

FACTS, STATEMENTS, INTERVIEWS AND OPINIONS ON THE HIGH SPEED TRAIN TURIN-LYON¹

Edited by Massimo Zucchetti – Politecnico di Torino
zucchetti@polito.it – zucchett@mit.edu

For all the English-speaking persons who would like to read some qualified opinions on the question of the High-Speed Train Turin-Lyon (TAV), that is proposed for construction in the north-western Italian alpine valley “Valle di Susa”, I have edited here some interviews and statements by Italian professors, experts, academicians, journalists, opinion makers.

1. Angelo Tartaglia, Professor at Politecnico di Torino (statements from an interview)

The technical people understand that the sums don't add up. They talk about this to the politicians who say they don't understand technical data and in the mean time, the work is to be done.

The central problem is that the goods trains In Italy travel at an average speed of 19 Kilometres per hour since they are often stationary waiting for passenger trains which get precedence. This is the bit of data to be improved.. It's not useful that goods arrive from France at 150 kilometres per hour if they then **pass** most of their time in the station when they arrive in Italy.

It makes sense to talk of High speed when the journeys are longer than 250-300Km. In Italy, if we look closely at the figures, we can see that 80% of the demand for passenger transport is for short journeys, less than 100Km. It's true that our trains are super-full on certain routes but only very few people go from one end of the country to the other. The routes that are most frequented are those where there is the greatest exchange of passengers.

A study commissioned by the Mountain Community of the Susa Valley carried out by a Transport Engineering Company, shows that the line would be justified if in the next few years there was 40 million tons of goods traffic per year making a total of 350 trains a day, every 4 minutes at the speed of 150 km/h, alternating with passenger trains at 300 km/h.

2. Marco Ponti, Professor at the Politecnico di Milano (interviews)

Marco Ponti - I am Marco Ponti, ordinary professor in the economics of transport at Milan Polytechnic (note from the author: one of the most important experts in the economy of transport in Europe and consultant to the World Bank).

Blog - Is the TAV in Val di Susa necessary for transport between Italy and France?

Marco Ponti -That line wouldn't seem to be indispensable, it would certainly have a very low priority in relation to other interventions because the **costs are really high** and the **traffic**, always going with the official figures, is really low, **among the lowest** of all the Italian valleys through the Alps.

¹ Most of the material in this note is coming from the English translations available on the site: <http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/>. All rights from the owner of the site and from the translators are reserved and acknowledged with the present statement.

Blog -What are the costs and what are the benefits of this endeavour? *Marco Ponti* -The costs that are officially forecast are for the whole line, not just the basic tunnel. That is 22 billion euro, but usually these forecasts are lower than the real costs. The Italian high speed train **cost three times** the amount forecast; the benefits for passengers are significant; but in this case the forecast number of passengers is very low, the line should thus be essentially for the **transport of goods**, but the goods traffic right now is **three million tons** a year and it has been in decline in the last 10 years and this seems to have limited growth prospects, because in the future it will have competition from the new **Gotthard tunnel** in Switzerland that goes more or less in the same direction. It seems unlikely that the traffic will saturate the existing line that can carry up to 20 million tons **without spending one euro**, it's unlikely to go over that threshold.

Blog -Why are the parties so persistent about this project that many people believe to be useless?

Marco Ponti -There's a strange story that everything to do with railways deserves a load of public money, while the road system that carries 90% of goods and passengers and even commuters, we have to remember, seems to be seen as the demon because of pollution but it doesn't make technical sense, nor from the environmental point of view.

Blog -Is this enormous environmental impact justifiable?

Marco Ponti -The environmental impact for any new construction project is pretty high, if the project is very useful then perhaps the benefits even the environmental ones can be more important than the emissions from the construction work, but in this case, given the really big doubts about the usefulness of the project, there's also the risk that from the environmental point of view the shifting of traffic from road to rail is very low and thus the benefits in the reduction of the environmental impact are very low. They are forecasting 14 trains a day where the capacity is 250. Goods traffic on rail is **in decline in the whole of Europe** with very few exceptions. Even in France rail traffic is in decline because the things that we produce are not raw materials, bricks or wood or coal, those things that went by rail two centuries ago. Today we are producing Armani outfits and microchips that it's more or less impossible to put on trains, if we want to increase the capacity of the rail system, but there's no need. It's much better to **intervene with technologies** that cost much less and can do quite a good job at dealing with any likely increases in demand, if the increases in demand happen, but up until now they have been like a **flat encephalogram**. I have to remember that the road system is overused in the whole of Europe, whereas the rail system is over subsidised and even still it's the road system that wins out. Why's that? Is it because people are stupid and wicked? No. It's probably because there are structural reasons that explain this. We have lifestyles and types of production that no longer are in agreement with the rail system.

In an interview with l'Espresso journal, Marco Ponti has made these further statements:

- The Italian system is largely under-utilised. On a normal line with double track, 240 trains a day can travel on it. And on a High-speed track (AV) up to 350 can. It doesn't make sense to add this enormous capacity on some of the segments, as there is not the demand for rail transport of this magnitude. Note that the AV lines are very costly.
- The railways in Italy all have to run along viaducts and go through tunnels. And the costs increase to stratospheric levels. At the same time, while the French AV is a "Light" AV, only for passengers, the model that we have chosen is mixed, passengers and freight, and is quite a lot more expensive.

- This model does not have any rational reason: the capacity of the existing network is far in excess of the demand and the goods that travel by train do not need to travel at 300 Kilometres per hour, 180 is more than enough. The cost of tunnels is proportional to the square of their radius: make them a bit wider and the cost doubles. If we need the trains to run fast, the tunnels need to be generous, otherwise an “ariete” effect is produced and it slows down the train. Conclusion: either we do like we did for the piece of AV track between Bologna and Florence, that was not finished because the costs rose to mad heights to create wide tunnels, or we do normal tunnels, as for the Frejus project, and have the trains running no faster than 120-150 kilometres per hour. So much for AV!
- An AV that costs nothing to the State already exists: the low cost flights. You can’t beat them above 500km. To go from Turin to Paris, is unlikely that you’ll take the Turin-Lyon. But it makes it even more improbable to square the accounts: AV needs enormous traffic flows to justify it. We are way off that. There are 30 long distance trains a day travelling between Milan and Turin and they are half empty: the number in the official estimates on the Frejus is about 12.
- At the beginning it was promised that the AV project would pay for 60% of its costs. Then this came down to 40% and finally it was established that 40% of the costs excluding the costs for the “nodes” near the cities, (really expensive). According to my simulations it would be around 20%; others estimate 23%. The system is destined for the default: the State pays. Many of these projects will get off the ground and then there won’t be the money to continue them and they will be restarted every time there is an election. The Turin-Lyon is a monument to dissipation: it will cost at least 13 thousand million, like 3 or 4 bridges over the Straits of Messina. Werner Rothengatter, world president of transport experts, in his “Megaprojects” has calculated that by the end, the cost of these massive schemes increases on average by 30-40 per cent.
- To develop innovation, we need to focus on technology rather than on cement. As far as employment is concerned, nowadays, the massive projects have a modest multiplier effect: manual labourers are not used as they were in the 1800’s. And then it is evident that our country has a great tourist value in the future. Thus there are more fruitful ways of spending money. Unless of course someone is promising themselves great business on the great works.

3. Marco Revelli, professor, sociologist and historian.

Forecast cost increase of 600%

Today we’re going to talk about the TAV, and the article is masculine because the acronym stands for “Treno ad Alta Velocità” (literally “High Speed Train”), Which I’m sure you all know about by now. The TAV is an exercise in futility from a transportation point of view, harmful from an environmental point of view and totally unsustainable from an economic and financial point of view.

