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Abstract

One hundred years after the ‘ten days that shook the world’ (to use John Reed’s famous phrase), the October Revolution is still the subject of intense intellectual and popular debate, holding a unique place in our collective imagination. Whether celebratory, apologetic or critical, public attitudes towards the value and legacy of the October Revolution form an evolving memoryscape (Muzaini and Yeoh 2016) in which the historical memory of the event is constantly de- and re-contextualized to articulate contingent demands and concerns (see Heer et al. 2008). In this paper, we seek to outline the distinct trajectory of the October Revolution memoryscape in the Italian context from a critical discourse-analytical perspective. Focusing on the opinion articles published in three major Italian newspapers in conjunction with key anniversaries (1977, 1987, 1997, 2007 and 2017), we examine the ways in which the memory and history of the Revolution were re-framed and embedded in specific argumentative topoi, and how these were employed to support different, and often conflicting, viewpoints.

Key words: *memoryscapes, topoi, argumentation, CDA, October Revolution, Italy*

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the concept of collective memory has emerged as a key issue of interdisciplinary research, involving fields as diverse as history, sociology, art, literary and media studies, philosophy, psychology, and neurosciences. Over time, many scholars have highlighted the complex and highly controversial nature of collective memory (Erll 2008). Already in 1998, Olick and Robbins (1998: 112) argued for using ‘social memory studies’ as a ‘general rubric for inquiry into the varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged.’ They referred to distinct sets of memory practices in various social sites, rather than to collective memory as a reified object. According to them, this approach enables ‘to identify ways in which past and present are intertwined’ (ibid.).

In his fundamental paper *Collective Memory: The Two Cultures*, Olick (1999) points out that sociological work on collective memory traces its origins to Émile Durkheim, who wrote extensively about commemorative rituals in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), and his student, Maurice Halbwachs’ landmark study *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (Halbwachs 1925, 1941 [1992]). Halbwachs makes a distinction between social memory and historical memory: social memory is the memory of events that the individual and/or the ingroup have experienced personally or that have been handed down from generation to generation; historical memory refers to how groups, collectivities, and nations construct – and identify with – particular narratives about historical periods or events. This distinction has been further elaborated by Olick (1999), who suggests that the concept of collective memory is often used to refer to two very different types of memory: ‘collected memory’ and ‘collective memory’. Collected memories are memories based on the individual, ‘the aggregated individual memories of members of a group’ (1999: 338), while collective memory presupposes that there is something that transcends the individual, the idea that ‘symbols and their systems of relations have a degree of autonomy from the subjective perceptions of individuals’ (1999: 341).

More recently, Wertsch (2008: 121) has argued for an instrumental and distributed notion of collective memory, which ‘involves agents, acting individually or collectively, and the cultural tools they employ.’ All memories are collective in that they emerge from the interplay of various memory tools, which are themselves shared and distributed (Wertsch 2002; Wertsch and Roediger 2008). According to Wertsch (2002: 178), “collective remembering is an active process, inherently social and mediated by textual resources and their affiliated voices, and inherently dynamic.” In Wertsch’s empirical example of schematic narrative templates – Russian narratives of the Second World War – a range of authorial voices are identified. These narrative templates serve as a technology for producing particular national (or other collective) narratives.

Shared representations of the past and of historical events are reshaped in relation to the present historical-political moment. Among these textual resources, media news occupies a significant place. Historical memory is deeply embedded in public discourses and even before the emergence of an

increasingly complex, ubiquitous, and globalized media infrastructure that has taken place over the last decades, historical memories were largely mediated and the media were regarded as strong drivers in constructing and disseminating versions of the past (Thompson 1995).

From this standpoint, collective memory can be regarded as a socio-political construct, a narrative version of the past, defined and negotiated through changing socio-political power circumstances and agendas (Neiger et al. 2011). The politics of remembering is intrinsically connected to power (Erll and Nünning 2010) and, as Macgilchrist et al. (2015: 1) argue,

memory (whichever concept we use from the current range, including collective memory, cultural memory, social memory, connected memory, prosthetic memory, multi-directional memory, travelling memory and entangled memory) is a site of political contestation, subject formation, power struggle, knowledge production, and community-building.

Recent studies have stressed the importance of the media and of journalism in memory practices. Practices like commemorative or anniversary journalism are regularly included in news making. Zelizer (2008: 379) suggests that

of the numerous social and cultural settings involved in the establishment and maintenance of collective memory, the environment associated with journalism is perhaps among the least obvious vehicles of memory. And yet journalists play a systematic and ongoing role in shaping the ways in which we think about the past.

