

Reggio Calabria and the 1970 riots: A local society from revolt to oblivion

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Abstract. This article addresses the problematic issue of remembering the dramatic events related to the municipal revolt of 1970-71, within the context of the present society of Reggio Calabria. The first section briefly recalls the facts of the case, with fundamental references to the national situation and to the most controversial aspects, linked to the attacks, the perpetrated violence, and the victims. Then, it presents examples of the rhetoric that characterized the social movements and retraces the following phases of oblivion (1970s-80s), recovery of memory (1990s-2000s) and new oblivion of the narrated events. The second section employs the use of research and reflections relating to the socio-economic and demographic situation of contemporary society in Reggio Calabria. It concludes by suggesting an overall interpretation of the memory outlined in a time frame of half a century with a background of the long-term historical events. The hypothesis is that of a direct connection between the peculiar social structure of the city on the Strait of Messina and both the outbreak of the revolt and the current weak memory of those events, faint to the point of bordering a characteristic oblivion.

Keywords: Memory, Social distance, Revolt of Reggio Calabria, Public use of the history, Politics and anti-politics.

Riassunto. L'articolo affronta il nodo problematico, nell'ambito della presente società di Reggio Calabria, costituito dalla memoria delle drammatiche vicende legate alla Rivolta municipale del 1970-71. La prima sezione ripercorre sinteticamente i fatti in questione, con essenziali riferimenti alla situazione nazionale e agli aspetti più controversi, legati agli attentati, alla violenza perpetrata e alle vittime, presentando poi esempi della retorica che caratterizzò il movimento di piazza e ripercorrendo le successive fasi di oblio (anni 70-80), recupero della memoria (anni 90-2000) e nuovo oblio degli avvenimenti narrati. La seconda parte si avvale di ricerche e riflessioni relative alla situazione socioeconomica e demografica della società reggina contemporanea e conclude proponendo una interpretazione complessiva dell'arco della memoria che è stato tracciato nel corso di mezzo secolo: ipotizzando, sullo sfondo delle vicende storiche di lungo periodo, un legame diretto della peculiare conformazione sociale della città sullo Stretto, tanto con l'esplosione della Rivolta, quanto con l'attuale labile memoria di quelle vicende, tanto labile da rasentare un caratteristico oblio.

Parole chiave: Memoria, distanza sociale, rivolta di Reggio Calabria, uso pubblico della storia, politica e antipolitica.

Introduction

In 1970 the population of Reggio Calabria rose up in large numbers in protest against the assignment of the headquarters of the newly formed Region to the city of Catanzaro, for reasons of dignity and cultural prestige, besides economic reasons¹. During those long months the streets and squares of Reggio saw many debates, rallies, processions, but also clashes with the police, attacks on institutional, trade union and party headquarters, barricades, and attempts, which also caused several casualties (the count depends on the sources consulted), including real terrorist acts, followed by lengthy judicial investigations. In fact, at the beginning of the events, a derailment of a railway convoy

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1 Historiographical attention regarding the events in Reggio and on their broader significance has been raised earlier in the time especially by Guido Crainz, "La stagione dei 'movimenti': quando i conti non tornano". *Meridiana*, 2000, 38/39: 127-149.

took place in Gioia Tauro. It was due to sabotage of the tracks and caused 6 victims. It is very little present in the memory of the many massacres linked to that dreadful period: during the events, it has been confirmed the intervention of both mafia and far-right terrorist groups - the latter intertwined with international influences - at least to a certain extent.

This article intends to consider the production of discourses and memories linked to that historical event, only considering the local context, setting the historical and social dynamics that affected Reggio Calabria in the background, until projecting the gaze to the present-day city. Therefore, it is a critical exploration from the perspective of the sociology of memory.

The first part traces the development of the Revolt, highlighting its characteristic 'rhythm' linked to the relationship between institutions, parties and the population. Then, it focuses on the specific rhetorical strategies deployed by the Reggio Calabria movement. In more recent times, local institutions brought out those strategies thanks to the implementation of memory policies.

The second part presents a schematic picture of the context of the revolt and Reggio's subsequent events, especially with reference to the socio-economic structure of the city, as it has been taking shape to date.

In conclusion, some analytical reflections are proposed, precisely regarding the peculiar timeframe of memory that has been outlined so far, characterised by the alternation of oblivion and renewed attention around the Revolt. Some conceptual and methodological tools had been employed, which were made available both by classical sociology - primarily referring to issues such as "social distance"² - and by the sociology of memory - with particular reference to Alexander's theories.

The hypothesis is that the peculiar social situation, characterized by disintegration, clientelism and top-down traits, explains exactly the implosion³ of the city and the recent fall of the Revolt into oblivion.

1. Facts of the revolt (1970-71)

As is well known, the establishment of ordinary administrative regions in 1948 was postponed and was carried out only after a series of legislative measures between 1968 and 1970. In some regions, above all Calabria and Abruzzo, the definition of the capital had remained just as open: in Calabria, the dispute concerned Reggio - even its name claimed supremacy in that region - and Catanzaro, a centre with a notable legal tradition. As a matter of fact, Calabria represented a unitary context only on an administrative level, but not on a socio-economic and cultural one, given the differences and divergent histories that characterised northern and southern Calabria. Mountains, scarcity of communication routes and the scarce material and cultural traffic had not produced a solid regional identification. On the contrary, Reggio had much closer ties, in every respect, with Messina and Sicily, with which it constituted a "Strait region"⁴, given the intense exchanges and common traditions between Southern Calabria and North eastern Sicily.

Therefore, the choice of the capital city seemed to be a matter of life and death - with its symbolic value in support of a community in crisis and with its impact on employment and public works linked to the institutional seats -. The government's subsequent news was received with dismay: the regional council should have met in Catanzaro, as the seat of the Court of Appeal - transferred there after the catastrophic earthquake that struck Reggio at the beginning of the century -. Thus, it seemed to be a "technical" decision⁵.

2 Fabio Introini. "La distanza sociale. Dimensioni teoriche e attualità di un concetto 'classico' ". «Studi di sociologia», 2007, Vol. 45 (1).

3 Vincenzo Bova. *Reggio Calabria la città implosiva. Modernizzazione e degrado di una città, nascita e morte di un movimento*. Rubbettino: Roma, 1995.

4 Still fundamental, particularly for this concept, Lucio Gambi. *La Calabria*. Torino: Utet, 1965.

5 In the absence of a legislative determination, regional or national, this was the orientation that had been forming, although in fact the parliamentary commission in charge in 1950 did not pronounce: Central State Archives (Acs), Ministry of the Interior, Gab., 1967-70, b. 513.

This was, actually, the result of a pact between those political exponents of the DC and PSI in Cosenza and Catanzaro⁶ - allied parties, within the centre-left political formula, at a national and local level - first and foremost the PSI leader Giacomo Mancini, who had been able to obtain a position of greater strength at a national level than their Reggio counterparts, for whom the regional university seat⁷ would be assigned to Cosenza, in exchange for the location of the Council and Assembly in Catanzaro. The PCI, which was slowly growing in the region, did not object, mainly because it was interested in consolidating other agreements at national and regional level with Mancini's PSI⁸.

