

# IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

## The Red Brigades: elite technocrats

The Red brigades in Italy are a new kind of political machine. It kidnaps, maims, and murders with proficiency. It punishes enemies and friends without fear or prejudice. Like the old-style political machine it gets results—by hook and crook.

The latter aspect has won the begrudging admiration of segments of the bourgeois press: the machine operates at high technical efficiency, cuts through bureaucratic red tape, eliminates competitors, and evades the law with impunity. It performs with fewer leaks than the most tight-lipped investment bankers, attracts maximum media attention, and embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that turns high-risk ventures into successful routine.

But a political machine is still a political machine; its stock in trade is manipulation.

The Red Brigades epitomize the technocrats' dream—the dream of replacing the messy human element with predictable inanimate force. For these managers of the assembly-line of history class struggle is too irregular and time-consuming. People making their own history are too inefficient, unpredictable, unsteady. The Red Brigade impresarios would have bright careers at Fiat or General Motors. A tender offer from some multinational conglomerate is not out of the question.

The Red Brigade is a direct offspring—whether legitimate or illegitimate is open to question—of modern technocratic capitalism, Italian style. Some of its members are the sons and daughter of middle and upper income families trained for careers for which there is no conventional market demand, in a society where the market determines everything. Some are from the working class, tens of thousands of whose members have also been consigned by the market society to the ranks of the deprived and superfluous. They and their numerous sympathizers, who are in imminent jeopardy of falling into a similar state have learned to think of themselves as "outsiders" with little

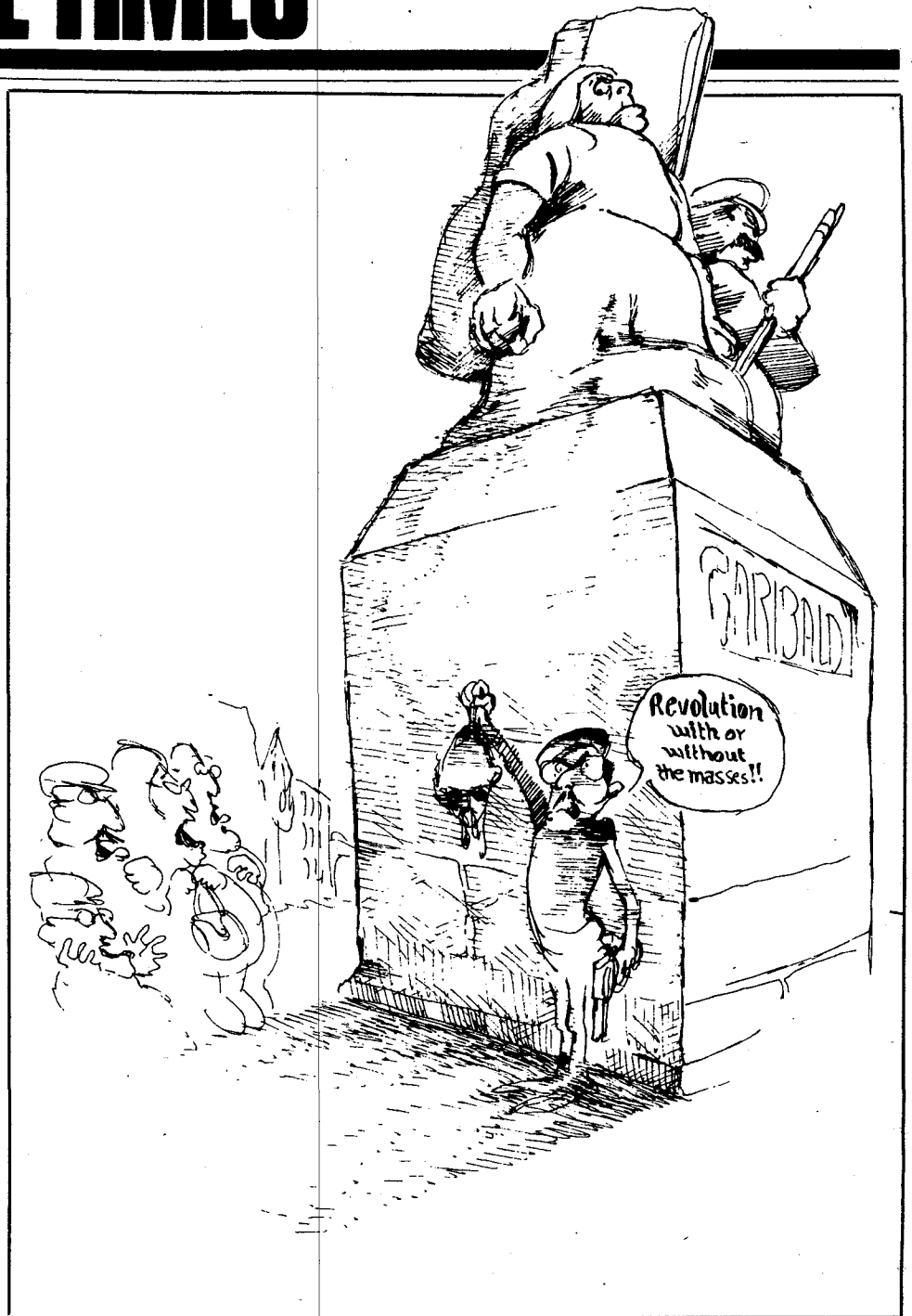
**They want to hasten the disintegration of Italian society. But their mechanized logic gets unintended results.**

