

## **Terror, Myth and Victims:**

### **The Historical Interpretation of the *Brigate Rosse* and the *Rote Armee Fraktion***

Names: Salvatore Scalzo (i518781)

Steffi de Jong (i518158)

Joost van den Akker (i287342)

Pigeonhole: 227

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Supervisor: N. Randeraad

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*“Die Historisierung der Roten Armee Fraktion ist in vollem Gange. Die Biographien der Täter und ihre Motive sind lange bekannt; der „Mythos RAF“ ist entzaubert.“ (Golz, 2007, p.2)*

## **Introduction**

The history of the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) and the Brigade Rosse (BR) has been interpreted differently over time. In our paper we analyse the process of history making concerning both the RAF and the Italian Brigade Rosse BR, two extreme leftist terrorist organisations founded in the 1970s. The aim of our paper is to show how different societies deal with historic events. We have detected and compared the history making trends within both countries. For this purpose we have been looking at books by historians, biographies, films, documentaries, news paper articles and pop culture in both countries. We have divided our essay into four parts, each one of them treating major trend or matter of debate between history makers.

We start by looking at the relevance of the topic within today's society. We will be looking at how much (or how little) the RAF and the BR has been influencing the political culture of both states according to different history makers operating at different moments in time. Special attention is given to the implementation of repentance legislation in Italian politics. Our second point of analysis is the embedment of the terrorist movements within the contemporary societal circumstances. Actors within the history making process have got different views on how much the terrorist movements stemmed from the historical circumstances and on how much support they got from society at large. We compare these differing views and answer the reasons of their existence. Our third point of analysis is a shift within history making from a unilateral focus on the terrorists to a more global view encompassing the victims in present-day history making. This trend has been underlined by several history makers and we analyse in how far the claim for the existence of such a trend is justified. Finally we look at the way in which both historical events have been subject to a creation of myth. In the case of Italy, we will be looking at how a view on the persona of Aldo Moro, the leader of the Christian Democrats famously kidnapped by the BR and killed after having been there hostage for 55 day, has changed over time. In the case of Germany we will show how a dense myth has been created around the RAF by the terrorists themselves, politics, mass media and the adoption of the RAF by pop culture. We want to show that, although Hans Georg Golz's claim in the above quotation that the Myth RAF has been demystified there is still a dense net of stories (instead of histories) surrounding the subject which might make an objective treatment of the RAF difficult.

# 1. The relevance of the terrorist organisations in contemporary society

## 1.1

Stefan Aust finishes his bestseller *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* with the famous sentence “Es waren sieben Jahre die die Republik veränderten.” (Aust, 1985, p.592) In how far the era RAF - which was of course not only lasting for seven years, but for twenty eight - has changed German society is a subject of debate, but there seems to be a general agreement among present-day history makers that the RAF has changed society and that its repercussions can still be felt today. As we will however show, the view on the RAF has changed because of a historical distance created both by the *Auflösungserklärung* in 1998 and the experience of 9/11 accompanied by a new perception of threat.

In a recent interview with the Uwe Vorkötter of the *Frankfurter Rundschau* German Chancellor Angela Merkel answered the question whether any lessons could be drawn from the experience of the *Deutsche Herbst* with the words:

Vielleicht zwei. Helmut Schmidt hat sehr darauf Wert gelegt, in dieser Ausnahmesituation alle Parteien einzubinden. Das Zusammenhalten von Opposition und Regierung in Grundfragen des Staates ist gute Tradition geworden. Zweitens: Der Staat darf nicht erpressbar sein. [...] [Die damalige Grundlinie] war und ist im Prinzip richtig. Sie bleibt auch heute die Leitlinie. (Vorkötter et al., 2007)

According to Merkel the experience of the *Deutsche Herbst* has thus changed German state culture in that it has determined the way the German federal government deals with crisis determined through a hard line and a close cooperation between opposing political forces. This does however not seem to be the present idea of former chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In an interview conducted in September this year with the chief editor of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, Giovanni di Lorenzo, Schmidt proclaims that: “Die Epoche des deutschen Terrorismus hat ein viel zu großes publizistisches Gewicht bekommen in diesem zweiten Demokratieversuch von 1949 bis zum heutigen Tage. Es ist ein wichtiger Zeitabschnitt, aber weiß Gott nicht der wichtigste.“ (di Lorenzo, 2007) Nearly ten years earlier however, in another interview published by the same newspaper immediately following the so-called “*Auflösungserklärung*” of the RAF Schmidt sounded very different. To the question whether terrorism had changed the republic, Schmidt answered:

In gewisser Weise schon. [...] Wenn sie sich bitte daran erinnern, daß auch heutzutage noch junge Leute Leitungsmasten der Eisenbahn umlegen, dann wäre es überoptimistisch anzunehmen, wir hätten dieses Phänomen vollständig hinter uns gelassen. Insofern kann man schon sagen, daß die RAF dazu beigetragen hat die Gesellschaft zu verändern. [...] Es gibt eine Restbereitschaft zu politischer Gewalttätigkeit: Möglicherweise hört das nie wieder ganz auf.“ (Kleine-Brockhoff and Kurbjuweit, 1998)

Whether Schmidt was right in drawing a line between the then politically relevant protests by environmental activists against the Castor transports - an argument that could indeed be extended to this year’s anti-G8 activists in Heiligendamm - and German terrorism and in claiming that terrorism has opened the path for the use violence in political protest remains to be proven. Schmidt is

however not the only one to see a link between terrorism and a change in political culture. Political scientist Wolfgang Kraushaar, in his introduction of the extensive collection of essays on the history of the RAF, *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, sees the impact of the RAF not so much in a change of society at large, but in the development of the non-parliamentary Left wing movement and the development of the Green Party:

Die RAF [war] vermutlich der Katalysator der die außerparlamentarische Linke zur Aufgabe ihrer Klassenkämpferischen Imperative zwang und sie schließlich in der Folge des sogenannten Deutschen Herbstes mehr und mehr zur Akzeptanz rechtsstaatlicher Normen führte. Es scheint jedenfalls alles andere als Zufall gewesen zu sein, dass mit dem 1977 offenbar gewordenen Scheitern der radikalen Linken zugleich ein Transformationsprozess einsetzte, der mit der Partei der Grünen eine zusätzliche parlamentarische Kraft zum Resultat hatte. (Kraushaar, 2006, p.26)

Also political scientist Anne Siemens, in the short RAF history introducing her collection of interviews with victims and victim's relatives sees a connection between the RAF and the present German political culture: "Zu den Folgen des Terrorismus zählen auch: weitreichende Eingriffe in das Rechtssystem der Bundesrepublik und eine Veränderung des innenpolitischen Klimas."

(Siemens, 2007, p. 41) Indeed, as di Lorenzo observes in his interview with Schmidt, some of the juridical measures taken against the RAF terrorist at the time are still on the books today and are still contested (di Lorenzo, 2007). Hans-Georg Golz, in the editorial to the APuZ Journal on the History of the RAF asks:

Können die Reaktionen des Staates während der "bleiernen Zeit" vor 30 Jahren als Rezept dafür dienen, den globalen sicherheitspolitischen Gefährdungen zu begegnen? Lauschangriff, Rasterfahndung und Kontaktsperre haben das Sanktionsrepertoire des Rechtsstaates beständig erweitert. Mit der aus Sicherheitsabwägungen erfolgten Preisgabe verbrieftter Freiheitsrechte steht indes auf dem Spiel, was den Rechtsstaat im Kern ausmacht. (Golz, 2007, p.2)

No matter whether the RAF has changed today's society or whether its relevance in the history of the after war German Federal State has been overstated, as Schmidt claims, that the RAF is very present in today's media landscape is undeniable. Beginning with the liberation of ex-terrorist Brigitte Mohnhaupt in March this year, continuing with the discussion over Christian Klahr's amnesty up to the sheer endless mass of documentaries and articles accompanying the recent 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Deutsche Herbst*, the amount of information on the RAF flooding the German public sphere this year is enormous. This flood seems to presuppose that the RAF has still got some relevance for today's German public. Left-wing journalist Christian Semler observes that:

Anfang dieses Jahres schien es so, als würde die dreißigjährige Wiederkehr des Schreckensjahres 1977 zum Anlass für Gedenkroutine. Der „linke Terrorismus“ der RAF schein zwischen den Buchdeckeln eines zweibändigen, dickleibigen Werkes [Wolfgang Kraushaar's *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*] seine endgültige Ruhe gefunden zu haben. [...] Aber die letzte Ruhe der RAF war Schein. Die Untoten sind mitten unter uns. (Semler, 2007, p.3)

