

# Aiming Higher:

An analysis of Giorgio's *Memorie* and the  
radicalization of Italian youth in the armed struggle  
of the 1970s



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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research, written in the full knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism and documented accordingly, and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any university

\* Image of two violent activists published in *L'Espresso* shortly after a demonstration in May 1977. Giorgio identifies himself and one of his comrades with these two youths,  
*Memorie* p. 33-34.

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## Abstract

This dissertation sets out to explore the phenomenon of radical left-wing terrorism in what came to be known as the darkest period of Italian post-war history – the 1970s.

The primary source on which this study is founded is the memoir of a radical left-wing terrorist who makes himself known to the public only as Giorgio. The first hand narrative was published in the early 80s, when the revolutionary dreams of many leftist terrorists who had fought the armed struggle were slowly beginning to fade.

Giorgio's story evokes the experiences of thousands of young left-wing radicals who in fulfilling utopian ideals, willingly participated in a collective effort to destroy the state and its representatives.

Through a critical analysis of Giorgio's *Memorie* and the consideration of the testimonies of other leftist militants, this thesis will attempt to reveal the influencing factors that contributed to the transformation of young Italians from rebellious political activists into fully fledged left-wing terrorists.

Each step taken by these rebellious young men and women will be closely observed in an attempt to discover the reasons why thousands of individuals joined terrorist organizations and the different ways in which their experience as clandestine militants affected their moral and physical stability.

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# Introduction

The study of the phenomenon of left-wing terrorism in Italy has often been carried out through the examination of the numerous declarations made by radical left-wing terrorists. As the terrorist nightmare temporarily disappeared from the large cities of Italy in the beginning of the 1980s, many interviews, testimonies, comparative analyses, biographies and autobiographies concerning the experiences of ex-terrorists were published and made available to the Italian public. In the tide of information sent to Italian publishing houses, one manuscript regarding the experience of a young unrepentant left-wing terrorist sparked controversy amongst the editors of a small publishing house named *Il Pane e le Rose* (Bread and Roses). The debate concerned the publishing of the text, raising fears amongst editors that the author could still be launching a message in favor of revolutionary activity. However, the manuscript sent by the youth known only as Giorgio<sup>1</sup> was finally published and the title assigned was *Memorie: Dalla Clandestinità Un Terrorista Non Pentito Si Racconta* (Memories: from clandestinity a non repentant terrorist tells his story). It would be translated in 2003 as *Memoirs of an Italian terrorist*<sup>2</sup>. Giorgio's narration basically concerns his step by step radicalization in extreme left-wing ideals and activities throughout the years of Italian terrorism as he goes from being a sociable, middle class activist to a radical left-wing terrorist, faithful to his organization, merciless in his undertakings.

The aim of this thesis is to raise critical awareness of Giorgio's *Memorie* and to analyze the process of radicalization undergone by many left-wing terrorists throughout what came to be known as the "*anni di piombo*" (years of lead<sup>3</sup>). The chapters of this dissertation will retrace the major steps taken by these terrorists from their participation in political activism, to the adoption of a radical ideology, to the entry into clandestine

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<sup>1</sup> Giorgio could possibly be his *nome di battaglia* (battle name). Many clandestine terrorists throughout the 70s changed both their names and surnames to conceal their identities.

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio, *Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist*. Trans. Antony Shugaar, (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> The term "years of lead" makes reference to the bullets that killed more than 400 people throughout the 1970s and is also a reference to Hesiod's *Works and Days* in which a Golden Age is followed by a Silver

terrorist organizations. The research question will be divided into two parts: Why did a segment of Italy's youth<sup>4</sup> turn to left-wing terrorism? In what ways did these young people become radical proponents of extremist left-wing ideals? The themes present throughout Giorgio's narrative will be unearthed and critically examined along with an observation of the experiences of other participants, activists and terrorists that reinforce or disagree with his numerous points of view. However, before the explanation and clarification of the arguments present in this thesis, the historical context of the years of Italian terrorism will need to be framed. This will offer the reader a chance to briefly observe the social, political and economic situation Italy found itself in throughout the 1970s.

By 1978, known as the year in which terrorism reached its apogee, the Italian nation found itself in a state of crisis. Weakening the nation was not only the uncontrollable phenomenon of terrorism since political and economic problems also led citizens to fear for the survival of the fragile Republic. Economically, Italy suffered from considerable inflation problems, low growth, capital shortages and the unemployment rate increased significantly. On the political front, the *Democrazia Cristiana-DC* (Christian Democracy) had been the most influential party of the last 30 years. It was lead by Aldo Moro who, in the second half of the decade, had established an unpopular link with the *Partito Comunista Italiano- PCI* (Italian Communist Party). His attempt to form a coalition with the PCI, also known as the *compromesso storico* (historical compromise), aimed at tackling the crisis of Italian democracy as the DC was blamed for most of the economical and social downfalls Italy was experiencing. This movement of the DC towards the center-left caused it to lose some strong support from traditional catholic entities, making the ground on which it stood even shakier. The political philosophy of the DC, in fact, lacked coherence and power<sup>5</sup>.

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Age and ultimately an Age of Lead. See introduction by Antony Shuggar in the translation of *Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> 'Young people' is a broad term, for this dissertation it will be used for those individuals in their mid to late teens and early thirties.

<sup>5</sup> Domenico Bartoli, *Gli anni della tempesta* (Milano: Editoriale Nuova, 1981) 177.

In order to understand why terrorism broke out in the beginning of the 1970s there is a need to briefly observe the development of social unrest in the student movements of 1968 and the student-worker movements of 1969. In her book *Autoritratto di Gruppo*, Luisa Passerini offers a detailed overview of how she lived the creative and communicative explosion of 1968 in Italy. Through the analysis of other individuals who shared a similar experience, Passerini explores a variety of themes regarding the construction of a political identity that spread amongst young people throughout the 1960s. Her discourse often returns to the concept of awareness. She affirms that “Throughout the nation passed a desire to seek freedom and to mature the relationship with knowledge”<sup>6</sup>. Amongst the desire of a large number of young people who lived throughout this decade, emerged a profound yearning to be politically aware and politically active. Much of Italy’s youth began to seek a new reality, many felt the call to change society and to redefine the situation in which they found themselves. Out of this great eruption of creativity and political awareness emerged the renowned student movements of 1968. Mass demonstrations, protests, the refusal to be taught or examined by teachers and professors and the invasion of schools and universities became the aim and purpose of tens of thousands of Italian students. This was their way of showing both the rejection of bourgeoisie values and their complete refusal to abide by the laws of the government.

At this point, an urgent question needs to be raised: how were the ’68 student movements connected to the outburst of terrorism in the 1970s? The answer can be found in the crucial events of the following year, 1969. The enormous amount of protest initiated by the students of 1968 had also been sparked amongst the workers of large factories such as *Fiat*, *Sit-Siemens*, *Alfa Romeo* and *Pirelli*<sup>7</sup>. As the year 1968 closed, the student movements collapsed. What remained however were many proletarians who had been told that the struggle was also for them, for their rights and, with the help of the students, had begun to fight for themselves. Thus, the turbulent autumn of 1969, also known as the *autunno caldo* (the warm autumn) saw the birth of a different movement to that of the

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<sup>6</sup> Luisa Passerini. *Autoritratto di Gruppo* (Firenze: Giunti Barbèra, 1988) 50.

<sup>7</sup> Giuliano Broraso, “Storia delle Brigate Rosse” 19/05/06 <[www.brigaterosse.org/brigaterosse/index/htm](http://www.brigaterosse.org/brigaterosse/index/htm)>

student groups, a worker-student movement, a new matter concerning the worker had been detonated. A participant in both the student and worker-student movements, Luigi Bobbio elucidates on this strange shift of protest:

“In the 1968-69 academic year there were groups but the movement was no longer there. At the same time the worker struggles moved ahead. Thus a type of attraction developed, something which we had tried to avoid. The pole shifted there. Then, after the collapse of the student movement in the university, it was as if the movement had produced militants that had nothing to do. We were political militants but had lost our objective. Eventually, we ended up concentrating our efforts to *Fiat*”<sup>8</sup>.

Many young people like Luigi Bobbio stationed themselves in front of large factories fighting for the rights of workers, inviting proletarians to seek better working conditions and rebel against executives. This fostered a strong hatred towards the government and the bourgeoisie amongst both students and workers. A famous slogan of the year clarifies the strong allegiance created between both groups: “*Operai e studenti uniti nella lotta*”<sup>9</sup> (Workers and students united in battle). Defamatory campaigns were also frequently used to unveil some corrupt and illegitimate proceedings of the ruling elite. Subsequently, small radical left-wing political groups began forming, these came to be known as proletarian youth movements<sup>10</sup>, and the *sinistra extra-parlamentare* (extra-parliamentary left<sup>11</sup>) also known as the *autonomia* (autonomy<sup>12</sup>).

Before examining the phenomenon of terrorism, one last observation concerning the groups of the extra-parliamentary left needs to be made. Extra-parliamentary circles basically gave the sense of rebellion and revolution present amongst young Italians some

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<sup>8</sup> Passerini, 132.

<sup>9</sup> Oreste Scalzone, *Biennio Rosso* (Milano: Sugarco Edizioni, 1988) 30.

<sup>10</sup> Proletarian youth movements, or youth groups, were loosely organised associations that organized protests and demonstrations, they were known for their encouragement of rebellious behaviour amongst young people. Youth groups were found both on the left and right.

<sup>11</sup> Extra-parliamentary means that they rejected the elected government and worked through different means ranging from mass demonstrations to acts of terrorism.