All the figures have already been quoted, re-quoted and repeated and are now public knowledge and available to anyone who may care to go to the website of Alp-Info, this Country’s most important agency that monitors the flow of passengers and, more importantly, the flow of goods across the Alps. According to those who originally came up with this folly, in the early nineties that now infamous Turin – Lyon railway line carried a few million tons of goods across the border. Supposedly, the number of trains that carried those few million tons of freight at that time was set to

increase so much during the first two decades of the new century that they would overwhelm the old railway line, supposedly shooting up to more than 20 million tons per year. This would therefore make this major enterprise absolutely essential, namely cutting a 53 or 56km-long hole through the mountain and then go through yet more tunnels, another twenty or maybe thirty kilometres of tunnels, in order to enable at least 30 or 40 million tons of freight to be moved. However, those calculations were unfounded because they were based on a peak numbers rather than the trend. They used the peak flows of freight, but not only has the flow of freight not increased at all since then, but has indeed declined significantly. At the moment, the line is in fact currently only carrying some 2.5 million tons. It could be said that the current economic crisis is at least partly to blame for this state of affairs, so let's say that without the current crisis, the existing line would perhaps be carrying 3 or 3.5 million tons of freight, yet this would still only amount to about 1/6th of the existing railway line's carrying capacity, the one that would cost little or nothing to update a little. Road transportation of freight has also declined somewhat, but why? Well, because there has been a structural decline in the East – West traffic flow, in other words between France and Italy. The major traffic flows these days are North - South, connecting Italy to the centre, the locomotive of Europe. The French and Italian economies are highly stable, mature economies and there is thus a structural decline in the flow of heavy goods. We are able to provide services because we have now entered the era of intangible assets, but while materials goods will continue to be shipped, the quantities will continue to decline.

The TAV project is sheer folly, born in a different century, in a different context and in a different economy, yet they nevertheless continue to push the idea. It is also a very destructive project from an environmental point of view, but I don't want to belabour this point because anyone who goes onto the No TAV website will find an abundance of documentary evidence. Millions and millions of tons of material are being removed in order to create that crazy 53km-long tunnel that cuts right through a mountain that nobody knows what it may contain. In the Val di Susa there is an abundance of uranium mines, as well as a large number of materials that are distinctly hazardous to human health, although I also don't wish to address this point, so let's just consider these millions of tons of spoil, which is the technical term, spoil that will allegedly be used as landfill in the valley, thereby changing the valley's profile, creating dust and truly hazardous conditions.

Finally, the project is economically unsustainable. The overall cost has been estimated to be in the order of some 30 billion Euro, a small portion of which will be provided by the European Union. The rest of the money, however, will have to come directly from the Countries involved, namely France and Italy. The cost and the interest to service the necessary loans will put an additional burden on the State coffers and in the coming decades our children and grandchildren are going to be paying the price for this useless and hazardous project, which will cost around 16 to 20 billion Euro, assuming that the costs don't escalate. However, the costs of the Turin – Milan high speed railway escalated by some 600% during its construction, and please note that this line was built on relatively level ground, with no tunnels and all it involved were a couple of river crossings and a couple of bridges. That was a very simple route indeed, yet the costs skyrocketed by 600%, so we can only imagine what the cost overruns are likely to be on a project that starts off by drilling a 53 kilometers tunnel through a mountain? This is something that is public, something that anyone with a modicum of interest can work out for themselves, yet our politicians and public administrators, backed by a large section of the press have insisted on demonising those opposed to the TAV

project. If we read the newspapers we see that the anti-TAV movement has to be the most persecuted and hounded by a hidden yet extremely fierce Court of Inquisition working away behind the scenes.

The tangled web of politics and business

Any dissent is immediately punished, just think back to that little comment that Luca Mercalli made on the “Che Tempo che fa” television programme, and the agitated reaction that the comment elicited from the major dailies like La Stampa, La Repubblica and Il Corriere della Sera. The No TAV Movement is regularly and openly portrayed as the enemy, but why? Why this dogged determination to proceed at all costs with a project that is so patently useless, hazardous and unsustainable in any event? I think that what is happening in the Val di Susa is a general sign of the times, of what is driving the relationship between economics, politics and the media at this moment in time, and not only here in Italy either. It is a sign of what is happening throughout Europe and it can be broken down into three points: firstly, the existence of a dogma that is communicated in ideological terms, a libertarian, nay ultra-libertarian dogma communicated in ideological terms in the central halls of power and that then goes on to dictate policy in a purely mechanical manner. This dogma says that we have to do the kind of things that make large amounts of money go round, even if they are detrimental to society and social ties. The most important thing of all is profit and the biggest enemy of all are the people’s rights. In some ways, this is the logic by which the European Technocracy decided to create the major shipping channels by merely drawing lines on a map, but it is also the very same logic that has led not only the financial institutions, but also the political and European institutions to destroy Greece. This same logic, applied in a purely mechanical manner to other Mediterranean Countries is what has resulted in Italy’s financial agony and it is also this same logic that demands that the salaries, the rights and the income of a huge part of the population be reduced just when the economic crisis has already resulted in the weakening of the job market, weakening the position of huge numbers of workers and reducing the purchasing power of a significant section of the population. It is a folly, but it’s a kind of folly that is pursued on the basis of a dogma that is deemed to be unquestionable, the same kind of dogma that, notwithstanding everything and notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary, nevertheless dictates that our Country must go ahead at all costs with this bottomless pit that is the Turin – Lyon high-speed railway line.

The second part of the paradigm is the very tangled web that exists between politics and business, namely the concept of business as the only basis of politics and decision making and the role of politics being little more than to support business practices. Any decision that does not fit in with business interests becomes irrelevant and is simply dropped from the agenda. Whenever business logic comes into the picture, then everyone is in agreement, including the politicians because politics and money have now become synonymous and inseparable due to the prevalence of the belief that without money there will be no politics, and the fact that every political party now has its own business arm too. This arm can be direct, as in the case of Berlusconi and its immediate conflict of interests, or it can be indirect. Business interests can be complementary, for example the major shareholders of the political parties. I think of the relationship between the Democratic Party and the co-operatives. In the case of the TAV, this relationship was clearly highlighted from the word go with the close and direct co-operation between certain family-owned firms, certain Ministers in the Berlusconi Government and the CMC, namely the builders and carpenters co-

operative of Ravenna, whose members commenced the TAV works and are continuing with the works to this day. The relay team that is getting ready in the little fort of Chiomonte just in case the works should commence include a number of companies from the Valley, companies that have faced some legal battles in the past few decades, even rather demanding ones, as well as the Ravenna CMC.

This tangled web has is now even bipartisan and across the board and has become an established driving force of this Country's politics, irrespective of whether this project goes ahead or not, since there is money to be made in any event through feasibility studies, planning fees, surveys, etc. and this feeds the relationships between the public service decision makers and their backers. This is a pathological issue that is unfortunately becoming physiological.