However, this affair attracted accusations of conspiracy and seemed an illegitimate way of opaquely resolving a decisive issue. Nevertheless, protests and recriminations went unanswered, because the political exponents of Reggio Calabria were silenced by the national and regional leaderships. That explains how they were then bypassed by their constituency and, in some respects, replaced by other actors in the role of leading the masses.

The cycle of protests was, as a matter of fact, started by local (centre-left) institutional exponents, who then saw it get out of hand. What we must basically note is the objective failure of politics, or rather of the parties⁹, to build a connection between the institutional level and that of civil society. In fact, it explains the rise, in rhetoric and then in practice, of anti-political attitudes within Reggio society.

Anti-politics¹⁰ is understood here as a condition of complete delegitimization of legal institutions, the rejection of the political function itself as a dimension of agreement and integration of different interests, and the rejection of any connection with superior or external instances. Basically, the non-recognition of Reggio as the capital of the Region represented for the city a reason to feel, if not from Italy, certainly separated from the rest of the region. In this sense, the appeals to Parliament and President Saragat continued, in the confidence that, at that level, the axis that penalised Reggio locally would be bypassed and neutralised.¹¹

The dynamic set in motion is precisely the one whereby there was a shift from anti-politics to a populist hegemony¹² -rejection of parties and mediations, assertion of identity reasons without any distinction on behalf of an entire population, proclamation of the superior moral dignity of society against a political class that was all conspiracy and betrayal-, or rather to hyper-politics¹³. The slogans took on almost apocalyptic tones on many occasions, and the behaviour kept up, in a continuous chase between challenge to the institutions and responses often of a merely repressive nature.

6 Students in fact had to apply to the university in Messina.

7 At that time there were only those three Calabrian provinces.

8 For the timely chronology of facts, statements and coeval journalistic reconstructions, the work of journalists remains an indispensable reference: L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Buio a Reggio*. 2 voll. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2000. For general bibliographical references see the note in the conclusion.

9 For a reference to the important topic of the First Republic as a democratic and "partitocratic" system, see for example Paolo Farneti. *Il sistema dei partiti in Italia (1946-1979)*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983.

10 The debate on partitocratic distortion of democracy, anti-politics, qualunquism, is endless. A summary: S. Lupo. *Partito e antipartito. Per una storia politica della Prima Repubblica (1946-78)*. Roma: Donzelli, 2004.

11 Here we can see how the geographic-economic situation, described by Gambi (see below) finds correspondence with sociocultural reflections. Reggio was not and did not feel an integral part of Calabria. Among the political initiatives of the time, the one undertaken by the coffee magnate Mauro (in cooperation with the shipowner Maticena) who tried to promote a popular referendum, in order to sanction the splitting of the province of Reggio (which at the time included the current one of Crotona) and establish it as a region in its own right, has been objectively underestimated in any analysis, despite being perfectly constitutional, but it had no significant feedback.

12 On this issue you can read A. Esposito. *Il populismo e le rivolte di Reggio Calabria e dell'Aquila (1970-71)*. «Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa», 2008, 73, pp. 193-220 (pubblicazione dei risultati di una ricerca conclusa nella primavera del 2007).

13 I am conducting conceptual research on this term, starting with suggestions found in: P. Taggart. *Populism and 'unpolitics'*. In Fitzi, Gregor, Mackert, Juergen and Turner, Bryan (eds.). *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy*. Routledge Advances in Sociology: London, pp. 79-87.

Fifty years ago, Reggio was a laboratory for events that are still relevant today, and, in fact, some witnesses and analysts realised that even at the time¹⁴.

Among the institutions that played a driving role in the hyper-political dynamic were certainly the police, since it is attested that it was the violent repression of an occupation of the railway tracks by a large group of demonstrators that literally set the dust on fire. The police charges were followed by the first of a very long series of clashes, which caused the first victim (martyr, as they were often called) -a CGIL railway worker, Bruno Labate-, probably struck down by a sudden illness. Many of those arrested were then harassed in the premises of the police¹⁵, and this contributed to producing a vivid tear between the state and the population.

It was 14 July 1970, and this is when the period of the actual Revolt began, which can be structured as follows:

- 1) First period of opposition in July 1970, and subsequent “truce”. In this phase, the leading role of the Action Committee for capital of Reggio, headed by the right-wing trade unionist Francesco “Ciccio” Franco -an exponent of the local MSI (neofascist party) in polemics with his own party-, was already being outlined;
- 2) Second period of opposition in September 1970 (following the new disappointment caused by the non-acceptance by the parliamentary components of the Reggio requests);
- 3) Winter break, interspersed with occasional episodes, especially close to the holidays, due to the hope in the results of the parliamentary debate, following the attention finally shown by the new Emilio Colombo's center-left government;
- 4) January and especially February 1971: after the failure to assign the capital, despite the publication of the "Colombo package", which provided for measures to benefit the city¹⁶, protests raged again, although progressively restricted to some peripheral areas¹⁷, also following the ban on all demonstrations in the area by the Interior, with the massive and decisive intervention of the police and the help of armoured tracked vehicles of the Carabinieri;
- 5) Queue of protest and sabotage initiatives were essentially completely suppressed, according to the law, until the end of 1971. Queues of further protests and further repression took place until 1973 (the opinion recently emerged is that this phase was underestimated, in terms of the consolidation of the anarchic and anti-state attitude on the part of large groups of the citizens).

14 During the months of the Revolt in the city, thick columnists and editorialists of the various orientations, such as Giampaolo Pansa of *Il Giorno*, also came to work, and the sphere of communication became a field of contention between even opposing tendencies (in particular, *Il Borghese* and *Il Candido* engaged in presenting in populist and tendentially anti-parliamentary terms what was happening). *Lotta continua* also tried to play a significant role, presenting the events in Reggio as a revolutionary opportunity and, as we shall see, producing and distributing various documents, including filmed ones. Only recently, however, as I have mentioned, have the more problematic interpretations, which at the time were instead submerged by the interpretation in terms of mere backwardness and fascist hegemony, of the dynamics in question been recovered.

15 L. Ambrosi. *La rivolta di Reggio, Soveria Mannelli*. Roma: Rubbettino, 2009, part 2, ch. II, particularly focused on this aspect.

16 It envisaged, in short, as compensation, the assignment of the seat of the Assembly alone and of the V steel Center to Reggio Calabria, but the second measure did not materialize: the official decision on the assignment of the capital to Catanzaro was nevertheless taken by the Calabrian Regional Assembly (see Acs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Minute, b.56, February 16, 1971).