<sup>12</sup> autonomy (with a lower case ‘a’) is a broad term covering a confederation of diverse extra-parliamentary groups. The term ‘autonomists’ was given to young left-wing radicals who did not belong to any specific terrorist organization yet practiced political violence in the name of aggressive extra-parliamentary groups. They were basically radical left-wing guerrillas.

form of organization. Directed by culturally prepared leaders able to shape and remodel revolutionary ideas, these groups arranged masses of students and workers to protest against the government and its way of ruling the country. By regrouping young people who favored extreme left-wing ideology, the extra-parliamentary left launched radical ideals and ultimately contributed to the creation of the destructive machine of revolution that would invade Italy, in the form of terrorism, throughout the 1970s. Frequented by nearly all the ex-terrorists used in this study, groups of the extra-parliamentary left offered an education based on radical left-wing principles that helped young people mature their revolutionary ideals and impulses. Some of these left-wing organizations went by the name of *Gruppi D'azione Partigiana (GAP)* present already in '68 and '69, the *Collettivo Politico Metropolitano (CPM)* inside which operated the men and women that founded the famous organization *Le Brigate Rosse (BR)* (The Red Brigades), *Potere Operaio POTOPT* (Worker's power) *Autonomia Operaia (AO)* (Worker's Autonomy) and *Lotta Continua (LC)* (Continuous struggle)<sup>13</sup>. The latter seems to have been the most influential group. It was attended by nearly all of the young people that nursed a desire to progress onto political violence.

Finally then, the advent of terrorism. The event which triggered the widespread use of terrorism in Italy was the famous tragedy of Piazza Fontana on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1969<sup>14</sup>. From this day on, radical left and right-wing terrorists committed brutal acts of political violence in order to fulfill revolutionary ideals and force the state into a position of subordination. The 1970s and early 1980s became the darkest period of Italian post war history. Expropriations of boutiques, dispossessions, kneecappings<sup>15</sup>, assassinations, bombings in public places and on trains, wild battles with the police, kidnappings, and shootings amounted to more than fourteen thousand five hundred acts of political

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<sup>13</sup> Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 86.

<sup>14</sup> As the first act of terrorism in Italy this became the moment which signalled the beginning of the years of lead. A bomb placed in Milano's Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura (National Bank of Agriculture) exploded killing 17 people and wounding 87. To this day no one has claimed responsibility for the massacre however it is alleged that the attack was organized by right-wing terrorist organization *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order).

<sup>15</sup>The term 'kneecapping' refers to the practice of shooting enemies in the legs. It became a way of warning individuals who had in some way irritated terrorists to stay out of the affairs of left-wing terrorism.

violence throughout this time. The enemies were progressive politicians and magistrates, as well as journalists, policemen, security guards and low ranking employees in the prison system, businessmen and individuals who held any kind of executive function in factories or workplaces where the proletariat could be exploited<sup>16</sup>. Driven by utopian ideals of freedom and sustained by left-wing philosophies, the ultimate goal of these terrorists was to cause a revolution. Before going further, it is essential for the reader to be accustomed to the fact that many aspects of the years of lead were, and indeed still are, shrouded in mystery. From the duplicity of the government siding with right-wing terrorism and possibly the Mafia, to its connections with secret services of the United States (intent on driving back the aforementioned ‘leftward’ drift of the nation)<sup>17</sup>, the hidden and corrupt truths and realities of these years deserve an entire thesis of analysis. Although only done briefly, these events will be analyzed in the second chapter of this thesis.

At the centre of this political violence were two renowned terrorist organizations, *Le Brigate Rosse* (The Red Brigades), also known as the initiators of terrorism in Italy, and *Prima Linea* (Front Line) an incredibly aggressive organization that emerged in the second half of the 1970s. Responsible for the greatest act of political violence throughout the entire period of terrorism were The Red Brigades. In March 1979 they kidnapped former Prime Minister and leader of the Christian Democracy Aldo Moro to assassinate him fifty five days later. These organizations, even if different in numerous aspects, especially ideologically, endeavored to bring down the state through the strategy of armed struggle. The years of Italian terrorism, in fact, also came to be known as the years of *La Lotta Armata* (The Armed Struggle)<sup>18</sup>. It is throughout these years that Giorgio’s complete transformation into a radical left-wing terrorist took place. The chapters of this thesis will trace the path of his radicalization and, with the help of the testimonies of other ex-activists and terrorists, three essential themes of left-wing terrorism will be

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<sup>16</sup> Sydney Tarrow, “Crisi, Crises or Transition”, *Italy In Transition*, (London: Frank Cass, 1980) 178.

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Meade, Jr. *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism*, (London: Macmillan press, 1990) 36.

<sup>18</sup>This term was and is still being used by terrorists, journalists and historians. It will often be employed throughout this thesis as well.

explored. These are: the process leading up to the entry into terrorist organizations, the adoption and faith in a radical left-wing ideology, the experience of clandestine life.

The first chapter of this dissertation will aim to introduce Giorgio to the reader and explore those factors that influenced the entry of thousands of young radicals into left-wing terrorist organizations. The ways in which Giorgio begins to radicalize himself in proletarian youth groups and the extra-parliamentary circle of *Lotta Continua* will be closely observed as he gradually develops his own revolutionary ideals and an uncontrollable desire to achieve more important goals in his life. His statements will be reinforced by other ex-terrorists who shared similar experiences in their ascent towards left-wing terrorism. In addition, other factors such as the passing on of left-wing ideals from fighters of the Partisan Resistance to their children and grandchildren and the anti-bourgeoisie ideals launched by the '68 phenomenon will be discussed in order to reveal the significant impact they had on the future decisions of young Italians. This study will expose those elements which may have functioned as vehicles bringing a large number of simple political activists to the doors of aggressive radical left-wing terrorist organizations.

The second chapter will consider the next step taken by left-wing terrorists in the process of their radicalization as they created and fostered ideological principles for the armed struggle. These will be observed both as ideals that guided terrorists in their aggressive activity and as principles that justified their illegitimate behavior. To begin with, the influence of Marxist theory on the formation of a radical ideology of the armed struggle will be discussed. The opinions of the founder The Red Brigades, Renato Curcio, will demonstrate how the ideas of Marx and Engels proved crucial to the ideological formation of his terrorist organization and subsequently contributed to the initiation of revolutionary activity in Italy. However, a great proportion of the body will consider the evolution of radical ideology throughout the years of Italian terrorism. Giorgio's memoirs clearly indicate that his armed struggle began in the year 1977, suggesting that he belonged to what author of *Vite Sospese: Le Generazioni del Terrorismo*, Nicola Tranfaglia calls the new generation of militants that embraced the armed struggle in the

second half of the 1970s. The separation of time periods of terrorism made by Tranfaglia in the introduction to his book will be essential to the development of this chapter. Tranfaglia divides the years of terrorism in two phases, each with a different generation of protagonists. The first phase, spanning from 1969 to 1975, saw an armed struggle fought by militants who pursued with intensity and passion the goal of a Marxist-Leninist revolution, many of these belonged to The Red Brigades. Tranfaglia's second phase, in which Giorgio waged his war against the state, spans from 1976 to 1982. In this period arrived a second generation of militants, young radicals grown in the midst of terrorism, ready to join the armed struggle, yet less predisposed in adopting fundamental Marxist ideals<sup>19</sup>. The argument will concern this new generation of militants who showed no understanding of the philosophical theories of thinkers like Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Mao but used these names to merely justify very private and personal demands. Thus the birth of a more anarchical ideology of the armed struggle will be discussed and its application demonstrated. Once again, the testimonies of ex-terrorists who lived this evolution of radical ideology will be taken into consideration.

The third and final chapter will deal with the last step taken by terrorists who searched for new ways to radicalize themselves. The phenomenon of clandestine life will be regarded as a method used by terrorists to announce their complete detachment from society and total devotion to the cause of the armed struggle. Giorgio's memoirs will once again be subject to critical analysis as the reader is invited to observe the punishing and unnatural lifestyle of clandestine terrorists and the physical and psychological repercussions they experienced. The Marxist ideal of false consciousness will be taken into consideration as a principle that fostered the desire amongst revolutionaries to reject society and aim to destroy the state that had been blinding and exploiting the lower classes. The frequent, almost obsessive practice of violence will also be viewed as factor that unconsciously led a significant number of revolutionaries to join clandestine organizations. As a final point, the experiences of imprisoned ex-terrorists will be briefly brought under inspection. This will give the reader an opportunity to glance at the direct testimonies of those who were

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<sup>19</sup> Nicola Tranfaglia, Diego Novelli, *Vite Sospese, le generazioni del terrorismo* (Milano: Garzanti Editore, 1988) 14.

left empty handed at the collapse of the armed struggle, and were faced (many are still facing) with years, or even lifetimes as prisoners of the same state they persecuted for over a decade.

Essential to the development of the arguments of this dissertation will be citations of the works of researchers such as Nicola Tranfaglia, Diego Novelli, Luisa Passerini, Robert C. Meade, Donatella dell Porta, Michele Brambilla and Mario Scialoja. The latter is also a renowned journalist who experienced and documented many events during the years of lead. All these researchers have given birth to endless theories surrounding the phenomenon of Italian terrorism and have consequently opened a continuously evolving body of knowledge surrounding this historical period. The books *Vite Sospese* and *Autoritratto di Gruppo*, the first written by Tranfaglia and Diego Novelli and the second by Luisa Passerini, will significantly contribute to the numerous claims present throughout the thesis. The multiple opinions made by the ex-activists and terrorists interviewed in these studies will be used in order to reinforce the arguments raised and answer the research question as it evolves in each chapter. For instance many of the eighteen ex-terrorists of The Red Brigades and Front Line interviewed by Tranfaglia acknowledge that the ideals on which they founded their armed revolt changed as the years passed; could then the whole radical ideology of armed extremism have evolved throughout the 1970s? And if so, in what way did the militants who upheld a new, redefined radical ideology approach the armed struggle?