90-Thousand Euro per day just to guard a hole in the ground

Finally, the crisis of representation is beginning to take its toll and there is a distinct breakdown in the relationship between the representatives and the represented, between the governors and the governed. In the Val di Susa, this relationship has broken down dramatically without any of the parties involved being concerned about it in the least because, in reality, they are worrying less and less about this kind of issue, even in a situation as dramatic as the one in Val di Susa, this growing detachment, this increasing gap between the decision makers' logic, which is becoming increasingly transversal, and the interests, the needs and the feelings of a people who are being deprived of a relationship with their own representatives. This explains the persistence in this folly, this doggedness that is costing around 90-thousand Euro per day just to pay for the security services, that army that the people of the Val di Susa see as an occupying force. Will the TAV high speed train ever become a reality? I'm sure that it won't because the money will run out long before it is completed, because we simply can't afford it and because the people of the Val di Susa will win out in the end. Their victory is inevitable, but why? Why am I sticking my neck out like this? Generally speaking, in politics people tend to say "most likely", "possibly" or "hopefully". I say that I am certain that the planned TAV will definitely never be completed in the Val di Susa" because the one thing that the politicians have not yet realised, and that is going to cost them very dearly indeed, is that the opposition to the TAV is not coming from a movement in the truest sense of the word. The No TAV movement is in fact much, much more. It is a population that is banding together, a groundswell that goes far beyond mere political affiliation. A wide ranging group of people who are rooted in the area, a number of different generations, including grandchildren, mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers, all taking part in the demonstrations that are perfect because, in some ways they are controlled by the people that organise them. Let's just take the last one as an example, the one at Chiomonte, which set off some serious alarm bells in the Val di Susa. This was the one where, I think for the first time ever, we witnessed a huge group of people walking along the mountain tracks without anyone getting injured, not even a twisted ankle, notwithstanding the fact that there were thousands upon thousands of people there. No fireworks were even set off even though, just the week before, there had been that demonstration in Rome that turned into a total slaughter!

So why so much control, you ask? Well, because in this case it was a territory that was demonstrating, not a political or political party gathering. It was merely a bunch of residents that is showing its opposition to the project on a daily basis. No one can win the battle against this type of resistance, just as it would be impossible to win a battle against an anti-colonial revolt or a battle to

occupy some other country. Sooner or later they will have to retreat because they simply cannot continue to use the Alpini Corps' Lynxes returning from Afghanistan to guard an area against invasion by the local residents for the next 20 years. I don't think that the politicians have realised this yet, but they will certainly have to pay the price in terms of violent delegitimisation, but also because, looking at the Val di Susa and looking at what is happening there under a microscope, anyone can perfectly understand what is happening in the world of politics and the level of degradation that the political hierarchy is reaching. From that, we can see just how rotten the core really is. For that reason, friends of Passaparola, keep an eye on the Val di Susa and keep watching that as yet nonexistent tunnel that will never, ever be completed and, of course, continue to spread the word!

4. Ferdinando Imposimato, magistrate and former Senator

The hands of the mafia on high speed

Hi to the friends of Beppe Grillo. I am [Ferdinando Imposimato](#), a former senator and a former member of the Antimafia Commission. Until 1992, I dealt with the "high speed" projects, because the "high speed" project in Campania was a factor that was destabilising and polluting democracy. From the moment that work started on the "high speed" projects, the mafia-type criminal organisations started planting bombs to discourage all the healthy companies in Campania and in other regions of Italy. When I was given the task of investigating criminality in Campania, I chose to concentrate on the "high speed" projects. I got the Police, the Carabinieri and the Finance Police to find out about the relationships between the "high speed" projects and the companies of organised crime and with the politicians that had relations with organised crime and after about a year starting from these questions that I asked the specialist teams within the State Police, the Carabinieri and the Finance Police, it turned out that this public work **cost 100 times more than the cost to realise the works** and not just that, but it was verified that many big companies did absolutely nothing, but they took the kickbacks of 30/40% and these companies that were the owners of the big daily papers, the big newspapers, like for example, Il Corriere della Sera, like Il Messaggero, like other newspapers, such as Il Mattino, and I realised that the State paid for this "high speed" that I considered to be absolutely useless given that for the journey between Rome and Naples it cut the journey time by **10 to 15 minutes while it was costing thousands of billions**. I wrote a report that I presented to the Commission for discussion. Unfortunately, it turned out that not only the politicians on the Right and in the Centre were involved, but even the politicians of the Left were. I was greatly embarrassed, however I could do nothing other than denounce the facts as they were without making an exception for anyone, in that I could not, even though I had been elected in the ranks of the Left as an independent, I could absolutely not gloss over the participation in this activity of corruption and even of collusion with organised crime, of all the politicians that had been indicated to me by the Finance Police, by the Carabinieri and by the State Police. Thus it happened that I went to discuss this report and I found myself completely isolated. Because all the members of the Antimafia Commission didn't take part in the sessions.

The TAV in Val di Susa is a useless project

I tried to carry out an investigation in an objective way and so I turned to the State's investigative bodies and I turned to the magistrates. I prepared 24 precise questions, without referring to anyone.

I said: “Let the investigative sections of the Finance Police find out what are the results of the “high speed” projects, what are the advantages, what are the costs, the companies, any possible relationships between the companies involved in the “high speed” projects with organised crime and with politicians and what is the effective cost.”

What really struck me is that while “high speed” projects cost a lot, on the other hand there were labourers who were striking because they weren’t being paid and they were working unofficially, off the books. I’m talking about labourers working in Campania, in Lazio, on the stretch between Naples and Rome. Obviously this matter extended to other parts of Italy, because I also went to have a look in Florence, even with the support of [Idra](#), this association that is fighting the “high speed” project in Florence. What were the results? There too there was the infiltration of the mafia and of the camorra and disproportionate expenses and above all there was destruction and the safety of people was put at risk because of tunnels that were harming environments that were the heritage of humanity. I am definitely against the “high speed” project in Val di Susa, because I believe that in that there would be a repeat of the same situation that I and so many other colleagues have uncovered in the Centre and in the South and in the north of Italy, that is enrichment, kickbacks, destruction of the environment with minimum advantages. Not just that, there would also be an increase in the public debt that would be then charged to the citizens.

5. Marco Travaglio, Italian journalist

Today I wanted to talk about the situation in our prisons, and we will get there eventually, but the news and the newsflashes of the past few minutes and hours have all been about the TAV, the high-speed goods train service for which, even according to what the Ministers and Deputy Ministers are whispering amongst themselves, our government and a large part of the opposition are obstinately, stubbornly and insanely busy militarising the Valle di Susa and the other valleys in Piedmont in order to force the people to accept a totally useless, damaging, costly, polluting and from certain perspectives entirely criminal structure that will not bring any benefit for the Italian economy, on the contrary, it is still going to cause major harm to all our pockets and to the health of the people living in the vicinity.

The State against its citizens

Last night saw the latest “clash”, as we have gotten used to hearing them referred to by the regime’s newspapers and television news broadcasts. The truth is that the valley has been further militarised and at the Maddalena things have gotten downright rough. They’ve got to the point of using truncheons and the public has resorted to throwing things at the policemen after becoming totally exasperated by a threat as catastrophic as a construction site that will be around for some 15 or 20 years and will poison those living in the vicinity. The policemen, on the other hand, have been sent in to protect private firms that won the tender contracts in anything but a transparent manner, as we will see in a moment, so that they can start work in time to avoid losing the precious European Union funding, or so we’re constantly being told, as if we have to fight for that European Union funding. If one fine day the European Union were to decide to fund the construction of a factory that shoots crap on people’s heads, what would we do then? Do we then start shooting crap on people’s heads just to get hold of that European Union funding? What is the logic behind this totem pole of European Union funding? Someone should take a closer look at what the funding is for,

whether or not we need it in the first place and whether or not we are even interested in the purpose. In this case, the area's inhabitants have decided that they are not interested in this project.

