies to assist in transforming the raging spontaneous confrontation into a broad anti-capitalist struggle. In September 1969, therefore the Pirelli CUB, the IBM and Sit-Siemens Study Groups, Renato Curcio and his associates and others, formed the Metropolitan Political Collective, the group that was shortly to lead to the Red Brigades.¹⁶⁴

Many of these workers were disillusioned and angered by what they saw as the cooption of the CUBs by the trade union apparatus and the impasse that the wave of protest seemed to have reached by the end of 1970. Further, with the bombing of Piazza Fontana, the struggle in Italy appeared to be moving onto a new, violent stage.

Those who came to associate themselves with the Red Brigades believed that the present situation in Italy required the employment of violent methods. In the immediate term force was required to defend workers' organizations from a surge of fascist attacks and to break the impasse that appeared to have arisen in Italy, opening the way towards a further radicalization of Italian society, eventually culminating in a direct assault on the Italian state itself, led of course, by the Red Brigades. For the Red Brigades violence was valued above all for its instructive properties; their motto, "Strike one to educate one hundred" clearly encapsulated their views on educational potential of violence. Believing that what was holding back the struggle in Italy was Italians' residual loyalty to the

¹⁶³ The composition of the Red Brigades' differed sharply when compared to their contemporaries in Germany, the Bader-Meinhof Group, who was primarily composed of disaffected students and middle class professionals.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Meade, *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 39.

Italian state, the Red Brigades sought to provoke the state into a highly repressive reaction that would destroy its legitimacy. “The specific, immediate aim of the Red Brigades has most often been understood to have been the creation of instability sufficient to produce an authoritarian reaction, which would in turn spark a mass proletarian uprising that would devour the capitalist state.”¹⁶⁵ Seeking to provoke such reaction proved to be incredibly short-sighted, as will be seen later, when the full brunt of the Italian state was brought to bear upon the Red Brigades and the social movements in the country, it would result in the outright destruction of both. While the Italian state was weak in comparison to other Western states, Italy was not Cuba; its repressive apparatuses remained highly functional, with the Red Brigades, at most, serving as a minor irritant.

The strategy and tactics adopted by the Red Brigades meant that they differed sharply from the other extra-parliamentary groups of this period, particular those influenced by Autonomist thought. The difference between the Red Brigades and the rest of the extra-parliamentary Left is of particular importance, because as I will argue later, the entire justification for the Italian state’s attack upon these diverse groups was predicated upon the notion that Red Brigades and the Autonomists were separate wings of the same shadowy organization. The Red Brigades were firm in their adherence to orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideas of revolution and saw themselves as forming an urban guerilla vanguard that was tasked with overthrowing the Italian state and leading the masses towards the post-capitalist revolutionary society. Initially however, and in

¹⁶⁵ Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser, *Italy: A Difficult Democracy: A Survey of Italian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 183.

contrast to other guerilla groups, the Red Brigades sought to root itself within a wider social milieu, while at the same time carrying out clandestine assaults upon industrial (i.e. kidnapping factory managers) and state targets (i.e. threatening judges). This split between a public and a clandestine wing can be seen in the organization of the Red Brigades as it sought to be a broad based horizontal movement in public, with a separate structure based upon a military chain of command for clandestine action.

In theory, the organization was supposed to consist of a hierarchically organized vertical structure (brigade-colonna-executive) and a horizontal structure (the fronti), characterized with respect to the specific competences of individual militants. Again in theory the work of the fronti should have been to continually analyze the sectors within their competence and transform this knowledge into possible proposals for politically and socially motivated campaigns. It was then the responsibility of the Executive Committee to organize campaigns concretely and delegate them to the individual colonne...In fact, the theoretical model of the fronti turned out to be irreconcilable with the dominating hierarchical structure based on the colonne. Above all this conflicted with the principle of the compartmentalization of the organization into brigade and colonne. The outcome was that...the mass front ended up existing only on paper.¹⁶⁶

The collapse of the Red Brigades into a solely secretive and isolated guerilla force was due as much to the difficulty of maintaining a horizontal and a vertical configuration within the same organization as it was to the near destruction of the Red Brigades in 1972.

Prior to 1972 the Red Brigades had confined themselves to actions which they believed had mass support and appeal among industrial workers, with their roots in the factories of the industrial triangle allowing them to gauge what would be deemed acceptable. These first initial actions primarily involved property damage, such as the

¹⁶⁶ Gian Caselli and Donatella della Porta, "The History of the Red Brigades: Organizational Structure and Strategies of Action (1970-1982)," in *The Red Brigades and Left-Wing Terrorism in Italy*, ed. Raimondo Catanzaro (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 81-2.

firebombing of an executive's car, or were confined to threats rather than actions, such as menacing letters sent to a particularly dictatorial foremen.¹⁶⁷ These initial and relatively benign actions compared to what was to come, provoked a swift response from the state. Contrary to the belief of the Red Brigades that they would be easily capable of surviving any state assault, their relative openness in this period meant their near destruction as an organization. "The discovery of hideouts and the arrests in mid-1972 were serious blows to the Red Brigades, which was then small and in uncertain health. The Red Brigades realized that they would now have to be more careful and they set to work to change their organization by compartmentalization and other means..."¹⁶⁸ The setbacks of 1972 caused the Red Brigades to abandon their pretension that they could be a mass movement within the factories of the industrial triangle leaving them as solely a collection of armed nuclei. This shift in organization also led to a gradual escalation of violence. March 3rd, 1972 marked the first in a series of kidnappings and physical assaults upon those who were deemed to be enemies of the working class by the Red Brigades.¹⁶⁹

With its loss of a connection to wider social strata the Red Brigades became increasingly sectarian and fundamentalist in their beliefs. While in its early period, shortly after its formation, the Red Brigades aspired to guide the working classes towards the revolution, with the prerequisite that they break any affiliation to the Italian state accomplished by provoking it into a violent response may have been paternalistic and suicidal, at least the Red Brigades at this stage viewed themselves as part of a wider struggle. After 1972 however the Red Brigades came to consider themselves as a self-

¹⁶⁷ Robert Meade, *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 42.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 50-1.

¹⁶⁹ Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 96.

contained totality of all that was truly radical in Italy. Those who viewed themselves as to the Left of the PCI, the basis of Italy's vibrant social movements were no longer to be engaged. Instead, in the Red Brigades view, they now represented an impediment to their vision, which was of course the only proper method for achieving radical change in Italian society. The separation of the Red Brigades from wider social strata after 1972, and its subsequent reorganization as a solely underground organization, instilled within it a tendency common to such organizations, an increasing disconnect from reality. "While other political organizations had to measure themselves in terms of support and participation they were able to win and mobilize, the Red Brigades were only indirectly subject to such pressures. The conditions of underground life functioned as a material basis for the construction and elaboration of a version of reality which did not allow refutation or questioning. It underpinned a logic which increasingly drove the Red Brigades to impose their own reality, and to make the world conform to their view of it."¹⁷⁰ The Red Brigades became ossified within the rigidities of their own theoretical framework, spouting tracts from Lenin and Mao that only served to demonstrate their total inability to comprehend the contingences of Italian life. As they descended deeper into their own quagmire the Red Brigades would have been reduced to a mere oddity of the Italian Left, a museum piece from a bygone era, if not for the fact that as they became increasingly irrelevant from a methodological perspective;¹⁷¹ they imposed themselves politically through the rapidly rising levels of violence they were willing to engage in, in

¹⁷⁰ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990), 291.

¹⁷¹ In terms of providing strategies and tactics that actually corresponded to the situation in Italy and could be utilized tilt the balance of forces in favor of radical change.

the process curtailing the social movements in the country, which did represent the best possibility for radical change.

The accelerating violence of the Red Brigades ended up playing into the hands of the Italian state allowing it to tighten the noose that would strangle the social upheaval in the country. By 1976 the Red Brigades had declared their intention to attack the very heart of the state, carrying out their first assassinations. The main victims of these assassinations were the Carabinieri and magistrates. Rather than weakening the state however, these actions only strengthened it as it now had the justification to enact a series of emergency laws, which began in 1974, after the first kidnapping had occurred and rapidly expanded in scope throughout the decade. These laws concerned primarily two major areas. First, police powers were increased. "...The police were permitted a wider range of circumstances for legitimate recourse to firearms (1975) and their rights to detain and search suspects were steadily extended, initially to cover cases of apparently unequivocal involvement in a crime already committed (1975), then when individuals refused to state their identities (1978) and finally most controversially-when they gave reason for police to believe they were preparing, but had not yet committed, an illegal act."¹⁷² One of the immediate effects of these laws was a rapid rise in the number of protestors who were shot and killed by the police during demonstrations, a figure that

¹⁷² David Moss, *The Politics of Left-Wing Violence in Italy, 1969-85* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1989), 137-138.

would reach 150 within the next ten years.¹⁷³ The second element of the law that underwent substantial alterations concerned detention rights.

Magistrates were increasingly compelled by law to order the arrest and preventative detention, and to refuse the release on bail, of person for whom they felt sufficient evidence existed for involvement in any politically motivated crime...In 1974 the maximum period between arrest and definitive sentence was increased to between eight months and eight years, depending on the seriousness of the crime; and in 1979 for acts of terrorism in particular, the limits were extended by a further one-third, in theory permitting a defendant to remain in jail for up to ten years and eight months before first sentence was first pronounced....these provisions, within normal circumstances would have been unacceptable were justified by the emergency created by public disorder...¹⁷⁴

These far-reaching laws would be used, as shall be seen later, to repress the vibrant political culture in Italy.

The attack of the Red Brigades upon the heart of the state would then recoil upon the entire Left in the country overwhelming it. The Red Brigades, in their manner of organizing and the form their violence took, came to represent a microcosm of the state itself. "The armed guerrilla struggle had begun as an outlet for continuing resistance to police violence and fascist attacks, but it ended up serving to highlight the central importance of the political system...The Red Brigades reproduced the values of the system, helped turn thousands of former activist into spectators, and made the popular movement seem unimportant."¹⁷⁵ Hence, the Red Brigades, despite their seemingly radical polemics, did not represent anything truly different, but instead virtually

¹⁷³ Dilip Das, "Impact of Antiterrorism Measures on Democratic Law Enforcement: The Italian Experience," in *Meeting the Challenges of Global Terrorism: Prevention, Control, and Recovery*, ed. Dilip Das and Peter Kratoski (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 306.

¹⁷⁴ David Moss, *The Politics of Left-Wing Violence in Italy, 1969-85* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1989), 184-185.

¹⁷⁵ Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 54.

reproduced the state on a far smaller scale. The Red Brigades did so both in its internal organization, as well as in its interactions with outside groups. Internally, the Red Brigades were arranged in a rigid hierarchical manner with a clear chain of command, similar to the way in which government ministries are organized. Externally, the Red Brigades saw themselves as a disciplinary force, tasked with frightening capitalists and providing the rest of the Left with the proper model for revolution, not unlike how the state exerts its will against those it deems to be undesirable and performs an organizing role in society. Yet, while the Red Brigades exercised forms of violence that were similar to those of the state, it should be clear the violence that Red Brigades employed was at least targeted to specific individuals, rather than mass slaughter of the Italian state. The eight major bombings organized with the consent of the Italian state killed 150 people. This total excludes the dozens more who were killed during demonstrations by Italian security forces emboldened by the new emergency laws. In comparison, the total number of deaths that can be attributed to the actions of the Red Brigades, throughout the 1970s totals, at most 75.¹⁷⁶

The resort to terrorism by a section of the Italian Left, impatient and eager to avenge the deaths caused by the Italian state, in reality ended up empowering the state, rather than weakening it. Such an outcome should not be surprising as the state is the most effective purveyor of terrorism, as the complex arrangements that were created between the Italian state, NATO, and non-state actors such as Ordine Nuovo, all in name of killing Italian civilians, demonstrates. The turn to terrorism by a section of the Italian

¹⁷⁶ Daniele Ganser, *Nato's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 5.

population provided the state with the justification to employ violence on its own population and make changes to the legal architecture. In doing so the state demonstrated its higher perfection of the mechanisms of violence when compared to the Red Brigades. Ironically, then, the actions of the Red Brigades actually strengthened the Italian state, by providing a justification to the Italian public for actions that formerly would have been regarded as impermissible.

Terrorism never destabilizes the established rule, rather it strengthens it, since it destabilizes the opposition (even when the opposition is most moderate) which is thus forced, in order to avoid being suspiciously drawn in as a cover to terrorism, to accept, support, and allow those laws and those uncontrollable, violent acts which will in fact be used against citizens and workers, not to mention the spontaneous movements of those who have been deceived.¹⁷⁷

With the physical closure of the space for political action political discourse was correspondingly constrained. The closure of political discourse and the potentiality it represented can be seen in the sharp rightward shift of the PCI, in the mid 1970s, a process that was promoted by the tactics of the Red Brigades.

The Adoption of Eurocommunism by the Italian Communist Party and its Obsession with Capturing the Italian State

Although, as was seen in the last chapter, the PCI had long since stopped being a force for radical change in Italy, during the course of the 1970s it rapidly moderated its stance even further, to the point where it played a reactionary role, attacking the social movements in the country and subsequently destroying its own base of support. While the actions of the Red Brigades had an effect on this reorientation, with the PCI fully

¹⁷⁷ Dario Fo, "The Sandstorm Method," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 214.

embracing a law and order agenda as a result, the shift towards Eurocommunism occurred gradually, over the course of several years and began before the creation of the Red Brigades. As the name implies, Eurocommunism was a phenomenon of Western European Communist Parties. While the entire trend towards Eurocommunism was thus a regional process that occurred through the course of the late 1960s and 1970s, the PCI as the largest communist party in Western Europe, occupied a leading role. Its acceptance of Eurocommunism would cause it to become the accepted strategical mode for Communist parties in Western Europe.

Eurocommunism arose as the Communist parties of Western Europe tried to separate themselves from the “actually existing socialism” in the Soviet Union. This process was spurred on both because the Communist Parties wanted to dissociate themselves from the authoritarianism and repression of the Soviet Union and by the belief that the circumstances in Western Europe were radically different than those of Russia in 1917, ruling out a revolutionary seizure of power by a vanguard party as a viable way to obtain power. It was 1968, the Prague Spring, above all, that crystallized this perspective for the Communist Parties of Western Europe.

When did Eurocommunism actually take off? It did so in 1968...in Czechoslovakia, where the Prague Spring had shown itself to be a considered attempt to give Socialism a democratic basis, the Soviet invasion made the Western Communist Parties realize with unprecedented force and urgency that they had to separate themselves off from the Soviets by rejecting the Soviet model.¹⁷⁸

The clear bankruptcy of the Soviet model meant that the Communist Parties of Western Europe had to distance themselves from it, were they to have any hope of

¹⁷⁸ Manuel Azcarate, “What is Eurocommunism?,” in *Euro-communism: Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere*, ed. G.R Urban (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978), 18.

maintaining legitimacy within their own countries. Hence they sought to reformulate socialism upon a clear democratic basis, as opposed to the totalitarian “actually existing socialism” of Eastern Europe.

One of the major problems that the Western European Communist Parties saw afflicting the Soviet bloc was an intolerance of differing opinions and a demand that all Communist Parties adhere to the Moscow line. In contrast, the Western European Communist Parties argued that their vision of socialism and in fact the manner in which debates were carried on internally within the parties and between them fully embodied the democratic ideals commonly accepted in Western Europe: “...the fundamental components of Eurocommunism are pluralism and polycentrism and therefore the right of each communist party to decide in autonomy and map its specific road to socialism within its national context much be recognized.”¹⁷⁹ Breaking with the Soviet model and promoting vigorous debate as a way of strengthening the party and the cause for socialism are surely positive. Proving that it was possible for a democratic form of socialism to exist, one that was democratic in its methods of organization as well as the ways in which it sought to gain power, is certainly a worthy and important endeavor. However, Eurocommunism was beset by several flaws that would prove fatal, turning it from an attempt to form an alternative to Soviet communism that sought a gradual progression towards the obtainment of socialism to, in the case of Italy, a party-form that proved to be no different than any other political party.

¹⁷⁹ Franco Ferrarotti, “Eurocommunism, Italian Version,” in *Eurocommunism: The Ideological and Political-Theoretical Foundations*, ed. George Schwab (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 168.

If one error above all can be said to prefigure the eventual failure of Eurocommunism it was the acceptance of the state as a neutral instrument that could be simply utilized by any Communist Party that might come to power, with perhaps a few slight modifications. "The state is no longer an enemy to be confronted and eventually overcome by violent means. It is an instrument to be reoriented, set in the right direction, endowed with a public function, and made functional in order to be effectively used for social purposes, not only for private interests."¹⁸⁰ As I have argued throughout this chapter and the one previous, the state is not a neutral instrument; it is a product of capitalist society. Rather than an object that stands outside of capitalism and can be utilized by anyone who gains power over it to intervene within capitalism, altering it in a manner of one's choosing, the state is immersed in capitalism, with its apparatuses internalizing capitalist logic, forming part of the larger capitalist framework. It is the state that provides a terrain upon which capitalist interests are effectively organized and given force. While it is true that the state may be used to enact some reforms, in its present condition, it cannot be used to create effective, radical, systemic change. Perhaps the state in conjunction with a mass social movement can begin to effect some structural changes, as has been the case in several countries in Latin America in recent years, but such a process also requires, concurrently, drastic transformations in the organization of the state in order to create the space for these changes to occur. Particularly in the case of Italy, where the Italian state had never fully expunged itself from the stain of fascism and was carrying out a campaign of terror against its own citizens, proclaiming the state to be a neutral instrument, willfully blinding oneself to reality, is the height of folly.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 178.

With the state no longer something to be confronted, but rather an instrument that could be wielded in any manner that those who controlled it wished, the PCI's strategy became overwhelmingly focused upon the state. In its confused analysis, it was agreed that to gain control of the state required that the PCI constrain itself within the narrow limits allowed by bourgeois institutions, but that the PCI could not do otherwise, because if it did actually manage to gain power through these tactics and then pursued a more radical path once elected, it could be accused of hypocrisy. "...once we accept the rules of the game and come to power through the ballot box, we are committed to respecting these rules, whether they benefit us or not. We cannot have one yardstick before we come to power and another while in power."¹⁸¹ By deeming it necessary that the PCI work only within the organs of the state and not organize an independent basis of power outside of the state and empower the social movements in the country, which could then be drawn upon to push through changes that might be resisted by antagonistic state functionaries, the PCI became just another political party. Lacking a major vision to transform society, the PCI in large part devolved into an electoral machine, seeking to win the most votes. Although it is true that the PCI still had millions of members in its union confederation, the CGIL, and a plethora of other social and cultural organizations, these served, in large part, as a funnel for votes, and did not pursue policies independent of the PCI.

While 1968 was an important event that formed the impetus for the creation of Eurocommunism, the more important event, and the one that confirmed the PCI's adherence to Eurocommunism was the coup against the Allende government in Chile in

¹⁸¹ Lucio Radice, "Communism with an Italian Face?," in *Euro-communism: Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere*, ed. G.R Urban (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978), 56.

1973. For Enrico Berlinguer, who had become General Secretary of the Party in 1972, what happened in Chile was a result of the Popular Front moving too quickly, creating irreparable divisions which led to its downfall. Overlooking the American interference and external pressure on the country, Berlinguer argued that what should be gleaned from Chile was that communist parties in the West should proceed cautiously, and should pursue a policy of alliances, seeking to be as inclusive as possible, in order to avoid creating a similar divisive situation.

The tragic Chilean experience confirmed and led us to underline a deep conviction of ours, one that has always guided our political conduct: everything possible, must be done-naturally following to tactics suited to the differences in concrete conditions existing in one or another political phase-to prevent the people and the country from splitting down the middle into two counterpoised enemy camps. Even in those moments when the political battle is most bitter, we must always, without abandoning the fight, pursue a unity oriented policy and the search for forms of convergence and alliances.¹⁸²

The problem with this unity based approach is that it meant no deviation from the status quo was possible. The potential for radical change only emerges during periods of rupture; by seeking to maintain stability at all costs the PCI foreclosed the possibility for significant change.

A period of division is thus a necessary requirement. Instead of trying to ensure that the division that already existed in Italy was used for productive ends, the PCI strove to ignore it. Further, by privileging alliances as an end in itself, rather than a means towards specific goals, the PCI made the implicit assumption that its policies, as moderate as they were, would be broadly accepted by political and economic elites. The

¹⁸² Enrico Berlinguer, "Report to the Central Committee in Preparation for the XIV National Congress of the Communist Party of Italy," *Italian Communists* (1975):102-103.

PCI assumed that it was playing on a level playing field and if it simply abided by the rules and sought as wide a consensus as possible, it would be able to gain power.

However, within the dynamic of the Cold War, anything that was proposed by a Communist Party was tarred with the brush of subversion. Further, as will be seen, the PCI would engage in these alliances without demanding any substantial concessions in return.

The irony of the PCI's attempt to gain control of the state, though not an entirely unexpected result, is that it was not the PCI that changed the state, but rather the state that changed the PCI. As the disorder through the 1970s reached new heights, the PCI responded, not by seeking to formulate a coherent alternative that would allow for society to progress, but rather advocated an uncritical defense of state institutions, declaring that they were under threat from the terrorist upsurge in the country and had to be protected. In doing so the PCI also sought as well to justify the repressive response of the state: "...the party has adopted the position that the defense of republican institutions is an indispensable goal, necessary to protect these institutions against terrorist attack. This is the real heart of the contradiction: what might be called the illusion that an authoritarian, repressive direction in the legislative and police apparatus might be necessary, in fact, indispensable, for the conquests of the working class and popular grassroots movements. There is absolutely nothing to justify this illusion.¹⁸³" Further, rather than trying to make the state responsive to the needs of the working class, as any party with even supposedly

¹⁸³ Suzanne Cowan, "Terrorism and the Italian Left," in *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition*, ed. Carl Boggs and David Plotke (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), 190.

social democratic intentions is supposed to do,¹⁸⁴ the PCI created its ideal of the working class and the subject of the individual worker in response to requirements of the state and the capitalist class in the country. What was good for the state then became good for the worker.