17 Sbarre and Santa Caterina, two neighbourhoods located on the opposite peripheries of Reggio, had been constituted into a "Republic" and "Grand Duchy" respectively and separated from the rest of the urban fabric with massive barricades, and led a partially autonomous existence until the final eviction. A reading that enhances the rediscovery of a community dimension, linked to the initiative of the inhabitants of those districts, can be found in Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Rivolta e strumentalizzazione. Il caso di Reggio Calabria*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1979 (1st ed. 1971), pp.113-115. Important reflections on the concept of Revolt – referring to its different concept of time than the Revolution, so that a Revolt is not linked to a long-term project, differently than a Revolution that is linked to a project of overall social transformation - and that of anti-structure, can be found respectively in: Furio Jesi, Spartakus. *Simbologia della rivolta*, new, augmented and updated ed. edited by A. Cavalletti, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2022 and Victor Turner, *Il processo rituale. Struttura e anti-struttura*, Brescia: Morcelliana, 1969 in addition to *Simboli e momenti della comunità. Saggio di antropologia culturale*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 1972.

The count of the victims of the clashes, which - it must be reiterated - included assaults on institutional, police and political-union headquarters, as well as bomb attacks, is still debated. It amounted to at least five, to which must be added at least (but the numbers are disputed) one victim in Catanzaro, due to an explosive attack during a rally held in that city, and the six victims of the before mentioned train bombing, and which, as we shall see, had a complicated judicial history (like the one that involved several exponents of the insurgent front, Franco above all).

It's probably fair to add five other victims to the sad count, the so-called "five anarchists of the South"¹⁸. Their stories could be linked to the presence in the area, widely ascertained, of forces under the command of Valerio Borghese, former commander of the infamous X Mas, since the immediate post-war period in contact with exponents of the secret services. In this context the so-called "*Golpe dell'Immacolata*" took place on the night of 8 December 1970 in Rome. According to certain historical and judicial reconstructions, Borghese attempted it, after having placed his operational base in Reggio, by then overwhelmed by an insurrectionary and subversive climate, with the rise of certain Mafia gangs.

It could be said that the knowledge of all these facts in the public sphere have remained relegated to the margins for a long time. What probably explains these dynamics of memory, at a national level, is precisely the geographical location of the protests, and their objectively parochial tone¹⁹, so as to deny their collocation within the more general period of protests and uprisings, characteristic of that period, not only in Italy²⁰. However, more recent reflections and research have stigmatised this approach in terms of a merely prejudicial mortgage.

Certainly, on all these aspects also weighed decisively the hegemony over the protests exercised by the Action Committee, led by Franco and his associates, who inevitably tinged rhetoric and street actions with disturbing colours, those of a far-right and intransigent populism. All that contributed to giving to the Reggio Revolt the name of a fascist episode, based on the subcultural backwardness of the South. It's the revolt of the "*Boia chi molla*" ("Who gives up is a rogue"), a mark that is only partly reliable, which facilitated the liquidation of any debate on what happened, and also helped to explain the complicated social and cultural events that followed, especially in terms of the politics of memory.

Rhetoric and memory

In order to understand the course of the Reggio uprisings, it is necessary to take into account, first of all, the quantity of publications of all kinds that were produced in the city at the time - booklets and second-hand pamphlets, but above all leaflets and posters²¹. Whether the authors were exponents

18 This is still a very controversial affair, "rediscovered" in 2001 by Fabio Cuzzola with *Cinque anarchici del sud (una storia negata)*, Città del Sole edizioni, Reggio Calabria, 2001. The five young men mentioned belonged to an anarchist circle and perished in a car accident on which later investigations placed the shadow of far-right subversion if not the equally controversial "coup." An updated picture was recently presented by Agostino Raso, *Rivolta fascista o di popolo? I partiti politici di fronte alla rivolta di Reggio e la strage di Gioia Tauro*, Città del Sole edizioni, 2020. For other elements, see infra.

19 But for a distinction between localism and parochialism, which in the context of this exposition has a certain weight, see S. Cavazza, *Piccole patrie*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2002: he distinguishes localism as a means of aggregation of a large and diverse population, from parochialism as a spontaneous moment, typical of restricted and cohesive communities. In this key, in Reggio, the parochial claim was a means of creating an interclass, "localist" aggregation, which in the long run-as we shall see-failed, perhaps also because it failed to go beyond its initial premises, based on a merely symbolic, "parochial" pride, moreover defeated in the context of regional political competition.

20 A reference text is Tarrow, Sidney, *Democrazia e disordine. Movimenti di protesta e politica in Italia 1965-1975*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1990.

21 A presentation of some of the leaflets put into circulation: Franco Arcidiaco - Daniela Pellicanò. *Boia chi molla. 14 luglio 1970*. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2020. For references to other collections of leaflets see, e.g., the 'list of sources in L. Ambrosi, *cit.*, which was also based on the collection of a large number of oral testimonies, preserved at the Circolo "*Gianni Bosio*" in Rome at the public library "*Casa della Memoria e della Storia*". Another important collection is the one made by Fabio Cuzzola and used in his Reggio 1970. *Storie e memorie della rivolta*. Rome: Donzelli, 2008.

of the local clergy, or of the various trade associations, or whether they were expressions of the political-cultural notabilities, overall these publications were characterised by three main rhetorical motifs.

Rhetoric

Claim of the capital as recognition of regional, historical, and moral primacy, and as a confirmation of dignity. The underlying value of this first recurring motive was that of mere recognition: what Reggio was asking for was a given, so to speak, natural and therefore beyond any discussion or negotiation - and anyone who was even suspected of being open to the infamous "compromise" was qualified as a traitor.

Suffice it to consider passages from the appeal addressed to the citizens by Mayor Battaglia, a centrist exponent of the party, who invited the citizens to "stand ready to vigorously support Reggio's right to lead the region", declaring that "the city refuses to accept decisions taken by this or that great man, whatever party he belongs to". It would have been right that the issue of the capital was "resolved with a special legislative measure of parliament", whereas until then, just "under-the-table agreements between the powerful in government" had been made²².

Furthermore, it must be considered the following, taken from the series of mimeographed leaflets and circulated by the Action Committee for Reggio Capital: "*Reggini*, we defend Reggio with civil determination and unwavering faith because our battle of the soul wants to ensure the right to life to a whole community and the city's reconfirmation in its age-old role as the capital of Calabria - For Reggio Capital: *BOIA CHI MOLLA!*"²³. It should be noticed that there are no significant differences with the tones previously used by the mayor.

After all, such perorations only emphasised the arguments expressed by those whom Lombardi Satriani²⁴ described at the time as "traditional intellectuals", expressions of the city's most educated bourgeoisie, who essentially cultivated a propensity for a rhetorical culture anchored to a mythical past, and condensed into a series of commonplaces, transmitted to the population over the decades.

