

ITALY



Red Brigades boosts rightists

By Diana Johnstone

ROME

ON MARCH 27 TWO RED BRIGADES assassins murdered 44-year-old economist Ezio Tarantelli as he was about to leave Rome University campus after teaching a morning class. The choice of victim, the timing and political context of the crime raise one apparently unanswerable question: are the latest batch of Red Brigades killers witting or unwitting agents of rightist forces? Are they crazy fanatics who actually imagine that they are furthering some sort of revolution? Or are they working for the latest incarnation of the P-2 network, whose role in controlling Italian society has been exposed but which has never been convincingly dismantled?

The evidence all seems to favor the first hypothesis. But the second is the one that makes sense.

Supposing that the Red Brigades are what they claim to be—that is, crazy fanatics—their motive in gunning down the professor was to take part, in their own special way, in the current sharp social struggle in Italy over the relation between wages and prices. In Italy this struggle has centered on the *scala mobile*, the sliding-scale system designed to protect wage earners' purchasing power from inflation. In line with prevailing Western policies aimed at "reducing labor costs to attract investment," the five-party coalition government headed by Prime Minister Bettino Craxi has gone all out to break the *scala mobile*. The government campaign has also been used to break the unity of the labor movement and isolate the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

The labor split came a year ago when the two labor confederations linked to the government coalition parties—the CISL led by Pierre Carniti and the UIL led by Giorgio Benvenuto—accepted a cut in the *scala mobile* system proposed by the government and the employers association Confindustria, although it had not been accepted by the largest confederation, the CGIL. The government tried to carry the split into the CGIL by urging the Socialist officials of the largely Communist-led CGIL to sign the agreement along with the CISL and the UIL. The agreement called for cutting "four points" from the *scala mobile*, equivalent to about 10 to 15 percent of the system's

defense of purchasing power. As the *scala mobile* then defended something like 65 percent of medium wages, the proposal meant reducing defense of purchasing power to about 50 percent.

The CGIL refused and proposed a referendum on the issue among the workers concerned. Instead, on Feb. 14, 1984, Craxi issued a decree cutting four points from the *scala mobile*.

The CGIL and the PCI have been combatting the decree ever since, with rallies, strikes and, finally, with a successful campaign to hold a national referendum on the issue some time this year.

A few days before Tarantelli was shot, the weekly *Panorama* published a survey indicating that the PCI and the CGIL are headed for an overwhelming victory in the referendum. Asked how they would vote in a referendum to recuperate the points suspended by the government last year, 50.2 percent said they would vote "yes" compared to only 10.1 percent who said they would vote "no." Most of the rest said they had not made up their minds because they had only slight understanding of the issue. Survey analysts said it was scarcely possible all the undecideds would turn out to vote "no."

Thus despite a globally unfavorable relationship of forces, the defenders of the *scala mobile* seem to have been doing astonishingly well—most notably with the planned referendum. They scarcely need to have the Red Brigades defend their cause.

Yet that is what the Red Brigades claimed to be doing, in the tract left at the scene of the crime. "Attack and defeat the Craxi-Carniti-Confindustria coalition, the dominant axis of the reactionary project of the neocorporative social contract," the tract exhorted.

"Predetermination."

Why Tarantelli? Of course it is easier to assassinate an unprotected professor than somebody with real power and bodyguards. But as representative of the proclaimed target, "the Craxi-Carniti-Confindustria coalition," Ezio Tarantelli was both a rather marginal and peculiarly flattering symbol.

By all accounts Tarantelli was an intellectual with a social conscience who wanted to put his skills as economist in the service of the people and especially of the young unemployed. He and his American wife

Carole Beebe, who teaches English literature at Rome University, returned to Italy in part out of a sense of civic duty. Tarantelli was interested in econometric systems relating wages to inflation.