This policy can be clearly observed in the PCI's directives¹⁸⁵ towards the working class. As the economic situation in Italy deteriorated from 1973 onwards, rather than defending the gains of workers and seeking to use the crisis as an opportunity to mobilize other sectors of society as the economic downturn caused increased amounts of suffering, the PCI instead urged a policy of austerity. Not only did the PCI fully support a policy of austerity, it attacked its main rivals, the DC, for not inspiring Italians, as they accepted wage cuts and reduced social services: "...what stands out above all is the narrowness of prospects characterizing the austerity policy urged and carried out to date by the government. This is the point of greatest differentiation between ourselves, on the one hand, and the government leadership and the dominant economic groups on the other. Basically, their state of mind is one of surrender, which is just the opposite of what is

¹⁸⁴ Although the PCI still claimed to be a party that believed in a post-capitalist society, its policies, particularly its foreign policy, were to the right of parties that were firmly in the Social Democratic Camp, such as the Labour Party of Britain. Eurocommunism itself never clearly elaborated its relationship towards Social Democracy, so while they had similarities, due to a shared penchant for reformism, Eurocommunism should be considered apart from Social Democracy; even if, Eurocommunism often appeared to be even more conservative than the parties of Social Democracy.

¹⁸⁵ Directives, because in the best tradition of Stalinism, the working class was instructed what it should do, rather than having the policies of the PCI form out of direct consultation with the working class. While this is common to other political parties, usually there is at least the specter of the grassroots of the party having some influence, none of which existed in the PCI. Further, the PCI should come under more scrutiny because as a communist party, its entire purpose is to be a tribune of the oppressed, to take what may be particularized struggles and concerns and generalize them on a national basis, in the process providing them with a coherent form. Additionally the development of Eurocommunism was supposedly to correct the large democratic deficiencies that existed, both within the party itself and in its interactions with society. Instead democracy deteriorated in both respects.

needed if people are to accept with conviction certain necessary sacrifices.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, while the DC saw austerity policies as a way to demobilize the working class, the PCI, at perhaps their most delusional, criticized the government, not for the cuts themselves, but because Italians were not enthusiastic enough in their acceptance of them. Here the PCI trends into almost Orwellian territory. Not only must you accept your fate, one that is worsening at a rapid pace, but you must do so with a smile on your face, and praise those who are causing you such hardship in the first place.

Continuing this corrosive logic, the PCI, saw it as the duty of workers to increase their productivity. Not only, then, was the working class expected to suffer declining living conditions and enjoy it, but it was also expected to work harder. The argument put forth in justification by the PCI flew in the face of the Marxist tradition of which it was supposedly a part of. Increased productivity was required due to the importance of profit: “...the PCI identified parasitic rent, and not profit, as the main enemy of the Italian working class. Simultaneously, the new stand of the PCI against the nationalization of economic activities was announced...the importance of profit was acknowledged, and it was explained that the task of the Italian working class was essentially to struggle for increased productivity, and to make all classes-including the working class itself-accept sacrifices.”¹⁸⁷ Hence, regardless of any work of Marxist thought, which will inevitable say that profit is created through the exploitation of the working class and represents the alienation of their labor, the PCI was now advocating a heightened exploitation of the

¹⁸⁶ Enrico Berlinguer, “A Serious Policy of Austerity as a Means to Transform the Country,” *Italian Communists* (1975): 42.

¹⁸⁷ Giuseppe Sacco, “The Views of the Left in Italy and France on International and Domestic Economic Issues,” in *The European Left: Italy, France, and Spain*, ed. William Griffith (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1979), 132.

working class. Further, once again, it took policies to the right of many social democratic and even some liberal parties by being in firm opposition to the nationalization of industry during a period of extreme crisis. Instead of being an ally of the working class then, in a period crisis, one in which the working class needs to be defended the most, and in which the potential, if proper strategical and tactical maneuvers are employed, exists for decisive breakthroughs and real victories, the PCI turned decisively against them, allying themselves with the worst elements of the Italian elite.

It took time for the PCI to suffer electorally from its policies. As noted above, the PCI had an extensive network of cultural organizations, this along with a membership numbering close to two million, guaranteed it a large percentage of votes. The PCI actually experienced its greatest electoral gains after it had already fully accepted Eurocommunism and began to proclaim its support for austerity. In the pivotal regional and local elections of 1975 the PCI had its best ever showing. It captured 33 percent of the vote, with the regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, and Liguria coming under joint PSI-PCI administration. Every major city, with the exception of Palermo and Bari elected a left-wing government. Naples, for the first time, propelled a left-wing administration to power.¹⁸⁸ These elections set the tone for the federal elections which followed a year later, where, one again, the PCI had its best ever showing, capturing 34.4 percent of the vote and became the second largest party in Italy, just behind the DC who received 38.7 percent of the vote:¹⁸⁹ despite, as has been noted, its rapid moderation and embrace of a

¹⁸⁸ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 372.

¹⁸⁹ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 17.

reactionary form of politics. This disconnection between the high levels of support for the PCI even while it pursued these policies should not be taken as support for them by Italians. Rather they represent a common phenomenon in politics, a disconnect between the intentions of voters and the actual policies enacted by the political party that receives these votes. As the largest party of the Left and with a rich history, it is unsurprising that during a period of political upheaval when a large proportion of the Italian population was either directly involved in radical politics, or were at least sympathetic towards them, the PCI would be a beneficiary, by receiving a flood of votes.

The PCI had now become a clearly hegemonic force, at least on the mainstream, institutional Left. With these political circumstances, it became impossible for the PCI to be fully excluded from the halls of power, as it had been ever since 1948. A complex set of negotiations, known as the Historic Compromise, began in earnest, whereby the PCI would agree to support a DC-led government while receiving a share of government power as a concession. The Historic Compromise had in fact been a policy of the PCI for several years, in keeping with the general theme of forming broad alliances advocated by the PCI's General Secretary, Enrico Berlinguer. However the Historic Compromise was only taken as a serious proposal by the DC when the PCI's electoral showing in 1976 forced its hand. The period of the Historic Compromise, an agreement that was never officially enacted, reached its end a little over a year later, when its major advocate and architect on the side of the DC, Aldo Moro, the President of the Italian Republic was kidnapped and later assassinated by the Red Brigades. Moro's assassination would represent the climax in what was to become one of the most important years in Italian history.

Autonomia: The Configuration of a Minor Political Form in Italy

I have sought, over the last several sections, to trace three different currents, the state of exception, the Red Brigades, and the PCI and show how they developed during the period of 1970-1976. What has so far been excluded from this assessment, is the factor that I find to be the most unique and wide ranging in its effects, not only during the course of the 1970s in Italy, but a factor that retains its relevance for the study of contemporary politics. I am speaking of Autonomia, the practical expression of Autonomist thought in Italy. 1977 is a crucial year because what occurred was the collision of the three factors analyzed above and, a resultant rupture in the field of politics, what was referred to at the time as “the movement of ‘77” where, for a brief period, Autonomia became the hegemonic on the Italian left as en masse people broke from the institutional constraints of society and began to organize on a political level outside of the pre-established political framework. I have analyzed the three factors mentioned above because the development of Autonomia and its moment of clarity in 1977 can only be understood in relation to them. In fact, without the incredible pressure that Italian society was placed under by them, it is doubtful that the breakthrough that Autonomia represented would have occurred. Autonomia is an example of a Deleuzian minor politics. Hence, I will first turn to an exposition of what precisely a minor politics is, arguing following Deleuze and Guattari that advances in politics only occur under extreme pressure, with the true political form being one of rupture, rather than governance or stability. After identifying Autonomia as a form of minor politics I will briefly examine its development from 1970 onwards. This will lead me to the final

section of this chapter, where I will attempt to expose all the tendencies that came together in Italy in 1977.

The idea of a minor politics emerged from an unlikely source, through Deleuze's and Guattari's analysis of Kafka. The crux of their argument regarding Kafka was that his body of work represented the creation of a minor literature. Compared to a major literature which resides, within a particular stable form and is an expression of that form, a minor literature is characterized by its rupture from the major, the predominant method, and the creation of new, minor forms which subvert it. "A major, or established, literature is presented in a given form of the content, one must find, discover, or see the form of expression that goes with it. That which conceptualizes well expresses itself. But a minor, or revolutionary, literature begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualize until afterward. Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sprouting."¹⁹⁰ From just this brief observation some similarities can be observed between a minor literature and an organic crisis. The minor literature is a form of literature which ruptures the dominant form of literature, in the process forcing the language through which the literature is expressed to expand and rearticulate itself in the attempt to absorb this new area into its conceptual framework. Further, a minor literature simply expresses itself, without any form of support, it is only later, after the literature has matured, that it creates a foundation that it can base itself upon. The organic crisis in Italy ruptured the dominant ideological framework in Italian society and forced the Italian state to rearticulate itself and attempt to absorb the political energies unleashed through repression and

¹⁹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 28.

confinement by a state of exception. Additionally, these energies, both in their earliest stage during the Hot Autumn and later in the 1970s, expressed themselves directly upon the political fabric, without any mediation through the traditional political party or state apparatus and lacked their own institutional form from which they could draw support.

The creation of a minor literature occurs on the margins and under situations of extreme pressure: "...if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, the situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility..."¹⁹¹ The creation of new forms does not occur within the dominant form, but outside of the norm it represents. The act of creation itself is a violent act, because by exposing the potential that exists for new paradigms and new realities, the dominant framework is thrown into disarray and a response is inevitably provoked. Once it reaches a critical mass this new form is quickly brought into conflict with the dominant form, and it is through this conflict that both the dominant form and the new form struggling to conceptualize and extend itself across the social sphere are transformed through their intersection with one another. With the new form itself every action that occurs is immediately political, because it resides outside of what is deemed to be political by the dominant paradigm, thus fracturing the normalcy of everyday life. "Minor literature is completely different, its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within

¹⁹¹ Ibid.,17.

it.”¹⁹² Despite the production of minor literature occurring on the margins, it strikes from within the major literature exposing as void its claim to stability and coherence and in doing so disrupts its hegemony over the material and immaterial realm.

With such an incisive analysis of the production of new realities on the margins and the direct impact that these actions have upon the political, it is not surprising that the concept of a minor literature was quickly transfigured into an analysis of contemporary politics and renamed minor politics. Minor politics should not be confused with the promotion of a minority agenda. Minor politics is not the attempt to give representation to a minority, a minority that is usually suppressed and ignored by the majority of the group. The politics practiced by the minor political form does not reside in one particular location or group, but exists in their alterations that occur within and outside of them. “The minor is not a minority subgroup, but is seen in the movement of groups, in their variations, mutations, and differences and hence has no membership, coherence, identity, or constituency in itself. It is a becoming of which no one has ownership.”¹⁹³ The minority is hence the act of creation, it is not the containment of that creation within an institutional matrix, which will inevitably occur later, but is rather a point of expression, that expresses itself purely upon the political and social. The lack of mediation that is inherent in any form of minority politics is what allows it to so destabilize contemporary society when it is expressed. Minor politics creates new forms of politics and new avenues of political expression, precisely because it is unencumbered by the regulatory norms of institutions of society, which seek to bend all existing politics

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 7.

to the prevalent form.¹⁹⁴ Due to its existence outside of the prevalent form the appropriate mechanisms do not exist to adequately respond to and absorb the dynamics unleashed by the existence of a minor form of politics. Hence, the state, as the final arbiter of the political, must formulate a response, seeking to engage the new political forms that have emerged and containing them within a restructured institutional framework. In the case of Italy the forum in which the response was formulated was known as P2 and the expression of the response was the terroristic state of exception, which curtailed the expression of minor political forms and allowed them to be submerged within a new institutional framework.

Before I trace the development of Autonomia in Italy prior to 1973, it is important to note the brand of militancy that Autonomia practiced and how it was distinguished from that of the Red Brigades. As I have noted, in the past Autonomia was, throughout its history, a fundamentally diffuse movement. Autonomia never coalesced into a coherent movement with a clear guiding force behind it. Rather, Autonomia was always an open movement that included whoever wanted to be involved with it. It was because of this openness that Autonomia was able to create a progression of new militant activities that struck at the hollow core of what the political had become in Italian life.¹⁹⁵ While these actions were wonderfully coordinated and inclusive, on their own they were unable to spur the sort of change that would alter the very fabric of Italian life. Perhaps this was because Autonomia was always a movement of the moment; it lacked a theological

¹⁹⁴ In the present condition this would be a liberal capitalist state.

¹⁹⁵ Institutional politics, dominated as it was by the conflict between the DC and the PCI, with the first party always being a corrupt electoral machine and the latter, increasingly becoming a mirror of the first with a few moderately leftist rhetorical flourishes seemingly being the only thing that separated them at times, was, predictably rather circumscribed with ascetics privileged over actual substance.

approach to politics, an eventual end point. Rather than a prefigured politics of the end Autonomia practiced a politics of means, a politics of becoming. "...denying the need for discipline and the bitter necessity of organization, and pursuing instead the sweet taste of utopia and the privilege of experiments in living which always come to nothing. All this notwithstanding, the communist experience of the proletarian masses enriches reality, and in favor constituting through struggle new possibilities of organization and subversion."¹⁹⁶ In contrast, the Red Brigades, as has been observed, were a closed, insular group, dogmatic in their beliefs. While they may have been more militant than Autonomia in the sense that they were willing to kill and be killed for their beliefs, their method of organization in fact made them far more conservative than Autonomia. "It is a central paradox of militancy that as an organization constitutes itself as a unified body it tends to become closed to the outside, to the non-militant, those who would be the basis of any mass movement. Indeed, to the degree that the militant body conceives of itself as having discovered the correct revolutionary principle and establishes its centre of activity on a moral basis as an adherence to this principle, it has a tendency to develop hostility to those who fall short of its standard."¹⁹⁷ The Red Brigades thus ended up producing a major form of politics, recreating the repressive mechanisms of the Italian state at a micro level within their own organization; while Autonomia sought to give expression to new minor political forms. Autonomia, along with all the other political variables in the country, would be able to force a reorientation in the political and economic apparatus of Italy, but this in itself would be a shallow victory, as in many ways this reorientation

¹⁹⁶ Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy* (London: Verso, 2005), 47.

¹⁹⁷ Nicholas Thoburn, "What is a Militant?," in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Nicholas Thoburn and Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 107.

would result in a more regressive socio-economic form taking root.¹⁹⁸ Autonomia itself cannot be faulted for this result however, since as will be seen when the events of 1977 are discussed, the factors that led to this regressive outcome were outside of its control. Perhaps if Autonomia had more time it could have moved beyond simple minor politics and created a new institutional structure that would have fundamentally reshaped Italian society. Time, however, favors the entrenched interests in society which are able to draw upon an array of resources to aid them through the struggle, rather than the movements that seek to establish a new social framework, which are, more often than not, ingloriously snuffed out.

As I recounted in the last chapter, while Autonomist ideas were certainly influential during the Italy's Hot Autumn, the first conflagration in a long period of social upheaval, they were quite limited organizationally, restricted, in large part, to a few intellectuals and their sympathizers who organized themselves around a confusing array of Autonomist journals. This changed in 1973, when three different currents all considering themselves to the Left of the PCI and all having a disdain for the limits of institutional politics decided that a new organization form and a new breed of politics in Italy was necessary to respond to the downturn in political struggle and the rapid growing economic crisis in the country.

Autonomia had first crystallized as a distinctive political entity in March 1973, when a few hundred militants from around the country gathered in Bologna to take some provisional steps towards a new national

¹⁹⁸ The reactionary economic policies and technocratic management of politics that are inherent in neo-liberalism have arguably gone further in Italy than any other Western country. The legitimacy bestowed upon two current Italian parties, the xenophobic and fascist Northern League and National Alliance, both of which have been rewarded with cabinet positions under successive Berlusconi administrations, are only one of the clearest indications of the present degradation of Italian politics.

organization of the revolutionary left...the organization was to be rooted in factories and neighborhoods, in bodies capable both of promoting struggles managed directly by the class itself, and of restoring to the latter that awareness of proletarian power which the traditional organizations have destroyed.¹⁹⁹

The three groups that came to comprise Autonomia, in its initial formation, were Lotta Continua, Il Manifesto, and Potere Operaio.²⁰⁰

Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle) is perhaps most notable for the mass circulation newspaper it produced of the same name that became the unofficial voice of the movement. Sharply critical at times of some of the more spontaneously violent elements of Autonomia, Lotta Continua dissolved as an organization at its annual congress in 1976 unable to come to terms with sharp critique by feminists of its latent and unexplored sexist tendencies, a crucial area that unfortunately went unexamined by many of the leading Autonomist thinkers.²⁰¹ Lotta Continua would, however, continue to publish its paper until 1982. Il Manifesto also took its name from a publication of the same name, in this instance a journal. Originally published under the auspices of the PCI, the members of Il Manifesto were expelled for expressing views that were not consummate with the orientation of the party. Il Manifesto argued that:

...the working class movement should struggle directly against the capitalist division of labor, for equality, and against the separation of the state from civil society. The group also proposed a new type of direct struggle within the sphere of social services, instead of simply bringing pressure to bear at the political level for reforms. They proposed that in this field as well the movement's objective should in some way prefigure

¹⁹⁹ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 152-3.

²⁰⁰ Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 22.

²⁰¹ *Dear Comrades: Readers Letters to Lotta Continua*, ed. Margaret Kunzle, (London: Pluto Press, 1980), 23.

the future socialist society for instance In the demand for the combination of work and study.²⁰²

With the PCI privileging a top down managerial form of politics and seeking to salvage, rather than overcome capitalism the opinions of the Il Manifesto group were obviously heretical and needed to be expunged lest they infect other members of the PCI, thus the Il Manifesto group was in short order expelled from the party. While Il Manifesto was certainly part of the milieu of Autonomia, with many of its members interacting and working with those who considered themselves as belonging to Autonomia, because it was formerly a part of the PCI, Il Manifesto was viewed with suspicion by the other sections of Autonomia, and was considered by many to not be a part of Autonomia proper. Nevertheless, it possessed a theoretical and political orientation broadly similar to the rest of Autonomia, and for that reason in the remainder of this thesis it will be considered under its rubric.

The final element that formed Autonomia at this initial stage can really be said to comprise the core of the movement, Potere Operaio, or Workers' Power. Potere Operaio was started in the early 1960s by a group of Italian intellectuals who wanted to become more engaged in the struggles of daily life. While they, like many others at the time, grasped that the rapid industrialization of the North was altering the social fabric of Italy they sought to go further and understand how regimes of work, social life, and what it mean to be a worker were changing as a result. To accomplish this they conducted intensive studies of life in the factories. It was because of these studies and their focus upon working life that they were named "workists". From these studies of working life,

²⁰² Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 182.

the workists reached a conclusion that may at first glance appear counter-intuitive. They did not urge the workers in the factories to defend the gains that they had made because by doing so they would close themselves off from workers who were outside of the factory and place themselves in competition with them. Instead of framing their demands in terms of an increased wage, which is how workers' demands were often framed at the time and still are today, they should strive for a guaranteed income. This would allow for an overcoming of the wage dynamic and reassert a level of workers control over the production process and would empower those who were either unemployed or restricted to marginal forms of work.

The biggest danger according to Potere Operaio, was factoryism, the term by which it characterized productive workers' defense of their positions at the expense of the jobless...The solution did not lie in the widespread leftist demand of jobs for the unemployed, since that would play into the hands of a class enemy only too ready to link income to employment. What was needed was a guaranteed or political wage for all...the slogan of the guaranteed wage summed up the strategy to separate wages from labor, asserting the reproduction of proletarian needs over and against the requirements of capital.²⁰³

In this theoretical analysis the beginnings of the concept of the refusal of work, analyzed at the beginning of this chapter, can be seen. Rather than working within the capitalist production process Potere Operaio was seeking ways that a basis of unity could be established that would cross the workplace divide and draw together workers from different strata.

The version of Potere Operaio that eventually became part of organized Autonomy after 1973 was not in its original form, rather it was a wing of Potere Operaio

²⁰³ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 138.

that had closely aligned itself with Antonio Negri and his critique of institutionalized politics.²⁰⁴ So when *Autonomia* was first formed it was comprised of those who had either splintered from their own groups out of what they saw as their rapprochement with institutional politics (*Potere Operaio*), been expelled from some of the most prominent institutional formations (*Il Manifesto*), or had been formed explicitly in opposition to the present brand of politics (*Lotta Continua*). Hence, *Autonomia* was intensely critical of contemporary forms of politics and sought to refound politics upon a new basis, outside the narrow terrain of political parties vying for control of the state apparatus. As Steve Wright recounts:

From 1973 onward Autonomy has been above all a search for a newly composed political class capable of acting outside the party system...it was then necessary to determine a new political terrain where the most diverse social strata could join their struggles and recompose a front against capital. And it surely wasn't only against capital, but also and perhaps above all, against the state and its party system, capital's initiative could only succeed with the complicity of the parties, the PCI included.²⁰⁵

Autonomia thus had a far more expansive view of politics, one that saw politics as part of daily life, not restricted to the dissociated action of casting a vote every few years, or in the case of Italy, every few months. As I argued earlier, this politics of daily life became possible, with the socialization of capital, which extended the domain of struggle to every sphere of life.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 152-3.

²⁰⁵ Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 13.

²⁰⁶ Obviously here I am assuming a Marxist view of politics, one that sees the political as the struggle to gain economic and social power by different strata in society. Whereas before, in the condition of formal subsumption these relations had still fed into the capitalist production process, they also stood apart from it, to an extent. Now, however, under conditions of real subsumption, the conditions of daily life were mapped upon the terrain of capital and became crucial to continuing capitalist accumulation. It is for this reason that we see the extension of struggle to new domains in Italy in this period.

