

LUTHERAN LETTERS

Pier Paolo Pasolini

Translated from the Italian by STUART HOOD

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INTRODUCTION

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI, journalist, novelist, poet and film-maker, was born in Bologna in 1922. During the war, which interrupted his studies in history of art and letters, he was evacuated to Friuli, the province bordering on Austria and Yugoslavia from which his mother came. Here he learned the local dialect in which he was to write some of his first poetry and here too he later became politicized by watching the struggles of the local peasants against their landowners. That experience made him a Marxist — but a Marxist who still felt the power of the Church so that he could write a poem on the death of Pope John and another dedicated to the ashes of Gramsci, the Marxist thinker and politician whose writings left a strong impression on him. That influence may be detected in *Lutheran Letters* in Pasolini's concept of a proletarian culture, that alternative culture which Gramsci held the oppressed class must oppose to the hegemonic culture of its rulers.

Pasolini's political and artistic development — the former brought him briefly into the Communist Party — owed much to his experiences when he was living and teaching in the slums on the outskirts of Rome and learning through homosexual attachments the life-style and culture of the young Roman proletarians. These experiences provided him with material for his novel *Ragazzi di Vita* (1954) which required a glossary for the non-Roman reader, and for his first film *Accattone* (1961) the eponymous hero of which is a Roman pimp. During this period Pasolini was a 'neo-realist', both as writer and film-maker. It was in the neo-realist style that he directed an episode in an anthology film to which Rossellini and Jean-Luc Godard also contributed. Pasolini's contribution — in a crucial scene it dealt with the mundane professional cynicism surrounding the use of second-rate actors in the filming of the Crucifixion — earned him a four months' suspended prison sentence for 'publicly undermining the religions of the state'. The statute invoked was one passed under Fascism. It was entirely typical of the polarities in Pasolini's work

and thought that his next film was a passionate and faithful rendering of *The Gospel according to Matthew* (the attribution 'Saint' was deliberately omitted). From there he moved on to classical themes (*Oedipus Rex* and *Medea*) and to parables (*Theorem* and *The Pigsty*). The next transition was to the film versions of *The Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales* before he began to work on *Salò*, a frightening, metaphorical exploration of the nature of Fascism. He was still at work on its final editing when he died.

The polarity in Pasolini between Catholicism and Communism was mirrored in Italian politics at the time when he was writing *Lutheran Letters* by the equilibrium between the Christian Democrat Party on the one hand and the Communist Party on the other. For most of the post-war period the Christian Democrats had been in power. Their period of dominance had been marked by a series of scandals reaching up into the highest levels of government, scandals which the police and the courts were apparently unable to clear up, and by a rigid display of public morality as demonstrated by the lawsuit against Pasolini. It was also a period of neo-Fascist revival with bomb attacks involving, apparently, elements of the military, of the state security services and of certain Christian Democrats. Once again the authorities were remarkably unsuccessful in tracking down and punishing the perpetrators but quick to arrest members of left-wing organizations on the flimsiest of suspicions. In the course of their investigations an anarchist 'fell' from a window in police headquarters in Milan — an incident which inspired Dario Fo's play, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. It was also a period in which the economic structure of Italy was changing rapidly; when there was considerable internal migration with the attendant collapse of local, chiefly peasant cultures, and — with the coming of the consumerist society — profound changes in the life and style of the urban working-class. During this time the Communist Party was basking in the mythology of the Resistance, memory of which was increasingly a substitute for political activity of a radical kind in the present; the Party had become a law-and-order Party, condemning extra-parliamentary activities and devoting much of its energies to civic administrations in which it had a very commendable record for honesty.

The 'historical compromise' between these two powerful

political blocs drove Pasolini — and a number of other intellectuals of the Left — into political anger and frustration which was not necessarily alleviated by the founding of the Radical Party in 1956 in an attempt to break the stasis in Italian politics. (The activities of parties of the Left, like Lotta Continua, and indeed, on a different level, of the Red Brigades, can be interpreted as an expression of the same frustration in the face of Communist inactivity and Christian Democrat cynicism.) Pasolini's *Lutheran Letters* are polemical interventions in the politics of the 1970s — indictments of the Christian Democrats for corruption, of the Communists for their acceptance of consumerism, and of Italian youth for the tyranny of fashion and of possessions. They are remarkable pieces of writing, informed at a personal level by his sense of being, by reason of his sexuality, an outsider in Italian society.

Pasolini was murdered in 1975 in Rome in obscure circumstances by a male prostitute.

Stuart Hood

UNHAPPY YOUTHS

One of the most mysterious themes in Greek tragic theatre is the way that sons are predestined to pay for the sins of the fathers. It does not matter if the sons are good, innocent, pious; if their fathers have sinned the sons must be punished.

It is the chorus — a democratic chorus — which claims to be the depository of this truth, which it pronounces without introduction and without illustration, so natural does it find it.

I confess that I have always accepted this theme of Greek theatre as something outside my knowledge, something that happens 'somewhere else' and 'in another time'. Not without a certain scholastic ingenuousness I have always considered such a theme to be absurd and, in its turn, ingenuous, 'anthropologically' ingenuous.

But then a moment came in my life when I had to admit that I belonged inescapably to the generation of the fathers. Inescapably because the sons are not only born; they have grown up, and they have reached the age of reason; their fate, therefore, begins ineluctably to be what it must be by turning them into adults.

These last years I have studied these sons for a long time. In the end my judgment, however unjust and pitiless it may seem, even to myself, is one of condemnation. I have tried to understand, to pretend not to understand, to rely on exceptions, to hope for some change, to consider the reality young people represent historically — that is to say beyond subjective judgments of good or evil. But it has been useless. My *feeling* is condemnatory. Feelings cannot change: they are historical. It is what one feels that is true (in spite of all the insincerities we may have within us). In the end — that is today, at the beginning of 1975 — my feeling, I repeat, is one of condemnation. But since perhaps 'condemnation' is a wrong word to use (dictated perhaps by the initial reference to the context of the Greek theatre) I shall have to define it: more than a condemnation my feeling in fact is a 'ceasing to love' — which precisely does not produce 'hatred' but 'condemnation'.

I have something general, immense and obscure with which to reproach the sons. Something which remains this side of speech — which manifests itself irrationally, in existence, in 'having feelings'. Now since I — ideal father, historical father — condemn the sons, it is natural that I should in consequence accept in some sense the idea of their punishment.

For the first time in my life by means of an intimate and personal mechanism I am able to free myself from the terrible, abstract, fatal necessity of the Athenian chorus, which confirms as natural 'the punishment of the sons'. Except that the chorus, endowed as it was with such immemorial and profound wisdom, added that what the sons were punished for was 'the sins of the fathers'.

Well, I do not hesitate for a minute to admit it — that is to say, to accept those sins personally. If I condemn the sons — because of ceasing to love them — and therefore presuppose their punishment, I have not the least doubt that this is all my fault. As a father. As one of the fathers. One of the fathers who were responsible, first for Fascism, then for a falsely democratic clerico-Fascist régime, and who in the end have accepted the new form of power, the power of consumer goods, the final ruin, the ruin of ruins.

So are the sins of the fathers, for which the sons must pay, 'Fascism', whether in its archaic form or in its completely new forms, new and without possible equivalents in the past?

I find it difficult to admit that this is 'the sin'. Perhaps also for private and subjective reasons. I personally have always been anti-Fascist and have never accepted the new power of which Marx was in fact speaking prophetically in the *Manifesto* while thinking he was speaking of the capitalism of his own time. It seems to me that there is something conformist and too logical — that is ahistorical — about identifying this as the sin.

I can hear all around me the outrage of pedants (followed by their blackmail) at what I am about to say. I can hear their arguments already: it is backward, reactionary, antagonistic to the common people, who are incapable of understanding the elements of novelty, which are admittedly dramatic and which are there in the sons, and who are incapable of understanding that they too are life. Well, I think that I too have a right to life because while being a father I do not for that reason cease to be a

son. Moreover for me life can manifest itself magnificently: for instance, by having the courage to reveal to the new sons what I really feel about them. Life consists in the fearless exercise of reason — and certainly not in fixed attitudes and even less in fixed attitudes to life, which is the pure philosophy of 'the little man'. It is better to be an enemy of the people than an enemy of reality.

The sons who surround us, especially the younger ones, the adolescents, are almost all monsters. Their physical aspect is almost terrifying and when not terrifying is fastidiously unhappy. Horrible coverings, caricatures of hair-styles, pallid complexions, dull eyes. These are the masks of some squalidly barbaric initiation. Or else they are the masks of a thorough and unconscious integration, which does not move one to pity.

Having raised barriers against the fathers, which tend to relegate them to the ghetto, the sons have found themselves shut up in the opposing ghetto. In the best of cases they stand clustered at the barbed wire of that ghetto, looking towards us, who are after all like desperate beggars who ask for something with their eyes because they lack the courage or perhaps the capacity to speak. In what are neither the best nor the worst of cases — there are millions of them — they have no expression of any kind; they are ambiguity made flesh. Their eyes are elusive; their thoughts are perpetually elsewhere; they have at one and the same time too much respect or too much contempt, too much patience or too much impatience. They have learned something more than their peers of ten or twenty years ago, but not enough. Integration is no longer a moral problem; revolt has become part of a code. In the worst cases they are real criminals. How many of these criminals are there? In truth it could be almost all of them. There is no group of boys one meets in the street which might not be a group of criminals. They have a light in their eyes; their features are copies of the features of automatons with nothing personal to give them character from within. The stereotype makes them treacherous. Their silence can precede a timid request for help (what help?) or can precede the thrust of a knife. They are no longer masters of their own actions; one might almost say of their own muscles. They do not know clearly the distance between cause and effect. They have regressed — behind the outward appearance of more advanced education and a higher standard of living — to primitive crudeness. If on the one hand

they speak better — that is to say, have assimilated the degrading average version of Italian — on the other they are almost aphasic; they talk old, incomprehensible dialects or are simply silent, every so often emitting guttural howls and other interjections, all of an obscene nature. They do not know how to smile or laugh: they can only grin or grimace. In this enormous mass — which is typical above all (once again) of the defenceless centre and south of Italy — there are noble élites, to which the children of my readers naturally belong. But these readers of mine will not wish to maintain that their children are happy (uninhibited or dependent) — as some imbecile journalists believe and keep repeating, behaving like Fascist emissaries in a concentration camp. They are in general personally bitter; they are living, in fact, through a moment of tension, of liberation, of conquest (even if it is in an illusory manner). But in the overall picture their function ends up by being regressive. In fact a liberty which is freely given naturally cannot overcome in them the age-old habits of submission to rules.

Certainly the groups of cultured young people (incidentally very much more numerous than once upon a time) are adorable because they are heart-breaking. Owing to circumstances which for the great masses of people have up to now been only negative, and atrociously so, they are more advanced, more subtle, more informed than were similar groups ten or twenty years ago. But what can they do with their subtlety or their culture?

So the sons we see around us are 'punished' sons — punished now by their unhappiness and in the future by goodness knows what hecatombs (this is my irrepressible *feeling*).

But these sons are 'punished' for our sins, that is to say, for the sins of the fathers. Is that fair? For a modern reader this, in fact, is the unanswered question, the Greek theatre's dominant theme.

Well, yes, it is fair. The modern reader has lived through an experience which makes finally and tragically comprehensible to him the statement of the democratic chorus of ancient Athens, which seemed so blindly irrational and cruel: that the sons must pay for the sins of the fathers. In fact the sons who do not shed the sins of the fathers are unhappy — and there is no more decisive and unpardonable sign of guilt than unhappiness. It would be too easy and, in a historical and political sense, immoral, if the sons were excused — excused in what is ugly, repellent, inhuman in

them — by the fact that the fathers erred. The negative paternal legacy may half explain them but for the other half they are themselves responsible. These are no innocent children. Thyestes¹ is guilty but so are his children. And it is just that they should be punished even for that half of the guilt of others from which they have been incapable of freeing themselves.

Yet there remains the problem of what in fact the 'sin' of the fathers is. In the end this is what really matters. And it is all the more important because, as it has provoked such an atrocious condition in the sons and therefore an atrocious punishment, the sin must be a grave one. Perhaps the gravest sin committed by fathers in the whole of human history. And we are these fathers. This seems incredible.

As I have indicated, we must free ourselves from the idea that this sin can be identified with Fascism, old or new, that is to say with the effective power of capitalism. The children who today are so cruelly punished for their way of life (and in future certainly by something more objective and more terrible) are *also* children of anti-Fascists and Communists.

Therefore Fascists and anti-Fascists, bosses and revolutionaries, have a sin in common. Until today, in fact, when we spoke specifically of fathers and sons we have always meant with unconscious racism bourgeois fathers and sons.

History was *their* history.

In my opinion the people had a separate history, an archaic one, in which the sons simply — as the anthropology of ancient cultures teaches us — reincarnated and duplicated the fathers.

Today when we talk about fathers and sons everything is changed: if by fathers we continue to mean *bourgeois* fathers, by sons we mean both bourgeois and proletarian sons. The apocalyptic picture I have sketched above includes the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

So the two factors have come together: and it is the first time in human history that this has happened.

This unification has taken place under the sign and by the will of the civilization of consumer goods — 'of progress'. It cannot be said that anti-Fascists in general and Communists in particular really opposed a unification of this kind, which is totalitarian in character — truly totalitarian for the first time — even if its repressiveness is not police repression in the archaic manner (if

anything it resorts to a false permissiveness).

The sin of the fathers is not only the violence of power, Fascism. It is also this: the dismissal from our consciousness by us anti-Fascists of the old Fascism, the fact that we comfortably freed ourselves from our deep *intimacy* with it (the fact that we considered the Fascists 'our idiot brothers'; secondly and above all, the acceptance (all the more guilty because unconscious) of the degrading violence, of the real, immense genocides of the new Fascism.

Why is there such complicity with the old Fascism and why such an acceptance of the new Fascism? Because there is — and this is the point — a guiding principle common to both, sincerely or insincerely: that is the idea that the greatest ill in the world is poverty and that therefore the culture of the poorer classes must be replaced by the culture of the ruling class.

In other words, our guilt as fathers could be said to consist in this: *that we believe that history is not and cannot be other than bourgeois history.*

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GENNARIELLO

1 How I imagine you

Since you are the one to whom my little instructional treatise is addressed it is as well for me to describe you as I imagine you. It is very important because it is always necessary to talk and act in concrete terms.

As your name immediately suggests, you are Neapolitan. And since the question poses itself insistently, before going on with a description, I shall have to explain briefly why I wished you to be Neapolitan.

I am writing early in 1975 and — although it is some time since I was in Naples — at this period Neapolitans represent for me a category of persons who are both in concrete and in ideological terms sympathetic to me. In fact during these last few years (to be precise the last decade) they have changed very little. And this is very important for me even if I know that for this reason I may be suspected of the most terrible things, even appearing to be a traitor, an outcast, a good-for-nothing. But what can one do? I prefer the poverty of the Neapolitans to the prosperity of the Italian Republic; I prefer the ignorance of the Neapolitans to the schools of the Italian Republic; I prefer the little dramas which one can see in the Neapolitan slums — even if they are somewhat naturalistic — to the little dramas of the Italian Republic's television. I feel very close to the Neapolitans because we are obliged to understand each other. With the Neapolitans I have no physical reserve because in their innocence they have none with me. With the Neapolitans I can presume to be able to impart something because they know that in giving me their attention they do me a favour. The exchange of knowledge is therefore something absolutely natural. With a Neapolitan I can simply say what I know because the way I see his knowledge is full of almost mythical respect and yet of gaiety and affection also. I consider a row to be also an exchange of knowledge. One day I noticed that in the course of an effusion of affection a Neapolitan

was taking my wallet; I drew his attention to it and our affection increased.

I could go on like this for pages and indeed turn my treatise into a treatise on the relationship of a member of the middle classes from Northern Italy with the Neapolitans. But for the moment I restrain myself and turn to you.

First of all you are, and must be, very pretty. Not perhaps in the conventional sense. In build you can be small and indeed even a little skinny; your features can already show the marks which with the years will inevitably turn your face into a mask. But your eyes must be black and shining; your mouth a little wide; your face fairly regular; your hair must be short at the neck and behind the ears; whereas on your brow I have no difficulty in granting you a fine quiff, high, warlike and perhaps a little exaggerated and ridiculous. I would not mind if you were a bit of a sportsman and therefore slim in the hips and solid in the legs. As for the sport, I would prefer you to like soccer so that now and again we can have a game together. And all this — all this about your body — let us be clear, has not in your case any practical or interested aim; it is a pure aesthetic thought, one moreover that puts me at my ease. Let us understand each other: if you were ugly, really ugly, it would be all the same provided you were as likeable and normally intelligent and affectionate as you are. In that case it is enough if your eyes are laughing — just as if instead of being a Gennariello you were a Concettina.

Some people might think that a boy like the one I am describing is a miracle. In fact you can only be a middle-class boy — that is, a student in his first or second year at grammar school. I would be prepared to admit the miraculous nature of the case were you Milanese, Florentine or even Roman. But the fact that you are Neapolitan makes it impossible for you — even if you are middle-class — to be anything but beautiful within. Naples is still the last plebeian metropolis, the last great village with cultural traditions, moreover, which are not strictly Italian; this general and historical fact levels the social classes physically and intellectually. Vitality is always a source of affection and candour. In Naples both the poor boy and the middle-class boy are full of vitality.

So as I have chosen you, you have chosen me. We are equals. We are exchanging favours. Naturally if this is read by others this

instructional text of mine is a lie since you are lacking: it lacks your dialogue, your voice, your smile. So much the worse for those readers who cannot imagine you. If you are not a miracle you are an exception — that is certain. Perhaps even for Naples where so many of your contemporaries are disgusting Fascists. But what else could I find to make this text of mine unusual at least in the literal sense?

6 March 1975

2 How you must imagine me

I could tell you so many things, Gennariello, that you need to know about your mentor. I do not wish to make a list of details which will certainly emerge little by little as occasion arises. In fact our pedagogical discourse will be full of parentheses and divagations; whenever something in the news is urgent enough and important enough to interrupt our discourse we shall interrupt it.

I should like to pick out one point: that is, what people say about me, which is how you have known me up to now (supposing that you know of my existence). What you know about me from other people is euphemistically summed up in a few words: 'a writer-director, greatly discussed and very discussable', a 'not very orthodox Communist who makes his money in the cinema' and 'a bad lot — a bit like D'Annunzio'.²

I shall not start a polemic over these pieces of information you have received with touching unanimity from a fascist lady and from a young person from the extra-parliamentary movement, from a left-wing intellectual and a pimp.

I know this list is a little in the style of 'the man in the street'. But remember: you must not fear anything and above all you must not fear those negative descriptions which can be endlessly twisted.

All Italians can call each other Fascists because in all Italians there are some fascist traits which, as we shall see, is explained historically by the lack of a liberal or bourgeois revolution; all Italians can for more obvious reasons call each other 'catholic' or 'clerical'. Finally, all Italians can call each other politically

'common man'. And that is precisely what concerns us at this moment. Not because you and I have broken what by now should be the tacit pact between civilized people which consists in never calling each other 'Fascists' or 'clerical' or 'man in the street', but because it is I who accuse myself, here and now, of a certain 'common man' attitude.

What is it that I (as a man in the street) see that finds something in common between 'a fascist lady, a member of the extra-parliamentary movement, and a pimp?' It is a terrible, invincible anxiety to conform.

It often happens in our society that a man (middle class, Catholic, even potentially fascist) noticing consciously or unconsciously this anxiety to conform, makes a decisive choice and becomes a progressive, a revolutionary, a Communist; but (very often) to what end? In order to be able to live at peace with his anxiety to conform. He does not know it but the fact that he has crossed over courageously to the side which stands for right and reason — I am using the word in its philosophical as well as its current sense — permits him to come to terms with the old habits which he believes have been regenerated, reified. Whereas they are, in fact, nothing more than the old anxiety to conform.

This has always happened during these thirty post-fascist but not anti-fascist years. But things got worse from 1968 onwards. Because, on the one hand, of what we can call official, national conformism, the conformism of the 'system' has become infinitely more conformist from the moment when power became consumerist power, therefore infinitely more efficacious in imposing its will than any other preceding power in the world. The process of persuasion to follow a 'hedonistic' concept of life (and therefore to be good consumers) renders ridiculous any authoritarian effort at persuasion — for example, to follow a religious or moralistic concept of life.

On the other hand, the great masses of workers and the progressive élites have remained isolated in this new world of power — an isolation which if, on the one hand it has preserved in them a certain clarity and hygiene both mental and moral, has also made them more conservative. It is the fate of all 'islands' (and of the 'marginal areas'). So the conformism of the Left, which was always there, has become fossilized in these last years.

Now one of the commonplaces most typical of the left-wing

intellectual is the desire to deconsecrate and (to invent a word) to desentimentalize life. In the case of the old progressive intellectuals, that is explained by the fact that they were brought up in a clerico-fascist society which preached false sanctity and false sentiments. And so the reaction was correct. But today the new power does not impose that false sanctity and those false sentiments. Indeed it itself is the first, I repeat, to wish to be liberated from them altogether along with all their institutions: the army and the church, for instance. So the polemic against sanctity and against sentiment on the part of the progressive intellectuals who continue to grind out the old values of the Enlightenment as if it had mechanically become part of the human sciences is useless. Or else it is useful to the existing power.

For these reasons you should know that in the instruction I shall impart to you there is not the least doubt that I shall push you towards every possible deconsecration, towards a lack of respect for all institutionalized feeling. Yet the basis of my teaching will consist in persuading you not to fear a sense of the sacred and of those feelings which consumerist secularity has deprived men of, thereby transforming them into ugly and stupid automatons that worship fetishes.

13 March 1975

3 More about your teacher

I should like to add something more to what I said to you in the previous section, 'How you must imagine me'.

We shall have a lot to say about sex. It will be one of the most important of our topics and I shall certainly not lose the chance to tell you some truths in this connection even if they are simple ones which nevertheless will, as usual, greatly shock Italian readers, who are always ready to cut dead the reprobate and turn their backs on him. Well, in that sense I am like a negro in a racist society which has felt the need to indulge in a spirit of tolerance. That is to say, I am tolerated.

Tolerance, you must know, is only and always purely nominal. I do not know a single example of real tolerance. That is because

real tolerance would be a contradiction in terms. The fact that someone is 'tolerated' is the same as saying that he is 'condemned'. Indeed tolerance is a more refined form of condemnation. In fact they tell the 'tolerated' person — let us say the negro whom we have taken as an example — to do what he wishes, that he has every right to follow his own nature, that the fact that he belongs to a minority does not in the least mean inferiority, etc. But his 'difference' — or better, his 'crime of being different' — remains the same both with regard to those who have decided to tolerate him and those who have decided to condemn him. No majority will ever be able to banish from its consciousness the feeling of the 'difference' of minorities. I shall always be eternally, inevitably, conscious of this. So certainly the negro will be able to be a negro, that is to say, will be able to live out his 'diversity' freely, even outside the physical and material ghetto which in the days of oppression was assigned to him.

Yet the mental picture of the ghetto lives on invincibly. The negro will be free, will be able to live normally without obstacles to his difference etc, but he will always remain inside a 'mental ghetto' and woe betide him if he should leave it. He can leave it only on condition that he accepts the point of view and the mentality of those who live outside the ghetto: that is to say, of the majority.

No feeling, no gesture, no word of his can be 'coloured' by the particular experience which is lived by someone who is conceptually enclosed within the limits set for a minority (the mental ghetto). He has to deny all of himself and to pretend that his experience is a normal one for the minority.

Since we took as our starting-point our master and pupil relationship (in particular 'what I am to you') I shall illustrate what I have said somewhat aphoristically by means of a concrete case that concerns me.

In recent weeks I have had the opportunity to make public announcements on two topics: abortion, and the political irresponsibility of the men who are in power.

Who is in favour of abortion? No one evidently. One would have to be mad to be in favour of abortion. The problem is not to be for or against abortion but for or against its legalization. Naturally, as I am *against* abortion, I cannot be *for* indiscriminate, total, fanatical, rhetorical abortion. As if to legalize abortion was

a joyful, peace-bringing victory. I am for prudent and painful legislation. That is to say, in terms of practical politics on this occasion I share the position of the Communists rather than that of the radicals.

Why do I feel the guilt of abortion with particular anguish? That, too, I have stated clearly. Because abortion is a problem of the vast majority which regards its cause, sexual intercourse, in such an ontological way as to render it mechanical, banal, irrelevant by an excess of naturalness. In this there is something that obscurely offends me. It confronts me with a terrifying reality. (I was born and lived in a repressive, clerico-fascist world).

All this has given my statements on abortion a certain 'colouring', which derives from my particular and different experience of life and of sexual life.

Everyone leapt on me like mad dogs, not because of what I said (which was of course entirely reasonable) but because of that 'colouring'. Stupid, blind, mad dogs. All the madder, more stupid and blind the more (as was evident) I asked for their solidarity and comprehension. Because I am not talking about Fascists. I am speaking about 'enlightened people', 'progressives'. I am speaking about 'tolerant' persons. So that is the proof of what I was telling you. So long as 'the odd one out' lives 'his difference in silence', shut up in the mental ghetto assigned to him, all is well; and everyone feels gratified at the tolerance they are granting him. But if he says a single word about his own experience as someone 'different', or merely dares to pronounce 'coloured' words 'coloured' by his own experience as someone 'different', there is an outbreak of lynching just as in the darkest clerico-fascist times. The most vulgar contempt, the worst schoolboy jokes, the fiercest incomprehension, cast him into degradation and shame.

Well, dear Gennariello, the fuss over this question of abortion was matched by the absolute silence on the question of the Christian Democrat bosses. And by the by, let us be clear about it, I certainly did not make a statement on a purely administrative level — that is to say, on the level of public morality. But this is a point we shall discuss in the next section, the subject of which will be language.

20 March 1975

4 How we shall speak

So we were saying last time that while there was a great uproar on the question of abortion there was the silence of the tomb on the question of the ineptitude — it borders on the criminal — of the Christian Democrat bosses. Or else the discussion was turned into a continuing and boring argument on bad government and on under-government with perhaps an obscure reference to the intervention of the Communists; that is to say, to that 'historical compromise' which, they say, is merely the codification of an existing state of affairs.