If the Italian people were to be called to vote in a referendum and they were duly informed on the issue, they would surely reject the project because it has long since become clear what the Italians think about this type of development that dates back to the 70s and 80s, the kind of development that is made up of monumental works involving lots of concrete, asphalt and monumental projects that no longer make any sense in the third millennium. Yet this government of dead people and this play-play opposition of equally dead people continues to get others to fight their battles for them or, as Ricucci so quaintly put it, "Acting like homosexuals but expecting everyone else to take in it the arse", namely those of the policemen, on the one hand, who are being forced to don anti-riot gear and, on the other hand the local population that is forced to battle against these policemen. Both sides are victims in a war that no one with even half a brain really wants, except those who have a vested interest in laying their hands on that money and perhaps even to share it out amongst themselves. It often happens that it is taken for granted that certain public works will go ahead at all costs and, as happens in the case of 90% of public works here in Italy, wherever there are public works, they go hand in hand with bribery and corruption. If those public works then grind to a halt for some reason, well, then the people that accepted the bribes either have to give the money back or they have to somehow ensure that the work can go ahead. It wouldn't surprise me if we were to find out one day that this is precisely what has happened with the TAV project, as it has with many other projects. Half of me wishes that this is indeed the case because then at least there would be some logical explanation as to why such an absurd and unpopular project would go ahead at all costs, even if it means militarising an entire valley for years, just to safeguard something that should never have happened in any event. In whose interests is it to turning the Maddalena, the Valle di Susa and the entire TAV area into a permanent battleground anyway? Why on earth would the political parties want to have protesters beaten up and removed, not only now but also many times in the past and heaven alone knows how many times in the future? What hidden motives could they possibly have? Either they are totally stupid or there is something that they're not telling us. The idea that they really love the TAV is too much of an insult to the average intelligence of anyone who is enamoured with it, even if they are merely representing the TAV project in institutional round table discussions. Amongst these TAV supporters is a man by the name of Paolo Comastri, who is not merely a disinterested spectator but also just happens to be the General Manager of the Company that wants to blast a great big hole through the mountain, and the company's name is LTF (Lyon Turin Ferroviaire). Just a month ago now, this Paolo Comastri was sentenced to 8 months of imprisonment by the Lower Court of Turin after being convicted of tender rigging in an attempt to influence the tender process for the construction of the Venaus winze, which is one of the preparatory works for the construction of the tunnel itself. On behalf of LTF, this Comastri fellow has ordered his attorneys to lodge a civil damages claim against certain people who have opposed the construction of this monster for many years already. It would appear that they have lodged claims for damages amounting to some 228 thousand Euro.

Now, there's no way that anyone who has been convicted of tender rigging should be allowed to continue sitting on any institutional panel whatsoever, and no politician, no Government, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration or Municipal Council representative should still be prepared to sit next to him, but why? Well, because he wasn't merely convicted on some unrelated

charge, for example livestock theft. So far, he has been convicted only in the lower court, based on wiretapped telephone conversations, which, if you care to go digging on Barbacetto's article on the Società Civile website, you will note that the wiretapped conversations in question were extremely eloquent indeed and revolved precisely around the fact that the TAV tender was rigged, so how on earth can the politicians and public administrators continue to discuss such matters with a man like Comastri? So you can see that there's certainly something that they haven't bothered to tell us but, by thinking about it and connecting the dots, a clear picture emerges and, more often than not, the picture that emerges is one of bribery and corruption, or at the very least one of tender rigging.

Obviously we must always keep our wits about us and the people who are demonstrating should keep their hands to themselves, which, I must say, is easier said than done for the people living in those areas, people who are seeing their own lives and those of their children and grandchildren come under threat. We should always encourage people to take it easy so as to avoid giving others any reason to take action against them and to avoid hurting anyone, but one of these days someone may well decide that flinging objects at someone is better than causing tumours or lung problems by establishing a construction site that may well release all sorts of mineral substances by drilling and blasting a 50 kilometre tunnel, plus a second 20 kilometre one, into a mountainside, all within a very small radius of a few dozen kilometres. So we shouldn't throw stones, but we have to do whatever we can to ensure that the tunnel never gets built. Personally, I don't believe that tunnel will ever be built but I do believe that this is a prime example of the fact that, as an infamous but well-travelled politician once said, it may well be a sin to think the worst of anyone, but one normally hits the nail on the head.

I'm sure that even those politicians that are defending the TAV project tooth and nail are only too well aware that the TAV project will never be completed because it's impossible to believe that the Italian Government is going to militarise the Maddalena, the Valle di Susa and all the other areas along the proposed route for the next 15 or 20 years. Not even the war missions in Iraq and Afghanistan have gone on for more than ten years and indeed the mission to Iraq has already ended and the one in Afghanistan is due to end sometime next year. Can you even picture a situation where we have the army on the ground, fighter planes and helicopters circling overhead and armoured cars standing by to protect the earthmoving equipment from the local population? Given that Italy is a democracy, I sincerely hope that the public will remember the names and surnames and the political party affiliation of those individuals who have applauded the militarisation of the valley and have forced the police and the public to injure each other in a war that is not of their own doing but that they have borne the brunt of. I sincerely hope that, when the time comes, the people will remember the Pdl, the Democratic Party, the Udc and the centre alliance, and particularly the Lega, the party that says that "we are the bosses in our own country", the party that stands for a "sovereign population" and "federalism" and that is now showing total disdain for that sovereign population, for the little homelands and for the local communities by forcing Rome, and perhaps even Brussels, to do something that should only be done with the total agreement and support of the Country's people. First they go out and get the people to vote for them, then they go ahead regardless with the unwanted works. They should have done precisely the same thing that the French did on the other side of the Alps, who first went out and got the people to vote for them, then they listened to what the voters had to say and gave the people what they could and then, and only then, did they go ahead with construction.

These public works cannot be undertaken without the people's agreement, there's no two ways about it! This has nothing to do with the NIMBY syndrome. It's not a case of "not in my back yard" because when something is really necessary, even if it is unpleasant it is only right that it goes ahead, even in my back yard. However, there is no need for this project, or rather, no one has really noticed any need for it except for a handful of bureaucrats and, I fear, also a few bribers and their beneficiaries. The only thing we can do now is to keep our wits about us and throw our weight behind the people that are demonstrating against the TAV and perhaps, seeing that this is a such beautiful area, we could organise some great, two or three day weekend trips in order to show our support for the people who are camped out there to guard the site on our behalf too, people who will still be there in the coming weeks and months, or longer, as long as this moribund government moribund opposition have the gall to continue trying to force the issue with their truncheons and earthmoving equipment.

Full prisons, incompetent governors

Now let's look at the issue of our prisons. Let's talk about our prisons because, like every summer since the Italian Republic became the Italian Republic, we are facing the apparently novel and unexpected problem of the summer heat and overcrowded prisons. Obviously this is no laughing matter because, for the inmates that are crammed into little foul-smelling cells like sardines, under inhumane and promiscuous conditions, there is indeed nothing to laugh about, but the question remains: how come Italy is the only Country in Europe that somehow finds itself every summer with more prison inmates than places available in the cells? I believe there are 70-thousand inmates but only 40-thousand cells, so we're heading towards almost double the number of inmates per available cell space! Cells designed to house two inmates now hold four, however, some cells are even housing up to ten inmates due to Italy's lack of organisation. Please note that, on the other hand, we also have cells standing empty in prisons that have already been built but have never been opened, and things like that. I don't know about you, but I can remember people like Minister Alfano and before him Minister Mastella, and Minister Castelli before them announcing major funding allocations and major investment in the construction of new prisons. There were supposedly major plans for building more prisons. There were marvellous solutions, however, did they ever even get around to actually building a single dog kennel? If they were to build some new prisons instead of digging useless new tunnels through mountains, then perhaps we could sort out this nonsense of overcrowded prisons once and for all. We need to understand precisely what we're talking about here, and that is that the emergency situation in our prisons results from the fact that there are far more criminals than the numbers that can be housed in our existing prisons. It has absolutely nothing to do with the possibility that there are currently people sitting in jail who shouldn't be there in the first place. Unfortunately, our jails are full of people who have to be there because they have broken Italy's laws. If we don't like these laws then we must change them but, at the moment, legal provisions mean that we have some 70-thousand people in our jails and paradoxically we can be thankful that our justice system is on the rocks and that, therefore, so many cases land up being statute barred and we are only managing to lock up the people responsible for one out of every ten crimes because, can you imagine what the situation would be like if our justice system was more efficient and we had to house, who knows, perhaps 100/120/150 thousand prison inmates, but why? Well, because we simply have too many, or indeed far too many criminals in this country and that's the real problem!