During the Hot Autumn, the Autonomist groups had in large part restricted themselves to conducting an analysis of the situation and promoting various strategical paths as the appropriate ways forward. They lacked, in large part, the organizational ability to directly intervene in the debates of the day. The exception was Lotta Continua, which was an early enthusiastic supporter of the United Base Committees, (CUBs), but withdrew, and in large part lost their connection with the factories after they became upset with the increasing union control and the corresponding restriction of the debates within the CUBs.²⁰⁷ While many of the Autonomists had seen the events of Hot Autumn as representing the emergence of the socialized worker, they saw the failure of a radical break with the prevailing institutional framework as being due to the socialized workers' lack of organization. The new needs of the socialized worker, as well as the new possibilities for resistance that it presented perhaps most clearly in the paradigm of the refusal of work required the formation of a new "party" for lack of a better term that could support and extend acts of proletarian acts of self-valorization across the entire social sphere. Rather than a centralized party form based upon the Leninist model that served as an elite bastion that sought to guide the social forces in the country, the new party form was envisioned as one that developed organically from the social movements, remaining totally immersed within them, instead of seeking its own separate existence. "Though the party seeks to forward certain modes of thought and community....it is not a concentrative articulation, but a dispersive one, invoking less a coherent collective subjectivity than a diffuse plane of composition. The party is stretched across the social, dependent upon social forces and struggles for its existence or its substance, and, in an

²⁰⁷ Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 273.

anticipatory and precarious fashion, orientated towards social contingencies and events.”²⁰⁸ Autonomia was not opposed to organization and structure in general, but to the limited expression of institutional forms that existed under contemporary capitalism. In Deleuzian terms a major focus for the theoreticians of Autonomia was how the creativity and the direct effect on the social that the actions of the socialized worker would have during the course of the 1970s could be contained within a new institutional framework.²⁰⁹ The riddle was how unmediated forms of action could retain their essence within a mediating institution, which would inevitably impose some level of separation between the action and its effect, a riddle which, despite being the subject of intensive theorization, was never adequately answered.

Outside of the realm of theory, important transformations in the nature of the socialized worker were occurring in Italy after 1973, placing its basis outside of the factory. While in 1969 when it had first clearly emerged onto the scene and appeared to be comprised of primarily factory workers and students, the economic recession in Italy after 1973 had altered its composition. While students would continue to play an important role in the formation of the socialized worker, the prevalence of factory workers lessened and more marginalized strata assumed a prominent role.²¹⁰ The

²⁰⁸ Nicholas Thoburn, “What is a Militant?,” in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Nicholas Thoburn and Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 109.

²⁰⁹ While I may have, at times been harsh in my criticisms of institutions, I am certainly not opposed to institutions themselves, but rather the expression they receive under capitalism. Providing the form of politics the Autonomia sought to practice with an institutional basis would provide it with the resources and the organization necessary to carry forth and allow it to begin to alter society at the structure level. It is not a question of whether or not institutions are necessary, but what form they should assume.

²¹⁰ This is not to say that factory workers were not still excluded. The economic disadvantages that I chronicled in the last chapter continued, in large part, unabated. Rather, segments of society, especially the marginal elements of the working class who occupied a space outside of the factory, and who do not usually receive such a prominent place in various theoretical contextualizations, in particular classical Marxism, came to play a far larger role in the economy and society than in the past.

changing nature of the socialized worker was due to the emergence of post-Fordism in Italy, an outcome that was prefigured and required by the existence of the socialized worker. While I have in the past argued that the socialized worker led to post-Fordism in Italy, I have not explored the effects that post-Fordism had upon the composition of the socialized worker as Italy industrialized at a rapid pace, achieving a Fordist stage of production and just as rapidly passing Fordism by and entering post-Fordism. This highly compressed transition between different capitalist modes of production meant that Italy never exhibited some of the traits common to work in the Fordist era, primarily the culture of life-long employment common to other European countries and Japan. The rapid industrialization of the country and the corresponding mass migration did much to undermine its development. However, as the Italian economy began to mature in the 1960s and increasing proportions of Italians found work in Italy's factories the notion of a culture of stable progressive work gains began to grow. This was destroyed just as it began to be implanted, by the economic crisis in 1973. With the mass layoffs, high inflation, and dismal job prospects that followed the composition of the socialized worker began to change.

Italy's economic decline destroyed the foundation upon which these factory jobs were based. As occurred across the Western world, the rise of post-Fordism corresponded with changes in the nature of work. Rather than a factory job and an eight hour day being the paradigm, precarious, flexible labor, work for indeterminate and unpredictable time spans was becoming the norm. Work was becoming increasingly decentralized, automated, and informationized. This reconstitution of the productive cycle upon a modified capitalist basis was an attempt to contain the socialized worker within an

institutional framework that would be conducive to the continued accumulation of capital. “The streamlining of production cycles, and the construction of networks of information, knowledge, and intervention, all represent a method of rationalization of the market which when utilized in conjunction with the development of deregulation, becomes a favorite instrument for the efficient homogenization of the social forces in accordance with scheme which are functional for the legitimation and reproduction of the system.”²¹¹ The changing nature of work altered employment patterns in Italy.

During the 1950s and 1960s as Italy industrialized, the demand for labor seemed endless. For Italians the model of work was an eight hour job in the factory, under perhaps harsher conditions than the rest of Europe and the north-east of the United States, but a mass expectation was created for stable and regularized forms of labor. The crisis of 1973 destroyed the economic basis upon which these jobs were based and created a rapidly expanding marginal class confined to precarious forms of labor. “The challenge for capital was now to dominate a new composition...a goal that is pursued via the extension of wage-labor to all sphere of society, the decentralization of production sites at the global level and the division of workers into a small, privileged core and a marginalized insecure majority.”²¹² In the struggles that followed in the 1970s the central role would no longer be played by the factory workers. While factory workers continued to strike and factories were occupied after 1973, the economic restructuring of Italy and the transition towards post-Fordism lessened their importance: “...the central figure of

²¹¹ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 107.

²¹² Finn Bowring, “From the Mass Workers to the Multitude: A Theoretical Contextualization of Hardt and Negri’s Empire,” *Capital and Class*, 83, 2004: 111.

the factory struggles, the assembly line workers of the major factories, began with the union-employer contracts of 1972-73, to lose its central role as an offensive and organizing protagonist. The increasing use of layoffs and the first partial implementation of new technologies radically changed the terms of production, blunting the thrust of previous forms of struggle including the mass strike.”²¹³ The crux of the Italian economy would now move outside of the factory and would be placed upon the somewhat counter-intuitively named marginalized strata, for while they were reviled by all institutionalized political actors and discriminated against economically they would come to form the core of the Italian economy and the majority of the Italian population.

These marginalized strata, located outside of the factory and with their social relations directly feeding into the productive sphere of capital, developed new forms of resistance in response. Rather than workers’ resistance in the Fordist era which primarily focused upon the betterment of working conditions and ignored, in large part, the condition of life outside of work.²¹⁴ These new militant actions were explicitly focused upon issues of daily existence. The most widespread was the practice of *autoreduction*, the self-reduction of prices. These included a range of activities from a number of youth simply walking into a grocery store demanding that the prices be reduced on various goods to massive coordinated actions involving hundreds of thousands of people and coordinated with rank and file union members, that reduced the prices of bus fares, electricity, and rent. “The *autoreduction* movement opens up the old alternative between

²¹³ Lucio Castellan et al, “Do You Remember Revolution?,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 230.

²¹⁴ Although of course the betterment of work conditions had a positive impact upon the worker’s wider existence.

urban struggles, subordinated to factory struggles, and the autonomy, if not the isolation of urban struggles led exclusively by the extreme left. It demonstrates the possibility of a coordinated struggle, the first concrete accomplishment of the theoretical and practical institutions of extra-parliamentary groups.”²¹⁵ The autoreduction movement represented one of the most successful actions of the newly emergent post-Fordist proletariat as it engaged a wide spectrum of people in actions that empowered them and directly improved their living conditions, further; it radicalized Italy’s unions through the crucial involvement of its rank and file.

One particular autoreduction action that best embodies all these traits concerned electricity bills in the heavily industrialized areas of Turin and Milan. “The electricity bill figures high in the budget of most working-class households and it is to this item that the struggle suddenly turned. One could hardly think of a more politically explosive choice. For one thing, in Italy the electricity industry is nationalized and adopts rates which are applied throughout the whole country. The state would therefore become the direct target in a struggle whose potential for generalization across the working class would be enormous.”²¹⁶ The actual practice of self-reducing the electricity bills was rather simple, workers received their electricity bills and returned a substitute bill to the state electricity company, with a lower price, often a reduction of 50 percent listed, which was then paid for. The organization behind these actions was complex, however. Self-reduction committees were setup, coordinating the actions of neighborhoods and importantly

²¹⁵ Eddy Cherki and Michel Wieviorka, “Autoreduction movements in Turin,” in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 77.

²¹⁶ Bruno Ramirez, “The Working-Class Struggle against the Crisis: Self-Reduction of Prices in Italy,” *Radical America* 10(4) (1976): 29.

involving rank and file union members of the state electric company, ENEL, who refused to cut off service to these who had reduced their bills. Thus the new social struggles outside of the factory found a basis of support in the organized workers within the factories. "The support given by ENEL workers who often refused to enforce the company's orders to disconnect electricity was also an important factor contributing to the success of the struggle. Through this combination of factory and neighborhood mobilizations...tens of thousands of electricity bills had been collected in each major Italian city. Turin was at its head with about 140,000 collected. To a large extent the political significance of this wave of struggle lies in the territorial link-up between factories and neighborhoods."²¹⁷ The manner in which autoreduction was practiced in Italy demonstrates the falsity of the divide between the economic and political and social and work struggles. Both are innately linked and cannot be separated or truly understood apart from one another. While autoreduction sought to improve the conditions of life under capitalism, during this period durable experiments were also devised to determine how society could be organized on a post-capitalist basis.

With the rise of precarious labor in Italy and its consequential undermining of the factory as the privileged point of economic and political struggle, new spaces, known in the Autonomist literature as social centers, were created which would fill the void left behind and allow for the continuation of expression and resistance under the post-Fordist paradigm. These social centres initially evolved out the actions of those affiliated with the far-Left, who, seeking to subvert private property relations squatted and took over

²¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

abandoned property for the purpose of creating spaces that would support and develop anti-capitalist politics in Italy.

The reorganization of Fordist production and the transition to flexible accumulation models based on the widespread use of temporary work contracts and the grey economy brought about a drastic change in the possibility of carrying out political activity in conventional spaces...The strategy adopted by extreme left-wing groups to counter the new order emerging in Italian cities was to setup self-managed social centers...they sparked off a fresh cycle of social struggle geared towards gaining control of existing spaces and devising new ones.²¹⁸

The social centers became a space from which a New Leftist culture could gestate, serving as perhaps the sole institutional support that the far Left and Autonomia had in Italy. The social centers provided a meeting place where people who sympathized with or were involved with the social movements in the country could meet and converse. They also hosted various events, such as film screenings and concerts. Most importantly they provided an outlet for those who felt stifled by the rigidity of Italian politics. Many of the social centers in Italy proved to be more durable than the upsurge of the far Left in Italy. For example, Leoncavallo, in Milan, one of Italy's largest and most well known social centers, has existed since 1975 and dozens of other social centers, originally created during the 1970s, are still in existence in Italy today, still serving as places for radical politics, in an increasingly apolitical world. During the 1970s however it was the social centers, in large part, that made possible the plethora of publications and low wattage pirate radio stations that refined and extended the influence of the extra parliamentary Left in Italy. By 1978 there were 80 to 90 regular far leftist publications alongside 100 to

²¹⁸ Pierpaolo Mudu, "Resisting and Challenging Neoliberalism: The Development of Italian Social Centers," *Antipode* 36(5) (2004): 918.

130 local radio stations.²¹⁹ Many of these radio stations and publications were either operated out of, or affiliated with, those who were connected with the social centers.

1977: An all too brief rupture in the fabric of Italian Society

By 1977 then, a vibrant and dynamic radical culture that was seeking to reinvent politics outside of its traditional framework existed in Italy. While Autonomia was not the only force on the so called extra-parliamentary Left, it was the most important and influential, due to its piercing analysis of the contemporary Italian condition, with its understanding of the emerging post-Fordist regime and arising from this both the potential and necessity for new forms of resistance and organization in response. “It was no accident that it fell to factions of the organized autonomy to lead the first phase of the struggles. Their initial hegemony over the movement derived from their having understood and anticipated the forms of political behavior that were characteristic of the new class composition; from the ability to read parts of the programme within the masses themselves, in other words, knowing how to present themselves not as a private thing, but as a social expression, a tendency of a growing movement, rather than a choice wholly confined within the self-reproduction of a political group.”²²⁰ In contrast to past political organizations, Autonomia did not exist apart from a social movement; rather it was a direct expression of a social movement. It did not seek to direct the struggles in Italy down a predetermined path, as the Red Brigades did, but rather sought to expand the scope of what was deemed political and in doing so open up the potential for radical

²¹⁹ David Moss, *The Politics of Left-Wing Violence in Italy 1969-1985* (Houndsmills: Macmillian, 1989), 13.

²²⁰ Sergio Bologna, “The Tribe of Moles,” in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 57.

transformation in different sectors of Italian life. However, in the span of a single year this unique political configuration would experience the height of its influence and suffer a crushing series of defeats that would result its total collapse, and with it the end of Italy's decade long period of upheaval and the reconstitution of Italian society upon a regressive basis, foreclosing any possibility, for the foreseeable future, that Italy's institutions could be restructured upon a new, revolutionary foundation.

1977 represented the collision of several different forms of politics. The events of that year exposed the dead end of both parliamentary and urban guerilla concepts of politics and the potential for a new type of politics that was unfortunately extinguished as soon as it appeared to be gaining momentum. The first pivotal event of the year and one that clearly illustrated the hostility that the student population had towards the PCI occurred in February at the University of Rome, one of the largest universities in the world, with over 150,000 students. On February 1st, the university campus was invaded by fascists who opened fire on students, wounding two, who were protesting against an education reform bill, by the responsible minister, Malfatti. Similar to the last attempt to reform Italy's university system in 1962 the proposed bill did not seek to ameliorate the many problems faced by Italy's universities, but rather sought to restrict access. The reforms were ideologically driven. As I mentioned in the first chapter, a university education in Italy had long stopped being a guaranteed path to prosperity, with students rapidly joining either the swelling ranks of the unemployed or Italy's booming precarious labor force. Rather than educating potential troublemakers and locating them where they could easily converge with others who may have similar bad intentions, along with dismal job prospects, it was deemed better to reduce the surplus amount of students and

marginalize those unable to satisfy the rigorous admissions process by simply ignoring their existence. In a repetition of the student unrest of the late 1960s, a wave of student protests and occupations occurred across the country. In Rome, in response to the attack on students, a large protest was held outside of the MSI's Rome office and the university itself was occupied by several thousand students and sympathetic precarious laborers from the surrounding area who recognized the similarities between their own condition and the students.

Rather than supporting the occupation at the University of Rome and defending the students, who were responding to a fascist attack, the PCI sent the Luciano Lama, the head of its affiliated union confederation the CGIL, along with a contingent of two hundred PCI functionaries and two thousand shop stewards and workers. Their goal was to "liberate" the university from the students, who because of their occupation of the campus and their failure to fit into the narrow framework of the PCI's orthodoxy were regarded as the true fascists,²²¹ rather than the people who had attacked the university and actually called themselves fascists. What happened when Lama arrived on campus at 9am that morning clearly illustrated the extent to which the PCI misunderstood the social reality in Italy and its distance from the dispossessed, who, if it had been more than a Communist Party in name only, it would have sought to give a voice to.

In the large open area of the campus where he was to speak, Lama found another platform already rigged up, with a dummy of himself on it. There was a big Valentine's heart, with a slogan punning Nessuno L'Ama (Lama Nobody Loves him)...As Lama started speaking chanting began: 'Sacrifices, Scarifies, Want Sacrifices! We Demand to Work Harder and Earn Less! This irony r aggravated the humorless PCI heavies. About

²²¹ *Italy 1977-8: Living With an Earthquake*, ed. Red Notes, (London: Red Notes, 1978), 53.

10,000 comrades and students gathered. The Autonomists started to put on their masks. Tensions mounted... Violence soon broke out between the Autonomists on the one hand and the PCI heavies on the other. Bricks, stones, and bottles flew through the air.²²²

Students and PCI members were injured; Lama and those he had brought with him were forced to flee the campus. Later that very same day, in the afternoon, the riot police raided the campus clearing out the occupiers. As they entered the campus the police were cheered and received encouragement from about 1,000 PCI members.²²³ This would be only the first incident of the year where the PCI, in no uncertain terms, clearly aligned itself with the forces of repression and reaction and against the resurgent social movements in the country.

As should be clear from the PCI regarding the occupiers of the University of Rome as fascists the PCI viewed those who stood to the Left of it with great hostility. The PCI had a very particular vision of politics and how society should be governed; those who did not fit into this narrow conception were branded as a threat, an enemy, to both the party and the stability of Italy.

Within this framework, it is the extreme Left, rather than capitalism which becomes the enemy. Its militants represent a threat the PCI's concept of democracy, because they have no place in it and because they reject the innate exploitation and inequality which make the very idea of that democracy a sham. Thus they are lumped together with fascists and thugs. Communism becomes synonymous with (bourgeois) democracy; terrorism with all forms of radical opposition. And this opposition includes not only students, the young, the unemployed, new leftists, and so on; but also vast sectors of the working class itself, which do not find expression in the

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 54.

mass parties and whose most profound needs cannot be met simply by gaining representation within existing political structures.²²⁴

The newly forming marginal strata in Italy, which represented the recomposition of the socialized worker away from the factories of the industrialized North and into precarious forms of labor, was not at all understood by the PCI. In its narrow economistic view, the only agents that were allowed to struggle, and who were tasked with leading the revolution through all of its predefined stages, were the workers in the factories. Aside from this incredibly simplisitic and teological view of revolution, the privileged agents, as was demonstrated by the union takeovers of the CUBs in 1969, were not even allowed to determine how the revolution would unfold, but would instead have its direction dictated to them by the leadership of the PCI who had supposedly divined the appropriate path through an intensive study of the Marxist classics.

Ironically, the marginal uprising which formed the basis of the movement of '77 did not seek to destroy the rapidly collapsing Fordist paradigm in the country that the PCI accused them of sabotaging. Rather, they sought to enter its privileged confines and receive the benefits of a stable job with decent pay. "The 1977 movement had the misfortune of being treated as if it was a movement of marginal people and parasites... In fact, they identified themselves entirely with the Fordist paradigm... Thus they identified with a production cycle already in decline."²²⁵ The marginal strata in Italy defined themselves in opposition to those who it saw as members of the Fordist paradigm. Unsurprisingly, they did not define themselves as opposed to the Fordist model, nor did

²²⁴Suzanne Cowan, "The Unhappy Adventures of Alice in Blunderland: Counter-culture, Revolt and Repression in the Heart of Italy's Red Belt," *Radical America* 11(6) (1977): 76.

²²⁵ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 99.

they see themselves as constituting the core component of a newly emerging post-Fordist form of socio-economic organization. Rarely when economic transitions are actually occurring is it possible for social movements to respond to them in a manner that can shape their outcome. In the intensity of the moment a clear analysis of the situation that analyzes all the forces in motion and devises a way forward is nearly impossible; it is only after the fact, with the benefit of hindsight that such an occurrence becomes possible. Those who were forming the economic basis of post-Fordism in Italy had no political outlet through which they could express themselves and have their concerns addressed, instead they were shunned and vilified. Desperate and seeing no other options they exploded onto the streets and directly confronted the entire political spectrum.

The next major event, following what occurred at the University of Rome, would happen in the most unlikely of places, in the PCI's stronghold of Bologna. Bologna, the regional capital of Emilia-Romagna, is in the heart of Italy's so called "Red Belt". The PCI had controlled Emilia-Romagna at the regional level ever since it had been granted that status in 1970 and had ruled from the mayor's office in Bologna since the end of the Second World War. It had sought to turn the region into a mode of efficiency and good governance and use its experience in government there as a demonstration that it could be trusted with power at the national level. "Bologna, with its Communist-controlled Town council, is a test-bed of the new policy of the Historic Compromise. Here the Communist Party, in order to gain entry to national government, has to prove itself capable of running an efficient state machine at the local level. It also has to show itself able to repress any

movement that challenges the established order of things.”²²⁶ So while the PCI may have offered an extensive array of social services in the attempt to make Bologna a showcase city, it, like any party governing the state, would be highly intolerant of any actions that it deemed as threatening its position, in this regard it had no qualms about making use of the repressive apparatus of the state to defend its interests.

What set off the explosion in Bologna was the killing of a former Lotta Continua member, Francesco Lorusso, by the police. Within hours mass rioting broke out in Bologna and its university was occupied. The next day angry demonstrations took place across the country. In response, the local PCI administration turned Bologna into an armed camp. “Like the expulsion of Lama, the murder of Lorusso was an event of national significance. A veritable state of siege was imposed on Red Bologna by its Communist authorities. Video cameras were installed on the main streets so police could keep constant watch: activists were whisked off the street if recognized as leaders, and groups were forbidden to congregate...Autonomists who attempted to leaflet factories were prevented from doing so by PCI goon squads.”²²⁷ Once again, when confronted with expressions of outrage by those who had been ignored and marginalized, rather than seeking to understand them and attempt to ensure that their concerns were addressed the PCI simply sought to repress and silence them. Further, they sought to their utmost to separate those who were revolting from what the PCI viewed as their base of support, the factory worker, trying to prevent these confusing new elements of society from infecting the “real proletariat” with their rebelliousness. What occurred in Bologna was really a

²²⁶ *Italy 1977-8: Living With an Earthquake*, ed. Red Notes (London: Red Notes, 1978), 38.

²²⁷ Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 47.

microcosm of the Historic Compromise, the PCI's strategy to gain political power in the country. However while the PCI hoped that negative reaction would be restricted to those who stood outside of its traditional basis of support, it would soon find itself facing dissent from within its own ranks.

As mentioned above, the PCI had since 1973 onwards been pursuing a policy known as the Historic Compromise, whereby it sought to gradually gain power through its pursuit of political alliances. After its strong electoral showings at the local and national level and lacking any other viable political partners the DC was forced to entered into a prolonged series of negotiations to gain the PCI's support in parliament. The PCI made a number of serious compromises and received little in the way of concessions itself. Already a firm advocate of political austerity the PCI agreed to fully follow the IMF's recommendations for dealing with the economic crisis. These included a hiring freeze in the public sector and patient fees for medication that was formerly free of charge under the national health plan. In return the PCI would enter the parliamentary majority, but it would not receive any ministerial positions.²²⁸ In June in response to these quite unacceptable concessions and in opposition to them the PCI controlled metalworkers union went on a wildcat strike and played a leading role in a march that topped 200,000 against the Historic Compromise in Rome. Events in Italy appeared to be coming to a head, with a wave of student occupations, rallies all over the country every few days numbering in the tens of thousands and now rifts within the PCI's own

²²⁸ Joanne Barkan, "Italian Communism at the Crossroads," in *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition*, ed. Carl Boggs and David Plotke (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), 67.

institutional apparatus, with rank and file union members refusing to follow the directives of the unions they were members of.