The research on the history of the Red Brigades carried out by Robert C. Meade and Mario Scialoja lays out a number of hypotheses through which further affirmations will be made. Meade's book, *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* manages to not only document the entire history of Italian terrorism as it also delves into the controversial and mysterious events that stamped the word 'corruption' on the doors of the Italian parliament. Meade's claims of a supposed strategy of tension ordered by the government and executed by the secret services will be integrated into this dissertation as a way of revealing yet reasons that encouraged many young Italians to turn to political violence. Offering a detailed interview with founder of the Red Brigades, Renato Curcio,

is Scialoja's book *A Viso Aperto*. The examination of fragments of this fascinating and thought provoking discussion will firstly clarify the originating theories of the first and most notorious group of the 1970s and subsequently open a new area of discussion concerning the evolution of these theories amongst other participants of the armed struggle. Fulfilling a similar purpose will be co-founder of The Red Brigades Alberto Franceschini's *Mara Renato e Io. Storia dei Fondatori delle Br*; an autobiography shedding light on the history, emotions, fears, acts of courage and illusive objectives of The Red Brigades. Finally, another author responsible for abundant quantities of research on the Italian left-wing armed struggle is professor at the University of Berlin, Donatella della Porta. This paper will consider two of her works: her study on Italian and German political violence from the 1960s to the 1990s entitled *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* and her contribution to the literature on social movements in the periodical named *International Social Movement Research*. Her theories regarding the frequent use of political violence by young activists will be surveyed in conjunction with Passerini's work.

Although this secondary literature provides a necessary context, *Memorie* and its author Giorgio always remains the primary text. Thus the thesis argument will be centered around Giorgio, and the scope of the study will be narrowly focused on this figure and his memoirs.

## Giorgio: The Road to Radicalization

On a small note accompanying Giorgio's manuscript, the editors of *Il Pane e Le Rose* found this message:

“It strikes me that, in the surging tide of disinformation, lies and idiocy that surrounds the world of the armed struggle and its militants, this text may serve as a useful document, offering a first-hand account of just how different things really are. I have nothing else to add, except that you publish these pages. Yours in communism, Giorgio”<sup>20</sup>.

Giorgio's desire to prove to the reader that his version of the events of the armed struggle has higher credibility than the lies and idiocy that had surrounded it until that year (*Memorie* was published in 1981) has brought him to narrate his experience as political activist and clandestine terrorist, describing in depth every step of the process of his radicalization. From a critical analysis of this detailed explanation will spring an investigation regarding the different factors that influenced the final decision that young radicals made to join left-wing terrorist organizations. The desire to put into practice the ideals introduced by the 1968 phenomenon will be discussed, as many young people moved on to join proletarian youth groups and circles of the extra-parliamentary left in the years following the student movements. These left-wing revolutionary associations will be regarded as factions through which young radicals were able to cultivate extreme left-wing ideals and thus to prepare themselves for the initiation of an armed struggle against the state. The transmission of the ideals of the Partisan Resistance from one generation to another will be singled out as yet another influencing factor that contributed to the birth of revolutionary ideals in the minds of many young Italians.

One of the negative features of Giorgio's character that the reader of *Memorie* gradually comes to notice is the constant presence of a nervous pessimism. This emerges not only

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<sup>20</sup> Giorgio, *Memorie. Dalla Clandestinità un Terrorista Non Pentito si Racconta* (Milano: Il Pane e Le Rose, 1981) 7 (55). The page number in brackets refers to the Antony Shugaar's english translation of Giorgio's *Memorie*.

in the description of those people in his life that he finds unbearable, namely his parents, his girlfriend, the bourgeoisie and the Italian government, as he also summarizes his experience as a radical left-wing terrorist with a heightened degree of cynicism. The narration of Giorgio's story seems to begin from the end. As an initial comment, he brings into the open the failure of the armed struggle, establishing that "when you enter this long tunnel that my life has become, you just need to forget the idea of a future"<sup>21</sup>. Giorgio seems to have accepted his destiny in life and although masked by an insensitive attitude and an unconcerned tone, a sense of defeat and resignation is noticeable throughout this first stage of his account. He continues:

"One way out, of course, would be the revolution. But let's not kid ourselves. More likely it would be prison, or worse. You don't think about it, of course, but then you can hardly imagine going on like this for the rest of your life either. I willingly accept both possibilities: jail, and worse. I don't care. In the meanwhile, I take my trip, in my head, and in my books, in the images I hold on to"<sup>22</sup>.

Giorgio is intent on revealing the loss of beliefs that he once had, the collapse of a purpose around which his life once revolved. He dedicates only a small section to the obvious fragmentation of his dreams and ideals, the urgency to take this trip through his memories clearly emerging as his only desire.

The first factor illustrating Giorgio's tendency towards revolutionary activity concerns his desire to be in a constant state of precariousness in which there are endless possibilities for new experiences and the discovery of unknown places. He begins with possibly the most important statement of the whole book:

"I like a world where something rustles in the dark, where there's something out there, but it's too soon to tell what it is"<sup>23</sup>.

Giorgio's aspiration towards a search for the unknown and the innovative is an echo of those ideals launched by the movements of 1968-69. It can be seen as the desire that drove thousands of individuals to turn towards radical left-wing ideology as a means by

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<sup>21</sup> Giorgio, 10 (60).

<sup>22</sup> Giorgio, 10 (60).

which the boredom and dullness of life could be obliterated. The reader first perceives Giorgio's attraction to what is extraordinary and diverse through an unusual fascination of his, a comic book series. *The adventures of Corto Maltese* is the comic book which he affirms will accompany him in this voyage through his memories. Created by Italian comic book designer Hugo Pratt, Corto Maltese is an Italian sailor-adventurer whose voyages take place throughout the early twentieth century. Corto supports the disadvantaged and oppressed in the numerous exploratory situations he encounters in different parts of the world. He is also known for his experience of the First World War, The Russian Civil War after the October Revolution, the Spanish Civil War and the early stages of Fascist Italy<sup>24</sup>. The stories which fascinate Giorgio the most recount Corto's earliest voyages, where he explores the mysterious Orient and Tsarist Russia. The admiration that Giorgio has for Corto Maltese and his adventures reflects what he has always aimed for in life but never achieved. The discovery of new worlds, the struggle for the defense of the oppressed and more importantly the certainty that there is something new out there, something that exists but that no one has yet discovered or even attempted to discover, all stand as objectives which Giorgio has endeavored to achieve throughout his whole life. Corto Maltese embodies freedom, solidarity and strife, words which echoed endlessly in the struggle fought by Giorgio and his comrades throughout the armed struggle of 1970s.

Researchers of the initial events of Italian terrorism such as Roberto Mazzetti often underplay the importance of proletarian youth movements, or youth groups, as initiators of cults of protest against the state. Youth groups were small associations, found on the left and right, frequented by thousands of young people throughout the late sixties and the seventies<sup>25</sup>. Although inside these groups young people had a chance to enhance their political awareness, they also developed an insubordinate attitude towards the police, the state and its laws, and above all towards the bourgeoisie. Giorgio's comments regarding

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<sup>23</sup> Giorgio, 11 (61).

<sup>24</sup> Andi Etris, "The Life of Corto Maltese", 13/08/06. <<http://home.c2i/tzara/pratt/corto.html>>

<sup>25</sup> Cf Roberto Mazzetti, *Genesi e Sviluppo del Terrorismo in Italia* (Roma: Armando, 1979), passim. Shuggar, *Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist*, trans. Giorgio (New York: Carroll and Graph, 2003) 192.

his experience in youth groups reveal the frightening formation of his radical perspectives:

“I sensed that something very important was developing in the proletarian youth movement, and I believed that any structure was too narrow and too rigid to contain it; that needs and behaviors simply needed to ‘explode’.

That was what I thought: *explode*”<sup>26</sup>.

The striking adjective used in this quote, *explode*, illustrates the kind of mindset present amongst young Italian protest groups of the 1970’s. This need to explode also signifies the accumulation of much antagonism and resentment towards an entity which Giorgio does not specify exactly, but which he sees reflected in the way that his society is run. It is not enough for him to take action; his revolutionary ideals need to erupt. In addition, the influence of Marxist-Leninist concepts resounds in his words as he moves on to emphasize that the proletariat should stand up and fight against a presumptuous state which believes that workers should be content with the bare necessities. His message is clear: “We want abundance!”<sup>27</sup>. Here, the influence of the protests sparked by worker-student movements of 1969 is clearly identifiable. Although Giorgio is speaking of his experiences in 1977<sup>28</sup>, the issues concerning workers were obviously still very alive amongst the protests of young radicals. The proletarian youth movement thus becomes the initial vehicle used by Giorgio on the road towards his complete radicalization. Giorgio’s fascination with Corto Maltese and rebellious experiences in proletarian youth movements give birth to the theme of protest and revolt through the search for innovation and change. Fuelled by an already present and strongly publicized Marxist-Leninist ideology, Giorgio begins a life guided by the desire to modify the reality that surrounds him and sets in motion a struggle to remodel those preconceptions that hang over workers and proletarians. His ambitions will eventually be sustained by a progression into the world of the extra-parliamentary left and into the practice of political violence.