Considering himself a man of the left, he turned down offers to work for Confindustria and offered his services to the unions—all of them. He enthusiastically proposed his ideas to the CGIL, the CISL and the UIL, and was published in the pages of their reviews.

In the April 8, 1981 issue of the leading daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, Tarantelli outlined his idea for "predetermination of the *scala mobile*." It was much discussed among specialists. In articles following his assassination, notably in the Socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, Tarantelli was virtually identified as the father of the government reform of the *scala mobile*, thanks to his idea of "predetermination."

The title of Tarantelli's 1981 article was: "If inflation doesn't recede, the companies pay," which pretty well sums up the idea. "The rate of inflation foreseen in the next four quarters should be determined by the union, in agreement with the other social partners and in the context of a package of other measures of structural intervention in the economy, with the double aim of guaranteeing purchasing power of real wages and bringing down inflation. If at the end of the year of application of the proposal, the effective rate of inflation exceeds the one foreseen...it would be the companies, not the government as Confindustria has proposed, that would pay the difference."

Pierre Carniti put Tarantelli in charge of the CISL's new research center to work on his idea of "predetermination." Thus the Red Brigades struck down a CISL man considered responsible for the *scala mobile* reform.

But hours after his death, in a conversation with old friend Benjamin Placido reported in *La Repubblica*, Carole Beebe stressed that her husband was not a "party man." She "absolutely" ruled out that he would have, as suggested by much of the media, led a campaign against the referendum. In fact, she said, he would have voted PCI in the May 12 municipal elections.

Tarantelli had continued to propose ideas to all the unions. His latest enthusiasm was the idea of a European fund to aid the unemployed that would also be the first major

use of the European currency unit ECU.

"The role of Tarantelli in the whole matter of *scala mobile* is now being largely overestimated," Bruno Trentin of the CGIL said a few days after the assassination. The 1984 government decree had "nothing to do" with Tarantelli's idea of making the companies pay for inflation. "And the paradox is that in the 1984 discussion, the CGIL perhaps supported a solution which was in fact closer to the original Tarantelli ideas than others." It was the government and the other unions, not the CGIL, that decided to cut out the part of the Tarantelli proposal that would oblige employers to make up lost wages if inflation exceeded forecasts.

Creation of a martyr.

Surveys show that about a quarter of Italians are uninformed about the fairly technical *scala mobile* controversy. By murdering Ezio Tarantelli, the Red Brigades created a martyr whose image of enthusiastic reformer, pursuing non-sectarian compromise, enormously embellishes the unpopular government decree cutting real wages.

In a front-page editorial in *L'Unità* March 29, PCI Secretary Alessandro Natta wrote that "Ezio Tarantelli's blood was still fresh on the pavement when there immediately broke loose a scandalous propaganda campaign. It was said over and over that the killing of Tarantelli must be the consequence of embittered social conflict caused by the approaching referendum. This is being said polemically against us, but it is less an attack on us than a way to justify terrorists."