What occurred in Italy in 1977 and what made the movement of '77 such a unique phenomenon was its total break with institutionalized politics as opposed to what occurred in 1969, this time there would be no eventual reorientation with mainstream politics. As first a group of theorists and now a diffuse network of organizations Autonomia was well placed to assume not only a hegemonic position on the extra-parliamentary Left, but potentially to make inroads in the PCI's base of support, disrupting the stability and potentially fracturing the Italian state by drawing away segments of society from the institutions that were supposed to govern them. The parallel with what occurred in 1969, when a few initial breaks appeared in the institutional structure of society, and the possibility of causing a large rupture on this occasion was clear. "What happened in 1977 was that which we did not have the strength to bring about in 1969: the mass break of the proletariat from the reformist institutions."²²⁹ Ruptures within society, the only points when real, systemic change becomes possible do not happen under ideal circumstances, but under great moments of crisis and tension. Solely from the perspective of Autonomia, the events of 1977, the sheer rapid pace with which they occurred, and the relations they created among a strata that at first glance appeared to be unconnected and have few common interests challenged Autonomia institutionally, (which was never its strong point to begin with), and stretched the limits of its conceptual powers. "1977 was a decisive year...The various organizations of

²²⁹ Antonio Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crises and New Social Subjects 1967-1983* (London: Red Notes, 1988), 250.

Autonomia were able-for a brief time-to fill the vacuum created by the crisis. None the less, the multitude of problems which the new political mood exemplified would push workerism's conceptual apparatus to its extreme limits."²³⁰ Despite its recognition of the importance of new social subjects, and in particular its awareness of the socialized nature of contemporary capitalism, which provided Autonomia with a solid theoretical base, analyzing the changing nature of capitalism and actually being directly a part of struggles which seek to utilize the temporary vulnerability of capitalism as it recomposes itself into an altered form to provoke a far more dramatic shift are two very different things.

What appeared to be developing into Autonomia's moment of triumph, or at the very least the massive expansion of its influence in Italy, was cut drastically short by the intervention of the Red Brigades. On March 16th, 1978 Aldo Moro, President of the Italian Republic, a two time former Prime Minister and one of the most important figures in the DC establishment was kidnapped, his five bodyguards killed, as he was being driven to Italian House of Representatives. The time the attack occurred was particularly noteworthy because that very day a debate on the Historic Compromise was due to take place, with it's almost certain ratification to follow afterwards. Moro had been its strongest advocate in the DC and with his kidnapping the entire process was suspended indefinitely and the PCI was denied its place in government. His kidnapping and his murder 55 days later drastically altered the social and political dynamic in Italy, resulting in the destruction of its vibrant social movements.

²³⁰ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 197.

The defeat of the movement of 1977 began with the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro... The Red Brigades, in a sort of tragic parody of the way the official Left had developed its policies in the mid 1970s pursued their own political outlet in complete separation from and outside of developments of currents of resistance in society at large. The culture of the Red Brigades...totally within the logic of a separate sphere of politics played against the new subjects of social antagonism as much as against the institutional framework.²³¹

The Red Brigades after appearing to have suffered a decisive defeat in 1974, had for years been restricted to infrequent attacks against targets of moderate importance had, in one move, struck at the heart of the Italian state. The attack by the Red Brigades came from totally outside of the present political dynamic, yet it changed it irrevocably. As I have recounted in this chapter, after the first wave of state action against the Red Brigades in 1972, the organization went underground cutting itself off from the social movements in the country and becoming contained entirely within its own worldview. Now its actions would finally instill a unity and coherence in the state and provoke a massive repressive response that would close the requisite political space and strangle the social movements in the country, and ending Italy's organic crisis and the potential for rupture in the Italian social fabric.

The eventual death of Moro, a major Italian political figure, is an outstanding enough event on its own, but the circumstances in which it occurred and the events that unfolded because of it are also incredibly noteworthy. Moro held the distinction of being the first kidnap victim of the Red Brigades to be murdered.²³² The massive nationwide search was begun after his kidnapping with almost 20 percent of the entire population of

²³¹ Lucio Castellano et al, "Do You Remember Revolution?," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 236.

²³² Robert Katz, *Days of Wrath: The Ordeal of Aldo Moro: The Kidnapping, the Execution, the Aftermath* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1980), 35.

55 million searched or checked by the police.²³³ Despite this however, the security services failed to locate Moro before he met his end. Although conspiracy theories have swirled that the police were somehow impeded or did not truly desire to find Moro, the far more likely explanation is that the police were, as many state organs are in Italy, not fully competent in their duties: "...an abiding weakness of the conspiracy theories in this cases concerned the unfounded belief that the police could have rescued Moro if had they so desired. In fact, the performance of the police in the Moro kidnapping conformed to the general character of their exertion in such crimes. It would have been much more surprising had they succeeded in freeing Moro."²³⁴ Further, as demonstrated by nearly 20 percent of the Italian population being directly approached by the police, there was a huge mobilization of the security services, so despite their questionable skills, it cannot be denied that significant resources were utilized in the attempt to find Moro.

What also cannot be denied is that at the political level, both from what occurred in Italy at the time and the later revelations of the American interference, is the negotiations surrounding Moro's release were systemically undercut by political actors, who, because of Moro's stance towards the PCI, would rather that he perish than gain his freedom and potentially restart the Historic Compromise. First, the demands the Red Brigades made for his release were not particularly outstanding, the release of 13 of their imprisoned members, not even the release of their entire membership in prison which numbered in the dozens. Moro himself, who was allowed to write freely during his imprisonment, and sent numerous letters, not only to his family and close friends, but

²³³ Ibid., 19.

²³⁴ Richard Drake, "The Aldo Moro Murder Case As Politics," in *Playing Politics With Terrorism: A User's Guide*, ed. George Kassimeris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 53-4.

also his political colleagues expressed his strong desire that such a transfer should occur. In a letter to Francesco Cossiga, Minister of the Interior, he declared, perhaps somewhat disingenuously, since he oversaw the enactment of severe measures which resulted in several deaths all in order to defend an abstract notion of security: “The sacrifice of innocent lives in the name of an abstract legal principle is inadmissible when an obvious state of emergency should make their deliverance unquestionable.”²³⁵ What is contained in this statement is a humanist portrayal of the state of exception. During a period of emergency legal notions which endanger human life must be swept away, in this case the prohibition of the state from engaging in negotiations with terrorists. The state of exception is then a sacrifice on the part of the state as it takes certain measures that it would not do under ordinary circumstances all in the name of protecting the life of its citizens. Yet, as I have demonstrated, a state of exception is not a progressive force, but a reactionary one, invoked in response to social upheaval. Further its orientation is not towards protecting citizens of the state, who suffer under the harsh regulations imposed during a state of exception, but is designed to protect the state and retrench its influence over civil society. That this latter version of the state of the exception is the correct one became clear in the Moro case, where one of the highest ranking state officials was sacrificed to preserve the greater unity and stability of the Italian state.

Perhaps the release of thirteen members of the Red Brigades could have been reduced had the Italian state been willing to engage in meaningful negotiations, something that was supported by 60 percent of the Italian population, but universally

²³⁵ Leonardo Sciascia, *The Moro Affair* (London: Granta Books, 2002), 34.

rejected by the mass circulation press and all major political parties, outside of the PSI.²³⁶

The leader of the PSI, Brento Craxi,²³⁷ described his struggle to get the major political parties to break their self-imposed impasse and frankly discuss Moro's release with the Red Brigades.

I may be naive, but what's happening is incredible. There's a great number of people, politicians and media executives, committed to present the Moro problem as insoluble...Moro is alive, in the prey of an altercation, which has not, however, obscured the central thread of his reasoning. But in this period he has been subjected to psychiatric analyses to demonstrate that he is not himself. Authoritative political voices have invited him to commit suicide. They are abusing him and making him out to be a coward. May god forgive them. Craxi declared this publicly. Privately he said, someone wants blood, Moro's will justify a hemorrhage.²³⁸

Moro's pleas for actual negotiations were pilloried in the press and by the major political parties as a sign of his mental instability rather than what they actually were, a man begging for his life. Despite the PCI's excessive moderation and its willingness to be denied cabinet positions having it form part of the governing coalition was still deemed to be unacceptable by those inside and outside of Italy.

Within Italy the Historic Compromise had always been strongly opposed by the heads of the security services and the military, large capitalist interests, and the conservative wing of the DC along with the smaller fascist parties, precisely the elements

²³⁶ Robert Katz, *Days of Wrath: The Ordeal of Aldo Moro: The Kidnapping, the Execution, the Aftermath* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1980), 147.

²³⁷ Although Craxi became the kingpin of Italian politics in the 1980s and managed to obtain the post of Prime Minister, a position far above what the minuscule size of the PSI in the Italian parliament, he was brought down by his own corruption. After extensive corruption investigations were launched in Italy in the early 1990s Craxi was revealed to be perhaps Italy's most corrupt politician, a distinction difficult to achieve in Italy! With the police closing in and coins being mockingly tossed at him anytime he appeared in public Craxi fled to Tunisia, where the ruler of the country was a personal friend. He never returned to Italy, dying in Tunisia in 2000. His legacy of political corruption continues in Italy however through the labors of his protégé, Silvio Berlusconi.

²³⁸ Robert Katz, *Days of Wrath: The Ordeal of Aldo Moro: The Kidnapping, the Execution, the Aftermath* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1980), 190-191.

that were strongly represented in the secretive P2 network. The strategy of tension which had been created by P2, with the assistance of NATO's Operation Galdio, was designed to cause the Italian populace to turn away from the PCI and in their fear accept a repressive response, which failed to occur, as evidenced by the increasing electoral strength of the PCI. The strategy of tension did however have the effect of accelerating the PCI's moderation eventually turning it into a paper tiger that would on occasion issue radical proclamations, but whose policies were well within the capitalist framework. Yet even a moderated PCI occupying a reduced role in government was too much for this highly organized reactionary part of the state. Moro's kidnapping by the Red Brigades thus provided them with the opportunity to eliminate the largest supporter of the Historic Compromise within the DC, scuttling the entire process and provided the excuse necessary for the full repressive mechanisms of the state to be unleashed. While the Red Brigades thought that they were striking a blow against the heart of the state, in actuality they were playing into its hands, as Philip Willan notes "...there can be little doubt that the activities of the left-wing terrorists ultimately played into the hands of the conservative conspirators...From a secret point of view, the exploitation of genuinely autonomous terrorists constituted the most sophisticated kind of covert operation and offered the added advantage of plausible deniability."²³⁹ The Red Brigades, regardless of their laughable claims that they represented the only truly radical force in Italy, were in actuality manipulated by its most conservative. An irony perhaps more understandable when it is recalled that in their relations to other political forces and in their own internal

²³⁹ Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991), 350.

method of organization the Red Brigades were merely reproducing the interactions of the state on a far smaller scale.

Before turning to the specifics of the Italian state's response after Moro was eventually murdered by the Red Brigades, it is important to recall that Italy was, at the time, on the frontlines of the Cold War. The United States had taken an intense interest in Italy from the 1948 elections onwards, providing the assistance and expertise necessary that allowed the strategy of tension in Italy to begin and continue for more than a decade. Thus it should come as no surprise that the United States was also intimately involved in ensuring that Moro never left the confines of his Red Brigades' prison alive, although actual confirmation of this has only very recently come to light. "An American envoy has claimed that he played a critical role in the fate of Aldo Moro, the former Italian prime minister murder by terrorists in 1978. Steve Pieczenik, an international crisis manager and hostage negotiator in the State Department, said that Moro had been sacrificed for the stability of Italy...Moro's widow, Eleonora, later said Henry Kissinger had warned her husband against his strategy. 'You will pay dearly for it', he is alleged to have said."²⁴⁰ It should be clear then that Moro diverged too far from what was deemed acceptable within the Cold War context, in the process upsetting powerful interests both within and outside of Italy, his death then would serve at least two valuable functions ending the Historic Compromise and providing the justification for the crushing of the social movements in the country, which would be smeared as simply a wing of the Red Brigades, and thus terrorists that had to be defeated at any cost. Viewed in hindsight and

²⁴⁰ Malcolm Moore, "US Envoy Admits Role in Aldo Moro Killing," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 11, 2008, 16.

with an awareness of the complex interaction of political forces in the country, Moro's death once he was captured by the Red Brigades was inevitable.

During Moro's imprisonment Lotta Continua had published an open appeal to the Red Brigades warning them "...secluded in their ivory tower of ideological and juridical madness of the terrible mistake they are committing since, at some future date, the state, in one of those bursts of energy which follow defeat and stem from impotence, will require that the price be paid precisely by this section of the left, which, ideologically, is most obviously associated with the Red Brigades."²⁴¹ This warning would prove to be highly prescient as the reaction of the Italian state, after Moro's body was found in Rome on May 9th, 1978 in the trunk of a car between the headquarters of the DC and the PCI, was immediate and brutal. The police, already violently cracking down on demonstrations, now increased their repression still further; the emergency legislation that was gradually introduced in Italy in the 1970s and chronicled earlier in this chapter was fully employed with mass preventive arrests becoming common place. Under these conditions necessary for a mass popular movement to survive and thrive, especially the ability to organize and demonstrate openly, were now unachievable. "Caught in a vice between the police and gun-toting radicals, the movement was denied public space vital to its existence. Squeezed between the violence of the police and the small group actions of armed militants, the popular movement came to an abrupt end..."²⁴² While Autonomia had been under incredible pressure throughout its existence and this pressure had in fact propelled both its theoretical analysis and the creation of new political actions,

²⁴¹ Leonardo Sciascia, *The Moro Affair* (London: Granta Books, 2002), 71.

²⁴² Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 51.

with the security climate in Italy now making interactions between militants, activists, and the common person who simply wished to be politically active impossible, the pressure became overwhelming submerging Italy's social movements and Autonomia along with it.

Conclusion: The Death of a Movement

The final and the most dramatic blow came on April 7th, 1979. With the arrest of twelve of the intellectual leaders of Autonomia "...for constituting the clandestine leadership of the Red Brigades...Although between 1979 and the defendants' first appearances in court in 1982 the postulated link with the Red Brigades was formally abandoned, the initial interpretation of armed struggle as the unilinear evolution of violence directed by a single set of leaders remained the basic feature of the accusations."²⁴³ This interpretation was fundamentally flawed. Although those arrested on April 7th were important figures in Autonomia, they were not its leadership, as no such leadership existed. Autonomia was never a single defined group, but rather a diverse network of organizations that coalesced around common causes and interests. Furthermore the accusation the Autonomia somehow directed the actions of the Red Brigades is sheer lunacy, for as I have demonstrated, in terms of organization, but also the forms of politics they practiced and the type of society they hoped to achieve the two groups could not have been further apart.

With Autonomia and the social movements in the country repressed, Italian society could enter the era of neoliberalism. Instead of the socialized worker fulfilling the

²⁴³ David Moss, *The Politics of Left-Wing Violence in Italy 1969-1985* (Houndsmills: Macmillian, 1989), 204.

potential it contained to tear asunder the logic of capital and with it the very notion of work it was forced to follow the dictates of capital and the newly ascendant post-Fordist mode of accumulation, with precarious forms of labor becoming dominant and the marginalized who rose up in 1977 becoming the majority of the workforce. FIAT once again served as a bellwether for a shift in Italy's economic and social conditions. In October 1980 a five week strike against mass redundancy was defeated. This historic defeat decisively influenced the direction of the Italian economy in favor of the capitalist class. "FIAT has always acted as a barometer not only of the fortunes of the economy but also to a large extent of trends in the struggle between capital and labor throughout Italian industry. And since the events of autumn 1980 the list of major industrial companies declaring, and succeeding in achieving, massive lay-offs and redundancies has been virtually a roll call of the commanding heights of Italian manufacturing...following FIAT's robust assertion of management's right to manage and restructure on its own terms."²⁴⁴ With the defeat of the FIAT strike the restructuring of the Italian economy along post-Fordist lines begun in earnest.

Outside of the economy, in terms of politics, the change in Italy could not have been more drastic, from a society in which everything seemed to be politicized and new ways of living and political action were being created Italy in the 1980s became a society, like the rest of the West, where politics was conceived of narrowly and confined solely to parliamentary means where a technocratic form of politics became the norm. Such an occurrence was not accidental, but the entire goal towards which the Italian state of exception, indeed any state of exception strives towards, nor is this type of politics unique

²⁴⁴ Marco Revelli, "Defeat at FIAT," *Capital and Class* 16 (1982):95.

to neoliberalism, but it is rather this narrow form of politics towards which liberal capitalist societies inevitably slide. “Today nothing is more modern than the onslaught against the political... There must no longer be political problems, only organizational-technical and economic-sociological tasks. The kind of economic-technical thinking that prevails today is long longer capable of perceiving a political idea.”²⁴⁵ Entrenched power interests do not desire a politically engaged, active citizenry, far from it; their ideal is a populace which quietly acquiesces to the demands of the state and capital, an outcome that is only possible if a society is thoroughly depoliticized. Today, this is the contemporary condition of the West. What makes Italy unique is both the mechanism that was required to achieve it, a state of exception, and also the unique form(s) of resistance, *Autonomia* which struggled against this outcome unsuccessfully.

Although it may appear that what occurred in Italy is only relevant to that country as I will show in the next and final chapter this is far from true. In our current condition the relevance of the forms of analysis developed by *Autonomia*, specifically of subjectivity, and its attempts to free social forces from their institutional control and construct a new set of institutions which better respond to their needs and desires continues today. Further the condition of politics that I have outlined as emerging in Italy in the 1970s have only accelerated and has become the accepted political mode of operation in the West today. Politics is, at present, truly post-political, with the political, defined as an activity which attempts to understand and challenge the human condition occurring outside what is usually considered to be the domain of the political, the state.

²⁴⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 65.

In terms of security measures implemented in Italy as part of a state of exception, the parallels with the United States, post-September 11th are clear. Presently the United State is under its own state of exception where cherished legal norms are disregarded and a new legal code is enacted all in the name of protecting the populace from an ill-defined threat. As in Italy this has resulted in a gradual mutation in the American state and the creation of a new repressive and secretive apparatus. All of this is designed, as it was in Italy, to maintain a state of fear in the public which will serve to create a pervasive atmosphere of disaggregation and depoliticization. As always then a state of exception is being employed to pacify a population so that vested interests in society can achieve their own aims. What these aims are, how they have shaped subjectivity in the present period, and the new visions of the political that are arising as a result are all points to which I will now turn.

Chapter III: Our Contemporary Circumstances. Empire, the World Social Form, and the Creation of New Political Forms.

Introduction: The Subjectivity of Empire

In the two previous chapters I sought to trace the development of Autonomia in Italy and demonstrate how its progress and collapse were rooted in the political and economic conditions of the country. In this final chapter I will seek to apply the analysis and theoretical conceptions that I have developed to understand the contemporary political condition. Specifically, I will argue that the new anti-terrorism measures and changes in the American state constitute a state of exception, however as I think is clear from my analysis of Italy, such an occurrence, while possessing its own unique characteristics, is not an unparalleled occurrence. Rather than focusing upon its particular manifestations, in terms of specific laws enacted and policies pursued by the American state, which have been extensively covered from a range of perspectives already, I will seek to comprehend the effect that these changes have had upon culture, the structure of the state, and the formation of subjectivity. However the relevance of my remarks are not simply limited to the United States. Rather, relying upon an interpretation of Hardt and Negri's conception of empire and multitude I will argue that the United States, in the wake of September 11th, has created an imperial culture and an imperial subjectivity which now encompasses the globe circumscribing the range of political action world-wide in the process.

The changes that have occurred in the American polity since September 11th are certainly not without precedent, especially when the Italian experience of the 1960s and 1970s is considered. Rather than being a radical break with past practice the American experience in the present era instead represents the progression of tendencies that first

emerged at the end of the 1970s. As I will demonstrate, the present political condition is founded upon the process of neoliberal globalization which began in earnest at the beginning of the 1980s. Politics, the economy, and societies in general were reshaped by neoliberalism and it is only after neoliberalism became the ideology through which society was both viewed and structured itself that the present age of global empire that we now find ourselves in became possible. Empire, and neoliberalism before it, have not found themselves unopposed however and in the second half of this chapter I will focus my attention upon the most exciting creation the resistance to both neoliberalism and empire has created, the World Social Forum (WSF). The existence of the World Social Forum is significant because it creates a space in which the incredibly diverse forms of resistance to neoliberalism and empire can congregate and begin to articulate visions of a different world and new forms of subjectivity. The World Social Forum represents a response of social movements to the current paradigm of endless war and fear. Beyond this the World Social Forum, both in the manner in which it is organized and in the form of politics it professes to privilege, represents the actualization of a radical post-political politics. The attempt of the social movements involved in the World Social Forum process to organize outside the terrain of the state and create a new institutional framework to struggle against neoliberalism and empire shares a common philosophy with Autonomia in Italy, demonstrating its continued relevance to political action today.

The Advent of Neoliberalism

To understand why the WSF arose and what it represents it is first necessary to understand the neoliberal vision of reality that it originally aligned itself against and how

the advent of the War on Terror has deepened and extended processes begun under neoliberalism but added new elements as well. Neoliberalism, like any successful traditional hegemonic ideology,²⁴⁶ built its base of support and perpetuated itself by posing as the only logical and rational way to govern society. Neoliberalism offered a persuasive and positive view of society, by appealing to an individual sense of self worth and posited a society in which the freedom of individuals to make their own decisions and govern their own lives would be paramount. In doing so neoliberalism served as a rhetorical trick in response to the social movements of 1968, which had sought increased freedom, but a more radical form of freedom with different connotations than the freedom offered by neoliberalism. In this way neoliberalism served as a veneer that portrayed the dominant paradigm of precarious labor that came to characterize the post-Fordist economic model as an improvement over the stable jobs with benefits that were common in the era of the welfare state. Individuals supposedly now had more choice and more control over their own lives. Rather than making claims upon the state expecting a certain level of social services the neoliberal subject was one that was now free from these constraints and effectively able to govern their own lives free of outside interference. “The neoliberal subject is not a citizen with claims on the state but a self-enterprising citizen-subject who is obligated to become an entrepreneur of himself or herself.”²⁴⁷ Thus, at the ideological level, neoliberalism served to portray the economic changes that were occurring within Western societies with the rise of post-Fordism as a

²⁴⁶ Neoliberalism and empire both adopt what I view to be classical notions of hegemony in that they seek to project a universalizing form of dominance which can encompass society. In contrast, the notion of hegemony that Laclau and Mouffe elaborate, seeks to create a hegemony which is a multiplicity of antagonisms, rather than a single unified force.

