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The Italian Far Right from 1945 to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Nicola Guerra



‘This book is a fascinating analysis of an important period of European political history. This detailed and rigorous scholarship is a valuable resource for historians and political scientists’.

Nell Bennett, *Macquarie University, Australia*

‘This book is a must for anyone interested in the extreme right in Europe from a contemporary historical and social science perspective. The great importance of neo-fascist and right-wing extremist groups in Italy is presented over decades in its historical and political references – especially with a view to the Strategy of Tension and the Years of Lead’.

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THE ITALIAN FAR RIGHT FROM 1945 TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

The Italian Far Right from 1945 to the Russia–Ukraine Conflict provides a comprehensive account of the postwar parliamentary and extra parliamentary far right in Italy.

This book explores the ideology, movements and activism of the extreme right and neo-fascists. The recent victory in the Italian parliamentary elections of the ‘post-fascist’ party Fratelli d’Italia and its leader Giorgia Meloni highlights the importance of such research. The book examines why some of these movements participated with CIA-backing in the ‘Strategy of Tension’ in the years of the Cold War where terrorist actions aimed to keep Italy in NATO and prevent the Communist Party from coming to power, while other extreme-right groups vehemently opposed this and what they considered the dangerous ‘Americanization’ of the country. It debunks the myth that there was a unified postwar fascist movement in Italy, but instead excavates the complex battles within the extreme right as well as with their opponents from the left, and the authorities. This study is necessary to clarify the history and ideological dynamics of a political area still too often shrouded in mystery and whose geopolitical role is still poorly understood and generally underestimated. The analysis is contextualized in the present day by looking at the different perspectives of the Italian far right on the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The book will be of interest to researchers of political history, the Cold War and Italian history and politics.

Nicola Guerra is Adjunct Professor at the University of Turku, Finland. He holds a Master of Science in Economics from the University of Pisa, a PhD in Italian Language and Culture and the title of Docent in Italian History and Society from the University of Turku. His research interests include: Political violence and radicalism; far right–far left; political terrorism in post-war Europe; the history of extremist ideologies; language and ideology nexus, hate-speech, hooliganism, social movements and urban subcultures.

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Designed cover image: The section of Acca Larentia during a commemoration by the far right (7 January 2012) of the massacre perpetrated by the movements of the radical left on 7 January 1978. Author's photograph.

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INTRODUCTION

The Complexity of Italian Neo-Fascism and the Extreme Right after the Second World War

This book is composed of a collection of independent studies on the main groups of the Italian extreme right and on the historical-political phenomena in which it is involved in the post-Second World War period. The study of the Italian extreme right assumes international relevance by virtue of the fact that it has been a relevant phenomenon in terms of the number of militants and organizations and also in historical-ideological terms. The great influence of Italian fascism on European fascism before, during and after the Second World War leads us to look at the ideological developments of Italian neo-fascism as an observation point to understand the contemporary dynamics that could extend to the European continent and beyond.

The studies that make up this book are presented in chronological order from the early post-war years to the Russia–Ukraine conflict. The book thus allows us to understand the main ideological dynamics within political radicalism which is alternatively and synonymously defined as extreme right and/or neo-fascism (Guerra, 2022). The conception that it is advisable to analyze groups without introducing complex ideological distinctions between the extreme right and neo-fascism (Mammone, 2016; del Hierro, 2022) has unfortunately led to a lack of understanding of this area of radicalism, and to a chaotic and confused representation of the ideological area as if it were a single indistinct black magma (Guerra, 2022). This simplistic approach is found both at the academic level with, for example, the CasaPound Italia movement (CPI) which is defined alternately as extreme right and/or neo-fascist (Guerra, 2022) and at the level of investigative journalism with all the groups and movements that are merged into a ‘black thing’ or a phantom ‘NazItalia’ (Berizzi, 2018).

If it is true that there is no academic consensus on the definition of fascist ideology, even more consensus is lacking with regard to neo-fascism and the extreme right after the Second World War (Albanese, 2018). However, this must not lead to a chaos of definition and understanding of radical phenomena; it is therefore advisable to refer to an academic definition of fascist ideology when dealing with the study of political movements that present themselves as heirs to it. In this book, in the various studies that compose it, the definition of fascist ideology formulated by Zeev Sternhell (1983; 1993; 1997), one of the main scholars of the phenomenon (Griffin, 2013, p. 6), is taken as a reference. The book also considers, in the analysis of the different groups of radicalism, their geopolitical orientation, which is unfortunately often overlooked in the analysis of radical thought. Moreover, it is precisely the geopolitical orientation of the various radical groups that has contributed to determining significant fractures within the political area up to the current fragmentation determined by the Russia–Ukraine war (Guerra, 2022a; 2023).

The long timespan examined in the book involves the contextualization of neo-fascism/extreme right in historical phenomena that still await a shared temporal framing. To study Italian political radicalism, it is necessary to contextualize it in political-terrorist phenomena such as the Strategy of Tension and the Years of Lead. The first is the strategy activated by the Italian and American secret services, with the former in a relationship of subordination to the latter (Maletti, 2022, p.132; Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi, 1997), in collaboration with the extreme right that through false flag terrorist acts which aspired to destabilize public order to stabilize the political one (Morando, 2022, p. 13; Vinciguerra, 1989), creating disorientation and fear in the population to make sure that the Italian Communist Party (PCI) did not assume a government role and that Italy remained in NATO (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003; Vinciguerra, 1989; Cucchiarelli & Giannulli, 1997). This phenomenon has led some historians, analysts and protagonists of the time to consider Italian sovereignty as 'limited' to the advantage of the United States and its geopolitical interests (Maletti, 2022, p. 132; Cipriani & Cipriani, 1991). The Strategy of Tension, while receiving a definitional consensus, is not uniquely framed at the temporal level. According to some reconstructions it would begin with the Piazza Fontana massacre of 1969 (Aviles, 2022; Boatti, 1993) perpetrated by the Atlanticist extreme right in collaboration with the American military secret service (CIC) (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019; Salvini, 1995; 1998). According to others, however, the beginning should be backdated to 1965 with the conference *The revolutionary war* organized by the Antonio Pollio Institute (Beltrametti, 1965). In reality, as demonstrated in this book on the basis of some documents declassified by the CIA, it begins in the immediate post-war