Also Wolfgang Kraushaar, in an article on the website of the Bundeszentrald für politische Bildung (bpb) observes:

Kaum jemandem dürfte verborgen geblieben sein, welche Wellen das Thema Terrorismus in den ersten Monaten des Jahres 2007 in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit geschlagen hat. [...] Es geht bei dieser kaum abklingenden öffentlichen Erregung um einen Terrorismus aus der Vergangenheit, einen, der inzwischen nicht weniger als zwei, drei Jahrzehnte zurückliegt und nach einhelliger Einschätzung der Sicherheitsbehörden längst keine Gefahr mehr darstellt. (Kraushaar, 2007)

In fact, the flood of information seems to have rekindled the interest for resolving old questions and possibly an old fascination with the RAF. During the research for a *Spiegel TV* documentary recordings of the Stammheim processes have been found and put online. They allow the public for the first time to hear the voices of Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof and Jan Carl Raspe during the process. Other new findings include plans for a kidnapping of Willy Brandt and a terrorist attack on the conference of foreign ministers in Luxembourg in June 1977, findings stemming from the enfranchisement of the legal dossier on the Buback case, taken up again this year. According to documents found by American Journalist David Crawford, Wolfgang Kraushaar speculates that the STASI and the KGB might have “used” the RAF as a weapon against the “class enemy” during the cold war. (NTV, 2007) Finally new research seems to show that the prisoners had made clear warnings against their suicides. It is certainly not a coincidence that those findings have been made during this year in which the RAF is all-present in the German public sphere. Despite its presence, the relevance of the RAF is seems however to be influenced by two other facts. The fact that since the release of the *Auflösungserklärung* is history and the recent terrorists attacks following 9/11 and the fear of a possible new and bigger attack on the domestic terrain. Wolfgang Kraushaar for one starts his collection of essays with a thorough analysis of modern terrorism before going on to compare it with the RAF. Also in newspaper articles seems to be 9/11 mentioned frequently. It might be that this bilateral distance has opened the way to a new mode of comparative research, a hypothesis which remains to be proven in recent years.

## 1.2

Also in Italy terrorism has been very present within the public sphere this year, not only because of the thirtieth anniversary of the 1977 terrorist attacks, but also because of the discovery of 15 members of a new generation of BR terrorists in February this year, seven of them working for the most important Italian Trade Union (CGIL). In the light of both events magazines, newspapers and TV dedicated a lot of time to terrorism, revisiting also the 1970s. We now move on to a short and fast analysis of whether a debate about the BR is actually present in recent media and how it is carried out. Two sources may be useful here. Stefano Folli, Italian journalist and past-editor of *Il corriere della sera*, taking part in an Internet Forum about terrorism, is argues that: “Sarebbe l’ora di affrontare gli anni di piombo con strumenti di analisi diversi. Ed è sorprendente notare come forse si dedichi più attenzione a questo tentativo nelle università straniere che non nel nostro paese” (Folli, 2004). Gilberto Mastromatteo<sup>1</sup>, author of *Quando i media staccano la spina*, a book about

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Mastromatteo uses as an introduction to the preface of his book: “We will conduct our war against the bourgeoisie, by using its newspapers”, by Andreas Baader.

the relationship between terrorism and mass media interviewed by Giuliano Boraso, the director of the book section of the internet site [www.brigaterosse.it](http://www.brigaterosse.it) observes that the BR have been very present in the media indeed:

Il fatto che tali notizie vengano poste in relazione con fatti considerati “vicini” (a livello politico, ma nel caso specifico di Vicenza anche temporale e geografico), scaturisce, a mio avviso, dall’estrema politicizzazione dei mass media italiani. Un gioco delle parti che, unito allo scarso ricorso all’approfondimento, finisce per provocare facili strumentalizzazioni. E questo è forse uno dei tratti che più avvicina il giornalismo di oggi a quello di trent’anni fa. Anche all’epoca le dinamiche ideologiche, i giudizi politici e la salvaguardia della linea editoriale prendevano il sopravvento sulla cronaca, l’analisi e il discorso sui fatti. (Mastromatteo, 2007)

Mastromatteo also tries to connect the attention and dramatisation offered by the media with the historical impact of 9/11:

“Il clima degli “anni di piombo” in generale ma, più in particolare, la sigla delle BR, sono divenuti con il passare degli anni dei – mi si passi l’espressione – “marchi di fabbrica”, il cui solo utilizzo riconduce a tutta una serie di assunti e umori di una certa stagione della storia del Paese. Un tempo era così anche per le parole “terrorismo” o “eversione”. Poi c’è stato l’11 settembre a variarne, anche qui in Italia, il contenuto semantico. La stella a cinque punte, invece, associata alla dicitura Brigate Rosse, è diventata un *brand* talmente efficace da guadagnarsi il rispetto di qualsiasi pubblicitario o esperto di marketing. Basta citare quella sigla per avere una macabra certificazione di qualità terroristica, un reale motivo per aver paura, o preoccuparsi, o allarmare.” (Mastromatteo, 2007)

The politicization of the Italian media in general implies, on the one hand, a general and frequent attention to events related to political violence and, on the other hand, an overlap, potentially instrumental, of the attention paid to terrorism with close and present events. This would for example explain the worries of the left movements about the impact of the 15 arrests over the demonstration in Vicenza against the enlargement of the NATO military station. As a conclusion we could say that the debate is no doubt present, especially under the pressure of media but whether the problematisation of the subject and the alarm created by media are justified is a matter of discussion.

The way in which the BR might have changed the present Italian political and culture, can be seen by the implementation of repentance legislation:

“La legge sui pentiti parla di un “ravvedimento sincero” ma si sa che neppure il bon Dio, forse, è in grado di penetrare i misteri dell’animo umano e districarsi nella selva degli opportunismi, degli istinti di sopravvivenza, nelle capacità di rimozione degli esseri umani. ... Non sono i pentiti che hanno sconfitto il terrorismo ma è la sconfitta del terrorismo che ha creato i pentiti. ...ci si dovrebbe chiedere se essa ha giovato o meno a quel bene supremo di una società democratica che è il sistema delle garanzie”. (Bocca, 1985, pp.284-5)

It is not common, in a formally laic State to find the existence of the consciousness and “sincere regret” as potentially relevant in determining sanctions and condemnations or awards provided by the State. In Italy however the most important laws set up to struggle terrorism (and later on the mafia) have stressed the value of regret and dissociation. Reductions of sanctions, temporary freedom and other kinds of awards are linked to the level of regret the condemned expresses regarding his deed. This level is verified by psychologists and doctors. In Italy regret is valued at the level of consciousness. This points at a clear paternalistic approach aimed at lessening the memory and

dignity of historical individual and collective experience. In 1993, two terrorists, Nadia Ponti and Vincenzo Guagliardo, wrote a moving article from prison in which they depict the way terrorists' lives and thoughts are treated. Nadia and Vincenzo are lovers but they can only rarely meet because they did not decide to regret or to reject their past experience. "After a lot of years we didn't get what other prisoners get within few days by regretting." (Ponti & Guagliardi, 1993) The Law Gozzini is the matter at stake here. This law allows a system of sanctions whereby the word sanction is related to "the level of violence the prisoner can exercise over himself. ....gradually admitting his personal disloyalty and failure." (ibid.)

The "regret penal legislation" was changed in 2001 (in order to award the "useful regret", that is the regret immediately confessed and useful for a clear and visible development of inquiries). Piero Fassino, minister at that time, commented the reform as a need. "A need", then. But for what? What the State had realized, through the legislation 1975-1987, was a system helpful to cancel one of the two parts involved in the struggle. "What we wanted was that the DC would recognize BR as a political subject", said Morucci, explaining what was the real price for Moro's freedom. The State, by the means of penal legislation and celebrations, simply reversed the coin, asking terrorists to recognize the State and regard the State as historically successful.

In both Italy and in Germany terrorism is thus very present within the media this year, a fact that is due both to the anniversary of the 1977 attacks in both countries and the discovery of a new generation of BR in Italy. In both countries an embedment of the issue within the broader framework of the 9/11 experience can be observed. Whether this presence will last over the next years has to be discovered in the near future. The fact that the BR still exist today the mentioning of the terrorists within the media leads moreover to a creation of alarm (cf. Mastromatteo's idea of "brand") whereas in Germany a historical distance related to the *Auflösungserklärung* can be sensed. In Germany there seems moreover to be a general agreement about the fact that the RAF has changed political and state culture. In Italy the implementation of repentance law shows the nature of the challenge that the BR put on Italian politics and state culture, determining a self-defending democracy and political class.