or nothing to lose.

They have been taught by the systematic exclusion of working class socialism from governing power, by the rhetoric of church and lay leaders, that they are "outlaws" if they seek by parliamentary means to put an end to the social injustices of capitalism. They have also learned that the market society punishes the impulses of human compassion and rewards huckstering, corruption, thievery, dissimulation and violent aggression, if done on a large enough scale. In the name of revolution, they have chosen to act in the image of themselves created by their acquisitive society—as outlaws, but as super-efficient technocratic outlaws: primitive rebels in the electronic age. They are not nihilists but practitioners of the prevalent values "traditional" to their modern society. Since it is also *our* modern society, they can "happen" here.

They want to hasten the disintegration of their society by polarizing it. But like all technique that puts confidence in mechanized logic over human consciousness informed by ethical ends and means, their efforts are yielding opposite and unintended results.

As last week's municipal and provincial elections indicate, they have contributed to strengthening the Italian political center, stabilizing the state, and short-circuiting the working class' revolutionary resolve that alone can regenerate Italy as an equalitarian and democratic society. In the process they have embraced the technocratic logic that reduces people to manipulable things and transforms noble ends into criminal means.



But the permeation of business by the technocratic logic in service of quick aggrandizement has turned more and more people against capitalism. People will be no more attracted to it when plied in the political sphere, whether in the name of the "proletariat" or of the status quo.

In the production of goods or the production of history, in the struggle with nature or the struggle of classes, machines are ultimately no substitute for the will and reason of the people. There is no mechanized short-cut to preserving the status quo or to social revolution. A machine designed for such a purpose, whether old-style or new, may run amok

for a time, but before long it must break down and go to rust. The Red Brigades quick returns today will be gone tomorrow, except perhaps for the poisonous fallout with which the working class will have to contend in its protracted struggle for a democratic socialist society.

In the last analysis, the red in the Red Brigade is the color of rust. It is not the color of revolution. Bourgeois admiration of Red Brigade "efficiency" and "discipline" reveals what seems beautiful in the eyes of the beholder—the eyes of a ruling class going to rust and beholding its inverted mirror image as it sinks beneath the human horizon. ■

## Meany's rejection of wage restraint

The AFL-CIO has rejected President Carter's call for wage restraint as the way to control inflation. Its president, George Meany, expressed labor's view with an argument that capitalists oppose but socialists can affirm.

As he pointed out, "Wages are not the cause of inflation." Rising prices of fuel, food, medical care, real estate and mortgage rates, in which the cost of labor has not been decisive, are the main sources of inflation, he noted. "What [Carter] was asking us to do was to accept wage controls...on a voluntary basis." For unions to accept "a cap on their [wage] demands" would mean they "have already agreed to control them."

In effect, Meany has told the Carter administration that the unions will not serve as a police force against their own members' living standards. Nor will they acquiesce in any other wage-policing agency. Since wages follow prices, the way to control inflation, Meany said, is to "bring the prices down."

As far as it goes, Meany's position is as sound as the old gold dollar. Adjusted for inflation and taxes, real disposable income of union and non-union workers alike is lower than at the beginning of the 1970s. With the consumer price index rising at a 9.3 percent annual rate in

this year's first quarter, and expected to rise 7 percent or more in the next few years, the 30 percent or so wage increase over the next three years that the mine-workers obtained and that other big unions will be seeking, will just about keep their members' real income at its present diminished level. Workers in less powerful unions and unorganized workers will get even less.