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<sup>26</sup> Giorgio, 12 (62).

<sup>27</sup> Giorgio, 12 (62).

<sup>28</sup> This piece of information places Giorgio in what Tranfaglia refers to as the second generation of left-wing militants, a new wave of young people who began protesting and practicing political violence in the second half of the 1970s. (For more info see Tranfaglia’s *Vite Sospese* pg 11).

The only piece of information that Giorgio discloses regarding his participation in groups of the extra-parliamentary left concerns his detachment from *Lotta Continua*. The events that follow this disconnection are clear enough to understand what kind of ideological formation he received inside this extra-parliamentary association. After having abandoned *Lotta Continua*, Giorgio is seized by a sudden urge to arm himself. He purchases a gun with his friend Piero:

“Then we decided to ‘raise our aim’. Those were the words we used: ‘raise our aim’. And we used them quite seriously because to us this meant moving forward, continuing the process, radicalizing. It meant, in fact, *raising our aim*, carrying real pistols”<sup>29</sup>.

Giorgio’s immediate desire to raise his aim suggests that an aim must have already been set in his experiences with *Lotta Continua*. A debate concerning the impact of the extra-parliamentary left on the process of Giorgio’s radicalization can therefore be opened. Having come out of proletarian youth groups, young men and women found in extra-parliamentary circles a system that would prepare them for the initiation of an armed struggle against the state. These testimonies, the first by Sandro Nitta and the second by Roberto Rosso, both ex-militants of *Prima Linea* (Front Line), offer some proof concerning this matter:

“In *Lotta Continua* I was brought closer to an interpretation of reality in the form of political criticism according to the Marxist categories...all that to me seemed unjust, capitalism, imperialism, a class-conscious society and the exploitation of man on man that for me symbolized the incarnation of evil, found an answer in the value of revolution”<sup>30</sup>.

“My experiences in L.C. [*Lotta Continua*] and Pot. Op. [*Potere Operaio*] taught me how to become a political militant, there I also developed a very anti-fascist attitude”<sup>31</sup>. Through these rather self-explanatory statements, the extra-parliamentary left can be identified as an instrument that organized and gave shape to the revolutionary tendencies of young people. It therefore emerges as another essential phenomenon that may have

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<sup>29</sup> Giorgio, 20. (71).

<sup>30</sup> Tranfaglia, 135-136.

<sup>31</sup> Luigi Gucciardi, *Il Tempo Del Furore* (Milano: Rusconi, 1988) 124.

significantly influenced many young radicals to eventually adopt violence as a new means of protesting against the state.

So far, the discovery of the proletarian youth movements and extra-parliamentary left as core elements of the process of youth radicalization has shone some light on some of the more evident factors that lead radical youths to perform terrorist activities. However, the study will proceed by directing more emphasis towards some of the less obvious factors that influenced the developing ideals of young people, primarily in their years as teenagers. This will entail an investigation into the stories and memories of the Partisan Resistance<sup>32</sup> passed on from parents and grandparents to their children, as well as an observation of a total refusal of the bourgeoisie as a motivation leading youths to violent political activism.

The testimonies of many ex-left wing terrorists belonging to The Red Brigades and Front Line reveal that the relationship with their parents and especially their grandparents had a significant impact on the development of their future ideologies. Many children and teenagers were often exposed to the stories of the Partisan Resistance and consequently to the passion and enthusiasm of an armed struggle that liberated Italy from oppression. The following comment by an ex-terrorist of The Red Brigades and Front Line Claudio Waccher illustrates the kind of influence that his father had on his emotional development as child:

“My father was to be, also because of the mythicizing effect that the echo of left-wing culture would provide to the stories of the partisans as ‘liberators of the Homeland’, the central figure of my childhood and adolescence, just as the memory of a ‘sense of loss’ that marked the lives of many partisans after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 would later have an impact on the emotive constitution of my character”<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> The Partisan Resistance was a force during World War Two that fought the German occupying forces in Italy and the formations of the Fascist Italian Social Republic. It became an armed struggle that tried to reconquer the independence of Italy and the freedom of Italians that been taken away by the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships.

<sup>33</sup> Tranfaglia, 81. On April 25, 1945 Partisans staged an uprising which ended with the surrender of the German forces and the liberation of most Italian cities. The Resistance had won and Italy was freed. The

Considering Claudio's future involvement in a left-wing revolutionary movement that struggled against the misuse of power by the state, one could assert that his familiar connections had a significant impact on the formation of his radical left-wing ideology.

Another relevant opinion supporting this argument is that of Alberto Franceschini, a member of the founding group of The Red Brigades.

“I never read nor listened to fables, they were replaced by the stories of my grandfather, one of the first in Reggio to leave the Socialist Party in 1921 and establish the Italian Communist Party. He told me about his years of prison and political exile together with the leaders of the party, of his gathering in the mountains to fight the Partisan war”<sup>34</sup>.

Conceived in an attic from which fluttered a red flag and son of a member of the Italian Communist Party, Alberto boasts of the origin of a communist mentality present in his family emphasizing that he was “communist from birth”<sup>35</sup>. Alberto's youth spent in such a politically orientated family atmosphere meant that communist concepts indeed became part of his beliefs and values. With the maturation of his intellectual ability he would cultivate these ideals and eventually apply them, just as Giorgio did, to the cause of the armed struggle. Again, the observation of the familiar environment of an ex-terrorist reveals certain aspects of his childhood that may have encouraged him to develop a critique of society and to struggle against the decisions and proceedings of the government. The exposure of children to the stories of the Partisan Resistance gave them an idea of how oppression could be vanquished and how freedom could be obtained. It therefore emerges as another essential factor that influenced the decisions of many young people to join the armed struggle of the 1970s.

The final factor that may have contributed to the eventual entry of many young people into terrorist organizations is the condemnation and rejection of the bourgeois mentality.

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result of this insurrection however weighed heavily on the Resistance movement as thousands of Partisans lost their lives in battle.

<sup>34</sup> Alberto Franceschini, *Mara, Renato e io. Storia dei fondatori delle BR*, (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1988) 26.

<sup>35</sup> Franceschini, 25.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1976, proletarian youth circles tried to contest the wasting of money by the Milan bourgeoisie by attacking members who were about to attend a play at Milan's prestigious and renowned grand theatre *La Scala*. This, however, was not the usual casting of insults and launching of eggs, as the outbreak of a violent insurrection required the deployment of more than five thousand policemen and *Carabinieri*<sup>36</sup>. This event opens a new area of investigation concerning the role of the bourgeoisie as yet another important mechanism in the process of youth radicalization. Michele Brambilla suggests that the young people responsible for the revolutionary events of 1968 were "a generation who rejected the idols offered by the bourgeois world, a career, a beautiful car, a lover and a prosperous lifestyle"<sup>37</sup>. Indeed thousands of young people caught in the flow of this anti-bourgeois upheaval began to see the lifestyle of the wealthy as something from which they needed to escape. The ideals launched by the phenomenon of 1968 represented the bourgeois class as a useless segment of the population that exhibited its luxury shamelessly. As Giorgio delves into the memories of his childhood, the following two comments about his parents express the kind of resentment he had towards their bourgeois habits and monotonous lifestyle:

"I never really liked my mother. There were - and are - so many things about her that annoy me. She's more or less like all the fifty-year-olds of her social class. She wears a tailored suit, with jacket and skirt. Every suit the same, for as long as I can remember. Grey with a pleat in the front, black when there was a reception for the parents at school. Black with a little white blouse. How I hated her and our apartment, where everything was always exactly the same as thousands of other apartments just like it"<sup>38</sup>.

"Young and full of energy, I never thought of using those words for those two...the two of them, always covered in dressing gowns"<sup>39</sup>. It is clear that through the observation of the life of his parents, Giorgio has endeavored to become their exact opposite. In both his parents he sees the bourgeois individual that goes through life without taking any notice

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<sup>36</sup> Michele Brambilla, *Dieci Anni di Illusioni* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1994) 211. The *Carabinieri* are a branch of the Italian police force.

<sup>37</sup> Brambilla, 223.

<sup>38</sup> Giorgio, 90 (150).

of his or her surroundings, he sees a life lived in the midst of wealth and comfort but deprived of any creativity or rational thought; he does not hesitate to include the word 'stupid' amongst the other criticisms that he casts at his parents.

Giorgio's scornful comments concerning the habits of his parents can clearly be related to Brambilla's observation of this generation of young people that, through the ideological explosion of 1968, rejected all that represented the bourgeoisie in its entirety. This kind of behavior can be singled out as another element that brought a number of young people to adopt radical ideologies, join youth movements, engage in violent protest and eventually to join terrorist organizations. In an attempt to shatter the idols of the bourgeois world mentioned by Brambilla, many young rebels simply created other, equally delusive idols such as an ongoing involvement in violent protests and the creation of armed powers for the destruction of a state unworthy of supremacy.

The critical analysis of Giorgio's *Memorie*, together with a consideration of the experiences of other ex-terrorists, has rendered possible an assessment of the diverse factors that contributed to the radicalization of a number of Italian young people throughout the 1970s. Part of the research question has thus been answered, as one has discovered that young Italians eventually turned to terrorism through a rejection of the customs of the bourgeoisie, the adoption of Marxist-Leninist principles in proletarian youth movements and groups of the extra-parliamentary left, and through conveyed feelings of the victory and freedom against slavery and oppression from fighters of the Partisan Resistance. Indeed all these factors had a significant impact on the ideological formation of young Italians and can therefore be regarded as decisive elements that eventually brought many of these teenagers and young adults into the service of terrorist organizations.