²⁴⁷ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 14.

positive progression that was allowing an increasing amount of control by individuals over their own lives, masking what neoliberalism actually represented, a generalized deterioration in the economic condition for the vast majority and a severe narrowing of the traditional sphere of politics. This occurred as the ideology of neoliberalism began to permeate across societies and came increasingly to influence the decisions taken by governments with the effect being that the ability to envision and elaborate other ways of governing society declined. This resulted not only due to the dominance of neoliberalism in cultural and state institutions, but also because the very methods used to construct the neoliberal society greatly undermined the potential to articulate and construct any alternatives, through closing off of the state as an effective terrain for political action and by disaggregating any collective activity in society.

Neoliberalism arose out of the collapse of the Bretton Woods institutions at the end of the 1970s as a new way of conceptualizing and organizing society.²⁴⁸ Over the course of many years neoliberalism gradually became dominant within the advanced industrial states of the West, with the specific manner in which it did so differing, of course, depending upon the country. In Italy, as I have chronicled, a state of exception was necessary to crush the vibrant social movements in the country, only then was the way cleared for the adoption of neoliberalism as the governing ideology in the 1980s. For the ideology of neoliberalism society itself was the problem. The scope of the public sphere had to be drastically reduced through the depoliticization of the standard terrain of

²⁴⁸ There is a vast literature analyzing the collapse of Bretton Woods. A large number of factors precipitating its downfall, however it is clear that the reforms of the Bretton Woods period empowered the working class, with steadily increasing wages. Ironically this had the effect of weakening one of the crucial conditions upon which Bretton Woods, an acquiescent working class. The job security that Bretton Woods provided created an increasingly militant working class. The rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s was a response to the crisis that a newly confident working class created.

political action, the state. This was done through defining the market as the only forum through which social interactions should occur. However, the market holds a very specific notion of what social interactions should be. “Only open-ended, fragmented, pragmatic conceptions of interests and benefits can be made intelligible to and have an impact on the market...”²⁴⁹ This conceptualization of the relationship between individuals conflicts with the common understanding necessary for society to exist. Whereas the market sees individuals acting in their own self-interest, society sees members that recognize that their actions affect both other members of society and society as a whole. To exist society requires “...the belief that what each member does or refrains from doing, matters to society as a whole and to all of its other members...”²⁵⁰ Neoliberalism, through its placement of the market as the sole mechanism through which individuals should engage with each other, undermined this belief because it posited society as a collection of atomized individuals whose sole purpose was to maximize their own market value, rather than as a collective that represented a plurality of views and potentials for the future.

Neoliberalism was an attractive paradigm because it presented itself as increasing individual freedom through limiting the extent that society could impinge upon individual action. In fact, a false sort of freedom was offered. “Paradoxically, the call to take life into one’s own, individual hands and the pressure to do just that may rebound in less individual control over its course. That call and those pressures divert the minds and the

²⁴⁹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Beyond Neoliberal Governance: The World Social Forum as Subaltern Cosmopolitan Politics and Legality,” in *Law and Globalization From Below: Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

²⁵⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Society Under Siege* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 49.

deeds of individuals from the collectively set conditions that determine the agenda and the chances of their individual choices and efforts.”²⁵¹ Rather than increased freedom and the multiplying of the possible choices that one could pursue to shape one’s own life, what resulted was a sharp curtailing of freedom and a limiting of choices. This was not accidental, but the only possible outcome of neoliberalism, as it extended market relations to encompass society. The freedom that neoliberalism sought was the freeing of capital from its legal restraints, through privatization and deregulation. This particular type of freedom depended upon shifting elements that were formerly governed by society to the market, in the process closing them off from the majority of society. As Bauman notes, “The consolidation, development and deepening of capitalism in our lives depends on enclosures.”²⁵² With the advent of neoliberalism the ability for the individual to make choices about their own life, and their ability to influence collective decision making through the election of representatives, who determined how society was to be governed, were sharply curtailed. Instead choice was abstracted and removed to the realm of the market, over which rapidly decreasing amounts of control were exercised.

Ironically, then, an ideology which had promised increased freedom by placing the market as the sole mechanism of governance had constrained the scope of individual action into an increasingly narrow framework. This was because neoliberalism was an ideology that was highly intolerant of anything that did not conform to the rationality of the market. Neoliberalism represented a singular form of integration “... a method of rationalization of the market which... becomes a favorite instrument for the efficient

²⁵¹ Ibid., 69.

²⁵² Massimo de Angelis, “Opposing fetishism by reclaiming or powers: The Social Forum movement, capitalist markets and the politics of alternatives,” *International Social Science Journal* 182 (2004): 595.

homogenization of social forces in accordance with schema which are functional for the legitimation and reproduction of the system.”²⁵³ Neoliberalism thus eroded differences that could not be effectively subsumed under the logic of the market. From this erosion a significantly changed political sphere and a cynical and consumptive subjectivity were formed.

Neoliberalism, defined succinctly as the capture and transformation of society by the mechanisms of the market, represents the full ramifications of capitalism at the stage of real subsumption. The changing nature of work under real subsumption seen most clearly in the precarity of post-Fordist forms of labor is here reflected at the ideological and state level. “This shift to a less regulated, more adaptive and flexible system of capitalist accumulation places constraints on internally regulated economic development...In the phase in which state and society constitute a single, all encompassing complex, the assemblages and apparatuses that comprise the capitalist system use a power of domination to secure the social cooperation that makes it possible for capital to operate: the social relations of production come therefore to constitute the core of the prevailing mode(s) of production.”²⁵⁴ Hence changes at the economic level, namely the socialization of capital, naturally had an impact upon the structure of the state as well, forcing it to intervene to reshape society so that it became more pliable to capital’s interests. This occurred both through withdrawal, i.e. deregulation and the rollback of hard won social programs and legal protections, and through intervention,

²⁵³ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 107.

²⁵⁴ Kenneth Surin, “Now Everything Must be Reinvented: Negri and Revolution,” in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri: Resistance in Practice*, ed. Timothy Murphy and Abdul-Karim Mustapha (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 206.

which primarily took the form of repression and the active attempt to discredit any political force or actor that sought to criticize or proposed alternatives to the neoliberal paradigm.

Neoliberalism undermined the public sphere by shifting governance functions from their traditional realm of the state to the supposedly impersonal and value neutral market. This shift was underlain by and perpetuated a culture of political consensus,²⁵⁵ “...a consensus of the center...which did not allow voters to make a real choice between significantly different policies.”²⁵⁶ The overwhelming political consensus that existed in support of neoliberal policies had a number of dramatic effects on the political sphere as well as the tasks deemed appropriate to the individual and how they viewed themselves and their place within society. With all mainstream political parties adopting a version of the neoliberal program politics was no longer about elaborating and debating between different visions of society and about striving to make these visions of the future possible in the present. Instead politics became contained solely within the present, “...with the future being nothing but an expansion of the present, paid for, of course, by the requisite austerities and cutbacks.”²⁵⁷ The traditional political realm of the party system was thus no longer an arena for substantive debate. With all political parties now agreeing on the

²⁵⁵ The basis of the consensus necessary for the advent of neoliberalism was formulated in the United Kingdom and the United States under the Thatcher and Regan administrations. With two charismatic leaders of the two of the most powerful countries in the world as its advocates, the consensus of neoliberalism quickly spread outwards, in both a peaceful manner, such as through the election of parties which had adopted neoliberal ideas, or through violent means, such as the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile.

²⁵⁶ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 66.

²⁵⁷ Jacques Ranciere, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995), 6.

general direction that the polity should take,²⁵⁸ “...with the only choice, given the nearly identical nature of the enterprise as envisaged by either side, being to opt for the better-tailored public relations image...”²⁵⁹ The effect was that the institutions of the state became a space where only social sentiments that coincided with the logic of the market could be expressed, resulting in a greatly narrowed understanding of what the political was. The state was therefore no longer a collection of various political organs, but simply a manager of market mechanisms, eliminating, in large part, its political function. “Modern politics comes into being accompanied by the thought of its own elimination.”²⁶⁰ Neoliberalism hence depoliticized the state as a realm of political action by reducing its perception of what it was capable of doing and what its role should be.²⁶¹

Any ideology which has become hegemonic through its capture of the institutions of society and which succeeds in reproducing itself across them creates new forms of subjectivity which correspond to the actions of these institutions in society under the guise of the hegemonic ideology. “Social reproduction and individual socialization, the processes of structuration, take place through the intersection of individual paths with

²⁵⁸ Generally speaking political parties within liberal democracies have generally agreed that the capitalist system is worth preserving. However the version of capitalism that each party represents could differ from *laissez faire* to social democratic. The significance of the advent of neoliberalism is that, on the whole, these political parties which formerly promoted different versions of capitalism, have now all subscribed to one general framework, with slight modifications between parties. It could be argued that the previous period of Bretton Woods and the welfare was also one such period of consensus, this argument has merit. However, the previous era also provided an expanded realm for debate and discourse to occur, which neoliberalism fails to do.

²⁵⁹ Jacques Ranciere, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995), 23.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 49.

²⁶¹ That state was reduced in the sense that the state no longer viewed it as appropriate to intervene in society in the same manner as it did during the welfare era. In actual material terms however, the state has actually increased in size. While the public services that the state provides have shrunk, its military and policing functions have grown dramatically over the past three decades. Ironically the state has grown quicker under Republican administrations, especially Regan and Bush II, than under Democratic governance.

institutional projects occurring at specific sites. Within any place it is the dominant institution projects...that have the most impact on socialization and reproduction.”²⁶²

Neoliberalism as the dominant institutional project expressed itself through the depoliticization of the state. This spurred the construction of a new subjectivity, with a particular set of characteristics, the most notable being an expansive consumerism and a pervasive cynicism towards virtually all social institutions²⁶³ and the ability of the individual working alone or collectively with others to make anything but a negligible impact upon the society. “The public morality of the marketplace works its magic in widening the gap between political control and economic power while simultaneously reducing political agency to the act of consuming. One result is a growing cynicism and powerlessness among the general population...”²⁶⁴ This cynicism arose as a direct result of the draining of any substantive notions of the political from the realm of the state. Denied any clear ability to shape society, the subject constructed under neoliberalism turned inwards and away from larger social concerns, focusing instead upon highly personal issues, restricting its range of action to primarily consumptive choices, further reinforcing the market logic of neoliberalism.

The success of neoliberalism was so pervasive that it not only restrained the ability of individuals and society to determine the choices that could be made in the present, but it presented the few actions that were possible as the only ones that could conceivably exist, thus limiting the possibilities that could exist in the future. This occurs

²⁶² John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 32.

²⁶³ I define social institutions in the broad Grasmscian sense to include organizations which belong to both civil society and the state.

²⁶⁴ Henry Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 57.

because neoliberalism “....rules out as unrealistic or totalitarian any notion of another society, promoting the ideal of a capitalism under which individuals can achieve happiness as consumers in the market.”²⁶⁵ This ruling out of any conceptions of alternative societies, of different ways in which individuals can conduct themselves and society can be organized, is encapsulated perfectly in what can be referred to as the slogan of neoliberalism, first spoken by the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, “there is no alternative.” By proclaiming that no alternatives to the present order of things are possible neoliberalism becomes a conservative utopia.²⁶⁶ “All conservative utopias are sustained by a political logic based on one sole efficiency criterion that rapidly becomes a supreme ethical criterion...Neoliberalism is one such conservative utopia for which the sole criterion of efficiency is the market or the laws of the market. Its utopian character resides in the promise that its total fulfillment or application cancels out all other utopias.”²⁶⁷ Due to the historical context that neoliberalism arose within; it became possible for the entire planet to be reorganized under the dictates of the neoliberal ideology. The utopia of neoliberalism projected itself across the globe through a process that came to be termed globalization.

Globalization is the realization and the awareness that “...events in one part of the world can affect individuals and communities in far distant parts. Moreover, one event

²⁶⁵ Jose Leite, *The World Social Forum: Strategies of Resistance* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007), 37.

²⁶⁶ Any hegemonic vision articulates a utopia which provides a foundation for the hegemonic discourse. As will be seen neoliberalism and empire and the WSF elaborate different variants of utopia.

²⁶⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 10.

can affect simultaneously many distant individuals and communities.”²⁶⁸ The drawing together of formerly disperse events has occurred through the creation of advanced communication technology, cheap air travel, and a global media that reports upon events happening in locations all over the world. While these important developments have the potential to draw people together and through the connections that are formed provide the basis for new transnational forms of solidarity, because globalization was informed by neoliberalism the result was fragmentation and alienation. Although neoliberalism presents itself as personifying globalization, it is only one possible form of globalization, as Marc Becker argues “...globalization in and of itself is not necessarily a negative influence on the world. Only when it combined with the forces of corporate-led neoliberal economic policies did it diminish environmental, labor, human rights, public health, and food safety policies with a corresponding erosion of culture, democracy and sovereignty throughout the world.”²⁶⁹ The anti-globalization movements which emerged in the late 1990s were a response to the negative impact that the globalization of neoliberalism was having upon societies across the world. Initially the anti-globalization movement simply opposed the institutions that were most associated with the propagation of neoliberalism, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization; however it soon extended beyond opposition to include a critique of the culture of neoliberalism upon which these institutions were based. This critique of the culture of neoliberalism soon developed into the realization that effectively challenging neoliberalism required the creation of an alternative culture which would serve as the

²⁶⁸ Marco Giuani, “Explaining Cross-National Similarities among Social Movements,” in *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, ed. Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 16.

²⁶⁹ Marc Becker, “World Social Forum,” *Peace and Change* 32(2) (2007): 206.

foundation for the conceptualization of a new utopia that could effectively oppose the utopia envisioned by neoliberalism.

While the extension of neoliberalism across the globe wrought social fragmentation and disorder across societies, it also created the basis for unity in opposition to neoliberalism: "...among the consequences of globalization is the creation of structural affinities in different countries. In particular, similar (though not identical) conflict structures, which correspond to existing social and cultural cleavages, are more likely to emerge in a globalized world."²⁷⁰ Placing the market as the only mechanism through which social interaction could occur resulted in a similar process of structural transformation across societies. Generally speaking the policies adopted resulted in the independence of central banks, the deregulation of the financial markets, and a progressively accelerated process of business consolidation, among others. "The socialization of exploitation was the result of the direct absorption by capital of all the conditions of production and reproduction. Capital consumed society, and thus became social. The same thing happened at the global level: capital consumed the entire world and thus became global."²⁷¹ The policies were on the whole the same across the globe, but they had different effects and consequences depending upon the character of the society in which they were adopted and how vigorously they were pursued.

²⁷⁰ Marco Giuani, "Explaining Cross-National Similarities among Social Movements," Explaining Cross-National Similarities among Social Movements," in *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, ed. Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p.20.

²⁷¹ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 104.

Thus in the period leading up to September 11th neoliberalism became the dominant method of organizing society, carried across the world through the process of globalization, led by the United States. Beginning in 1994 however, with the Zapatista uprising in Mexico and continuing through to the massive mobilizations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 and successive demonstrations over the next two years in various cities throughout the world, a sustained world- wide opposition, a cycle of protests against the institutions that most represented neoliberalism can be observed. “For a cycle to form, the recipients of the news must be able to translate the events into their own language, recognize the struggles as their own, and thus add a link to the chain.”²⁷² The pervasive nature of neoliberalism provided the basis for a common language which allowed an incredibly diverse assortment of people from all over the planet to find commonality in opposition to its policies. In effect by globalizing itself neoliberalism also made a global resistance possible.

The social movements that comprised the anti-globalization movement had a different orientation from social movements of the past. Rather than replicating traditional political mechanisms within their own organizational form and primarily seeking to bring about a change in state policy, these social movements have sought to actualize the change they seek through lived practice in pursuit of a change of culture over and above a change in traditional politics. By attempting to subvert dominant institutional actors and operating on a terrain outside of traditional politics the anti-globalization movement actualizes a new form of minor politics. “Contemporary social movements, more than others in the past, have shifted towards a non-political terrain: the

²⁷² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 50-1.

need for self-realization in everyday life. In this respect social movements have a conflictual and antagonistic, but not a political orientation, because they challenge the logic of complex systems on cultural grounds...”²⁷³ The anti-globalization movement has certainly confronted state actors and the massive wave of demonstrations that began with Seattle in 1999 clearly demonstrate this, but they differed from movements of the past in that they did not seek for their politics to be reflected by changes in the state. The anti-globalization movement, in large part did not approach the state with a list of demands to be fulfilled, rather it sought to organize outside of the state, assuming that in the neoliberal era little could be gained by directly appealing to the state: “...the fundamental fantasy of the politics of demand is that the current hegemonic formation will recognize the validity of the claim presented to it and respond in a way that produces an event of emancipation. Most of the time, however, it does not; instead it defers, dissuades, or provides a partial solution to one problem that exacerbates several others.”²⁷⁴ With neoliberalism effectively depoliticizing the state by turning it into a site for the technocratic management of society, with the broad support of all major political parties, the state was no longer the primary terrain for political action. The anti-globalization movement, in the type of politics it practiced, recognized this and instead of confining itself to one particular area of society it sought to politicize the lived experience of daily life through its actions.

²⁷³ Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (London: Hutchinson Radis, 1989), 23.

²⁷⁴ Richard Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 89.

As the anti-globalization movement sought an expansive view of politics that encompassed aspects of life that were supposedly nonpolitical it was misunderstood by the major institutional actors in society who possessed a highly restrictive notion of politics. Due to this misunderstanding this plethora of movements was, for a time, able to operate outside of the traditional institutional realm, creating its own spaces where new forms of political action could occur. “The emerging forms of collective action differ from the conventional models of political organization and operate increasingly outside of the established parameters of the political system. In complex societies collective action creates new spaces which function as a genuine sub-system. These social spaces are the products of different forms of behavior which the system is unable to integrate and include not only conflictual action but also deviant behavior and cultural experimentation.”²⁷⁵ In its belief that politics was best understood as a daily lived experience, its insistence on organizing outside of what was understood as traditional political domains, and its creation of social spaces from which new forms of political actions could gestate and take root the anti-globalization movement in many way mirrored the experience of the Autonomist struggle in Italy some three decades previous.

Both the Autonomist movement and the anti-globalization movement were perceived as sudden explosions whose very existence perplexed the dominant institutional actors of the day, yet both were rooted in transformations that had occurred in their respective societies with a series of precipitating events that happened before their existence was formally recognized either by those who comprised these movements

²⁷⁵ Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (London: Hutchinson Radis, 1989), p.56.

or those who stood apart from them. In the case of Italy it was the industrialization of the country and the subsequent inability of any of the dominant actors in society to respond appropriately to the new demands that arose as a result that created the basis for the upheaval which followed, with the Hot Autumn of 1969 creating the possibility for a mass break from the institutions through which these actors were represented; a potential which was briefly realized in 1977 before it was crushed by the Italian state. With the anti-globalization movement the scattered riots in developing countries which had been occurring for decades against the imposed austerity measures of the IMF as well as the coordinated movement across several countries against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the mid 1990s demonstrated that the potential for a global resistance against neoliberalism existed, but it was not until the pivotal demonstration in Seattle in 1999 that it was recognized both by its proponents and detractors that such a movement had already come into existence. What occurred in both instances is that the movements existed to an extent before those involved in the movements were themselves conscious that their own collective activities comprised a social movement. A conscious recognition that one's actions are part of a wider struggle is the foundation upon which the construction of a new critical form of subjectivity is based, from this arises a new theoretical understanding of the world and new ways to actualize this conception of the world. Antonio Gramsci recognized this: "The formulation of a revolutionary political theory according to Gramsci constitutes two simultaneous, mutually related activities: the uncovering of the ideological, cultural, and moral structures of the established system, and the development of a political subject whose consciousness is itself the new political theory whose embodiment and concretization within the subject is also the uncovering

and undermining of the established social structure.”²⁷⁶ Thus to become truly effective and have the potential to effect radical systemic change the social movements involved must create a new political subjectivity that recognizes the underlying operation of power in society and seeks to break from this by counterpoising it with its own vision of society. A similar process occurs with the dominant power formation as well, although in this instance rather than seeking to expose the underlying power dynamics the goal is to mask them and promote a form of subjectivity that maintains and promotes the continuation of the status quo. Neoliberalism, as I have outlined above, succeeded in doing this through its creation of a consumptive subject whose notion of choice was restricted to which consumer good to purchase.

While the anti-globalization movement demonstrated that the basis existed for a sustained resistance against neoliberalism it failed to articulate a coherent opposition and successfully construct an alternative subject that could be posited against the cynical and consumptive subject of neoliberalism. Although the anti-globalization movement went a long way towards revealing the vapidness of modern existence, this by itself was not enough. The social forces in society lack any ability to bring about radical change unless they are focused and capable of generalizing themselves across society. “Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order.”²⁷⁷ The anti-globalization movement needed to create its own institutions, its own terrain of

²⁷⁶ Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relationship between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 6.

²⁷⁷ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 98.

political action, from which a new subjectivity could be formulated that could contrast with the subjectivity created by neoliberalism and vie with it for dominance. The anti-globalization movement needed to move beyond the domain of minor politics, something that Autonomia in Italy never succeeded in doing, and solve the riddle of how the enthusiasm and radical potentialities that were emerging within the movement could become contained within a new institutional structure that would allow them to be rooted within society and serve as a foundation from which it could draw strength and inspiration in its struggle against the contemporary reactionary order. Unfortunately its lack of institutional coherence left the anti-globalization movement unable to effectively respond to the rapidly shifting terrain after September 11th when the neoliberal subject was modulated into the imperial subject. The anti-globalization movement did, however, make remarkable progress in only a few short years, vastly undermining the legitimacy of the neoliberal paradigm.