period with the collaboration between American military intelligence, Italian secret services and the first post-war group of the Italian extreme right represented by the *Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria* (CIA, 2001). The other phenomenon that serves as the prevailing historical framework for the understanding of Italian extremism is that of the so-called Years of Lead. It is a historical period that is not uniquely defined at the temporal level, because according to some scholars it goes from the protests of 1968 to the early 1980s while according to others it would begin with the massacre of Piazza Fontana (Montanelli & Cervi, 1991; Guerra, 2021). Unambiguous instead is the description of the period as characterized by a climate of widespread violence, armed struggle and terrorism, and by the presence of numerous extremist groups and terrorists of left and right.

The book, in the complex historical and political framework represented by the Strategy of Tension and the Years of Lead, examines all the main Italian radical groups of what is called the first neo-fascist generation, ranging from the early post-war years to the dissolution of the terrorist groups of *Avanguardia Nazionale* (AN) and *Ordine Nuovo* (ON) respectively in 1976 and 1973, and of the second generation of the *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (NAR) and *Terza Posizione* (TP) which runs from 1977 to the early 1980s. The fragmentation into opposing factions of Italian far-right radicalism following the Russia–Ukraine conflict (Guerra, 2023) that has aroused surprise in analysts is analyzed with respect to the different and sometimes opposing ideological souls that, since the Second World War, characterize Italian neo-fascist/far-right radicalism. The book reconstructs how the fragmentation, with radicals shooting at each other on opposite sides of the Ukrainian front, is anything but surprising and reflects ideological divisions that also cross the first neo-fascist generation with the *Giovane Europa* (GE) movement which, due to its Europeanist, communitarian and anti-American nature, stands in sharp contrast with the Atlanticist and pro-Western groups of AN and ON. Even the birth of the phenomenon from time to time defined as *Rossobrunismo*, *National Bolshevism* or *Red-Brown cocktail* (Terraciano, 2020; Van Ree, 2001; Rękawek, 2023) is explained by the multi-year ideological dynamics that distinguish this area of Italian political radicalism. The overall analysis and through time of the Italian neo-fascist/right-wing extremism allows clarification of ideological dynamics so far not covered in political analysis and highlights the inhomogeneity and complexity of this ideological area whose groups are characterized over time even for opposite political and geopolitical purposes.

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1

IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL INHOMOGENEITY OF THE ITALIAN FAR RIGHT DURING THE YEARS OF LEAD

The Historical Context: The Years of Lead and the Strategy of Tension

The primary source of this research is represented by the slogans shouted by the movements of the Italian extreme right during demonstrations in a period commonly known as the Years of Lead. There is neither an academic nor journalistic consensus on the time span represented by the Years of Lead (Bale, 2017; Farré, 2022; Cento Bull, 2012; Baldoni & Provvigionato, 2009; Gastaldi & Ward, 2018; Ferraresi, 1995). Some researchers and journalists date the period from the Piazza Fontana massacre of 12 December 1969 to the early 1980s while others backdate it to the conference *The Revolutionary War* [La Guerra Rivoluzionaria] organized by the Alberto Pollio Institute from 3 to 5 May 1965 (Beltrametti, 1965). During the conference funded by the Italian military intelligence (SIFAR) and jointly attended by members of the Italian extreme right and the secret services, violent operations and strategies that characterize the Strategy of Tension are theorized (Salvini, 1995, p. 284). The Pollio Institute that organized the conference is considered a screen for the coordinated activities of the CIA, SIFAR and people linked to the Greek colonels (Salvini, 1995, p. 284). The former Italian volunteer in the Waffen-SS and member of their esoteric circle Pio Filippini Ronconi (Guerra, 2014) during the conference presented a strategic programme to fight communism by any means (Salvini, 1995, p. 283). Backdating the beginning of the Years of Lead to the origins of the Strategy of Tension rather than making its beginning coincide with the Piazza Fontana massacre seems correct. The beginning of the Strategy of Tension, however, precedes the conference of the Pollio Institute and must be backdated at least to the early

1960s and to the concept of ‘unorthodox guerrilla warfare’ of American anti-communist organizations (Salvini, 1995, p. 226; Faenza & Fini, 1976). Documents recently declassified by the CIA suggest a backdating of the Strategy of Tension to 1947 with the official birth of the organization Los Angeles Network that operates in Italy and unites the American and Italian secret services and far-right terrorists in the fight against communism by any means (CIA, 2001).

The main objective of the Strategy of Tension is to spread a climate of fear and insecurity among the population through false flag bomb attacks in order to prepare a military coup or an authoritarian escalation and thus prevent the Italian Communist Party (PCI) from coming to power (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019; Cucchiarelli, 2019; Ferraresi, 1995; Associazioni di familiari vittime per stragi, 1996; Celani, 2004). It is also the conference organized by the Pollio Institute that originates the so-called operation Chinese posters [Operazione manifesti cinesi] in which members of the extreme right of Avanguardia Nazionale (AN) put up communist posters in Italian cities with the intention of frightening the population for an ‘imminent communist subversion’ (Salvini, 1995, p. 225) (Figure 1.1). The conference of the Pollio Institute makes public the collaboration between the extremist groups AN and Ordine Nuovo (ON), the parliamentary right of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), and the Italian and American secret services, which marks all the Years of Lead with bomb attacks and massacres (Pesenti, 1974; Cucchiarelli & Giannulli, 1997; Mosca, 1978; Lanza, 1997; Calvi & Laurent, 1997; Vinciguerra, 1989; Willan, 1993). The Strategy of Tension that characterizes the Years of Lead is composed of a series of substrategies among which the Theory of Opposing Extremisms [Teoria degli opposti estremismi] plays a pivotal role (AA. VV., 1971; Guerra, 2020; Romanelli, 1971; Sidoni & Zanetov, 2013). This strategy of opposing extremisms consists not only in letting extremists of the right and left clash but in fomenting hatred between the two extremisms so that in the face of clashes and murders the population feels the need for special measures of public order and an authoritarian state (AA. VV., 1971).