The AFL-CIO is well advised in opposing the administration's policy on inflation. The administration has no strategy for controlling, let alone rolling back, prices and interest rates. The get-tough threats by Wage and Price Council director Barry F. Bosworth to subpoena corporate books to publicize and jawbone against unjustified price increases is little more than rhetoric. Corporations can tie up such subpoenas in the courts for a year or more, meantime keeping their high prices in place. Unlike the ICC in regard to railway rates, the Council has no cease and desist power over prices.

Indeed, public statements in the past week by Bosworth and Carter's muscleman Robert S. Strauss make it plain that the administration is acting on the pro-business argument that wages are the key to price restraint.

Bosworth pointed to the wages of the

80 percent of American workers not in unions. They have been rising on the average about one percentage point below those of union workers. Acknowledging that "it isn't very equitable," Bosworth nevertheless argued that non-union wages must be held down, and that to do that union wages must be held down.

Carter's decision to trim the budget deficit by cutting back and postponing tax cuts is also aimed at wages. It will have little impact on interest rates or prices; its only possible impact will be in cooling demand for labor, hence softening labor's bargaining position, by reducing the federal fiscal stimulus.

A confrontation is shaping up between labor and the administration over the corporate program for planning the nation's income distribution and capital accumulation. This conflict reveals both the strength and the limits of the "business unionism" legacy bequeathed by Samuel Gompers.

Business unionism fights for *more* within the system. Here, its protagonists are no less militant, by and large, than socialists. That is its strength. But labor leaders and the capitalists have pounded it into the workers' heads (with a little help from the state) that to want to change the system—or take less—is "un-American."

Now both capitalists and labor leaders—and the Carter administration—are stuck with their "American Way." And that means permanent inflation so long as labor fights to hold its own and capitalists won't accept lower prices and profits.

Business unionism is limited, however, to insisting on *more* within a system that can no longer give more without crises of inflation and unemployment. And it is barred from developing a labor-centered politics (like that, for example, of the old National Labor Union and Knights of Labor, to mention no others) seeking to replace the capitalist system with a socially responsible and just economy.

That limit defines the impasse—indeed bankruptcy—into which business-union leaders have led American workers. The *more* for which they fight becomes less with inflation, unemployment and deteriorating public services. Yet they are unable or unwilling to formulate an alternative and fight for a publicly owned and democratically planned economy.

It is no longer enough for labor to say "No" to wage controls and "Yes" to *more*. Labor is arriving at a point where it must consider the alternative: socialist unionism in place of business unionism. The very "success" of Gompersism is forcing the issue.



# Letters

## Surprise?

**C**ONGRATULATIONS! *ITT* HAS finally learned to distinguish itself from Congressional Republicans (Editorial, *ITT*, May 10) who have moved way to the left of their normal agricultural base, the Farm Bureau, and began supporting massive increases in federal subsidies.

It must have surprised *ITT* and many others that it was the Democrats, not the GOP, who voted down the recent farm bill to add loans and subsidies to the already mammoth agricultural budget. Such irrational and opportunist behavior, which does not address itself to the commodities market and the monopolistic buyers, or to loans, which have often been the death knell of the small farmer, should be expected from conservatives who must stand for election this year. More, however, is expected from socialists.

—Don Stevens  
Custer, S.D.

## Too rosy a view of the PLO?

**I** READ JOHN JUDIS' ARTICLE concerning Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (*ITT*, May 10) with great interest.

As a Jewish socialist I welcome attempts by fellow leftists to assist in bridging the gap that prevents the achievement of the rapprochement between my national liberation movement, Zionism, and the Palestinian nation. I truly look forward to the day when the Jewish and Palestinian nations will live side by side in peace.

I was disappointed, however, to note the absence in Judis' article of statements released by Arafat and other high-ranking officials of the PLO since 1974—the period in which Judis asserts the PLO has altered its strategy from a single-state solution to a two-state solution. This contention seems at odds with various PLO statements since 1974.

Concerning a question posed in a November 1975 issue of *Newsweek* as to whether the PLO would accept a two-state solution, Farouk Kadoumi, his organization's chief representative to the UN stated: "As an interim stage of settlement, yes. But the final settlement as far as we are concerned is a secular, democratic state of Palestine.... There is no tolerance on our part for the State of Israel..."

The abandonment of the single state solution by the PLO has also been discounted by Arafat himself. On the "Voice of Palestine," Feb. 1, 1977, three years after the PLO allegedly discarded the single-state solution, Arafat stated: "We must be prepared for our task, which is the struggle against the Zionist foe and all the enemies of our Arab nation—without and within.... From the Ocean to the Gulf, we shall march on, hand in hand, to victory!"