The Transformation of Neoliberalism into Empire

The attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the American-led response to them dramatically changed the global political and social climate. The changes that have occurred have altered the structure of the American state and correspondingly the legal regime which underpins it, creating what can properly be termed a state of exception. Although the paradigm through which the American state understands itself and the actions that it undertakes as a result differ from those of the pre-September 11th era, the tactics employed, the justifications offered, and the effects that they have had within the United States are not unique, but rather are common to every state of exception. What is

unprecedented is that due to the strength and expansive influence of the United States the ramifications of these changes have not been restricted to the United States but are being replicated across the globe within other states, transnationally (as in the EU) and internationally through forums such as the UN. The effect has been that at the global level the very basis of interactions between political actors has been restructured. A global state of exception has formed with the ever present threat of war²⁷⁸ being its defining characteristic as Hardt and Negri note, "...war seems to have seeped back and flooded the entire social field. The state of exception has become permanent and general; the exception has become the rule, pervading both foreign relations and the homeland."²⁷⁹ While war has always been the basis and the ultimate condition of international relations it is the pervasive threat of war, one that is unceasing and directed against a shifting and ill-defined assortment of enemies propagated by the United States with its global reach that makes the current condition of war different from wars of the past, which have traditionally been contained to a specific geographical area within a set length of time.

My goal in this section is first to demonstrate how the emergence of the American state of exception, at a general level, has caused the transformations in the American state and its legal regime that have occurred post-September 11th. This process, I argue, has modified the consumptive subject of neoliberalism into the present imperial subject. Following this I shall examine, employing Hardt and Negri's concept of empire and

²⁷⁸ The threat has of course actually manifested itself on numerous occasions, both through the American led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and terrorist attacks in London and Madrid. In the present era war seems to be defined by a dialectic between terrorism and counter-terrorism, although in many instances the actions performed in the name of counter-terrorism only mirror terrorist actions, with only a higher level of technological sophistication separating the two.

²⁷⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 7.

multitude, how the condition of the imperial subject has been generalized across the globe and has come to define the contemporary era. With its concentration of power in the executive branch, the increasing restriction of political freedoms, and a rapidly expanding surveillance and repressive apparatus, the American state is increasingly coming to resemble the state form of authoritarian statism described by Poulantzas. “A new form of state is currently being imposed...For want of a better term, I shall refer to this state form as authoritarian statism. This will perhaps indicate the general direction of change: namely, intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with a radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and multiform curtailment of so-called formal liberties, whose reality is being discovered now that they are going overboard.”²⁸⁰ The process towards the fulfillment of an authoritarian state certainly did not begin after September 11th; the state has always sought to restrict popular participation in politics, and the formation of authoritarian statism as the dominant state form in liberal capitalist societies started in earnest with the advent of neoliberalism, but it has been radically extended and deepened after September 11th.

To truly comprehend the changes that have occurred in the structure of the American state since September 11th requires an analysis of the legal regime that has been erected to support and codify it. The new legislation which has been enacted serves to signify and give force to the changing social and political dynamic within the United States: “...legislation is inherently political. It constitutes the abstract blueprint for the exercise of power within a given state form, and by the same token it provides testimony on the latter’s character. The War on Terror has significantly redrawn this blueprint.

²⁸⁰ Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 203-204.

Counterterrorism legislation implicates a shift in the operational and organizational character of the state, signifying a shift in the relation of forces in the sphere of social antagonism.”²⁸¹ Perhaps the most obvious change that has occurred in the United States with the advent of the War on Terror has been a significant increase in the power of the executive branch of government. In alignment with the centralization of power in the hands of the executive, the law has, to a great extent, lost its appearance as serving an autonomous regulating functioning in society and has become instrumentalized as a tool to be employed to carry out the will of the executive. Specific areas of the law, particularly security law, alongside immigration law,²⁸² have become far more prominent both in the public discourse and in its influence on other seemingly unrelated aspects of the law. This reorientation of the legal system, prompted by a transformation in the nature of political power in the United States, a form of power that expresses itself through the law, has transformed social relations in the United States. “While the law is more present than ever, it now finds its expression in the form of procedure, so that social relations are increasingly perceived in terms of procedure. The war on terrorism is thus the ultimate stage in turning penal law into procedure. As with other branches of the law, penal law is

²⁸¹ Christos Boukalas, “Counterterrorism Legislation and the US State Form: Authoritarian Statism, Phase 3,” *Radical Philosophy* 151 (2008):34.

²⁸² It is interesting to note that as the United States becomes more accepting and open about its role as a global empire, the ancient discourse about defending the frontier and beating back the barbarian hordes assumes a renewed prominence, with the imposition of an increasingly harsh and unforgiving immigration regime being a direct outgrowth of these altered perceptions. Although a full discussion of the contradictions of this regime is outside the scope of this chapter it is worthwhile to draw attention to some of its characteristics. First, the shifting nature of the frontier, usually associated with the Middle East, but capable of being located as close as the Mexican border. Second, the populations targeted by the new immigration regime are broadly defined, intersecting class and ethnic backgrounds. Crudely put, anyone who appears to be of Arab origin is under suspicion regardless of their possession of American citizenship or their economic status. Finally, and related to the last element, new immigration laws have been employed against illegal migrant workers, who supposedly represent a security threat, despite falling outside of the official logic of terrorism, demonstrating the amorphous and ill-defined “enemy” that these laws are designed to combat.

turned into a mere instrument in the hands of the executive power and the police.”²⁸³

What has occurred in the United States after September 11th, under the rubric of a state of exception has been a shift in the organizational form of the state, as it comes to more fully appropriate the ideal of authoritarian statism first elaborated by Poulantzas. The law has served as the clearest indication of this shift, with the privileging of the executive, rather than the judicial or congressional branch as the main force in American society, enacted, propagating, and interpreting the law.

As important as the increase in executive powers, what has occurred in the legal realm extends beyond the privileging of one branch of government to the detriment of the other two. The focus on the executive, a few members at the core of the state, is common in a state of exception, as it reveals the few who are truly sovereign within the apparatus of the state, who in times of crisis come overwhelmingly from the executive, as they exercise control over the security organs of the state, which naturally assume a prominent role during times of crisis. Such an event occurred in Italy with the formation of the parallel P2 state network as well as in the United States, with the rise of what some have termed “the imperial presidency”.²⁸⁴ In Italy P2 was used to direct terrorist attacks against its own citizens. While the United States is supposedly using its increased security powers against an enemy residing outside its borders, the effects of a state of exception are being felt within the United States as well.

²⁸³ Jean-Claude Paye, “Antiterrorist Measures, a Constituent Act,” *Telos* 136 (2006):173.

²⁸⁴ A term which in our post-September 11th world many forget is decades old, first coined by Arthur Schlesinger in 1973 to describe the rapidly expanding power of the presidency.

The most obvious effect of the vastly expanded power of the executive branch, which is a fundamental component of the American state of exception, is the erosion of American democracy. Outside of the actual policies being enacted, the very mechanism through which many of them are realized, the presidential signing statement, is detrimental to a pluralist democracy as it circumscribes the division of powers "... the George W. Bush administration has very effectively expanded the scope and character of the signing statement not only to address specific provisions of legislation that the White House wishes to nullify, but also in an effort to significantly reposition and strengthen the powers of the presidency relative to the Congress. This tour d'force has been carried out in such a systematic and careful fashion that few in Congress, the media, or the scholarly community are aware that anything has happened at all."²⁸⁵ In the first five years of the Bush Presidency, over 500 laws were altered in this manner, more than the entire Regan (71) and Clinton (105) Administrations put together.²⁸⁶

At least, however, the content of these signing statements are publicly available. More worrying are the presidential memos issued internally which may or may not be publicized. These memos are statements of the policy of the executive branch and outline options that can be pursued in support of these policies. Regarding the enforcement of a state of exception within the United States, one recent presidential memo, issued on October 23, 2001 memo, authored by the Office of Legal Counsel and sent to both the Defense Department and the White House reveals the lengths the American state is prepared to go, if it feels the circumstances are justified. In particular the memo argues

²⁸⁵ Phillip Cooper, "George W. Bush, Edgar Allan Poe, and the Use and Abuse of Presidential Signing Statements," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (3) (2005):516.

²⁸⁶ Andrew Sullivan, "We Don't Need a New King George," *Time Magazine*, Jan. 19, 2006.

that a situation may occur which will allow for the explicit disregarding of the Fourth Amendment of the American Constitution, therefore allowing for unlimited searches and seizures may occur and should be prepared for. The contemplation of such an action demonstrates the inherent instability that exists within not only liberal, but all societies, when the foundational document of a nation can be voided under the proper circumstances. Such an event would demonstrate, in crystal clear terms, the shaky foundations upon which modern society rests. The legal status of the memo itself reveals the malleability of the law, as it has not been formally withdrawn and remains a secret, but *unclassified* document, according to a Justice Department spokesman.²⁸⁷

These measures are portrayed as acting in the defense of society, due to the unorthodox threat facing society. "In the discursive constitution of the war on terror, the state is clearly cast in terms of the defender of society, and so great is this particular threat that the instrumentality of the state must become extraordinarily extensive and intrusive."²⁸⁸ The justification is that in a war, a war against terror, the normal rules no longer apply. The disregarding of current rules and the creation of new rules during a war to respond to the threat presented by the war is of course nothing new. However because of the diffuse nature of the present conflict, "...it is not clear whether the U.S is at war in a literal sense. If this is merely war in metaphor, then war rhetoric turns largely flat, and a more precise term for the conflict against terrorists might more appropriately be police

²⁸⁷ Dan Eggen and Josh White, "Administration Asserted a Terror Exception on Search and Seizure," *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2008, A04.

²⁸⁸ David Mutimer, "Sovereign Contradictions: Mahar Arar and the Indefinite Future," in *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, ed. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 171

action.”²⁸⁹ However if the struggle against terror is merely a police action, a common occurrence within society, then no justification is provided for the creation of new state powers, the formation of states of exception, and the prosecution of war internationally against terrorist regimes.

The difference between the American and the Italian states of exception lies in the realm of norms. In Italy it was claimed that the draconian security measures and repressive response of the state towards the social movements in the country was necessary to protect its democratic institutions. Similarly, the War on Terror is branded in the United States as a “war for democracy”, one waged ostensibly to protect American freedoms. Where they differ however is that while the Italian state of exception was coherent in aims and well organized, despite the competing fractions within the ruling elite, the American state of exception seems to be very haphazardly coordinated, with its unclear objectives leading to a confused application of the law, when the law is actually applied. As demonstrated by the prominence of presidential signing statements, the law is now circumvented when it is deemed to be inconvenient. What can be observed presently is the rise of procedural mechanisms that have the force of law, but do not have the legitimacy of the law, because they have not been created through accepted avenues (i.e. consultative negotiation and debate in Congress), but rather have simply been acclaimed. As Debrix argues, this is a direct consequence of the vague and shifting notions employed to justify the War on Terror: “...the normative basis of the (new) system cannot accommodate anything other than a succession of constantly revised, fine-tuned,

²⁸⁹ Michael Brough, “Legitimate Combatancy, POW Status, and Terrorism,” in *Philosophy 9/11: Thinking about the War on Terror*, ed. Timothy Shanahan (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 206.

or transformed techniques and procedures. The vaguely formulated objectives of such procedural measures are incidental and come after the fact, once the rules are already in place. Thus, the sovereign's task is far more than finding a way of connecting these new procedures to (the pretense of) a final purpose, to an overall justification, than it is to actually actively decide on the ultimate goal and, on that basis, invent appropriate laws."²⁹⁰ Usually in a state of exception, as I have argued earlier, the application of the law is separated from social norms to supposedly defend the foundation upon which those norms rest, society itself. However while the application of the law in a state of exception is typically at odds with the norms it is supposedly defending, an argument can usually be made, however dubiously, that these exceptional measures are necessary to achieve certain goals that will allow for the return of some semblance of normality. No such certainty exists in the American state of exception because no clear enemy exists that can be conquered or expunged.

While the United States has singled out particular regions in which the enemy supposedly resides, it is unable to specify who exactly the enemy is, besides those that adhere to a tenebrous ideology that supposedly threatens American values. Thus, despite their small number, the confused categorization of who the enemy is actually serves to increase their power. "A few terrorists are able to threaten great masses. Wider spaces of insecurity, fear, and general mistrust are added to the narrower space of open terror, creating a landscape of treason..."²⁹¹ In the absence of a clear definition of who the

²⁹⁰ Francois Debrix, "The Permanent State of Exception and the Dismantling of the Law," *Telos* 143 (2008):187.

²⁹¹ Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007), 73.

enemy is the American state has used its resources against its own citizens, society itself has become the enemy. The need to securitize society against a threat that can strike at any time or place has the ironic effect of escalating the level of insecurity by expanding the scope of those who are deemed to be a potential threat by the state, with the result being that one is far more likely to suffer harm from the actions of the American state than from a “terrorist.”

It is in the drive to protect itself from its own citizens that counterterrorism legislation in the United States can be best understood. The absence of a clearly defined enemy has devolved into anyone that seeks to influence the policy of the American state being deemed a possible enemy. “It cannot be stressed enough that the core of counterterrorism legislation is the criminalization of attempts undertaken by the citizenry to influence state policy. As terrorism is the criminalization of the political conviction behind the act, counterterrorism is an attempt to shield the socio-political regime. Finally, the social order the counterterrorism seeks to protect is the governance of social affairs by joint state-capital ventures. Its measures are a powerful message of caution to anything that, to one degree or the other, challenges this social order.”²⁹² Thus the only way to comprehend the legal changes brought about post-September 11th is not by the popular discourse surrounding them that they are designed to limit threats to the United States, but rather they can only be fully understood as part of a larger project to limit the impact of the citizenry upon governance mechanisms in American society. The tendency to limit the impact of popular participation upon governing structures is nothing new; perhaps the

²⁹² Christos Boukalas, “Counterterrorism Legislation and the US State Form: Authoritarian Statism, Phase 3,” *Radical Philosophy* 151 (2008):38.

only thing unique about the American legal system and the structure of the American state is the rapid pace by which the changes have occurred, not the changes themselves: “...the new anti-terrorism laws are very much in conformity with more ancient jurisdictional tendencies...they aim not so much to restrict the fundamental liberties of certain segments of the population, but rather to encompass it as a whole. They establish a permanent and generalized surveillance and control of individuals and will preventively attack and arraign any process of class re-composition by criminalizing social movements beforehand.”²⁹³ It is through these legal changes that the American state increasingly comes to assume the mantle of the authoritarian statism described by Poulantzas, a state form where there is an appearance of popular participation and consent but in reality the mechanisms of governance are insulated from the will of the citizenry.

The Imperial Subject and Empire

The alterations in the American legal system, prompted by a shift in power relations within the structure of the American state, have naturally had ramifications for the constitution of American society, giving rise to what I deem to be a new imperial form of subjectivity, one that has been carried across the globe due to the pervasiveness and strength of American society. It is an analysis of the content of the imperial subject as well as the manner in which it has been propagated that I now turn to. The changed political circumstances after September 11th accelerated and deepened many of the processes that neoliberalism had already put into place. With the emergence of the War

²⁹³ Jean-Claude Paye, “Dictatorship as the Empire’s Mode of Governance?,” *Telos* No.139 (2007):153.

on Terror and the clear unmasking of American imperial aggression²⁹⁴ what can now be observed is the intertwining of empire and neoliberalism. “A new international order is emerging, but it is designed to suit American imperial objectives. American’s allies want a multilateral order that will essentially constrain American power. But the empire will not be tied down like Gulliver with a thousand legal strings.”²⁹⁵ After September 11th, for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War, the United States was commonly referred to in popular discourse as an empire, lifting the veil off American imperialism for large portions of the American population. The new highly aggressive American foreign policy was justified under the rubric of the War on Terrorism, the struggle against an amorphous, ill-defined enemy that could strike at any time in any place.

Before examining the characteristics of the imperial subject it is crucial to realize that the conditions for the imperial subject and indeed the creation of the American empire in which it resides, was only made possible by decades of neoliberalism. “Under neoliberalism, dominant public pedagogy with its narrow and imposed schemes of classification and limited modes of identification use the educational force of the culture to negate the basic conditions for critical agency.”²⁹⁶ This negation of critical agency occurs, as we have seen, with the atomization of public life and the shaping of the individual into a consuming and cynical subject. Atomization and general cynicism, features that were spread by the globalization of the socialized worker and which already

²⁹⁴ American aggression has always been quite obvious to those it has been directed against, but within the United States itself there has always been a strong reluctance to refer to these actions as those of an imperial power. American foreign policy has always been viewed in the popular consciousness as the work of a benevolent democratic republic. It is this discourse which has been totally disregarded in the War on Terror.

²⁹⁵ Michael Ignatieff, “The Burden,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003.

²⁹⁶ Henry Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 106.

resided in the consumptive subject privileged by neoliberalism, have now been joined by a pervasive and all consuming fear “...fear is what binds and ensures social order and today fear is the primary mechanism of control...”²⁹⁷ provoked initially by the terror attacks of September 11th but extended and institutionalized by the American state of exception to create what I term the imperial subject. The imperial subject is not constrained to any one segment of society, rather the imperial subject cuts across class, ethnic, and gender divides. The imperial subject provides both the foundation for the present age of empire we currently find ourselves in and is a product of the culture of empire which has a specific relationship with the changes in law and politics that have occurred. It is from this foundation that the American empire is constructed. If a dynamic and vibrant public sphere existed that encouraged the formation of critical and knowledgeable social agents, with the provision that these social agents had ample opportunities to express themselves individually and amongst themselves, it is difficult to imagine that the construction of the imperial subject, the byproduct of neoliberalism and the American state of exception, which serves as the foundation for the American empire, would have met with the same success that it has.

My own conception of empire differs somewhat from Hardt and Negri's. They primarily see empire as a diffuse network of power relations encompassing the globe; although they admit that key nodal points may exist²⁹⁸ for them empire has no center. My own view is that, despite Hardt and Negri's reluctance to explicitly name an organizing actor of empire, it is clear that America forms the focal point of empire. As Panitch and

²⁹⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 323.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

Gindin argue this requires us to develop an analysis of imperialism that is "...capable of accounting for the central role that the American state has come to play in the global capitalist order."²⁹⁹ While the United States, like empires of the past, engages in geopolitical maneuvers and violent actions, my main point of interest here is the society that empire creates. Empire creates its own form of culture, which serves to perpetuate its own existence. It is in the realm of culture that I believe the analysis of Hardt and Negri proves to be more useful. "The networks of agreements and associations, the channels of mediation and conflict resolution, and the coordination of the various dynamics of states are all institutionalized within Empire."³⁰⁰ World culture is increasingly becoming an imperial culture, shaped by the power emanating from the American empire. This culture creates its own rationalities which form into subjectivities and presently have resulted in the imperial subject. This culture is not a unitary one, but can include many variations within its overall framework, it is here that the networked vision of power that Hardt and Negri elaborate exists, separate from, but playing an important role in, influencing the "old" realm of power politics, the arena of states and traditional international relations.

It is this imperial world culture³⁰¹ that has given rise to the imperial subject. The imperial subject is internally complex with many different tendencies; despite this several generalizing characteristics do exist; because of this I base my notion of the imperial subject upon the concept of the multitude. "The multitude designates an active social

²⁹⁹ Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, "Theorizing American Empire," in *Empire's Law: The American Imperial Project and the 'War to Remake the World'*, ed. Amy Bartholomew (New York: Pluto Press, 2006), 25.

³⁰⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 182.

³⁰¹ This culture is created as a byproduct from American actions throughout the world. The imperial culture, like any culture, privileges certain possibilities and excludes others, treats some populations or areas with suspicion and allows others to proceed unmolested. Although many other cultures reside within it the imperial culture provides the foundation upon which they operate and as a result heavily influences their development.

subject, which acts upon the basis of what the singularities share in common. The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity but on what it has in common.”³⁰² The imperial subject, like the neoliberal subject before it, is not a singular homogenous entity which submerses all variation within it. Rather, it serves as the framework within which the multitude is constructed. The multitude is not a unified entity, but rather a collection of individual singularities interacting with each other, however the manner in which these singularities engage with each other and the range of actions available to them is determined by the dominant form of subjectivity which informs the singularities of the multitude. “Every society constitutes its own form of rationality and intelligibility by dividing itself; that is, by expelling outside itself any surplus meaning subverting it.”³⁰³ In the contemporary society of globalized empire, the imperial subject serves as a particular form of rationality through which the multitude comprehends itself. With the imperial subject transgressing class, ethnic, and gender divides, the concept of the multitude becomes central to understanding the production of the imperial subject. The characteristics of the imperial subject, which will be examined below, serve to inhibit, but not entirely prevent, the emergence of countervailing formations

The imperial subject shares several characteristics with its neoliberal predecessor, namely the cynicism and turn to consumerism for self-satisfaction and expression that were noted above, however these characteristics are at the same time displaced in the

³⁰² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 100.

³⁰³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 136-7.

constitution of the imperial subject. For the imperial subject, fear is the central organizing principle. "Cruelty is now the norm. Fear is no longer sufficient for the maintenance of power. Fear must be so widespread and intense that people are stunned by it."³⁰⁴ Fear is propagated by the declaration of a state of exception as a state begins to make war against the society it governs. This fear is permeated through social institutions and contains two different variations that combine together to create an encompassing fear that serves as a reference point and norm for empire.³⁰⁵ The first form of fear is a fear of repression. This fear is demonstrated to society at large, to the entire multitude, by making examples of particular individuals or vulnerable segments of society through the direct application of coercive mechanisms which are rooted in the new legal framework³⁰⁶ of the War on Terror: "...while particular acts may silence particular individuals, what makes these acts truly lethal is their effect on the other men and women who are likely to associate with these targeted individuals...fear does the work, or enhances the work of repression, ensuring that specific incidents have a resonance and power extending far beyond the incidents themselves."³⁰⁷ Thus by publicly targeting a few individuals, an example is created which serves as a reference point for the rest of society, causing it to assume an unquestioning and fearful attitude, allowing the institutions from where the repression

³⁰⁴ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 124-5.