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<sup>39</sup> Giorgio, 118 (182).

# Radical Ideology

The commitment of a large number of young left-wing terrorists to the cause of the Italian armed struggle often hinged on the fulfillment of a radical ideology drawn from various thinkers of the far left including Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Mao. This ideology defined their group's field of action and its role in it. Whether they belonged to a proletarian youth circle, a group of the extra-parliamentary left, or a subversive terrorist organization, left-wing radicals believed in an ideology of the armed struggle that gave them guidance and discernment in their functions, legitimized their aggressive and insurgent behavior and enabled them to frame goals or objectives that made their struggle worth fighting for. The creation and evolution of this ideology will be the main topic of this study as one examines the adoption of Marxist-Leninist ideals amongst the founders of The Red Brigades and the ideological change brought about by a new generation of terrorists who approached the armed struggle in a more anarchistic fashion. In an attempt to answer the second part of the research question, the deceptive effects of ideological excess will be discussed along with an exploration of the methods used by radical terrorists in putting various ideals into practice. This will reveal the more pragmatic functions of left-wing terrorists as one uncovers their purposes, ideals, motivations and vindictive mentality as guerrillas of the Italian armed struggle.

Marxist theory played a significant role in the formation of the initial left-wing terrorist organizations such as Renato Curcio's Red Brigades and Giangiacomo Feltrinelli's *Gruppi Armati Proletari*, GAP (Armed Proletarian Groups). More than a contemplation of the original principles laid out in Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto*, the relationship that these associations had with Marxist theory was linked with the political achievements of figures such as Stalin, Lenin and Mao, and to the battles of Partisans for the liberation of Italy. (Feltrinelli's GAP's took their name from a Partisan group active in the Second World War). Determined to reproduce a classless society founded, as the

laws of communism proclaim, on social equality and the abolition of private property<sup>40</sup>, the initiators of terrorist violence in Italy fought first and foremost for the rights of the proletariat and for the improvement of working conditions for employees. The origins of an adoption of extreme left-wing ideals can be observed through possibly the most important figure of Italian terrorism: Renato Curcio. In his early gatherings with acquaintances in Trento, Curcio remembers:

“We held small seminars and organized courses on subjects that were not taught at university, or in our opinion, were taught badly: Wittgenstein, Marx, but also Fanon, Marcuse and Benjamin”<sup>41</sup>.

Concepts of equality, fairness, class struggle and armed revolt were discussed in these meetings. Through a combination of these ideals, Curcio, Alberto Franceschini and Mara Cagol, the founders of The Red Brigades, formulated their own version of radical left-wing ideology and used it as the supporting pillar of the armed struggle. This rendered the initiation of an armed revolt against the state acceptable and justifiable, giving the groups that would continue fighting the state throughout the 1970s a reason to continue radicalizing themselves.

The identification and radicalization of left-wing terrorists in this ideology of the armed struggle resulted in a total rejection of the norms laid out by society. The restraints on human behavior placed on the population by the laws of the state were disregarded completely. The fulfillment of ideology was obviously considered as a superior doctrine to be abided by. Questioned about the type of identity that the Red Brigades assumed as they fulfilled their functions of armed extremists, Curcio answers:

“We were conscious of the fact that we were not bandits and believed that we were acting both in the most classic revolutionary Marxist-Leninist tradition and in the new perspective of urban guerrilla practiced by Latin-American groups and by the Black Panthers in the great cities of North America”<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Pipes, *Comunismo: una storia* (Milano: Rizzoli editore, 2003) 12.

<sup>41</sup> Renato Curcio, Interview with Mario Scialoja, *A Viso Aperto* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1993) 31.

<sup>42</sup> Curcio, 7.

This comment clarifies the position that The Red Brigades took as fighters inspired by both the traditional and contemporary versions of extreme left-wing ideology. The illusive side effects of radical ideology can be identified through Curcio's belief that The Red Brigades were not bandits. Since the subversive and aggressive behavior of his organization was carried out according to the 'Marxist-Leninist tradition', Curcio automatically exempts it from any responsibility for unlawful crimes and disregard for human life. This example, as well as demonstrating how deeply militants radicalized themselves in left-wing ideology, reveals the dangers of taking this ideology to the extreme. Despite the beliefs of its founders, The Red Brigades were seen as cold hearted criminals by both the state and the Italian population. Their violent nature even lost them support from thousands of proletarians and workers, the very individuals for whom the armed struggle was being fought<sup>43</sup>.

The ideology supporting the armed struggle created by the founders of The Red Brigades would be subject to significant alteration as the phenomenon of Italian terrorism entered a new phase. By 1977, the number of terrorist attacks threatening the Italian nation had risen to one thousand nine hundred and twenty six. Only three years earlier the attacks recorded were just over five hundred<sup>44</sup>. This considerable increase can be linked to a new wave of militants that joined the ranks of The Red Brigades and Front Line in the years following 1975. The testimonies of members who actively participated as terrorists throughout the second stage of Italian terrorism singled out by Tranfaglia (spanning from 1975 to 1982) demonstrate that no consideration was given to Marxist-Leninist principles; some did not even understand the basic concepts of Marxist theory. Ex-Front Line militant, Adriano Roccuzzella, gives his experience:

“The older militants seemed more prepared from the point of view of political attention. We on the other hand, were more of a collection of individualities without a real political logic, more interested in searching for a shared logic of emotions and unifying collective actions, rather than

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<sup>43</sup> Guido Quazza, preface, *Operai Senza Politica*, by Bruno Montanelli and Marco Revelli (Roma: Savelli, 1979) 9-10.

<sup>44</sup> Alison Jamieson, *The Heart Attacked. Terrorism and Conflict in the Italian State* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1989) 20.

a group focused on and attracted to the reading of the sacred texts of Marxism”<sup>45</sup>.

Adriano’s disregard of Marxist ideals allows a new argument to emerge concerning the creation of another type of ideology, an ideology that allowed militants to fight the armed struggle for personal reasons, not for a ‘socialist cause’: an ideology founded on the laws of anarchism. Oscar Jászi, in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* offers a general definition of the term ‘anarchism’ as:

“An attempt to establish justice in all human relations by the elimination of the state (or by the greatest possible minimization of its activity) and its replacement by an entirely free and spontaneous cooperation among individuals, groups, regions and nations”<sup>46</sup>.

The disappearance of the recognition of Marxist ideology amongst radical left-wing militants unconsciously transformed these terrorists into mere anarchists. Although they declared that their armed struggle was fought in the name of intellectuals like Marx and Lenin, this new generation identified their reasons to fight in one or more ‘motives’ that originated in their discontent. On these they fabricated their own utopian ideals and were able to discover a motivation worthy of their struggle, as well as a system by which their law breaking behavior could be justified. Therefore, their armed struggle became a mere fulfillment of those anarchistic principles described by Jászi.

Giorgio was a passionate militant of this second generation. His memoirs can be used as evidence demonstrating the complete ideological change that occurred in the second phase of Italian terrorism.

“I never entered the ‘Soviet’ wing of the armed struggle, my sense of life and theirs, my determination to be entirely present in everything that I do, is what separates us. And for that matter, these are the roots of my culture and my decision to take up the armed struggle. This is the thread

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<sup>45</sup> Tranfaglia, 242.

<sup>46</sup> Oscar Jászi, “Anarchism” *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 1931 ed.

that leads from the youth group right up to the way I am today, and it has never changed”<sup>47</sup>.

Giorgio confirms his complete detachment from a communist-like idea of the armed struggle and affirms his participation as an individual in the proceedings of his terrorist organization. He can be viewed as a symbol that reflects a widespread sentiment of selfishness brought to the armed struggle by a generation in whom the ideals of 1968 were still very much alive. Giorgio refuses to adopt the same socialist identity rejected by Roccazzella and his comrades. He continues:

“The ridiculous thing, in my opinion, is that there are even people in our group who claim you shouldn’t hate the people you attack, because we aren’t acting for ‘personal’ reasons but out of a necessary and dutiful opposition to the current state of things”<sup>48</sup>.

The statements of both Giorgio and Adriano Roccazzella reveal the presence of a subjective perspective of the armed struggle that was somewhat separate from the original Marxist ideology. Motivated by personal and private demands, they ultimately engaged in terrorist activities for their own benefit. By bringing this kind of mindset to the armed struggle these terrorists exposed themselves as mere anarchists who endeavored to bring down a state in the hope of erecting righteous governing authorities.

So why did this new generation of terrorists support a more anarchistic ideology rather than an extreme left-wing one? Roberto Bartali, a scholar specializing in the history of the Red Brigades, makes an insightful distinction useful in the search for a response. He claims that:

“The terrorist groups born from 1975 onwards, were the children of the ’68 phenomenon, thus children of a protest ideology less tied to the classics of Marxism. BR and GAP (Red Brigades and Armed Proletarian Groups) were instead children of the Resistance, they came out of the most intransigent Stalinism”<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Giorgio, 60 (116).

<sup>48</sup> Giorgio 61. (117-118).

<sup>49</sup> Roberto Bartali, e-mail to the author, 16 Aug. 2006.

This observation is an understandable and insightful way of looking at the ideological change between the two phases of Italian terrorism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the founders and members of The Red Brigades had been exposed to many stories and myths surrounding the Partisan Resistance. As a result, they inherited a radical left-wing way of thinking from their parents and eventually sought to reproduce a society founded on the laws of communism. On the other hand, many of the vigorous participants and supporters of the ideologies launched in 1968, became members of Front line (born in 1977<sup>50</sup>) and although they chanted “Long live Marx and long live Lenin” in the years of the student movements, they had no desire to identify themselves in Marxist or Leninist theory. As many later progressed onto the practice of terrorist activity, they would merely claim that their armed struggle was fought in the name of left-wing ideology. As a result, their practice of political violence became a series of actions for the fulfillment of individual aspirations. In this respect, they fall more under the category of ‘anarchists’ than ‘left-wing terrorists’.