Not only does the above quote discount the two-state solution, but it explicitly excludes the possibility of the existence of the State of Israel. This can hardly be construed as a desire for co-existence between the Palestinian and Jewish nations.

Following President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem Arafat stated: "I have little to say because of my deep sadness that someone has thought to go and shake hands with this treacherous Zionist enemy. What has been taken by force can only be restored by force."

The above statements coupled with the Palestine National Council's re-ratification of the Palestine National Covenant last spring, a document that denies the right of Jews who came to Palestine after 1917 the right to remain there, suggests that the PLO has no intention of coexisting with Israel.

Indeed, statements by PLO officials have continuously called for the dis-

mantlement of Israel. One wonders whether these "sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people" are genuine revolutionaries wishing to cooperate with the Zionist left in bringing progress to our distressed region. As Fidel has said, no genuine revolutionary wishes to annihilate another nation.

—Yosef Gottlieb  
Worcester

*[John Judis replies: The PLO position, as it was explained to me and was also reported by Anthony Lewis in the New York Times, is that upon acquiring an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza, the PLO would abandon armed attacks against Israel and recognize it. But it would seek to achieve the ultimate goal of a democratic secular or binational state through political and social means. PLO officials thought this would take as long as 50 years. See my article in this issue.]*

## An anti-polemic

**I** ENJOY YOUR PAPER VERY much for the honest reporting of people's struggles. It is already widely read by people involved in meaningful political activity.

But don't allow your Letters column to become a forum for the endless polemics of frustrated ex-leftist leaders. I refer specifically to Peggy Dennis' Dialog (*ITT*, May 10), which was a polemic for which she used to have an audience.

Aside from being trite it was simply an exercise in getting back at you for implicitly belittling her period in history. Trite because statements such as "Weinstein seems unable to recognize let alone cope with the contradictions, dialectics, complexities of all social phenomena" are nothing but another way of saying you are stupid. Peggy needs to learn American English and to realize that Marxist double-talk turns people off, makes people run.

Whether the current movement will lead to a classical Marxist party, or any kind of socialist party is still unclear. The time now is for all good people to find an assignment that suits them and do their little thing among the people.

We all need to free ourselves of the burdens of past disappointments and resentments that eat away vitality.

—H.E. Cox  
Greensboro, N.C.

## Medical care and the Tooth Fairy

**I** READ WITH GREAT INTEREST Joyce Goldstein's "It's Time for a Public Health Service" (*ITT*, May 10), though I don't expect that the Health Service Act will ever see the light of day. In this, one of the richest nations on earth, and supposedly one of the most humane, we spend a hundred and twenty-five billions on the military and a mere fraction of that to maintain the health of our people. We lag far behind many other civilized countries in the area of health care.

A close relative, a woman in her early thirties who has worked all of her adult life, is in danger of losing all of her teeth unless she can come up with \$8,000 for surgery and other treatment. Considering that \$8,000 is more than her yearly take-home pay after deductions, she has as much chance of raising that sum as she has of going to the moon.

The cost of a single nuclear missile, of which we have an obscene surplus, would cover the medical needs of a thousand neglected middle income sufferers like her.

Our president and legislators (with few exceptions) talk a good health bill. Anyone naive enough to swallow such double talk must still believe in the tooth fairy.

The problem, of course, is that the all powerful, immensely rich and influential AMA has our Congress sewed up lock, stock and barrel. Besides, Congress, the Chief Executive and other officials have a free tax-subsidized medical plan that

takes damn good care of them and their families for everything from toothache to tummyache, courtesy of taxpayers who are forced to do without such services.

With our elected representatives we will never get a national health bill passed.

—Shirley Wolf  
Los Angeles

## Entitled, but...

**A** NEWSPAPER IS ENTITLED TO a point of view.

The *Daily News* may be entitled to call for the dismantling of the excellent radio station WNYC.

Likewise, *IN THESE TIMES* may be entitled to a pro-PLO, anti-Israeli viewpoint despite the fact that the former not only murdered Israeli athletes, but even bragged about their murders! You are entitled to your own bias.

Nevertheless, to publish sensational trash such as the Finkelstein-Huyst effort to me is shocking. I can only equate it with the *Daily News* sob-sister writing.

I am nevertheless re-subscribing, but hope you will never reach such a low level again.

—Beatrice Kuntz  
Bronx, N.Y.

## If we want it, we'll build it

**I**N YOUR ARTICLE (*ITT*, MAY 3) on Swedish social democracy you describe the LO (trade union central) plan for transfer of stock to union control over a period of several decades. "The voting rights of the stock (of a company) would go to the unions with the first 20 percent going to the local and the rest to the national. The national would appoint board members in consultation with the local."