***Regginità* and populism, anti-political, and hyper-political**

Here we come to the second rhetorical motif: what brought together the interclass movement that fuelled the revolt, and led to the constitution of an 'Us' as opposed to the internal and external 'enemies'. It represented the reference to the traditional folklore of the subordinate classes²⁵ that local politicians and men of letters relaunched, leading to the constitution of what the sociologist Vincenzo Bova has called "*regginità*"²⁶: a peculiar feeling of unity as a community of Reggio, in opposition to Catanzaro (in a parochial²⁷ way), but also to the internal traitors, as well as to the usurpers of both the

22 L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Cit.*, pp. 19-20 However, while in the quoted volume Battaglia turns out to conclude by "calling on everyone for calm and moderation", in others instead he reiterates that "identity, pride, and history must be safeguarded at all costs, even at the price of showing that we Southerners are also capable of waging war as a matter of pride." For the issue of differing accounts in circulation, partly due to partially autonomous strategies put in place by the government's peripheral offices, see e.g. L. Ambrosi. *Cit.*, p. 174. It is important to note that Mayor Battaglia's very speech on July 5 for some commentators represents the true origin of the uprising, especially if one gives credence to the most inflammatory version of his words.

23 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by). *Cit.*, p.20.

24 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Cit.*, pp.109.

25 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani, op. cit., passim.

26 For the concept see Vincenzo Bova, op. cit., who has taken up the remarks in this regard by Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani, op. cit., p.94.

27 Here parochialism is understood specifically as a rhetorical manifestation of unity in antagonism to rival neighbours through the recovery of a traditional discursiveness based on territorial pride, see Vincenzo Bova, op. cit., p.24. For a discussion of the concept of parochialism, distinguishing it from other collective representations, see supra.

capital and of the democracy itself, outside the Region²⁸.

Here we must see²⁹ how a situation of extreme social disarticulation and the relationship between society and institutions, especially following the crisis of that class of mediators, party-clientelist, who governed the city, has been the premise for a real eruption, a paroxysm of identity and rebellion, represented by a social dynamic fuelled essentially by rage and despair, by the aim of "all or nothing".

The failure of politics, both with respect to the inability of the city notables to direct local developments, and with respect to the responsibility of building more balanced relations between the different territorial realities, has produced the rapid transition from anti-politics (refusal of mediations, compromises, negotiations) to hyper-politics (claims of absolute values and recourse to or threat of the use of force).

The examples are innumerable, and one must refer to the collections and repertoires mentioned above³⁰. However, one brief example will suffice here: the cubital title of a leaflet of the already mentioned series, in which it invokes almost religiously "Reggio always united against enemies and traitors in defence of its just rights" because "We have interpreted the demands of our people while others have ignored them" and it mentions "The sacred effigy of the Madonna [...] ran three times past the Town Hall"³¹ as if to denounce the mayor's inadequacy. In fact, the demonstrations soon took on religious overtones, as parochialism and inter-class mobilisation gathered around traditional city symbols, first and foremost the Madonna of Consolation, also due to the role of both support and moderation exercised by Bishop Ferro, who issued a public notice declaring Reggio's claim to obtain a "legitimate right documented by millenary history, also comforted by the metropolitan role for Calabria of this ancient apostolic seat"³².

Anti-party and betrayals, conspirations and victimhood

In particular, the populist, identity-driven, rebellious anti-politics concentrated its rhetorical arrows against parties, referring both to the Christian Democratic majority - unable to deal as equals with their counterparts in other cities and in parliament - and against the Socialists, allies of the Christian Democrats, both of the minor parties and especially the Communists, who had openly expressed that they did not support and recognise the reasons of the demonstrators.

Here, a classic topic of national political discourse reappeared: the anti-party one, with indifferent, reactionary, anti-Parliamentary tones from time to time, even in Reggio. However, it must be reiterated that during the Revolt the populist rhetoric never went so far as to question democracy and parliament, but on the contrary, right up to the end it presented itself as an expression of authentic democracy and appealed both to the Chambers and to the President of the Republic, Saragat, as the supreme guarantor.

Another example of a leaflet³³ of the Action Committee for Reggio capital, however, denounced on a full page "Nesci and Vincelli - new betrayals for Reggio" as previously the Committee had cried

28 It is not in dispute here that a series of rational evaluations, based on concrete interests, were also widely circulating in favour of the claims, with reference to investments and especially jobs in the tertiary sector, linked to the establishment of the offices – however, this motive on one hand remained subtended, because it was certainly not diriment, and on another it was nevertheless stigmatized by observers, of whatever orientation, as attesting to a society incapable of conceiving autonomous economic development. This discourse, rooted in anti-Southern polemic and in the research of authors such as Banfield, was obviously known to the people of Reggio Calabria, who for this reason, too, perhaps, did not make it the first of their banners (but neither did they take up that of industrial or agro-industrial investments, proposed by the Left Front).

29 See in this regard in Part III Bova's and Coco's analysis.

30 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by). *Cit.*, p. 48

31 The sacred effigy was carried in procession in advance of the traditional date, as on the occasion of previous calamities against which celestial protection had been invoked, and even thereafter such symbolism remained central to the events. Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (eds.). *Cit.*, p. 48. For a classic reading of the episode, Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Cit.*, p.96.

32 Statement of July 16, 1970, see L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Cit.*, pp.34-35.

33 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by), op. cit., p. 36.

"Betrayal! Reggini, *once again* the parties have deceived and betrayed us" also invited "the Parliamentarians, Regional, Provincial and Municipal Councillors of Reggio to assume the responsibilities that the particular seriousness of the moment requires"³⁴. By standing by the people and deserting the institutional seats, he spread an ambiguous message that attests how even anti-state motives spread and turned on in the Revolt.

Another phenomenon was demonstrations characterised by victimhood, whereby assorted conspirations and betrayals were reported, and a sort of martyrological propensity was created. It is not surprising that the demonstrations were accompanied (in addition to numerous acts of violence, very different in their deadliness) also by the characteristic macabre processions with hanging dummies - complete with placards bearing the names of the various 'Mancini', 'Misasi' and other 'enemy' politicians - and by bonfires in the squares where to give them, in effigy, as scapegoats, what they "deserved"³⁵.

Victimhood became a characteristic feature of the memories of the events of 1970, a victimhood mixed with anger which represented the other side of the manifestations of wounded pride and - more recently, it can be assumed - of the weakening of the tradition of tales and slogans linked to that moment, since victimhood and resignation can correspond³⁶.

Memory, Public Use of History, Oblivion

This research doesn't intend to follow the phases of the debate around the riots and the subsequent period (which, for a long time, remained focused on the contrast between those who supported the genuineness of the protests and those who emphasised its exploitation by the right wing).

With the end of the cycle of struggles, for over a decade even society and the political-cultural world in Reggio devoted very little attention to the Revolt, burdened by the sign of defeat, humiliation and the stigma of upheaval born resulting from southern backwardness³⁷.