Political analysts reconstruct how the Strategy of Tension represents the political-terrorist response of the so-called American party, composed of right-wing and centre-conservative political forces that want to maintain the Atlanticist geopolitical positioning of Italy at all costs, to the ‘strategy of attention’ towards the PCI that the leader of the Christian Democracy (DC) Aldo Moro began in 1963 with the centre-left political agreements (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, pp. 29, 33; Flamini, 1981–1985; Ventrone, 2019). The American party regards these agreements as a Trojan horse of communism (Ventrone, 2019, p. 122). The so-called Years of Lead of which the Strategy of Tension is a characterizing element must therefore be considered as a period that goes at least from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. But a more precise dating that takes into account the beginning of the anti-communist

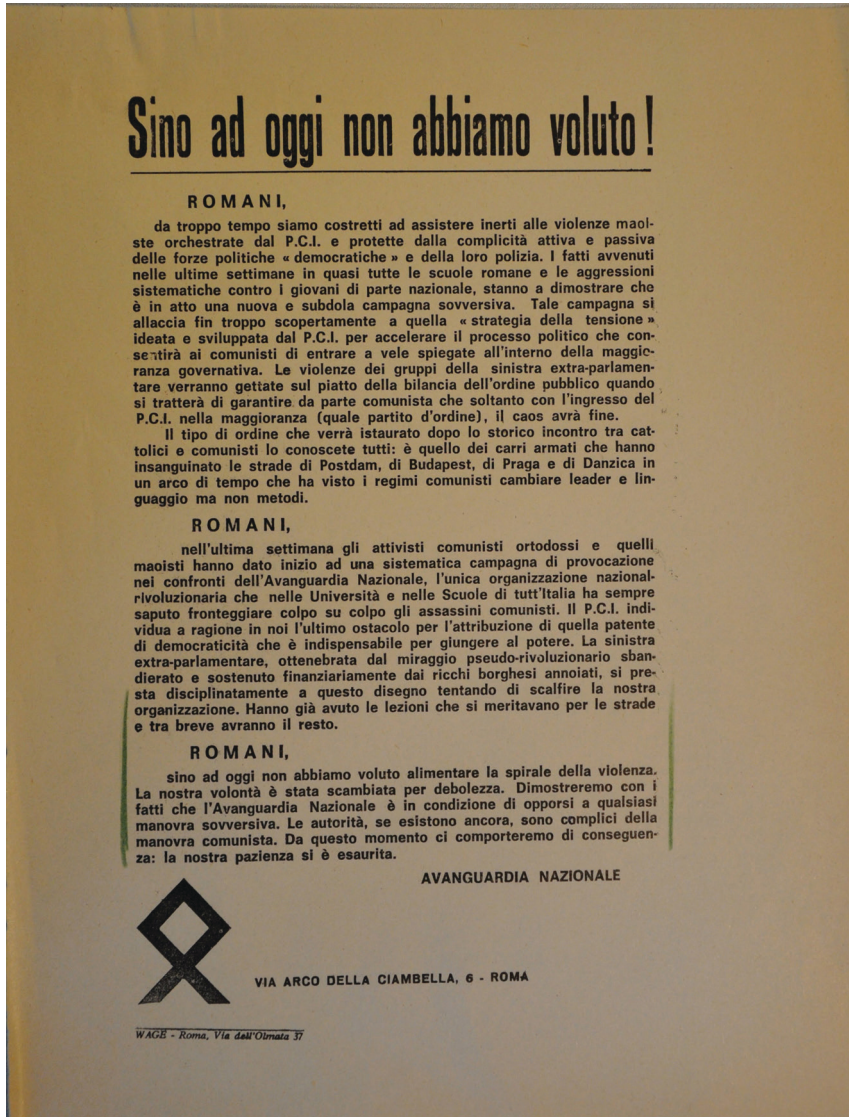


FIGURE 1.1 A leaflet of the Avanguardia Nazionale (AN) which, after having carried out in agreement with the secret services the posting of false Maoist posters to instill fear in the population, states that it will respond 'to Maoist violence' and declares itself 'in a position to oppose any subversive manoeuvre'.

Source: Photograph by the author (2012), Document authorized for publication and present at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS-PS-G- 1944-1986-Envelope 289).

terrorist activities carried out by the Italian extreme right under the guidance of the Italian and American secret services requires backdating the beginning of the Strategy of Tension to 1947 with the birth of the anti-communist organization Los Angeles Network managed by the American military secret services (CIC) and in which the Italian secret services and the subversive extreme right collaborate (CIA, 2001).

It is no coincidence that immediately after the Piazza Fontana massacre of 1969 the militants and intellectuals of the Marxist left described the criminal event as ‘a massacre carried out by the state’ [*strage di stato*] (Di Giovanni & Ligini, 1970; Pesenti, 1974). This is a definition that well explains how the Italian state was not the victim of that wave of violence and coup terror, but the protagonist of a political-terrorist strategy to prevent the rise to the government of the PCI and keep Italy in NATO. Although the judiciary has also slowed down the discovery of the truth about many events so as not to compromise the institutions of the state (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, p. 17; Provvigionato, 1993), there are now numerous cases of convictions of officials of the Italian secret services for misdirection of the investigations into the massacres and bomb attacks (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, pp. 13, 216–219; Morando, 2022, pp. 29, 50; Mosca, 1978). The collaboration between American military intelligence (CIC), Italian secret services and the subversive right of ON in the Piazza Fontana massacre is now proven (Salvini, 1998, pp. 271–277; Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, pp. 50–51, 226–230; Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, pp. 24–26, 37–38, 56–60, 98–104; Senato della Repubblica e Camera dei Deputati, 1996–2001, pp. 141–144). The Office of Classified Matters (UAR), the secret services of the Ministry of the Interior, chaired by Federico Umberto D’Amato from 1971 to 1974 and protagonist of various misdirections of the investigations into the massacres and the extreme right (Veneziani, 2006, p. 63; Lanza, 1997, p. 20; Senato della Repubblica e Camera dei Deputati, 1996–2001, pp. 129–141) is often referred to as ‘the bomb office’ (Morando, 2022, p. 13).