## 2. The embedment of the issue within historical and social roots

### 2.1

If there is one issue about which all annalists of the RAF agree, no matter whether they are bibliographers, ex-terrorists, historians, political scientists, journalists or victims, whether they have been writing in the 70s, 80s, 90s or in 2007, is that the RAF had its origins in the student movements of the late 60s. Certain key moments which are repeated again and again are the death of Benno Ohnesorg, shot by a policeman during a demonstration against the Persian Shah Reza Pahlevi on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1967 and the burning down of Brussels' shopping centre *L'Innovation* followed by the distribution of a leaflet calling for the burning down of shopping centres in Germany by the members of the Kommune 1. As key ideas a rebellion against the "father generation's" refusal to deal with their Nazi past, a protest against the Vietnam War and a view of the post-war German state as lacking democracy are named, as key ideologists Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, but also Che Guevara and Mao are named. This is rather matter of course since those events and ideologies have been named by the members of the RAF itself as being at the origin of their actions. The debate starts with the question whether the RAF was rooted in contemporary society or whether it was a phenomenon appearing on its margins. Quite unsurprisingly, the debate here is mainly one between ex-terrorists and politicians, left-wing and right-wing or moderate annalists, although a denial of the embedment of the armed fight within society at large can be sensed in the recent declarations of ex-terrorists themselves.

Wolfgang Kraushaar argues that, although German society disagreed with the fatal attacks, some sympathy emerged for the motives and the ideology behind the RAF. (Kraushaar, 2006) Dorothea Hauser observes that according to opinion polls in spring 1971, each seventh West-German citizen would not exclude to host a RAF member for one night to hide for the police and six percent even wanted to help them. In July 1971, 25 percent of the West-German citizens below 30 years old, said to entertain a certain sympathy for the RAF (Hauser, 1997, pp.177-8). This view has however not been shared by most history makers. Helmut Schmidt, (un)famous for his hard line against the terrorists declared in 1998 that: "Die Sympathie für die RAF [war] immer beschränkt auf ein paar Tausende junger Leute. Die deutsche Gesellschaft war relativ immun gegen die Vorstellungen der Terroristen." (Schmidt, 1998, p.52) With regards to the terrorist's idea that they were fighting for a better world Anne Siemens observes: "Die Terroristen fragen nie nach, ob die Menschen, für die sie angeblich kämpften, das überhaupt wollten." (Siemens, 2007, p.27) Likewise Kraushaar recognises: „Der Radikalisierung, die die entlaufenen Kinder der Bougeoisie an den Tag legten, fehlte es [...] an der entsprechenden Resonanz.“ (Kraushaar, 2006, p.26)

Gerd Koenen adopts an even stronger argument against the RAF, he calls the group „autistic“ (Koenen, 2007, p.16). He claims that the attacks were only a means of the terrorists for

proving their own right of existence and observes that after the imprisonment of the first generation, the attacks had as sole aim the liberation of the imprisoned companions who constantly depicted themselves as victims. As a further proof of their “Selbstbezogenheit” (Koenen, 2007, p.24) he names the fact that the terrorist groups named themselves after their dead companions, such as “Kommando Holger Meins” or “Kommando Ulrike Meinhof”. Koenen draws a comparison with the militant leftwing movement in Italy. He claims that in Italy, the terrorists had “eine gewisse lebendige Rückbindung an die Konflikte der Gesellschaft im Ganzen, vor allem im Produktions- und im Ausbildungsbereich, aber auch im Hinblick auf politische Verfassung der Italienischen Nachkriegsrepublik, die sich seitdem grundlegend gewandelt hat.“ (Koenen, 2007, p.20).

In Germany started however when political culture was changing with the politics of détente of Willy Brandt. Bettina Röhl, journalist and daughter of Ulrike Meinhof, who is well known for her critical view on the so-called generation of 68 and who became famous because of her publication of the pictures of a young, punching Joschka Fischer has got a similar view: “Die RAF verfügte über kein eigenes Können, kein Management, keine Idee, kein politisches Konzept, keine Vision, mittels derer sie in der Lage gewesen wäre, die genannten Generationen in ihren Bann zu ziehen.” (Röhl, 2007, p.7) Röhl claims that the RAF was nothing but a construct of the Media and that without media coverage the RAF would have lost its means of existence. Considering the fact most of the ex-terrorists say that for them the armed fight seemed right and good, Röhl and Koenen’s view of the RAF as an autistic organisation or a media construct seems, if not unplausible, so at least a bit adventurous. It is certainly not compatible with the view the members of the RAF had of themselves. In their “Auflösungserklärung” the RAF terrorists express their conviction that “die RAF – ebenso wie die gesamte Linke – ist nichts als ein Durchgangsstadium auf dem Weg zur Befreiung,“ (RAF, 1998, p.217) only to shamefully have to admit in the remaining part of their declaration that their project failed because of a lack of support within the society. Similarly former RAF terrorist Inge Viett says in an interview with a journalist of *DIE ZEIT*, Christoph Dieckmann, the terrorists, or as they called themselves guerilleros, had drawn wrong conclusions from the contemporary circumstances:

“Die Befreiungsbewegung in der DrittenWelt wurde bis weit ins bürgerliche Lager unterstützt [...]. Aber im eigenen Land galt ihnen bewaffneter Kampf als kriminell. [...] Aufständische beginnen einfach , ermächtigt vom revolutionären Geist und von den gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen. Entweder sie haben diese Verhältnisse richtig eingeschätzt, dann werden die Menschen ihnen folgen. Oder...“ (Dieckmann, 2007, p.76)

With a certain distance from the events, the terrorists are thus admitting that their actions lacked support within the society at large and that their failure was connected to this fact.

Another issue which is a matter of debate is the amount to which the RAF was embedded within the left-wing movement in general, also here the annalists generally tend to agree that support within the left was much less strong than what the terrorists had hoped for themselves, at least after the first heat had cooled down. Indeed, a lot of those who sympathised with their ideas

(Rheiner Langhals, Daniel Cohn Bendid, Rudi Dutschke among others) refused to enter the armed battle themselves or least the radical form the RAF fought it. As mentioned above, Wolfgang Kraushaar claims that the RAF gave way to a reorientation of the non-parliamentarian left. He even goes so far as to say that the RAF went into the underground because of their lack of support from other radical left-wing activists: “Politisch galt [die RAF] von Anfang an als kreditunwürdig. Der Gang in den Untergrund war zugleich auch eine Flucht vor der Legitimationsfähigkeit in der linken Öffentlichkeit.“ (Kraushaar, 2006, p.26)

Christian Semler, journalist and cofounder of the KPD agrees with the argument that the RAF might have had its origins in the 1968 movement but that support from the radical left itself was rather scarce:

Die radikalen Linken, ob maoistische K-Gruppen, Spontis, Trotzlisten oder Anarchisten sahen ihre Aufgabe darin, der sozialistischen Idee zu einer Massenbasis zu verhelfen. Nie wäre es ihnen [...] in den Sinn gekommen, die Pistoleros der RAF zu beneiden oder gar zu bewundern. (Semler, 2007, p.5)

He argues that sympathy with the RAF prisoners was limited to the circumstances of imprisonment, that it did however not embrace the circumstances of imprisonment. Just as Kraushaar he sees a link between the refusal of the radical left to identify with the RAF and the new social movements appearing at the end of the 1970s and culminating in the formation of the Green party. According to Semler, the green party, preaching the refusal of force allowed a lot of left wing activists to change into the camp of the refusers of force without having to openly rethink the use of force as a political means. In a forum organised among others by left-wing Italian intellectual Primo Moroni, former RAF terrorist Knut Folkerts argues that the lack of support and even betrayal from the radical left was one of the problems the RAF had to deal with all along its history: “Verrat und Entsolidarisierung ist nicht der einzige, aber auch ein nicht unwesentlicher Aspekt der Ausgangsbedingungen.” (IG Rote Fabrik, 1997, p.32). He observes that Ulrike Meinhof was betrayed by her left-wing professor Negt and that the group had to constantly reorganise itself because of its fluctuating membership. Also here, a distance from the events has thus created an agreement about the lack of support from the radical outer-parliamentarian left wing movements.

