

We want to break a Taboo

We want to break a taboo, break the silence on the fact that the Italian State has kept 16 militants of the “Brigate Rosse” in prison for forty years and has subjected three others, for over 20 years, to the regime of Article “41 bis” of the penitentiary system. The special regime of “41 bis” is aimed at the psycho-physical annihilation of the prisoner, who is kept in almost total isolation: twenty-two hours a day in solitary confinement, two hours of fresh air a day, a short monthly visit for family members behind a glass wall, no books or newspapers from outside the prison. This prison regime is one of the most intolerable in Europe. It has two objectives: to cut off all communication with the outside world and to force prisoners to become "repentants", collaborators of justice.

Some commentators argue that these prisoners prefer to remain in prison, stubbornly refusing to benefit from alternative measures to detention or conditional release. But these statements do not mention the fact that these alternative measures are subject to a logic of exchange: they are granted only in exchange for the questioning of one's political past, for formal self-criticism, which will be amplified by the media; they are therefore asked to deny, purely and simply, their own political history and their own revolutionary past.

This is not an abstract question: these militants are asked to renounce an identity that for them is the choice of a lifetime, which explains their incredible resistance to forty years of deprivation of freedom; they are asked to renounce beliefs that correspond to currents of thought deeply rooted in universal history, in more than a century of class struggle, a struggle that has been international. Whether one shares these ideas or not, it is this identity struggle that is at stake and nothing else.

But while the State prides itself on its firmness in pursuing the annihilation of the prisoners, some claim to reduce their struggle to a simple question of principle that the prisoners would defend with excessive obstinacy. As if at the basis of their resistance there wasn't a profound coherence, the refusal to bargain and commodify their political thought. But to better understand why it is important to break this taboo, we must also ask ourselves what are the fundamental reasons why the Italian State still today maintains a ferocious line of conduct towards them, why it persists in this implacable line of action.

We are living in a historical phase characterized by the unbridled growth of inequalities, by a succession of crises and by a strong intensification of the comparison between the states that dominate the world. A comparison that is becoming increasingly dangerous and globalised. In this context, the crisis of the political system is intensifying, as in other historical phases, such as in the years between the two wars or during the colonial wars. These tensions make representative democracy increasingly "unsuitable" for crisis management, so much so that the ruling classes seem every day more inclined to seek authoritarian solutions and to liquidate social gains.

Proof of this trend is, for example, the violent repression by the French state against the Gilets jaunes or during demonstrations against the pension reform, rejected by the vast majority of the population; but also the repression of the environmental movement in Germany and France, the anti-strike laws in the United Kingdom, as well as the unprecedented measures against migrants. In Italy there has been a massive criminalization of social movements: attacks on trade unions, on students, on those fighting for the right to housing, against unemployment, on NGOs trying to defend the lives of immigrants and on immigrants themselves, deprived of the preventive protection of previous safeguards and violently attacked in their precarious jobs.

At the same time, the right to freely express one's thoughts is constantly limited: it becomes compromising to defend the Palestinians and anyone who denounces the ongoing massacre against

the Gazan people is banned. Any discussion of the war in Ukraine that does not immediately and without discussion adopt the NATO point of view is seen as support for Russia and betrayal. In general, we are witnessing the gradual criminalization of all opposition, not just the radical one. Finally, after countless trials and incarcerations of protesters, anti-globalization activists and anarchists, the repression in Italy reached its peak when, on the orders of the Minister of Justice, Alfredo Cospito was subjected to the "41bis". He was the first anarchist to be subjected to this ruthless detention regime.

The increasingly severe repression of social movements, demonstrations, militants and activists, regardless of their beliefs and actions, is gradually creating a climate reminiscent of the "strategy of tension" that characterized the 1960s and 70. Back then, this strategy aimed to stifle a strong protest movement that was sweeping through the entire society. Today, this strategy of tension would like to prevent the growing discontent and ideological disorientation from finding political expression and transforming into real protest. The "war" that has been waged for some time against the memory of the struggles of the 1970s fits into this context. In those years, the subordinate classes were the bearers and expressions of an important process of social transformation, of a real "assault on heaven". This is why this period is systematically subject to reductive or mystifying analyzes by those in power.

By denying the existence of class struggle, they persist in pretending that the world can be reduced to an opposition between supporters of liberal democracies and others.

It is only in the context of this "war" on memory that we can understand the silent policy of prisoner annihilation. The State sees these prisoners as a sort of trophy and, by making their imprisonment an example and a bogeyman, aims to discourage any struggle, in the hope of suffocating the development of the current contradictions, which could lead to a reversal of the situation, to a new "assault on the sky".

Breaking the taboo, breaking the silence about these prisoners, about the conditions of their detention, about their infinite duration, cannot be reduced to a humanitarian reaction. It is a necessary step to free ourselves from our fears, to untie the noose of constraints, of the cage in which they would like to enclose struggles and movements.

This unacceptable prison regime, the denial that is required of prisoners in order to escape this regime, is a further way to stifle all struggles.

Therefore, breaking this taboo is primarily in the interest of those who suffer the consequences of the disastrous economic and political conditions of society as a whole, which can only be transformed by a radical change in existing social and political structures. Breaking this silence is also a way to regain freedom and critical thinking, so that we can freely find possibilities for solutions and to interrupt the mortal spiral into which the powerful are dragging us with their increasingly repressive, classist policies and warmongers.