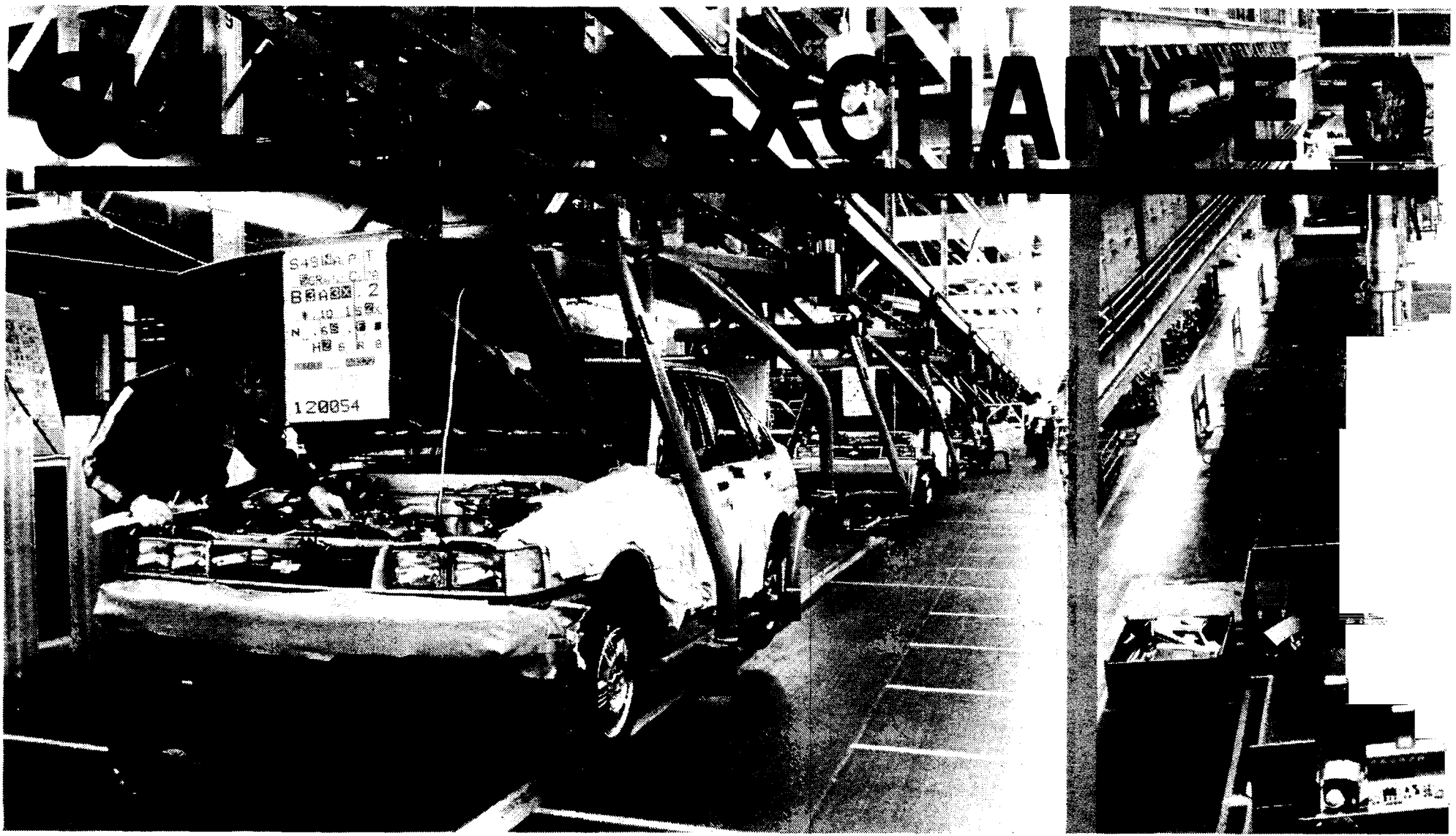
"We won't reply by saying the opposite: that the crime stems from the decree that the referendum wants to abrogate," Natta continued. "That would be equally mistaken. Those who are making the connection between democratic social struggle and terrorism are the same ones who, confronted with the violence of the late '70s, put forth the doctrine according to which that violence derived from the absence, or concealment, of social conflict due to the experience of national solidarity."

Natta's point is well taken. The Craxi Socialists, who felt left out or diminished by the "historic compromise" ("national solidarity") between the Christian Democrats and the PCI, were extremely indulgent—and in some cases even supportive—toward the radical fringes somewhere between the far left and actual practitioners of armed struggle, contributing to credit the nation (with special success in some French and U.S. universities) that the power monopoly of the Christian Democrats and the Communists was driving political activists into desperate acts to combat state repression that was wiping out all possibility for political dissent.