## 2.2

The amount of embedment is also a matter of debate in Italy. From a historical perspective it might not be unimportant to embed an historical event within a line of events and a shared historical and national feeling rather than detaching it from society by either manipulating it or associating it with external sources or forces. Historical events are bound to be cancelled more easily from the public mind if unanimously recognized as detached from historical circumstances in society or, worse, temporarily or culturally external to contemporary circumstances. The amount to which the BR is seen as embedded in historical circumstances varies from annalist to annalist – a fact which is, as

we will show not without its political reasons. Left-wing journalist Giorgio Bocca in the introduction to his *Il terrorismo Italiano 1970-1978* edited in 1978, sets up a strong linkage between the BR and Italian history. Five points are emerging: the dominant culture of “catolocomunismo” in post WWII the Italy - a point which is relevant especially under a psychological point of view as this phenomenon was forging a political culture based on ideology and a collective mission - the traditional Italian anarchic and revolutionary workers’ struggles, the bureaucratisation of the communist party and the antifascist militancy during WWII and the suspicion of “golpe”<sup>2</sup>. (Bocca, 1978). Further on in the book Bocca writes something which, nowadays, could be considered as quite heretic and undemocratic:

“Quando le brigate rosse affermano che gli anni seguenti hanno dimostrato che il terrorismo era l’unico modo possibile di fare politica in Italia dicono, ad un tempo, qualcosa di profondamente sbagliato e di vero; il terrorismo in se non si è dimostrato una buona politica, ha condotto a una disumanizzazione della sinistra, ha portato le avanguardie rivoluzionarie in un vicolo cieco; ma li effetti politici ci sono stati, profondi, a volte laceranti nella vita dei partiti e delle istituzioni. Il terrorismo ha mancato le soluzioni della crisi, non ha offerto alcuna seria alternativa al sistema, ma ha rivelato la crisi della società e dello stato” (Bocca, 1978, pp. 36-37).

Looking at the articles he wrote between 1984 and 1985 in *L’Espresso* we can detect that Giorgio Bocca was often critical of left prejudices and old reiterated left practices. He was able to look at a changing society with changing habits, as can for example be sensed in the way he treat students’ demonstrations in 1984 and his look at equality in the school system.

In 1985 in his second work on terrorism entitled *Noi terroristi* Bocca uses as main sources interviews with terrorists. The way in which he handles the terrorists’ experiences and tales is very interesting here. He treats them with dignity and respect and shows them as normal people – although often very smart and bright ones - with common lives. He shows the origins and reasons of their choice to enter the BR, reasons often embedded in the revolts of 1968. Considering the freedom the terrorists were looking for former terrorist Roberto Ognibene answers for example:

“E’ difficile spiegare. Direi liberazione da tutto quello ciò che gli altri, famiglia, partito, sistema produttivo avevano già deciso per te. Io ne ero ampiamente deluso: mi aveva deluso il PCI burocratizzato e la mia stessa famiglia di cui vedevo i difetti, un padre padrone, una madre soffocante. Ero un ingenuo? Sì. Ma in quella ingenuità mi riconosco ancora.” (Bocca, 1985, pp.28-29)

It is interesting to compare the way Bocca describes and reports terrorists’ words and thoughts with the way other history-making do at a later date. We want to argue that journalists and historians in the 90s and during the recent years concentrate more on sensationalism, victims and conspiracies. The main mediums used in recent years in order to handle terrorism were movies and documentaries. Sergio Zavoli, in his famous documentary *La notte della Repubblica* dedicates more than thirty minutes to Enrico Fenzi, a university professor and former member of the Red Brigades in the part dealing with the new BR and the historical interpretation of terrorism. Professor Fenzi has a sad, contrained face. Regret is the predominant feeling. Fenzi sums up the entire

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<sup>2</sup> It is important remember that in Italy there were two attempts of “golpe”, one in 1964 and one in 1970 and that in the 1970s, following the trial for 1969’s bombs in Piazza Fontana in Milan “the Italian public opinion was perfectly aware

experience as a collective madness: “Un mondo in crisi più che un mondo da costruire” (Zavoli, 1989). The concept expressed is quite similar to what Ognibene says in Bocca’s book but the words used and the message they express are different. Considering that a large part of communication is done not through words, but through body-language and tone of voice, it is mainly by showing Fenzi in natura that Zavoli carries his message. Combining the speed of the sentence with the sadness in his facial expression we touch a sense of a historical as well as social and human failure.

Bellocchio’s 2004 movie *Buongiorno notte* focuses on the world of the terrorists who kidnapped and killed the leader of the Christian Democrats Aldo Moro. Apart from showing some pathetic tendencies of two protagonists to conversion and humanization, terrorists are mainly depicted as disadapted, lonely and isolated - people whose cultural formation and revolutionary spirit is connected with books, beliefs and a general sense of the mediocrity of individual life. Often some sociological books are shown close to the terrorist’s beds and their thoughts are interrupted by Kubrickian sequences of Stalin’s or Lenin’s parades. They always act in a dark atmosphere and their faces never show sincere happiness or enthusiasm. In the first scene of the movie some terrorists are looking for a house and in the dialogue between the future landlord and them the contraposition between, on one hand, the fast and typical Italian “concitato” monologue of the landlord and, on the other hand, the mechanical face and silence of terrorists is easily detectable. Bellocchio creates a distance - a huge distance – between the terrorists and the rest of the society. Given some exceptions, as the job (one of the terrorist is an employee in a public library) described as mechanical and alienate and the final funeral in which a criticisms of the old and conservative Italian political leaders, disposed as an army under the throne of an authoritarian Pope, there is only scarce problematisation of terrorism and of its social and cultural roots. However, as we will specify later on the final funeral too is probably more aimed at putting a distance between the DC leaders and Aldo Moro rather than showing the weaknesses and limits and conservatism of the Italian political system.

As far as historical books are concerned, two among the most read and best received by critics in the last decade are Giorgio Galli’s *Piombo Rosso* and the interview with Pellegrino, a member of the DS (Left Democrats, now Democratic Party) and the president of the Commission in charge of the inquiry about terrorist activities and the Moro case, in the 90s. The title of the latter is “Segreti di Stato” and was published in 2000. The main impression about both works is that the historical research and theories are quite thoroughly aimed at proving conspiracies, mysteries and subtle political strategies. Especially Galli challenges himself in proving (and offering some more findings to his old 1986’s opinion) of the Italian secret services’ use of the BR as a tool at the DC’s

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that the State could lie” MOSCA “Catanzaro. Processo al SID.

disposal, never losing the control over it. The point is not whether it is true or not, mad or sensible, but what is important to see is the way in which the history maker is looking for sensation.

Secondly, and more importantly, the content of the research is often historically deviant or distorting, in the light of the need of problematisation and embedment of the terrorism. In fact what Pellegrino, Galli and other courageous history makers often put down is the failure or the bad system erected on the absolute power of the DC (especially the compliance between the DC, secret services and the CIA). Their approach is to involve the matter of the USA control over Italy and to transfer the challenge of terrorism only to the DC system. Galli and Pellegrino do thus embed the history of the BR within a narrow range of external and internal factors instead of looking at society at large. Unavoidably what the reader's conclusion will be is that the formal failure and falling down of the party meant automatically the end of the challenge and, worse, the usefulness of documenting and deepening that challenge. Although the formal death of PSI and DC the political class moved quite undisturbed from the so called "First Republic" to the second one and nowadays an unchanged political dominant class, included ex communists now in the charge of governing, could probably be favourable to cancel that part of history: some wounds, especially regarding the lack of participation, closeness, legitimacy are still open. The recent history doesn't help too much in order to keep the matter alive in the public mind.

As to what concerns the embedment of the RAF and the BR within the contemporary socio-cultural circumstances we can detect two main differences. First of all there is a general agreement within Germany that the RAF had its origins within the movement of 1968. This means putting RAF terrorism into an international context. The 1968s were concerned with the war in Vietnam, anti-americanism and communist movements all over the world. In Italy the focus is more on inner societal and political problems. The fact there is no clear agreement on the level of embedment proves that the BR are more connected with the Italian social and cultural historical development. In fact, the inner societal and historical roots of the BR make a homogenous interpretation of the phenomenon difficult. The matter is simply still too sensitive.

Secondly, the German history makers generally agree that the radical left wing movements distanced themselves from terrorism, a fact which could be proved by the fact the RAF groups named themselves after their dead companions. This is not the case for Italy. Some probable support for the terrorists within the Italian left is depicted, as can for example be seen in the survey mentioned by Bocca above. Considering that nine of the terrorists arrested in February this year were part of the CIGL might actually be some prove for this point.

