

PRELIMINARY HEARING SET FOR SIBILLA OPERATION (PERUGIA, ITALY, OCTOBER 10, 2024)

The preliminary hearing in the Sibilla repressive operation has been set for **October 10th**, at 10 a.m. at the Court of Perugia. On that date, the indictment will be requested for twelve comrades, including Alfredo Cospito (detained under 41 bis regime in the Bancali prison, Sassari). In all likelihood, Alfredo will be connected by videoconference. Following the removal of the crime of promoting or participating in a subversive association with the purpose of terrorism, the comrades are indicted on 19 different counts, including the main one, for incitement to commit crimes with the aggravating circumstance of the purpose of terrorism, concerning the **drafting and distribution of the anarchist paper ‘Vetriolo’**. The other charges (all but four aggravated by the purpose of terrorism) concern seven episodes of wall writings and two posting of banners, the publication of a leaflet by Circolaccio Anarchico (anarchist space opened in Spoleto between 2018 and 2022), two texts by Alfredo Cospito for specific initiatives in Bologna and France, five texts in the first months of Covid-19 and the first edition of the book *Quale internazionale?*, as well as the damaging of some Poste italiane (Italian post office) vehicles in Foligno during the hunger strike by anarchist comrades against the women’s AS2 section inside L’Aquila prison (2019).

Launched in the early hours of **November 11th, 2021**, Sibilla operation had the declared aim of targeting the anarchist paper ‘Vetriolo’ (as well as Edizioni Monte Bove, Circolaccio Anarchico and two websites, Roundrobin and Malacoda). Particularly deserving of attention in the eyes of the investigators was the publication of the interview with Alfredo Cospito, then a prisoner in Ferrara prison, which came out in three issues of the paper under the title ‘Quale internazionale?’ (‘Which international?’), later reissued in the booklet of the same name with a long appendix on the history of the Federazione Anarchica Informale. In the paperwork of the magistrates of Perugia, however, went to merge a previous extensive investigation of the prosecutor’s office in Milan significantly named ‘Vetriolo’.

With the Sibilla operation, the repressive forces experimented with the use of the accusation of incitement to commit crimes, with the aggravating circumstance of the purpose of terrorism, in order to affect anarchist publications and possibly distribute pre-trial detention orders among comrades accused of having drafted or edited militant texts, hypothesising **non-existent ‘inciting’ and ‘orienting’ capabilities** in an ambit like the anarchist movement, which is historically characterised by **an obstinate and radical autonomy of thought and action**. Also significantly, not least, the two websites involved in the operation were obscured on Italian territory.

To tell the truth, the preliminary investigation phase was not very lucky for the investigators. Faced with eight requests for precautionary detention in prison for a total of sixteen suspects, the GIP (preliminary investigation judge) granted six precautionary measures, excluding the associative crime (one arrest warrant in prison for Alfredo Cospito, already detained, as well as a comrade under house arrest and four with the obligation to stay in the municipality of domicile combined with the obligation to present to the judicial authorities to sign at local barracks). Only five weeks later, however, the Court of re-examination in Perugia annulled all the measures with an order that completely dismantled the charges on the merits. Against this, the public prosecutor appealed to the Cassation Court, which upheld the prosecutor’s appeal and

ordered a new re-examination hearing. However, the latter also confirmed with a long motivation that all precautionary measures were null and void.

In the meantime, misfortune continued to turn against the investigators, with the head of the investigation Manuela Comodi being sentenced to one year's detention for unauthorised access to documents in the public prosecutor's computer system and transferred to the civil court in Milan.

While, as has already been pointed out, the proceedings set a precedent against the anarchist publications, in a sense acting as a forerunner for further repressive episodes (we think in particular of Scripta Scelera operation against the internationalist anarchist fortnightly 'Bezmotivny'), it was above all against Alfredo Cospito that Sibilla had the most serious effects.

We cannot and will not overlook the role played by these events in determining Alfredo's transfer to 41 bis prison regime. Within the motivations that the repressive organs presented first to justify and subsequently – in the plot of institutional contradictions that matured during the hunger strike of 2022-'23 – to reaffirm the comrade's imprisonment in this infamous regime of annihilation, appear precisely those writings already under investigation in Perugia (and previously in Milan). Sibilla thus contributes, technically and also suggestively, a supporting function to the legal justifications for the continuation of the torture to which the comrade is subjected.

Evidently, **the State's decision to persevere on the path of an investigation that has so far proved extremely fragile is also to be found in the need to keep Alfredo in 41 bis.** It is no coincidence that an eventual trial will most likely end close to the expiry of the four years that the comrade is spending in this prison regime. An eventual sentence and the possible request for an extension of the 41 bis are therefore legally and politically interconnected. As a demonstration of what political will is behind this investigation, following Comodi's replacement, the role of public prosecutor was taken over by the chief prosecutor of Perugia, Raffaele Cantone.

This trial for us is above all an occasion to continue the struggle against 41 bis and in solidarity with Alfredo Cospito. On the other hand, the very presence of the comrade will represent a living contradiction to those who would like to keep him walled up alive.

Not forgetting the historical context in which this turn of events took place (think of the fact that the decision to transfer Alfredo to 41 bis occurred just a few months after the beginning of the war in Ukraine and was taken by the government of national unity led by Mario Draghi), **the season of extraordinary repressive intensity that we are currently experiencing must be qualified for what it really is: a manifestation of real war policies.**

For these reasons we urge a solidarity presence on the occasion of the preliminary hearing and during the eventual trial.

[September 2024]