A certain resurgence of attention on the events approximately coincided with the crisis of the First Republic. That was because, at a national level, a collapse of the party system referable to the constituent arc took place, and this represented the crisis of the partitocracy which had been the controversial target of an 'ideological' nature that had united the largest part of the Reggio movement in 1970. Moreover, in Reggio, the phase change was marked by the so-called Reggio *tangentopoli*, which arose from the confessions of the former DC mayor Agatino Licandro³⁸, who, by showing the collusion between power and the local mafia, earned the nickname 'mafiopoli' by the local media. Reggio's administrations turned right in the early 2000s and returned to refer to 1970, thus riding a real electoral parochialism - although Leftist Mayor Italo Falcomatà, who had a very important role between 1993 and 2001, dedicated a monument to the fallen of the uprising, seeking to wrest the monopoly of memory from the far-right-. A significant example of public use, but also of history, of symbols and memory, is the decision by Mayor Giuseppe Scopelliti of "Alleanza Nazionale" to erect a stele in honour of Ciccio Franco, who died in 1991, and to dedicate the "Arena dello Stretto" to

34 Franco Arcidiaco & Daniela Pellicanò (eds.). *Cit.*, p. 20, italics mine

35 Photographic evidence already in Lombardi Satriani, Luigi M. *Reggio Calabria: rivolta e strumentalizzazione*. Vibo Valentia: Qualecultura, 1971, p.84. This is the first edition of the 1979 text already cited above.

36 "The ideology of defeat and betrayal remains as the substratum of the city's collective identity, social action conforms accordingly," Vincenzo Bova. *Cit.*, p.42, which implies both the inability to oppose the reconstitution of opaque mechanisms of power and distrust of institutions.

37 The sense in which this backwardness is to be understood, if such a judgment is justified, and whether it is more of a cultural or at bottom a socioeconomic issue, and thus whether such backwardness is historical or structural, continues to divide opinion even today: for some thoughts on this, see Chapter 3, where reference is made to research that seeks to articulate the sociocultural versus the socioeconomic level.

38 Agatino Licandro - Aldo Varano. *La città dolente. Confessioni di un sindaco corrotto*. Turin: Einaudi, 1993: keep in mind that the epithet *città dolente* that is "sorrowful city" also appeared on the placards of the rioters in 1970 in Reggio. For a framing, one can read: "La guerra di mafia e la «tangentopoli reggina»". In Antonella Coco. *La distanza sociale. Reggio Calabria: le condizioni sociali in una città del Sud*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2011, p. 34 ff.

him, with the new name of “Senator Ciccio Franco Amphitheatre”³⁹.

Concurrently with these initiatives, new works, both historiographical and fictional, have been dedicated to the uprisings, but this flare-up of cultural, political and civil attention does not seem to have taken root⁴⁰. On the other hand, it should be considered how much attention was aroused by the initiatives of Scopelliti's centre-right administration, which then came to a traumatic end⁴¹, inaugurating a new phase of great difficulty for the city.

Some intellectuals and exponents of the cultural world involved in political and social life such as Tonino Perna⁴², Franco Arcidiaco or Fabio Cuzzola reflected and commemorated the events of 1970 and subsequent events, collaborating with the new administrative course, inaugurated by the election of Giuseppe Falcomatà as mayor, son of Italo. The course ended with his suspension due to a conviction for abuse of office. Unfortunately, very little of the reflections produced has been reflected in the citizens' consciousness, and it may have to be concluded that the events of Reggio now only raise attention in reference to the supposed far right conspirations and criminal and terrorist aspects.

However, a weight to the modest transfer of attention from the media to that of Reggio Calabria society is due to the lack of commitment of trade unions and political parties. In the middle of the crisis of consensus and authority in the Calabrian city as almost everywhere else, a significant exception is represented by the ANPI of the Province of Reggio Calabria, which has dedicated a series of debates to the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolt, held in summer 2020, with the participation of historians, journalists, and other personalities. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the YouTube channel, on which these discussions were broadcasted and recorded, has only a few dozen subscribers and that the views amount to a few hundred in all⁴³.

However, with reference to the hypotheses of far-right conspirations, the enquiries that reopened the case of the Gioia Tauro bombing⁴⁴ - completely absent from the national public memory⁴⁵ - have caused a particular stir. Although they have not led to the sentence of the material executors and alleged instigators, given the passage of years, they have led, as the President of the Republic Mattarella⁴⁶ declared in 2020, to ascertain the neo-fascist matrix of that crime, with connections between the organisers of the uprisings.

It is remarkable, however, that the Gioia Tauro massacre has not risen, in the national memory, to the prominence rightly attributed to episodes such as the Bologna or Piazza Fontana bombings. Undoubtedly, the very little attention that local society has given to that event also contributed to that. One of the reasons consists in the obvious contradiction that would be presented to those who, wishing to celebrate, and in this light commemorate, the 1970 uprisings, would also have to commemorate a heinous crime in which elements that contributed decisively to the development of the same uprisings

39 Franco, the populist leader of the uprising of 1970, was elected and remained senator from 1972 until his death in 1991.

40 The considerations that follow arise from discussions held with Prof. Tonino Perna (university lecturer and former deputy mayor), Franco Arcidiaco (formerly mayor Giuseppe Falcomatà's Culture delegate) and Dr. Antonella Cuzzocrea in charge of the *Città del Sole* publishing house, and with Prof. Fabio Cuzzola, all of whom agree on the very scarce presence of a memory of the events of 1970 in Calabrian society and in particular among the younger generations-a reality that can be seen if one considers the small number of public debate initiatives and in particular in schools, as the same personalities surveyed pointed out. One may see for example the interview released by Arcidiaco in the *Gazzetta del Sud* of March 25, 2020.

41 Scopelliti later became governor of the same region, a fact as significant as the investigations that led him to be convicted of abuse of office in reference to his management of the Reggio municipality (which, by the way, in 2012, under the management of the former deputy mayor who later took over, would find itself to be the first administration of a provincial capital dissolved for mafia infiltration).

42 Perna ended his term as delegate of the mayor in controversy with Falcomatà, who has since been convicted of abuse of office and had to leave office.

43 The ANPI channel in question: www.youtube.com/channel/UCKC9PR99YhMZgwFHz25mbpg/videos

44 On the findings of the judicial investigations and a historiographical framing of them, the summarizing work of Agostino Raso, op. cit. turns out to be valuable, most recently.

45 See Ketì Ricciardi's documentary *Gioia Tauro. Una strage dimenticata*, del 2016.

46 www.quirinale.it/elementi/49798.

were implicated (see above). In conclusion, perhaps this explains even better how the episcopate⁴⁷ of Reggio continued, in recent years, to give symbolic importance to 1970 events - which, as we have seen, had played a central role in that popular uprising – whereas it can be noticed the almost total absence of initiatives by the administration. It was not only because of judicial difficulties but also because of the pandemic emergency. In March 2020, a committee for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Revolt in Reggio Calabria had been set up⁴⁸, but it didn't realized so far the project to establish a museum dedicated to the uprising⁴⁹.

3. Socio-economic framework of the city of Reggio before and after the revolt

This paragraph intends to turn our attention to the general evolution of society in Reggio Calabria up to the present day, in order to formulate an interpretative hypothesis of the presence of memories of the Revolt, making use in particular of a conceptual tool such as that of "social distance" to be placed alongside the well-known ones of "exploitation" and "clientelism"⁵⁰.