The ‘strategy of misdirection’ implemented by the Italian secret services is also called the ‘Maletti doctrine’, from the surname of General Gianadelio Maletti, head of the Department of counter-espionage of the secret services of the Ministry of Defense (SID) and author of numerous misdirections on the Piazza Fontana massacre (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, pp. 219–222, 76–85; Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, pp. 56–60). The definition of ‘deviated secret services’ used for many years in historical reconstructions on the Strategy of Tension to describe the actions of collaboration of Italian intelligence with the extreme right now appears outdated and erroneous (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, p. 45). There does not appear to be any deviation but rather a conscious action of the secret services within a scenario of hybrid anti-communist war that included the use of the so-called war among the crowd that had previously been implemented by the Organisation Armée

Secrète (OAS) during the Algerian crisis (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, p. 16). This was a strategy that aimed to prevent the rise to government of the Communist Party and to keep Italy in NATO, even sacrificing national sovereignty to Atlanticist directives (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, pp. 47–48; Cipriani & Cipriani, 1991). It is precisely General Maletti, who took refuge in South Africa to escape the convictions for misdirection of the investigations, who describes Italy at the time as subject to a ‘limited sovereignty’ due to ‘an overbearing American influence’ and reconstructs the Piazza Fontana massacre as a ‘hetero-directed massacre’ (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, p. 56).

Within the Strategy of Tension, the collaboration between far-right groups and American and Italian intelligence is so intense that the description of a subversive right attacking the state is not acceptable, but rather a co-optation of the extreme right by the state in an anti-communist function (Morando, 2022, pp. 11–12). Even the parliamentary right of the MSI is no stranger to this design of anti-communist Atlanticism as can be seen from much evidence. The electrician who collaborates in the design of the bombs for the nucleus of ON headed by Franco Freda is a candidate in the elections in the MSI (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, p. 181). Carlo Cicuttini, one of the authors of the Peteano massacre (Vinciguerra 1989; Morando, 2022; Testa, 1976), was secretary of the local MSI section in Manzano (Morando, 2022, pp. 72, 78). As reconstructed by Nico Azzi, a member of a circle linked to ON and convicted of some train attacks (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, p. 48), there was at the time no clear distinction between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary right, with militants often participating in both (Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, p. 68). A symbiosis between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary right evident after the Piazza Fontana massacre committed by ON when Pino Rauti, leader of ON, returns with many militants in the MSI to have a ‘political umbrella’ (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, p. 338; Barbieri & Cucchiarelli, 2003, pp. 34, 53). The proof that the MSI knew well and participated in the Strategy of Tension also consists in the fact that it had announced a national demonstration in Rome in the days following the Piazza Fontana massacre, which, thanks to the misdirection of the secret services, had to be attributed to the anarchists (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, p. 26), to ask for an authoritarian turn in the country (Salvini & Sceresini, 2019, p. 344) (Figure 1.2).

Collection of Sources and Objectives of the Research

It is precisely in this historical and political context in which the far right participates in the Strategy of Tension that it is important to analyse the oral communication of neo-fascist/far-right militants during street demonstrations. The choice to analyze the collective communication of the

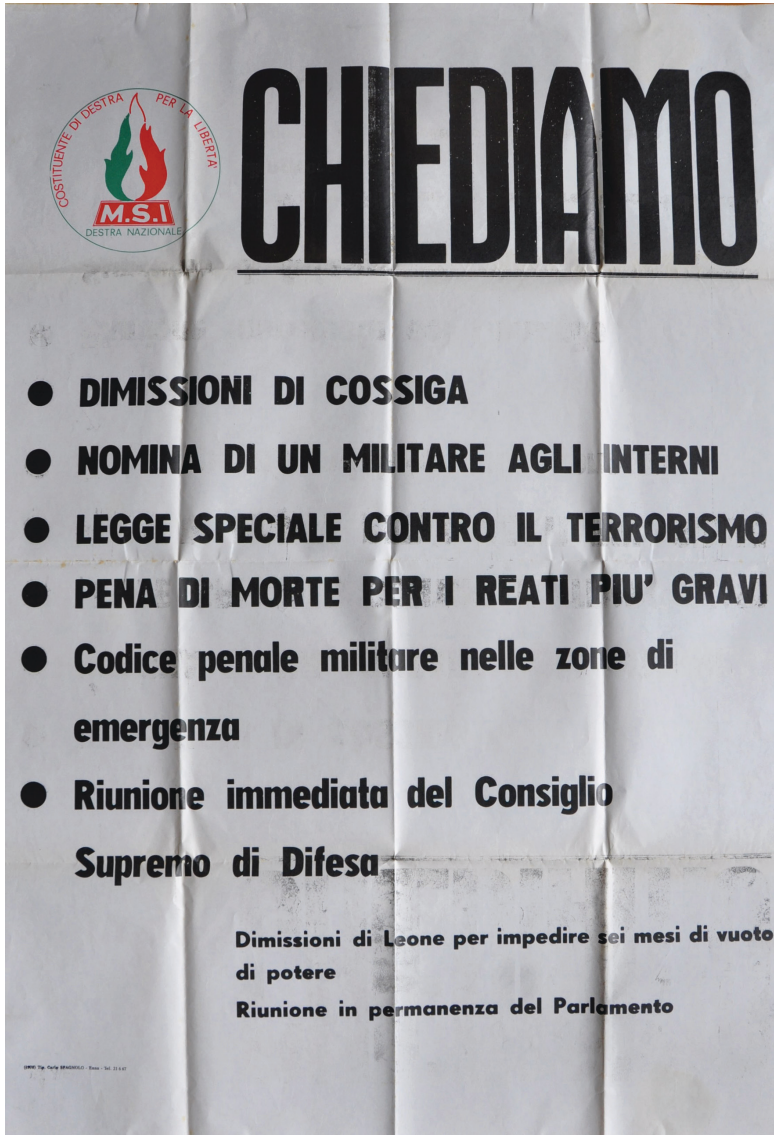


FIGURE 1.2 A manifesto of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), dating back to about 1978, with which the party demands: ‘the appointment of a military man to the Ministry of the Interior’, a ‘special law against terrorism’, ‘death penalty for the most serious crimes’, ‘military penal code in emergency zones’, ‘immediate meeting of the Supreme Council of Defence’. The demands of the MSI clearly foreshadow the desire for an authoritarian turn in the country.