The purpose of radical ideology, in both phases of Italian terrorism, was to justify and legitimize the wounding, assassination or kneecapping of those regarded as enemies. In order to detect other methods through which young people radicalized themselves, it is essential to explore the pragmatic side of left-wing terrorism. Firstly, propaganda was one of the first methods used by revolutionaries to persecute and defame their enemies. “Send the bill to Andreotti”<sup>51</sup>. As Giorgio decides to expropriate a jeans boutique with his youth group, he shouts this verse as a signal to commence the hold up. The message is again very clear: we are not responsible for this expropriation, Andreotti is.<sup>52</sup> This way of using propaganda was often adopted by young radicals who, after committing a crime, freed themselves of any guilt or liability by insinuating that their enemies were responsible for the offences they committed. The ideal of a guilty enemy was thus created. Through posters, pamphlets, slogans, defamatory campaigns and

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<sup>50</sup> Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, *L'Italia degli Anni Di Piombo* (Milano: Rizzoli Libri, 1991) 254-255

<sup>51</sup> Giorgio, 15 (66).

<sup>52</sup> Giulio Andreotti, was seven times prime minister of Italy. He was one of the most powerful politicians of the *Democrazia Cristiana* and was later accused of Mafia membership and the ordering of the murder of a journalist. For more information see Robert C. Meade *Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism* p. 107-109.

communiqués,<sup>53</sup> the Italian government was accused of corruption and exploitation. By carrying out propaganda campaigns, left-wing radicals made their first steps in the armed struggle and began to feel like useful subjects of what they believed was a fast growing revolution. It is essential, however, to examine how this practice of defaming members of the state progressed into a vindictive and malignant dehumanization of government officials and of components of the police force.

Defamatory campaigns were not the only methods used to expose the affairs of the Italian government as illegitimate. As young activists evolved into fully-fledged terrorists, the lives of politicians, magistrates, judges and all those that fell under the category of ‘enemy’ were significantly put at risk. Terrorists assumed the roles of self-appointed judges that would forcefully process and sentence the state by kidnapping its representatives. The following interviewee of Donatella della Porta illustrates the rapid and frightening process of identifying and condemning enemies:

“You make a political analysis, but then you need a victim. If you want to hit the Christian Democracy in a neighborhood, you need a target...therefore, you start to look for this victim...you read the newspapers, you infiltrate their meetings, and you try to find out. Then you have singled out your victim: he is physically there; he is the one to be blamed for everything. In that moment there is already the logic of a trial in which you have already decided that he is guilty; you only have to decide on his punishment. So you have a very *‘emphatic’ sense of justice*; you punish him not only for what he has done but also for the rest. Then you don’t care anymore which responsibilities that person has; you ascribe everything to him...he is only a small part of the machine that is going to destroy all of us”<sup>54</sup>.

Formulate an analysis, locate your victim, find him guilty and punish him for all the misdeeds of the state, show no remorse. This way of thinking indeed reveals a world in

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<sup>53</sup> These were letters written by The Red Brigades used as a ways of communicating with the exterior world. They accused the Italian Government (primarily the Christian Democracy) of corruption, injustice towards the proletariat and exploitation of workers.

which moral scruples were completely eliminated and in which human beings were not only targeted for what they did, but for what they represented. This statement evokes the procedures taken to kidnap and assassinate Aldo Moro; a man held in captivity for fifty five days and shot nine times for being the representative of The Christian Democracy. His killer, the leader of The Red Brigades in 1978, Mario Moretti, made this declaration after Moro's death: "We did not kill Moro the man, but his function. We reject the accusation of political homicide"<sup>55</sup>. Another leftist terrorist demonstrates his immunity to the established laws of society and the value of human life.

A shared ideal that best justified and made acceptable the use of violence in almost all politically motivated terrorist activity was found in the image that most terrorists had of a violent and unfair state. The belief that the state had not been faithful to a democratic way of governing triggered a significant sense of rebellion inside many politically active youths. della Porta believes that the idea of a violent state was initially created by the militants' vivid memories of police brutality. She suggests that the bitter memories of police violence and abuse of power commenced in street riots where rebels were severely beaten, wounded or lost a close companion<sup>56</sup>. Seen as the defenders of the state and obstacles of political violence, police commissioners, police officers, security guards, body guards and prison wardens were targeted with just as little mercy as those in higher positions such as politicians, judges and magistrates. This observation can be linked to Giorgio's comments regarding his detachment from the Marxist ideological line of conduct and refusal to enter the 'Soviet' wing of the armed struggle. The hatred towards the police force was very much alive on a personal level between officer and revolutionary. The notion that the already 'unclean' job practiced by the police was that of wounding and killing left-wing radicals in street battles and making comrades suffer in prison, caused terrorists to feel a stronger sense self-gratification in their perpetration of murderous actions. The face to face encounter between a southern police commissioner

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<sup>54</sup> Donatella della Porta, "Political Organizations in Left-Wing Underground Organizations: Biographies of Italian and German Militants." *International Social Movement Research* 4 (1992): 280.

<sup>55</sup> Meade, 173.

<sup>56</sup> della Porta, "Political organizations" p. 267.

and Giorgio demonstrates just how personal his armed struggle actually was. Emanating from the pages of *Memorie*, is an intense feeling of hatred and disgust:

“How dare you? I wanted to say. How dare you? We know every detail about the work you do, of your filthy activity as cop and executioner, and you are such a jerk that you don’t even have a foreshadowing, a flash, a sense of what’s coming?”<sup>57</sup>.

On a common city bus, just before attempting this murder, Giorgio pauses to observe his objective and continues to evoke sentiments of hatred, rage and rebellion in all sorts of malignant ways. His sense of detestation towards police detectives reveals yet another way through which young revolutionaries were able to radicalize themselves and faithfully continue an armed revolt against the state.

Aside from the vindictive perspective towards the police adopted by left-wing militants to justify their hostile behavior, a second reason concerning the image of a corrupt and unfair state convinced many left-wing radicals that to join and continue the armed struggle was an imperative and urgent matter. Robert. C. Meade asserts that right-wing violence was being tolerated or even promoted by the state, and that many of the bombings throughout the 70s and early 80s were part of a ‘strategy of tension’ orchestrated by conspirators, generals of the armed forces and prominent political figures<sup>58</sup>. Further inquiry into this conspiracy is offered by the previously mentioned Roberto Bartali who states that bombings in public places, such as the December 1969 tragedy of Piazza Fontana where a bomb exploded in the National Bank of Agriculture killing 17 people, were the state’s response to the tens of thousands of students and workers who demanded better working conditions and dreamt of a just Italy<sup>59</sup>. The bomb in Piazza Fontana exploded in the busiest hour of the working day of a bank frequented by manual laborers and farmers. Furthermore, it was believed that the Italian secret services were involved in the organization of these bombings in an attempt to frighten voters who were in favor of the fast growing *Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian

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<sup>57</sup> Giorgio, 87 (147).

<sup>58</sup> Meade, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Roberto Bartali, “L’Autunno caldo, la strage di Piazza Fontana – La loggia P2” 03/04/06. <[www.robertobartali.it/cap02.ht](http://www.robertobartali.it/cap02.ht)>.

*Comunist Party*) and counteract the “leftward drift of the nation”<sup>60</sup>. Amongst all the reasons that brought young Italians to take up arms and battle the state, this was the one that ignited a fierce desire inside each militant and made the struggle worth fighting for. This image of a violent and unfair state was, above all, the most significant, the most prominent; it was the reason that ultimately justified every militant’s participation in the armed struggle. Finally, because of this reason, left-wing militants were able to firstly adopt a line of conduct that reflected the teachings of Marxist theory and secondly, in the second half of the 1970s, support the armed struggle with an anarchistic ideology that permitted terrorists to fight for more personal reasons. The fulfillment of both ideologies saw as its objective the ultimate destruction of the state.

The study of the radical ideology of the armed struggle has given birth to a number of hypotheses regarding its creation, evolution and eventual application in the diverse phases of the years of Italian terrorism. From its historical origins, deeply rooted in the guidelines of Marxist theory, to its conversion into an ideology founded on the laws of anarchy, one has been able to detect a significant ideological change which labeled the second generation of terrorists as mere anarchists. By referring back to the research questions, it is possible to frame the ideology of the armed struggle as an attractive force that lured many young rebellious subjects to its adoration. Its power to legitimize and justify immoral acts of violence emerges as another essential factor that contributed to the radicalization of young people in the armed struggle of the 1970s. The years of lead were indeed a time of ideological excess, and it is this precise overindulgence that deceived thousands of radical left-wing terrorists into believing that utopian ideals could only be reached through revolutionary violence. The final chapter of this dissertation will expose the consequences of ideological precepts taken to the extreme. However, as a final point, a statement made by one of the founders of The Red Brigades reveals just how lethal the attractive characteristics of ideology can be: “we have only been addicts of a particular type, addicts of ideology. A fatal drug, worse than heroin. A few cubic centimeters of it and you’re done for life” - Alberto Franceschini<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Meade, 36.

<sup>61</sup> Meade, 235.