You see, Gennariello, the majority of anti-clerical and democratic Italians give themselves great airs because they feel that they are living in a virile way 'inside' history. They accept realistically its capability to transform reality and men, being entirely convinced that this 'realistic acceptance' is the result of the use of reason.

But I do not, Gennariello. Remember that I, your teacher, do not believe in that history and that progress. It is not true that things necessarily progress. Very often either the individual or society regresses or deteriorates. In that case the transformation *must not* be granted; its realistic acceptance is in reality a guilty manoeuvre to assuage one's own conscience and to go on as before. And that is the opposite of a rational process even if it often has, linguistically, the appearance of a rational argument.

Regression and deterioration cannot be accepted — even if with indignation or with anger — because, contrary to appearances, they are in this specific case profoundly rational acts. What is needed is the full force of cold rejection, of desperate useless denunciation.

Anyone who accepts realistically a transformation which is a regression and a deterioration means to say that he does not love those who are the victims of that regression and that degradation: that is to say the men of flesh and blood who surround him. Anyone who, on the other hand, protests with all his might — even with the might of his feelings — against regression and degradation says that he loves men of flesh and blood. A love which I have the misfortune to feel and which I hope to communicate to you too.

The Christian Democrat bosses are precisely the ones most

guilty of not loving those who are degraded by the false progress of history.

Let us leave aside the first phase of their regime, which was clearly the continuation of the fascist regime, and let us go on immediately to the second phase; that in which they continued to exist and act in the same way as before, although the power they served was no longer the paleo-capitalist (clerico-fascist) power but a new one — the power of consumerism (with its feigned tolerance). In this second phase there was an atrocious succession of political murders and criminal behaviour. And it is of this that the bosses of the Christian Democratic Party are, in the case in point, also formally guilty because the possibilities are three in number:

One: the Christian Democrat leaders (or a group of them) are directly responsible for, or are the instigators of, the 'strategy of tension' and of the bombs. The scandal of the SID³ (military intelligence) would suffice to demonstrate unequivocally the validity of this hypothesis. And moreover this can be read between the lines of the recent — even if in another sense explicit — accusations of de Martino.

Two: if the Christian Democrat leaders nevertheless did not know everything, or almost everything, a lot, or even a little, about these matters, they would be incompetents who do not notice what is going on under their noses.

Three: the Christian Democrat leaders know everything about the murders, or almost everything, or a lot, or at least a little, but are pretending not to know and remain silent.

In all three cases the Christian Democrat bosses who have held the power during these years should get out, disappear, not to say worse.

Instead they not only remain in power, they *speak*. Now it is their language that is the stumbling-block. In fact every time they open their mouths they do nothing but lie: from insincerity, from guilt, from fear, from cunning. Their language is the language of the lie. And since their culture is a rotten legal and academic culture monstrously crossed with technological culture, their language in concrete terms is pure teratology. One cannot listen to it. One has to shut one's ears.

The first duty of intellectuals today would be to teach people not to listen to the linguistic monstrosities of the Christian

Democrat bosses and to scream with disgust at every word they utter. In other words, the duty of intellectuals would be that of rejecting all the lies which through the press and above all through television inundate and suffocate the admittedly inert body of Italy.

Indeed almost all the intellectuals in the opposition substantially accept what the Christian Democrat bosses accept. They are not at all scandalized at the monstrosity of the language of the Christian Democrat bosses.

My dream in our relationship of master and pupil, dear Gennariello, would be to speak Neapolitan. Unfortunately I do not know that language. So I shall make do with an Italian that has nothing to do with the Italian of these powerful figures and their equally powerful opponents. The Italian of a cultured and humanistic tradition which does not fear a certain 'manner' which in a relationship like ours is inevitable.

So the preambles are finished. Next time I shall give a summary sketch of our scheme of work, a sort of index, and then at last I shall start the lessons.

Scheme of work

This more or less — with a thousand punctuation marks and parentheses caused by the arrogance of actuality in which you will feel you have a right to privilege, thus taking advantage of my weakness — is the scheme of work.

A first series of chapters will be dedicated to your most immediate 'educative sources'. You will at once think of your father and mother, of school and of television. But it is not like that: your most immediate educative sources are dumb, material, objective, inert, merely present. And yet they speak to you. They have their own language which you, like your companions, can decipher extremely well. I am speaking of objects, of things, of the physical reality that surrounds you. On that subject, contrary to what you expect, I shall have some sharp remarks to make. The language of things from which you receive your first education is not boring, I can assure you. (Forgive me if I adopt certain mannerisms when I imitate 'how to speak to boys'.)

After the chapters dedicated to the pedagogical language of things (of commodities or consumer goods) I shall dedicate a long section of the book to talking to you about your companions who are clearly your true educators. They are the unconscious and therefore all the more irresistible bearers of absolutely new values, which only you and they live out. We — your fathers — are shut off from them. Those values, indeed, cannot be translated into our language. Yet it is in a paternal language that I shall attempt to speak to you about them: and I shall require in a somewhat paternal manner your comprehension or curiosity...

The third part of our treatise will be on the two parents who are your official educators, if not your dis-educators as well. Yet as we shall see, between their pedagogic intentions for you and the realization of these intentions there is a layer of immense thickness: it concerns your relationship of love and hatred with them. In short, I shall explain to you what happens in the family.

Then we shall move on to the school, that is to say, to that organizational and culture organism which has totally dis-educated you and places you here before me as a poor idiot who has been humiliated, indeed degraded, incapable of understanding, caught in a trap of mental pettiness which, apart from anything else, causes you suffering. The anti-school (that is to say, the political polemic against school which you have taken in and assimilated from the debate of the last few years, a debate now completely impoverished and deprived of authority) is no less diseducative. It imposes on you a conformism no less degrading and cruel than that of the school.

First I shall talk to you about your elementary school teachers and then about your secondary school ones, those duplicates of fathers and mothers, authors of your uneducated state. (If instead someone had educated you, he could only have done so through his being rather than through his speech. That is to say, with his love or his possibility of love; it does not follow that in some cases the most humble of your teachers may not be a man who belongs not to the sub-culture but to culture.)

The fifth part of the treatise will be the press and television, these terrifying pedagogic instruments which lack any alternative. On that topic nothing will halt my fury, which is that of someone who, as you see, is gentle. In short, up to this fifth section, the subject of our series will be in substance pedagogy itself. It is from

this long look inwards that the continual outward glances will derive their meaning. On the other hand, as Barthes says in one of the aphorisms in his latest magnificent book (*The Pleasure of the Text*) probably 'we are scientific for lack of subtlety'. I shall try not to be scientific even if I cannot claim to be sufficiently 'subtle' in my treatment of the various themes.

Once these five important chapters are finished the five more important sections will begin and on them I shall spread myself without any preconceived limits and with all the freedom of improvisation.

They will deal first with sex, second with behaviour, third with religion, fourth with politics, fifth with art. In all this a pragmatic attitude will dominate. In other words I shall give you advice. To complete this list, I feel that it is a secret between the two of us. Hurrah. Certainly I do not think that there is anyone — at least in my world, the world of so-called culture — capable of minimally appreciating the idea of compiling a pedagogic treatise for a boy. An enormous vulgarity makes them think of and receive such a treatise as a chat that is completely and perfectly 'legible'. All right: it means that instead of dedicating it to the monstrous shade of Rousseau we shall dedicate it to the scornful shade of de Sade.

3 April 1975

5 The first lesson, given to me by a blind

Our first memories are visual ones. In memory life becomes a silent film. We all have in our minds an image which is the first, or one of the first, in our lives. That image is a sign, or to be exact, a linguistic sign. So if it is a linguistic sign it communicates or expresses something. I shall give you an example, Gennariello, which to you as a Neapolitan may sound exotic. The first image of my life is a white, transparent blind, which hangs — without moving, I believe — from a window which looks out on to a somewhat sad and dark lane. That blind terrifies me and fills me with anguish: not as something threatening and unpleasant but as something cosmic. In that blind the spirit of the middle-class

house in Bologna where I was born is summed up and takes bodily form. Indeed the images which compete with the blind for chronological primacy are a room with an alcove (where my grandmother slept), heavy 'proper' furniture, a carriage in the street which I wanted to climb into. These images are less painful than that of the blind, yet in them too there is concentrated that element of the cosmic which constitutes the petty bourgeois spirit of the world into which I was born. But if in the objects and things the images of which have remained firmly in my memory (like those of an indelible dream) there is precipitated and concentrated the whole world of 'memories', which is recalled by those images in a single instant — if, that is to say, those objects and those things are containers in which is stored a universe which I can extract and look at, then, at the same time, these objects and things are also something other than a container.

They are, in fact, linguistic signs which, if for me personally they evoke the world of middle-class infancy, nevertheless in those first moments they talked to me objectively and demanded to be deciphered as something new and unknown. In fact the content of my memories did not superimpose itself on them; their content was only their own. And they communicated it to me. So their communication was essentially instructional. They taught me where I had been born, in what world I lived, and above all how to think about my birth and my life. Since it was a question of an unarticulated, fixed and incontrovertible pedagogic discourse, it could not be other — as we say today — than authoritarian and repressive. What that blind said to me and taught me did not admit (and does not admit) of rejoinders. No dialogue was possible or admissible with it, nor any act of self-education. That is why I believed that the whole world was the world which that blind taught me: that is to say, I thought that the whole world was 'proper', idealistic, sad and sceptical, a little vulgar — in short, petty bourgeois.

Other 'discourses of things' intervened a little later and then throughout my whole infancy and youth. Often such new 'discourses of things' — especially after earliest infancy — contradicted the initial ones. I saw rustic objects in the courtyards of poor houses; I saw furnishings and furniture which were proletarian and sub-proletarian; I saw landscapes which were not city ones but suburban or poorly rural, etc. But how long it was,

my dear Gennariello, before those first statements had doubts cast on them and were explicitly contradicted by later ones. For many years their repressive power and their authoritarian spirit were invincible; it is true that I quickly understood that as well as my petty bourgeois world — so cosmically absolute — there was another world, indeed that there were other worlds. But for a long time it always seemed to me that the only true valid world, taught me by objects, by physical reality, was my world; whereas the others seemed to me to be extraneous, anomalous, disquieting and devoid of truth.

The education given to a boy by things, by objects, by physical reality — in other words, the material phenomena of his social condition — make that boy corporeally what he is and what he will be all his life. What has to be educated is his flesh as the mould of his spirit. Social condition is recognizable in the flesh of an individual (at least in my historical experience). Because he has been physically shaped by the education, the physical education, of the matter from which his world is made.

What his parents say, what his teachers and finally his professors say is superimposed and crystallized on what a boy has been taught by things and deeds. Only the education received from his companions will be very similar to what was imparted to him by things and acts — that is to say, will be just as purely pragmatic in the absolute and primary meaning of the word.

Moreover I leap ahead immediately to say that the importance of what television teaches is enormous, because it does nothing else but offer a series of 'examples' of being and behaviour. Even if announcers, presenters and other dregs of humanity of that kind talk — and talk horrendously — in effect the true language of television is like the language of things; it is absolutely pragmatic and does not admit of rejoinders, alternatives, resistance.

You must forgive me for jumping ahead in this way, but I can allow myself to do it because we must stay for some 'lessons' with the language of things, seeing that what is really important is what things have taught you; I referred to my own personal experience only so as to come to present-day experiences — like yours in fact — thus establishing (even if blandly and somewhat idyllically) the facts of one of the most terrible generation gaps that history records.

10 April 1975

6 Our impotence in the face of the pedagogic language of things

Nothing forces one to look at things like making a film. The way a writer looks at a landscape whether urban or rural, can exclude an infinity of things, extracting from their totality only those which are either the source of emotions or useful. When he looks at the landscape the eye of a director cannot but be conscious (almost making a catalogue) of all the things in it. In fact while in the case of the writer things are destined to become words, that is to say, symbols, in the utterance of a film director things remain things; the 'signs' of the verbal system are therefore symbolical and conventional while the 'signs' of the cinematographic system are nothing more nor less than the things themselves in their materiality and reality. It is true that they become 'signs', but they are what one might call living 'signs' of themselves. All that is part of a science — semiology — which you, Gennariello, must know at least by name and at least in its vulgarized sense if you want to follow what I am saying, particularly when I am speaking about the primary language of things and their subsequent pedagogic shortcomings.

So if I had gone to the Yemen as a writer I would have come back with a totally different idea of the Yemen from what I have after going there as a film director. I do not know which of the two is more true. As a writer I would have come back with the idea, at once exciting and static, of a country crystallized in a medieval state with high and narrow red houses, decorated with white designs which are like crude goldsmiths' work, heaped on each other in the midst of a burning desert, so bright that it risks skinning the cornea, with here and there little valleys, and villages which repeat exactly the architectural shapes of the city amidst distant terraced fields of grain, barley and little vines.

As a film director, on the other hand, I saw in the midst of all this the 'expressive', horrible presence of modernity — a leprosy of chaotically planted lamp-posts — huts of cement or corrugated iron put up without logic where once were city walls — public edifices in a terrible twentieth-century Arab style, etc. And naturally my eyes *had* to alight on other things, smaller or even really tiny ones: plastic objects, tins, shoes, and textiles of

miserable cotton, tinned pears (from China), transistors.

In short, I saw the coexistence of two semantically different worlds united in a single, confused expressive system.

Naturally the modern part of such a linguistic system seemed to me to be a degrading aberration. It was, to tell the truth, objectively so because it was miserable and declared without reserve or reluctance its brash speculative intent. The Yemen is still only a small, a tiny, market for Western industries. Therefore it is scorned and ridiculed. Its disintegration seems natural. The fact that this requires a renunciation on the part of the Yemenites seems perfectly natural to German and Italian speculators; the Yemenites must agree without reservations to the proposition of their cultural and physical genocide — even if it is not mortal — just as in the concentration camps.

But let us get back to things. The language of new things which in the Yemen — and in my infancy — is a confused babble has become for you, Gennariello, an articulated, logical and normal speech. Even if something still *separates you from it* because you are Neapolitan.

I do not wish to involve you in my aesthetic sin. I hope the pack of moralists may keep away from you with those accusations of theirs which rise up from their — it has to be said — disgusting testicles (which are certainly not like your boyish ones or like mine, for I do not confuse them with the prevaricating and vulgar spirit of the Law).

My aestheticism is indivisible from my culture. Why deprive my culture of one of its elements even if it is spurious and perhaps even superfluous? It completes a whole. I have no scruples about saying so, because in these last few years I have become convinced that poverty and backwardness are not by any means the worst ill. We are all mistaken on this score. Modern things which capitalism has introduced into the Yemen have not only made the Yemenites physically clowns; they have also made them more unhappy. The Imam, the banished king, was horrendous; but the disgusting consumerism which has taken his place is no less so.

That gives me the right not to be ashamed of my 'sense of the beautiful'. A man of culture, dear Gennariello, can only be either far ahead of his times or far behind them (or even both at once; as in my case). That is why he is listened to — because in his existence here and now, in his immediate actions, that is to say, in

his present, reality possesses only the language of things and can only be lived.

The point is this: my culture (with its aestheticism) makes me adopt a critical attitude towards modern 'things' understood as linguistic signs. Your culture, however, makes you accept these things as natural and makes you listen to their teaching as something absolute.

I shall try to scrape away — or at least cast doubts on — what your parents, your teachers, television, the papers, and above all boys of your own age, teach you. But I am absolutely impotent in the face of what things teach you and have taught you. Their language is inarticulate and absolutely rigid; so too the spirit of your learning-process is inarticulate and rigid, as are the non-verbal opinions which have formed in you through that learning-process. On this point we are two strangers whom nothing can bring close.

We are two strangers — the teacups say so

I shall never tire of repeating that by speaking to you I shall perhaps have the strength to forget — or to wish to forget — what words have taught me. But I shall never be able to forget what was taught me by things. Therefore in the sphere of the language of things there is a real abyss that divides us: that is to say, one of the greatest generation gaps recorded by history. What things taught me with their language is absolutely different from what things taught you with their language. But the language of things has not changed, dear Gennariello; what has changed are things themselves. And they have changed radically.

You will say to me, in your Neapolitan dialect: 'Things always change'. That is true. The world has eternal, inexhaustible changes. But every thousand years or so there comes the end of the world. And then change is total. And it is an end of the world that has happened between me at fifty and you at fifteen. So my image as a teacher is immediately threatened. It is not possible to teach if at the same time one does not learn. Now I cannot teach you the 'things' that educated me and you cannot teach me the 'things' that are educating you (that is to say, which you are

living). We cannot teach each other for the simple reason that their nature has not confined itself to changing some of its qualities; it has changed radically in its totality.

Let us look at a phenomenon that seems irrelevant. Recently 'objects' of the thirties and forties have come back into fashion — and I am shooting a film which is set in 1944. I am therefore obliged every day — with that pitiless and cataloguing eye that film-making demands — to observe the 'objects' we are filming. During the last few days, I have been shooting a scene in which middle-class young ladies take tea. So as well as other objects I have been seeing teacups.

My set-designer, Dante Ferretti, had done things on a grand scale: he had found a very precious tea-set for the scene. The cups were bright egg-yellow with white raised spots. Related as they were to the world of the Bauhaus and the air-raid shelters, they were deeply moving. I could not look at them without a pang in my heart followed by a profound feeling of discomfort. Yet these cups had about them a mysterious quality which was shared incidentally by the furniture, the carpets, the ladies' clothes and hats, the furnishings and even the wallpaper. This mysterious quality did not however cause pain or a violent regression (which I dreamt of at night) to earlier and atrocious periods. Instead it caused joy. The mysterious quality was that of their workmanship. Up to the fifties and into the first years of the sixties that is how it was. Things were still made or put together by human hands: patient old hands of carpenters, tailors, upholsterers, craftsmen who made majolica. And they were things with a human — that is to say, personal — destination. Then suddenly handicrafts and their spirit suddenly came to an end. Just when you were beginning to live. There is no break in continuity in my eyes now between those teacups and a chamber-pot.

The gap between the consumerist world and the paleo-industrial world is still wider and more total than the gap between the paleo-industrial one and the pre-industrial one. The latter in fact has only today been finally superseded — abolished, destroyed. Up till today it provided the human models and values for the paleo-industrial bourgeoisie, even if it mystified them, falsified them and made them into something horrendous (as happened with Fascism and in general with all the clerico-fascist

powers). Mystified, falsified, made horrendous at the level of power, they remained real at the level of the power-dominated world — a world which had remained in practice overwhelmingly peasant and artisan.

Since you were born these human models and those ancient values have no longer been useful to those in power. And why? Because the mode of production has changed *quantitatively*.

The truth we must tell ourselves is this: the new mode of production of things — that is to say, the change in things — gives you a basic and profound training which I cannot understand (also because I do not wish to do so). And that implies an estrangement between the two of us which is not merely that which for centuries and millennia has separated fathers and sons.

24 April 1975

How the language of things has changed

Before leaving the subject of the 'language of things' (which I am sure will have left you vaguely displeased, hostile and perhaps a bit fed up) I want to give you a series of examples which will make you understand a little better what I have been trying to say in this mysterious instructional introduction of mine.

If at your age (and even much later) I walked round the outskirts of a city (Bologna, Rome, Naples), what those outskirts said to me in their coded language was: here the poor live and the life that goes on here is poor. But the poor are workers. And workers are different from you middle-class people. So they want a different future. But the future is slow in coming. So their tomorrow — lived out by them in these outskirts and observed by you — is immensely like today. A today that repeats itself. The sons are assured of an existence similar to that of their fathers. They are destined to repeat and reincarnate their fathers. The revolution is as lazy as the sun that shines on the bare patches of grass, on the huts, on the great peeling buildings. None of this wounds the past, nor does it tear to pieces its values and its models. Urbanism is peasant. The world of the worker is physically peasant; and its recent anthropological tradition commits no transgressions. The landscape can contain this new

form of life (shanty-towns, huts, tenement blocks) because its spirit is identical with that of the villages, the peasant huts. The working-class revolution has this same 'spirit'.

If you walk through the outskirts of a city today those outskirts will say to you in their coded language: 'There is no more popular spirit here'. The peasants and the workers are 'elsewhere' even if materially they still live here. The shanty towns — thank heaven for it — have almost disappeared. But the housing schemes with their great blocks have increased enormously. One cannot speak of an amalgam between them and the old peasant world. Refuse is something frightening and extraneous. The little streams and canals are terrifying. The right of the poor to a better existence had a counterpart which has ended by degrading them. The future is imminent and apocalyptic. Sons are snatched away from similarity to their fathers and projected towards a tomorrow which, while preserving the problems and miseries of today, cannot but be qualitatively different. There is no talk of revolution, least of all when there is frenetic talk about it (a frenzy which the workers' sons have learned in a humiliating manner from the sons of the middle classes. The break with the past and the lack of rapport (even if ideal and poetic) with the future are radical.

So I was brought up by the physical reality of the outskirts of cities to certainty, to a profound, secure and irreplaceable love. You, on the other hand, have been brought up to uncertainty, to a lack of love created by a false, cruel and pitiless certainty (the 'crystallized', conventionalized and blindly aggressive consciousness of your own rights). I have dwelt on the 'language of the physical reality of the outskirts of cities', but I could have talked in similar terms of the centres of the cities and of the countryside.

City centres have all his life assured your teacher of the unalterability of the humanistic tradition and therefore of a quality of life, whether bourgeois or working-class, which is fundamentally conservative (which the workers' revolution was to regenerate but not to change). But to you the historical centres of the cities speak of a particular problem which concerns their physical conservation, their material survival: the incompatibility between their structure and the quality of life of a consumerist mass of bourgeoisie and workers gives birth to a chaos for which

neither the word 'conservation' nor the word 'revolution' has any longer a meaning.

As for the countryside, the difference between what it taught me and what it is teaching you is still more enormous. For me it was the certainty of a continuity with the origins of the human world and gave meaning to each minimal gesture, to each word, so that they almost acquired the character of a rite. Moreover it represented to my eyes the spectacle of a perfect world. For you, however, the countryside speaks of a spectral and almost timorous survival. Its function (mechanized, industrialized) remains alien to you unless you wish to engage with it professionally. For the rest, it is an exotic place for atrocious weekends and for the no less atrocious little villas to alternate with the atrocious flats in the city (all atrocious to me, naturally).

You will understand gradually in the course of these lessons, dear Gennariello, that in spite of appearances these talks of mine are by no means panegyrics of the past (which in any case I did not much like when it was the present). They are different from anything a man of my age can say today: they are talks in which 'conservation' and 'revolution' are words which no longer have meaning (so, you see, I am modern too).

I see, however, that even this page of examples continues to remain vague and general. Therefore next time I shall speak to you about a concrete example: I shall talk to you about the city of Bologna.

1 May 1975

Bologna, a consumerist and communist city

Why do I take as an example of non-verbal 'discourse' — which because it is non-verbal is endowed with a persuasive power which nothing verbal possesses — the city of Bologna? Simply because Bologna is not a 'typical' Italian city: it is a unique case. But at the same time it puts itself forward as a very advanced specimen for a possible and improbable Italian city of the future. Its anomalous nature is due to the fact that it 'developed' during the last few years in accordance with what are now the sanctified norms of consumerist progress — but at the same time it is a Communist

city. So the Communist administrators have had to confront the problem imposed on them by the capitalist development of the city. You live in Naples so naturally all this must appear almost incomprehensible to you. And the same goes for almost all other Italian cities. Thus for you the regional and provincial administrators are simply ancient corrupt viceroys. The 'king' is somewhere else and somewhere else is rapidly changing forms and methods. The viceroys have an intuition that this is so but their torpid consciousness knows nothing of it. As far as the transition is concerned, however, they behave perfectly: they are retarded in their looks and mentality but very advanced in their cynical acceptance of power's new course — that is to say, its new modes of production.

But let us get back to discussing the city of Bologna. What it says to you is: 'Gennariello, admire me. I am the richest city of the north which development has made more opulent — opulent to the point of being like a French or German city. If you were to emigrate here your consciousness could not but be continually amazed by this fact. Moreover here we are Communists and therefore clean and honest. This, too, is a privilege compared to the world from which you come. Naturally if you emigrated here you could not do other than vote Communist. Those two 'blessings' — wealth and a Communist administration — create a democratic optimism which cannot fail to throw you into a state of ecstatic prostration first of all, and then to make you a convert though not too fanatical a one.'

To me the city of Bologna says: 'I can compare myself to the Bologna which you left thirty years ago. I know you admire me and that you still consider me the best city in Italy, second only to Venice even where beauty is concerned. But I know that something disappoints and divides you. It is not regret for that city of thirty years ago, which is no longer there though it has kept its form intact: what disappoints and divides you is the evidence of what I am now. It is through your character and your culture that I in fact speak to you. My objective reality would have no words for you. The first and only proposition of my silence would be: "I am a stranger and incomprehensible to you." If I can still talk to you through your character and your culture that is thanks to the conservative function which the Communist Party has had here. So you are tempted to settle here, to work

here, perhaps to live in the house in via Zamboni where you were born or in the one in via Nosedella where you passed your adolescence and wrote your first verse. But the same phenomenon — the fact that I am a separate land, an island — which tends to keep you here, thrusts you back almost in terror into the unprivileged parts of my happiness. Of course you find traumatic the alien nature of an urban centre and an industrial zone which practically covers the whole countryside — both caught in a cycle which leads to a future substantially different from any past you know. You are upset to see an uproar that recalls the Latin Quarter with the triumph of the couple and the presence of hooliganism. The boasted democratic game (as your friend Scalia calls it) with meetings, workers' control, participation, makes you feel uncomfortable. But I know that what, more than anything else, makes you worried and almost distressed so far as I am concerned is the fact that I pose problems concerning the development of transnational consumerism to a Communist regional governing body. Which in resolving the problems accepts them. And in accepting these problems — in practice, which is always an unuttered theory — it accepts the world that poses them: that is to say, the world of the second and final bourgeois revolution. What an Italian city has become, for good or ill, is here accepted, assimilated, codified. At the same moment as I am both a developed and a Communist city I am not only a city where there is no alternative but I am a city where there is no alterity. That is to say I am a forerunner of the possible Italy of the historical compromise in which, in the best of cases (that is, in the case of an effective Communist administrative power) the population would all be petty bourgeois, the workers having been anthropologically eliminated by the bourgeoisie.