Yet in retrospect, it appears more accurate to suggest that real power in the '70s was never in the hands of the PCI but was very much controlled by P-2 and the secret services. During the '70s, the Communists were told that their failure to provide vigorous opposition fed terrorism. Now they are told that their vigorous opposition is feeding terrorism. It is understandable that Natta complains. Craxi shouldn't be able to have it both ways. But having it both ways has been the hallmark of Craxian success.

Police said captured Red Brigades documents showed yet another split in the strategic leadership of the terrorist organization, whose original leaders have long been in prison. The latest quarrel was between those who wanted to join "Euroterrorism" in attacking NATO objectives and those who wanted to attach their actions to domestic social conflict. Journalists allowed a glimpse of the unpublished documents said that paradoxically, the "Euroterrorist" faction had won, and had apparently carried out the killing of Tarantelli to show that it too was ready to link up with domestic struggle. The victorious faction is described by the police sources as pro-Soviet.

Totally isolated from any political movement, Red Brigades murders can only sully the causes they claim to defend. It is hard to believe this is not the real intent. ■



By Joan Walsh

FREMONT, CA

DEBI HOTZE AND CLEOTHA GARRETT are glad to be back at work in the renovated General Motors plant that now houses New United Motor Manufacturing Inc., the groundbreaking joint venture between GM and Toyota. Both work in the paint department as sealers, the same jobs they held before GM closed its Fremont plant in March 1982, but the similarities between the old and new work end with the job title. Their tools and techniques are Toyota's and both women went through months of new training, learning their "new" jobs as well as others around them on the assembly line.

Hotze and Garrett are impressed by the Japanese-imported process, which they say gives workers more control of their jobs and more input into the improving the product. The most important symbol: they can stop the line themselves if a problem arises, a traditional taboo in auto plants but not at NUMMI, where "mutual trust" is the labor-management model. "We don't even have to punch a time clock," Garrett notes.

So far, the trust is real, they say. Their "group leader," the foreman in American parlance, is a good guy; he drinks with workers after shift at Chippers, the bar across from the plant. And when problems arise they can discuss it with him or his supervisors directly, instead of relying on a union committeeman, like in the old days. "He even drops by the union hall," says Hotze. "A foreman wouldn't dare do that before."

They have a few complaints about the new system though. No one's entirely happy with their wages, which are \$1 to \$2 below what they'd make elsewhere in the auto industry. They're a little concerned about the loss of seniority and retirement standing they'd accrued as GM workers. Now everyone is a new NUMMI employee, even though 95 percent of the workers hired so far are GM veterans.

And they worry a little bit about their workload. Right now 16 sealers work in a department that used to employ 40 people, a reduction due in part to the more efficient Japanese techniques. But though employment will increase when output jumps—from a leisurely 12 cars an hour now to 60 next year—it will probably just about double, from 1,250 to 2,500.

But both believe their concerns will be addressed in contract talks between the

United Auto Workers and NUMMI management, set to formally begin April 16. "It's all in negotiations," says Hotze, adding hopefully, "everything could change."

The women's perspective illustrates the balancing act the UAW must perform in negotiating its first contract with NUMMI. Its members are unanimously relieved to be back at work. They're impressed by Toyota work methods and technology, and even a little excited by the responsibility and respect the company's "Quality Through Teamwork" emphasis seeks to offer.

But they want to see their wages at an industry scale and would like some representation at least with GM, that giant of the auto world. Most workers emphasize that they want to work harder and produce more under the Japanese system, many worry that Japanese ideas of productivity won't translate directly for an older, racially diverse, and female American workforce.

The UAW will walk that line, carrying the expectations of GM and Toyota on its shoulders. For the union, it's a full partner in the unprecedented agreement and has a strong stake in making it work along the guidelines of "mutual trust" spelled out when NUMMI finally, a little grudgingly, recognized it after almost a year of uncertainty. The UAW is negotiating more than a contract; it's to carve out a role for itself in a system that is in many ways designed to thwart it.

Three giants.