Source: Photograph by the author (2012), Document authorized for publication and present at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS–MI–Cabinet 1976–1980–Envelope 12–Fascicle 1).

extreme right during the demonstrations has different motivations. First of all, it is necessary to collect and preserve the oral sources that would otherwise disappear from availability to the researchers with the death of the enunciant (Guerra, 2020a). Secondly, there are methodological implications in the study of political thought since the passage of time with respect to events tends to increase the weight of written sources compared to orality and thus limits the completeness of the sources and consequently the accuracy of the analysis (Guerra, 2020a). The shouted slogans also represent a collective moment and require a strong sharing of the contents and objectives contained to be then intoned by a political collectivity. While the slogans written in a communiqué may be the work of a small and specific number of militants, the slogans shouted during demonstrations represent the key issues embraced by a political collective and are therefore decisive for understanding collective ideologies, especially in the period from the late 1960s to the late 1970s when the radicalized youth masses manifest their ideas in the streets in opposition to parliamentary practices (Guerra, 2020a).

The study of the slogans shouted during the demonstrations is therefore important to understand the collective political agenda of the Italian extreme right in the Years of Lead. If the collaboration of AN and ON with the Italian and American secret services within the Strategy of Tension is known, it is important to understand if the project of *coup d'état* or the establishment of an anti-communist authoritarian regime was shared by the entire extreme right, its militants and demonstrators. Did all the militants of the Italian extreme right and all the extreme right groups aspire to an authoritarian solution for Italy? Were there differences of thought within the Italian far right or can it be considered as a single bloc?

Since the Years of Lead are associated with a climate of widespread violence between opposing extremisms and these are against the state, it is important to understand how this violence was conceived and experienced by the protagonists of political radicalism (Gutiérrez-Sanín & Wood, 2017, pp. 20–41; Zimmermann, 2012; Besley & Persson, 2011, pp. 1411–1445). The vast non-fiction on the Years of Lead by journalists focuses almost exclusively on armed conflicts and violent actions of the main terrorist groups (Ferrari & D'Ubaldo, 2017; Clementi et al., 2017; Tassinari, 2005; 2008; Cazzullo, 2007; Bianconi, 2003; 2005; Moretti et al., 2007; Rao, 1999), neglecting the climate of widespread violence and its many forms. The forms of violence in those years were manifold and must also be considered what the radical militants of the time call 'mass illegality' and 'violence of unarmed attack' (Guerra, 2020a). The latter is conceived as violence that is exercised against the political opponent without recourse to firearms, but with blunt tools such as wrenches or hammers. Another constitutive element of the climate of violence of the time is the mass verbal violence which consists in the collective incitement to carry out acts of violence and in the collective

commemoration of criminal events that occurred. During the Years of Lead there is a crescendo of violent practices ranging from violent slogans shouted during demonstrations to aggression without firearms – demonstrated by the use of wrenches and incendiary materials by the extra-parliamentary lefts animated by militant anti-fascism (Bussagli, 2015; Giraudo et al., 2007; Mattei & Monti, 2008) – and the widespread use of firearms and bombs. The analysis of the slogans shouted by the radical right and the verbal violence contained in them is therefore useful to understand how much the practices of violence were approved and supported at the collective level.

The slogans shouted by the extreme right during the Years of Lead were collected through interviews and correspondence with a group of 37 former militants and with a request published in the Facebook group *Anni di Piombo – Years of Lead* which at the time had 1,893 members including protagonists of the time, researchers, journalists and fans of the historical period. The work of collection and documentation was followed by a phase of validation of the slogans in which 15 militants active in the extreme right during the Years of Lead participated. Only slogans recognized as commonly used by two-thirds of the former militants who collaborated in the validation process were considered eligible for research purposes. The collection and validation process took place from 1 July 2014 to 21 January 2020 and former militants requested to be mentioned, if necessary, anonymously as recommended for research on sensitive issues related to acts of violence (Guerra 2014, pp. 52–57). In addition to the testimonial sources, paper materials kept at the Central State Archives of Rome were consulted and consist of envelopes 253, 289, 309, 322, 356, 357, 360 of the Public Security Fund (PS-G), envelopes 13 and 19 of the Ministry of the Interior Cabinet Fund 1944–1986, envelope 12 of the Ministry of the Interior Cabinet Fund 1944–1967 and envelopes 119, 123, 130, 188, 206, 207 of the Marcello Coppetti Fund. The archive material consists of posters, photographs, political and programmatic documents, material seized from groups by police and Carabinieri and reports of inspections and seizures.

Collected Slogans and Thematic Qualitative Analysis

The slogans collectively shouted during the demonstrations of the far-right movements during the Years of Lead are the following 36 presented in alphabetical order and with punctuation reported by the former militants:

1. Adolfo, Benito, Hirohito [Adolf, Benito, Hirohito].
2. Ankara, Atene, adesso Roma viene [Ankara, Athens, now Rome comes].
3. Basta coi bordelli, vogliamo i colonnelli [No more brothels, we want colonels].
4. Beata P38, compagno culo rotto [Blessed P38, broken ass communist].