### 3. From terrorists to victims

#### 3.1

In his September interview with Helmut Schmidt, Giovanni di Lorenzo observes that it took him very long to convince Schmidt to do the interview. Schmidt answers that the reason is that he has got little desire to discuss the issue and continues: „Einer der Gründe hat mit euch Journalisten zu tun: Fast alle beschäftigen sich mit den Terroristen, ihren Motiven und deren persönlichen Entwicklung und kümmern sich überhaupt nicht um die Opfer dieser entsetzlichen Verbrechen.“ (di Lorenzo, 2007) In his article in the journal *DIE ZEIT Geschichte* published by the same editor, Gerd Koenen gives an explanation for this one-sided view on the RAF:

“Der Blick auf die Opfer terroristische Aktionen, so notwendig er ist, verweist am Ende doch wieder auf die Täter zurück. Die Opfer der Anschläge und Attentate geben uns keine Fragen auf. Sie waren entweder zur falschen Zeit am falschen Ort. Oder sie wurden nach ideologischen Kriterien ausgewählt, die allein im Kopf der Terroristen irgendeinen Sinn macht.“ (Koenen, 2007, p.18)

It might be true that a view on the victims is scientifically less interesting than a study of the motives of the terrorists themselves. Despite this fact, the authors of this paper do sense a trend within the historification of the RAF going away from a unilateral view at the criminals towards including the victims into the arena of the history making. On 24 October 2007, 30 years after Hanns-Martin Schleyer's murder, the victims were officially commemorated in Berlin (although the German President Horst Köhler refused to be present). 36 pupils mentioned each one name of a victim. As the *Berliner Zeitung* wrote: “Es ist ein starker Moment. Es ist die Demonstration eines Perspektivenwechsels von der Konzentration auf die Täter, die die Beschäftigung mit der RAF lange dominierte, hin zu den Opfern“ (Schmale, 2007). Minister for Justice Brigitte Zypries observed that only in recent times the victims have entered the public interest. Zypries sees the state as responsible for this unilateral view: “Justiz und Polizei waren viel zu lange nur täterorientiert.” (...) At the same place Parliament's president Norbert Lammert (CDU) blames the 68 Movement to spread the myth that the terrorist activities were about politics, and argues that these activities had been discussed in the APO and raised in the spheres of sympathising intellectuals (ibid.).

Also Georg Golz, in the editorial to the bpb journal on the RAF observes: “Nun Rücken die Opfer des deutschen Linksterrorismus stärker ins öffentliche Bewusstsein.“ (Golz, 2007, p.2) Within the journal itself Golz does include an essay by political scientist Anne Siemens. Anne Siemens' collection of interviews with victims and victim's relatives could indeed be seen as a final prove that a study of the victims has entered the sphere of academic investigation. Siemens' book is however not a unilateral view on the victims; she introduces short biographies of the terrorists into the interviews, introduces her work with a short biography of the RAF and closes it with an interview with Helmut Schmidt. A similar approach, although in another medium has been adopted

by artist Hans-Peter Feldmann. In his tableau *Die Toten* which was the main part of the controversial RAF exhibition Feldmann shows pictures of all the people who died during the RAF time. Unlike Siemens however who concentrates on the famous victims, Feldmann pays also attention to the unpopular victims, the drivers, bodyguards and simple civilians who were at the wrong time in the wrong place.

The Dutch news correspondent Joost van der Vaart sets the RAF in a context “conform the *Zeitgeist* among youngsters, communist and anti-imperialist”. Its members not only resisted against the capitalism and the assumed fascism of the state, but also rebelled against the ‘Auschwitz generation’ with which one could have no argument. Their battle against ‘American imperialism’ and the ‘mass murders in Vietnam’ can be explained from this German *adagio* that one could not tolerate injustice. This was characterised in another film, *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978) of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff et al. (RAF sympathizers themselves). It starts with real scenes of the funeral of Hanns-Martin Schleyer and then turns into a live recorded dialogue between Fassbinder and his mother Lilo Pempeit about the value of democracy. Pempeit: “Mich erinnert das wirklich an die Nazizeit, in der man einfach geschwiegen hat”. And the alternative? Bankrupt declaration for our democratic interferences since 30 years: „Ein autoritärer Herrscher, der ganz gut ist, ganz lieb und freundlich” (Elsaesser, 1994, p.143). The film is a associative mixture of historical *lieux de mémoire*<sup>3</sup> in search for the deeper perspectives of German history. The fall and loss of connection in German society causes in this way a horizontal confrontation (State vs. RAF) but lacks a vertical tradition. The Nazi period is disconnected from the new postwar Germany. As critic Ulrich Behrens argues, the *Enthistorisierung* of the RAF in the post-war context is put right on the escaping point of violence and made manageable (Behrens, 2005): the idealisation of terrorists.

Within Popular culture the step from a unilateral view on the terrorists to a multilateral view including the victims seems to have been made at least since the release of Andres Veiel’s 2002 documentary *Black Box BRD* in which the biographies of Alfred Herrhausen and his possible murderer Wolfgang Grams are put face to face. Nevertheless, whereas the book market has been flooded with biographies and autobiographies of the terrorists, biographies of the victims are still missing even for the most famous ones.

### 3.2

We have already described the idealization of Aldo Moro by the film director Marco Bellocchio. Giuseppe Ferrara, another important Italian film director who is often engaged with political topics. He has been treating the BR in two films. There are twenty years between the two movies. The two

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<sup>3</sup> Haydn’s *Kaiserhymne* is played in different strengths but never in that of the German national hymn; Marshal Erwin Rommel commits suicide, his son Manfred Rommel –being the mayor of Stuttgart– has to organise the funeral of Baader, Raspe and Ensslin. Furthermore RAF convicted Horst Mahler is interviewed in his prison cell in Stammheim

films are *Il caso Moro* from 1986 and *Guido che sfidò le brigate Rosse* from 2006. There are clear changes with regard to the style as well as the historical perspective. The former is a very strict-structured and slow film, quite a documentary, as has been underlined by some reviewers. With the only exception of the great Gian Maria Volonte's performance as Aldo Moro, the film seems mainly oriented to explain the involvement of the American and Italian secret services, the role of the secret association P2<sup>4</sup> and the responsibilities of the Government and of the PCI itself. Twenty years later the subject is another important victim of the terrorist action: Guido Rossa, a trade Union representative in Turin, killed by the BR, because he had informed the police on some BR activities within the firm. What changes is Ferrara's way of handling the victim, very similar to Bellocchio's approach. The film director focuses on Rossa's private dimensions, his family, his daughter, his friends, his austerity and his serious and loyal commitment workers' rights.

Apart from the way of handling victims' experience, as shown by the movies, there is also a shift of attention from terrorists to victims visible in magazines and newspapers but, above all, in politicians' speeches and legislation. First of all the commemoration of victims on the 9th May, a decision commented by Giorgio Napolitano, president of the Italian Republic, with the following words: "E' un riconoscimento dovuto per dissipare ambiguità e reticenze". (Fusani, 2007) As to what regards the legislation in favour of victims of terrorisms, the law 206/2004 is the main exemple. It aims at giving to people reporting infirmity and relatives of victims particular economic privileges and government benefits. The law was enforced through a regulation of the Presidency of Ministries on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2007. It is notable to underline the role in promoting this legislation played by the association of victims of terrorism, born in 1985. The association develops a series of important meeting and projects, covered by the media and newspapers. Last but not least: a lot of victims' relatives are now Members of Parliament. Among them Sabina Rossa (Guido Rossa's daughter), Rosa Villecco Calipari, the wife of an Italian secret agent killed in Iraq, Nando dalla Chiesa, son of the famous general Carlo Alberto who inquired on terrorism and mafia and Maria Grazia Lagana, the wife of a politician killed by the mafia in 2006. It is worth of attention that the parties were ready to make them running for the election few months after their relatives' murder.

A common tendency can thus be sensed in the shift away from terrorists to victims in both countries. The reason of this shift could, in the case of Germany be the fact that the RAF is history now. As has been stated by Zypries, finding the terrorists is not a priority any more. In Italy, especially because of the Moro case, meaning the killing of one of the most important political leaders, an interest in victims has always been present. The way in which the victims are portrayed has however changed from an analytical point of view towards a more human way of dealing with the issue. Especially the Italian state seems to be very committed to the subject.

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<sup>4</sup> A secret association declared illegal in 1982.

