

The “True Believers” of the Revolution: Italian Left-wing Terrorists during the Seventies

“Layers and Connections of the Political”

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Abstract

The paper aims at investigating the complex dynamics which characterized the trajectories of Italian left-wing terrorists during the Seventies. The analysis is made up of two different parts. In the first part, it focuses on the reasons of the pervasiveness of the “myth of the revolution” and on its origins (Antifascism and the heritage of the Resistance; Marxism-Leninism; New-Left thinking; several revolutionary “reference models” ranging from Vietnam, China to South-Central America; operaismo). In the second part, the paper attempts to analyse how this myth of the revolution permeated the left-wing terrorist wave during the Seventies. In order to understand this wave and the relevance of the “revolutionary mystique”, the paper provides an explanation which – adopting (and adapting it to an historical approach) the well-known research paradigm elaborated by the social scientist Donatella della Porta and taking into consideration, most of all, the “life stories” and the autobiographies of the Italian terrorists – aims at examining three different levels of analysis, looking at the relevant interactions among them: the micro level (that is the subjectivity side, i.e. individual beliefs, perceptions, habits of mind, ideological motivations); the meso level (“organized group dynamics”); the macro level (conditions related to the context).

Author information

Giovanni Mario Ceci (PhD) teaches History of Contemporary Europe at Università degli Studi Roma Tre and Terrorism: an Introduction at IES-Rome. His researches and publications mainly focus on Italian politics and culture during the Cold War, Terrorism, and Fascism. He is the author of several books and articles, including *Renzo De Felice storico della politica* (Rubbettino, 2008); *Moro e il PCI. La strategia dell’attenzione e il dibattito politico italiano, 1967-1969* (Carocci, 2013); *Il terrorismo italiano. Storia di un dibattito* (Carocci, 2013). He has just published *La CIA e il terrorismo italiano. Dalla strage di piazza Fontana agli anni Ottanta (1969-1986)* (Carocci, 2019).

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Monday, 14 June - Session 2 - **10,30-12,00 CET (Webex)** - Panel – *Revolution and the language of feelings in Italy: from Mazzini to 1970s terrorism*

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