³⁰⁵ Although the two forms of fear are discussed in reference to the American state of exception they, of course, exist in any state of exception. What is different in the American case however is its scope, carried through the network of empire, the fear arising from the American state of exception begins to encompass the entire globe.

³⁰⁶ Critical parts of this legal framework which are used to justify the application of repressive techniques include laws such as the USA Patriot Act and the numerous legal memos drafted under the Bush administration which selectively interpret already existing laws to either coincide with the new requirements of empire or provide justifications for the disregarding of inconvenient laws and provisions.

³⁰⁷ Corey Robin, "Fear, American Style: Civil Liberty After 9/11," in *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century*, ed. Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 48.

was issued to function unhindered. The second form of fear is a fear of death. This fear arises from the possibility that the events of September 11th might repeat themselves again, possibly on a more horrific scale. This fear is manipulated and maintained by the same social institutions which underline the fear of repression. The fear of death is used to justify the unceasing war of empire. "Popular fears about domestic safety and internal threats accentuated by endless terror alerts have created a society that increasingly accepts the notion of war without limits as a normal state of affairs..."³⁰⁸ The fear of repression and the fear of death combine to form the core of the imperial subject, displacing the cynicism and consumerism which was at the heart of the neoliberal subject, but at the same time deepening and extending these elements. This occurs because the transformations necessary within society to place fear as the central point of subjectivity further atomizes and depoliticizes society thereby perpetuating the factors necessary for cynicism and consumerism.

Perhaps the only positive attribute of fear is that its intensity subsides over time. However instead of a return to the previous condition, before the state of exception, what is usually witnessed is a grudging acceptance of the changes that have occurred as what was formerly exceptional becomes the new norm. "Fear, which had cut through is like a hot poker, became instead a low-grade fever, ambient noise, wallpaper, something you feel without feeling, hear without hearing, see without seeing. Then you look up one day and realize how profoundly that fear has changed your world... We swallow lies like

³⁰⁸ Henry Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 35.

candy, nod sagely at babblespeak, and its unexceptional.”³⁰⁹ It is this condition that is the culmination of a state of exception, the population is now depoliticized, the institutions of government are separated from its citizens, and the technocratic form of government favored by neoliberalism becomes reborn as the organizing principle for society. This is what occurred in Italy in the 1980s after the crushing of the social movements and has occurred, in different circumstances to be sure, but with the same general tactics employed in the United States.

Placing fear as the organizing element around which subjectivity is constituted leaves the imperial subject unable to effectively feel a part of society. Formerly society was organized around ensuring a sense of place and creating a general understanding that provided its residents with the prerequisites necessary to form stable and meaningful relationships amongst each other. Now, with the institutions of society geared towards displacing the singularities which comprise the imperial subject, the conditions in which the multitude exists is submerged by risk. “The multitude is united by the risk which derives from not feeling at home, from being exposed omnilaterally to the world.”³¹⁰ The multitude is left without a sense of purpose, numbed by fear and with an indescribable sense of loss, lulling it into complacency. Society was once structured in a manner that produced forms of subjectivity that possessed the ability to influence and alter society. The imperial subject however possesses qualities designed to ensure that it lives an incomplete and unfulfilled existence with no potential for positive fulfilling action.

³⁰⁹ Leonard Pitts, “Fear has profoundly changed us,” *Miami Herald*, October 19th, 2008.

³¹⁰ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 34.

Only with the imperial subject does the unending war of empire become possible. The imperial subject provides the foundation upon which the ever present potentiality of war that defines empire is based. “The new imperial form, which is rooted in US democracy, may not require wars of outright military conquest, but it does require a Hobbesian state of war, not necessarily endless fighting but an endless possibility of war.”³¹¹ Yet not only does the imperial subject make the endless war of empire a viable possibility, but the potential for endless war reinforces the condition of the imperial subject. The possibility of an endless, expanding war against an unseen and mutating enemy exacerbates the fear at the core of the imperial subject, thus strengthening the foundation upon which that very form of subjectivity is based. In this way a vicious self-perpetuating cycle seemingly without end is created.

However the present hegemonic dominance of the imperial subject and empire is not a totally self-contained edifice with no possibility for the articulation of alternative rationalities which can be formulated into subjectivities that can challenge the imperial subject and create the possibility for the construction of new societies: “...no hegemonic logic can account for the totality of the social and constitute its center, for in that case a new suture would have been produced and the very concept of hegemony would have eliminated itself. The openness of the social is thus the precondition of every hegemonic practice.”³¹² Although it is certainly possible for one particular subjectivity to become dominant and form the basis from which the multitude is articulated, by virtue of its very

³¹¹ Ellen Meiksins Wood, “A Manifesto for Global Capital?,” in *Debating Empire*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 2003), 71.

³¹² Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London : Verso, 1985), 142.

condition, it is never possible for the entirety of the multitude to be absorbed within a single subjectivity. Some fragments, some elements of the multitude must always be discarded. It is through discovering these fragments and by reclaiming what has been pushed aside that resistance becomes attainable and from this resistance new potentialities are formed which challenge and overturn present hegemonic practice. The World Social Forum (WSF), as I will demonstrate in the next section, represents one exciting possibility for the creation of a coherent resistance to neoliberalism and empire.

The anti-globalization movement, the WSF, and the Creation of Alternative Subjectivities

In this section I will discuss the creation of the WSF and how it has given rise to a new form of politics and subjectivity, one based upon solidarity and a respect for difference. By doing so the WSF creates alternative visions of the future and begins to form a multi-varied form of counter-hegemony that can seek to counteract the contemporary condition of neoliberalism and empire. However, the WSF is not without its limitations and its inability, as of yet, to create a coherent and sustained opposition remains its largest deficiency. The WSF is a massive³¹³ international gathering of social movements, activists, and non-governmental organizations that has been held a total of eight times since 2001. Each forum has built upon the last and has brought new elements into a growing global network that seeks to challenge the dominant paradigm of neoliberalism and empire that characterizes the contemporary world order. The WSF arose from the anti-globalization movements of the late 1990s and early 2000s which represented the first sustained transnational opposition to the policies of neoliberalism.

³¹³ Historically attendance at the WSF has ranged from 80,000 to well over 100,000.

The WSF serves as a space where a diverse array of movements and actors can congregate to learn from and be empowered by tales of struggle against neoliberal policies and from these interactions begin to gradually develop strategies which can effectively combat neoliberalism and manifestations of empire. While the ramifications these policies³¹⁴ may be different depending upon the location where they were implemented and the reaction they received, a common thread of depoliticization can be discerned. Neoliberalism depoliticized societies in two ways. First, the state was removed as an effective realm for political action due to the hegemony of neoliberal ideas amongst all established political parties. From conservatives to social democrats, the same general program was pursued, with slight modifications depending upon the orientation of the party. Second, neoliberalism attacked any form of collectivism and placed an overwhelming focus upon the consumptive individual as the only rational actor which could exist in modern society. This effectively atomized society and destroyed the collective bonds needed for any sort of political action. Neoliberalism thus undermined the traditional institutions through which political action could be pursued and by atomizing society disrupting the conditions that were necessary to create a basis for effective mass political action against neoliberalism.

In this section I will refer to empire and neoliberalism concurrently. My main reason for doing so is that, as was seen in the first section, neoliberalism contained elements which later developed into empire and empire retains many of the qualities of

³¹⁴ Obviously the history of struggle and the political culture of the region where neoliberal policies were imposed determined the form their implementation took and the extent to which they altered society. Generally, in the countries of the global South neoliberal policies were applied through direct, violent means, whereas in the North a shift in popular culture provided the necessary basis of support.

neoliberalism. Further, many of the movements involved in the WSF oppose both neoliberalism and empire. Thus even though empire is now clearly the dominant formation, I believe that it makes sense to refer to both neoliberalism and empire together. My focus will not be upon offering a detailed account of the development of the WSF and the debates that surround it, but rather analyzing what its existence entails. The WSF is an incredibly important development, not only because its existence represents that alternative visions of the future are possible, but because the participants of the WSF actively seek a world in which these alternative visions become a reality. The utopianism of the WSF is not a singular utopia, but rather a plurality of utopias that represent the breadth of those involved within the WSF, a utopia which involves the creation of a new culture that stands in stark contrast to the alienating consumer culture of neoliberalism and the perpetual war of empire. These utopias are not something that can actually be achieved, but rather provide a source of inspiration and an impetus that drives the struggle against neoliberalism and empire.

The movements which gather under the framework of the WSF realize that while the state is still important, under neoliberalism it cannot serve as the leading conduit for change in society and primarily pursue their struggles outside of the institutions of the state. While the movements involved within the WSF are diverse they share some important commonalties regarding the world they want to build. These commonalties serve as the basis for the gradual creation of a counter-hegemony. However this hegemony is not an encompassing universalist hegemony, but is rather a hegemony that is a multiplicity of particularism and difference, one that best coincides with the vision of hegemony outlined by Laclau and Mouffe. Finally the interactions that occur within the

WSF and the political culture and counter-hegemony that it develops find commonality in difference. The interactions and linkages that occur within the space of the WSF build upon these commonalties and allow for the realization of a form of solidarity that transcends political borders and is based upon the recognition and celebration of difference. In creating a new form of solidarity the WSF begins to overcome the atomization and fear that is central to the perpetuation of the imperial subject.

Today it is the anti-globalization³¹⁵ movement, for lack of a better term, that actualities the resistance to neoliberalism and empire and more than anything else represents the full range of the multitude through its diverse forms of struggle and refusal to be bound to a singular essence. The anti-globalization movement arose in response to the globalization of neoliberalism and spawned the WSF which has served to gradually articulate a resistance to the present imperial period. The anti-globalization movement differs from social movements of the past. Instead of the predominance of one tendency, be it civil rights, the environment, or anti-war, which marked previous social movements, the new global opposition to neoliberalism encapsulates a startling diversity of people, cultures, and political beliefs with no single element central. Lacking a singular perspective or concern that drew people together the anti-globalization movement was not a traditional social movement, rather it represents the connection of the many different social movements and struggles that opposes neoliberalism. "One of the remarkable features of the anti-globalization movement, and of discourses about it, is that it has been identified as a movement of movements, constituted through an extraordinary

³¹⁵ In Europe the movements which comprise the WSF are referred to as alter or other globalization movement, a term that I feel more accurately depicts the sentiments of those involved. However I use the term anti-globalization as it is more popular in North America.

historical and global convergence of movements.”³¹⁶ The anti-globalization movement could only be understood in its broad unified whole, as a movement of movements. This convergence of movements found its strength in diversity, in the range of approaches, perspectives, and alternative futures that was imagined by the various movements that comprised the movements of movements. Perhaps the vision of the world that the movements of movements held was expressed best in the Call of the Social Movements proclaimed at the second WSF, which in part, declared that, “The expression of diversity is our strength and the basis of our unity. We are a global solidarity movement, united in our determination to fight against the concentration of wealth, the proliferation of poverty and inequalities and the destruction of our earth. We are constructing alternative systems, and using creative ways to promote them. We are building a large alliance from our struggles and resistance...”³¹⁷ Neoliberalism, possessing a singular vision of the world, presented a common program of privatization and deregulation that was to be adopted by the entire world. Empire, as well, holds a singular vision of the world, one in which fear and hopelessness are predominant. The world both have sought to create is opposed not by a single movement, but by a movement of movements which believe that only through the construction of a world in which many worlds can fit will the entire range of human potential and experience be protected, promoted, and assured.

Although the movements which have congregated in the space of the WSF represent a gradual articulation of a counter-hegemony which seeks to oppose the

³¹⁶ Janet Conway, *Identity, Place, Knowledge: Social Movements Contesting Globalization* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2004), 20.

³¹⁷ Porto Alegre II. Resistance to Neoliberalism and Militarism: For Peace and Social Justice, “Call of the Social Movements, January 2002,” in *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen et al. (The Viveka Foundation, New Delhi, 2004), 102.

hegemony of empire and neoliberalism, the counter-hegemony being formulated cannot be considered as hegemony in the traditional sense. Differing from classical notions of hegemony, as well as the present hegemony of neoliberalism and empire, the counter-hegemony being gestated in the space of the WSF is not a singular hegemony which strives to create pre-set limits that structure a single dominant subject and provide a sole criterion that defines rational action. Rather, the hegemony of the WSF is a hegemony of multiplicities, one which can contain many different subjectivities and modes of action. Lacking a single method of rationality that orders society, the hegemony of the WSF is a hegemony of particularities, rather than a unified whole. However, this does not mean that the hegemony which the WSF seeks to form lacks the potential for universalizing effects. "Society is a plurality of particularistic groups and demands. So if there is going to be a subject of a certain global emancipation, the subject antagonized by the general crime, it can be politically constructed only through the equivalence of a plurality of demands. As a result, these particularities are also split; through their equivalence they do not simply remain themselves, but also constitute an area of universalizing effects..."³¹⁸

The vision that the WSF promotes, the subjectivity that it seeks to give rise to, is one in which the diversity of the multitude is fully actualized. This requires that the hegemony which articulates this vision by necessity be one of particularities. However these particularities do not remain trapped in their own context. Rather, through their interactions in a space such as the WSF these particularities develop, are modified, and form linkages with each other, while retaining their own essence. It is through these

³¹⁸ Ernesto Laclau, "Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics," in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2000), 55.

interactions that these particularities, or at the very least respect for coexisting particularities can become universalized. This does not mean however that these particularities lack a common foundation.

While a diversity of approaches and perspectives comprise the movement of movements, commonality exists through a shared opposition to neoliberalism and empire. The shared opposition to neoliberalism and empire serves as the common understanding that provides the foundation from which the diversity of the movements of movements is based. It is through this shared opposition that the diversity which defines the movement of movements is based and becomes possible. Thus the opposition to neoliberalism and empire is rooted in a morality that contrasts the diversity of the movement of movements with what it views as the inherent homogeneity of neoliberalism, with its common economic program of austerity for all societies and empire which demands conformity through the application of repression and the management of fear. While moral order is usually associated with the status quo, the emergence of revolutionary moral orders is always a possibility. "...images of moral order, although they make sense of some of our actions are by no means titled toward the status quo. They may also underline revolutionary practice..."³¹⁹ The morality of the movement of movements expresses itself as a revolutionary morality, because it seeks to overturn the morality of neoliberalism, which sees society as subservient to the whims of the market, and empire which creates a subject accustomed to unending war, and replace it with its own moral order. The morality of the movements of movements does not appear as fully developed, but rather

³¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 28.

has gestated in the political framework through which the movements of movements has sought to articulate itself, the WSF.

The new international environment that neoliberal globalization and now empire has created requires the corresponding formation of new politics and strategies which can understand it, respond effectively to it, and alter the world in the ways that are desirable. “The new is always more daunting than the familiar, but if we don’t want to repeat the failures of the great rebellions of the past, we need to continue to develop ways of working that learn from our victories, which build on the past and yet are always reaching into the unmapped and unknown future.”³²⁰ The inception of new ways of working is rooted in the creation of a new culture. It is from culture that we draw the ideas that inform how we perceive and act in the world. The World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund, may be the institutions which are most closely associated with neoliberalism, but these institutions are not neoliberalism, they merely propagate the culture of neoliberalism. Similarly, while the United States may be the focal point from which empire is projected, it is not enough to simply challenge individual policies, whether foreign or domestic, but to challenge the culture that makes these politics seem rational and their actualization possible. Thus, “...successful strategies of resistance must confront not only the political-institutional and economic manifestations of neoliberal capitalist globalization, but also, and at the same time, the foundational cultural logics and the quotidian practices and social relations that both constitute, produce and make the dominance of these systems

³²⁰ Notes from Nowhere, *We are Everywhere: The irresistible rise of global anticapitalism* (London: Verso, 2003), 69.

possible.”³²¹ The effective confrontation of the culture of neoliberalism and empire requires the development of an alternative culture which can not only oppose neoliberalism and empire, but also offer persuasive vision of the future, a utopia.

The WSF is the space in which such a culture can be formed and a new, alternative, utopia envisioned. “In a context in which the conservative utopia prevails absolutely, it is more important to affirm the possibility of alternatives than to define them. The utopian dimension of the WSF consists in affirming the possibility of a counter-hegemonic globalization.”³²² After decades of the discourse of “there is no alternative” the affirmation that alternatives exist is a revelation. However, to proclaim that alternatives exist is not enough, these alternatives must be conceptualized and methods pursued to make their actualization possible. Such a process requires dialogue, continuous engagement, and the formation and deepening of solidaristic ties across the diverse elements that comprise the movements of movements. With such ends in mind the first WSF took place in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in the last week of January 2001. The location and timing were both symbolic. Porto Alegre was considered to be a city on the forefront of the struggle against neoliberalism in a region that had perhaps suffered the most from neoliberal policies. The time selected was chosen to coincide with the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, an invitation only event, which embodied the conservative utopia of neoliberalism, where the most prominent business leaders, politicians, and academics congregated to discuss strategies of

³²¹ Michal Osterweil, “A cultural-political approach to reinventing the political,” *International Social Science Journal* 182 (2004):498.

³²² Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 11.

governing the world order of neoliberalism and solutions to the various problems that arose and interfered with this governing. If Davos served as the pole of attraction around which the forces of neo-liberalism had drawn themselves, Porto Alegre represented the pole around which alternatives to neoliberalism could begin to be articulated and realized.

Forming out of the movement of movements which challenged the organizational forms that neoliberalism imposed upon the world, the WSF cannot be classified in the mold of traditional political institutions. “The WSF is a space and not an organization. It creates a meeting place for dialogue, debate and diffusion of proposals, exchanging experiences, emulating successes, developing battle plans, and organizing new movements.”³²³ The WSF itself has a minimal framework. Selecting the locations for where the WSF will occur, as well as general organizational work, such as reserving buildings and publicizing the WSF is done by an Organizational Committee comprised almost solely of Brazilian NGOs and social movements, which works in concert with an International Committee composed of NGOs and social movements drawn from all over the world. Further nominal requirements are also set for participation in the WSF, but all that is required is an “...opposition to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and a commitment to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.”³²⁴ To ensure that the involvement is as broad as possible the Charter of Principles

³²³ Jose Leite, *The World Social Forum: Strategies of Resistance* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007), 135.

³²⁴ Organizing Committee of the World Social Forum, “World Social Forum Charter of Principles,” in *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen et al. (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2004), 67.

prohibits the WSF from issuing declarations which speak on behalf of all, or even some of its participants, although various groups and individuals that form connections within the WSF are free to issue and publicize statements that speak solely on their behalf.³²⁵ “It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.”³²⁶ In this way the WSF cannot be defined as a political actor because it does not seek, as political actors do, the centralization of power within its own organization. Instead the WSF presents itself as a space in which power relations might be deconstructed through an analysis conducted by a range of people who exist within different racial, economic, political, historical, educational, and gendered contexts.

The existence of the WSF coincides with, and is a reaction to, the depoliticization of politics which has occurred under neoliberalism and which has been extended with the new imperial period. With the effectiveness of the state as a sphere for progressive change drastically decreased the WSF allows for a space where a post-political politics³²⁷ form of politics, a politics that no longer places the state as primary terrain for political action can be formulated. The state can, of course, not be ignored and any hegemonic

³²⁵ The lack of a declaration by the WSF has become a major point of contention, many commentators arguing the WSF is developing into an apolitical talk shop and that the forum as a whole must take concrete political stances, or risk becoming irrelevant. Time will tell if the structure of the WSF will mutate or if a new global arrangement with greater ability to effect deeper and more lasting change will form from the WSF.

³²⁶ Organizing Committee of the World Social Forum, “World Social Forum Charter of Principles,” in *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen et al. (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2004), 68.

³²⁷ By using the term post-political, I mean the end of the traditional form of politics, politics which was organized solely around the state and deemed the state to be the only actor capable of reformulating society. Clearly, politics itself has not ended, but it has moved and expanded to include different terrains, thus necessarily changed the shape of the political.

articulation must take the state into account. However after neoliberalism and in the current age of empire the form that political action takes must change in order to be effective. The momentum which will propel the counter-hegemonic force that will overturn empire will not come from the state, although it will transform the state once it has reached a critical point. Instead this force will form outside of the state in spaces such as the WSF.

Within the space of the WSF a multiplicity of antagonisms can be created, because outside of a common opposition to neoliberalism and empire, no ordering principle is imposed upon those who gather in the WSF. The state, however, imposes a false unity upon society and demands that it follow a single will: "...after the establishment of the state, there is one-people, endowed with a single will."³²⁸ In contrast, the WSF allows for the progressively greater development of the creative energies of the multitude. "How can the multitude organize and concentrate its energies against the repression and incessant territorial segmentation of Empire?...it is a matter of gathering together experiences of resistance and wielding them together in concert against the nerve centers of imperial command."³²⁹ By creating a space in which the diverse elements which comprise the movements of movements can interact and learn from each other "...the WSF serves as a foundation for a more democratic global polity, it provides routine contact among countless individuals and organizations working to address common grievances against global economic and political structures."³³⁰ Through these

³²⁸ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 23.

³²⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 399.

³³⁰ Jackie Smith, *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 4.

contacts bonds of solidarity are forged and the atomizing effects of modern society can begin to be overcome. The solidarity that exists between participants in the WSF is not the unthinking, emotional solidarity of patriotism or the form that exists between family members. Rather, the solidarity that exists within the space of the WSF is a solidarity that is based upon debate and an analysis of the contemporary social condition and is best labeled as reflective solidarity. "...rather than viewing criticism as potentially disruptive, reflective solidarity sees it as furthering the intersubjective recognition characteristic of solidarity bound members."³³¹ While those involved in the WSF have many different conceptions of what the world should be, they all share a common opposition to neoliberalism and empire, although the nature of each particular opposition may be based upon different factors.

The differences of those within the space of the WSF are not seen as a weakness or as a source of division, rather this diversity is viewed as forming the foundation of the WSF. The WSF provides an arena where various tendencies which may disagree on a range of issues can engage in debate and discussion and from this a hegemonic discourse that can function in a post-political age can be created. "To construct the concept of hegemony involves not a simple speculative effort within a coherent context, but a more complex strategic movement requiring negotiation among mutually contradictory discursive surfaces."³³² Rather than an all encompassing totality which silences difference and dissension in favor of a common political program to which all must

³³¹ Jodi Dean, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism After Identity Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 32.