But have you ever heard anyone tackling this problem from this point of view? Namely the one above? Only from the above point of view? Definitely not! They always look at the problem and say that there are simply “too many people in prison”. It’s not a matter of too many inmates but rather a lack of prison facilities to house all these inmates and prison sentences should essentially serve two purposes: 1) prevent the criminal from harming honest citizens and therefore he must remain in prison, at least for a while, and 2) help to rehabilitate the criminal so as to reinstate him in society, in other words to help him to improve and not to get worse, at least that is supposedly the purpose.

Torture is not an acceptable penalty, yet we are torturing the prison inmates. The prison inmate should merely be held taken out of circulation and held in custody in a special facility, perhaps even in solitary confinement if necessary, yet what we’re inflicting inhumane conditions on people, something that is not permitted either by Italian Law or by International convention. The inmate must be allowed to live in a decent and dignified manner, irrespective of whether he/she has been tried and sentenced to jail for a number of years or whether he/she is in jail while awaiting trial in order to prevent him/her from potentially tampering with evidence or perhaps escaping, threatening witnesses or committing further crimes. We have always been told that our Country’s habit of throwing people in jail before putting them on trial is inhumane, but we have seen that the United States also does the same thing (see the Strauss-Kahn case) as do all other countries because, anywhere in the world, when someone gets caught with their fingers in the cookie-jar, the chances of them trying to escape, or to tamper with evidence, or to threaten witnesses, or for that matter to go on to commit other crimes is rather and the only way to prevent that from happening is simply to lock them up first.

Obviously, other Countries have one, or maximum two levels of justice, one dealing with the merits of the case and the second dealing with the procedural propriety, so when a person is convicted based on the merits of the case, he/she goes to jail to begin serving their sentence and it is from there that the individual may lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court. But why is it that we’re being told that we have too many prison inmates awaiting trial? Well, perhaps it has something to do with the fact that they may be awaiting their third trial, after having already been convicted in the lower and second level courts, or are awaiting trial in the second level court, or awaiting their appeal on a ruling handed down by the lower court, while other countries simply don’t have any such thing as second and third level merit-based courts, so they don’t have these hordes of people awaiting trial and that’s the reason why our statistics are so skewed, all because other countries have fewer levels of justice.

But do we have really too many prison inmates when compared to the number of crimes? We have already said no, indeed we have too few prison inmates given the number of criminals that get off scot-free, either because we are unable to track them down or because their cases fall victim to statute barring. Do we have more criminals per capita than other Countries do? No, we are below the European average and there are certain other Countries where, just by the way, the crime rate is the same as or lower than ours, but that have more prison inmates than we do for more or less the same size of population, so what’s the problem here in Italy? Well, we have far too little prison space and what we do have is absolutely disgusting so, in order to increase the number of available cells and to improve the conditions for the inmates, we have to build new prisons. This could be one way of creating more jobs and redirect the resources being wasted on useless projects, like for

instance the TAV, to more useful things, after all, even notwithstanding the European Union funding, the TAV project is set to cost a further 15 to 17 billion Euro, which we would have to pay, so we may as well move that money to the prison construction budget and thereby sort out something that is causing us a major headache within the European Union context since we are constantly being condemned for the slowness of our justice system and the inhumanity of the conditions in our prisons and accused of violating human rights. In this regard, Pannella is right, and as we know Pannella is always right, in his analysis of the situation. The only area where he is wrong is in what he claims is the solution, namely to grant pardons. Over the past 50 years, indeed it is now 65 years of our history as a Republic, there have been around 50 provisions issued, between pardons, amnesties and clemency provisions. In order to thin out our prison population, we tend to adopt what Davigo jokingly referred to as the scholastic solution, namely “kick out the trouble-makers”. In other Countries, instead, they first stop and give the issue some thought, namely how many cells do we need in order house those who belong behind bars? We will need X-number of cells. Great, then let’s build X-number of cells! They may even be out by 100, 200 or even 300 units, but certainly not by 50%. We instead have politicians that continue to make laws that produce increasing numbers of detainees, without ever building new prisons to house them and not even enough to replace our ageing prisons that are falling apart at the seams and should actually be shut down. Therefore, we are losing cell space while the number of prison inmates continues to rise, partly due to the influx of illegal immigrants into our Country and, once here, they have a greater propensity for turning to crime because they have no jobs and no identity, indeed they prefer to come to Italy because they know that this is more of a paradise for criminals, after all, this Country is currently being governed by a bunch of criminals so it’s not surprising that since the guys at the top are setting the example, anyone coming to this country will immediately begin to behave in the same manner. This is happening just when we are losing cell-space, but why is Amnesty not the answer? Well, firstly because it acts as a disincentive and each time it is applied it further increases the sense of impunity, which is already a major problem as it is. If word were to get out that Italy is about to grant its umpteenth amnesty in the five years that have passed since Mastella’s pardon, with the centre-right and the centre-left agreeing virtually unanimously with the exception of the Lega, part of the Alleanza Nazionale, Di Pietro and the Italian Communists, if word were to get out that we are about to grant yet another Amnesty, you’d better believe that the idea of becoming a criminal will undoubtedly become far more attractive than that of honest work and will obviously also increase the criminal’s sense of impunity and also the belief amongst Italians that crime does indeed pay, but why? Well, because if amnesty or pardon is granted on a regular basis every few years, it means that you, as a regular offender between amnesties or pardons, will always get off scot-free and the situation becomes a bit like that famous comedy film in which Sofia Loren becomes the ideal scapegoat for petty criminals because she kept on having more kinds one after the other and every time the police nabbed her they couldn’t hold her because she happened to be pregnant at the time!

Therefore, amnesty is the wrong option, and it is also the wrong option because it is not the solution to the problem. Amnesty is like trying to drain the ocean using a teaspoon, without taking into account the fact that the next wave will replace whatever has been drained, as we saw with the pardon where, 6 months later, the prisons were once again full to the brim as they were before the pardon, but why? Well because you can’t solve the prison overcrowding problem by letting out a

certain number of inmates, but rather by housing more inmates in more hospitable facilities and deterring more people, in other words working upstream to try to shut down the inflow of new offenders at the source, but why? Well, when it comes to certain crimes, it is inevitable that the offender will land up behind bars, no amnesty and no pardon, they will know that they are going to serve time, but why? Well because there is no such thing as a great place to be imprisoned, no good alternative to jail time has yet been invented and I don't believe that any such option will ever be invented to keep dangerous people out of society or to encourage people to avoid having to go to prison. Why can't you frighten white collar criminals by imposing fines? Well, because they have loads of money so having to pay a fine means absolutely nothing to them and the only real fear that the Strauss-Kahns or Tanzis of the world have is the fear of landing up behind bars.