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5. Camerati assassinati dalla reazione marciate in spirito con la Rivoluzione [Comrades murdered by reactionism marched in spirit with the Revolution].
6. Ce ne freghiamo della galera, camicia nera trionferà [We don't care about jail, black shirt will triumph].
7. Compagno Berlinguer dicci come mai i camerati morti son figli di operai [Communist Berlinguer tell us why dead comrades are the children of workers].
8. Compagno carogna, ritorna nella fogna [Communist carrion, return to the sewer].
9. Compagno maiale, per te finisce male [Communist pig, it ends badly for you].
10. Compagno sciarpa rossa il tuo posto è in una fossa [Communist red scarf your place is in a pit].
11. Compagni attenti, stan tornando gli anni Venti [Communists careful, the twenties are returning].
12. Contro il sistema la gioventù si scaglia! Boia chi molla è il grido di battaglia [Youth lashes out against the system! Executioner who gives up is the battle cry].
13. Corporativismo e socializzazione, questa è la nostra rivoluzione [Corporatism and socialization, this is our revolution].
14. Dalle fabbriche alle università, il comunismo non passerà [From factories to universities, communism will not pass].
15. Destra Nazionale, comunisti all'ospedale [National Right, communists in hospital].
16. El pueblo adelante acclamerà Almirante [El pueblo adelante will acclaim Almirante].
17. El pueblo unido acclamerà Benido [El pueblo unido will acclaim Benido].
18. Europa Fascismo Rivoluzione [Europe Fascism Revolution].
19. Europa Nazione Rivoluzione [Europe Nation Revolution].
20. È ora, è ora di cambiare: MSI, lotta popolare [It's time, it's time to change: MSI, popular struggle].
21. Fascio littorio, comunisti all'obitorio [Fascio littorio, communists at the morgue].
22. Fronte della Gioventù, comunisti a testa in giù [Fronte della Gioventù, Communists upside down].
23. Guardatelo, leggetelo, è scritto su ogni muro: con le bandiere rosse ci si pulisce il culo [Look at it, read it, it's written on every wall: with red flags you wipe your ass].
24. I proletari non vanno al mare, Berlinguer ha un'isola per abbronzare [The proletarians do not go to the sea, Berlinguer has an island to tan].
25. Il comunismo non passerà, il nostro onore si chiama fedeltà [Communism will not pass, our honour is called loyalty].

26. Il nostro onore si chiama fedeltà, Ordine Nuovo vincerà [Our honour is called loyalty, Ordine Nuovo will win].
27. Italia come il Cile, la lotta di classe finisce col fucile [Italy like Chile, the class struggle ends with the gun].
28. La repressione non ci fa paura la nostra risposta sarà più dura [Repression does not scare us, our response will be harsher].
29. La repressione non ferma la rivoluzione [Repression does not stop the revolution].
30. Madrid, Lisbona, Atene, adesso Roma viene [Madrid, Lisbon, Athens, now Rome comes].
31. Ne fronte rosso ne reazione, lotta di popolo, terza posizione [Neither red front nor reaction, people's struggle, third position].
32. Ne fronte rosso ne reazione, lotta armata per la terza posizione [Neither red front nor reaction, armed struggle for the third position].
33. Né Usa né Urss, Europa per riprenderci la storia [Neither USA nor USSR, Europe to take back history].
34. Non siamo gli ultimi di ieri ma i primi di domani [We are not the last of yesterday but the first of tomorrow].
35. Rossi e borghesi, ancora pochi mesi [Reds and bourgeois, a few more months].
36. Se vedo un punto rosso sparo a vista, o è un cardinale o un comunista [If I see a red dot I shoot on sight, either it is a cardinal or a communist].

On the slogans collected and validated, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out that allowed determination of the collective political dynamics and the areas of homogeneity and ideological inhomogeneity. Considering all the slogans as a single linguistic body, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out to group the slogans into homogeneous thematic clusters and thus identify the different contributions to the general discourse exposed by the extreme right during the demonstrations (Guerra, 2020a). In the thematic analysis it was considered how different slogans could be intimately linked at a thematic and/or linguistic level and how the creative process of a slogan is generally collective and owes much to previous slogans enunciated by one's own political or even opposing side (Guerra, 2020a). The slogans were merged into a single textual body on which a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted with an inductive approach (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The inductive approach allowed the identification of the key themes contained in the collected slogans without resorting to pre-established categorizations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012; Guerra, 2013). The qualitative inductive thematic analysis had previously been successfully adopted to analyse political radicalism of right and left and through the study of the language-ideology nexus had made it possible to determine the key motivations that drive some people to militancy in radical groups (Guerra, 2021; 2021a;

2020; 2020a). The qualitative thematic analysis conducted on the 36 slogans collected made it possible to identify five thematic clusters that form the overall political discourse of the extreme right: (1) 'revolutionary slogans'; (2) 'anti-communist slogans'; (3) 'authoritarian-coup slogans'; (4) 'historical-political slogans' and (5) 'ironic slogans'.

The first thematic cluster named 'revolutionary slogans' includes 12 slogans (5; 7; 12; 13; 18; 19; 28; 29; 31; 32; 33; 35). The most recurrent lexeme within the cluster is 'revolution'. Through the overall analysis of the slogans contained in this cluster it was possible to identify how the concept of revolution is declined at the ideological level by far-right militants. First, the demanded revolution is conceived as antithetical to the existing political system which is identified as reactionary and repressive. The definition of the political system that governs the country as reactionary by far-right militants is an element that appears consistent with the generational revolts of 1968 and 1977 (Abram et al., 1988; Balestrini & Moroni, 2015; Bascetta, 1997; Benci et al., 2011; Berman, 2006). This first thematic cluster allows the understanding of how fascist ideology is interpreted and experienced by protesters. Those who shout slogans resort to lexical expressions such as: 'Sons of workers', 'corporatism', 'socialization', 'people's struggle', 'third position'. A lexical universe emerges that highlights how the fascist ideology taken as a model is not that of the Fascist regime but rather that of the origins of fascism and the last republican fascism. It is a markedly social fascist ideology that rejects the distinction between right and left by defining itself as a 'third position' (Rimbotti, 2018; Accame, 1990; Parlato, 2000; Sternhell, 1985; De Felice, 1997; Petacco, 1997).