At NUMMI opening ceremonies April 4, those worries seemed very far away. Speakers from Gov. George Deukmejian to Toyota Chairman Eiji Toyoda hailed the new venture as a partnership between three "giants": GM, Toyota and the UAW. It was Mutual Admiration Day, with UAW Regional Director Bruce Lee praising the "courage and foresight" of Toyota and GM Chairman Roger Smith, and even saying a few kind words about the Republican governor.

In the recreation area where the speeches were made, the atmosphere was like a high school pep rally. Employees got part of the day off to attend the festivities, and they cheered each dignitary, shouted back "Good Morning," Japanese style, to each speaker, and punctuated the glowing descriptions of NUMMI procedures and prod-

ucts with applause.

When workers applauded even Smith, who presided over the bitter Fremont closing three years ago, it was hard to remember that they were once among the UAW's most militant locals. Some 800 unresolved grievances and 60 challenged firings were pending when the plant closed, and its history was marked by wildcat strikes. One, in 1977, shut the plant for seven days. Layoffs halved the workforce, from 6,000 to 3,000, as the auto industry declined, but Fremont workers rejected the growing calls for concessions. The plant's abrupt closure—it was announced in mid-February and most workers were laid off within 1—seemed to punctuate the industry's concessions demands, which the UAW only narrowly ratified that spring. (Fremont Local 1364 voted the package down.)

When GM and Toyota began joint venture talks that year, rehiring the old workforce emerged as a major sticking point, since Toyota was reluctant to get involved with employees, and a union that had the reputation Fremont did. Though there was no love lost between GM and the union, GM had to at least nominally favor some rehiring agreement, since opposing it would risk a nationwide strike.

Toyota had another reason for recalcitrance: its management was ambivalent about the joint venture, yet was under heavy pressure from the Japanese government to go through with it as a goodwill gesture to stem the protectionist tide in this country. Trouble over the union could provide an excuse for scuttling the deal before it got off the ground.

In the end, Toyota dropped its harshest demand—a no-strike pledge from the UAW. In return the union conceded that a majority, not all, of the NUMMI workers must be Fremont veterans, and that management could consider an applicant's work background, not just seniority, in deciding whom to hire back. Nationally, and within Local 1364, there had been strong sentiment that the UAW shouldn't budge on the seniority issue.

But to union leadership some jobs seemed better than no jobs, and getting in on the ground floor in the GM-Toyota venture could give it an inside perspective on the management techniques that were keeping the union out of plants elsewhere, especially the Nissan plant in Smyrna, Tenn.,

and Honda's facility in Marysville, Ohio. The union was formally recognized by GM and Toyota in September, 1983.

Meanwhile, Local 1364 went into receivership, since after the plant had been closed one year it no longer had pension and health benefits to administer. In dissolving the local, however, the UAW also seemed to be removing a troublesome symbol of past Fremont defiance. Local 2244 was chartered in its place, but a new Local 1364 left behind remains the former Fremont identity and a commitment to the new venture.

Adapting to a new system.

The central questions of the experiment is whether the new labor-management cooperation can work here. Along with concessions and numbers hired, the NUMMI unprecedentedly set new rules and job classification for the plant, and agreed to a less on the line.

Toyota's new system is a struggle to balance the Stearns' system, a troika of Japanese, American and UAW representatives, with the circles (though are now being called the Japanese-style circles) agreement, which is for knowledge sharing, make more of a union has its own at Ford plant, though recently voted to join.

But NUMMI's new model will be a test of the plant's ability to gain what the workers who have been when the new leaders began to learn of production and teamwork. Workers' efficiency and productivity impressed the American team leaders, though some had reservations about whether workers here could match the Japanese pace.

One NUMMI team leader, Bob Scott, expressed those doubts publicly and was subsequently fired. Management denies any connection between Scott's firing and his opinions, citing "poor job perfor-

Workers rate job satisfaction high but p