There is no other more efficacious deterrent than a jail term and, the longer it is, the more it becomes even a better deterrent than the death penalty, but why? Well, because whichever way you look at it, it means spending day after endless day, week after endless week, month after endless month and year after endless year in confined space amounting to just a few square metres, so there is no better deterrent than that, obviously within the limits imposed on us by our democratic system and the human rights charter. Therefore, in the case of certain money and blood-related crimes, jail time is the only deterrent that is perhaps able to prevent these people from harming the public ever again, however, there are certain other situations, such as administrative violations, where perhaps a little more leniency may be appropriate. Downgrading a crime does not however equate to legalising the behaviour in question. All it means is removing an offence from the list of criminal offence and reclassifying it as an administrative offence or merely a misdemeanour. If our public service was working properly, there would be any number of things that should be punished, but these should be punished by means of fines, not prison time. For example, convalidating the same ticket twice on the public bus or the underground is currently classified as a criminal offence. There are people that crunch their ticket and then crunch it again later so as to avoid paying the fare twice and this is currently classified as a criminal offence, which means that there must be a full investigation and a preliminary court hearing. In fact, this normally results in an immediate summons, court case in the lower court, an appeal and then a Court of Cassation hearing, but how much does it cost us to go through this long drawn out procedure, all for a bus or train ticket that costs one Euro or 1.20 Euro? But what kind of damages are we talking about here? One Euro, or 1.20 Euro in total. The individual bought one ticket and used it twice, so the total loss to the community is equivalent to 1.20 Euro, so it is madness to put the person on trial for this offence, pay the Police to conduct an investigation, pay the Public Prosecutor to prosecute, pay a single judge to hear the case, pay 3 appeal court judges to hear the appeal, plus a chief prosecutor to request the confirmation or the overruling of the lower court ruling, pay 5 Court of Cassation judges to hear the final appeal and once again also a chief prosecutor to present the prosecution's case, not to mention the defence attorneys, who are often provided by the State anyway since it would appear that the accused would not be able to afford his own attorneys. So, what does it cost us in the end to try this individual that broke the law by crunching the same 1.20 Euro bus or train ticket twice? Does this seem logical to you? It is also a criminal offence to tamper with parking tickets. If you scratch the ticket, which is done using a pen or pencil, and then use it to park twice on the same day, this is classified as a criminal offence, does that seem logical to you? What is the extent of the loss when compared to the cost of a trial?

Abolish all the useless classified crimes

We keep on flooding our courtrooms with bullshit like this. I was told to “fuck off” by environmentalists and animal lovers when I stated on Anno Zero that perhaps a government that is wanting to allow magistrates a certain amount of discretion when it comes to criminal cases, because we are told that they are totally swamped with work and should therefore be allowed to decide which cases to prosecute and which ones not to prosecute, should not be bothering to classify animal abuse as a criminal offence. The environmentalists and animal lovers immediately took me to task on this statement, making me out to be in favour of people who ill-treat and abuse animals, but nothing could be further from the truth. All I was trying to point out was that perhaps we should simply slap a hefty fine on anyone who is caught abusing animals, a fine that will make their eyes water and, by all means, take every penny he has! This would be a far better deterrent than any trial, which, because of the severity of the penalty and given our totally ridiculous justice system, would probably land up being statute barred anyway, long before any final conviction.

So, the way things stand at the moment, the only thing that classifying animal abuse as a criminal offence has managed to do is to cause additional bottlenecks in our courts and these cases never go anywhere because they become statute barred long before they can ever be completed, whereas, if they were to hand out some real tear-jerking spot fines instead, it would act as a far more effective deterrent, with only one appeal allowed, and that’s that. So the deterrent effect would be far greater, but why? Well, because at least they would be hitting offenders where it hurts, namely in the wallet, whereas a trial is nothing more than a little hot air and some shuffling of paperwork and, when all is said and done, the offender calmly walks out as a free man! Are you aware that trials are being held against people who keep pythons as house pets and have perhaps been reported by a neighbour who happened to notice the snake at some time when it was unwell? I was told about this by an attorney friend of mine, and these cases wend their way through three levels of justice before eventually being statute barred, can you believe it!

There are numerous so-called crimes that could be far more effectively resolved by issuing fines. Instead, these guys have continued to come up with all sorts of crimes that we all know could never be successfully prosecuted anyway. Take the criminal offence of illegal immigration, for instance. Before the European Union stepped in, this criminal offence carried a penalty of jail time, whereas now there are certain fines, but what is the use of fines you may well ask? If the individual is homeless and penniless, how is he ever going to pay a fine? We are now going to be holding a trial where the individual will eventually be ordered to pay a fine, which he will never pay anyway! We land up paying for that trial that is going nowhere and meanwhile the illegal immigrant has disappeared! You must read this book written by an Assistant Public Prosecutor from Turin, Paolo Borna, a book that is all about the illegal immigration and other errors that both the left wing and the right wing have committed over the years. He explains the level of insanity of those who have been in charge of this Country’s immigration policy for the past number of years, an extremely important matter that should be handled by people who actually know what they’re doing. The book is published by Editori La Terza.

So we’re putting ghosts on trial, namely illegal immigrants, and in the end we levy fines on individuals who is no longer around, who can no longer be traced and who, even if we did know where to find them, they would never pay the fine anyway because they are totally destitute. So they keep on dreaming up these new laws and we are holding trials that are headed nowhere, also

because these criminal offences are dreamed up by sick minds, after all, what the hell is illegal immigration anyway? How can it ever be a crime to simply move from one Country to another? Robbery, murder, rape, fraud, now those are criminal offences, but it cannot be a crime to enter another country, after all, goods move freely between countries and we even throw away loads of money on the TAV in order that these goods can move around more freely, as if they moved using their own legs and feet! Have we gone totally crazy? What kind of criminal offence is that then? Dumping refuse in the streets, a criminal offence, I ask you! The public prosecutors office of Agrigento alone opened 40 thousand case dockets for in the first 3 months of this year, for the 20 thousand illegal immigrants from North Africa. Can you even imagine just how much time it has taken for a public prosecutors office with 8 assistant prosecutors and one chief prosecutor to open those 40 thousand case dockets? Not to mention all of the dockets that have to be opened for the entire Province of Agrigento because two separate entries need to be made in the crime registers: one entry recording the crime of illegal immigration and a second entry recording the individual's entry into the country without any identity documents. Then multiply this by 40 thousand! Now this is something that should be scrapped. They should scrap those regulations that criminalise innocent people, needlessly cause bottlenecks in our courts and perhaps even provide for summary arrest for what? One or two days? If I remember correctly, some 60% of detainees are not people that stay locked up for a few months or years, but constitute a regular stream of detainees apprehended on a regular basis, time and again, but why is this? Well, because they come in today and get out tomorrow and go on their way, only to be re-arrested the next day and so on and so forth, and each time they increase the average daily arrest statistics.

What sense does it make to arrest someone today only to release him/her again tomorrow? Where's the logic? Just think about the work that goes into detaining someone, only to let them go the next day. So perhaps it would be better to arrest only those people who need to be arrested, or else leave the people alone because it makes no sense to arrest someone and release them again the next day. They have created laws that mean absolutely nothing as regards public safety but are merely designed to reassure the public. Laws designed to show that the State is acting tough, meanwhile, behind the scenes, the state is nothing but a scarecrow because it does not frighten anyone who understands how it works. They are merely creating statistics. We made 40 thousand arrests, however, no one knows about what happened to those 40 thousand people the very next day! Reassurance policies, not security policies, that is what has been fed to us for the past 20 years and this is the end result, crazy laws, overcrowded prisons and escalating crime rates, but why? Well, because their style of crime control is about as effective a deterrent as a scarecrow is.