## 4. Myths and Idealisation

### 4.1

In the mirror of the literature of authors of the post-RAF generation, several myths about the RAF appeared. In his essay “Mythos RAF” Wolfgang Kraushaar defines myth as a narrative, which tells “a story, however without one individual identifiable story-teller and without one more exact and definable audience” (Kraushaar, 2006, p.1186). He states that political myths have to compensate a communication deficit: a message replaces what has been said. According to Kraushaar there was, however, not one single RAF myth, but several myth spaces which are often hard to differentiate. He distinguishes five myth producers: the RAF as a heroic self-explanation, a demonisation of the RAF by the state, a populist dramatisation by the mass media, the self suggestion of the mass public, and the delegation of an imaginary fight instruction by the scene, the milieu of so-called supporters and sympathisers.

1. *The RAF as heroic self-explanation*: the RAF wanted to destroy the supreme myth about the inviolability of the political system, in order to prove that an armed fight against the state was possible. The RAF saw itself as a ‘revolutionary *avant garde*’, and defined the possible invasion of the Soviet Red Army as a revolutionary liberation rather as a threat. It wanted to defend the acquisitions of the GDR and to attack ‘West German imperialism’. Kraushaar also argues that without the Nazis, Auschwitz and the holocaust, the ideas and actions of Ulrike Meinhof would have been unimaginable. The same counts for the fatal hunger strike of Holger Meins. His death led to a heroification of the dead in 1974/5 with demonstrators carrying banners with a photo of Meins’ haggard body through the streets, implicitly referring to the victims in the concentration camps. Another heroic myth was referring to the time between 1970 and 1972 as a time of armed fight –in fact, says Kraushaar, those years were used for the logistic preparation for terror. Only in spring 1972, the first attacks took place.

Similarly, the idea of isolationist torture between 1973 and 1978 was merely a widespread instrumentalisation of RAF propaganda to ‘create an own legal group of sympathisers, in order to prolong the violence. A final heroic myth was that of the murder of the prisoners (Baader, Ensslin and Raspe) in their cells in the Stammheim prison, as the injured RAF-member Irmgard Möller declared in hospital. It became a fatal myth of quasi victims, which did not miss its effect at the scene of sympathisers. Former RAF-member Karl-Heinz Dellwo admitted indeed in 1998: ‘We have looked on the creation of the myth and partly supported it’ (Kraushaar, pp.1189-96). Kraushaar characterises a constant hysteria in order to produce an anti-attitude as the key mark of the RAF and states that the heroic myths have extended its existence for some decades. Recently the released RAF-member Rolf-Clemens Wagner revived the myth that it was right to kidnap Hanns-Martin Schleyer from a contemporary perspective. The RAF questioned itself how it could act

concretely and what made sense politically. Wagner argued that the RAF Schleyer: “mit seiner SS-Geschichte als Wehrwirtschaftsführer in besetzten Gebieten und seiner aktuellen Funktion als Aussperrer und Präsident des Unternehmerverbands ja nicht zufällig ausgesucht“ (Göbel, 2007).

2. *The demonisation of the RAF by the state*: The RAF was labelled as State Enemy number one, which led to the image of demonising when the government took measures to extend the power of the intelligence agencies and established the anti-terror unit GSG 9. This was pictured as decisive battle in an imaginary war in which the existence of the constitutional state was at stake (p.1198). These drastic measures were for some as threatening for the young German democracy as the attacks from the RAF. Member Hans-Joachim Klein considered that the RAF had reached its goal by showing through provocation that the German state would still be fascist after World War II (Pontzen, 2007)

3. *The populist dramatisation by the mass media*: Kraushaar criticises the gutter press, especially the *Bild-Zeitung* for its constant linkage of ‘Sex & Crime’ in its reports about the acts of the RAF, which would even have a positive relationship in strengthening each other. Furthermore the violent headings in the papers like ‘Bomben Terror and 1000 Männer – Aufstand in Deutschland geplant’ added to the sphere of dramatisation. Even recently the *Bild-Zeitung* overstated the suits for amnesty of the former RAF members Brigitte Mohnhaupt and Christian Klar by the heading ‘Aufstand der RAF-Opfer! Angehörige lehnen Entlassung der Terroristen ab’. The famous photo of Hanns-Martin Schleyer *seit 31 Tagen Gefangener* and the ‘wanted’ pictures of Klar and Mohnhaupt usually accompany these articles. (Castell-Rüdenhausen, 2007). The respected *Süddeutsche Zeitung* headed objectively when Mohnhaupt was released: ‘Frühere RAF-Terroristin Mohnhaupt kommt frei. Oberlandesgericht Stuttgart: Die seit 24 Jahren inhaftierte ist nicht mehr gefährlich / Entlassung Ende März’ (Dörries, 2007). In the same newspaper, the RAF-*Linksterrorismus* was considered as history in Germany as now also the imprisonments turn to an end (Kahlweit, 2007). It stated however also that some murders have not been clarified yet, like the murderer of attorney general Siegfried Buback, whose case has been reopened recently.

As already stated above, the RAF has been presented quite differently in the German media: it was dramatised in the German utter press. But how did the most prominent German magazine *Der Spiegel* address the issue? A short comparison of articles during the *Deutsche Herbst* in 1977 and its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007 shows a shift of focus from the terrorists to the victims and from an (over)dramatisation to a more analytical way of dealing with the issue.<sup>5</sup> Also the heading in *Die Zeit*’s interview in August 2007 with Helmut Schmidt ‘Ich bin in Schuld verstrickt’ emphasises this notion. In 1977 the headings of the *Spiegel* articles were focused on the attacks on the state and the motives of the terrorist. In 2007 the whole RAF story has been revisited in much detail. In a

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<sup>5</sup> See ANNEX – Headings in *Der Spiegel*

sevenfold coverage, *Der Spiegel* reported again all the ins and outs of the story with new interviews, but also using old quotes for its headings. Some of those quotes were of course not known yet in 1977, so in a certain way, by revealing new findings the contemporary articles have contributed to the history-making of the RAF. All articles are largely illustrated with timetables and dramatic photos. Both periods sketch the RAF as an aggressive terrorist organisation and condemn its brutal acts.

4. *The self suggestion of the mass public.* Kraushaar sensed among the public feelings of fear, malice and horror but also curiosity, lust and voyeurism. Quite some students, leftist intellectuals and artists were fascinated how the RAF displayed itself (Pontzen, 2007). The RAF could count on some fascination – even some sympathy – in parts of the leftist liberals. It was questioned whether leftist extremism was less bad than rightist extremism. On the other hand in an opinion poll after Schleyer's kidnapping, 67 percent of the respondents argued in favour of a punishment of the terrorists with the death penalty and supported the government's position of non-negotiation with terrorists.

5. *The delegation of an imaginary fight instruction by the scene, the milieu of so-called supporters and sympathisers:* broadly the word 'sympathiser' has been defined by the former *Berliner Wissenschaftssenator* Peter Glotz, as a person who not only approved with terror and murder, but also supported it practically. Meinhof's Auschwitz phantasy as a description of the circumstances in the Stammheim prison, the adventurous guerrilla fight, and the power phantasy of the RAF were alluring for many radical leftists and their intellectual spokesmen (Kraushaar, pp. 1198-1202). Kraushaar argues however that these myths have largely been deconstructed when in 1972 most of the RAF leaders were arrested and put into prison and Meinhof committed suicide, when in 1977 Baader, Ensslin and Raspe followed Meinhof's example and when in 1990 the RAF-members hidden in the former GDR were arrested. After the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the German reunification, these myths about the RAF have more or less disappeared (Kraushaar, pp.1205-06).