But we shall dwell more on that point, Gennariello, when I come to talk about your contemporaries in whom we meet, along with psychological embourgeoisement, the phenomenon of regression to that kind of barbarism which was always considered to be popular culture and therefore phenomena representing departures from the norm which are the unpublished matter of history.

8 May 1975

Boys are conformists twice over

Today let us begin the second chapter of our treatise. After the pedagogic language of things, which has had such a great and lasting influence on making you what you are, let us go on to the pedagogic language of your contemporaries who at this time in your life — at fifteen — are your most important educators. In your eyes they supersede both family and school. Fathers and teachers they reduce to gaping shades. No great effort is needed to obtain this result: indeed they are not even conscious of it. To destroy the value of every other source of education it is sufficient for them simply to be there: to be there as they are.

They have in their hands two most potent weapons: intimidation and blackmail. This is something as old as the world. In boys the conformism of adults is already ripe, fierce, complete. In a refined manner they know how to make their contemporaries suffer — and they do it much better than adults because their desire to cause suffering is gratuitous; it is violence in the pure state. They discover this desire as a right. They invest in it all their intact vitality and naturally their innocence as well. Their pedagogic pressure on you knows neither persuasion nor comprehension nor any form of pity or humanity. Only when your comrades become friends do they perhaps discover persuasion, understanding, pity, humanity — but your friends number four or five at most. The others are wolves and they use you as a guinea-pig on which to try out their violence and on which they can test the excellence of their conformism.

The conformism of your contemporaries derives directly from the adult world. The pattern is the same. But unlike adults they always have something new. That is to say, they incorporate what are essentially new values compared to those lived and codified by adults. That is where their power lies. It is by means of this something new — by their way of being and of behaving (since it is purely a matter of what is 'lived') — that they impose themselves as the true mutual teachers. Their 'novelty' is not spoken, nor even thought, but only lived; by going *beyond* the world of the adults it contests it even when it accepts it totally (as happens in repressive or outright fascist societies). You are crushed by a 'novelty' of this kind and it is this 'novelty', which you fear you may live imperfectly while you see it lived perfectly

by your companions, that is the core of your eagerness to learn. It cannot be taught to you by adults (including myself) and so though you listen to adults, although you work with a will to assimilate the wisdom of the fathers, you have in your heart a single disturbing desire — that of sharing with your comrades that novelty of learning from them, obsessively, every day. In short, your companions are the depositories and bearers of those values which are the only ones to interest you. Even if they are the slightest, almost imperceptible variants on the values of fathers.

There are historical moments — like the one we are living through — when boys also believe, however, that they know what the new values are that they live, or else believe that they know what the new way is in which they already have established values. In those moments the power of intimidation and blackmail of your contemporaries is still more violent. Within the framework of assimilated conformism — as in the days of the savage hordes — from the paternal social order, they add a new dose of conformism: that of revolt and opposition.

Ours is not then the case of an explicitly repressive or fascist society. We live at least nominally in a period of parliamentary democracy, of well-being and tolerance. That 'extra' the boys live is not therefore a fascist 'extra', an extra of dedication to authority; there is also an 'extra' of disobedience, of anarchy, of dedication to working-class revolution. In the time of Fascism, when I was an adolescent, my comrades gave me daily lessons not only in how to be virile and vulgar but also in how to be rowdily loyal to the fascist authority. Today your comrades give 'repressive' lessons not only of attachment to authority in its destructive aspect (Fascist) but also — and indeed above all — of revolutionary spirit, whether Communist or extra-parliamentary.

So contemporaneously every day you receive a tremendous lesson on how to behave and think in a consumerist society.

As you see, we are in the snake-pit. The examples are infinite and always ambiguous. It is not easy to help you with all your weakness and complexes in your struggle against all the others who are strong in being individually champions of the majority. Yet I shall try to help you, even if the way I indicate to you will be difficult. Naturally we will have to spend a lot of time on the chapter which deals with your contemporaries, those boys who

are attempting to sort out the confusion in which they throng around you and from which you nevertheless deduce a unique and very clear way of living.

15 May 1975

They are alive but should be dead

I shall make you a brief list of the types of your contemporaries whom I shall describe to you in this section of our course. It is an incomplete list, but we shall bring it up to date whenever it seems right to do so. First I shall describe to you those boys who can be called more or less 'obedient', the fact that they sometimes pose as dissenters, rebels, extremists, etc, is unimportant, just as it is unimportant that they have long hair which has crystallized by now into the ridiculous and rather repellent style of a totally conformist initiation. Then I shall describe to you those boys who can be called more or less 'disobedient', that is to say, the few real surviving extremists, the maladjusted, the deviants; and finally — these are extremely rare — the 'educated'.

The list of types in the first group, with which we shall begin, is more or less as follows: those 'destined to be dead', the 'sportsman', the 'future executives', the 'orthodox Communists', the 'non-neurotic repressed', the hooligans, the Fascists, the Catholic activists and finally, the average ones. Naturally while describing them I shall always keep in mind the two Italian variants, which are still fundamental: the middle-class boys and the working-class boys, the boys of the North and those of the South.

It is very difficult for me to describe the first types in the first group — those 'destined to be dead'. They are those who, up to a dozen or score of years ago, in Italy and above all in the South and among the poorer classes, would have died in their first infancy, in that period which is known as the period of infant mortality. Science intervened — but à propos medicine, read at least the first pages of Ivan Illich's *The Tools of Conviviality* — and saved them from physical death. So they survived and in their lives there is something artificial and 'against nature'. I am fully aware that I am saying horrible things and even some apparently reactionary

ones. But on this point I have encouraged you warmly several times not to be surprised, far less shocked (as many readers of our lessons will be). To find something 'artificial' or 'against nature' in those who as children were saved from death by medical techniques would have been something atrocious or reactionary in a world where one of the fundamental values was truly the conservation of the species and where that conservation took the concrete form of the preponderance of births over deaths. But in a world like ours in which such a fundamental human value is being overthrown (for humanity to save itself we must avoid the excessive preponderance of births over deaths) the moral gratifications of another age no longer make sense. So do not be shocked: the children who are born today are no longer aprioristically 'blessed'. Judgment as between benediction and malediction has been suspended. But those who are born 'in excess' are decidedly not blessed. Who are those who are born 'in excess'? Evidently one cannot tell. This is certain — a child knows intuitively, immediately, after only a few days of life, if its arrival in the world is truly wanted or not. If it feels not truly wanted, or worse, unwanted, it falls ill. The neuroses which cause the most terrible and incurable repressions are due to this first feeling of not being received into the world with love. Now, objectively speaking, no child nowadays is any longer received into the world with the love of an earlier time when he was by definition 'blessed'. Everyone knows, even if they are not conscious of it, that the destruction of humanity follows from over-population. So if all the 'sons' feel this lack of blessing at their birth — which makes them sad and unhappy throughout their childhood and youth — those who into the bargain have been 'snatched' from the innocent death of childhood feel with still greater violence their guilt at being in the world, at demanding to be fed and looked after.

Some years ago there was a certain illusion — one of the many stupid illusions of that time — that the human race was improving precisely because of medical science and better nutrition, that children were stronger, taller, etc. A brief illusion: the new generation is infinitely weaker, uglier, sadder, paler, more ill than all the preceding generations one can remember. The causes of this are numerous, and I shall attempt to analyse them all in the course of our lessons; one of them is the presence among

the young of those who should have died, and there are many. In certain cases (the South, the poorer classes) the percentage is very high. All are either depressed or aggressive — but in a manner that is either painful or unpleasant. Nothing can cancel out the shadow which an unknown abnormality casts on their lives.

22 May 1975

We are beautiful so let's get dirty

If my hypothesis is correct that, in the classification of your contemporaries, 'the obedient' find a place, and first and foremost 'those who were destined to die' — that is, those whom medical science has saved from 'infant mortality' and who are therefore 'survivors' — what is their pedagogic function as far as you are concerned? What do they teach you simply by their existence and the way they behave?

The first characteristic, as I have said, is the unconscious feeling that their coming into this world was unwanted: that they are a 'burden' and 'not needed'. That can only increase their desire for normality, their total and unreserved adherence to the horde, their urge not only not to appear different but not even to appear distinguishable.

So they teach you above all to live in aggressive conformism — something which, as we shall see, is taught you by almost all categories of your 'obedient' contemporaries. We shall analyse it better by continuing our discussion. But I should like to dwell for an instant on three privileged points in their pragmatic teaching which, because it is pragmatic, is all the more easily assimilated.

First of all, your contemporaries teach you renunciation — a renunciation made absolute, habitual, daily, by their lack of vitality, which in them is a real physical fact but in others, like yourself, may be a temptation. They should have died — or rather in other social circumstances they would certainly have died. They must instinctively reduce to a minimum the effort of living, which in social terms means renunciation. It is true that as a friend of mine from Chia⁵ says — a young boy who remembers the proverbs of the elderly — 'the world belongs to the clever and the idiots enjoy it'. It is one of the greatest truths my ears have ever

heard. But as an old bourgeois rationalist and idealist — that is to say one of the 'clever' ones — I continue to detest with all my strength the spirit of renunciation: it is after all the desire for integration and for becoming like the 'man in the street'. Don't be afraid to be ridiculous: don't renounce anything. Let idiots enjoy the world and greatly envy their happiness all your life — as I do.

The second thing those 'destined to die' teach you is a certain obligatory tendency to be unhappy. All young people of today, your contemporaries, are unpardonably guilty of being unhappy. Apparently there are no more idiots — unless in Naples or Chia. They are all 'good' — and so they all have good unhappy faces. To be good is the first commandment of the power of consumerism (into whose mental universe and mode of behaving you, poor Gennariello, were born) — 'good' so as to be happy (the hedonism of the consumer). The result is that their happiness is completely false; meanwhile an immediate unhappiness spreads in all directions.

On the other hand, Gennariello, you must know that contrary to the sublime proverb from Chia there is also a happiness known to those who are good. The proverb says in fact, that 'the world belongs to the clever', referring decisively to possession, to power. But over and above the possession of the world by the bosses, there is also its possession by intellectuals — and this is a real possession, just like that of the idiots. It is simply a question of a different cultural level. It is the cultural possession of the world that gives happiness.

Do not allow yourself to be tempted by champions of unhappiness, of idiotic sourness, of stupid seriousness.

The third thing you are taught by 'those destined to die' is the rhetoric of ugliness. Let me explain. For some years young people, boys, have been doing everything possible to appear ugly. They get themselves up in a horrible way. They are not happy until they are totally masked or made ugly. They are ashamed of curly hair, of the rosy or brown gleam on their cheeks; they are ashamed of the light in their eyes, which is due to the candour of their youth; they are ashamed of the beauty of their bodies. Among all this madness those who triumph are precisely the ugly, who have become the leaders of fashion and behaviour. Those 'destined to die' certainly do not have a splendid youth. But you,

Gennariello, are splendid.

At the risk of appearing a bit cowardly and racist — of creating, that is, a category of persons whom one is invited to condemn, I have inveighed somewhat against those 'destined to die'. No. Among those 'destined to die' there are beings as adorable as yourself and just as clearly destined to live. If I have polemicised with particular violence against the teaching which those 'destined to die' impart to you, it is because I have taken this category as a symbol of the average — the average which teaches you these very same things without that element of desperation which corrects, justifies and renders them humane.

29 May 1975

Madonnas don't weep any more

With profound, almost consuming pleasure I remember those mornings in school when, instead of giving a lesson, my professors allowed themselves to be distracted by some idleness and sense of freedom and talked to us about other things. They were — at least in my memory — mornings in May or June when term was almost ended. There was a perpetual sun, still and immense — the sun of the summer poems of Sandra Penna.⁶

Well, Gennariello, today is just such a morning, when teachers don't feel like teaching and talk about something else.

Above all the elections are coming up — so what is more natural?

What requires to be said is very hard even if in my capacity as teacher I must be calm. So. Until ten years ago when the elections were upon us Madonnas wept; today high magistrates are kidnapped. The problem is as follows: what connection is there between these two phenomena? I believe that there is, first of all, a connection in terms of *opposition* and of incommensurability — a world in which the tears of a Madonna are somehow important as opposed to, and incommensurate with, a world in which such tears no longer count for anything at all. What has intervened is precisely the end of a world. Millions and millions of peasants and also of workers — in the South and the North — who remained true to themselves over an epoch, certainly much longer than the

two thousand years of Catholicism, have now been destroyed. Their 'quality of life' has been radically changed. On the one hand, there has been a mass emigration to bourgeois countries. On the other, they have been overtaken by bourgeois civilization. Their nature has been abrogated at the wish of the producers of commodities. But I have talked about this before and will often talk about it again. The connection which at least on a mechanical level brings together the tears of Madonnas and the kidnapping of magistrates must be examined.

The connection is organizational and pragmatic. And as such enigmatic. How in fact were the tears of a Madonna planned and brought about? Did a parish priest come to Rome, get the agreement of some senior official in the Vatican, obtain the necessary means, etc? Or did the agent of some high-up authority in Christian Democracy (the Fanfani⁷, Andreotti or Scelba of those days) descend on some chosen village, contact the parish priest, give him the necessary orders? Or did the parish priest do it all on his own, interpreting the tacit wishes of those in power who needed to be re-elected, if possible with an increased majority? The fact is that the plot always worked perfectly and no one was ever unmasked.

In this respect the kidnapping of magistrates and the tears of Madonnas are perfectly matched. Indeed they are in substance the same thing.

Certainly the mechanism of the first organization (the Madonna's tears) — even if in Sicily, for example, the Mafia cannot have been uninvolved — was much more simple than the mechanism of the second organization (the kidnapping of a magistrate); for the latter an immensely more refined criminal apparatus is required and over and above that the intervention of the CIA⁸ at least (until recently by way of SID, and now?). Moreover whereas once it was sufficient to induce souls ingenuously to fear divine judgment — the Madonna's tears were anti-Communist — now it is necessary to create two tensions in people's hearts: an anti-Communist one and an anti-fascist one. Apparently while these elections are coming up we are in a phase of anti-fascist tension. Yet, yet, yet — while in the case of the massacres of Brescia and Bologna one can definitely talk of an anti-fascist campaign 'mounted' by the Christian Democrats, who are in power and no longer now Catholic, in the case of the

NAP⁹ one cannot definitely talk about Fascists or rather there is no wish to have them talked about. It seems we are faced by a new and devilish scheme — to kill two birds with one stone: to leave it in the air whether it is a case of Reds or Fascists, thus creating at one and the same time an anti-Communist and an anti-Fascist tension.

Certainly a lot depends on the person of the kidnapped magistrate. It has to be said meantime that the resemblance between Sossi and Di Gennaro¹⁰ is strange. In any case, while I do not know Sossi personally I know Di Gennaro very well. He was public prosecutor in the trial of my film *La Ricotta*¹¹ which was accused (in a fascist manner) of slandering religion.

Now in my memory no one is more reactionary than this Di Gennaro. His concluding speech against my film was so deeply reactionary in religious terms that — as the numerous intellectuals and journalists who heard it can testify — it came close to Grand Guignol and the ridiculous, not to mention vulgarity. It was the oral masterpiece of the clerico-fascism of the fifties (the trial took place in 1963). That is to say, on the cultural level of the same clerico-fascism which organized the Madonna's tears. Now one has to ask oneself: what political connection is there between this man of the old Right, who is reactionary and hard but also ambiguous (since the trial of my film was manifestly an act of persecution which implicated the Vatican and the entire official apparatus of Christian Democrat power) and those who kidnapped him? Why was he chosen? What logic connects the kidnapped person and his kidnappers? I shall never be able to reply to these questions except purely on the level of ideas. And that is what I shall try to do by continuing this digression as long as necessary.

5 June 1975

LUTHERAN LETTERS

Trilogy of Life¹² rejected

I

First of all I think that one must never, ever, be afraid of being used by power and its culture. One must behave as if this dangerous possibility did not exist. What counts above all is the sincerity and the necessity of what has to be said. One must not betray it in any way, least of all by remaining silent, diplomatically and of set purpose. But I think that *afterwards* one must be able to take stock of the degree to which one has possibly been used by the integrating power. And then if one's own sincerity or necessity has been taken over and manipulated I think one must simply have the courage to reject them.

I reject my *Trilogy of Life*, although I do not regret having made it. I cannot in fact deny the sincerity and the necessity which drove me to the representation of the bodies in it and of the culminating symbol, their sex. Sincerity and necessity of this kind have various historical and ideological justifications.

First of all they are part of the struggle for that democratization of the 'right to self-expression' and for sexual liberalization, which were two of the fundamental factors in the progressive tension of the fifties and sixties.

In the second place, during the first phase of the cultural and anthropological crisis which began towards the end of the sixties — in which the unreality of the sub-culture of the mass media and therefore of mass communication began to reign supreme — the last bulwark of reality seemed to be 'innocent' bodies with the archaic, dark, vital violence of their sexual organs.

Finally, the representation of Eros as seen in a human environment which has not been quite overtaken by history (in Naples, in the Middle East) was something that fascinated me personally as an individual author and as a man.

Now all that has been turned upside down.

First: the progressive struggle for democratization of

expression and for sexual liberation has been brutally superseded and cancelled out by the decision of consumerist power to grant a tolerance as vast as it is false.

Secondly: even the 'reality' of innocent bodies has been violated, manipulated, enslaved by consumerist power — indeed such violence to human bodies has become the most macroscopic fact of the new human epoch.

Thirdly: private sexual lives (like my own) have suffered the trauma both of false tolerance and of physical degradation, and what in sexual fantasies was pain and joy has become suicidal disappointment, shapeless torpor.

II

However, do not let those who criticized *Trilogy of Life* because they were displeased or despised it, imagine that they can think that my rejection leads to their imperatives. My rejection leads to something else. I am terrified to say it and so before I do so (which is my real duty) I seek reasons for delay. These are:

(a) The irrefutable fact that, even if I wished to continue to make films like *Trilogy of Life* I would not be able to do so because I now hate the bodies and the sex organs. Naturally I am talking about *those* bodies and *those* sex organs. That is to say, the bodies of the new Italian youths and boys, the sex organs of the new generation of Italian youths and boys. People will object: 'But you did not in fact show in *Trilogy* contemporary bodies and sex organs but those of the past'. That is true — but for some years I have not been able to delude myself. The present with its degradation was compensated for not only by the objective survival of the past but consequently by the possibility of reinvoking it. But today the degeneration of bodies and sex organs has assumed a retroactive character. If those things which *then* were thus and thus have *today* become this and this, it means that they were already so potentially — so that their mode of existence even *then* is devalued by the present. The boys and youths of the Roman sub-proletariat — who are incidentally those whom I projected into the old Naples that still survives and into the countries of the Third World — if *today* they are human garbage it means that they were potentially the same *then*; so they were imbeciles forced to be adorable; solid criminals forced to be pathetic; useless, vile creatures forced to be innocent and saintly,

etc. The collapse of the present implies the collapse of the past. Life is a heap of insignificant and ironical ruins.

(b) While all this was going on my critics, whether pained or contemptuous, had idiotic 'duties' which they continued to impose, as I was saying; they were 'duties' connected with the struggle for progress, improvement, liberalization, tolerance, collectivism, etc. They did not notice that degradation took place precisely through a falsification of their values. And now they look as if they were satisfied. They find that Italian society has *undoubtedly* improved, that it has become more democratic, more tolerant, more modern, etc. They do not notice the avalanche of crime that submerges Italy; they relegate this phenomenon to the news columns of the papers and deny it any importance. They do not notice that there is no break in continuity between those who are technically criminals and those who are not, and that the model of insolence, lack of humanity, lack of pity, is identical for the whole mass of youth. They do not notice that in Italy there is a real curfew — that the night is deserted and sinister as in the darkest centuries of the past; but this they do not experience: they stay at home, no doubt satisfying the modernity of their consciousness with the aid of television. They do not notice that television, and perhaps worse, compulsory education, has degraded all youths and boys into being the worst type of second-rate, hard-to-please, complex-ridden, racist bourgeoisie; but they look on that as an unpleasant state of affairs which will certainly be resolved — as if an anthropological mutation were reversible. They do not see that sexual liberation, far from bringing ease and happiness to young people, has made them unhappy, shut off, and consequently stupidly presumptuous and aggressive. But that is something they do not wish to know about because they care nothing for young people.

(c) Outside Italy in the 'developed' countries — especially in France — the game has been up for some time. For some time the people no longer exists anthropologically. For the French bourgeoisie the people consists of Moroccans or Greeks, Portuguese or Tunisians, who, poor things, can do no other than assume as quickly as possible the behaviour of the French bourgeoisie. And that is what intellectuals — whether of the Right or the Left, think in an identical way.

III

Anyway the time has come to confront the problem: where does my rejection of *Trilogy* lead me? It leads me to a process of adaptation.

I am writing these pages on 15 June 1975, the day of the parliamentary elections. I know that even if, as is very probable, there will be a victory of the Left, the nominal value of the vote will be one thing and its real value another. The first will demonstrate that there has been a unification of a modernized Italy in a positive sense; the second will demonstrate that Italy — with the exception of the traditional Communists, naturally — is now overall, a depoliticized country, a dead body whose reflexes are only mechanical. That is to say, Italy is merely living through a process of adaptation to its own degradation, from which it is nominally trying to liberate itself. *Tout va bien* — there are not masses of young people who either have criminal tendencies, or are neurotic or conformists to the point of madness, or have total intolerance. The nights are safe and quiet, marvellously Mediterranean; the kidnappings, the robberies, the capital executions, the millions of frauds and thefts are a matter for the news columns, etc. Everyone has adapted to this situation either by not wishing to notice anything or by an inert process which takes the drama out of the situation.

But I have to admit that even if one had noticed or dramatized the situation that by no means saves one from adaptation or acceptance. So I am adapting to degradation and accepting the unacceptable. I manoeuvre to rearrange my life. I am beginning to forget how things were *before*. The loved faces of yesterday are beginning to turn yellow. Little by little and without any more alternatives I am confronted by the present. I readjust my commitment to greater legibility (Salò?).

15 June — published in *Corriere della Sera* 9 November 1975

Pannella and dissent

Dear Pannella¹³, you are on the barricades and I am in my house in the country. That is to say, you have the advantage over me. But it would be moralistic were I to fear such an advantage (and both of us in any case detest moralizing in equal measure). Besides you

know how much I love you and how much I am on your side.

What is the context in which I write to you? That of a national political situation in which the Communist victory at the last elections has no other real sense than that of having immensely increased the responsibility of the Communists (we shall see why), while the defeat of the Christian Democrats has the result that in reality these elections have only one victor — Fanfani. In fact in a civilized country in which progress had not been mere development, that is to say the mechanical and irreversible destruction of values, the Christian Democratic losses would have been 10 or 20 per cent of the votes and not 2 per cent. To have contained the losses at 2 per cent is a success — Fanfani's success. That is why he still remains so strong and the left wing (?) of the Christian Democrats acts and threatens without avail. Besides, in two years the votes of the Fascists will certainly be won back because it is clear that Fanfani, the man of the Right, will continue the anti-Fascist tension. And everything will be as before — at least apparently so, because on the contrary everything will be changed in a radical and decisive way: in fact the Catholic votes will be Christian Democrat at last. That is to say, no longer guaranteed and controlled by the Catholic Church but directly by Economic Power. There is no doubt, in fact, that the peasant world is finished. And the eventual reshaping of agriculture will certainly not restore those religious values which — fortunately and unfortunately — have been lost for ever. That is why I said 'no longer Catholic but Christian Democrat'. Christian Democracy is an ideological cipher with the characteristics of the Mafia. Having its point of reference in the Church, like evil-smelling wax, it can model itself in accordance with the forms dictated by more direct reference to the real Economic Power — that is to say, the new mode of production (determined by enormous quantity and by superfluity) and its implicit hedonistic ideology (which is the exact opposite of religion).

With the old-fashioned cynicism of old-fashioned Catholics the Christian Democratic bosses, imperturbably and by now consciously, accept and assimilate the cynicism of the new capitalist revolution (the first great revolution of the Right) and that makes them perfectly new and modern, the newest, most modern of all.

From the anthropological point of view — that is to say, as far as the foundation of a new culture is concerned — this new capitalist revolution demands from men with no links with the past (the habit of saving money and moralism) that they should live as far as the quality of life, of behaviour and values is concerned, in a state of what one might call weightlessness: a state which allows them to accord to consumption and the satisfaction of its hedonistic demands the privilege of being the only possible existential act.

Naturally — by one of those curious and shocking contradictions which in reality make up history — it is precisely this reduction of man to an automaton (which is often unpleasant and ridiculous because of the substantial loss of dignity — or rather of the dignity which for good or ill he traditionally had) — it is precisely this degrading reduction, I repeat, which brings with it the demand for an advance in the sense of demystification, of democratization and indeed of progress. But I have repeated a thousand times: it is a question of a democratization, of a demystification, of a progress, which are purely *appearances*. Names not things. Which means things that do not yet have a name.

The Christian Democrat bosses and all the other men of power pride themselves on this demystification, this democratization, this progress, which is taking place — which ‘accompany’ a development which is in reality monstrous and destructive.

Even the Communists have come to believe — or pretend to believe to the point where they truly believe with unjustified faith in the appearances of demystification, of democratization, and of progress, which accompany the objective improvement in the standard of living of the workers. That is why I said that their responsibility has increased enormously. The expectation of those who voted for the PCI¹⁴ for the first time, thus guaranteeing the great victory, is first and foremost practical and economic (Communists, help us to bring a little order and morality into progress); but it is also, so to speak, an anthropological expectation, which is incidentally unconscious (Communists, help us to know *what sort of men* we are). This second expectation cannot but force the Communists to observe critically, with the undiplomatic lucidity of analysis, what men essentially are and to what extent their way of life has been

determined by that ‘first, true and great revolution of the Right’, which is what the new mode of production consists of.

How can one oppose this new mode of production? What attitude can one adopt in the face of tertiary industries and of superfluous goods?

Meanwhile what has been, has been — that is to say, what is, is; and irreversibly so. One must adapt oneself to what is called reality in order to be able to settle scores with it. This reality has easily recognizable characteristics because their violence has a deadly vitality which spreads over everything: loss of traditional values (however we care to judge them), total and totalizing embourgeoisement, the offsetting of an ostentatious and meaningless democratic urge against the acceptance of consumption; the offsetting of an ostentatious and meaningless demand for tolerance against the most degrading and maddening conformism.