With regard to the Reggio Revolt, an analysis in terms of exploitation has been developed starting from the exemplary work⁵¹ of Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. He invested the events of 1970 with great problematic commitment, in order to safeguard the potential, at least in theory, of democratic development represented by those upheavals (Satriani published the first edition of his research in 1971), by stigmatising the specific responsibilities of the local political classes that imposed a direction that was less and less compatible with a discourse marked by social progress, and polemising with those readings that too hastily dismissed the Revolt as the product of a backward culture, sparing themselves further critical in-depth sociological analysis.

Recently, however, scientific attention on the social framework has characterised some research such as that of Antonella Coco⁵², who, also relying on the works of previous interpreters such as Pietro Fantozzi and Vincenzo Bova, made use of the category of social distance to illuminate the situation in Reggio Calabria, with a longer-term perspective.

In the sociological debate, Coco explains, there are at least two different understandings of the concept of social distance. The first "relates to the structural dimensions of the concept and considers social distance as the interval separating in social space the position of individuals belonging to different groups, such as social classes and strata, ethnic or religious groups. On the other hand, the second concerns the subjective and psychological dimensions of the concept understood as the degree of sympathetic understanding that an individual possesses towards another person belonging to a

47 In 2000, the bishop issued a joint statement with scholar and lecturer Pasquale Amato, author of several publications on the Revolt, proposing to establish July 14 as a public holiday for the city, because exactly on that date, on which the uprisings are made to begin, Reggio itself would have been founded (in the 8th century B.C.): <https://www.avveniredicalabria.it/luglio-non-solo-mese-della-rivolta-la-proposta-di-monsignor-nunnari-e-amato/>. Recently, in general, it has been mainly the local Church that has made itself the bearer of a memory of 1970, but from a perspective that is in essence more ethical than political, without favouring openings to reflections of a properly historiographical nature, in continuity with the traditional rhetoric that characterized the Riots (see supra). For the important role played by Archbishop Ferro during the Uprising, one can see also Di Stefano, M. *I moti di Reggio del '70. Le due facce della medaglia*. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2017.

48 Town executive committee resolution n.30/2020 (Del. G.C. 30/2020).

49 Among other things, the reference to the celebration of events that are still considered mournful, as evidenced by the annual ceremony in honor of the victims held by the municipal authorities every July 14, aroused perplexity: see Santo Strati's arguments at <https://calabria.live/linutile-rivalita-reggio-catanzaroe-antistorica-e-va-contro-la-crescita/>. Moreover, ideological divisions were also manifested on this occasion because an alternative *Comitato 14 luglio* arose, consisting of the right-wingers who had been excluded from the "official" committee: <https://www.reggiotoday.it/cronaca/50-anniversario-rivolta-nasce-comitato-destra-.html>.

50 On clientelism see, e.g. Simona Piattoni. *Il clientelismo. L'Italia in prospettiva comparata*. Rome: Carocci, 2005.

51 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Rivolta e strumentalizzazioni*. Cit.

52 Antonella Coco. *La distanza sociale. Reggio Calabria: le condizioni sociali in una città del Sud*. Cit.

different group and which is elaborated in a sense of greater intimacy or estrangement⁵³“. For the former, “indicators of educational level, profession, income and housing” are considered, while subjectivity takes into account “the perceptions and concrete practices of distancing enacted by individuals⁵⁴”. Measuring social distance in effect measures “the relational unavailability and closure - of varying intensity - of a subject with respect to others perceived and recognised as different [...] resulting from the dynamic interweaving of factors located on three different dimensions of space, in turn in a relationship of reciprocal co-production: physical, symbolic and geometric⁵⁵”.

We therefore refer to social distance in order to better understand the processes of social inhomogeneity and “it is believed that between stratification and social distance there is a reciprocal influence, and the former is considered both the producer and the product of the latter⁵⁶”.

On this theoretical basis, Coco proposed a sociological reading of the events in Reggio Calabria so far, showing how concrete socio-economic and urban-demographic dynamisms have determined an ever-increasing inhomogeneity and social distance between individuals and groups in the Calabrian city, characterising Reggio's historical developments already before the Revolt and worsening thereafter, up to the present. In fact, “as in other urban areas of the South, a weak social regulation was produced, which had elites as its main protagonists [...] whose concrete actions have distanced themselves from the protection of collective goods⁵⁷. It can be noticed “the absence of ruling classes capable of guiding the city, elaborating a vision projected into the future” for which there are no “processes of social organisation nor a framework of stable interaction between several actors” in view of collective strategic choices, precisely because of the elites' inability “to elaborate new visions, mobilise resources” and at the same time “build trust, favour the articulation of the interests of the various social groups⁵⁸”. Therefore, Reggio is characterised by a multiplicity of realities that “coexist in a relationship of physical proximity and strong social and cultural differentiation”, due above all to the dynamics of irrational distribution of resources “of which the phenomena of inequality and social distance are the outcome”. The reason can be found in the prominence of groups born from the intertwining of politics and crime that have prevented “any function of social cohesion” and “social integration” potentially linked to available funding: and this is to the detriment of the weakest groups, which has triggered further social disintegration⁵⁹”.

Coco concludes that research on the structural factors of social distance was the premise for an analysis of the relative subjective dimension, again referring to suggestions dating back to Simmel. If then “among the elements of differentiation perceived as indicators of distance, there are factors pertaining to a disadvantaged socio-economic condition” as well as “to the cultural sphere[...] and the possibility of intertwining relations with politics”, this is the same as saying that in the “subjective social distance one finds the factors of social inequality” together with elements to be brought back to “the cultural sphere⁶⁰”. Coco explains how, from research in the field, residents with a lower economic-cultural level perceive “the existence of social and cultural barriers that impede the processes of integration⁶¹”. On the other hand, in Reggio Calabria, research shows “a tendency to

53 *Ibidem*, p. 8.

54 Ivi, pp. 8-9

55 Vincenzo Cesareo (Ed. by). *La distanza sociale. Una ricerca nelle aree urbane italiane*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2007, p. 11. Quoted by A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 9.

56 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 9.

57 Pietro Fantozzi. *Familismo amorale o regolazione sociale debole?* In *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 51, 44, pp.1 85-94, 2007. Quoted by Coco. *Cit.*, p.185.

58 *Ibidem*.

59 *Ibidem*, p.186

60 *Ibidem*, p.190

61 *Ibidem*, p.191

exclude the lower-middle classes from the sphere of cultural activities⁶² and even a different breadth of relational networks deployed in the urban area between the upper-middle and lower-middle classes of the population⁶³.

At the time of the events of 1970, Reggio Calabria had 165,000 inhabitants and was the most populous city in the region: there had been a chaotic urban boom, which had evidently reached a limit. The precocious, and deleterious, enlargement of Reggio had been linked to the so-called economy of the emergency⁶⁴ following the very serious crisis that had hit the Strait of Messina after the catastrophic seaquake that had struck it in 1908 (but already in 1783).