This view has been shared by several authors. Gerd Koenen looks mainly at what is Kraushaar's first category. He argues that the RAF's self-mythification was a prerequisite of their fight. Without hunger strikes and self-victimisation, stories about solitary confinement and a cult built around the figure of Baader, the deeds of the RAF would have been impossible. (Koenen, 2007). In her essay "Die RAF und die Bundesrepublik", Bettina Röhl expresses the view that the RAF was nothing but a media-construct:

Die Medien waren die *Conditio sine qua non* für das Entstehen und die Fortexistenz der RAF, und dabei haben sie verantwortungslos die Terroristen zu Kultfiguren gemacht: eine Art Dallas-Show in Sachen Weltrevolution. Aus der RAF wurde ein urbaner Reality Western: Fiesling Baader, böse Ensslin, Identifikationsfigur Meinhof, Chefideologe Mahler, Hungeropfer Meins, der liebe Raspe und, nicht zu vergessen, die roten Star-Advokaten. (Röhl, 2007, p.7)

Röhl is convinced that the RAF would not have had a second or a third generation if the media had not helped them with the construction of their own myth. Röhl does not see this mythification of the RAF as a finished process: “Die Ikonenindustrie rund um die RAF läuft wellenförmig auf Hochtouren und spuckt unbeanstandet immer wieder dieselben Quietschentchen aus.“ (Röhl, 2007, p.8). Röhl gives as an example of iconification of the RAF Bernd Eichinger’s action film *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, which is based on the 1987 bestseller by Stefan Aust and will be opening in the cinemas in 2008. Another example could be the cycle of paintings *18. Oktober 1977* by Gerhard Richter. It portrays terrorism, ‘the enemy within’ by paintings of pictures of the dead RAF members in the Stammheim prison. (Pontzen, 2007)

Indeed, the Rote Armee Fraktion is all-pervading in present pop-culture. Uwe Schütte analyses how the RAF has been adopted by German “high” and “low” culture. He observes that the RAF became a popular phenomenon in music. German bands made allusions to the RAF and the developments in the *Deutsche Herbst*. The punk band *Wizo* called one of its songs ‘R.A.F.’, left wing hip-hopper Jan Delay sings about ‘Die Söhne Stammheims’. Both songs look with nostalgia at the terrorist years. Schütte argues that

„Das ursprünglich dissidente Potential der Popkultur jedoch wurde spätestens seit den achtziger Jahren durch die Kulturindustrie fast gänzlich assimiliert und umgepolt... Das erklärt die Notwendigkeit und Rolle revolutionärer Symbolik im Pop. Die RAF musste als mythisierbares Gespenst wiederaufstehen, um auf symbolischer Ebene die Leerstelle zu füllen die die Neutralisierung der dissidenten Komponente des Pop geschaffen hat“ (Schütte, 2003, p.355-6).

The Designer Label Professor Head used a photo with Baader’s for an advertising campaign and the Boutique ‘Mägde und Knechte Elternhaus’ came with up with the Label Prada Meinhof. The younger generation wears T-shirts and buys posters with the RAF logo and the fashion magazine *Tussi Deluxe* made a 22 page ‘RAF Parade’ with provocative photos.

Schütte also analyses how the RAF has been received by literature. He argues that the first generation of authors (Heinrich Böll, Peter-Jürgen Boock etc.) stood in close relation to the persons of the extreme leftists and therefore, their texts were a direct reaction to daily political occurrences, in which they implicitly framed the RAF’s actions. Current authors do not write about the active RAF as the first generation, but they write about the image of the RAF in the media, photo’s and arts (ibid., pp.357-8), they (re)construct history. Leander Scholz in his novel for example *Das Rosenfest* retells the history of the RAF as a love story between Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin. The literary critic and author Iris Radisch perceived his book as provocative and almost revolutionary. Michael Wildenhain in his novel *Erste Liebe Deutscher Herbst* (1997), Michael Wildenhain puts the RAF in a more negative perspective, when he describes how the first person (who just passed high school) has to cope with a theorising RAF sympathising classmate and a his

radicalising masochistic girlfriend. In this way he criticises –but not analyses– from a certain distance the theory and practice of the RAF. Friedrich Christian Delius uses in his novel *Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes* (1992) the suicide of Andreas Baader to turn reality upside down (the kiss of BKA<sup>6</sup>-Chief Horst Herold and Andreas Baader, Baader's funeral in the BKA city of Wiesbaden accompanied by a police orchestra, sketched as the resurrection of the FGR as a purified and lively democracy). Klaus Schütte argues that in this way, Delius recognised the messianic aspect of the RAF (Schütte, pp.360-2) Nobel price winner Elfriede Jelinek wrote several plays having the RAF as a subject. Jelinek looks at the RAF from a distance and sees it as a collective organisation which had become a phantom at the time of German reunification and of which one could question whether the name RAF was appropriate for its (non-)actions. In Jelinek's *Wolken. Heim.* (1990) the RAF is seen as final point in the framing of German history from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards and especially as a "Reaktion auf die unmenschlichen Verbrechen der Nazis, führte deren totalitären Geist aber in ihrer eigenen inhumanen Sprache und rigidem Denken, wie auch ihren mörderischen Methoden" (Schütte, p.365).

4.2 "La Repubblica riconosce il 9 maggio, anniversario dell'uccisione di Aldo Moro, quale Giorno della memoria al fine di ricordare tutte le vittime del terrorismo, interno e internazionale, e delle stragi di tale matrice," (2007) says the first of the two alineas of the first article of the law introducing the commemoration of all the victims caused by terrorism. Institutions, legislations and policies produce values, codes and interpretations and probably it is not just a coincidence that in the present Parliament the RC, the neo-ommunists, decided not to vote for the law. Their main concern was the date of the 9<sup>th</sup> of may, the day of Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro. In fact, they would have preferred the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, the anniversary of the Piazza Fontana massacre in 1969, caused by a complicity between the State, neofascists and secret services. The centre left for its part proposed the 12 of Februray, the day in which Iraqi terrorists killed 19 Italian soldiers in 2003. Their decision could be seen as an attempt to get some more legitimacy and consensus over their past pro-American and pro-intervention foreign policy. The way in which the debate on this law was carried out shows how law can forge feelings and behaviours towards history. From this year on every 9<sup>th</sup> of May each Italian citizen will keep in mind that a bad and mad political movement, brutally killed an enlightened and respectable Italian political leader, no matter why and how. Through the idealisation of the figure of Aldo Moro a strict and automatic historical interpretation and a clear division between good and evil, bad and respectable is forged.

As a comparison of how the view on Aldo Moro changed a look on how he was portrayed by Bocca shortly after the murder is useful here. Bocca wrote his first book on terrorism only a few months

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<sup>6</sup> BKA: *Bundeskriminalamt* – Federal Criminal Agency

after the murder. He puts emphasis on a survey published by *L'espresso* during the kidnapping's 55 days which was based on interviews with left-voting people.

“C'è un'area vasta che ostenta grande commozione per i cinque agenti uccisi, i figli di povera gente, ma ci tiene a far sapere che è indifferente alla sorte di Moro in quanto uomo politico, barone, pezzo grosso che doveva conoscere i rischi della sua professione. Dire immediatamente che si tratta di un'area qualunquista o populista o qualunquista, come dice il PCI, è rinunciare ad un'analisi seria di quell'atteggiamento”. (Bocca, 1978, pp.142-143).

This rather negative outlook on a wealthy, powerful persona who should have been aware of the risks of his profession contrasts fundamentally with the way Moro's political behaviour has been shown, especially by leftwing historians in recent years. Here emphasis is laid on Moro's openness and his responsibility for a national compromise and for the involvement of the communists in the government. Eugenio Scalfari, editor of the newspaper “La Repubblica” wrote in 1998:

Fu terribile quel 16 marzo di venti anni fa! Il governo Andreotti, proprio quel giorno, si presentava in Parlamento per ottenere la fiducia e per la prima volta avrebbe anche avuto l'appoggio del Partito comunista. Moro si era molto battuto per arrivare a questo risultato, aveva dovuto superare resistenze fortissime nei gruppi parlamentari della Dc inimicandosi potenti "lobbies" politiche ed economiche, interne e internazionali. (Scalfari, 1998)

In the dominant opinion of today Moro was killed by the BR in order to destroy the symbol of the attempt of the DC to include the communist party within the system, lessening the revolutionary or anti-system spirit of workers and lower classes generally PCI oriented. In the contemporary sources we analysed Henry Kissinger's famous judgement on Moro is referred to frequently. Kissinger, after a meeting in Washington with Moro and the Italian representatives expressed his suspicion and mistrust towards the Italian political leader: weak and bound to open the doors of government to the communists. This view of the killing of a symbol contrasts however fundamentally with what Valerio Morucci, the leader of the new BR after Renato Curcio's arrest said in an interview with *L'Espresso* in 1985. Morucci wards off the widely shared opinions which surrounded Moro's kidnapping and murder. He says that the BR were targeting three Christian democratic leaders: Giulio Andreotti, Aldo Moro and Amintore Fanfani. Moro was chosen because Andreotti and Fanfani used to spend their free time in the centre of Rome, protected by a huge number of agents whereas “Moro was more simple to kidnap” (Morucci, 1985, p.7). Asked by the interviewer about the BR's interest in striking the symbol of a national compromise, Morucci is clear and laconic: “Our interest was the DC....the role of communists was of secondary importance”. (Morucci, 1985, p.9). Giorgio Bocca, in his books, describes Aldo Moro as a typical 1970s DC leader, very engaged in pursuing the traditional DC strategy wanting to keep the communists out of the government), also with more determination<sup>7</sup>, and responsible for the building up of the fourth government Andreotti which was going to be given the Parliament the day Moro was kidnapped.