So, as I was saying, downgrade whatever criminal offences can realistically be downgraded, change whatever laws are creating unnecessary prison inmates or utilise tools that will allow us to reduce the numbers of prison inmates. Some of these have already been applied, and here I'm not referring to the usual lighter sentences because we already have some 30thousand people that are out of jail and under the supervision of social services or under house arrest and it's no use increasing this number because we know only too well that they are not particularly well supervised at all. There are numerous cases of people who were supposedly under house arrest but that went out and committed other crimes, so there is already an alternative penalty that is not working and, in my opinion, there is no reason to increase its use. The Bossi – Fini Immigration Law is producing some 10 to 13 thousand new detainees per year, which is equivalent to almost 20% of the total, and the

sections of this law that are not working as they were intended should be changed as required. For example, instead of arresting an immigrant who has no identity document and give him a “Via” (literally “Get out” order) form, which means nothing anyway because these people won’t simply “Get out”, they must be loaded onto aircraft and we must pay to fly them back to their respective countries of birth once they have been identified. So spend some money on a credible expulsion policy, rather than on some make-believe policy. Currently we are only repatriating one out of every four illegal immigrants that should in fact be repatriated and so, instead of arresting them and overcrowding our prisons for another 2 or 3 days for each of the people arrested and then issuing them with a useless Get-out order, we may as well implement a repatriation policy that won’t cost us anything more, and thereby avoid unloading a problem that has nothing to do with the prison department onto our prisons, a problem that has to be resolved in an administrative manner.

Then there is one article of the Bossi – Fini law that should be applied, namely the article that enables the judge to give a non -EU detainee two years off his sentence in exchange for voluntary repatriation. Given that out of a total of 20 thousand odd non-EU detainees in our prisons, some 6 or 7 thousand have two years left to run on their prison sentences, give them those last two years off in Exchange for voluntary repatriation and let’s get rid of them that way, instead of leaving them in their prison cells and thus exacerbating the overcrowding. But they haven’t yet applied this article, partly because there is no money available to repatriate these guys and partly because the immigrant shelters have become a flourishing business opportunity. We really have to be exceptionally careful of immigrant shelters becoming a flourishing business opportunity.

Then there is also the former Cirielli Law of 2005, which introduced an American style “three strikes and you’re out” system, as well as a sentencing procedure that provided for alternative penalties and the individual could be given a suspended sentence or allowed house arrest under the supervision of social services, something that, thanks to the Cirielli Law, is no longer an option if the individual already has three previous convictions against him, irrespective of the type of crime he has committed. In other words, someone who has two previous convictions for rape or armed robbery murder can have his detention suspended and essentially walk around freely. Instead, in the case of someone else who has 3 previous convictions for stealing 3 provolone cheeses from three different supermarkets, it makes no difference that stealing provolone cheeses is a far less serious offence than rape or armed robbery, all that matters is that he has three previous convictions, whether they be for stealing provolone cheeses or for ripping CDs and selling them at a market stand, he will be liable to spend 5 years in prison. The ripping of the CDs, or whatever the third offence may have been will automatically land you in jail for the first two offences as well, whereas the individual who is only convicted twice, never mind how serious the crime may be, has a good chance of avoiding prison. This is a truly crazy law that does not differentiate between different crimes in any way whatsoever and does not take into account the issue of danger to society, so what do we do? We keep relatively harmless petty thieves locked up and we let serious criminals out, including white-collar criminals of course.

So what I’m saying is that these regulations need to be abolished, but why? Well, because all they do is produce more and more petty criminals and it really is no use locking up someone who has stolen 3 provolone cheeses, while it is instead very important to lock up someone who has perhaps committed two rapes or two armed robberies for a very, very long time indeed. Shake off your schizophrenia and look out for those taps that let out too many detention orders. Reduce them to a

minimum without negatively affecting public safety. Repatriate those illegal immigrants that should be repatriated, thereby reducing the overcrowding in our prisons. Downgrade the ridiculous criminal offences to mere misdemeanours, those that can be more effectively addressed by means of administrative or preventative penalties and fines. But in order to achieve this, we need to have intelligent politicians, not necessarily geniuses but relatively intelligent nonetheless. Read the transcriptions of the wiretapped telephone conversations between Bisignani and the Ministers that were virtually kneeling before him and you will realise that we are currently being governed by people that are not only dangerous, but also extremely stupid, of very mediocre abilities and totally insane as well, and then we ask why we have overcrowded prisons? Amnesty to resolve the problem of overcrowded prisons? Pardons, protests against the TAV, let 'em have it, which is the usual response of people who only have half a working brain cell between the lot of them, and fortunately even that is busy shutting down. Spread the word!

6. Beppe Grillo, Italian politician, artist and opinion maker

The nine common sayings in favour of the TAV project and why they are wrong: I'm listing a series of common sayings about the Susa Valley with comments from the No TAV campaign. If there exists a Pro-TAV campaign that wants to provide contrary information to these points, send me an email and I will publish it. If it is not possible to prove that these points are not correct, then we need a European Committee of Inquiry.

“The nine common sayings”

1. 1 WITHOUT THE TURIN-LYON, PIEDMONT WOULD BE ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF EUROPE

In reality, Piedmont is already abundantly connected to Europe and above all through the Susa Valley. In this valley there are already 2 main roads a motorway and a dual track train line for passengers and freight. There is even the so-called motorway-train (transport of HGV by special shuttle trains). They are all connecting lines with France going through two natural passes (Monginevro and Moncenisio) and two artificial tunnels (Frejus for trains and for motorway). All this fits into a valley floor that is on average 1.5km wide! Even the river, the Dora Riparia has trouble squeezing in, and every so often it floods.

2. THE EXISTING TRAIN LINES ARE SATURATED

In fact the existing Turin-Modane train line is only used at 38% of its capacity. The HGV shuttle leaves every day desolately empty. (But they were rediscovered and pounced upon in the period when the Frejus tunnel was closed after the fire.) The direct train connection Turin-Lyon was suppressed because there weren't enough passengers. And the flow of goods – forecast by those who want it the work in exponential growth – is in fact down by 9% in the last year!

3. THE TURIN-LYON IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE ECONOMIC REVIVAL OF PIEDMONT

In fact the opposite is true. By removing resources (it's all public money) from research, innovation, the recovery of industry in deep crisis (Fiat and others) , the TAV will be the final blow to Piedmont's economy.

4. 4 THE TAV WILL REMOVE THE HGV FROM THE VALLEY

In fact just to kick off, the 10-15 years of work needed to construct the Turin-Lyon will bring to the roads of the Valley and to the area around Turin something like 500 lorries a day (and night) to

transport the material from the excavation from the tunnel to stockpile sites, with a great increase in pollution and dust. Once the apocalyptic phase of building sites is over and the Great Work is realised, who says that the merchandise will pass from the motorway to the new railway? The opposite will happen. The promoters of this work and recent transport engineering studies tell us that only 1% of the current road traffic will transfer to rail. Massive advantage.

5. 5 THE PEOPLE OF THE SUSVA VALLEY ARE EGOTISTS AND DON'T CONSIDER THE INTERESTS OF ITALY.

In fact, at the moment 35% of the goods crossing the Alps go through the Susa Valley! Along the Frejus Motorway 4,500 HGV pass every day. This can be compared to the 1,500 passing Mont Blanc in the Aosta Valley where the number of HGV is limited by law.