Now, dear Pannella, there are people like us who continue to act under the ‘inert’ pressure of civil necessity which we became conscious of ten years ago — who fight because of a sincere democratic urge and in the name of real tolerance. Ten years or so ago, however, the meanings of the words ‘obedience’ and ‘disobedience’ were profoundly different. The word ‘obedience’ still referred to that terrible sense which it had in the centuries of counter-reformation clericalism, of petty-bourgeois moralizing, of Fascism; while the word ‘disobedience’ still meant that marvellous feeling which impelled one to rebel against all that.

All this, moreover, contrary to any logic we call historical, was swept away not by the rebellion of the ‘disobedient’ but by a new urge on the part of the ‘obedient’ — the first true, great revolution of the Right.

Counter-reformism, clericalism, petty-bourgeois morality, Fascism, are left-overs which above all annoy the new power. Are we fighting against these ‘left-overs’? Is it the laws of these ‘left-overs’ that we disobey?

Note that the most intransigent characteristic of the ‘first true great revolution of the Right’ consists in its destructive power — its first demand is to clear away any ‘moral’ universe that stops it from expanding.

Let us look at the example of crime in Italy. This is not an analysis of something marginal. It is not a matter of a world apart,

to be left to the news pages. Italian crime is an impressive phenomenon and a primary one in the context of the new conditions of life in Italy. Not only are the true criminals a 'mass' but what is more important, the mass of Italian youth *tout court* (with the exception of small élites and, in general, the young people who have joined the PCI) is now made up of people with criminal tendencies; in other words, of those hundreds of thousands of young people who suffer from the loss of values of one culture and have not yet found within themselves the values of a 'new culture' (as we conceive of it) or else accept with ostentation and violence, on the one hand the values of the 'culture of consumption' (which we reject) and, on the other, the values of a progressive spirit which is purely verbal.

Well, for all these youths the 'model' of the 'disobedient' young person applies. There is no one among them who considers himself 'obedient'. In reality, semantically, the words have turned their meaning upside down and exchanged them; in so far as anyone assents to the destructive ideology of the new mode of production and believes himself to be 'disobedient' (and behaves as such) he is in reality 'obedient'; while one who is a dissenter from the destructive ideology mentioned above (and, in so far as he believes in the values which the new capitalism wishes to destroy, is 'obedient') is for that reason, in reality, 'disobedient'.

The young people of 1968 have already furnished a model of 'disobedience' (lack of respect, mockery, contempt for compassion, the incarnation of ideological hooliganism) which today is really valid only for common criminals, who are a mass, and for the masses of those potential criminals who are always those, as I was saying, who have recently suffered a loss of values (of the *proletarian* troops of the SS).

'Destruction' is definitely the dominant 'sign' of this model of false 'disobedience' of which the old 'obedience' now consists.

That is why I am writing to you. You must bring yourself up-to-date semantically with the language you use. You must no longer call it your 'disobedience' but your 'obedience' or better still, if you like 'new obedience' and offer yourself as a model of it. You must not... Must not? Forgive me, you must attribute to this 'must' and 'must not' a sense which is only that of passion and solidarity. To make myself understood better I shall turn back to the two current 'examples'.

During the last two weeks the 'mass of Italians with criminal tendencies' has had two cases to consider — unconsciously and clumsily as is its wont. The first is 'a case of disobedience', that of Sergeant Sotgiu (protest at the living conditions of non-commissioned officers). The second 'a case of obedience', police officer Rizzi (suicide following the escape of a prisoner entrusted to him and in whom he had placed his trust).

The first enjoyed the utmost popularity: it was recognized by everyone; it was approved by everyone, including the army. I like Sergeant Sotgiu very much. I here declare my sympathy for him and (even though he does not need it) my solidarity. But I have to raise an objection: he based his protest on the assertion that even air-force sergeants and, I suppose, regular sergeants and soldiers in general, are 'human beings like the rest', but here he begs the question. Are the so-called 'rest' really 'human beings'? Is the anthropological mutation which is taking place not turning them by chance into 'sub-humans'?

Police officer Rizzi was undoubtedly even more 'human' than Sotgiu. But his sense of duty, his faith in others as 'human beings', in short, his 'obedience', lacked a consensus; it did not present itself in any way as an exemplary value or, better still, as the 'universal form' of a value. It is clear that even as an idea obedience does not enjoy any popularity. But if there is someone who has disobeyed, in effect, everything that constitutes reality as power conceiving of it today, it is police officer Rizzi. He opposed reality in the name of everything that has been brutally destroyed by that reality. Because 'destruction' is, I repeat, the dominant mark of the new power.

In conclusion, the Italy of today has been destroyed exactly as was the Italy of 1945. Indeed the destruction is still more serious, because we do not find ourselves among the ruins, however distressing, of houses and monuments, but among the ruins of values, humanistic values and what is more important popular values.

As in 1945 the men who today have power in Italy — not only because of the destruction they have caused but above all because of the baseness of their ends and the stupid lack of awareness with which they have operated — would be worthy of a new Piazzale Loreto¹⁵. Fortunately and unfortunately there will not be one. Yet it is clear that today what it is important to define and to live

is 'obedience to future and better laws', similar to that obedience to which, after Piazzale Loreto, the Resistance gave birth — along with the consequent will to 'reconstruct'. To lay the foundations for the possibility of a similar type of 'obedience' and of a similar desire to 'reconstruct' is the true new and great role of the PCI. But it is yours too — and of the Radicals — and of every single intellectual, every man who is alone and gentle by nature.

Corriere della Sera, 18 July 1975

Drugs — a real Italian tragedy

To anyone who does not take drugs, someone who does is 'different'. And as such he is generally stripped of humanity either through racist hatred, which those who are 'different' attract, or through possible understanding or sympathy. In relationships with those who are 'different', intolerance and tolerance are the same thing.

It has to be said, however, that while the intolerant believe that the difference of the different has no explanation and therefore merits only hatred, the tolerant often ask themselves, more or less sincerely, what the reasons for the 'difference' are.

Now both I and my readers are 'tolerant' people; is there any doubt about that? So the question I pose is this: 'Why do those "different people" who are drug-users take drugs?'

There is undoubtedly an explanation which applies to individuals — psychology. If without moralizing or sentimentality or complicity I talk to and analyse an individual drug-user I have immediately a concrete life to examine: its childhood, its parents, its bad side, etc. So that modicum of psychological knowledge which every intellectual has access to is sufficient to make some sort of diagnosis; but that diagnosis is constantly the same: the death-wish. This individual goal, which may often be a conscious one, throws a retroactive light from below on the whole individuality under analysis, which is thus made profoundly coherent: a unique totality standing on its own. The 'difference' is always inaccessible.

But if the relationship to the individual drug-user does not provide what one might call openings, has no context (and the excessive concretization of a human 'case', as always, eludes history) the relationship to the mass of drug-users or rather to the phenomenon of drugs can, on the contrary, be talked about, rationalized, historicized.

As far as my own and very limited experience goes, what I feel I know about the phenomenon of drugs is that they are always a surrogate. And to be precise, a surrogate for culture. Put like this the matter is undoubtedly too straightforward, simple and vague. But the complications arise when things are looked at more closely. In average cases — and there are very many — drugs serve to fill a void caused precisely by the death-wish: a void which is therefore a cultural one. One needs a great deal of vitality to love culture. Because culture, in the specific, or rather the class sense, is a possession; and nothing demands a fiercer or madder energy than the desire for possession. Those without this energy, even at a minimum level, give up. And since in general, we are talking of an individual destined because of his traumas and sensibility, to belong to the specific culture of the élite, there opens up around him that cultural void, which he incidentally desperately desires (so as to be able to die) — a void which he fills with the surrogate of drugs. The effect of drugs, then, mimics rational knowledge by means of an experience which is, so to speak, aberrant but analogous to it.

Even at a higher level one finds something similar: there are writers and artists who take drugs. Why do they do it? They too, I believe, do it to fill a gap; but this time it is not simply a case of a cultural void but rather of a lack of compulsion and imagination. In this case the drug serves to replace 'grace' with despair, style with manner. I am not passing judgment: I am making a statement. There are some periods when the greatest artists are the most desperate mannerists.

The reader will certainly have noted that up to now I have been talking about the phenomenon of drugs in the same terms as I could have used ten or twenty years ago — not to say a century ago.

I have spoken of a group of individuals who, for their own good reasons, have wanted to get lost, to make 'the great refusal', by renouncing the wide and comforting enjoyment of the living

values of a culture and the attractions of that objective possession in concrete and individual cases. I have, in fact, been talking about the specific culture of the élite, of a class.

But the word 'culture' means not only the specific culture of the élite, of a class; it also applies above all (according to the scientific use made of it by ethnologists, anthropologists, the best sociologists) to the knowledge and the way of life of a country in its totality or else to the historical nature of a people, together with the infinite series of often unwritten and often quite unconscious norms, which determine its view of reality and regulate its behaviour.

Now there are periods in history where there is no space for drugs — or rather that space is nothing more nor less than the 'internal' cultural void of individuals who have decided to anticipate their own death by that void and to accelerate it with the cultural surrogate of drugs. One of the periods in which there was no space for drugs was, for example, the times which we recently and seemingly so fortunately have emerged from: the period of clerico-fascist repression (the twenty years of Fascism and the thirty years of Christian Democracy). During that time — I am speaking of Italy (I am still to my shame a student of Italy and of its dialects) — there persisted among the ruled — that is to say, for practical purposes, in a country which had not had a revolution, in which the ruling class was numerically an oligarchy (the Vatican, the great industries of the North and little else) and the middle classes were merely great plebeian masses on a scarcely higher economic level — there persisted, I say, throughout the whole Italian nation, which was peasant and paleo-industrial, a culture, or rather a totality of separate cultures, in which the values and models were extremely solid and the 'tradition' exclusive.

The repression of this nation by the clerico-fascist powers, which followed one another, consisted in giving an official meaning (which was therefore idiotic, alien) to the real values of that popular tradition and imposing them by police methods.

In such a historical situation the phenomenon of drugs could only be a strictly middle-class phenomenon; drugs could only be a surrogate for a specific élitist class culture. The people had no connection with this. Its 'culture' was not under discussion nor in crisis; it was as it had been for hundreds, not to say thousands of

years (every popular tradition is in reality trans-national).

It is true that even today if I go to Piazza Navona and meet a drug-user who saunters past with a bored and vaguely sinister air, I detect in him characteristically middle-class unhappiness and refusal; and I curse the mysterious circumstance which has forced this particular individual to smoke hashish instead of reading a book. Yet this meeting in Piazza Navona although, so to speak, ritual, is not typical. It is infinitely more typical to meet a drug-user in a bar in the Piazza del Cinquecento¹⁶ or in Quarticciolo¹⁷.

What do I mean by that? I mean that the phenomenon of drugs has radically changed its character compared with what it was ten or twenty years ago. It has become a phenomenon that affects all social classes (even if its model remains middle-class).

So we are living at a time in which the 'space' (or void) for drugs has increased enormously. Why? Because culture in the anthropological sense, 'total' culture, has been destroyed in Italy or is in the process of being destroyed. Therefore its traditional models and values (I use the word traditional in its best sense) either no longer count or are beginning not to count any more. For example, the two 'values' of 'God' and 'family', which are two idiotic values when priests or moralists (possibly in uniform) speak in their name. They are actually two values *tout court* and when they form the basis of a popular culture, they no longer count any more today; one can no longer utter them to any young person — far less to any drug-user. The slump in the prestige of all values of an entire culture could only produce a kind of anthropological mutation, and cause a 'total' crisis. All social classes are involved and the loss of values affects everyone, although those most affected are the youth of the poorer classes, precisely because they live in a culture which was more secure and more absolute than that of the youth of the ruling classes.

I see that in *Unità* (20 July 1975) they tend to 'limit' the phenomenon of drugs basically with the aim of making it less dramatic or to throw the blame — following an all too classical pattern — on to society. In reality the phenomenon of drugs is a phenomenon within a phenomenon; and it is this second and vaster phenomenon that matters; it is, indeed, a real and major historical tragedy. It is a question, I repeat, of the loss of the values of an entire culture (unless one is to 'adapt', which would incidentally be tragically the right thing to do, and to consider

consumerism a 'culture').

The great phenomenon of the uncompensated loss of values, which includes the extreme mass phenomenon of the use of drugs, therefore affects all the young people in our country (with the exception, as I have often said, of those who have made the only elementary cultural choice possible, the young people who have become members of the PCI). Taken as a whole, young Italians constitute a social calamity which is perhaps no longer curable; they are either unhappy or criminal (or have criminal tendencies), extremists or conformists; and all that in a measure unknown until today. Since drug-users, so to speak, place themselves in the vanguard of this irrevocable determination on the part of young people to live a void and to render themselves inaccessible — that is to say, not to accept anything any more which one can discuss with them (unless it is a question of sub-cultural themes) — for this reason, I maintain, I have no tender feelings towards young people who use drugs. On the contrary, I tend to feel a strong aprioristic antipathy for them. On the one hand, there is their blackmail and presumption in carrying out a sub-cultural act which they elevate into a myth; on the other, there is my personal impatience with the acceptance of flight, renunciation, unavailability.

That is why when Pannella made his gesture of 'disobedience' in the direction of the legalization of soft drugs, I suddenly thought of at least ten other reasons for making a similar gesture of disobedience — naturally outflanking Pannella on the left. Some time or other I shall say what these reasons are. But meantime I have to say that I have come to understand why the fight for the legalization of drugs (even hard drugs, as far as I am concerned) is central and not marginal to a fight for real tolerance. Why?

Almost all my intellectual colleagues declare themselves to be convinced that Italy has improved in some way. In reality Italy is a horrible place; all one has to do is go abroad for a day and then return. I had a measure of the abyss in which Italians writhe like worms when I came back from Barcelona of all places — a city of breathtaking *Angst*: the past is suffocating. And I am talking above all of the Italy of the young. So if there is someone who notices this state of affairs — perhaps subconsciously and perhaps by way of sub-cultural myths — and wishes to die, how can a

society which offers him such a tragic and disgusting spectacle stop him?

Corriere della Sera, 24 July 1975

Outside the Palace¹⁸

Readers must forgive me if I start off 'journalistically' from an existential situation. I can scarcely do otherwise.

I am on a bathing beach at Ostia between the morning shift and the afternoon one. Around me there is the crowd of bathers in a silence like thunder and vice versa. The season is in full swing. As for me, busy recovering from the insane darkness of the dubbing-theatre, I have *L'Espresso*¹⁹ in my hand. I have read nearly all of it as if it were a book.

I look at the crowd and ask myself: 'Where is this anthropological revolution I write so much about for people consumed by the art of not knowing?' And I answer myself: 'There they are'. In fact the crowd around me, instead of being the plebeian and dialect-speaking crowd of ten years ago, a wholly popular one, is a crowd of the most middle-class kind, happy to be that way.

Ten years ago I loved this crowd; today it disgusts me. And I dislike the young people in particular (with a pain and a sympathy which in the end cancels out the disgust); these imbecilic and presumptuous youths who are convinced that they have had their fill of what the new society has to offer them; indeed to be almost venerable examples of it.

And I am here, alone, defenceless, thrown into the midst of this crowd, irretrievably mixed up with it, its life displaying its 'qualities' as in a laboratory. Nothing shields me, nothing defends me. Many years ago, in the epoch preceding this one, I myself chose this existential situation and now I find myself there through inertia — because the passions admit of no solutions or alternatives. Besides where is one to live physically?

As I was saying, I have *L'Espresso* in my hand. I look at it and get a general impression: 'How different they are from me, those people who write about the same things that interest me. But where are they, where do they live?' An unexpected idea, a

lightning-flash, confronts me with words which are, I believe, not only clear but anticipate my answer: 'They live in the Palace'.

There is not a page, not a line, not a word in all *L'Espresso* and probably not in the whole of *Panorama*,¹⁹ the whole of *Il Mondo*²⁰, of all the dailies and weeklies in which so many pages are given over to news which does not refer solely and exclusively to what goes on 'in the Palace'. Only what goes on in 'the Palace' seems worthy of attention and interest; all the rest is minutiae, a swarming mass, shapeless, second-rate.

And naturally of what goes on 'in the Palace'; the lives of the most powerful people there, those who occupy the peaks of power. To be 'serious' means, apparently, to be concerned with these people, their intrigues, their alliances, their conspiracies, their strokes of luck and, finally, *also* with the way in which they interpret the reality that exists 'outside the Palace' — that boring reality which, in the last analysis everything depends on, even if it is unsmart and unserious to bother with it.

In the last two or three years this concentration of interest on the summits of power and on top people has become exclusive to the point of obsession. It has never happened before to this extent. Italian intellectuals have always been courtiers — have always lived 'in the Palace'. But they have also been populists, neo-realists and even revolutionary extremists — something which created in them the need to be concerned with 'people'. Now if they are concerned with 'people' it is through the public opinion organizations Doxa or Pragma (remember these names!). For example, it is not in good taste to bother about housewives, to mention whom may at best induce a strong sense of good humour; housewives, it seems, can only be comic characters. And indeed *L'Espresso* does talk about housewives — those enigmatic and distant creatures lost in the depths of daily life — because a statistical analysis by Doxa or Pragma has discovered that their vote was extremely important for the Communist victory at the last elections; a fact which made the Palace shake and caused tremors in the hierarchies of power.

Housewives live in the news, Fanfani or Zaccagnini²¹ in history. But between the former and the latter an immense gulf opens up — a 'diachronism' which is probably the harbinger of the Apocalypse.

What is this gulf, this 'diachronism' due to? Why is news —

which from 1945 on was always so important, now relegated to a back-water, to a mental ghetto? Why is it analysed, exploited, manipulated, in every possible way suggested by the laws of consumption but is not linked to 'serious history', not that is to say made meaningful?

Why are thefts, kidnappings, juvenile crime, what are effectively curfews, robberies, capital punishments, gratuitous homicides, in concrete terms 'excluded' from logic and certainly never linked one with the other? Two seventeen-year-old boys with shots from a revolver mortally wounded one of their contemporaries at Ladispoli (the holiday resort of the underworld) because he did not give them his motorcycle's sparking-plugs which they wanted. And *Paese Sera*²² heads its piece on this news item: 'Absurd incident at Ladispoli'.

Absurd perhaps in 1965. Today it is normal behaviour. That piece should be headed 'Normal behaviour at Ladispoli'. Why do we find this anachronism in *Paese Sera*? Do the journalists of *Paese Sera* not know that it is the exception to find a seventeen-year-old in the working-class districts of Rome who does not have a revolver? Why did no paper mention an exchange of automatic fire over a Porsche which took place on a couple of evenings at Tormarancio? Why did no paper mention the revolver shots fired at the legs of a 'young boy who practises nudism' by a fifteen-year-old boy who shouted at him: 'Next time I'll fire into your mouth'. I mean — why does the press pass over in silence thousands of crimes like these (thefts, the pickings of pockets are innumerable) which take place every night in the great cities, and select only those about which it cannot decently remain silent? Why, into the bargain, does it render them less dramatic, enforcing an acceptance of them on the part of public opinion?

But I don't want to make matters worse and pass for a man of law and order. Let it be quite clear that the 'underworld' interests me only in so far as its representatives are humanly mutated in comparison with those of ten years ago. And this is not something incidental. It is part of a totality, of an anthropological revolution which also includes the mutation of housewives . . .

The real question is: Why is there this 'diachronism' between the news and the mental universe of those who occupy themselves with political and social problems? And why, within the news, this practice of 'keeping phenomena apart'?

What happens 'outside the Palace' is qualitatively, that is to say, historically, different, from what happens 'inside the Palace', and infinitely newer, terrifyingly more advanced.

That is why the men of power live and move 'inside the Palace' as do those who describe them — since they too must logically be 'inside the Palace' to do so — live and move like atrocious, ridiculous puppetlike idols of a cult of the dead. In so far as they are powerful they are already dead, because what 'made' their power — namely a certain way of life of the Italian people — no longer exists; so their life is a puppet-like series of spasms.

If one leaves 'the Palace' one finds oneself 'inside' something else: the penitentiary of consumerism. And the chief characters in this penitentiary are the young.

Strange to say, while it is true that the men of power, wearing their clerical-fascist power like a ridiculous mask, have been left behind by reality, it is also true that the men of the opposition wearing like a ridiculous mask their progressive views and their tolerance have also been left behind by reality.

A new form of economic power (that is to say, the new real soul — if Moro²³ will permit the expression — of Christian Democracy, which is no longer a clerical party because the Church is no longer there) has achieved a fictitious form of progress and tolerance. Young people who have been born and have grown up in this period of false progressiveness and false tolerance are paying for the falsity (the cynicism of the new power has destroyed everything) in the most atrocious way. They are all around me; a look of imbecilic irony in their eyes, an air of stupid satisfaction, an offensive and inarticulate hooliganism — when it is not pain and apprehension almost like that of novices — with which they live through the real intolerance of these tolerant years.

In the same number of *L'Espresso* that I was telling you about, Moravia²⁴ reviews a film that talks about a respectable father who has a rebellious son, a murderer, etc. He concludes — in absolute coherence with everything that he is — that a father like that in a similar situation can only 'try to understand the son'; not make tragedies out of it, not kill him, not kill himself, but try to understand him. And when he has understood him? I ask myself — after he has carried out this magnificent act of moral liberalism? Admittedly the understanding of which Moravia speaks is a

rational, that is to say, a Western, way of understanding, and therefore brings with it the need for subsequent action. Let us admit that this father — having got himself into the frame of mind of an entomologist who studies an insect — finally succeeds in understanding his son and finds that he is an imbecile, presumptuous, uncertain, aggressive, vain, with criminal leanings — what should he do? Be content with having understood him? But to content oneself with having understood implies detachment and indifference. It is action that counts. And a loving father acts. He is fated to be left dead in the dust like a neglected Laius²⁵ — no other possibility exists. So understanding is the least of it. And action can only consist in attacking the son so as to be able to remain in the end dead in the dust. I look at the sons, I try to understand them, and finally I act; I act by telling them what I believe to be the truth. 'You live in the chronicle of news, which is true history, because — even if it is not defined, accepted, spoken about — it is infinitely more advanced than our smug history, because the chronicle of reality lies in what goes on "outside the Palace" and not in partial interpretations of it or, worse still, in its dismissal.'

This chronicle aims to overwhelm you in a crisis of values because the power which we, after all, have created has destroyed all preceding cultures so as to create from them a culture of its own made only of production and consumption and therefore of false happiness. The loss of values has thrown you into a void which has caused you to lose sense of direction and has degraded you as a human being. The masses to which you belong is a 'mass' with criminal tendencies *to whom one can no longer talk in the name of anything*. Your few educated élites — Socialists or Radicals or avant-garde Catholics — are suffocated on the one hand by conformism and on the other by despair. The only ones who still fight for a culture and in the name of a culture, in so far as it is a question of a 'different' culture projected into the future and therefore from the beginning something very different from the lost cultures (the bourgeois one of class and the archaic one of the people), are the Young Communists. But for how much longer will they be able to continue to defend their dignity?

Corriere della Sera, 1 August 1975

Subject for a film about a policeman

Everybody read about it without paying too much attention. About a month ago a policeman killed himself because the prisoner who had been placed in his charge escaped, so betraying the policeman's trust.

A friend of the policeman carried out an investigation on his own, in his free time, and after a long period of lying in wait he succeeded in capturing the escaped man. In this way the shade of the young man who had committed suicide was — at least in the sight of his friend — partly placated.

Elsewhere (*Corriere della Sera*, 18 July 1975) I have called this an episode of obedience. Obedience to a series of norms and therefore of values which define a culture that has now disappeared (almost totally, although only within the last few years). These norms and values are traditional. That is to say, they really belong to a popular universe which, by means of these values, had created a way of life which had continued to function for centuries. At the same time, however, such norms and values had been taken over by the men of power and had been alienated and reimposed by means of police repression of a clerico-fascist nature. (This was a case of an operation not lacking in coherence since even in the framework of the reality of popular life during its moment of autonomy, such norms and values were of a religious and paternalistic nature.)

Now, I repeat, these norms and values have collapsed because the culture that expressed them, and was expressed by them, has been destroyed. They remain 'crystallized' in the reactionary and surviving wing of clerico-fascist power. But in fact no one believes in them any more — neither the priests nor the generals. Their presence is still felt, however, potent and fascinating, a hang-over from the recent past whether as a positive popular spectre or as a horrendous clerico-fascist one. Among other things, we still believe that they govern our lives (our ideas about reality and our behaviour).

The policeman who committed suicide, Vincenzo Rizzi by name, still truly believed in them. He came from a poor and decent Southern family where he had assimilated those norms and values in their natural innocence and had then as a police cadet been educated in accordance with them. The police must

naturally pretend that these norms and values are still normal currency. Otherwise how can they talk to their cadets?

So Vincenzo Rizzi was an 'obedient' boy. Something absolutely original in a world of 'disobedience': 'rhetorical disobedience' (the kind created and manipulated by the ruling power as a contradiction of itself and, above all, as a guarantee of modernity, which is absolutely essential for consumption) and 'real disobedience' (that of scattered groups of revolutionaries and of an enormous mass of criminals).

So I consider the word 'disobedience' to be discredited, while the word 'obedience' has to be reassessed. The story of the policeman, Vincenzo Rizzi, is therefore in my eyes a moving and exemplary story.

But can a man, a boy, maintain intact within himself and indeed almost crystallized, a 'culture', an entire system of values? When naturally, one is speaking of a culture in the anthropological sense of a system of values capable of determining one's way of life down to the last physical detail?

Can the whole world be 'mutated' and yet remain 'unmutated' inside one person or certain specific groups of persons (mostly policemen or soldiers who are precisely the only ones to preserve a certain ancient Italian grace)?

No, it is not possible. In what way then was the policeman, Vincenzo Rizzi, 'contaminated' by that 'false obedience', which is in reality the 'true obedience' to the rules of the new power?