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<sup>7</sup> There is a Fanfani's observation in 1976: “Moro is worse than us” (Galli, 2007, p.226)

The Communist would not vote for it in normal conditions and there were internal struggles and doubts within the DC. The day before his kidnapping, Moro tried to get the favour of Zaccagnini and, as we got from Moro's diary, the meeting had probably been positive. There is no direct reference to Zaccagnini but to an important "meeting shaping the sorts of the new government". Finally, in Mosca's book about the Piazza Fontana trial in 1977-78, the GR1 journalist tells that Aldo Moro played a decisive role in covering suspected Italian secret agents. What emerges in sources 1978-1986 is an Aldo Moro perfectly embedded in the culture and Italian political life at that time. It is taken for granted that the American State Department was disappointed with his certain alleged orientations and that he was no doubt a brilliant and smart politician well attached to his time.

Bellocchio's historical reconstruction of Moro in *Buongiorno Notte* (2004) supports the contemporary view on Moro as a symbol. Moro is shown as thin and reflective. A good Christian able to understand and share terrorists' views about society. He shows the piety shown by two terrorists during the 55 days, letters to relatives and to his wife and the distance between the kidnapped and his DC colleagues. Eric Voegelin wrote about Bellocchio's movie that "each reality is self-interpretative", in the meaning that the effort to give a good and as credible as possible interpretation implies entering the views and values of the analysed time. In 1978 the society is still forged on values and behaviours directly derived from 68' with a politicisation of all the dimensions of the life and the quest for collective political spaces and rights. The individualistic interpretation and reconstruction given by Bellocchio is too much contemporary, risking to overlap our views to the ones predominant at that time.

Comparing the evolvement of myths about the RAF in (West-)Germany and the BR in Italy in case of the idealisation of Aldo Moro we can conclude that in both countries and idealisation has been taking place. Whereas in Germany this idealisation mainly focussed on the terrorists, the Moro case shows that in Italy this idealisation also happened in the camp of victims. In Germany the idealisation is based on media, the state and the terrorists themselves. In Italy the view on Aldo Moro changed over time. In both countries, there has been a myth created around the main terrorist attack, the kidnapping of Hans Martin Schleyer and that of Aldo Moro. Both men were represented by the terrorists as symbols of the political system.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have detected and compared the history making trends of the Rote Armee Fraktion in Germany and the Brigade Rosse in Italy. For this purpose we have been looking at different sources. We wanted to detect and analyse the main actors operating in the creation of history in both countries in order to explain how the history was interpreted differently in societies that deal with such traumatic events.

First, one should note that it is this year for the first time that both the Italian and German state officially commemorated the climax of the attacks by its extreme leftist terrorist organisations, 30 years ago. The public was flooded with revisited information about the RAF in the media, which attempted to analyse rather than to dramatise the history. This is not true for Italy where attempts to dramatise could be still present because of the 15 terrorists arrested last February, the politicisation of Italian medias and the intervening position the country engaged in the war with Iraq. However, one has to keep in mind that the media do play on the emotions of its audience in order to keep the circulations high.

Secondly, both terrorist organisations are considered to have different historical and social roots. The RAF is considered to be embedded in the international context of the '68 Movement and their protest against (capitalist) world politics. In Germany in particular, this *68er Generation* and its subsequent connections with the RAF were framed in the vertical tradition of post-war and post-holocaust Germany. However, the roots of the BR lie more in inner societal and political problems. Whereas the German leftist movements distanced themselves from the RAF, their Italian counterparts were not completely able to do so.

Thirdly, we recognised a shift of focus in society from the terrorists to the victims. In Germany this shift is stronger appearing than in Italy, where especially due to the murder of Aldo Moro the victims always had a lot of attention. In Germany the shift is also stronger because the RAF does not exist anymore, contrary to the BR. The sense of guilt which the former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt expressed recently and the contrasts between RAF films of the 1970s and the new millennium emphasise this trend.

Fourthly, the creation of myths about the RAF had a large impact on how the RAF and its (re)actions to the state were interpreted. The heroic myths spread by the protagonists of the terrorists, demonising myths about the state, and myths believed by the sympathisers. In Italy the idealisation of Aldo Moro attempted to underline his political difference from conservative tendencies of his party, a view also expressed by film directors.

It could be possible to give an explanation for the detected differences by looking at two main variables. First of all, the fact that the RAF declared officially their dissolution, whereas the BR still exist and kill. Secondly, the German political system showed itself as more dynamic than

the Italian one. The main example is the year 1969. One year after the demonstrations claiming for social needs and more democracy in 1968, there was a clear turning point in German political life with the election of the social democrat Willy Brandt. Whereas in Italy the massacre in piazza Fontana, directed by the compliance of the State and the secret services, showed that the system did not commit to changes. Still today the governing political class in Italy is quite the same. These two variables mean that the issue in Germany has more possibility to come into interpretations, which are plural, free and provided with more serenity and serious analysis. Or as the RAF put it anonymously on 20 April 1998 in its declaration of dissolution:

„Es war ein strategischer Fehler, neben der illegalen bewaffneten keine politisch-soziale Organisation aufzubauen. Die Stadtguerilla in Form der RAF ist nun Geschichte.“ (Focus, 2007).

Only time will show whether the BR will become history soon

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## ANNEX – Headings in *Der Spiegel* (1977-2007)

1977

- The article of 8 August 'Frauen im Untergrund: "Etwas Irrationales"' tries to explain that the acts of the women terrorists could not be justified as human but something irrational on which even criminologists could not explain.
- The cover of 12 September 1977, one week after Schleyer's kidnapping stated: 'Stark genug, den Krieg zu erklären?' Here the state is meant and questioned whether it was strong and united enough (coalition and opposition) to fight back with equal means to the RAF attacks
- The article 'Fall Schleyer: "Die Dramatik muss raus"' of 19 September 1977 referred to the urge of Schmidt's coalition partners to calm down his intensive crisis management because the matter was concentrated too much on him, and could have a negative impact in case of Schleyer's death and when the terrorists would escape.
- In the same issue, the heading "Schrecken sie diese Burschen mal ab" a speaker of the German Inner Department explains the heavily defended 'fortress' of the governmental quarters in Bonn.
- After the hijacked plane 'Landshut' on 13 October 1977 at Mallorca, *Der Spiegel* focussed more on the terrorists side by stating: 'Fall Schleyer: Der zweite Schlag' on 17 October to present that the terrorists had a second card to play in order to get the imprisoned RAF-members free. When finally the Landshut was liberated in Mogadishu on 18 October by the GSG 9 anti-terror unit, the magazine quoted one GSG-member in its heading of 24 October 1977 'Kopf runter, wo sind die Schweine'. At the same night, the imprisoned Baader, Ensslin and Raspe committed suicide in their cells, and later on it was found out that weapons were smuggled in and they used a secret communication system as the magazine headed 'Dunkle Geschichte hinter dem Finstern' (Spiegel, 2007).

2007

- "Leben gegen Leben" in the issue of 22 October was the standpoint of RAF member Stefan Wisniewski before the kidnapping of Schleyer, in which he played an important role. It meant: to exchange the Stammheim prisoners for the release of Schleyer (Bönisch, 2007).
- "Wir wollen an die Front" of 1 October refers to the wish of the RAF members who were trained in Jordan but refused an offered tourist programme in Amman (Sontheimer, 2007a).
- "High sein, frei sein, Terror muss dabei sein" of 24 September expresses the motto of the subculture in some anarchic communes in West-Berlin. A Central Council mobilised hippies for militant actions. It was more about fun than serious politics that fascinated the students (Sontheimer, 2007b).
- "Dann gibt es Tote" of 17 September 2007 was a statement of Andreas Baader on 7 October 1977 to a doctor in the Stammheim prison, anticipating at the hijacking of the Landshut (Aust & Büchel, 2007a).
- "Selbstmord ist der letzte Akt der Rebellion" of 10 September refers to a note of Ulrike Meinhof which she had written months before on a circular in prison (Aust & Büchel, 2007b).