For all these and other reasons, agriculture was in dire straits, trade was languishing, industry was almost non-existent, and Reggio's economy was by now a *dependent one*, entirely turned to support in a patronage⁶⁵ from the local political class, which acted as a mediator⁶⁶ with the sources of economic wealth, in northern Italy and the political capital city.

The tertiary sector, with public services and commerce mutually linked and therefore equally dependent on transfers, and the construction sector, undergoing a chaotic expansion due to the action of speculation⁶⁷ and with the function of housing for the conspicuous immigration from the countryside (in the middle of a recession) represented the only driving sectors - but in fact penalising in the long run -. Reggio had seen a decline in activities related to maritime trade, fishing, and trade with Sicily, and had not developed an appreciable interaction with inland Calabria.

All this characterised “a model of growth increasingly centred on the building and services block, that is to say, on the ability of Reggio's ruling classes to intercept and capture external resources and financial opportunities capable of sustaining incomes [...] without, however, succeeding in activating endogenous development mechanisms”⁶⁸.

What was the implication of this economic dynamic on the socio-cultural level? Coco again explains⁶⁹ that “the consequences[...] were very relevant not only in terms of the repercussions on employment, but also with regard [...] to the affirmation of the individual as an autonomous subject[...] and with regard to the affirmation of collective identities, without favouring the emergence of forms of collective action for the conquest of civil and social rights”. Therefore, the Revolt can be considered “symptomatic of the processes of degradation of the southern urban realities [...] and of the regulatory crisis related both to the southern patronage system and to the Italian political and institutional system⁷⁰”. For all these reasons it is fair to say that “the revolt of Reggio highlighted the opposition between interests of a particularistic nature and the need to regulate processes of change according to [...] collective criteria⁷¹”.

On the other hand, “Reggio's history is dominated by the pervasiveness of patronage phenomena” with the political dimension considered by the population “as a space for exchange and favours instead of rights and citizenship”, with the result that this pervasive patronage system sees as

62 *Ibidem*.

63 In Coco's work, in fact, reference is made to categories such as lower and upper and their location in specific cut-outs of the territory (e.g., whether in neighbourhoods characterized by the proximity of residents of different economic and cultural levels or not): the reading presented here presumes to be fully consistent with the cited indications.

64 D. Cersosimo. Un modello di economia dell'emergenza. In Mazza, F. (Editor), *Reggio Calabria. Storia, cultura, economia*. Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubbettino, 1993.

65 See in this regard, by way of example, Carlo Trigilia. *Sviluppo senza autonomia*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1992.

66 Gabriella Gribaudo. *Mediatori. Antropologia del potere democristiano nel Mezzogiorno*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991.

67 The subject is treated in A. Coco. “Gli anni sessanta e settanta: l'«edificazione spontanea»». *Cit.*, p. 27 ff. But on the events of Reggio's chaotic housing expansion there is no lack of documentation and analysis produced over the years.

68 Cersosimo. *Cit.*, pp. 373-74.

69 A. Coco. *Cit.*, pp.25-26.

70 *Ibidem*, p. 31

71 Pietro Fantozzi, *Politica, clientela e regolazione sociale*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1993, p. 97. Quoted by Coco, op. cit., p. 31.

protagonists not the citizens, but “the administrators, hence the political class⁷²”. Moreover, “the patronage nature of mediation produced [...] distrust towards the social organisation as a whole⁷³”. If this was the social configuration, essentially characterised by a vertical and dependent regime, which ascended from Rome and, passing through the local political class, reached the chaotic peripheries, then “the movement of revolt [...] can be interpreted as a consequence of the existing fracture between civil society, political society and institutions⁷⁴”. However, if the movement swept away to a large extent the old ruling class, according to Coco, it is fair to say that it did not produce innovation and indeed with its typical development and failure contributed “in a decisive manner to the progressive accentuation of the state of degradation and marginalisation of the urban reality in Reggio Calabria⁷⁵”. Indeed, it has “determined a contraction of both interpersonal and institutional trust and of the possibilities of democratic participation” to the detriment of any project inspired by the search for the common good and with the parallel “accentuation of the phenomena of power management characterized by the manipulation of the political-institutional dimension for personalist purposes⁷⁶”, which unfortunately well explains the subsequent impressive expansion of underworld circuits and related business connections. Actually, “the events of the seventies provoked a fracture” and constituted “a moment of decisive rupture with the State, with legality and also with an (albeit questionable) cultural, administrative and political homogeneity⁷⁷” as well as “a fracture in the historical formation of the public spirit in Reggio Calabria⁷⁸” with the abandonment of hope in a collective rebirth.

Rather than initiating a rebirth, the events of 1970-71 accelerated a deterioration, which later reached truly dramatic levels, especially considering how in 1971 it had been decided to focus on industries for the development of Reggio, which remained only on paper.

On the political-administrative level, following the events of 1970-71, there was a change of political personnel, but the social processes certainly did not find a better regulation, as mentioned. Therefore, the permanent willingness to exploit the historical memories, and specifically those of the Revolt, should not be surprising, considering the “rhythm” assumed by the re-evocations, their tone and the agents who promote them with episodic electoral purposes (see above).

If it is true that “cities, as subjects of political action, are called upon to develop specific capacities of social organisation [...] and strategies of integration between the communities present in them⁷⁹”, one can see how the peculiar socio-economic conformation and historical events did not allow Reggio Calabria to “be a city” in this sense. The Revolt, in fact, although launched and managed by minorities, represented a phenomenon that was as genuine and visceral, where, however, in some way impolitic watchwords (“dignity”, “identity”) represented the only possible factor for aggregating the multiplicity of particularisms that characterised Reggio. Having defeated, in this sense, the “*Regginità*”, the result, certainly not inevitable, but undeniable, was that “implosion” of the movement (in the end, of a society) which Bova discusses in his inescapable analysis⁸⁰.

If the Revolt was born from the absence of politics, understood as a project of integration and emancipation, and represented an attempt to respond to the “challenge” - represented by the new regional order – an attempt based on hyper-political motives and rhetoric, it failed precisely “due to the inability to create a new subject entitled to manage power and the representation of interests” and for the “inability to give consistency to systems of relations and solidarity” by not transferring “into

72 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 46

73 Pietro Fantozzi. *Politica, clientela e regolazione sociale. Cit.*, p. 96. Quoted by Coco, *op. cit.*, p.32

74 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 32.

75 V. Bova. *Cit.* p. 37.

76 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 34, referring to Bova's earlier reflections.

77 Interview with an associationist quoted in Coco. *Cit.*, p. 33.

78 Cersosimo. *Cit.*, p. 383.

79 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p.7 with particular reference to Arnaldo Bagnasco's reflections.

80 V. Bova. *Cit.*

daily practice the strong identity that had generated it⁸¹". In short, it failed the translation into a policy, into a project capable of going beyond that condition of emergency, which had generated the mobilisation.