The demonstrators shout their belonging to a concept of fascist ideology that opposes both communism ('red front') and capitalism ('reactionism') and that unites 'reds and bourgeois' in the same enemy front. Marxism and capitalism are considered two different sides of the same materialist ideology. It is an interpretation of fascist ideology that immediately appears in contrast with that of the two main extremist groups of AN and ON, which is instead characterized by strong Euro-Americanism and Western supremacism (Guerra, 2023). The concept of revolution that emerges in this first thematic cluster is characterized by a strong Europeanism and the militants shout their support for the 'nation Europe' which represents a geopolitical myth to be realized against a Europe then divided into American and Soviet areas of influence. The slogans highlight the adherence to the national-communitarian political thought of Jean-François Thiriart and his Giovane Europa (GE) [Jeune Europe] movement that had spread to various European nations since 1962 and asked Europeans to abandon the old chauvinist and fratricidal nationalisms in favour of a strongly anti-American European nationalism (Thiriart, 2019; 2018; 1965; Lebourg, 2007, pp. 95–108; Bastow, 2002, pp. 351–368; Sauveur, 1978).

The GE movement was also present in Italy and although it counted on a much smaller number of militants than AN and ON, its cultural influence on the Italian right was significant (Missiaggia, 2021) even though Thiriart's political and geopolitical thought was complex and considered too pro-European for nationalists, too nationalist for regionalists and too communist for fascists (Boutin, 1996, p. 133). GE is a movement with a strong intellectual dimension characterized by a deep Europeanism, a strong anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism, and several of its militants will implement strong political ruptures with neo-fascist nostalgia and far-right culture (Guerra, 2023). Among the militants of GE to stand out are Franco Cardini who will become one of the most important Italian medievalists, Claudio Mutti who will be the animator of Eurasian geopolitics in Italy and a young Renato Curcio who will become one of the founders of the Red Brigades (Missiaggia, 2021, pp. 22, 72–73). Some researchers highlight a possible contiguity between the strongly anti-capitalist thought of GE and the theory of the Imperialist State of the Multinationals [Stato Imperialista della Multinazionali] that Curcio will develop in the Red Brigades (Battarra, 1992). GE's political thought would require more detailed study and seems outside that political area alternatively defined as extreme right or neo-fascism although it exerts a certain ideological and cultural influence on it (Guerra, 2023).

Another dynamic highlighted by this thematic cluster is that far-right militants accuse the state of being repressive and persecuting right-wing groups. Part of the demonstrators are evidently not aware of the terrorist actions of AN and ON and considering the Italian state reactionary could even less accept a dictatorship or a military regime as AN and ON wish. A certain programmatic and ideological split emerges. While ON in its newspaper celebrates the *coup d'état* of the colonels in Greece with the title 'Long live the centurions of Athens!' (Noi Europa, 1967, p.1), GE harshly criticizes the coup as organized by the CIA and to the advantage of NATO and the United States (Mutti, 1967, p. 3). Contrasting positions are also present regarding the *coup d'état* and the dictatorship of General Pinochet in Chile. While AN and ON collaborate with the Chilean dictatorship and its secret services (Mayorga, 2003; Salvini, 1998), GE strongly criticizes the dictatorship and coup in Chile as tools of American imperialism.

The second thematic cluster resulting from the analysis is named 'anti-communist slogans' and consists of 13 slogans (4; 8; 9; 10; 11; 14; 15; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 36). These are slogans against the communist political opponent that well represent the climate of opposing extremisms in place in the country. Among the far-right slogans collected, the genesis of two of them can be traced back to well-known slogans of the radical left that had great popularity in those years within militant anti-fascism and which are the following: 'fascist carrion, returns to the sewer' [fascista carogna, ritorna nella fogna] and 'if I see a black dot I shoot on sight, either it is a priest or

a fascist' [se vedo un punto nero sparò a vista, o è un prete o un fascista]. During the Years of Lead the opposing extremists identify political viability with control of the territory and consequently the cities are divided into neighbourhoods of right and left with a struggle between factions that takes place street by street. It is in this warlike political climate that it is important to consider that the extreme left can count on a greater number of militants and the extreme right operates in the streets and schools in conditions of clear minority (Guerra, 2020a; Balestrini & Moroni, 2015; Bascetta, 1997; Abram et al., 1988). The extreme left, in addition to counting on a wider militant participation, is characterized by the consolidated techniques of militant anti-fascism that find linguistic representation in the widespread slogan: 'The Resistance has taught us, killing a fascist is not a crime' [la Resistenza ce l'ha insegnato, uccidere un fascista non è reato].

In historical reconstructions of opposing extremisms, a semantic neologism such as 'black hearts' [Cuori Neri] has been established to indicate right-wing militants killed by the violent practices of militant anti-fascism (Telese, 2010). Even today, particularly heinous murders such as the burning of Primavalle in 1973 (Mattei & Monti, 2008), the murder of Sergio Ramelli (Bussagli, 2015; Giraudò et al., 2007) and the ambush of Acca Larentia (Cutonilli, 2018; Cutonilli & Valentinotti 2009) find ample space in the political and historical debate (Figure 1.3). The far right's response to militant anti-fascism is violent and far-left militants are killed in ambushes with firearms, as in the cases of Valerio Verbano, Mario Lupo, Walter Rossi and Roberto Scialabba (Sidoni & Zanetov, 2013; Lazzaretti, 2011; Capocchetti Boccia, 2020; Staccioli, 2003, pp. 117–132). It is the phenomenon of opposing extremisms, of 'black hearts' and 'red hearts', which consists of a bloody spiral characterized by a succession of murderers, vendettas and counter-vendettas. The phenomenon of opposing extremisms is one of the constituent mechanisms of the Strategy of Tension because the climate of violence and its media echo become political tools for the demand for exceptional police measures and the establishment of an authoritarian regime (Tranfaglia, 1998, pp. 989–998; Vinciguerra, 1989).