6. THE TURIN-LYON BRINGS WORK TO THE PEOPLE OF PIEDMONT.

In fact, as is already happening for all the structural work currently going on, this is short-term work carried out to a great extent by manual workers from outside the European Union. Also, the contracting firms bring in their own technical people and workers from their own Regions (there's a saying that you get your wife and your cows from your own village – but here they'll get their firms and their cows from their own village). For the towns and villages of the Susa Valley and the area round Turin, a great problem would arrive: the mafia. Turbulent tendering processes have already been identified in the phase of geological surveys on behalf of politicians from Piedmont and others. Who knows what we'd see for the actual construction work!

7. THE TRACK IS ALMOST ALL INSIDE THE TUNNEL. WHAT HARM WILL IT DO?

In fact it will do a great deal of harm. The route involves a 23 kilometre tunnel inside the Musinè, a mountain where there is much asbestos. The machine that perforates the rock will send into the air quite a lot of asbestos fibre. Invisible and lethal. The wind will carry it everywhere. The wind called the "foehn" will take it as far as the centre of Turin. Breathing in asbestos fibre causes a tumour of the lungs (mesotelioma pleurico), which doesn't give you a chance. Asbestos is a material that has been outlawed since 1977. To excavate tunnels in a place like this is illegal and criminal. And what's more: The 53Kilometre Italy -France tunnel excavated inside the Massiccio dell'Ambin (Ambin mountain) will encounter (apart from water sources and springs that will be destroyed) rock containing uranium. And what's more: A railway in a tunnel needs loads of tiny tunnels, at right angles to the main tunnel. They are called service tunnels – or "windows". There will be 12 of them. These will need their own construction sites, all in areas where there are villages and houses. It will be a type of hell with noise and dust and lorries going back and forth on narrow village roads, day and night for at least 15 years. And what's more: the tunnelling of such long sections in the mountain near to densely populated towns and villages may dry out the water tables and the aqueducts, as has happened for the TAV tunnels of Mugello, for which trials are going on now concerning environmental disaster. And what's more: The road system will be turned upside-down. Over-passes will be constructed at each site of works. Perhaps these new roads will be calculated as compensation in regard to the environmental impact of the work? (To have a vague idea, go and tour round the Turin-Milan motorway and see the upset caused by the Turin-Novara TAV).

8. THIS WORK IS GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY BECAUSE IT RELEASES PRIVATE CAPITAL INTO THE MARKET.

In fact the estimated cost of 20 thousand million Euro is all charged to the public purse. All public money, but entrusted to private firms according to the diabolical invention of the general contractor.

It is guaranteed by the Italian State. Nobody private will put in a Euro, especially after the experience of the tunnel under the English Channel. That sent into bankruptcy those that bought bonds. The incredible amounts of money that are needed by this work will be taken from the existing railway lines (already in a disastrous state), from hospitals, schools, and all public services, and from the development of renewable sources of energy to replace petrol. And what's more: It has already been forecast that the new Turin-Lyon railway line will have very high management costs and will be making a loss for scores of years. And what's more: Notwithstanding the fact that most of the route is in French territory, the Italian Government has accepted to cover the cost of two thirds of the International route (Borgone – St.-Jean-de-Maurienne). Anyway it's us that pay.

9. WHOEVER IS AGAINST THE TURIN-LYON IS AGAINST PROGRESS.

In fact, the opposite is true. Progress must not be confused with infinite growth. The territory of Italy is small and is over-populated. Natural resources (water, agricultural land, forests, minerals) are limited. Pollution and refuse increase without limits. Petrol supplies are coming to an end. Progress means understanding that physical limits exist to our mania to construct and transform the face of the planet. Progress means optimising, making more efficient and durable that which already exists, cutting out what is superfluous and investing in intellectual and cultural growth more than material, using the mind more than muscles. The TAV represents the exact opposite of this idea; it is an old project that is now an anachronism. It foresees infinite growth in the volume of goods to be transported (that will then be the refuse of tomorrow). It privileges as values only speed and quantity. It ignores quality and whether and why we need to transport something.”

7. Alberto Perino, leader of the No Tax Movement

Beppe Grillo's statement, on the January's 2012 arrests: “An operation of geometric power has taken place in Italy. The Police made 26 arrests across all the territory of our nation. The hour marked by our destiny (the arrests took place at about 5:00 am in the homes of the criminals) rang out in the skies of our Fatherland. 15 people have been notified of their obligation to stay home. Three community centres were searched. The restoration of the rule of law took place in Val Susa, as well as Asti, Biella, Cremona, Milano, Turin, Trento, Palermo, Rome, Padua, Genoa, Pistoia, Macerata, Bergamo, Parma and Modena. Even in France with an international arrest. The GDP is exultant. The red and white cooperatives are exultant. Bersani and Fassino are exultant. Monti and Passera are exultant together with the banks and the Confindustria. The 'ndrangheta is exultant. The Italians and the public debt a bit less. The TAV for the transport of goods will cost us 22 billion euro for the creation of a useless tunnel along a route that has seen a constant reduction in traffic for decades. I am a person of the Val di Susa! It'll be difficult!”

Alberto Perino: “What's happened today is not a surprise because since before Christmas we've been expecting this “[blitz](#)”. This blitz has been carried out for two specific reasons: 1) to give Italy an incorrect message, but intentionally incorrect so as to make people believe that the No Tax Movement is no longer a Movement of the people, but a Movement that has been polluted by a load of antagonists from all over Italy. It's not by chance that they have arrested two people from the valley and all the others from all over Italy. But above all, this message has been delivered here today to give a really strong signal to all those who are trying to raise their heads against the Monti government and against the “porcate di Monti” {Monti's filthy stuff}, to say: “Dear ladies and

gentlemen stay calm, tranquil. Allow yourselves to be sheared in absolute silence, because anyone who allows themselves to raise an objection will be thrown into prison.” This is the signal because given that the No Tav Movement was a visible movement in the Italian panorama and it was seen by many people as a beacon of resistance and of liberty, by attacking the No Tav Movement they want to send back to their lair all those that are trying to lift up their heads once more against this dreadful government! In the valley they have arrested a town councillor held in really high esteem throughout the valley. He’s accused of having used a crutch to resist the police. At that time he had a leg out of use. The police were clearing the area against the shields of the police who had come to clear the “la Maddalena di Chiomonte” on 27 June 2011 and the other one is a barber from Bussoleno who didn’t participate in the demonstration on 3 July and that was the same zone where there was Beppe Grillo and where they gassed us all, including Beppe!”

Conclusions (Massimo Zucchetti, Professor, Politecnico di Torino)

The construction of the high speed railway line Turin-Lyon in the Susa Valley has long been surrounded by bitter controversies which do not give enough relevance to more significant and technical aspects of the proposed project. Beyond the slogans and positions for or against its implementation, this compilation to do a bit of clarity, bringing together some different contributions and statements.

The writer intends to leave – in this brief end note - conclusions on what should be the fate of the TAV proposal to the reader. This project brings with it, after plus more than twenty years of strenuous and continuous reworking, the quantity and quality of difficult issues that have been highlighted in the previous pages. We believe that the usual appeal to the Precautionary Principle, in this case, is not even necessary. Economic data, energetic considerations, legal questions, environmental impact, the health impact potential, the negative experience of other projects, and especially the Common Sense, suggest a simple solution. In our opinion, if it is following a rational choice and avoiding to follow slogans, not always "don't do" is to be discarded in favor of "do" at any cost. Also because in this case the "don't do" avoids hazards and a cost-benefit ratio clearly at a loss, and would free up a lot of resources for "doing" something else: for example, public services, public health, education, investment to redevelop the area, improvement of local transport and even international transport. With a lot of support from facts, we really can "do better" hundreds of useful things but the TAV Turin-Lyon.