

Extrapolations from a letter to Josefina by Keith, undated

[...]

...what the fuck is happening? It's impossible to make any sense out of the reports in the bourgeois press, and left wing publications in Britain and America (and probably everywhere else as well) are crying out for some real information.

[...]

England is in the throws of an unprecedented heat wave at the moment, and it must be pretty well as hot here as it is in Lisbon.

It's a strange feeling reading this letter written so long ago (likely in the mid-seventies) and finding echoes of a familiar situation today. In the age of rampant misinformation and (literally) incredible news that bombard us every day, it's hard to make sense of 'what the fuck is happening', and particularly with a senseless war going on in the old heart of Europe. The reference to the heat wave is also uncanny, as if those people exchanging letters from the two sides of the Atlantic were seeing the first signs of climate change, or rather, climate chaos that is manifesting more forcefully today.

I look for other signs that could bring me closer to this fascinating intellectual figure and the time in which she was connecting the dots on a map of the world. On Google Map I find the address of the Lotta Continua meeting quarters of a town near Turin (Sezione di Grugliasco, Via Minghetti 12), where Josephina Mena spoke on April 17 of an unspecified year (it was on a Wednesday, so the year could be found; likely, 1974). Now near that address there is an ice cream parlor, two Japanese restaurants, one Pizza Kebab and not too far away, a MacDonald's., among nondescript condominiums of a placid small town.

As I do my research online, I come upon a copy of the newspaper published by Lotta Continua on Saturday, February 17, 1973. On the first page there are two short articles about the rise in prices for vegetables and meat – from 15 to 50% more than the regular price. Impossible not to think of the current energetic crisis, housing crisis, occupational crisis, and the increasing cost of prime materials (including oil and grains)...and yet...those were the years of public protests on a localized and organized scale (whose report forms the bulk of this issue of the newspaper), when globalization was not yet taking the indistinct form of social media. We have the tools today, but do we have the will to solve our problems?

S.M., April 27, 2022