## Clandestine Life

The entry into a clandestine terrorist group, also known as an underground organization, often signified a radical left-wing terrorist's complete devotion to the armed struggle. In breaking off all contact with society, militants became anonymous soldiers whose only purpose in life was to perform and encourage political violence. This final chapter will examine various characteristics of the phenomenon of clandestine life in order to explore those factors that motivated left-wing terrorists to join underground organizations. Firstly, the decision to reject and step out of society will be viewed in conjunction with the Marxist concept of false consciousness, a theoretical precept that accuses the ruling class of blinding the subordinate classes to the true nature of their social relationship. Secondly the frequent, almost incessant, use of violence will be considered and singled out as a physical and mental addiction that unconsciously brought militants to become members of clandestine organizations. Giorgio's detailed description of his experience as a clandestine soldier will be subjected to analysis as he descends into a world of poverty, solitude, repetition and isolation where one's body and soul needed to be in complete service to the revolution. To conclude the study, the effects of the failure of the armed struggle on ex-terrorists will be briefly observed. This will expose the different reactions of revolutionaries to the collapse and failure of a utopian dream on which many had founded the reason for their very existence.

The decision taken by hundreds of radical left-wing terrorists to join underground organizations can be linked to the belief that the society in which they lived suffered from what Marx and Engels refer to as 'false consciousness'. Elucidating the meaning of this concept is Professor Robert M. Seiler:

“The ruling class persuades other classes into the belief that the status quo benefits us all. The ideas people have are the ideas the ruling class wants them to have. That is, the ruling class generates an ideology, which we call

a false consciousness, one that blinds the subordinate classes to the true nature of their social relationship”<sup>62</sup>.

Aware of the fact that the ruling class had kept the proletariat enslaved under this false ideology, terrorists needed to discover a way in which they could detach themselves completely from society and search for a reality that was not contaminated by the bourgeois mentality. Only after having gained this sense of freedom could one progress to a serious and strategically planned attack of the state. Clandestine life functioned as a portal through which revolutionaries could exit the bourgeois consciousness and step into revolutionary consciousness. From this position, the deceived proletariat could be encouraged to take up arms and join the armed struggle against the state. Slogans such as “Let us create and organize the armed proletarian power everywhere”<sup>63</sup> were in fact launched by clandestine organizations such as The Red Brigades.

Another significant factor that may have motivated young left-wing radicals to join underground organizations was an endless and addictive practice of violence. Luisa Passerini notes that “several activists came to consider violence as ‘natural’ and were able to move into the underground so smoothly that they did not perceive they had made an important choice”<sup>64</sup>. Through this observation, Passerini suggests that for many violent activists the entry into clandestine organizations was more of an unconscious decision linked to an incessant practice of violence. As the following interviewee of della Porta demonstrates, violence had indeed become an everyday practice for radical youths:

“Every morning I left home, I went to fight the police in the street battles, I came back for lunch, and went back to fight in the afternoon and until night. It was a Londonderry, I mean a series of battles carried out with Molotov-cocktails and stones to conquer five meters of land”<sup>65</sup>.

It is clear that as weeks, months and even years were passed in the midst of violent protests, young activists developed an addiction to violence that saw their involvement in

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<sup>62</sup> Robert M. Seiler, “Karl Marx: A Critical Profile”. 12/07/06. [www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/maxpro.htm](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/maxpro.htm).

<sup>63</sup> Brigade Rosse, ‘Communiqué no 6’. *Il Martirio di Aldo Moro*, ed. Gustavo Selva and Eugenio Marucci (Bologna: Cappelli, 1978) 171.

<sup>64</sup> Donatella della Porta, “Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations.” *International Social Movement Research 4* (1992) *International Social Movement Research 4* (1992): 14.

<sup>65</sup> della Porta, “Political Organizations” 270.

environments of battle, protest and physical aggression on a day-to-day basis. In this atmosphere they developed a distorted vision of society where they saw only marginal difference between the normal and the deviant. Armed robberies, expropriations and violent protests entered the daily schedule of left-wing revolutionaries who came to consider violence as a natural aspect of everyday life. Blinded by this belief, many activists almost unconsciously progressed into underground organizations without realizing they had made possibly the most important decision of their lives.

An ideal example of a radical left-wing terrorist who entered clandestine life in this unconscious manner is Giorgio. His experience can be related to Passerini's observation as he comes across as one of these activists who, after an extended period in the service of proletarian and extra-parliamentary groups, mechanically nodded his head when asked: "are you willing to enter into our organization?"<sup>66</sup>.

"The entire dense and complex network of social interaction in which I lived over the past few years, almost without being aware of it, began to crumble. Here, too, there was no 'leap'; and this is a pity, because there is no longer a symbolic moment in which a community, however informal it may have been, breaks apart and each of its members joins another community, like the big graduation dinner"<sup>67</sup>.

After some time spent as a clandestine militant, Giorgio begins to acknowledge that his social world had slowly begun to disappear. Caught in the strong current of violence that swept away so many young people throughout the 1970s he feels the first side effect of underground life as his social life slowly disappears in front of his eyes. Giorgio gives hardly any significance to his entry into an underground organization (he does not specify which one, however he seems to have joined Front Line) as he cannot seem to point out a clear moment in which he began to consider himself a 'clandestine soldier'. His experience can be used as proof demonstrating the presence of a number of radical left-wing terrorists who simply advanced into underground organization without taking notice of how consequential their decision may have been.

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<sup>66</sup> Giorgio, 38 (91).

<sup>67</sup> Giorgio, 44 (98).

Having analyzed some of the reasons why left-wing revolutionaries may have joined clandestine organizations, it is now possible to move onto the study of the rules and procedures of underground life. Giorgio's description of his experience as a clandestine militant will be closely observed as he narrates his slow descent into solitude, isolation and poverty. Leading us into this examination is a thought-provoking observation of his general experience of clandestinity:

“There is no state of life as transparent as living underground. It is a highly unnatural way to live, rigidly regulated and constantly required to contain a meaning, it winds up being reduced to the bone in terms of experience. Nothing happens in a natural manner, nothing is light or easy, because there is no room for things to process themselves in a normal way”<sup>68</sup>.

Why is this lifestyle so unnatural? What brought Giorgio to make a comment such as this one?

Living in solitude and isolation is a side effect of underground life that Giorgio often raises in his memoirs. A clear indication of his solitary existence is visible in the deficient relationship he has with his comrades.

“I see them rarely, and when we do get together we speak in the technical, activist jargon involved in the larger question of ‘what is to be done?’ and all the countless daily steps required for security, survival, and political activity. Personal questions are veiled, as if they were somehow shameful”<sup>69</sup>.

Giorgio's function in this organization resembles that of a machine. He is expected to perform his duties according to the orders of his leaders and comrades, in silence, abiding by rules that request an increase in attention towards security and an ongoing revision of tasks and assignments. His comment regarding the avoidance of personal questions in the group illustrates another aspect of the unnatural nature of clandestinity and demonstrates

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<sup>68</sup> Giorgio, 61 (117).

<sup>69</sup> Giorgio, 89 (148-149).

how neither intimacy nor personal comments could be brought to the underground. These strict rules reminded militants that they had dedicated body and soul to the cause of the armed struggle. Just as all possessions had been sacrificed upon joining an organization, militants had to renounce their personal lives also.

Poverty is another characteristic of clandestine life that reveals the extent to which terrorists went in order to continue radicalizing themselves in the armed struggle. By descending into a state of poverty, militants lowered their social status to that of the proletariat and went through, even if for a short period, the difficulties of those for whom the armed struggle was being fought. Money was closely associated with the bourgeois state and the false consciousness it had promulgated throughout the nation. In breaking away from society, terrorists become dependent on the funds of the organization (which acquired its capital through armed robberies, extortions and demands for ransoms) and often lived on the bare minimum in order to survive. Giorgio speaks of the minimal income he received from his organization:

“Among other things I was given a salary. Very, very little money, and the occasional gifts I received from my parents always made the difference between scrimping and outright poverty”<sup>70</sup>.

At first, Giorgio’s decisions seem bizarre. Not only has he broken all contact with his friends and family but he seems to have punished himself by descending down to the poverty line. By observing his situation from a different angle though, it is possible to note that Giorgio acquires a sense of fullness from this life of simplicity. In his desire to devote body and soul to the cause of the armed struggle, an aspiration to the lowering of his social status to that of the proletariat is also present. In other words, Giorgio needed to become poor, he needed to experience repetitive work, and have limited social life in order “to feel like an ordinary person, one person like any other, a proletarian among proletarians”<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Giorgio, 72 (129).

<sup>71</sup> Giorgio, 109 (172).

By the beginning of the 1980s, a large number of left-wing terrorists, mainly belonging to Front Line and The Red Brigades, had been imprisoned. Two years later the terrorist nightmare would cease to haunt the Italian nation. Imprisonment represented a physical restraint which stripped the radical left-wing terrorists of their weapons and left them to be judges of their own actions. In this internal process some pleaded guilty and went as far as proclaiming their *dissociazione* (dissociation)<sup>72</sup> from the armed struggle and terrorist activity. Others failed to recognize their faults and remained faithful to their ideologies. Faced with the painful reality of a failed revolution, the differing reactions of ex-terrorists merit some attention. Ex-member of Front Line, Sandro Nitta is a clear example of one of the former type of prisoner. He was one of those that realized what he believed to be political utopia could not in any way justify the level of violence reached by his organization. His remorseful outlook was expressed clearly when he affirmed:

“In me what dominates is the awareness of defeat, the consciousness of the inadequacy of the cultural tools that had pushed and supported me in the armed struggle, and the sensation of having embraced something absurd too tightly”<sup>73</sup>.