³³² Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 93.

ascribe, the WSF serves as a space in which a multiplicity of antagonisms can form and take root. “The WSF shows eloquently that no totality can contain the inexhaustible diversity of theories and practices of the world left today. Rather than a synthesis, the WSF suggests a call for depolarized pluralities. The aim is to reverse a tradition with deep roots in the left based on the idea that to politicize differences is to polarize them.”³³³ By serving as a space that prohibits the issuing of declarations, in contrast to institutions and political actors, the synthesis of the various tendencies that comprises the movements of movements is avoided. These tendencies instead exist in a continuous dialogue with each other without being required to reach some defined point, and without the imposition of predetermined conditions upon them. However, as I will argue in the next section, the WSF needs to move beyond being simply a meeting place for activists to proposing concrete solutions to the world’s problems and thinking of ways in which these proposals can be enacted.

The WSF is then a space of plurality informed by the belief that multiple avenues of approach exist towards understanding and combating neoliberalism and empire. The existence of this plurality does not require the absence of strongly held political views, but it does require that participants in the WSF possess a self-awareness that allows them to understand that the knowledge which informs their political viewpoint is rooted in specific conditions. “Commitment to dialogue and a foundational recognition of pluralism does not imply the absence of firmly held values or political commitment, but it does require an epistemology embracing partial, situated, positional knowing as the basis

³³³ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 166.

for the open, provisional but reliable enough knowledge for politics.”³³⁴ The epistemology that underlines the WSF results in the creation of a transnational form of reflective solidarity. The solidarity of the WSF is classified as transnational because it forms out of the experience of the movement of movements, an experience that extends across states and traditional political borders. The solidarity of the WSF is one based upon continuous argumentation and debate that occurs through panels, workshops, and general discussion. These discussions are made possible because of the social imaginary of opposition to neoliberalism and empire and respect for difference, which serves as point of reference for all the participants in the WSF.

In the space of the WSF the movements that are brought together not only learn from each other and share experiences, but they are transformed in this process as well. “The movements...function rather like a public sphere, in the sense that they can allow full expression of differences within the common context of open exchange... They displace contradictions and operate instead as a kind of alchemy, or rather a sea change, the flow of the movements transforming the traditional fixed positions...”³³⁵ The dialogue and debate that occurs within the WSF in a sense makes it a global public sphere, which seeks to overcome the constraining of the public sphere that has occurred under neoliberalism. The rich and varied nature of the discussions that occur within the space of the WSF stand in contrast to the lack of debate, outside of a narrow and predetermined range of issues, that seems to mark contemporary political discourse.

³³⁴ Janet Conway, *Identity, Place, Knowledge: Social Movements Contesting Globalization* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2004), 261.

³³⁵ Michael Hardt, “Today’s Bandung?,” in *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?*, ed. Tom Mertes, (London: Verso, 2004), 236.

Of course, the space of the WSF is not an entirely open space in which all participants receive equal standing. Relationships of power play a prominent part in the WSF, as they do in any interaction. To conceive of the WSF "...as a decentralized space where power relations are non-existent or neutralized is a dangerous mistake, as it turns a blind eye to power struggles that do take place within the Forum... in order to guarantee the continuation of the WSF as an open incubator of ideas is precisely to intervene in the power dynamics in its organizational process to promote new forms of interactions and relationships."³³⁶ The power relationships which structure the WSF and determine what sort of interactions can occur are the result of two factors: How the forum is organized, and by whom, and the composition of people who attend the WSF.

As noted briefly above, the WSF is organized jointly by the Organizing Committee and the International Committee. Where to hold the next WSF, as well as which meetings and discussions receive prominence³³⁷ is not determined collectively by the participants of the WSF, but by these two committees. "Both the Organizing Committee and the International Committee were put together by co-optation. Their legitimacy derives from their having organized the WSF with relative success. Their members were not elected and they are not accountable to jurisdiction."³³⁸ While determining the composition of these committees is as easy as accessing the official

³³⁶ Vanessa Andreotti and Emma Dowling, "WSF, ethics and pedagogy," *International Social Science Journal* 182 (2004):606.

³³⁷ Events and meeting organized under the auspices of the Organizing Committee and the International Committee receive central placement in the WSF newsletter, which lists all of the events occurring at the WSF. Additionally, official WSF events take place in central locations, usually in hotel conference rooms downtown, as opposed to self-organized events, which are placed in school classrooms, art galleries, and a variety of other locations across the WSF host city.

³³⁸ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 48.

website of the WSF, surely some democratic mechanisms could have been created to ensure that these committees are more truly representative of those who attend the WSF. Of course for logistical reasons it may be unfeasible for all the participants of the WSF to be involved in the important day to day decisions that determine the nature of its operations. However, if the WSF desires to become a sort of an alternative global public sphere, then its own internal democracy must be strengthened, lest it too closely resemble the institutions of neo-liberalism, which are rightly criticized for their unaccountability.

Perhaps of even greater importance than how the WSF is organized, is who attends. A survey of the 2005 WSF, which was held in Porto Alegre, found that 80 percent of the participants came from Brazil, 8.8 percent from the rest of Latin America, 4.5 percent from Europe, 2.6 percent from the United States and Canada, 2.5 percent from Asia, and 1.6 percent from Africa.³³⁹ Clearly the geographical origin of the 2005 WSF participants is heavily skewed towards Latin America, which is understandable due to both its location and the high level of political mobilizations in Latin America against neoliberal policies along with a series of elections that has brought to power a number of governments which have taken explicit stances against neo-liberal policies. To help assure that as much geographical diversity exists within the WSF it has been held in a number of locations. In 2004 the WSF took place in Mumbai, India, in 2006 a polycentric WSF occurred, with a WSF running concurrently in both Caracas, Venezuela and in Bamako, Mali and with a delayed WSF occurring in Karachi, Pakistan due to the massive earthquake that occurred in the country; in 2007 the WSF took place in Nairobi, Kenya.

³³⁹ Brazilian Institute Of Social And Economic Analyses, *World Social Forum, A X-Ray of Participation in the 2005 Forum: Elements for Debate* (Rio de Janeiro: Brazilian Institute Of Social And Economic Analyses, 2005), 12.

The majority of the WSFs have occurred in Porto Alegre, it has, in a sense, served as the “home base” of the WSF with 2001-2003 editions of the WSF, as well as the 2005 WSF all taking place there. Rotating the location of the WSF helps to ensure that participation is as broad as possible; doing so improves the diversity of the WSF and enriches its political culture.

It is from political culture that the implicit assumptions which inform the views of the participants and the range of issues can be discussed. The nature of the discourse that is able to occur is shaped by political culture. The WSF serves as a space of discussion for the movements of movements creating its own political culture. “In choosing to be a space of total deliberation, the WSF contributes to the creation of a common political culture, understood as the mutual adjustment of different political cultures by exchange, accommodation, and debate.”³⁴⁰ In contrast to neoliberalism, which represents a singular political culture, the political culture of the WSF encompasses a variety of political cultures from every corner of the globe. As demonstrated above, these different political cultures are made intelligible to each other through a shared moral language of opposition to neoliberalism and empire and respect for diversity. A foundation is thus provided that makes the dialogue in the WSF possible and allows it to develop into a transnational reflective solidarity.

Beyond the WSF?: Towards a New Politics

While a concern about the suppression of the various tendencies that comprise the WSF in favor of a homogenizing discourse is certainly a valid one,

³⁴⁰ Isabelle Biagiotti, “The World Social Forums: A paradoxical application of participatory doctrine,” *International Social Science Journal* 182 (2004):535.

especially when the history of Leftist movements in the 21st century is considered, many of those who have played important roles in the WSF since its founding are now calling for it to adopt a political program, that will express the will of the forum and create the basis from which the WSF can stage radical interventions that can effectively disrupt the present operations of the global capitalist economic system. Rather than simply serving as a meeting space for activists the forum should begin to create international organizational structures that can ignite the radical systematic change that most of those involved in the WSF believe is not only possible, but necessary to create a sustainable, livable planet. The document which elaborates these points and has generated a large amount of opposition from those who see it as an attempt to turn the WSF into a sort of 5th International, is the Bamako Appeal, issued during the polycentric WSF in 2006 in Bamako, Mali.

The Bamako Appeal aims at contributing to the emergence of a new popular and historical subject, and at consolidating the gains made at these meetings. It seeks to advance the principle of the right to an equitable existence for everyone; to affirm a collective life of peace, justice and diversity; and to promote the means to reach these goals at the local level and for all of humanity. In order that an historical subject come into existence – one that is diverse, multipolar and from the people – it is necessary to define and promote alternatives capable of mobilizing social and political forces. The goal is a radical transformation of the capitalist system.³⁴¹

The aim of the Bamako Appeal then is to turn the WSF into a space which promotes the emergence of a coherent subjectivity that can challenge the current world order and serve as an arena in which the multitude of global struggles occurring around the globe can be

³⁴¹ Subir Sinha, "Comments on the Bamako Appeal," in *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum?: Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements* (New Delhi: India Institute for Critical Action, 2007), 100. <http://www.cacim.net/bareader/home.html> (Accessed April 8, 2009).

coordinated in such a manner that the actions they take in their only location are reciprocated by others thereby posing an effective systemic challenge to the current world order. This requires that social movements be guided a common understanding and function through a shared praxis. Such a latent possibility already exists, as I demonstrated above with the reflexive solidarity and the common aims which bind the participants of the WSF together.

The driving force behind the Bamako Appeal has been Samir Amin, an eminent Marxist based in Senegal, yet it has the support of many of the organizations and individuals that were instrumental in originally establishing the WSF. Much of the criticism of the Bamako Appeal is that it is:

a program aimed at homogenizing the demands of people all across the world and centralizing the movement to a much higher degree than its current levels...the disturbing fact is that it is implicit, not explicit in the document, seemingly having been snuck in the back door, since centralizing and homogenous organizational forms are not very popular within current global networks. Some might argue that such decentralized and diverse forms have reached the limits of their usefulness. Again, this is a perfectly legitimate intellectual opinion to have, but then it should be acknowledged, and debated in these terms.³⁴²

The Bamako Appeal is not an unpredicted document but rather follows in the wake of similar documents such as the Call of the Social Movements issued every year at the conclusion of the WSF and the Porto Alegre Manifesto or the Appeal of 19, issued at the

³⁴²Kolya Abramsky, "The Bamako Appeal and The Zapatista 6th Declaration - Between Creating New Worlds and Reorganizing the Existing One," in *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum?: Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements* (New Delhi: India Institute for Critical Action, 2007), 149. <http://www.cacim.net/bareader/home.html> (Accessed April 8, 2009).

WSF in 2006. Each of these documents has laid out a common vision towards the creation of another world founded upon a different basis. The difference between these earlier statements and the Bamako Appeal, is that the earlier ones simply represented the opinion of a segment of those involved with the WSF either proposing vague non-binding statements or calling for a shift in the orientation of the WSF. The Bamako Appeal however puts forward a program and argues that the only way to obtain its realization is the creation of international organizations that can intervene in a sustained manner and articulate the desires of those struggling against the current world order.

While the WSF, as I have outlined above, has made important strides in creating the elements crucial to any oppositional culture and counter-hegemony, it has yet to solve the riddle of how they can be institutionalized, creating a new terrain within which politics can occur in the process. Without creating a new institutional structure that can spread and deepen radical forms of politics those involved in the WSF risk their actions being limited to sporadic gestures which can be quickly absorbed and contained: "...without a perceptible form or shape, existing social movements have little reality for the majority of human beings. To the extent that we can still speak of a global left at all, it is without form. But without a body through which to appear in the temporal world, movements are doomed to roam the earth unperceived..."³⁴³ The WSF has served as a valuable starting point, by creating a dialogical community in which radical discussions can occur and insight and inspiration gained from the realization that others are involved in struggle against injustice and exploitation, but it seems to have become

³⁴³ John Sanbonmatsu, *The Postmodern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of a New Political Subject* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 11.

mired in this state, unable to progress beyond it. At some point the discussion must develop into tangible solutions. This has to some extent occurred, through coordination amongst groups with common interests, but primarily only on a micro level and not the necessary global systemic level. The oppression and forms of domination that are being fought, while having distinctive variations across regions and societies is global in scope, neoliberalism and empire encompass the entire world, thus to be truly effective some way must be found to move beyond proclamations and envisioning other worlds and move towards making these visions a reality.

Unsurprisingly, given the tragic experiences of revolutionary politics of the 20th century, many on the Left are reluctant to advocate for the encompassing form of politics necessary to create the systematic form of struggle required to actually being able to construct a viable alternative to global capitalism and endless war. However this is the only way in which interventions can be made that are capable of rupturing the framework of empire as well as take advantage of its own inherent contradictions as Zizek argues in his criticism of the WSF:

...the politics advocated by many a leftist today, that of countering the devastating world-dissolving effect of capitalist modernity by inventing new fictions, imaging new worlds, is inadequate, or at least, profoundly ambiguous: it all depends on how these fictions relate to the underlying Real of capitalism-do they just supplement it with the imaginary multitude, as postmodern local narratives do, or do they disturb its functioning? In other words, the task is to produce a symbolic function (a truth) that intervenes into the Real that causes a change within it.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁴ Slavoj Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008), 33.

The failure of both the anti-globalization movement of the 1990s and Autonomia in Italy, particularly in 1977, is that they were restrained to a few explosive actions that while initially exposing the tensions within existing society, saw their energies dissipate when circumstances rapidly shifted, with either the assassination of the President of the Republic or a massive terrorist attack serving as an unexpected event that overwhelmed the formerly vibrant movement. A type of organization must therefore be created that has a global perspective that is capable of articulating the diverse network of global struggles in a coherent manner, and has the strategical and tactical foresight to ensure that the methods these employed are effective, with the successes and failures of past practice learned from and applied in the future. The WSF, in its present formation, does not serve this role, rather it appears to have become trapped in a repetitive cycle of holding large showcase events, that while inspiring do not create actions that are capable of rupturing the framework of global capitalism. As Walden Bello argues, it is time for a change in the structure of the WSF:

Maybe early on it was important to have that space so that progressives can come together to affirm themselves, but after awhile the function begins to wear thin. You end up just having one social forum after another in which lessons are not accumulated; it's just a festival or market of ideas that does not result in more effective action. And my sense is that unless you are able to link the Forum to activist energies it's going to atrophy... The open space idea has become empty and is really a problem for the Forum... we should start transforming it into more of a partisan activist network.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ Walden Bello, "Walden Bello on the Global Anti-War Movement and the World Social Forum," *Assessing the Present: Global Democracy News & Ideas*, August-September 2008, <http://www.nigd.org/nan/nan-doc-store/07-08-2008/walden-bello-on-the-global-anti-war-movement-and-the-world-social-forum> (Accessed April 6, 2009).

Such an endeavor requires, in sharp divergence with radical politics post-1968, adherence to and belief in and a universalistic project. The plethora of movements involved in the WSF process must realize that while individually they may be quite different from one another, they are united by the desire to bring forth a new world in which their differences can be celebrated and allowed to develop to their fullest extent. In this regard then they are already bound by their commonality of differences. While each struggle can be analyzed individually they only become truly comprehensible in relation to one another. Viewed in this manner it becomes possible to conceptualize a political form that is capable of "...representing the organic coalescence of the various diverse movements for human liberation into a single universal project to cultivate the basis of a new social order."³⁴⁶ However coming to the realization that a new type of political organization is necessary to allow for the movements to progress and concretize their struggles into actual daily lived practice for an increasing majority and discovering what precisely at an organizational level this would entail are two different things. It is clear that while such an organization may be a party in the sense that it attempts to direct and intensify particular struggles and coordinates them with one another to ensure that the potential of each is maximized, it would be a type of political party that would differ from all past variants.

³⁴⁶ John Sanbonmatsu, *The Postmodern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of a New Political Subject* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 185.

*Conclusion: Transcending the Present Impasse. The Necessity for New Politics and a
New Party in the post-Political Age*

Although this thesis has covered a number of different themes and historical periods it has remained constant in its critique of organizational forms, whether they be political parties, social movements, or the overdetermining factor in the present conjecture, the state. In the final section I will offer some brief concluding remarks on the necessity and importance of creating new political forms, related to the experiences of Autonomia and the WSF, as both movements did or are struggling with how to create meaningful change in society. One of the most important tasks that face us today is the creation of a new political party that is capable of giving voice to all the diverse tendencies and movements. This new party form is necessary precisely because what is lacking today is an organization that is capable of recognizing areas of weakness in the global framework and intervening in such a way that points of rupture are created. Whether this new party form develops directly out of the WSF or alongside it, the WSF will play a prominent role in its orientation. The WSF however is a stationary space for debate and discussion, what is needed is a mobile entity that can begin to shape the world to its will.

It is crucial that, while being aware of the necessity for organization and leadership, this new political party not seek to replicate party forms of the past which centralized power and allowed for the expression of only a single approved set of views. While the party will be involved in a struggle for dominance with the reactionary forces of the state and capitalist interests no one mode of struggle should be privileged to the detriment of all others. The party should seek to actualize the multi-varied type of

hegemony that I elaborated above, both externally, in its relations with actors either allied with or opposed to it, and internally by striving to give expression to as large a range of democratic tendencies as possible. It would then be a mass party, not one in the Leninist mold of a small band of professional revolutionaries, but one that seeks to encompass all those who are opposed to the empire of global capitalism. This would serve as the unifying principle that would bind those in the party together, despite the many different ways in which they will pursue their opposition. Diversity could then exist in pursuit of a common goal, making “Another World is Possible” a reality, a world in which many different worlds could fit. In this sense the party would resemble the diffuse network that was Autonomia but with a more coherent focus and strategy for effecting change.

The new party would of course not be in any sense an electoral party. It would take stock of the alignment of political forces in a particular country, of which political parties form an important part and would be cognizant of the state and the need to make inroads on its terrain but the new party would be post-political in its method of organization: “...alongside their possible presence in the physical space of the state apparatuses, the popular masses must constantly maintain and deploy centers and networks at a distance from these apparatuses: I am referring, of course, to movements for direct rank and file democracy and to self-management networks.”³⁴⁷ In this regard the Autonomia movement in Italy can provide important historical lessons for the immense difficulties that exist in striving towards the actualization of a new political party form today. Autonomia sought to give voice to the new subjectivities that were arising in the Italian context and realized that the present institutional framework of

³⁴⁷ Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 153.

society would only seek to contain them and repress their radical tendencies. In response new tactics of political struggle were developed alongside a vibrant radical political culture that undermined the decaying hegemonic culture in the country. Autonomia failed however to institutionalize its outburst into a new series of institutions that would allow to it sustain its pace of struggle.

Today, once again, a multifaceted resistance movement, this time on a global scale, appears to have a tedious and unpredictable existence for the foreseeable future, restricted to singular acts that, while inspiring others and revealing the illegitimacy of the contemporary order, fail to challenge it in the sustained manner necessary to cause real change at a structural level. “The problem is thus: how to regulate/institutionalize the very violent egalitarian impulse, how to prevent it being drowned in democracy in the second sense of the term (regulated procedure)? If there is no way to do it, then authentic democracy remains a momentary utopian outburst which, on the proverbial morning after, has to be normalized.”³⁴⁸ What is required is to move beyond the realm of minor politics, something that Autonomia failed to do and create its own institutions that not only retain the original powerful outbursts of the movement of which they are a part, but provoke new outbursts and extend their length and impact. The WSF, in its current incarnation, is an important beginning on the road towards formulating the solution to this. It has already begun to create the necessary elements of an incipient alternative world culture; it has started to create an alternative form of subjectivity which can be juxtaposed to the imperial subject. The WSF has done this by seeking to elaborate its own vision of utopia, which can be utilized to inform the construction of a counter-hegemonic

³⁴⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008), 266.

discourse that can be contrasted with the utopia of neoliberalism, a fully privatized world in which every aspect of society submits itself to the whim of the market, and the utopia of empire, which is one of endless war and manipulated fear. Each vision of utopia creates its own subjectivity which conforms to it. The utopia of the WSF is not a singular vision but one in which many different vision of the future can form and take root. In contrast to neoliberalism and empire the process occurring within the WSF does not seek to arrive at a single subject, but rather seeks to create a world in which many different subjectivities can interact and engage with each other, creating a rich and diverse discourse. The discourse which arises from the culture of neoliberalism is one of freedom, but it is a specific kind a freedom, a freedom for capital and for the market, not a freedom for humanity. In contrast, the WSF is informed by a morality which recognizes commonality in difference and a transnational form of solidarity that views discussion and debate as extending and deepening the bonds amongst peoples and societies. From this basis the space of the WSF is created, a space in which many different utopias can be conceptualized and strategies conceived that might move these utopias from possibility to reality.

The current condition is one of depoliticized societies, massive inequality, impending environmental collapse and seemingly unending war and fear. Formerly we were told that this was the best that could be hoped and wished for and if we sought alternatives they would inevitably end in disaster. The WSF has demonstrated this is wrong, an important first step. To advance, however, requires the development of new political forms and methods of struggle. In this regard the experience of Autonomia is

highly significant, both for the advances it was able to make and ultimately its failure to sustain them.

Autonomia was a movement that functioned outside of the state, but sought to intervene through a detailed study of Italy's economic and social situation in a manner that promoted a radical transformation. While despising the political parties in Italy, it realized that the formation of a new party was necessary to challenge the present order in a sustained way. With the current post-political state of society, it is crucial to learn how to disrupt the functioning of society, from outside the state, but also to take account of the state and learn to operate with it in certain circumstances, a lesson the Autonomia failed to learn. Politics must be reinvented, both our notions of what the political is and, related to this, different way of performing political actions. Following the highly restricted avenues that are presently available only ensures the endurance of our unbearable contemporary condition. We must regain the audacity to dream of alternative futures again and the courage to follow the unexplored paths that lead to them. Modern politics must become a space that allows for the full potential of individuals to be realized through the construction of a set of institutions that furthers human development. This requires the existence of an interrelation between new forms of subjectivity that are created from economic, political, and cultural shifts and these new institutions. It is the new party that is tasked with giving expression to these new forms of subjectivity and focusing them into the creation of the new institutions that are required to fully realize their potential. At present, all that is possible is the abstract realization that this is necessary in order to affect real systemic radical change, the actual contours of each of

these elements, of the impending new politics, can only be determined through the struggle of daily lived experience.

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