The boy, Cosimo Marra, that is to say, the policeman who was Vincenzo Rizzi's friend and his avenger, when giving some interviews (not so far as I can discover to important papers, that is, papers belonging to the Palace, but to more lowly papers, which feed on news items according to a formula) was naturally reticent about the conduct of his friend. Either out of tact or diplomacy, he had not wished to interfere. Marra does not have the passionate and apprehensive innocence of Rizzi; there is in him a certain typically petty-bourgeois consciousness which tends to put him on the side of his superiors. It is not for nothing that he is preparing to be admitted to a course for non-commissioned officers. One might say that, for him, the prime value is that Order which is the only one in whose name a reactionary voice might be raised (given that God and the Family, etc, have collapsed and perhaps, so far as the popular world is

concerned, Honour too). In Marra's face one can perceive — I write as a film-maker — at least from the only photograph I have been able to see, that vague pallor and hostility which fatally deform the faces of those who consider themselves defenders of Order. But he is young, a boy, little more than an adolescent. His adventurous act as an avenger makes him appear stronger than he really is or is likely to be.

From his words there emerges quite indirectly — almost like snatches of a dream — how Vincenzo Rizzi passed his last hours.

At this point — apropos of these last hours — one cannot avoid an analysis of the prisoner (even if it too is dreamlike), the man who escaped and was recaptured. He does not belong to the new criminal community. He is one of the old community. He can certainly speak the old dialect, the forgotten jargon. Probably he is witty, not at all antipathetic, or violent, and he knows the old code of the underworld well — a code which incidentally is very like any other code of any popular culture.

I am also discussing this prisoner on the basis of a photograph, a single photograph. That is to say, he reveals himself to me by means of a somatic language, a language of physical presence, of connotations...

On his basic structure, which is ancient not to say archaic — the structure of a young man from the underworld — something new has been deposited like mud or excrement, something that belongs to the new underworld. His hair is sophisticated, full of sinister and vaguely indecent codes; in his eyes there is the mocking gleam of the well-heeled, together with a look that indicates an obsessive resolution (which in his archetypes was both madder and more noble). His dress follows fashion menacingly — or perhaps by now it is natural to him — the fashion of those younger than himself, who are aphasic and as wicked as vipers.

So Piero Merletti is a person from the pre-consumerist anthropological world in the process of degeneration. Just like, *mutatis mutandis*, the young avenger, Cosimo Marra — all this being deduced from photographs and the few real clues that peep out from between the lines of what they say. The escaped prisoner and the avenger friend, the two persons bound in brotherhood by the young man who committed suicide, are much nearer to us, much more real and recognizable.

It should be noted that until shortly before he killed himself, Vincenzo Rizzi was no less a friend of Pietro Merletti than of Cosimo Marra. For the reasons I have already stated he found it possible to have an understanding with both of them: the fact that they all belonged to a popular culture (peasant and sub-proletariat) which had survived and which was pre-consumerist. The fact that Pietro Merletti, on the one hand, and Cosimo Marra, on the other, were partially 'contaminated' by the modern world perhaps constituted yet another reason for their fascination for the naive Vincenzo Rizzi.

Why in fact was Pietro Merletti able to trick him? For the same reason as Cosimo Marra was able to avenge him. That is to say, because of their knowledge of what is important in the preconsumerist world: honour, trust, friendship, homo-eroticism, virility, dignity. In the name of all these Pietro Merletti was able to betray him and Cosimo Marra to avenge him.

So during Vincenzo Rizzi's last hours — as they appear in snatches in the words of Cosimo Marra — what played a determining role were the values in which Vincenzo Rizzi believed (honour, trust, friendship, homo-eroticism, virility, dignity), which Pietro Merletti knew and could therefore exploit.

Marra's words illuminate like a lightning flash a little meal consumed together by Vincenzo Rizzi and his prisoner in some trattoria or other in Centocelle, the very thought of which makes one's heart bleed. That spaghetti, that drop of bad wine, must have appeared in the last moments of Vincenzo Rizzi's life as an intolerable surrender to the base instincts, a criminal orgy.

But it is not only the values I have mentioned above that determine the relationship between policeman and prisoner — there is also sex. So enter a new character, a woman called Calicchia. If I am not mistaken she was the proprietress of the miserable trattoria in Centocelle of which I have spoken. Of her I know nothing. I do not even have her photograph in front of me. To imagine her I have to invent her totally. And our imagination is always conventional. But it doesn't matter: Calicchia's role is symbolic and ideological. And that implies a certain conventional abstraction. In fact she is not a woman — as she would be in a neo-realist film and therefore in the reality that the neo-realist films mirror — but *the* woman. I presume incidentally that she, as well as her friend, Pietro Merletti, is a character from the

preconsumerist culture who is in the process of adapting and therefore of degenerating — degenerating by imitating girls younger than herself.

The preconsumerist society needed strong and therefore chaste men. The consumerist society on the other hand needs weak and therefore lecherous men. The myth of the woman shut away and alone (whose obligation of chastity implied the chastity of the man) has been replaced by the myth of the woman accessible and at hand, always available. The triumph of friendship between men and the erection has been replaced by the triumph of the couple and impotence. Young males are traumatized by the duty permissiveness imposes on them — that is to say, the duty always and freely to make love. At the same time they are traumatized by the disappointment which their 'sceptre' has produced in women who formerly either were unfamiliar with it or made it the subject of myths while accepting it supinely. Besides, the education for, and initiation into, society which formerly took place in a platonically homosexual ambience is now because of precocious couplings heterosexual from the onset of puberty. But the woman is still not in a position — given the legacy of thousands of years — to make a free pedagogic contribution; she still tends to favour codification. And this today can only be a codification more conformist than ever, as is desired by bourgeois power, whereas the old self-education, between men and men or between women and women, obeyed popular rules (whose sublime archetype remains Athenian democracy). Consumerism has therefore finally humiliated the woman by creating for her an intimidating myth. The young males who walk along the street laying a hand on the woman's shoulder with a protective air, or romantically clasping her hand, either make one laugh or cause a pang. Nothing is more insincere than the relationship to which that consumerist couple gives concrete expression.

Ten years ago, if in order to escape, the prisoner, Pietro Merletti, had suggested to his guard, Vincenzo Rizzi, the need to pass a couple of hours with his woman, Vincenzo Rizzi would have considered such a necessity to be quite unreal (indeed, to tell the truth, such a request would not even have entered the mind of either prisoner or guard). Chastity was part of man's destiny. Woman was a dream and dreams wait or are waited for. Coitus

would come in due time.

Today, on the other hand, by demonstrating the need to make love *hic et nunc* with his woman the prisoner was able to make an immediate breach in the heart of his friend the guard. He blackmailed him with a myth of the age of consumerism. He overpowered him with a display of terrorism to which the innocent Vincenzo Rizzi surrendered with all his heart, because in his ancient culture woman was *truly* a myth and he could not know that in the culture of the consumerist world this myth comes true in a false and cynical way; it is brutal conformism and not freedom. Seeing no gap between the two cultures, Vincenzo Rizzi thought that the attainment of a dream so difficult to attain in his old culture was miraculously easy to attain in the culture of the modern world. So instead of being Calicchia, a woman (who is waiting for her friend to serve his time in prison) but *woman* (who must be there ready and available in accordance with a collective decision) consumerism by one of its untransgressible rules caused the collapse of all the rules of a system of values, even if repressive, under which Vincenzo Rizzi lived so innocently and with such grace.

Naturally if I were to make a film about all this it would inevitably be a film that ended with the recommendation of a gold medal for the 'obedient' hero, Vincenzo Rizzi. On this point I would have no hesitation. In 1945 and again in 1965 there were a thousand reasons in the name of which a young man felt it his duty to die; it was therefore easier for him to do so. That a young man did so today is almost incredible. While we wait for a 'new obedience' it seems to me to be just to be moved by and to admire the 'form' of obedience.

Il Mondo 7 August 1975

The Christian Democrat bosses should be tried

Dear Ghirelli²⁶, I think the front page of *Il Giorno*²⁷ of 25 July 1975 will remain imprinted on my memory. Even typographically it was a special page — symmetrical and squared off like the text of a manifesto with a single image in the centre, also perfectly regular, formed by the massed panels of four photographs of four

powerful members of the Christian Democrat Party. Four — de Sade's number. In fact they looked like the photos of four executed men chosen from among the better ones by their relatives to put on tombstones. On the contrary it was the case not of a mournful event but of a relaunching, of a resurrection. These photographs in the centre of *Il Giorno's* monolithic page seemed in fact to suggest to the astonished reader that this was the true physical and human reality of four powerful figures in the Christian Democrat Party, that the jokes were over; beaming smiles and laughter of persons in power no longer disfigured their faces, nor did a crafty wink. The bad dream had faded in the bright light of morning. And here they were, their true selves. Serious, dignified, with no grimaces, no sneering grins, no demagoguery, without the ugliness of guilt, the shame of servility, or provincial ignorance. They had put on their double-breasted suits once more and their future as serious persons placed a kiss on their brows.

I would however be unjust if I did not add that *Il Giorno* was not the only paper to take on the role of reassuring the nation at this moment and of baptising in the name of general pacification the solution of rule by a four-party coalition (and the solution represented by Zaccagnini, that respectable gentleman). Even the *Corriere della Sera*, for example, showed the same feeling of relief. So did the rest of the Italian press — even the bourgeois press which is most disdainful in opposition.

What we can deduce from this is: that the whole Italian political world was, and is, ready to accept in substance the continuity of Christian Democrat power, either with a belief in miracles disguised as professional seriousness or with gratifying contempt.

Now when we come to know, or, better still, when some one tells the whole truth about power in the last few years, the madness of the Italian political commentators and of the Italian cultured élites will also be clear. and therefore their complicity.

In any case the 'truth about power' is already known but in the same way as 'the real state of the country' is known — that is to say, in terms of an interpretation which 'keeps phenomena apart' and in terms of an irrevocable decision in the minds of everyone concerned not to link them.

Not to continue to 'keep phenomena apart', thus making them

logical as parts of a single whole, would mean breaking a continuity which would certainly be dangerous. But do not let us anticipate.

Some weeks ago, you, dear Ghirelli, took on the task of running a political and cultural review. Such an undertaking has never been so difficult as in recent years because never has the distance between power — (which on page 63 I have called 'the Palace') and the country been so great. It is a case (I said) of a real historical disjunction which leads the Palace to react to stimuli which no longer correspond to real causes in the country. The mechanism for political decisions in the Palace seems to have gone mad; it obeys rules whose 'soul' (Moro) is dead.

But as I hinted, there is more to it than that. The crazed and putrefying phenomena of the Palace take place in water-tight compartments. It seems that each of these compartments, situated within the impenetrable power bases of that oligarchic mafia which, emerging from the depths of the most ignorant provincial life, has governed Italy for decades.

Each of these bosses assumes his own areas of responsibility — and thanks to this separation of responsibilities preserves the totality of power. What Andreotti is guilty of Fanfani is not; what Gronchi²⁸ is guilty of Segni is not, and so on and vice versa. No one has ever had the courage to embrace the totality with one glance.

At the same time, outside the Palace a country of fifty million inhabitants is undergoing the most profound cultural mutation in its history (which coincides with its first true unification), a mutation which at present degrades and defiles it. But here, too, our consciences as observers are stained by the unpardonable guilt of having (as I said) kept the phenomena of that degradation and deterioration 'apart' — of not having dared to embrace the whole with one glance.

I shall give you two tiny but typical examples:

(1) In connection with the 'keeping apart' of Palace phenomena here is an amusing story. After the famous night on which — unjustly incidentally — he was made a scapegoat, Fanfani gave vent to his feelings on an ungrateful protégé (I don't remember his name) who was part of what is vulgarly described as the 'swill bucket' of power. This man (it is Fanfani speaking) had long prostrated himself before the powerful secretary of the

Christian Democratic Party in order to get some ministerial post or other, had praised him in the most obscene way ('laying his jacket under my feet' are Fanfani's exact words). Finally Fanfani appointed his flatterer to the post he so ardently desired. So now we know how a public post at government level is allocated in Italy. Now if all that goes on, it means that either there is a parliamentary regime which does not function (in which case the extra-parliamentary opposition is right) or else it has to be made to function. But again do not let us anticipate. By not being upset by this impudent confession of Fanfani's (perhaps because of excessive contempt?) even the most informed observers have made themselves his accomplices; but what is worse, they have continued to refuse to consider the distribution of public offices as one of the many tiles that form a mosaic: they do not want to see that mosaic.

(2) In connection with the way that phenomena are 'kept apart' I recall along with other examples, the news of a conference on juvenile crime in Italy which appeared in the papers a short time ago. The data on juvenile criminality collected in that piece of news were terrifying. So much so as to entirely revolutionize one's ideas of the 'juvenile' in Italy. But here too 'juvenile crime' is only one of the tiles (indeed the pattern for one of the tiles) which make up the mosaic of reality. It cannot be looked at in its totality except at the cost of turning into stone.

Therefore as far as an observer is concerned, or an observation post like a review (such as the one you edit), (a) what goes on in the Palace and what goes on in the country are two separate realities, the links between which are merely mechanical and formal so that each goes its own way; (b) in these two different realities the disjunction that separates them is repeated in those phenomena which occur within them.

The prime cause of this separation between Palace and country and of the consequent separation of the phenomena within the Palace and within the country lies in the radical mutation in the 'mode of production' (enormous quantities, trans-national organization, a hedonistic function); the real new power to emerge has stepped over the men who up to now had served the old clerico-fascist power (leaving them to play the fool in the Palace) and has hurled itself on the country in order to carry out its premature acts of genocide.

You will say to me: 'This letter of yours seems a bit clumsy and repetitive. *Quandoquidem et Cato dormitat?*' Yes, it is true, but this is the end of the first part, the painstaking, accurate part of my letter. I am coming to the end of it and, being perfectly logical, it is also upsetting.

Other powers intervene in the mechanism I have described to you (Palace, Country, New Power): the Italian Communist and Socialist Parties, which are supposed to be free of this mechanism. And they ought to be free precisely because their interpretation of reality should be cultural and not pragmatic. By politicizing the whole it ought to be possible to see the totality and therefore the point from which to begin again.

Why then do the PCI and the PSI²⁹ refrain from any form of interpretation of the totality, however timid, and accept the first rule by which *all* Italian observers abide — the rule that one intervenes only phenomenon by phenomenon?

There are two possible hypotheses:

(1) The PSI and the PCI no longer have a cultural interpretation of reality, having allied themselves pragmatically and commonsensically with the Christian Democrats, accepting Progress together with everything democratic, tolerant, progressive (I maintain, falsely so) which follow in its wake. In that case the extraordinary suggestions which are being made from all quarters to the Christian Democrats to 'learn' from the PCI (particularly where its real relationship to the masses is concerned), are valid. And indeed, in that case the PCI would have something to teach the Christian Democrats, something fundamental: honesty.

(2) The PSI and the PCI still have their by now classic vision of a different interpretation of reality *but they do not use it*. And they do not use it because they would logically have to adopt extreme solutions.

What would these extreme solutions be? Those of the extremists perhaps?

Not exactly: that would not fit in with the methods of the PSI and especially of the PCI, methods by now well-established. These extreme measures would remain within the framework of the Constitution and of parliamentarianism; indeed they would (in line with a style which is, if anything, Radical) glorify the Constitution and parliamentarianism.

In conclusion, the PSI and the PCI should first of all (if my hypothesis is valid) institute a trial of the representatives of Christian Democracy who have governed the country these last thirty years (especially during the last ten). I am talking of a proper criminal trial in a court-room. Andreotti, Fanfani, Rumor³⁰ and at least a dozen other Christian bosses, including for correctness' sake a couple of Presidents of the Republic, should be dragged into the dock like President Nixon. Or rather not like Nixon who was saved by President Ford from a proper trial — let's keep a sense of proportion — but like Papadopoulos. Into the dock like Papadopoulos, and there accused of a vast number of crimes which I state only in moral terms (hoping in the possibility that sooner or later there will at least be a Russell Tribunal, which for once is committed and not merely conformist and celebratory): unworthiness, contempt for the citizen, manipulation of public funds, deals with oil firms, with bankers, complicity with the Mafia, high treason in the interest of a foreign power, collaboration with the CIA, illegal use of organizations like SID, responsibility for the massacres in Milan, Brescia³¹ and Bologna (at least in so far as they are guilty of being unable to punish those who carried them out), the destruction of the Italian countryside, responsibility for the anthropological degradation of the Italians (a responsibility all the graver for being unconscious), responsibility for the frightful conditions in schools, hospitals and all primary public institutions, responsibility for the savage abandonment of the countryside, for the savage explosion of mass culture and the mass media, responsibility for the decadence of the Church, and finally, and in addition to all the rest, for the distribution of public office to flatterers in a manner worthy of the Bourbons.

Without a criminal trial of this kind it is useless to hope that anything can be done for our country. It is clear, in fact, that the respectability of a few Christian Democrats (Moro, Zaccagnini) or the morality of the Communists is of no avail.

Il Mondo 28 August 1975

The Trial

So unworthiness, contempt for the citizen, manipulation of public funds, deals with oil firms, with bankers, complicity with the Mafia, high treason in the interest of a foreign power, collaboration with the CIA, illegal use of organizations like SID (military intelligence), responsibility for the massacres in Milan, Brescia and Bologna (at least in so far as they are guilty of being unable to punish those who carried them out), the destruction of the Italian countryside, responsibility for the anthropological degradation of the Italians (a responsibility all the graver for being unconscious), responsibility for the fearful condition of the schools, hospitals and all primary public institutions, responsibility for the savage abandonment of the countryside, for the savage explosion of mass culture and the mass media, responsibility for the decadence of the Church, and finally and in addition to all the rest, even for distribution of public office to flatterers in a manner worthy of the Bourbons.

That is the list, the 'moral' list of crimes by those who have governed Italy for the last thirty years and for the last ten in particular — crimes which should drag at least a dozen Christian Democrat bosses into the dock in a proper criminal trial like, to be precise, the trial of Papadopoulos and the other colonels.

Why do I keep on repeating 'in the last ten years'? Because it is precisely in the last ten years that a way of governing which is not only typical of but, I would say, natural to the history of Italy from the Unification onwards, has assumed the form of a crime or a series of crimes.

So I am not raising a question of morality here. The guilt of the Christian Democrat bosses who have to be dragged into the dock does not consist of their immorality (which is there) but in an error of political interpretation, in their judgment of themselves and of the power they undertook to serve — an error of political interpretation which has disastrous consequences for the life of our country.

I am alone here in the heart of the countryside — in true, well-chosen solitude. Here I have nothing to lose (and so can say everything) but I have nothing to gain either (and so have all the more reason to say everything). You can interpret as you wish my need for solitude, recalling perhaps the theories of Elias Canetti

(solitude is the typical condition of tyrants); but I would ask you not to deduce too much from a rhetorical device which I feel it necessary to resort to at this point.

Let us suppose that the picture of Andreotti or Fanfani, of Gava or Restivo³², sitting handcuffed among the *carabinieri*, is a metaphorical one. Let their trial be metaphorical, in order to make what I say comic rather than sublime (like any monologue) and above all to make it didactically more clear.

What would be revealed to the consciousness of Italian citizens by such a trial — over and above, of course, the well-founded nature of the crimes set out above in ethical if not juridical terms?

Something essential to the existence of Italian citizens would be revealed. That is, that the Christian Democrat bosses who have governed us for the last ten years did not understand that the form of power which they had slavishly served (and drawn every possible profit from) for the preceding twenty years was historically exhausted and that the new form of power did not know (and still does not know) what to do with them.

This 'epoch-making' truth is essential quite apart from the trial and the sentences — in order to understand that the epoch of a particular power, which had lasted a thousand years, has come to an end and that the epoch of 'another' power has begun.

But only a trial could turn this abstract statement into an irrefutable historical truth which would produce in the country a new political will.

Once our Christian Democrats have been condemned — to shooting, to penal servitude, to a fine of a lira, which any citizen would settle for — any confusion due to a false and artificial *continuity* of Christian Democrat power would be dispelled. The dramatic interruption of that continuity would, on the contrary, make clear to all *not only* that a group of corrupt, lazy incompetents had been democratically removed but *above all* (I repeat) that one epoch is over and another must begin.

If however these bosses remain in power — perhaps moving round for the *n*th time — if that is to say, Christian Democracy, and with it the country, opts for *continuity* of a more or less dramatic nature, it will never be made clear, for example, that Italians today are laymen at least as much as yesterday they were Catholics; or that the values of economic development have dissolved all the possible values of the preceding economic

systems along with those which are specifically ideological and religious; or even that the new power needs a new kind of man.

Now (or so it seems to an intellectual alone in the midst of a wood) Italian political observers are guilty of opting basically for Christian Democrat *continuity* — including for the moment the Communists. In the economic field (but not in the field of political economy) the bourgeois observers indicate piecemeal the possible solutions to what they call the crisis; the Communist observers — as well as making the same comments, naturally more radically, and at the same time accepting at their face value the intentions of those Christian Democrats who want *continuity* — lament the persistent anti-Communism.

But what sense is there in expecting or hoping for anything from the Christian Democrats? Or indeed in asking anything of them?

One cannot govern or even administer without principles. And the Christian Democrat Party has never had principles. It has identified them, brutally, with the moral and religious principles of the Church, thanks to whom it held power. An ignorant mass (and I say it with the greatest love for that mass) and an oligarchy of vulgar demagogues with an insatiable hunger cannot construct a party with a soul. That we have always known and said — but we have not known and said it to its conclusion for a very simple reason: the Catholic Church was a reality and the majority of Italians are Catholics. And however inarticulate, this was an argument which contrived to conceal truths even better than those repellent ones appropriated by the Christian Democrat bosses — for example, the religious culture (in the anthropological sense) of the popular masses or the possibility of a re-evangelized Church.

But now this historical argument has collapsed because its reality has collapsed. That ideological zero with Mafia connections and its classic inter-class nature which is Christian Democracy is no longer based on anything (unless it be the ruins of a rapidly disintegrating world).

If all that is true, what Zaccagnini and other decent men who stand for 'continuity' say is nothing but words and that means hypocritical words.

So let us get back to our (metaphorical) trial but this time in relation to and in terms of the policy of the PCI (and of the PSI

hypothetically renewed by a cultural revolution of its own), which is the only one that counts. If instead of pretending to accept the word of 'the decent men who stand for continuity', the Communists and Socialists decided to break that *continuity* by setting up a criminal trial of Andreotti and Fanfani, Gava and Restivo, etc, what would they make clear once and for all to their own consciousness? A series of banal facts which lead to an essential fact, as follows:

First banal fact: the clerico-fascist framework in which it has been possible for the Christian Democrats to misgovern by means of a series of classic crimes would be seen in all its extent and depth but also in its clearly archaic state. Crimes which are no crimes in so far as they are consubstantial with the reality of the country and therefore (like those of Mussolini) perpetuated basically within its ambit and with its consent. During the first twenty years of the Christian Democrat régime they governed a nation historically incapable of dissent — exactly as occurred during the twenty years of Fascism, during the Bourbon or papal rule of the nineteenth century, and exactly as happened during the centuries of feudalism.

Second banal fact: the title of 'anti-fascist' (which even authoritative men of the Left persist in rejoicing in, in this respect being no different from the Christian Democrats) is becoming an absurd, indeed ridiculous synonym for anti-Bourbon, anti-feudal.

Third banal fact: a country which is no longer clerico-fascist — a nation which is no longer religious — must inevitably reflect its own reality on to 'the Palace' thus rendering null and void its codes of law and causing the manoeuvres of the bosses (in which the members of the opposition are also accomplices) to become mad mechanical gestures.

An essential fact: What the trial would make clear, on the contrary, blindingly and definitively clear — is that the context in which government is exercised is no longer the clerico-fascist one and that *it is precisely the fact that they did not understand this that constitutes the real political crime of the Christian Democrats*. The trial would make clear that to govern and administer well no longer means to govern and administer well in relation to the old power system but in relation to *the new power*.

For example: enormous quantities of superfluous goods are something absolutely new in Italian history, which is made up of

bread and poverty. To have governed badly means not to have known how to make the superfluous goods into a positive fact (as objectively they should be) but, on the contrary, to make them into a corrupting factor savagely destructive of values, the cause of anthropological, ecological, civil deterioration.

Yet another example: democratization caused by very extensive consumption of goods (including, why not?, superfluous goods) is another great novelty. Well, to have governed badly means not to have made the democratization real and vital — to have made it, on the contrary, into a horrible levelling process or a decentralization which is one in appearance only, generally in the hands of deluded progressives.

Yet another example: tolerance, which the new power has extended for its own good reasons, is also a great novelty. Again, to have governed badly consists in not having made a conquest of that tolerance but to have transformed it instead into the worst real intolerance ever seen (that is to say, the tolerance of a majority, which knows no limits because of its new 'mass' nature and which, in reality, tolerates only such infractions as suit itself).

Therefore, in my didactic anxiety, I insist that to govern well or to administer well no longer means governing or administering well compared to the bad government or bad administration of clerico-fascism (and therefore of the Christian Democrats). Political morality no longer consists in confronting clerico-fascist immorality and overcoming it perhaps — something which the Christian Democrats (in so far as they are Christians) have always said they wanted to do. Consequently if the Communists in the regional, provincial and communal councils were to confine themselves to following a similar morality *they would merely be the true Christian Democrats*.

But — and this is the point — even if they made of superfluous goods, of consumer democracy, and of false tolerance something advanced, vital, real, the Communists would still merely be the true Christian Democrats. Why? Because superfluous goods, consumer democracy, tolerance, are phenomena that characterize the new power (the new mode of production) and that new power (that mode of production) is capitalist.

Bologna is in fact an example of how a city should have been administered by the Christian Democrats.

But this is the 'twist' in my article (which has clearly acquired

romantic qualities from the presence of the trial): the Christian Democrat continuity which everyone without exception wants — in the teeth of the terrible crisis which is equally and without exception perceived and dramatized by everyone — is in reality not possible.

In fact, in order to be able to govern, the Christian Democrats even in the hypocritical flood-tide of that continuity can no longer at this point not attempt even on a purely practical level (they are capable of nothing else) a definition and analysis of the 'novelty of power', which, were they to define and analyse it, would inevitably end up by destroying them.

Similarly should the Communists accept such continuity without a trial, they would not be able to produce anything (as I have said) other than morality and certainly not politics. Because they too, by defining as the result of a deep and sincere political examination, the 'novelty of power' (which the Christian Democrats neither can nor wish to define), would be destroyed by it in so far as they are Communists.

Can I now attempt to make some forecasts which are of course entirely devoid of good taste?

