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Instructor:

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Why Were the 1970s and 1980s So Violent in Italy?

The “years of lead” (1969-1983), named after the number of bullets fired, contained a combination of political, ideological, and social conflicts between the “Lefts” and “Rights” that resulted in more than 12,000 incidents of politically motivated violence. Often referred to as a civil war, this period impacted every aspect of life: culture, language, media, art, and Italian history. Even years later, experts investigate and analyze the representation of violence in all of these spheres.

In post-war Italy, there was an acceleration in the interaction between protesters and the police: people were dissatisfied with the system and its oppression of democracy. Some people saw protesting as an outburst of violence, while others saw it as a form of expressing their political views and dissatisfaction with some situation. At first, the social movements were hesitant to use violence because the aim of the resistance was self-expression, but in the 1970s, their ambivalence changed into action. This led to repressions from the state and thus, a vicious cycle of “violence-repression-violence-repression” (Porta, 2006).

The first victim of bombing and shooting was Antonio Annarumma, a policeman from Milan, killed in November 1969, during the left-wing demonstrations. Later in December that year, a young anarchist set a bomb that killed 17 people in a bank. He was imprisoned and killed under mysterious circumstances. Three years later, the policeman allegedly responsible for his death was executed on the street. Conducted until 1985, the

judicial investigation was inclined to charge the extreme Right (Christian Democrat) and extreme Left (Italian Communist Party) for the incident.

The young anarchist was part of the most notorious movement: The Red Brigades, a Marxist-Leninist extremist group, led by Renato Curcio (Jenkins, 2018). This movement held Italy in horror for at least 15 years by kidnapping and killing government officials (prime minister Aldo Moro and Brigadier General James Dozier from NATO), organizing riots, carrying out attacks, torturing and just making hell on earth for those who did not support their ideology (2018). The Communist Party, however, did not support the anarchist movement and tried to put an end to their actions.

What started out as student and working class movements fighting against government repressions and its inability to provide a better life for the people, turned into blind extremism due to a lack of support from the Christian Democrat and Communist parties. All they wanted was to be seen and heard but could not reach their goal peacefully.

Works Cited

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