Nitta’s reaction when confronted with his guilt was to dissociate himself from the armed struggle. On the other hand, a militant of the same organization, Paolo Zambianchi, took the opposite direction when faced with his own personal sentence. He had lost a war against the state but maintained a revolutionary spirit which was now identified in *Le Nuove* prison of Turin against the ill treatment of detainees. He states:

“Mine became a battle for a utopian society without prisons, where the need to resort to the prison system became less and less frequent”<sup>74</sup>.

Zambianchi represents all the terrorists who managed to endure in a battle against what they believed to be their most dangerous foe: society. In the role of detainees, these terrorists were inevitably brought to look back on their desperate search for social freedom which marked the bloodiest years of Italian post war history. Their defeat incited

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<sup>72</sup> By becoming *dissociati dal terrorismo* (dissociated from terrorism) terrorists declared that they would indefinitely abandon any kind of terrorist activity and would disown their criminal past.

<sup>73</sup> Tranfaglia, 332.

<sup>74</sup> Tranfaglia, 326.

them to look forward to a new definition of freedom which could justify decades, or even a lifetime, in prison.

As a final point, it is important to observe the reaction of the leader of The Red Brigades, Renato Curcio, to the failure of the armed struggle and to the passing of the new law of *dissociazione* (dissociation). The law of dissociation was approved in February 1987, it granted substantial reductions in prison sentences to those who had definitively abandoned violence as a method of political activity and had admitted their own crimes<sup>75</sup>. Through a legal document, all imprisoned terrorists had the chance to state that they would disown the armed struggle completely. Apart from being an encouragement to abstain from signing this document, Curcio's critique of the idea of dissociation can be seen as a message sent to all imprisoned terrorists offering a solution to the problem of dealing with life after the armed struggle. Curcio never signed the document of *dissociazione*, he claims that he did not recognize himself in this complete abjuration of his past. He defends his decision by affirming that:

“The law also wanted the humiliation of those that subscribed their own ‘dissociation’ ...why would I have to dissociate myself? Why would I have to ‘abjure’ a past that I had lived with all of myself? Isn't prison the ideal place for a first, provisional attempt to balance things out? I preferred to confront, remaining integrate, the troubled times that lay ahead”<sup>76</sup>.

Curcio demonstrates yet another reaction to the failure of the armed struggle. He does not insinuate that terrorists should not repent or be remorseful when looking back at their participation to left-wing terrorism, he only rejects the idea of dissociation as a way of surrendering to the will of the state in order to be spared further time in prison. His reaction can be placed in between Sandro Nitta's and Paolo Zambianchi's. Curcio is neither remorseful to the point of proclaiming his dissociation, nor blinded by the belief that radical ideology must still be glorified. His can be seen as an invitation for militants to not neglect a past where one's purpose of existence was dedicated to a battle against

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<sup>75</sup> Meade, 237.

<sup>76</sup> Curcio, 206.

injustice, but accept the years of prison as a time to search for some form of moral stability through which life can be continued.

Giorgio's memoirs, together with the experiences of other ex left-wing terrorists have allowed the phenomenon of clandestine life to be studied in the context of the Italian armed struggle of the 1970s. This has opened a new area of investigation concerning the reasons for which terrorists joined underground organizations, how they were affected by the austere lifestyle and the different ways in which they reacted to a failed revolution. This analysis has revealed that many activists and terrorists were drawn to clandestine organization through the belief in the Marxist concept of false consciousness and through an addiction to the practice of violence that affected possibly the most important decision of their lives. The damaging characteristics of clandestinity have been unearthed and identified as sets of severe rules that provided terrorists with a sense of fulfillment yet had a deep impact on their mental and physical stability. The harsh clandestine lifestyle quickly transformed human beings into machines trained for the sole purpose of setting in motion a revolution. The final consideration of the reactions of radical left-wing terrorists to the failure of the armed struggle has proved to be a study revealing the different paths taken by ex-militants, as some continued to struggle against injustice, some dissociated themselves, and others accepted their prison sentence in the hope of returning to the normal lives they once lived. By turning to clandestinity, terrorists reached the climax of their radicalization. However, this high point proved to be, paradoxically, the beginning of a descent into the lowest depths of the human condition they were trying to transform.

## Conclusion

Giorgio was a radical left-wing terrorist fighting in the armed struggle of the 1970s who, through the use of political violence, attempted to establish a new system of government that would permanently eradicate what he considered to be an unjust civil state. Through the study of the behaviors, ideals, intentions and motivations of this terrorist, this dissertation has retraced the path taken by numerous young Italians from their early experiences in proletarian youth groups to the eventual entry in clandestine organizations. This analysis has reopened the continuously evolving body of information surrounding the years of Italian terrorism by demonstrating that Giorgio and other left-wing terrorists engaged themselves in a process of radicalization that transformed them from occasional demonstrators to malevolent political assassins.

By taking into consideration Giorgio's initial participation in violent protests, proletarian youth groups and extra-parliamentary circles, the first chapter has focused on the origins of collective revolutionary activity in Italy. The effects of the assimilation of the ideals launched by the movements of 1968 and 1969 have been unveiled as thousands of individuals at the start of the 1970s became violent autonomists accusing the Italian government of corruption and exploitation. Proletarian youth groups and the extra-parliamentary left have thus been identified as systems through which young rebels could radicalize themselves in left-wing ideals and develop revolutionary beliefs. Other less evident factors that influenced young Italians have also been examined. For instance, the exposure of teenagers to the stories of ex-Partisans who had fought the liberating Resistance in World War Two has been proven to be a determining issue that brought many of these youths to see radical left-wing concepts in a favorable light, and to adopt communist ideals. As they matured their political identities many would take this ideology to its extremes, using it as the supporting pillar for an armed struggle against the state. Finally, the complete rejection of bourgeois mentality has been identified as a factor that stimulated young people to redefine the reality in which they found themselves and search for new ways of experiencing life. In an effort to avoid adopting the thoughts

and habits of the bourgeoisie, young Italians found extra-parliamentary groups and terrorist organizations to be adequate escape routes. By bringing all these elements into discussion, the first part of the research question, regarding the reason why young people turned to terrorism, has therefore been answered.

The purpose of the second and third chapters has been to provide a response to the second part of the research question concerning the ways in which young people became radical proponents of extremist left-wing ideals. The second chapter has focused on the creation and evolution of a radical ideology of the armed struggle, with an observation of the application of these ideals as terrorists fulfilled their aggressive and murderous tasks. The ideological change that occurred throughout the years of Italian terrorism has been the primary issue discussed. From the originating ideology of The Red Brigades founded on the theories of critical thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Mao and Fanon, a significant evolution of ideology of the armed struggle has been singled out due to the arrival of a new generation of militants in the second half of the 1970s. These guerrillas have been identified as children of the '68 movements and labeled as anarchists rather than left-wing terrorists since they showed no understanding of Marxist theory but fought the armed struggle for very private and personal reasons. They have thus been held responsible for the creation of a new anarchistic ideology. The reader has ultimately been shown the different ways in which ideological principles, whether Marxist or Anarchist, were put into practice to defame and attack government officials and members of the police force. The presence of radical ideology in the armed struggle has been identified as an enticing force that lured many terrorists to an excessive glorification of its principles therefore eliminating any moral scruples from their inhuman acts of violence.

The final chapter has explored the phenomenon of clandestine life and has shed light on the different paths taken by radical left-wing terrorists to the doors of clandestine organizations. The belief in the Marxist concept of false consciousness has demonstrated the need for terrorists to detach themselves completely from society and search for a new, uncontaminated reality through which they could plan an attack on the state. On the other hand, the constant, almost obsessive use of violence has been framed as a blinding

addiction that unconsciously drove young radicals to search for the high point of their radicalization and descend into the world of underground activity. After a brief observation of the miserable lifestyle that terrorists subjected themselves to, the experiences of imprisoned left-wing terrorists who faced the collapse of the armed struggle have been critically analyzed. This has extended the area of investigation by focusing on the contrasting reactions to the failure of an idealized revolution between those who continued to remain faithful to radical ideology and those who abjured their past in the hope of reconstructing their destroyed lives. In trying to establish a new form of government that would benefit the exploited classes, the armed revolt of these individuals did nothing but lead Italy to the brink of civil war, not to mention the four hundred dead and five thousand wounded that it left behind<sup>77</sup>.

In light of this last observation concerning the failure and collapse of the armed struggle and the repercussions of this event on the lives of thousands of militants, it is possible to note that every expectation that radical left-wing terrorists had of their armed revolt ended in its contrary. This dissertation has demonstrated the impracticality of violence as a means through which any form of social change can be effected, and the inevitable failure of man's attempt to establish utopian ideals on earth. Considering the recent murders of Massimo D'Antona (1999) and Marco Biagi (2002)<sup>78</sup> by a reassembled cell of The Red Brigades, this has been a relevant analysis of the mysterious terrorist mentality that continues to plague contemporary societies. By exposing the motivating forces that encouraged young terrorists to continue radicalizing themselves to the limits of their human capacities, this study perhaps contributes to the continuous effort to understand why human beings resort to atrocious acts of violence in order to impose their own beliefs on the rest of civil society.

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<sup>77</sup> Richard Drake, "The Red Brigades and the Italian Political Tradition", *Terrorism in Europe*, (London: Billing and Sons, 1982) 102.

<sup>78</sup> Gianni Cipriani, *Brigate Rosse: La Minaccia del Nuovo Terrorismo* (Milano: Sperling & Kupfer, 2004) 223. A nucleus of The Red Brigades resurfaced in the early nineties calling itself BR-PCC (Brigate Rosse Partito Comunista Combattente).

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