This spiral of violence between opposing extremisms is well represented in the second thematic cluster identified through thematic analysis, not only for the content but also for the linguistic brutality of the slogans. Another aspect revealed by this second thematic cluster is the central and, in some ways, unifying role of anti-communism. The Italian political situation at the time reflected the typical climate of the Cold War and the two main mass parties, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the DC, competed for a parliamentary majority in a battle to the last vote (Formigoni, 2017; Teodori, 1998). The fear of a communist electoral victory is strong among the militants of the extreme right and during the demonstrations two types of anti-communist slogans are shouted. The first typology is represented by generic anti-communist



FIGURE 1.3 A leaflet of the Fronte della Gioventù (FdG), the youth organization of the MSI, in Florence that denounces the fire of Primavalle (Rome) in 1973 in which far-left militants of the organization Potere Operaio (PO) set fire to the home of a right-wing family causing the death of the brothers Virgilio and Stefano Mattei aged 22 and 8.

Source: Photograph by the author (2012), Document authorized for publication and present at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS–Fund Marcello Coppetti–Envelope 207).

slogans that do not refer to historical events or figures and represents the vast majority of slogans that make up the thematic cluster. The second typology is represented by two slogans (11 and 25) that instead invoke anti-communism as a continuation of the civil war that in Italy characterized the last phase of the Second World War (Fasanella & Pellegrino 2006; Cento Bull, 2012; De Felice, 1997; Pavone, 1991). While the first thematic cluster, ‘revolutionary slogans’, is characterized by a strong neo-fascist ideologization of the third-positionist type, this second cluster reflects a generic and generalist anti-communism not far from that of the right-wing current of the DC and the centre parties.

The third thematic cluster that emerged from the analysis of the collected slogans is that of ‘authoritarian-coup slogans’ which includes four phrases (2; 3; 27; 30). Far-right protesters call for an authoritarian regime for Italy like those of Francisco Franco in Spain and António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal, and call for a coup like those in Turkey, Greece and Chile (Ravelli & Cento Bull, 2018; Minuzzo, 1970; Mathiopulos, 1968). Although it is a thematic cluster with a limited number of slogans, it is politically relevant because it clarifies that which the anti-communism of the previous cluster leads to, namely the invocation of an authoritarian turn for the country. From an ideological and political point of view, these slogans conflict with those of the first thematic cluster identified. In the first cluster emerges a neo-fascism conceived in a social sense and as a third position equidistant from capitalism and communism, while the slogans of the latter cluster indicate a preference for a *coup d'état* like those that took place in other countries to keep them in the American geopolitical sphere of influence. Even the slogans previously examined that are shouted by the demonstrators against the repression imputed to the government in office do not appear compatible with those calling for the establishment of a pro-American and pro-Atlanticist military junta on the Greek and Chilean model. These are political and ideological contradictions that must be deepened with respect to both the organizational dynamics of the demonstrations during which the slogans are shouted and the political dynamics internal to the right and extreme right.

During the demonstrations the militants of the parliamentary right of the MSI and those of the extra-parliamentary right mingle in a universe of people who are united by the common aversion to communism but who aspire to very different solutions for the country (Guerra, 2020a; 2023). Most slogans incite a revolution based on a fascist ideology of the third position and on a Europeanism hostile to both the United States and the Soviet Union but are mixed with fewer slogans in favour of a coup and a pro-American and Atlanticist authoritarianism. An ideological rift emerges between those who are aligned on positions similar to those of GE and, although with less openness towards National Bolshevism, reject the Atlanticist geopolitical positioning of Italy and those who instead have a pro-Atlanticist position

typical of AN and ON, and hope for an authoritarian turn in this sense. The content of the authoritarian-coup slogans perfectly reflects the political aspirations of AN and ON and their violent actions within the Strategy of Tension aimed at authoritarian projects for the country. Such opposing political and geopolitical visions share the public space of the demonstrations for two main reasons. In the first place, the common anti-communism plays a unifying function and secondly the practices of militant anti-fascism towards right-wing militants who are in the minority push them to tolerate very different internal visions to achieve political viability. Militant anti-fascism, which adopts a very broad definition of what should be considered fascist and therefore pursued and effected (Bevere et al., 1974; Matteo, 2015, Lotta Continua, 1970; 1973), ends up forcing far-right militants to share public spaces despite different if not opposing ideas. The co-presence of Atlanticist-authoritarian and anti-American militants in the extreme right, which according to witness sources is often poorly tolerated by both sides, must also be correlated with the political path of the MSI, which represents the only electoral and parliamentary container that has relations with the groups of the extreme right.

In 1968, especially in the second half of the year, there was a significant international affirmation of conservative political forces. The victory of Charles De Gaulle in France and the American elections are part of this trend of international growth of conservative forces, and the candidacy of Richard Nixon in the American presidential elections takes on great significance for the MSI. For the first time MSI leaders, in particular Franco Maria Servello and Raffaele Delfino, openly engage in electoral propaganda among the Italian-American community in favour of the Republican candidate for the American presidential elections. MSI executives have close political relations with prominent members of the Nixon administration, including those with Massachusetts Governor John Volpe, who was a minister in the first Nixon government and then Ambassador to Rome in the second half of the 1970s (Sorgonà, 2013). MSI executives also have close relations with Thomas Pappas, the oil entrepreneur who from Athens manages relations between the Colonels' regime and the US government (Sorgonà 2013, pp. 120–121; Guerra, 2020a). The MSI makes public its Atlanticist geopolitical vision and its support for Nixon on the pages of the party newspaper in which Nixon is defined as 'the candidate of the right-wing alternative for American politics' (*Il Secolo d'Italia*, 1968, pp. 1–5). The influence of GE and its anti-American Europeanism is significant at the level of the militants and slogans that they shout during the demonstrations, but at the level of parliamentary politics instead the Atlanticism of the MSI prevails that looks at Nixonism as a model of a global anti-communism. The violent actions of AN and ON in close collaboration with the Italian and American secret services are even more Atlanticist in their objectives.