First: it is inevitable that the Christian Democrat power vacuum will be filled by Communist power in a way that goes beyond the 'historical compromise'. That 'compromise' was acceptable and conceivable only and exclusively with the support of the mass of Catholic workers. But these Catholic workers no longer exist (except as 'names' or in the last remaining corners of humble Italy). Besides it is inevitable that, if Communist power fills the void left by Christian Democratic power, it will be able to do so initially only as an *Ersatz* but in the end will in fact do so precisely as 'Communist power'.

Second: the disappearance of the masses of Catholic workers, especially of course the peasants, completely transforms the significance of the Church, which until ten years ago was alone able to supply the Christian Democrats with those moral and spiritual principles consonant with 'good government'. (It makes one laugh to say it). Now the Church is merely a financial power — and therefore a foreign power.

Third: there is no copper in Italy nor is there an ITT. But in Italy there are key missile bases. The multi-nationals have gone away — but for ever?

Four: the natural break in Christian Democrat continuity — which has been overwhelmed by the impact of a new reality on the Palace — will probably be solved by the formation of a little Catholic Socialist party (no longer peasant but urban in character) and of a big theological party: a kind of techno-Fascism financed therefore by two foreign powers and capable of finding in the enormous 'imponderable' masses of youth, who live in a world without values, a powerful force which is psychologically neo-Nazi.

And it is at this point that we can, I believe with justifiable anxiety, leave metaphor behind and give our fairy-tale a concrete and real connotation. The picture of the Christian Democrat bosses, handcuffed among *carabinieri*, is an image to reflect on seriously.

But must I do so alone in the midst of an oak wood? This time I do not feel like being ignored, snubbed, left alone with a monologue, as Carlo Bo³³ says. So I shall conduct a roll-call even if it is rather restricted and somewhat contentious. I should like Giuseppe Branca³⁴ to intervene to say if the situation is drastic enough for a real trial of the Christian Democrat bosses and how it should be formalized juridically. I should like Leo Valiani³⁵ to make a contribution to the discussion, (perhaps to compensate for a somewhat vacuous discussion on the old Fascism); Claudio Petruccioli³⁶ (one of whose leading articles I took as a sample of the present attitude of the Communists); Livio Zanetti³⁷ (from whose review I have taken almost all the information on which I have based this article); Giorgio Bocca³⁸ (who could thus expend his energies on a difficult battle and stop falling stupidly into traps which are provocations he has himself extrapolated); and Alberto Moravia (who always has something intelligent to say especially when he frees himself from the conclusions suggested by Ecclesiastes).

Replies

Leo Valiani (*Corriere della Sera* of 28 August 1975)

I believe that few men in all human history have chanced to live through such radical changes in a few years as those which Italian

adults have lived through since the end of the sixties. It has happened to me, for example, to see the most likeable youth of Italy transform themselves into the most odious. There is nothing vague about this, nothing uncertain, nothing gradual — no, the transformation has been a complete turning upside-down. I refer to the Roman proletariat and sub-proletariat youth. But I believe that it can be extended to all Italian youth. I give every possible opportunity to those who wish to make exceptions. Apart from the obvious exceptions of groups or individuals (for example, all the young people who are really members of the PCI) I myself would undoubtedly feel like saying, for example, that in general the proletarian and sub-proletarian youth of Naples is an exception to the rule (and would add to them the youth of other provincial nooks and crannies which have been spared by Progress — Upper Lazio, for example, where gentleness, respect and dignity survive.

But where the masses are concerned — that is to say, the millions of Italian youth — degradation is the rule. And in Rome, to be precise, the rule is intolerable. Take a look at the faces of the two Carlini brothers, who following some traffic incident murdered a driver, killing him and splitting his skull open on the street. There you will see the faces of the entire Roman youth: not the horrible, pallid, disfigured, slobbering faces of two murderers. At Torpignattara, where the brothers were born and where they lived, the majority of the young people now look like the brothers.

It has to be added — with the utmost ruthlessness, I know — that this majority voted for the PCI. So is it possible for an adult man who has suffered (savagely) such a cataclysm — to go on living and making interventions?

In order to do so one has to 're-adapt' — something which is degrading, however, if each 'readaptment' is a pact with the devil; and besides one must have the courage to throw out of one's baggage of ideas the most important, the most certain and the most consoling ones.

As an intellectual, it may be that my case is somewhat different, having been by my own wish thrown out of the Palace and on to the streets (of Torpignattara).

But I do not think that one can use the yardstick of yesterday to justify the figure of an intellectual who today continues to

judge the world as it is, and who is therefore not obliged to 're-adapt' and re-examine the totality of his knowledge.

For a long time now I have been concentrating my polemics on anti-fascism. My polemics have been commented on only in a racist manner — that is to say, suggestions about me personally. They have been ironical; they have smiled; they have made accusations. What I say is not worthy of anything else. I am not a serious person.

But what about Mr Huey Long and Mr Geoffrey Barraclough? The former has said the following and the latter has quoted him with approval: 'Fascism may return to the stage provided it calls itself anti-fascism' (*Vide L'Europeo* of 29 August).

Now there is every reason to believe that Mr Huey Long and Mr Geoffrey Barraclough, two illustrious American economists, are serious persons. Valiani may even think them worth taking into consideration.

The point of view, the focus of the world has completely changed. Reality has, as it were, been 'turned upside down'. Poverty is no longer the poverty of pre-consumerism. Even if a certain type of poverty — typical of dictatorial régimes — were to return, that poverty would merely be well-being, ingrown and frustrated; at least in Europe, in Italy. Chilean poverty is perhaps of the classical kind. But a possible Italian Pinochet would never dream of re-establishing the poverty of the old days by means of a neo-repressive régime; he would set himself the task of protecting 'progress' as the bosses want it (and it is still possible). Hedonism and false tolerance would certainly be in large part preserved. So would the laicism which is bound up with consumerism. The votes of peasants and petty bourgeoisie who still opted — massively in the last analysis — for the Christian Democrats are 'numerical votes' lacking in quality (which from the point of view of the Catholics can only be 'a good Catholic quality'); they are in fact now irremediably inclined towards Communism. And the situation is sadly symmetrical with what I was saying above about the Communist votes of Roman sub-proletariat youth. They are 'numbers' but of wretched quality. In reality, the Carlini brothers are two typical 'new' youths who are living through loss of values and, while waiting for new values, have petrified into a ferocity worthy of the SS.

When Leo Valiani contemptuously puts down (in dignified

terms) what I say about anti-Fascism being synonymous with anti-bourbon or anti-feudal attitudes (because the crude and 'poor' Fascism of Mussolini no longer exists nor does the Italy that gave its consent to Fascism) he is doing something ineffectual — that is to say, he is making a profession of faith in a value no longer in circulation. He is, precisely, a case of the Italian adult who does not know how to re-adapt, who is incapable of changing his intellectual baggage — his key ideas, the most certain, the most consoling ideas. All that is human and comprehensible: it is a way of continuing to live.

But when Valiani talks about the 'lay' alternative (between the Christian Democrats and the PCI), making *inter alia* a strange blunder — that is to say, he erects a hypothesis about my symmetrical aversion to the Christian Democrats and the PCI, whereas it is quite clear that I would be happy for the PCI to take power even if only partially — he commits a real historical error as a historian. The laicism of which Valiani speaks is a cultural form of the best of the bourgeoisie — a despairing minority to which I too belong — which the people not only has never shared but the existence of which it did not even suspect. When the old Fascism came to power in poor Italy, the people lived only its *own* archaic culture even if, being peasant, it was trans-national. As far as the Fascist sub-culture was concerned and as far as the culture of the anti-fascist laymen was concerned, the people were completely ignorant — more than half of them being straightforwardly and literally analphabetic. Now Consumerism has taken Italy out of its poverty to endow it with (disgusting) well-being and with a certain non-popular culture. This is humiliating and often achieved by imitating the petty-bourgeoisie, by stupid compulsory schooling and a criminal television service. From this has come a 'consumerist secularism' which, by absorbing it, has cancelled out the old 'aristocratic' laicism of which Valiani speaks.

Finally I must say that Valiani's intervention was a complete disappointment to me because what I wanted him to discuss was the possible criminal trial of ten or twenty of the Christian Democrat bosses who have reduced the Italy of 1975 to a condition perhaps worse than that of 1945. Valiani did not deal with this and naturally that is disappointing.

Luigi Firpo³⁹ (*La Stampa* of 31 August)

It is very doubtful whether today there can be a good 'historian' who is not as thoroughly familiar with ethnology, the history of religion and above all cultural anthropology as with his own science. For Firpo the question does not even arise.

It is true that Firpo talks about the 'good manners' of Valiani's reply but there is nothing more offensive than to use the word 'good manners' about anyone.

It is true that Firpo makes himself the spokesman of respectability by polemicizing with me while he has not, as it was his duty to do, read my book, *Scritti corsari*, in which many answers to his objections have already been given.

It is true that Firpo accuses as being too general certain of my charges against the Christian Democrat bosses, who are responsible for a government bad to the point of criminality, pretending not to know that I purposely formulated general charges: that is to say, moral and not legal ones.

It is true that Firpo pretends to fall into the trap of a paradox of mine (these Christian Democrat bosses, I said, are also responsible for the decline of the Church, a responsibility which I added to my list with obvious irony, adopting the point of the Christian Democrats themselves to indicate that it was the height of unawareness).

It is true that Firpo surreptitiously bases my 'reactionary nature' on this head of the indictment (the decline of the Church), using in this connection arguments which appear to be taken bodily from my *Scritti corsari* which (not very honestly) he has not read.

It is true that Firpo, slily attempting to tone down my anti-consumerist fury, states that it is better that, having become literate, people today should read 'langourous, gossipy, pornographic weeklies' rather than the reading matter *d'antan* which consisted of improving material on images of the saints and on religious texts. Thus he revealed all the vulgarity of the Italian intellectual class. In fact the weeklies are neither more or less than images of saints. But the myth that lies behind the unreality of these weeklies is certainly more unpleasant than the myth that lay behind the unreality of the images of the saints. Moreover only cheapjack secularism and progressive thinking can make one

believe that compulsory secondary schools as they are *hic et nunc* in Italy are not a crime.

It is true that in the way mass culture and the mass media have spread, Firpo associates Italy with the other great European countries, but he does not bear in mind that the other great European countries reached a stage of mass acculturation to consumerism after being prepared for it by three other preceding acculturations: the monarchy, the bourgeois revolution, and the first industrial revolution. This makes Italy a case apart, which those countries that are today underdeveloped will in time resemble.

It is true that Firpo tends to absolve the Christian Democrat bosses of the responsibility of not containing, not identifying, or at the very least suspecting, the 'savage' explosion of this new form of culture — that is to say, the culture of power — as if it were a case of a natural catastrophe; whereas it is precisely in the culture of power that their primary guilt consists and it is precisely here that one must look for the prime cause of the present destruction of Italy.

Yet, in spite of everything, in substance Firpo's intention can only be seen as a prosecution statement for the trial — a trial which, all right, I am prepared to think of as more analogous to that of President Nixon than to that of Papadopoulos — seeing that Firpo, greatly puzzled, wishes us to take note that the 'accused' are still in power. Damn it, of course they are still in power.

'Your interview confirms that there must be a trial'

Signor President⁴⁰, I read with much emotion the account, however fragmentary and rambling, of the conversations you had at Ferragosto. In them you expressed yourself with the anxiety and sense of impotence of any Italian citizen whose view of things can only be partial. That gave a democratic nobility to your words: it made you 'one of us'. And that is why I am writing this letter to you.

I should like to dwell on two points. And then on a third one.

The first point concerns your phrase, directed at some large European powers, in which Italy is described as a country unjustly considered to belong to the Second Division. 'There cannot be countries which belong to the First Division and countries which belong to the Second Division,' you say. It is true: they cannot, or rather, they should not exist. But they do. The truth is that Italy is a Second Division country and that emerges unequivocally from your words, which are prudent but sincere. I can allow myself to be imprudent and I say to you that, on the contrary, Italy is much worse than a Second Division country. The football terminology is a mere euphemism. Italy — not only the Italy of the Palace and of power — is a ridiculous and sinister country; its men of power are comic masks crudely smeared with blood, a contaminated cross between Molière and Grand Guignol. But the citizens of Italy are no better. I have seen them in crowds at Ferragosto. It was a picture of frenzy at its most insolent. They invested so much energy in amusing themselves at all costs that they seemed to be in a state of rapture; it was difficult not to think of them as contemptible or at least guiltily foolish. Especially the young people. All those stupid couples walking along hand in hand with an air alternately of romantic protection and inspired certainty of tomorrow.

They have been tricked, fooled. A sudden and violent (as far as Italy goes) overturning of the system of production has destroyed all their former values, both 'particular' and 'real', changing their form and behaviour; and the new values of 'well-being' which are purely pragmatic, existentialist, have deprived them of their dignity. But that did not suffice; after having turned them into monsters, marionettes controlled by a 'new' hand and therefore behaving as if they were mad — lo and behold, well-being, the cause of their monstrous character, fails them while the dance of the marionettes continues.

The second point concerns your phrase, 'we must draw a picture of our future so that it can testify to the faith of our Country'. Now the whole of your statement, which is democratically grey and deliberately unideological, the 'civil' chat of any citizen, does not foresee the politicization of that expression (which is therefore intensely moral) 'the picture of our future'. The first quality of any science is to be prophetic. Any scientific intervention on any problem is nothing other than a

provision of the future. Politics, in the case in point, is the science that can provide us with 'a picture of our future'. To be precise it is political economy. Or less concretely the examination of the new mode of production — new, that is, for Italy, a country which has never experienced any process of unification either through the bourgeois or the industrial revolution: the new system of production which is not only the production of goods but of human beings — as the elementary law of political economy says.

Do you believe that Christian Democracy is politically capable of making a forecast that goes beyond the pure pragmatism (Catholic and therefore cynical) in which up to now it has put its sole trust? Do you really believe that?

And now here is the third point. You draw — even if it is euphemistically (a masterpiece of politicians' language) an apocalyptic picture of Italy; according to you nothing functions there, not only on the practical level but not even, so to say, on the spiritual one.

This desperate and degrading situation of our country will logically, therefore, be the result of something. Unless de Sade is right — and perhaps he *is* right — when he says in a lightning-flash: 'Perhaps causes are of no use to effects'. But if de Sade can be a temptation to me as a literary man, he certainly cannot tempt a politician. So the causes of that effect which you so accurately describe and lament must be sought by reason.

What are these causes?

There is a primary cause, which in fact sums up all the other possible causes: it is the absolute, total lack in your party, the Christian Democrat Party, of any ideology which is not moral, spiritual, religious, that is to say, verbal, in character.

I feel a great sadness (sister to contempt) when some Christian Democrat politician who is — why not? — respectable (the last was Zaccagnini) attempts like Antaeus to regain his strength by falling to the ground — that is to say, he turns back to the Christian Democrat ideological tradition and reverently dusts down De Gasperi. But De Gasperi was a political nobody.

Lacking any hint of political thought, the Christian Democrats have governed according to the pragmatic models of western capitalism, which are therefore obviously imitative, vague and ineffectual. And for the first twenty years of their régime they

have mixed these pragmatic models with the spiritual ones of the Church.

During the last ten years the 'new mode of production' has destroyed the anthropological clerical-fascist framework of Christian Democracy and made of it one that is (falsely) secular and (falsely) tolerant. Since it lacked the slightest hint of political thought, Christian Democracy did not even notice this and went on governing as if the mode of production was still as in the days of Giolitti⁴¹ and Mussolini. And that has provoked the present disaster.

Superfluous goods can be allowed and conceded, assuming what one might call a spiritual context of hedonism, of pleasure, only on condition that necessary goods are guaranteed: houses, schools, hospitals and all other public services — things which the First Division countries foresaw during the first industrial revolution so that they arrived at the Second to some extent prepared, which in millenary terms is much more important.

But Christian Democracy is not an abstract 'sign'; it is not fate.

More than any other party — precisely because of its mere pragmatism or, if you like, because of its mere moralism — the Christian Democrat Party *is* the men who compose it.

But at this point, Signor President, I can no longer address you directly. You cannot even hear or take in what I am going to say because it would be an act of aggression against your imposed impartiality. I do not wish to drag you into an unpleasant polemic and therefore would ask you to consider this, the last part of my letter, as a mere appendix.

I have often asked myself: Where does a man's vocation to govern come from? What modality does it have, what necessity, what vocation? Is it by any chance like the vocation to act, to invent, to write, to play football? I have been unable to find any answer. The vocation to govern remains, as such, an enigma, at least so far as my practical and historical experience in Italy goes. But to govern is a phenomenon which is strictly linked with, indeed incorporated in, another phenomenon — that of possessing power. In my opinion, therefore, the pure and simple vocation to govern does not exist, at least not in Italy; every vocation in fact presupposes a quality, a talent, without which it would be no more than mere idle fantasy subtly cancelled out by the first contact with reality. A vocation which undoubtedly

exists in Italy, on the other hand is the vocation to wield power. Something which is unfortunately to be expected and to be identified because of all the advantages that derive from the possession of power: the manipulation of a great deal of money; a system of dependents; hired killers. So it would appear that in Italy governing is merely a boring, disagreeable duty which anyone who wishes to wield power has to undertake.

Are these mere suppositions? Perhaps. But it does not matter. They do not substantially enter into my argument. No — let us say that those who have governed us for the last ten years did not in the least consider governing as an irksome burden necessary for the possession of power but, on the contrary, they have governed us out of a pure and disinterested vocation to govern.

But even if it is pure and disinterested, governing implies responsibilities and gives purely spiritual pleasure to those who govern.

If those who govern do it well, it is right that they should be rewarded with some pleasures. I would even go so far as to say that if those who govern, govern well, let us not mind if they allow themselves some little material pleasure, that is to say, if they steal. But if those who govern do it badly, they must be prepared to face — or accept the need to face — the responsibilities which they have assumed.

If then their method of governing borders on the criminal — as happened with Nixon and in an unrestrained manner with Papadopoulos — it seems right to me that a real democracy should accept the ultimate consequences, even if they are only formal ones: that is to say, the trial. This is an idea which I have often repeated (*Il Mondo* of 28 August and *Corriere della Sera* of 24 August 1975).

Signor President, from your conversation at Ferragosto it emerges very clearly that at a factual level (and you yourself seem to allude to this) the Italy of 1975 is very similar to the Italy of 1945. It has been destroyed and must therefore be rebuilt. Since in politics there are no effects without causes, the guilty men of those days went tragically towards their fate; they paid tragically for their responsibility. This took place at the right moment, for it would have been terrible had it happened later. Now I am not asking for tragedies and I am not interested in punishments. But

it seems to me that one cannot sketch a political consciousness 'of the picture of our future unless one consolidates a political consciousness, which is at once shocking and free of any conformism, of what our recent past has been. It is only by putting on trial those responsible that Italy can put itself on trial and recognize itself.

Il Mondo 11 September 1975

Why the trial?

Dear Colleagues of *La Stampa*, 'the trial', you wrote in a leading article on 14th September, 'and then what?' Well, if the next ten years of our lives *count* (are, that is to say, history) we shall have learned something. But if they don't count, if instead what counts are the next ten thousand years (that is, the life of the world) then it is all superfluous.

For myself I tend to attach infinitely more importance to the next ten thousand years than to the next ten; and if the next ten years interest me it is due to a pure philosophy of virtue.

What must one know, or rather what do the Italian citizens want to know, so that the next ten years of their lives are not filched from them (as were the last ten years)?

I shall repeat once more my litany, risking perhaps — in spite of virtue — the carrying out of a mere academic exercise.

The citizens of Italy want to know consciously why, in the last ten years of so-called well-being, money has been spent on everything except the public services, which are immediate necessities: hospitals, schools, play-schools, green open spaces, natural goods which means cultural ones.

The citizens of Italy want to know why in the last ten years so-called tolerance has deepened the division between North and South Italy, turning the Southerners increasingly into second-class citizens.

The citizens of Italy want to know consciously why in the last ten years of so-called technological civilization savage disasters have been carried out in building, in town-planning, in the landscape and the ecology, while even more cruelly the

countryside has been abandoned to its fate.

The citizens of Italy want to know why in the last ten years of so-called progress the 'mass' has been so impoverished and degraded.

The citizens of Italy want to know consciously why in the last ten years of so-called democratization (it is almost comical — has culture ever been more bent on centralization than the culture of the last ten years?) the examples of decentralization have merely served as a cynical cover-up for the manoeuvres of an old clerical-fascist government sub-system which has become merely a mafia.

The citizens of Italy want to know why in these ten years of so-called secularism the only secular discourse has been the ugly discourse of television, which has joined forces with the schools in what is perhaps an unalterable process of diseducating people.

I have used the word 'why' repeatedly; the Italians do not in fact want to know consciously that these phenomena objectively exist and what the possible remedies are, but they do want to know above all *why* they exist.

You say, dear colleagues of *La Stampa*, that the democratic game is there to make known all these things to the Italians, that is to say by the criticisms which the parties direct at each other — sometimes even violently — and, in particular, the criticism which all the parties direct at Christian Democracy. No. It is not like that. And for the very reason which you, thereby contradicting yourselves, put forward: for the reason that everyone in different degrees and in different ways, all politicians and all parties, share with the Christian Democrats their blindness and responsibility.

So, first of all, the *other* parties cannot make objective and convincing criticism of the Christian Democrats since they too failed to understand certain problems or, worse still, shared in certain decisions.

Moreover, over the whole of Italy's democratic life there looms the suspicion of Mafia-like complicity on the one hand, and of ignorance on the other; from this is born almost of its own accord a natural pact with power — a tacit diplomacy of silence.

A list of the phenomena, that is to say, of the guilts, even if summary but complete as far as it goes, and reasoned, has never been drawn up. Perhaps it cannot be done.

Because to the heads of indictment which I have listed above

there is a great deal to add in connection with what the Italians want to know *consciously*.

The Italians want to know what the real role of Sifar⁴² was.

The Italians want to know what the real role of Sid⁴³ was.

The Italians want to know what the real role of the CIA was.

The Italians want to know to what extent the Mafia took part in the decisions of the Rome Government or collaborated with it.

The Italians want to know what the reality of the so-called Fascist 'coups' was.

The Italians want to know in whose mind, and at what level, the idea of 'the strategy of tensions' (first anti-Communist and then anti-Fascist, indiscriminately) was launched.

The Italians want to know who set up the Valpreda case.

The Italians want to know who instigated and are materially responsible for the massacres in Milan, Brescia and Bologna.

But the Italians — and this is the heart of the matter — want to know all these things as a whole along with all the other potential crimes with which I began the list. Until they know all these things (with the logic that connects and binds them into a single whole not being left to the mere fantasy of the moralists) the political consciousness of the Italians will be incapable of producing a new awareness. That is to say Italy will not be governable.

The criminal trial of which I speak has (in my moralist's fantasy) the form, meaning and value of a synthesis. The eviction and trial of Nixon, which as I have said was initiated but not carried through, should have something to say to you who believe in *this* democratic game. If in America a democratic game as you conceive of it had been played against Nixon he would still be there and America would not know what it now knows about itself — or at least would not have the confirmation, even if it is only formal (which is important), of the virtue of what it believes to be good: its own democracy.

But if, as appears evident to me to my incurable mortification, Italian public opinion, which you too represent, does not wish to know, or is content merely to suspect, then the democratic game is not formal; it is false.

Moreover if the conscious desire of the Italian citizens to know has not the strength to force power to carry out self-criticism and to unmask itself (if only on the American model), that means that

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ours is a very poor country; in fact let us call it a miserably poor country.

At this point I am continuing more than ever in the pure spirit of the Stoa⁴⁴. There are other things that Italian citizens want to know without, I believe, having formulated their desire to know with sufficient clarity — something that occurs where the democratic game is false, where everyone plays with power and where the blindness of the politicians is by now well confirmed.

So Italians want to know what exactly the 'human condition' is in political and social terms in which they are forced to live as if by a natural cataclysm — first by the evil and degrading illusion of welfare and then by the frustrating illusions, no, not of the return of poverty but of the arrival of well-being.

Italians also want to know what the 'new culture' (in the anthropological sense) is in which they live as if in a dream; what its limits are and what future it has in mind, this levelling, degrading (and especially for the last generation) vulgar culture.

Italians also want to know what the 'new type of power' is that produces such a culture and how it is truthfully defined — seeing that clerico-fascist power has had its day and can now only fight 'out-dated battles' (the sentencing to death of anti-Franco elements, the relations between the old and the new generations of *mafiosi* in the South of Italy, etc).

Above all, Italians also want to know what the 'new mode of production' is, from which the 'new power' and therefore the 'new culture' are born, and how it can be defined; to know whether by any chance this 'new mode of production', by introducing a new kind of commodity and *therefore* a new kind of humanity, is capable, for the first time in history, of bringing about 'social relationships which cannot be modified'; that is to say, removed from and denied once and for all any possible form of 'alterity'.

Without knowing what the 'new mode of production', this 'new power' and this 'new culture' are, one cannot govern; one cannot take political decisions, as Moro⁴⁵ does, unless they are the kind which get one through from day to day.

The Christian Democrat bosses who have governed us for the last ten years have not even been able to pose the problem of this 'new mode of production', this 'new power', this 'new culture'

except in the maze of corridors of their madman's Palace, they continue to believe that they are serving the power structure set up by the clerico-fascists. That led them to the tragic failures which have brought our country to that state which I have frequently compared to the ruins of 1945.

This is the real political crime of which the Christian Democrat bosses have been guilty and for which they deserve to be brought into a court-room and tried.

By this I do not mean that other politicians did not face up to the problem which the custodians of power did not face up to, or that like them they failed to solve these problems. Even the Communists, for example, confused the standard of living of the working class with its life, and development with progress. But if they made errors the Communists made theoretical ones. They were not in the government; they did not have power. They did not *rob* the Italians. Dear colleagues on *La Stampa*, who I am sure are in perfect agreement with me, it is those who assumed power who must pay.

One last observation which, incidentally, seems to me to be of prime importance.

The inquiry into the 'coups' (Tamburion, Vitalone), the inquiry into the death of Pinelli⁴⁶, the Valpreda trial, the Freda and Venturi⁴⁷ trial, the various trials of neo-Fascist crimes... Why is there no progress? Why is everything as quiet as a graveyard? It is terrifyingly clear: because all these inquiries and trials, once carried to their conclusion, would lead only to the Trial which I am speaking about. Therefore at the heart of everything, at the root of everything, there is the problem of the magistracy and of its political choices.