Apparently, this applies not only to large corporations with several plants in different cities, but also to smaller enterprises with a single plant. The article then states, "At present rates of growth, the more profitable firms would come to be employee-controlled in 20 or 30 years. In 50 or 60 years the Swedish economy would be essentially socialist in that the huge majority of equity capital would be collectively owned." (emphasis mine)

Obviously, we all have different understandings of what socialism is and what constitutes employee-control. Maybe the key is in the work employee. In Sweden's proposed system, workers would indeed remain as employees, of labor bureaucrats rather than of capitalist investors. This is neither workers' control nor socialism, as I understand these terms. Something approaching workers' control might be established by reversing the 20-80 ratio, so the local controlled 80 percent of the stock, and the board appointment, but then one might well ask, why only 80 percent, why not 100 percent; and why have a board of directors and stock, anyway?

It seems to me that socialism and democracy will never be established from the top down. Two very interesting statements come to mind:

"It is better to give freedom from above than to wait until it is taken from below." (Czar Alexander II)

"If you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of the capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are." (Eugene V. Debs)

No benevolent leader is going to give us socialism. If we want it, we'll have to build it out of our own lives.

—Ann Tattersall  
Eugene, Ore.

## Right to life upheld

**I** AM A FEMINIST AND SUPPORTER of the ERA, but I am above all a supporter of all human life.

In two issues you blast the "Right to Life" (*ITT*, Apr. 26, May 3). On one page you show the small child who survived a Cambodian attack, and it is a pitiful sight to see. On the next page you talk about women's rights being abort-

ed in New Zealand. We better take a look at some slides or pictures of fetal development and of aborted babies. You can call it "tissue" or "contents of the womb," but it doesn't take much to figure out that it's more than that. It looks suspiciously human. When will we consider contraception one thing and abortion another?

For a paper that strives to unite people on important issues such as the dangers of nuclear plants and improved medical care for all, I find it inconsistent that you express no concern for the 1.2 million aborted babies in 1977. (Predictions are two million by 1985.)

If 1.2 million babies could organize, write letters, and march in protest, there wouldn't be abortion on demand in any country. What about those deformed and imperfect who were born? Do we tell them that if we had had the means to determine their condition earlier we could have terminated their life in utero?

A final note. In every unwanted pregnancy there are two human beings. Can't we as a people do something for both? Unplanned or unwanted pregnancies do not necessarily make unwanted children.

—Judith E. Kearney  
Milwaukee, Wisc.

## He's with Lenin

**I**N *ITT* MAY 10 PEGGY DENNIS replying to James Weinstein's review of her recent book, says that "the Communist party...helped win an anti-fascist war". But up to the time the Germans attacked the Soviet Union (from 1939 to June 1941) Communists throughout the world called it an "imperialist war," a classic example of imperialist war that Lenin had written and warned about.

After June 1941, the Russians called it "The Patriotic War" and the rest of the world's Communists called it an "anti-fascist war."

I'm with Lenin. WWII was a capitalist-imperialist war for markets, sources of raw materials, etc., with the "have not" (and therefore aggressive and fascist) imperialist countries on one side, and the "have" (and therefore democratic and less aggressive) imperialist countries on the other. Some other countries, like the USSR, Yugoslavia, etc., and peoples, like the Jews, were caught in the middle.

—J.J. Sternbach  
Little Neck, N.Y.

## Freedom from unhealthy dependency

**I** AM AN EX-MENTAL HOSPITAL patient who went through some of the conditions detailed in "Do mental patients have rights?" by Susan Abrams (*ITT*, Jan. 18)—compulsory medication, incarceration, etc. I want to know as much as possible about the legal context for the practice of psychotherapy in the U.S. so that, should I have a future psychotic episode, I know exactly what treatments cannot be forced upon me.

I have long suspected the psychotherapeutic industry in the U.S. of devious and coercive practices, and if I can legally avoid contact with it I should be free from what I think is an unhealthy dependency.

Thanks for the article.

—Eliot W.D. Char  
Honolulu

## Correction

In the Editorial, "Defending Israel and Palestine," May 17, one line was inadvertently dropped from the second full paragraph of column four. The paragraph should read:

To support the Begin government in such policies is to urge Israel to continue on a disastrous course—one of gross injustice to the Palestinian people. It risks pushing Egypt and other Arab nations back into belligerency when Israel is becoming increasingly vulnerable to wars of attrition, and when Israel's relative military superiority is disappearing.