

“A class struggle fought within ourselves”. War and revolution in the moral world of Italian communists during the early years of the Cold War

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Abstract

Within the culture of the international communist movement, the relationship between individual subjectivity and the ethics of activism has historically been defined in relation to a highly regulatory political and organizational model founded on the myth of the USSR and the axiom of a necessary, virtuous correlation between total war and global revolution. Engaging in revolution entailed the unique, atypical practice of personally submitting to collective party ethics. This practice was rife with tensions and contradictions that were variously fuelled by adherents’ family and cultural inheritance, social imprinting and personal experience. This analysis adopts a dual approach: historiographical and biographical. The first approach aims to analyze the methods and theories of the strands in historiography that take into closer consideration the relationship between the public and private spheres in communist culture. The second approach aims to reconstruct, on the basis of case studies and biographical sources, the profile of revolutionary activism interwoven with motivations, ideals and passions. The latter often clashed with party orthodoxy yet were at the same time capable of glorifying a revolutionary anthropology which still always strove to change the world by first changing oneself in order to cleanse one’s personal morality of the vestiges of past experience and an unwieldy cultural inheritance.

Author information

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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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