But, dear colleagues of *La Stampa*, while we all have the courage to speak up against politicians because basically politicians are cynical, available, patient, sly, great pocketers of money, and have an admittedly provincial and crude sense of 'fair play', we are silent on the question of the magistracy, civically and seriously silent. Why? That is the last terrible thing I have to say: *because we are afraid*.

Corriere della Sera, 28 September 1975

My 'Accattone'⁴⁸ on TV after the genocide

Accattone can also be seen in laboratory terms as a specimen of a way of life, that is to say, of a culture. Looked at in this way it is an interesting phenomenon for a researcher but a tragic phenomenon for anyone directly involved; for me, for example, who am its author.

When *Accattone* came out — although we were at the beginning of what was called a 'boom', a word that makes us smile, like 'belle époque' or 'streamlining', we were in another age.

A repressive age. In the fifties nothing had changed that had characterized Italy in the forties, and even earlier. The continuity between the Fascist régime and the Christian Democrat régime was still perfect. In *Accattone* there are two striking examples of that continuity: first, the segregation of the sub-proletariat in a condition of marginality where everything was different, and second, the pitiless, criminal, uncontrolled violence of the police.

On this second point we are all agreed and there is no point in wasting words on it. In fact, part of the police is still like that — one need only go to Madrid or Barcelona to see our old acquaintances in all their squalid splendour.

On the other hand, a lot could be written on the first point because in 1961 when *Accattone* appeared, no middle-class person knew exactly what the urban sub-proletariat (and specifically the Roman sub-proletariat) was and how it lived. And in 1975, the year when *Accattone* was shown on television, no middle-class person yet knew exactly what that sub-proletariat had been and what that sub-proletariat is like today. I find myself explaining and arguing at one and the same time, that all middle-class persons are, in fact, fascist, always, everywhere and to whatever party they belong.

In 1961 for the first time *Accattone* unleashed explicit phenomena of 'racism' in Italy. Hence the ferocious 'persecution' of myself and of poor — sub-proletarian — Franco Citti. But today, in 1975, things are not much different. 'Racism' in a confrontation or clash with the sub-proletariat always comes out explicitly; it emerges from that lethargy and that sense of power which determine (all the more rigidly for being unconscious) the middle-class idea of existence and existence itself.

In 1961 the bourgeoisie saw evil in the sub-proletariat in exactly

the same way as American racists saw it in the world of the negro. And at that time, incidentally, the sub-proletariat were to all intents and purposes 'negroes'; their 'culture' — an exclusive culture within a wider one which was in its turn exclusive, the peasant culture of the South — gave the Roman sub-proletarians not only original psychological 'traits' but completely original physical traits as well. It created a real 'race'. The film-goer of today can certify this by looking at the characters in *Accattone*. None of them — I repeat for the thousandth time — was an actor; in so far as each one was himself. His reality was represented by his reality. Those 'bodies' were like those in real life as well as on the screen.

Their culture which was so profoundly different that it created nothing more nor less than a 'race', gave the Roman sub-proletarians a morality and a philosophy of a dominated class, which the ruling class confined itself to 'dominating' without any attempt to evangelize it, that is to say, to force it to absorb the ruling class's own ideology (which in the case in point was a repellent and purely formal Catholicism).

Left to itself for centuries, that is to say, to its own immobility, that culture had elaborated values and models of behaviour which were absolute. Nothing could question them. As in all popular cultures the 'sons' recreated the fathers — took their place, replicated them: this is something which constitutes the sense of 'caste' which we, in a racist manner and with such contemptuous Eurocentric nationalism, take pleasure in condemning. There was therefore never any internal revolution inside that culture. Values and models passed immutably from father to son. Yet there was a curious regeneration. It was sufficient to observe their language (which no longer exists); it was continually invented, although the lexical and grammatical models were always the same. There was not a single moment of the day within the circle of districts which made up an immense plebeian metropolis when a linguistic invention did not echo through the streets or in the fights; a sign that this was a living culture.

In *Accattone* all this is faithfully reproduced (and one sees it above all if one reads *Accattone* in a certain way that excludes the presence of my gloomy aestheticism). Between 1961 and 1975 something essential changed: a genocide took place. A whole population was culturally destroyed. And it is a question precisely

of one of those cultural genocides which preceded the physical genocides of Hitler. If I had taken a long journey and had returned after several years, walking through the 'grandiose plebeian metropolis' I would have had the impression that all its inhabitants had been deported and exterminated, replaced in the streets and blocks of houses by washed-out, ferocious, unhappy ghosts. Hitler's SS, in fact. The young boys, deprived of their values and their models as if of their blood, have become ghostly copies of a different way and concept of life — that of the middle class.

If I wanted to reshoot *Accattone* today I would be unable to do so. I could not find a single young man who in his 'body' was even faintly like the young men who played themselves in *Accattone*. I could not find a single youth able to say those lines with that voice. Not only would he not have the spirit and the mentality to say them, he would quite simply not understand them. He would have to do the same as a Milanese lady reading *Ragazzi di vita* or *Una vita violenta* — that is, consult the glossary. And finally even the pronunciation has changed (Italians have never been phonologists and we must assume that on this point a dense and final mystery will descend).

The characters of *Accattone* were all thieves or robbers or people who lived from day to day; it was a film, in short, about the underworld. Naturally it was also surrounded by the world of the people of the working-class quarters, possibly implicated in the conspiratorial silence of criminals but fundamentally working normally (for a miserable wage — see Sabino, *Accattone's* brother). But as an author and as an Italian citizen I did not by any means pass a negative judgment on those characters from the criminal underworld; all their defects seemed to me to be human defects which were pardonable as well as being socially perfectly justifiable: the defects of men who obey a scale of values different from that of the bourgeoisie, that is to say, men who as I have said were totally themselves.

In fact they are enormously sympathetic characters; outside the framework of bourgeois sentimentalities it is difficult to imagine people as sympathetic as those of the world of *Accattone*, that is of the sub-proletarian and proletarian culture of Rome up to ten years ago. The genocide has removed those characters from the face of the earth. In their place there are their understudies,

who as I have already had occasion to say, are by contrast the most hateful people in the world.

That is why I said that *Accattone*, viewed as a sociological report, cannot but be a tragic phenomenon.

Does the reader require proof of what I am saying? Well, if he does not know the working-class quarters of Rome (imagine!) let him try reading the news in the papers. These 'criminals' are no monsters. They are products of an ambiance with criminal tendencies just as the criminals of *Accattone* were the products with criminal tendencies of an environment; but what a difference between the two environments.

I would be an idiot to generalize; my paradoxicality is merely formal. Certainly half, and more than half, of the young people who live in the working-class quarters of Rome or, in short, within the Roman proletariat or sub-proletariat, are honest as far as criminal records go. They are clever boys too, but they are no longer sympathetic. They are sad, neurotic, full of petty bourgeois anxiety; they are ashamed of being workers; they try to imitate the well-off kids. It is the latter today who are the guiding models.

Let the reader compare people like the neo-Fascists from Parioli⁴⁹ who carried out the terrible murder in a villa at Circeo⁵⁰ and those like the youth from the working-class district of Torpignattara who killed a driver by splitting open his head on the tarmac; while being different on two social levels these people are identical, but the former — those well-heeled kids who were mocked and despised by the boys from the working-class quarters, who considered them to be pitiful nonentities; whereas they were proud of what they themselves were — are the models of their 'culture' (which provided them with gestures, mimicry, words, behaviour, knowledge, criteria).

Today the papers throw the blame on the inhabitants of Parioli (privileging them incidentally through their interest). But if the neo-Fascists of Parioli have not won, yet the inhabitants of Parioli have done so. At the same time the papers note (with a few years delay) that 'the Roman underworld has turned nasty'. But the papers are the accomplices of politicians and politicians are completely out of touch with reality.

Recently a 'moderate' journalist on a powerful bourgeois paper and an authoritative leading member of the PCI, while they

argued with me on various levels, each made the same incredible mistake. For both of them, that is to say, the 'defects' which were exhibited in my narrative and film work of fifteen years ago seem to them to be presented 'negatively'; which implies on my part an attitude of obvious, natural condemnation — an attitude which is theirs.

So unconsciously are they racist that the suspicion does not even begin to occur to them that I might see these defects as elements of a 'good' or at least of a cultural reality, which was what it was but was also life and directed towards life. And both see as a case of sad coherence my explicitly and violently negative attitude towards the boys of the working-class quarters of today. Refusing to see any thing real in my radical reversal of judgment on the sub-proletariat (which for me implies a personal tragedy), they refuse to admit in substance a reality which concerns the whole country; that is to say, the radical and objective destruction of the world of the dominated classes. They do not admit the *fait accompli* of the genocide. They cannot do other than believe in progress: *tout va bien*.

Moreover, all those who reproach me for my vision of everything that is Italy today — a vision which is catastrophic because it is total (if only from the anthropological point of view) — compassionately mock me because I do not take into consideration that consumerist materialism and criminality are phenomena which are spreading throughout the capitalist world and not only through Italy. Miserable, dishonest and stupid that they are, is it possible that the thought does not pass vaguely through their heads that in those other countries where this plague is spreading there are compensations which, to some degree, re-establish the equilibrium?

In New York, Paris and London there are fierce and dangerous criminals (almost all — surprise! — coloured or almost coloured); but hospitals, schools, homes, asylums, museums, experimental cinemas, all function perfectly. Unity, acculturation, centralization, took place in a very different way. Marx was a witness of their genocides more than a century ago. That such genocides are taking place today in Italy substantially changes their historical nature. Accattone and his friends went silently towards deportation and the final solution, perhaps even laughing at their

warders. But what about us, the bourgeois witnesses?

Corriere della Sera, 8 October 1975

Two modest proposals for eliminating crime in Italy

The various cases of criminality which apocalyptically fill the news columns of the papers and our somewhat alarmed consciousnesses are not solitary cases — they are clearly extreme cases of a diffused and deep-rooted way of being criminal: mass criminality.

In fact the criminals are not the neo-Fascists. Recently one episode — the murder of a girl at Circeo — unexpectedly took a load off everyone's conscience and caused a huge sigh of relief, precisely because those guilty of the murder were Fascists from Parioli. So there was cause to rejoice for two reasons: (1) for confirmation of the fact that Fascists are solely and always guilty of everything, and (2) for confirmation of the fact that the blame attaches only and always to the privileged and corrupt bourgeoisie. The joy at feeling oneself confirmed in this ancient populist sentiment — and in the solidity of the moral pattern that accompanies it — exploded not only in the Communist papers but in all the press (which since June 15th has a great fear of being outstripped by the Communists). The bourgeois press was literally delighted to be able to assign the guilt to the criminals from Parioli because by placing the guilt on them so dramatically *it privileged them* (only middle-class dramas have real value and interest) and at the same time could snuggle back into the old idea that there is no point in dealing beyond a certain point with proletarian and sub-proletarian crimes given that it is established *a priori* that proletarians and sub-proletarians are criminals.

So I think that the murder at Circeo has let loose on Italy the usual offensive wave of journalistic stupidity.

In fact, I repeat that criminals are by no means only neo-Fascists but are also, in the same way and with the same consciousness, proletarians and sub-proletarians who may even have voted Communist on June 15th.

Just think of the crime of the Carlini brothers from Torpignattara or the assault at Cinecittà (a boy brutally beaten

up and locked in the boot of a car, the girl raped and tortured by seven youths from the outskirts of Rome). These 'popular' delinquents — and for the moment I am referring with documentary precision only to the Carlino brothers — enjoyed the same conditional liberty as the criminals from Parioli; that is to say, they enjoyed the same immunity. It is absurd therefore to accuse the judges who set the neo-Fascists free to walk about if one does not at the same time and with the same firmness accuse the judges who set the Carlino brothers free to walk about (along with thousands of other young criminals from the working-class districts of Rome).

The reality is as follows: the extreme cases of criminality derive from a mass environment where crime is endemic. There have to be thousands of cases like the sadistic party at Circeo or of aggressive brutality because of some traffic incident before cases like those involving the sadists from Parioli or from Torpignattara can occur.

As for me, I have been saying for some years that the popular world of Rome is a 'hateful' world. I say it to the indignation of right-thinking people and above all to the indignation of right-thinking people who do not believe that that is what they are. And I have indicated the reasons: the loss by the youth of the working-class (of their own) moral values, that is to say, of their own restricted culture with its models of behaviour, etc. And so far as a criminal world like that of the Roman people is concerned, one must say that the usual populist excuses are not valid. One has to arm oneself with the same punitive and puritanical rigidity as we were wont to display towards the criminal manifestations of the dregs of the neo-Fascist bourgeoisie. In fact, the young proletarians and sub-proletarians of Rome now belong totally to the middle-class world. The petty-bourgeois model has finally been imposed on them, once and for all. And their concrete models are those stupid and ferocious middle-class youths whom in the good old days they scorned so forcefully and with so much wit as ridiculous and disgusting nonentities. It was not for nothing that the sub-proletarian torturers of the girl at Cinecittà, while using her as 'an object', said to her: 'Watch out or we'll do to you what they did to Rosaria Lopez'. My own daily, existential experience — which once again I oppose to the offensive abstractions and approximations of journalists and politicians

who do not live in this way — teaches me that there is no longer any difference in their attitude towards the real world and in their consequent behaviour, between the bourgeoisie of Parioli and the sub-proletariat of the working-class districts. The same enigmatic, pale and smiling faces indicate their lack of moral weight — the fact that they are suspended between the loss of old values and the acquisition of a new one: their total lack of any idea of their own 'function'.

Direct experience teaches me something else which is a totally Italian phenomenon. It forms part of the conformism, which by the by is antiquated, of the Italian information network which consoles itself with the fact that even in other countries the problem of criminality exists. It is true that it does exist but it presents itself in a world where the bourgeois institutions are still solid and efficient and so continue to present a countervailing force.

What is it that has transformed the Italian proletariat and sub-proletariat in substance into a middle class, eaten up moreover by the economic urge to be just that? What is it that has transformed the 'masses' of young people into 'masses' of potential criminal types? I have said it over and over again: it is a 'second' industrial revolution which in Italy is really the first revolution: consumerism which has cynically destroyed a real world, transforming it into a total unreality where there is no longer any choice between good and evil. Hence the ambiguity that characterizes the criminals and their ferocity, which is produced by the total lack of any traditional internal conflict. They have had no choice between good and evil but they have had another choice — the choice of turning into stone, of a lack of pity.

Italians lament the lack of a modern police force to deal with delinquency. What I would lament above all is the lack of an informed awareness about all this and the survival of progressive rhetoric, which no longer has anything to do with reality. We must be progressive in another manner; we must invent a new way of being free, above all in passing judgment on those who have chosen the loss of pity. We must admit once and for all the failure of tolerance, which has, of course, been false tolerance and one of the outstanding causes of the degeneration of the mass of young people. In short, when passing judgment we must behave consequently and not aprioristically (that progressive a-priorism

which was valid up to ten years ago).

What are my modest proposals for reducing criminality? They are two Swiftean ones, as their humorous definition makes no attempt to hide.

- (1) immediate abolition of compulsory secondary education
- (2) the immediate abolition of television

As for teachers and television staff they need not be eaten, as Swift would suggest, but simply put under the heading of 'integration'.

Compulsory schooling is a school for initiation into the way of life of the petty bourgeoisie; there even in the best of cases you are taught useless, stupid, false, moralistic things (i.e. you are invited flatteringly to apply the false democratization of self-government, decentralization, etc, which is all a great confusion). Besides an idea is dynamic only if it includes its own expansion and depth. The learning of a little history has sense only if one projects into the future the possibility of a real historical culture. Otherwise ideas go bad — they are still-born, have no future, and their function is therefore simply to create, all in all, a little bourgeois slave in the place of the free proletarian or sub-proletarian. That is to say, a person who belongs to a different culture which leaves him virginal and therefore capable of possibly understanding new realities, whereas it is clear that those who have had compulsory schooling are prisoners of their own miserable circle of knowledge and are shocked when confronted with anything new. To reach the top form in junior school is enough for a worker and his son in Italy today. It is criminal to delude him with an advancement which is a degradation because first of all it makes him presumptuous (because of the couple of things he has learned), and secondly (often contemporaneously) he becomes painfully frustrated because the few things he has learned bring him only awareness of his own ignorance.

Certainly to stay on for another three years, or even for another ten, would be the optimum for me, as for everybody, I suppose. But since in Italy today compulsory schooling is exactly as I have described it (and I am literally anguished by the thought that 'sex education' might be added) it is better to abolish it while waiting for better times — that is, for a different kind of progress. (And this is the heart of the matter.)

As for television, I do not wish to waste words; what I have said

about compulsory schooling is here multiplied to infinity since it is a case not of teaching but of an 'example': that is to say the models in television are not spoken but shown. And if the models are those we know, how can one expect that the most exposed and defenceless youth will not be either inclined to crime or become criminal. It has been television which in practical terms (it is merely a means) has brought to a close the age of pity and begun the age of *hedone*. It is an age in which young people, who are at one and the same time presumptuous and frustrated, because of the stupidity and the unattainability of the models offered by school and television, in a way that cannot be checked tend to be either aggressive to the point of delinquency or passive to the point of unhappiness (which is not a lesser crime).

Today any move to the Left, whether in the schools or in television, has been useless; school and television are authoritarian because they are state institutions and the State is the new production (production of human beings). So if the progressives really have the anthropological condition of the people at heart let them boldly unite and demand the immediate end to compulsory schooling and to television transmissions. It would not be nothing — indeed it would be a great deal; a Quarticciolo without abominable little schools and abandoned to its evenings and nights would perhaps be able to rediscover its own mode of life, ranking below that of a time past and above one of today. Otherwise all statements about decentralization are stupidly aprioristic or in pure bad faith.

As for the information links between the Quarticciolo and all other 'centres of culture' with the outside world, the wall posters and the daily *Unità* would suffice to guarantee them — and above all work, which, in a context of this kind would naturally acquire another meaning and would tend for once to unite life and the way it is lived by a process of self-inspired decisions.

My proposals for schools and television

Even Moravia honours me with his views. They are the opinions of an intelligent man, we know, but we also know that like any other author he enjoys the 'pleasure of the text' but only if he can turn it into romantic fiction.

Indeed as a novelist he saw the episode of the massacre at Circeo and the assault at Cinecittà simply as two episodes. Crystalline, transparent, deeply etched, closed — perfect microcosms of their kind. So much so that by using a similar narrative model, he can equate the massacre at Circeo with his own short story dating from 1927: 'Crime at the Tennis Club'. I too could similarly equate the sub-proletarian aggression at Cinecittà with the attack by four Neapolitans on the woman in *Accattone*. But I know that the attack by the four Neapolitans on Maddalena, Accattone's woman, is idyllic compared to the attack at Cinecittà in the autumn of 1975 and find its context in a code of criminality, an underworld code from which humanity is not excluded. Even Moravia should see that the crime at the tennis club is idyllic compared to the crime at Circeo in the autumn of 1975; and no real historical relationship unites them. Between the two there is a qualitative leap which is due to the enormous difference in quantity. A crime which in 1927 was the expression of the environment of an élite is today the expression of the environment of a mass. Gide's gratuitous crime has become an article of consumption: personal choice has become a collective compulsion. That is no mean thing.

In the same issue of the *Corriere della Sera* in which my polemical piece on the 'abolition' (no, not the abolition, the suspension) of compulsory schooling appeared, Moravia and my readers should look at the photographs of the four hooligans who in Milan carried out the same enterprise as the sub-proletarians of Cinecittà: robbery with violence, carnal violence, rape. They are Milanese proletarians, that is to say, that for a century and more they have been part of the 'living space' of the middle classes. So the picture is complete.

But in the *Corriere* containing the pictures of the four hooligans who have been unmasked, let Moravia and my readers in their imagination find room for pictures of all the possible blackguards like them who have not been unmasked. To place them side by side would require more space than the distance from Rome to Milan. Indeed I shall say more — those hollowed faces, dangerous, painful, unhappy, undecipherable, forbidding, sinister, weak, presumptuous, lacking in any class connotation (in a sense neither positive nor negative) they are in fact the faces of all the 'mass' of Italian youth today.

In my article, which Moravia disagrees with, I had set out clearly that the mass of young people know nothing of the traditional internal conflict between good and evil. Its choice is pitiless indifference and that almost of set purpose, aprioristically — whether the case concerns delinquents or good unhappy boys; unhappiness, I said, is not a lesser crime. But I do not expect Moravia to interest himself in what young people are like. Why should he take an interest in them? He does not look at things from their milieu but from afar. Therefore his interest cannot concern itself with actuality or physicality.

I also said in my article that 'there must be thousands of cases like the sadistic party at Circeo, or of aggressive brutality following a traffic incident, before cases like those involving the sadists from Parioli or from Torpignattara can occur'. This statistical sociological fact ought to interest Moravia and he should give it consideration. If he had done so neither the episode at Circeo nor the episode at Cinecittà would have appeared to him to be two crystalline, transparent, deeply-etched, closed, absolute episodes, but two confused, muddy, disordered, uncompromising 'samples' of a quality of life. It would then have been impossible for Moravia to make a fictional comparison between the two: clever, penetrating, and basically full of good humour. Moravia plays on purely external data — the story's surroundings. The content is reduced to a cipher. At this point I shall not produce the licence I hold as someone who understands things concretely — a licence valid because my way of life has given me the opportunity to look in the face, hundreds of times on hundreds of evenings, the protagonists of hundreds of episodes which predate extreme cases like those of Circeo and Cinecittà; I shall confine myself to saying one thing. For Moravia (who read about her in the papers) Rosaria Lopez is an abstract figure like the Queen of Clubs or a tragic *prosopeon* — perhaps from the theatre; she is The Woman from the Slums. And on that he bases part of his interpretation. Whereas I — imagine this — have known Rosaria's brother for many years; he is a very distressed and distressing young man who has a red racing car and would like to be a film-cameraman. As can be seen, I am limiting myself to furnishing two facts, pure and simple. But it does not require much to draw from them at least some initial sociological deduction.

Having said all this (which is private and *therefore* concrete) let us come to the points of general interest. First, as far as concerns the civilization of consumer goods in general and its genocides, and then as far as concerns my 'two modest principles' to suspend compulsory schooling and television. On the first point Moravia commits two errors due to inferences drawn from my texts. These inferences are due in their turn to the fact that Moravia attributes greater importance to what I do not say and to his own guesses, than to what I do say.

(A) While rebuking me for my ingenuous indignation at consumerism, Moravia continually confuses consumerism in general with Italian consumerism: although he understands my obsessive and moreover obvious distinction between the two perfectly well. Now if he were to accuse me of ingenuous indignation over consumerism in general he would be right. But prove to me that I am indignant about consumerism in general — produce, that is, a text of mine containing such indignation. In fact as far as the consumerist phase of world capital is concerned, I think exactly the same as Moravia. If however he is accusing me of ingenuous indignation about Italian consumerism, then he is wrong. Because without indignation it would not be possible to talk about it. There is no possibility of objectivity when control of the consumerist revolution has been manipulated by those who govern Italy in a way and in a context which are criminal. Let Moravia prove the contrary to me.

(B) Moravia says that consumerist embourgeoisement does not abolish social classes. But prove to me that I have ever said anything so silly. Produce a text of mine which contains such a foolish statement. Embourgeoisement is part of the class struggle. It is for that reason that I have quoted (and quoted to the point of obsession) Marx's expression about 'genocide' — 'cultural genocide'. The ruling class whose new mode of production has created a new form of culture has proceeded in recent years in Italy to the most complete and total genocide of restricted (popular) cultures that Italian history records. The sub-proletariat youth of Rome — must I repeat it for the nth time? — have lost their 'culture', that is, their way of life, of behaving, of speaking, of judging reality; they have been provided with a model of middle-class (consumerist) life. That is to say, they have been classically destroyed and made into bourgeoisie. Their class

connotation is therefore now purely economic and no longer *also* cultural. The culture of the lower classes no longer (almost) exists; there exists only an economy of the lower classes. And I have already repeated an infinite number of times in these wretched articles of mine that the atrocious unhappiness or criminal aggressiveness of the proletarian and sub-proletarian youth derives precisely from the mismatch between culture and economic conditions — from the impossibility of attaining (except by imitating them) middle-class cultural models because of the persistent poverty which is masked by an illusory improvement in the standard of living.

Let us move on now to compulsory schooling and television. In passing, let it be said that my 'two modest proposals' for their abolition were clearly intended to refer to temporary abolition. I said, for accuracy's sake, 'while waiting for better times — that is, for a different kind of progress'. In other words, I involved the PCI, the best forces of the Left, etc, whose interest in a radical reform of school and television should not be put in doubt — if it is essential to the transformation of 'progress'.

While waiting for a radical reform of this kind it would be better to abolish both compulsory schooling and television (I know it is utopian but I am nevertheless firmly convinced) because every day that passes is fatal to both the school children and the viewers.

At this point I find myself perfectly in agreement with Moravia, and he agrees perfectly with me. In fact my proposal for 'abolition' — once again — is merely a metaphor for a radical reform; and Moravia and I can only have the same ideas where such a reform is concerned.

Only yesterday, while improvising during a debate with teachers at a seminar in Lecce, I outlined what in my view compulsory schooling ought to be — and I said almost exactly the same things as Moravia. As material for such new compulsory education I suggested driving lessons with accompanying instruction in road courtesy, bureaucratic problems of all kinds, elements of urban planning, economy, hygiene, sex, etc. And above all, a great deal of reading, liberally commented on.

As for television, my proposal for radical reform is this: television must be made a party matter, that is to say, culturally pluralistic. It is the only way in which it can lose its terrible

charismatic quality, its intolerable official nature. Besides, as is well known, the parties behind the scenes fight tooth and nail dividing television power up among themselves in an abominable manner. So it would be a question of regulating and dragging the existing situation into the light of day and thus making it democratic. Every party should have the right to its own transmissions. So that every viewer would be called upon to choose and criticize, that is, to be co-author, instead of being a wretched creature who sees and listens and is the more repressed the more he is flattered. Every party would have the right, for example, to its own television news so that the viewer could choose his own news or compare one version with another and thus no longer have to endure 'the news'. I would say, too, that every party should run other programmes as well — perhaps in proportion to its representation in parliament. The result would be tremendous competition and the level of programmes — including their quality as spectacle — would rise at once. *Voilà*.

