

LIFE IS NOT FOR SALE

It all starts on Thursday, January 23 [2003] in Bologna a couple of steps from plaza Maggiore. It is here, at the Feltrinelli bookstore in plaza Galvani that an event in itself banal and lacking great importance took place: a customer loaded with baggage that on leaving made the electronic anti-shoplifting system go off, one of the various reflections of the prison-like existence to which we are all condemned, an agitated employee that followed him, held on tight to the arm and the traveling bag, started to shout, to call for the neighborhood police, to make such an uproar as to induce the customer to turn in his steps. But this is when some books sprung out of his bags: "Too much!", the employee must have thought as he passed from agitation to hatred, called the police and handed over the dreadful thief. Nothing unusual, one will say. An innocuous little theft, of the sort that happen every day and are concluded as a rule with a denunciation without being taken into custody, destined to drown in the mazes of the judiciary bureaucracy or at most to be absorbed under the legal parachute called conditional.

And instead no. In reality it is a question only of the antecedent facts of a circumstance that, to remain in a literary theme, one could almost describe as Kafkaesque. The voracious bibliophile is in fact a name known to the forces of order. He is an anarchist. Worse, he is an insurrectional anarchist. Worse still he is one of those who a pomaded magistrate of Rome tried to condemn twice in vain.

And so an episode that is insignificant in itself sets out to become the point of departure for yet another inquisitorial farce, with the Digos [a special police force in Italy] inclined to vie with the ROS [another special police force] in the elaboration of the most absurd theorems. Indeed, because a few hours later while the anarchist who loved books too much still found himself an involuntary guest at the police headquarters, the men of the Digos went to knock, without a warrant, at the door of his house, in the province of Asti where they confiscated two computers containing, textually, " a huge quantity of electronic correspondence that took place through e-mail between the ones named in the object and the receivers from which notes emerge that can be brought back to the area of belonging and sheets of paper containing informatic documentation on the demonstrations at the Global Forums in Genoa and Florence", numerous letters, and afterwards they deliver an oral message to his terrified companion in which it is maintained, Listen, listen!, that the books taken from Feltrinelli "from first analyses appeared similar to those employed as part of the letter-bombs sent this past September to various offices of the Spanish airline 'Iberia', attacks claimed by so-called insurrectional anarchist groups..."

There is little to do but laugh and laugh: truly a book resembles a book. Even the Digos are shrewd enough for this, and right from "the first analysis"! And then, let's say it, in a world rich only in gaudy images, too much passion for books can only be suspicious.

In the meantime, the anarchist bibliophile is accused of aggravated theft, passes the night in a cell and is released the following afternoon to the great disappointment of the courageous clerk, present in the hall in order to satisfy his thirst for

vengeance through a judge deaf to the extremely reactionary solicitations of the deputy magistrate. The date of the trial is set for this coming February 25.

Finally free, the anarchobibliophile returns home, but his hope for a long refreshing sleep is crushed the following morning by the agents of the Digos. Two searches in 48 hours for some book that was not paid for? The mandate is signed by the Bolognese prosecutor Valter Giovannini, which states that they are in search "of topographic maps... and addresses of bookstores in Bologna and other cities". Everything here? In order to understand the extent of the opportunism of such words, it is enough to consider that the search is led by a masked agent ("our Diabolik", one of his colleagues affectionately calls him) with a bulky bodily build but with graceful fashion; that the agents recover a video camera placed on the wall of the house sometime earlier; that they show a strange predilection for the wide open windows (one-two-three, testing microphone); and that they are particularly interested in the correspondence with prisoners and in the Sardinian anarchist publications (which they spread out on a sofa beside various European road maps in order to film them with a video camera in a slow sequence that will bring joy to the Emilio Fede on duty). After more than five hours they take off, carrying back street maps and addresses, but above all propaganda materials and various documentation.

These, for now, are events the developments of which are not easy to foresee but not at all difficult to imagine. And these, for now, are a few conclusions that can only be imposed for themselves.

Certainly Proudhon did not first reveal that property is a theft. In reality the desire for a world in which everything is available to everyone is the fount of age-old rebellion as well as the muse of recurrent utopias. Naturally the artificers of this social order claim that the absence of property is only a prehistoric myth or a futuristic illusion. As proof, they remind us of all the poverty of the present in which the pestilence of profit reigns. It's useless to deny that objects have lost their use value in favor of exchange value and that today we are surrounded by commodities destined to be bought and sold. Possession has given way to property, prodigality has given way to calculation and trade has reduced the gift to an exception to practice only during festivities. But this long process of domestication has not been without resistance. What the eye sees, let the hand seize, has been the battle-cry of those who aspire to a world without money since the middle ages. No divine commandment, no article of the penal code, the modern conscience of a humanity without any more conscience, ever manages to repress the assault on the banquet of life. Yesterday like today like tomorrow.

In this specific case, books are considered on the level of bread. It is not by chance that they are described as "food for the soul". Outside foul advertising rhetoric, this authentication establishes in an unequivocal way the necessity of these particular goods the lack of which contributes to generating idiocy, obtuseness, narrow-mindedness. Vital food, books feed the mind and nourish the heart. Taking this

nectar away from anyone who makes use of it only to feed their bank account is from every point of view a necessary and incalculable act.

On Feltrinelli, on this colossus of the publishing trade that as a rule imposes a cover price that is enormously greater than its effective costs; on this Feltrinelli that upon acquiring the chain of bookstores managed by RCS Books has reached the absolute monopoly of the market with 74 shops throughout Italy; on this Feltrinelli that betrays the anti-capitalist spirit of its founder, a revolutionary who died under a trellis-work from the explosion of his bomb, more and more each day; on this Feltrinelli willing to publish everything from prohibited Russian writers to televised cabaret performers passing for anarchists and rebels, knowing well that the only public opinion that counts is that of the Purse; on this Feltrinelli the profits of which are so threatened by the crumbs that are snatched from it, having opened more than 40 new spot shops in the last few years; on this Feltrinelli that appreciates thieves and outlaws only on paper but in reality hurries to deliver them "to the knotted ropes" (Villon) of the police; on this hypocritical, turncoat, greedy, narking Feltrinelli, we declare war.

Literature for literature, already one lycanthropic writer noted that "big business plunders the merchant, the merchant plunders the small shopkeeper, the small shopkeeper plunders the artisan, the artisan plunders the laborer and the laborer dies of hunger". After more than a century, what has changed? And really today, in a time in which more and more people find themselves in the midst of the street, useless even as workers to exploit, what will withstand the hunger for dignity and the thirst for equality? The respect for private property? Should the poor respect the wealth of the privileged like the privileged respect the poverty of the poor? Until when? When the fulfillment of social obligations no longer manages to compensate for the lack of the joys of life, how many agitated employees or licensed cops will have to be unleashed in protection of profits? Or do you think it is possible to eternally satisfy the stomach and the heart with untied little letters and the most beautiful soccer championships in the world?

Literature for literature, now the warning of a well-known writer thief is heard: "Theft, nothing to do with the beggars' bowl."

Some anarchist thieves

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Guerra Sociale (2002-2010)
critica libertaria al capitalismo

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