

BOOK REVIEWS

Negotiating memories of protest in Western Europe: the case of Italy, by Andrea Hajek, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 232 pp., £53.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-23851-0

Andrea Hajek's book provides an in-depth analysis of the 30-year process of memory-building that followed the controversial death of Francesco Lorusso in Bologna in March 1977, an event that marked a turning point in the history of the best-known Western European communist city. By the 1970s, the biggest city uninterruptedly governed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the Cold War era was widely recognised among the European Left for its ability to combine economic development, social well-being and democratic practices, as shown by the success of the book *Red Bologna* (Jaggi, Muller and Schmid 1977) in Germany and the United Kingdom.

In the first two chapters of the book, the memories of the 1977 student movement, which Lorusso belonged to, are framed within a more general context of the legacy of the Italian protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s by comparing the contrasting memories of 'the wonderful years' of 1968, with those of the 1970s, dubbed 'the years of lead'. In so doing, Hajek places the Italian case within a broader Western European context, taking into account the West German experience and, by way of comparison, the French and British ones. In Hajek's view, the shadows of the Fascist and Nazi pasts in Italy and Germany, respectively, helped to shape both the history and the memory of the 1970s, including that of the Italian student movement of 1977.

The core of the book deals with the complex process of negotiating a publicly shared memory of the March 1977 events, and Lorusso's death in particular, within a time span of more than three decades. In so doing, Hajek analyses a wide variety of sources, including newspapers, audio-video material (television broadcasts, films, TV series), oral sources from several grassroots movements including 77-ers, documents from the social movements' public and private archives, letters and official documents such as city council minutes. Thanks to the wealth of the sources Hajek is able to consider several 'agents of memory', complicating the usual binary interpretation of official memory and counter-memory by deconstructing the latter into various strands.

On the one hand, the book carefully reconstructs the responses of the local government of Bologna towards the commemoration of Lorusso's death from the late 1970s onwards, revealing how changes in macro and micro politics, such as the break-up of the PCI or the Bologna mayor's direct involvement, deeply influenced the public memory of these events. Although Hajek's book belongs to the realm of memory studies, it contributes to a better understanding of the influence of Lorusso's death in worsening the relationship, in the long run, between the local government of Bologna on the one side and the social and student movements on the other. The very concept of collective trauma as applied to Lorusso's death can be particularly helpful in regard to the weakening of the communist identity of Bologna since the late 1970s (De Maria and Carrettieri 2013).

On the other hand, the book assesses as agents of 'counter-memory' Lorusso's family, the 77-ers, the Pier Francesco Lorusso Association founded by local intellectuals, professors and lawyers, and social movements of the 1990s and 2000s. Hajek questions the relationship between memory and social activism, showing how memories of mourning can create a link

between different generations of activists as has occurred in the case of Francesco Lorusso, whose memory became linked to that of Carlo Giuliani, shot dead by the police during the G8 protest in Genoa in 2001. By contrast, the book casts light also on the issue of ‘possessive’ memory, arguing that the 77-ers ‘claim authority’ (p. 176) over the memory of the events that they took part in, and, in particular, the memory of Lorusso.

The last chapter of the book analyses the sites of memory created to commemorate Lorusso’s death in the city, tracing a possible geography of 1977 urban memory. The analyses of the various attempts made by the family and others actors to obtain a public space named after Lorusso reinforces the theory of collective trauma experienced by the city of Bologna whose institutional actors (university and municipality) had until very recently been reluctant to get involved in a shared process of remembering and commemoration. Furthermore, this chapter shows how the different social groups involved in the process of commemorating the 1977 events and Lorusso’s death shaped their own rituals and ‘monuments’, such as the ‘Mascarella plaque’, creating the so-called ‘living memorials’ addressed by Hajek. Again, a strong relationship between memory and social activism emerges, as student movements rejected the idea of a commemoration in favour of a more active recollection, which should primarily provide inspiration for future struggles.

Hajek’s book is a valid contribution to scholarship on the memory of social movements in the 1970s and provides some useful insights into the relationship between the history and memory of the political and social movements. In this regard, the book might have benefited from a more comprehensive overview of 1970s Italian historical dynamics and historiography, helpful for better framing, for instance, the events of 1977 within the general climate created by the so-called ‘national solidarity’ government.

References

- Jaggi, M., R. Muller, and S. Schmid. 1977. *Red Bologna*. London: Writers and Readers.
 De Maria, C. and M. Carrettieri. eds. 2013. “La crisi dei partiti in Emilia Romagna negli anni ‘70/’80”. *E-Review* 1. <http://e-review.it/sommario-2013.all>

Eloisa Betti

University of Bologna
eloisa.betti2@unibo.it

© 2015, Eloisa Betti

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2015.1029317>

Nation/Nazione: Irish nationalism and the Italian Risorgimento, edited by Colin Barr, Michele Finelli and Anne O’Connor, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2014, x+245 pp., €45.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-906359-59-1

Irish history, as Colin Barr and Anne O’Connor point out in their introduction to this fine collection of essays, ‘has long been determinedly insular’ (p. 2), no more so than in relation to the nineteenth century, where ‘[e]ven Britain . . . gets short shrift’ (p. 4). *Nation/Nazione*, which places nineteenth-century Ireland firmly within the wider European context, is thus a very welcome and important addition to the existing historiography. Its focus on the ‘interactions and