Appendix: If by attributing to me in a romantic manner a theological hatred of consumerism in general as a serious phenomenon of capitalism (an attribution, I repeat, which is unjust because my theological hatred is entirely directed at Italian consumerism just as it is not directed at television but at Italian television, not at compulsory schooling but at compulsory schooling in Italy) makes me deserve to be called a pre-Raphaelite by Moravia, that is something. On another occasion Moravia called me a Catholic (as if Catholics by definition were apt to get angry, or were quixotic, or occasionally exposed a weak spot). Pre-Raphaelite as an epithet is halfway towards one which I would consider accurate: that is to say, reformist, Lutheran, if it were possible to give some sort of meaning to these romantic epithets.

Corriere della Sera, 29 October 1975

Heran Letter to Italo Calvino⁵¹

Corriere della Sera of 8 October 1975): 'Those
the slaughter at Circeo are numerous and they
at they did was perfectly natural, as if they had

behind them an environment and a mentality that understands and admires them.'

But why is this so?

You say: 'In the Rome of today what is terrifying is that these monstrous practices take place in an atmosphere of absolute permissiveness without a hint of defiance of repressive constraints...'

But why is this so?

You say: '...The true danger comes from the spread of cancerous layers in our society...'

But why is this so?

You say: 'It is only a step from moral atrophy and social irresponsibility (on the part of the Italian bourgeoisie, you say) to the practice of torturing and killing...'

But why is this so?

You say: 'We live in a world in which the escalation of murder and of humiliation of the person is one of the most obvious signs of the historical future (*political criminality and sexual criminality seem in this case to be reductive and optimistic definitions, you say*).'

But why is this so?

You say: 'At any moment the Nazis can be vastly outdone in cruelty'.

But why is this so?

You say: 'In other countries the crisis is the same but it encounters a more solid layer of society.'

But why is this so?

For more than two years I have been trying to explain and to put these questions of mine before a large public. And in the end I am angry at the silence that has always surrounded me. People have sat in judgment on a Catholic *refoulement* on my part of which they are unable to produce evidence. No one intervened to help me forward and to develop more thoroughly my attempts at an explanation. Now it is the *silence* that is Catholic. For example, the silence of Giuseppe Branca, of Livio Zanetti, of Giorgio Bocca, of Claudio Petruccioli, of Alberto Moravia, whom I had invited by name to join in my proposal for a trial of those guilty of that Italian condition which you describe with such apocalyptic fear — you who are so sober in your judgments. And your silence with regard to all my public letters is Catholic. And the silence of the Catholics of the Left is Catholic too (they who should have

the courage to call themselves reformers or, with still more courage, Lutherans). It would be about time after three centuries.

Allow me to tell you that a person who speaks out and attempts to provide explanations (which may even be drawn from life) is not Catholic and is surrounded by the most profound silence. I have not been able to stay silent just as I am not able to stay silent now. 'One has to have talked a lot to be able to stay silent' (it is a Chinese historian who makes this marvellous statement). So speak for once. Why?

You have drawn up a '*cahier de doléances*' in which facts and phenomena are set out, but just like Lietta Tornabuoni or any other TV journalist, however indignant, you offer no explanation of them.

Why?

Yet I have faults to find with your *cahier* over and above the lack of 'because'...

I object to the fact that you create scapegoats which are 'part of the bourgeoisie', 'Rome', 'the neo-Fascists'.

From that it is evident that you rely on certainties which were valid even in earlier times; the certainties (as you said in another letter) which comforted us and even gave us some pleasure in a clerico-fascist context — lay, rational, democratic, progressive certainties. As such they are no longer valid. The historical future has become the present and those certainties have remained as they were.

To talk still about 'part of the bourgeoisie' being guilty is an old-fashioned and mechanical way of talking, because the bourgeoisie today is at one and the same time much worse and much better than it was ten years ago. All of it: including the bourgeoisie of Parioli or of San Babila. There is no point in my telling you why it is worse (violence, aggressiveness, disassociation from 'the other', racism, vulgarity, brutal hedonism) but there is no point either in my telling you why it is better (a certain secularism, a certain acceptance of values which were those of only restricted circles, referendum votes, the way they voted on June 15th).

To speak of the city of Rome as being guilty is to fall right back into the pure days of the fifties when people in Turin and Milan (or Friuli) considered Rome to be the centre of all corruption — thus providing an open display of racism. Today Rome with its

Parioli is no worse than Milan with its San Babila, or Turin.

As for the neo-Fascists (youths) you yourself have noticed that their ideas are very widely diffused and that the possibility of Nazi cruelty, to which you refer (and about which I myself talk so much) does not refer to them alone.

I have objections to another point in the *cahier* which lacks 'because'.

You have privileged the Parioli neo-Fascists with your interest and your indignation because they are middle class. Their criminality seems interesting to you because it concerns the new sons of the bourgeoisie. You take them out of the savage darkness of the news and into the light of intellectual interpretation because their social class demands it. You have behaved — it seems to me — like the whole Italian press which sees in the murderers of Circeo a case which concerns it, a privileged case, I repeat. If the 'poor' of Rome's working-class suburbs, or the 'poor' immigrants of Milan or Turin had done the same things, there would not have been so much talk about it, and certainly not talk of this kind. Because of racism. Because the 'poor' of the working-class areas or the immigrant poor are considered *a priori* to be delinquents.

Well, the 'poor' of the working-class areas of Rome and the immigrant 'poor' — that is to say, the youth of the people — can and do indeed (as the news tells us with frightening clarity) do the same things as the young people from Parioli did — in the very same spirit which is the subject of your 'descriptive powers'.

Every evening young men from Rome's working-class areas carry out hundreds of orgies like those at Circeo, and moreover they too take drugs.

The killing of Rosaria Lopez was very probably unintentional (though I do not by any means consider this to be an extenuating circumstance); every evening, in fact, these orgies imply a sadistic ceremonial.

The impunity of the bourgeoisie and especially of the neo-Fascists during all these years can stand comparison with the impunity enjoyed by the criminals from working-class quarters of Rome. (The Carlino brothers from Torpignattara enjoyed the same conditional liberty as the young men from Parioli.)

What is one to deduce from all this? That 'the cancer' does not spread from the strata of the (Roman, neo-Fascist) bourgeoisie

thus infecting the country and the people? But there is a source of corruption which is much more remote and total. And here I repeat my litany.

The 'mode of production' has changed — enormous quantities, superfluous goods, a hedonistic function. But it is not only goods that are produced; it makes social relationships as well — human beings. 'The new mode of production' has therefore produced a new kind of human being, that is to say, a 'new culture', which changes man anthropologically: in this case the Italian. This 'new culture' has cynically destroyed (genocide) preceding cultures, from the traditional middle-class one down to the various restricted and pluralistic popular cultures. For the models and values destroyed it substitutes models and values of its own — not yet defined or named — which are those of a new kind of bourgeoisie. The sons of the middle class are therefore privileged in so far as they give these values reality and in so doing (uncertainly and therefore aggressively) set themselves up as examples for those who are economically unable to do the same and who are reduced to being ghostly and ferocious imitators. Hence their killer nature, like that of the SS. So the phenomenon concerns the whole country. And the reasons are there: they are very clear. Clarity which, I admit, certainly does not emerge from this list, which I have put in telegraphic style. But you know how to obtain the necessary documents if you wish to reply, to discuss, to answer back. And this finally I demand that you do.

NB. It is difficult to win over politicians for such a task. Theirs is a fight for pure survival. They must each day find something to which they can cling and where they can keep a foothold while they fight (for themselves or for others, it does not matter). The press faithfully reflects the chaotic nature of their everyday life, the vortex in which they are caught and dragged down. And it faithfully mirrors the magic words, the pure play with words, to which they are attached and to which they reduce the real political perspectives: 'alternative', 'compromise', 'jungle behaviour'. Journalists, who are the authors of this process of mirroring politicians, seem to be their accomplices in this pure ordinariness which is mythologized (as 'practice' always is) because it is 'serious'. Palace manoeuvres, conspiracies, intrigues, deals, pass for serious events. While to an eye that is even slightly disinterested they are no more than tragi-comic contortions and

by their nature crafty and ignoble.

Trade unionists cannot be more helpful. Lama,⁵² before whom all manufacturers of opinion are accustomed to abase themselves like bitches in heat under a dog, would have nothing to say on this subject. He is the same as and different from Moro with whom he negotiates. Reality and future perspectives are words; that matters is that today has been dealt with. It is not important if Lama is forced to do this, whereas for the Christian Democrats it is a way of life. Today it seems that only the intellectual Platonists (Marxists, I should add) who perhaps lack information but certainly also lack self-interest and complicity, have some slight chance of intuitively understanding what is really happening — provided always that their intuition is translated (literally translated) by scientists who are also Platonists into the terms of the only science the reality of which is objectively certain, like that of Nature: that is to say, Political Economy.

Il Mondo, 30 October 1975

Intervention at the Radical Party Congress

Premise

First of all I must justify my presence here. I am not here as a Radical, nor as a Socialist. I am not here as a progressive. I am here as a Communist who votes for the PCI and places great hopes on the new generation of Communists. I have hopes of the new generation of Communists just as I have hopes of the Radicals. That is to say, with that certain degree of will and irrationality and perhaps even of arbitrariness which allows one — maybe with an eye on Wittgenstein — to displace reality in order to be able to talk about it more freely.

For example: the official PCI declares that it now accepts *some* democratic practices. So I must have no doubts. It is certainly not to democratic practice as codified and conventionalized by the customs of the last three centuries that the PCI refers; it refers undoubtedly to democratic practice understood in the original purity of its form or, if you like, of its formal terms: the lay religion of democracy. It would be an act of self degradation to suspect that the PCI is referring to the democratic practice of the

Christian Democrats. And one cannot therefore mean that the PCI is referring for example to the democratic practice of the Radicals.

Paragraph One

(A) The most lovable people are those who do not know they have rights.

(B) Those people who, while knowing that they have rights, do not claim them or actually renounce them, are also lovable.

(C) Those people who fight for the rights of others (above all for those who do not know they have them) are very sympathetic.

(D) In our society there are exploiters and exploited. Well, so much the worse for the exploiters.

(E) There are intellectuals, engaged intellectuals, who consider it their own and other people's duty to make known to lovable people, who do not know it, that they have rights; to incite lovable people not to renounce rights they know they possess; to compel everyone to feel the historical impulse to fight for the rights of others; and finally, to consider it to be incontrovertible and absolute, as between exploiters and exploited, that the exploited are the unhappy ones.

Among those intellectuals who have assumed this role for more than a century some groups have stood out clearly in the last few years as particularly eager to make this role an extremist one. I refer to the young extremists — and their elderly admirers.

These extremists (I wish to deal only with the best of them) propose as their first and fundamental objective the spreading among the people in an apostolic way the awareness of their own rights. They do it with determination, anger, desperation, optimistic patience or the impatience of dynamitards, according to individual cases. And since it is not merely a case of awakening (in the lovable and ignorant) the awareness of their own rights but also the will to obtain them, their propaganda can only be first and foremost pragmatic.

Second Paragraph

Disobeying the twisted desire of historians and professional philosophers — not to mention that of Roman feminists — a desire to see me confined in Helicon just like the mafiosi in Ustica⁵³, one evening this summer I took part in a political debate

in a city of the North. As always happens on a warm evening a group of young people wanted to continue the debate in the street, which was full of singing. Among them was a Greek, one of these 'nice' Marxist extremists of whom I was speaking.

But all the most obvious defects of rhetoric and of the extremist sub-culture were clearly rooted in his basic niceness. He was an 'adolescent', rather badly dressed, maybe a bit of a ragamuffin; but at the same time he had a real thinker's beard — something between Menippus and Aramis; but his hair, which touched his shoulders, counteracted with something exotic and irrational the possible gestural and magniloquent function of the beard, an allusion to Brahmin philosophy, to the ingenuous conceit of the *mparampara* gurus.

The young Greek lived this rhetoric of his with a total absence of any self-criticism; he did not know he had these highly visible signs and in this respect he was likeable in exactly the same way as those who do not know their rights.

Among the defects which he so candidly embodied the most serious was certainly the vocation to spread among the people ('a little at a time', he said — for him life was something long, almost without end) an awareness of their own rights and the will to fight for them.

Well, here was the enormity, as I read it, in this Greek student who was quite unaware that he embodied it.

Through Marxism the apostolate of the young extremists of middle-class extraction — the apostolate in favour of awareness of rights and the will to realize them — is nothing other than the unconscious anger of the poor against the rich members of the middle class, of the young against the old, of the powerless members of the middle class against the powerful, of the lower against the upper middle class.

It is an unconscious civil war — wearing the mask of class war — within the inferno of bourgeois consciousness. Remember, I am talking about extremists, not about Communists. The likeable people who do not know they have rights or the lovely people who know but renounce them, in this masked civil war take on a well-known and ancient function: that of being cannon fodder.

They are used, first of all, with unconscious hypocrisy as subjects of a transference which liberates the conscience from the

weight of envy and economic rancour; and, in the second place, they are thrown like an army of pariahs into battle by poor, uncertain, and fanatical young middle-class boys — a battle which is unconsciously impure, a battle against the old, rich, assured and Fascist bourgeoisie.

Let us be clear: the Greek student whom I have taken as a symbol was to all intents and purposes (except where one cruel truth is concerned) a 'pure' too, like the poor. And this 'purity' was due to one thing only: the radicalism that was in him.

Third Paragraph

It is now time to mention that the rights I have been talking about are 'civil rights' which outside a strictly democratic context such as might be found in an ideal puritan democracy in England or the United States, or a lay one like in France, have taken on a class colouring. The socialist Italianization of civil rights could inevitably (historically) do nothing other than vulgarize them.

What does the extremist who teaches others to have rights actually teach? He teaches that he who serves has the same rights as the one who commands. What does the extremist who teaches others to fight to obtain their own rights, in fact teach? He teaches that one must exploit the same rights as the bosses do. What does the extremist who teaches that those who are exploited by the exploiters are unhappy, teach? He teaches that one must lay claim to the same kind of happiness as the exploiters.

The result eventually reached in this way is therefore an *identification*, that is to say, in the best of cases, a democratization in the bourgeois sense.

The tragedy of the extremists consists therefore in turning a struggle, which they define verbally as Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary, into a regressive civil war as old as the bourgeoisie and essential to their very existence. The attainment of one's own rights merely promotes the person who gains them to the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

Fourth Paragraph

In what sense does class consciousness have nothing in common with the consciousness of Marxized civil rights? In what sense has the PCI nothing in common with the extremists (even if at times it lays claim to them by means of the old bureaucratic

diplomacy — and going so far as to classify 1968 under the heading of Resistance)?

It is very simple: — while the extremists fight for Marxized civil rights pragmatically in the name, as I have said, of a final *identification* between exploited and exploiter, the Communists instead fight for civil rights in the name of a different order of things. Alterity — not simply an alternative — which by its very nature excludes any possible assimilation of the exploited and the exploiters.

The class struggle has until now been also a struggle for the prevalence of another form of life (to quote Wittgenstein, the potential anthropologist, once more) that is to say, of another culture. For in fact the two classes in the struggle were — what shall I say — racially different. And in reality, in substance, they still are. In the middle of the age of Consumer Goods.

Fifth Paragraph

Everyone knows that when the exploiters (by means of the exploited) produce goods, in reality they produce human beings (social relations).

The exploiters of the second industrial revolution (otherwise known as Consumerism, that is to say, great quantities, superfluous goods, hedonistic function) produce new goods and therefore produce a new kind of human being (new social relations).

Now during the two hundred years or so of its history, the first industrial revolution produced social relations which were capable of modification. The proof? The proof is provided by the solid certainty that social relations could be modified on the part of those who fought in the name of revolutionary alterity. They never opposed an alternative to the economy and culture of capitalism but simply something other. Something which would necessarily modify radically the existing social relations — or, anthropologically speaking, the existing culture.

Basically the 'social relation' incarnated in the relationship of the serf to the feudal landowner was not very different from the relationship between the worker and the boss in industry — and yet we are talking about 'social relations' which have proved to be equally capable of modification.

But supposing the second industrial revolution, by means of

the immense new possibilities it has acquired, were from now on to produce social relations incapable of modification? That is the great and perhaps tragic question posed today. And it is the conclusive meaning of the total embourgeoisement which is taking place in every country — in a very definite way in the great capitalist countries, dramatically in Italy.

From this point of view the prospects for capitalism seem rosy. The needs induced by the old capitalism were on the whole very similar to primary needs. But the needs which the new capitalism can induce are totally and perfectly useless and artificial. That is why, by means of these needs, the new capitalism will not limit itself to changing one type of man historically but humanity itself. It must be added that consumerism can create 'social relations' which are not subject to modification; in the worst case creating a new techno-Fascism in the place of the old clerico-fascism (which could probably come about only if it were to call itself anti-Fascism) or, as is now more probable, by creating as context for its own hedonistic ideology a context of false tolerance and of false laicism: that is to say, the false attainment of civil rights.

In both cases the space for a real revolutionary 'other' would be restricted to Utopia or to memory, thus reducing the function of the Marxist parties to a social-democratic one — even if, from the historical point of view, this was something completely new.

Sixth Paragraph

Dear Pannella, dear Spadaccia⁵⁴, dear radical friends, as patient as saints and therefore patient with me, the possibility of alterity does not exist only in class-consciousness and in the revolutionary Marxist struggle. It also exists of its own accord in capitalist entropy. There it enjoys (or better, suffers, often horribly) its concrete expression, its factual nature. What is, and that 'other' which is contained in what is, are two cultural data. Between two such data there exists a relationship based on prevarication, which is often (there is no other word) horrible. To transform their relationship into a dialectical relationship is the function — or has been until today — of Marxism: a dialectical relationship between the culture of class that rules and the class that is ruled. Such a dialectical relationship would therefore no longer be possible where the culture of the class that is ruled had disappeared, been eliminated, abrogated as you say. So one must

fight for the conservation of all forms of culture, whether alternate or subaltern. That is what you have been doing — especially in most recent years. And you have succeeded in finding alternate and subaltern forms of culture everywhere: in city centres and in the most remote, dead and least accessible of corners. You have had no human respect, no false dignity, and have not succumbed to any blackmail. You have not been afraid either of whores or publicans, and not even — and this says everything — of Fascists.

Seventh Paragraph

In substance civil rights are the rights of others. As to alternatives, they are limitless. In your mildness and your intransigence you have not made distinctions. You have compromised yourselves utterly for every possible type of alternative. But I must make one observation. There is one alternative that affects the majority and there is another which affects minorities. The problem of the destruction of the class that is governed, seen as the elimination of a dialectical and therefore threatening alterity, is a problem that concerns the majority. Divorce is a problem that affects the majority. Abortion is a problem that affects the majority. In fact workers and peasants, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, make up the majority. You have had great successes with the general defence of alternatives, with divorce and abortion. That, as you know very well, constitutes a grave danger. For you (and you know exactly how to react), for the whole country which reacts badly, especially at cultural levels which should be higher.

What do I mean by that?

Because of the Marxizing adoption of civil rights by the extremists of whom I have spoken above, civil rights have become a part not only of the awareness but also of the dynamic of the entire Italian ruling class, with its faith in progress. I am not talking about your sympathizers, or about those whom you have reached in the most distant and diverse places — a fact of which you are justly proud. I am talking about the Socialist, the Communist, the Left-wing Catholic intellectuals, of intellectuals in general, *sic et simpliciter*; in the mass of intellectuals — thanks to your success — your irregular passion for liberty has been codified, has acquired the certainty of conformism and indeed

through a model which is always imitated by young extremists — of terrorism and demagoguery.

Eighth Paragraph

I know I am saying very serious things, but it was inevitable. Otherwise what would I be doing here? At a time of justified euphoria on the Left I foresee for you what for me is the worst danger that awaits us intellectuals, especially in the near future. A new *trahison des clercs*, a new acceptance, a new adhesion, a new surrender to the *fait accompli*, a new régime even if it is only in the form of a new culture and a new quality of life.

I want to remind you of what I was saying at the end of my Fifth Paragraph — consumerism can make the new social relations expressed by the new mode of production incapable of modification creating as context for its own hedonistic ideology a context of false tolerance and of false laicism: that is to say, the false attainment of civil rights.

Now the intellectuals who have invested in you, because of the pragmatic Marxist tendencies of extremists, the struggle for civil liberties thus making it progressive within their own code of left-wing conformism, are merely playing the power game. The more fanatically an intellectual is convinced of the value of his contribution to the attainment of civil rights, the more he accepts the social-democratic function which power imposes on him, thus abrogating any real alternative. So power is preparing to take over the intellectuals as its own clergy. And they have already given invisible adherence to this invisible power by pocketing an invisible membership card.

Against all this you need only, I believe, do nothing other than continue simply to be yourselves; which means to be constantly unrecognizable. To forget at once the great successes and to continue, unafraid, obstinate, eternally contrary; to demand, to will, to identify yourselves with all that is different — to scandalize and to blaspheme.

NOTES

- 1 Atreus and Thyestes, sons of Pelops, king of Lydia, were rivals for their father's throne. Thyestes seduces his brother's wife. By way of revenge Atreus invites Thyestes to a banquet where the flesh of his own children is served to Thyestes. In the next generation the feud continues between the sons of Atreus and Aegisthus (Thyestes's son born of incest with his daughter). Aegisthus seduces Clytemnestra, daughter-in-law of Atreus and is murdered by his sons. They in turn are murdered by Orestes, son of Clytemnestra.
- 2 Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863—1938), Italian poet, novelist and playwright.
- 3 *Servizio informazioni difese*, the Italian counter-intelligence service (now suppressed).
- 4 *Le plaisir du texte* (1973); English edition published in 1976 by Jonathan Cape.
- 5 A small village near Viterbo of the kind where conventional wisdom might be expected to live on.
- 6 A modern Italian lyric poet, strongly influenced by the pastoral tradition of the Greek anthology and the Italian school of 'hermeticism'.
- 7 Amintore Fanfani, Giulio Andreotti, Scelba, Christian Democrat prime ministers. Scelba became President of the European Parliament in 1979. Fanfani is now President of the Senate; he still hopes one day to be elected President of the Republic.
- 8 American Central Intelligence Agency.
- 9 Proletarian action groups.
- 10 Lawyers. Sossi prosecuted Pasolini over the film episode, *La Ricotta*, under a Fascist law for 'publicly undermining the religion of the state'. He received a four-months' suspended prison sentence.
- 11 *La Ricotta* was an episode in the film *Rogopag*, so-called after its three directors: Pasolini, Jean-Luc Godard, and Gregoretti. Orson Welles plays the part of a director who films the Crucifixion.
- 12 *Trilogy of Life* (*The Canterbury Tales*, *The Decameron* and *The Arabian Nights*) three films, similarly episodic and erotic which were later repudiated by Pasolini.
- 13 Giacinto Pannella, leader of the Radical Party which split away from the Liberal Party in 1956. He has been involved in lobbies for

- women's rights, divorce and the right to vote at 18. President of the League of Conscientious Objectors. He has used fasting as a political weapon. Elected to Parliament in 1976, and to the European Parliament in 1979.
- 14 Italian Communist Party.
- 15 The square in Milan where in 1944 the bodies of Mussolini, his mistress Claretta Petacci, and other Fascist notables were displayed after the liberation of the city (where formerly the Fascists had executed partisans).
- 16 A square in Rome.
- 17 The square in front of the main railway station in Rome.
- 18 'The Palace' is a euphemism for the seat of power and those who wield it.
- 19 Illustrated weekly paper.
- 20 Liberal political weekly.
- 21 Christian Democrat politician.
- 22 Communist evening paper.
- 23 Aldo Moro, Christian Democrat politician who held many Cabinet offices, including that of Prime Minister. He was killed by the Red Brigades in 1978. He was noted for his obscure oratory.
- 24 Alberto Moravia (b. 1907), the most widely known and influential Italian novelist of the period immediately following World War II.
- 25 King of Thebes, and the father of Oedipus.
- 26 Antonio Ghirelli, a journalist.
- 27 Conservative newspaper published in Milan.
- 28 Christian Democrat politicians and former Presidents of Italy.
- 29 Italian Socialist Party, close to but critical of the PCI (Italian Communist Party). Pietro Nenni was its leader for many years.
- 30 Christian Democrat politician who twice held office as Prime Minister.
- 31 In May 1974 several people were killed and injured in Brescia during a bomb attack on an anti-Fascist rally held to protest against neo-Fascist violence. In August 1980 a bomb attack on the railway station in Bologna killed 85 people and injured more than 260. In January 1979 a neo-Fascist youth group fire-bombed five cinemas in Rome.
- 32 Christian Democrat politicians.
- 33 Catholic writer and critic; Rector of Urbino University.
- 34 Professor and a Senator; former President of the Constitutional Court.
- 35 Journalist; a political exile under Fascism, active in the Resistance as a member of the Action Group.

- 36 Left-wing journalist.
- 37 Journalist; editor of *L'Espresso*.
- 38 Journalist; author of a book on terrorism in Italy.
- 39 Professor of the history of political thought.
- 40 Giovanni Leone, then President of the Italian Republic.
- 41 Liberal politician. Prime Minister during the time of Mussolini's accession to power. He attempted to deal with Fascism by using the tactic of blurring Party distinctions in the hope of maintaining a consensus in the centre of the parliamentary spectrum.
- 42 *Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate* — Italian military intelligence. The name has now been changed.
- 43 See note 3.
- 44 The porch (Stoa) in Athens where the Greek philosopher, Zeno, taught — hence Stoicism.
- 45 See note 23.
- 46 An anarchist who 'fell' from a window during police interrogation.
- 47 Fascists implicated in the bomb attack in Brescia.
- 48 Pasolini's first film, released in 1961.
- 49 Working-class district of Rome.
- 50 A wooded promontory south of Rome, where many elegant villas have been built by the rich.
- 51 Modern Italian novelist.
- 52 Luigi Lama, Secretary General of the CGIL (Communist trade union).
- 53 An island prison for dangerous and long-term prisoners.
- 54 Gianfranco Spadaccia, one of the founders of the Radical Party.