Bova then poses the problem of what remains of a defeated movement, and in the case in question he notes how only "a shattered social body" remains with a residual feeling of common belonging based on "a feeling of defeat and generalised mistrust". Whereby "the experience of participation is transformed into ideologism, into a deep-rooted memory of what was perceived as a betrayal, without this common feeling finding places of interpretation, synthesis and propositional constructions". So, what remains is "a sort of mythical reference, as unquestionable as it is unsuitable to concretise a point of mediation between individual and collective interests⁸²". Ultimately, "the place of memory" in reference to the Revolt "struggles to be the place of the present and the future". Life choices are centred entirely "on individual interests" since "mythical identity is detached from the concreteness of relationships", so that "*Regginità*, the 'we', dissolves in the daily actions of individuals"⁸³ driven only by the needs of the moment.

Conclusion: A society between memory and oblivion

To conclude, we would like to propose an interpretation of the current situation, characterised, as we have said, by a very faint presence of the memory of the events of 1970-71 - which means, above all, a scarce attention to the debate that revolves around them and that develops from the riots themselves.

Half a century later and looking at the present time, it must be noted that in the discourse circulating in society as a whole, in Reggio Calabria and Calabria in general, the memories of 1970 re-emerge, as we have seen, only in connection with episodic political-electoral initiatives, of an instrumental nature, or are confined to the debate of relatively small circles and academic work that unfortunately - beyond the intentions - seems to interest only a limited number of intellectuals and researchers: there is almost no trace of "bottom-up" initiatives or broader involvement.

Indeed, the events of 1970 represented a trauma⁸⁴, which affected an already fragile society, and which determined those further worsening dynamics, in terms of increased dependency, disintegration, social anomie documented by the research cited above. To the wounds linked to the violence that took place in the city, and to the defeat itself, around a point of honour and placed in defence of the very dignity of a community, one must add the stigma that these events attracted, producing a kind of victimhood to the nth degree, which resulted truly deleterious.

However, as is well known, Jeffrey Alexander⁸⁵ has brought to attention how every trauma must be understood not as a fact in itself, but as the outcome of a complex process of signification and cultural and narrative appropriation, which extends to ever wider circles and gives rise to a new interpretative paradigm: a product of social reconstruction, linked to a path of redefinition of collective identity.

In Reggio Calabria, this did not happen, probably because the Reggio Revolt was an episode that, from beginning to end, was hegemonised, not by fascism, but by the local political-administrative, entrepreneurial, or cultural notabilities, and the result was the defeat and therefore the mere replacement of these classes, without the affirmation of a new ruling class that was no longer inclined to think in particularistic terms. Moreover, as it has been said, that social situation characterised by de-structuring, went even further: in this way, a social group, even a minority one, capable of or interested in becoming the bearer of a process of social reconstruction of the memory - according to the paradigm outlined by Alexander - never emerged. So that, one could say that the Reggio uprisings constituted a historical trauma, but not a social trauma, that is, a socially re-elaborated trauma.

81 V. Bova. *Cit.*, p. 92.

82 V. Bova. *Cit.*, p. 93.

83 *Ibidem*.

84 As could be read in the analysis of Bova, Coco and especially Cersosimo.

85 Jeffrey Alexander. *Trauma. La rappresentazione sociale del dolore*. Roma: Meltemi, 2018.

Recently, the historian Gabriella Gribaudi has developed profound reflections on this problem⁸⁶, emphasising how the most dramatic life events can set in motion dynamics and paths of 'memory and oblivion', closely linked to the historical-social context, so that forgetting itself can become the subject of a particular reflection, to be placed at the centre of trauma studies, trying to understand the specific reasons and motivations. It is then a well-established acquisition that every memory, every emergence of memories - and of trauma - must be related to those specific 'regimes of historicity' and 'regimes of memory'⁸⁷, which sometimes allow and sometimes prevent the elaboration, articulation and broad communication (sharing) of trauma.

Perhaps, then, in addition to regimes of historicity and memory we should focus on specific 'regimes of sociality' related to whether and how memories of historical trauma emerge, because even silence or forgetting are, in socio-historical terms, facts, 'activities', with exemplary significance.

On the one hand, in fact, silence can represent a way to deal with historical traumas, and to survive, when a collective does not seem to be offered the space for alternative scenarios.

On the other, considering how, also according to Walter Benjamin⁸⁸, each subject begins a process of affirmation and re-appropriation of identity exactly when he or she takes the floor and begins to narrate his or her own story, so as to transform it into true and authentically lived experience, so as to emerge from passivity and become the master of his or her own destiny, one must note the difficulties that have burdened the population of Reggio.

The wide social distance analysed by Coco (see above) that characterised and still characterises the city has prevented the "spiral of signification" to which Alexander links the affirmation, in the public sphere, of trauma memories, from unfolding. For the scholar, in fact, it is the characteristic of threat to social identity that can lead a trauma to take on a truly collective relevance, and yet from the outset the slogans of the Revolt represented, in some respects, a means of instrumentalising the very identity of Reggio (the "Regginità") for the benefit of a minority, which by leaving the scene was unable to pass the baton to any other component of the population. Actually, the aggregative and identity factor constituted by the claim of the capital and the consequent mobilisation, were genuine. But the rioters, by placing in the capital the centre of every possible meaning and claim, had imprinted their discourses with a language that excluded any compromise, and this 'hyper-political' line perhaps did not facilitate the elaboration of further visions, which used the memories of the uprisings as a 'prism', which remained as crystallised in the bed of a traditionalist and victimistic rhetoric.

That of the identity and dignity linked to the status of capital was in fact a reason, in some ways mythical, that left no room for a more shared rational reading of the political and social situation, also because the further widening of social distances made it even more arduous to articulate new aggregations and different re-appropriations of the events of 1970, leaving instead the relative memory available for any 'public use', for any new exploitation, instead of being a factor of subjectivation. It was at this juncture that the implosion of the city movement - mentioned (see above) by Bova - and the subsequent further social destructuring took place.

Therefore, it can be hypothesised that both the same social conformation - with the prevalence of vertical and patronage ties, the scarce widespread solidarity, and the presence of a large section of the population in conditions of dependence and economic precariousness - which had favoured the 'explosion' of the Revolt, and the subsequent 'implosion', have favoured a process of erosion of memory and, in any case, a rarefied and stumbling communication. So that, instead of the 'spiral of signification' of which Alexander speaks, the result has been the unfolding of such a parabolic mnemonic timeframe which, if one considers the Reggio Calabria overall social space, it seems to tend towards oblivion.

This line of research may perhaps merit further verification and in-depth study both by means of appropriate field surveys, through interviews or statistical research, and by developing comparisons with similar historical events.

86 Gabriella Gribaudi. *La memoria, i traumi, la storia. La guerra e le catastrofi nel Novecento*. Roma: Viella, 2020.

87 See François Hartog. *Regimi di storicità*. Palermo: Sellerio, 2007. Related to "regimes of historicity", on which French hermeneutics scholar Johann Michel later modelled the concept of "memorial regime."

88 Walter Benjamin. *Saggi e frammenti*. Torino: Einaudi, 2014.

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