One of the first scholarly attempts to look at memory and the news was Lang and Lang's (1989) exploratory study on the link between major news of the past and the content of collective memories. Edy (1999) developed a typology of journalists' use of collective memory. From the work done by Zelizer (1992) and Schudson (1992), she retains the idea that the manner in which journalists represent the past impacts on the way we see its relevance (or lack thereof) to the present and the future. Moreover, Hoskins (2018: 6) suggests that the '[m]edia have long been instrumental in the settling of history: the selective restorative process through which societies generate their history: rediscovery plus translation (and remediation) through the representational, archival and circulatory technologies, discourses and witnesses of the day.'

As mediated events, the anniversaries of the 1917 Russian Revolution provide key sites for investigating media *modus operandi* and collective memory (Hoskins 2009; Garde-Hansen 2011). In both the intellectual and the public sphere, the Revolution represents a profound – and controversial – social and political transformation. Over time, mediated uses of the revolutionary past have been entangled in the shaping of social categories such as social change, power, violence, freedom, emancipation, brutality, terror, equality, solidarity, exclusion, fear, reform, liberalism or democracy. Whether celebratory, apologetic or critical, media attitudes towards the value and legacy of the October Revolution can be regarded as forming an evolving *memoryscape* (Muzaini and Yeoh 2016) in which the historical memory of the event is constantly re-contextualized to articulate contingent demands and concerns (see Heer et al. 2008).

The concept of memoryscape, understood as a material and symbolic space in which social memory is expressed, is indeed useful for framing the analysis of mediated collective memory, and it is increasingly used in the field of memory studies to analyse collective memory practices (Yoneyama 1999; Shaw 2002; Argenti and Rösenthaller 2006; McAllister 2010; Sather-Wagstaff 2011; Basu 2013). Several scholars – cultural and historical geographers in particular – use it literally to describe how people remember through their physical and material environment. Anthropologists, drawing on Appadurai's (1996) work on globalization, developed the idea of 'global memoryscapes' to convey transnational movements of memories (Ebron 1999; Phillips and Reyes 2011). Kapralski (2017: 172) suggests that

memoryscapes form a matrix of possible attitudes towards the past that can be activated in the commemorative actions of individuals and groups. They are spaces of coexistence of various groups' visions of the past that could be in a symbolic conflict, precisely the way their holders could be in a real conflict. For this reason, the memories contained in memoryscapes constitute an important realm of the struggle for power, understood here as the right to marginalize, exclude or even criminalize those visions of the past that diverge from the sanctioned ideal.

According to Kapralski (2017: 172), memoryscapes have the peculiar characteristic of being, in Clifford Geertz's terminology, both 'model of' and 'model for':

Memoryscapes are 'models of' because they become, over time, representations of the remembered past. Yet, memoryscapes may also be consciously designed to emphasize and amplify those aspects and interpretations of the past desired by those with the power to shape them. In this way, memoryscapes are 'models for': they are instructions or frames for our memories in which certain recollections are more likely to emerge than others.

Drawing on this definition of the concept of memoryscape, in this study we focused on how the media, and the intellectual elites in particular, (re)shape practices of remembering around the Russian Revolution. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to map the development and distinctive features of the October Revolution mediated memoryscape in Italy's intellectual discourse over the past forty years. The research questions we sought to answer are the following:

1. How has the memory of the October Revolution been strategically activated and re-framed within Italy's intellectual debate, as reflected in the press?
2. What are the defining traits of the resulting memoryscapes?
3. What does this tell us about the significance of the Soviet revolutionary experience for Italian politics (particularly the left) and the broader public?

To approach these questions, we examined a sample of 100 opinion articles focusing on the October Revolution and the Soviet Union that were published in three major Italian newspapers with different political/ideological orientations – *Il Corriere della Sera* (centre), *L'Unità* (left-wing) and *Il Giornale* (right-wing) – in the anniversary years of 1977, 1987, 1997, 2007 and

2017. We specifically looked at how the authors of these texts drew upon and re-framed aspects of the collective memory of the October Revolution and the USSR in order to advance claims about the present. To this end, the argumentative strategies underlying these claims were investigated from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Although the sample size is admittedly large for qualitative approaches in CDA, we found that systematic and rigorous analysis allowed us to identify recurring argumentative topoi and shed light on similarities and differences both across newspapers and across anniversaries.

Generally speaking, we believe that CDA can provide a detailed description and interpretation of the role of discursive practices, strategies and linguistic patterns that characterize the construction of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses about the past. As Achugar (2017: 298) points out,

The past has become an area of focus for CDA. What does the past mean today? How is the past used to serve current political agendas? How do we use the past to give meaning to ourselves as individuals and members of groups? A historiographical approach to (critical) discourse analysis will seek to reveal the hidden assumptions in received and naturalized historical accounts

Hence, the main contributions of CDA are to show *what* discursive resources are deployed to construct the past and *how* discourses of the past are used to serve particular present agendas and to shape specific memoryscapes.

2. The October Revolution: a Contested Memoryscape

The Russian Revolution left a profound mark on the history of the entire twentieth century, structuring the languages, symbols, ideologies of political cultures that characterize the evolution of a globalized world. Torbakov (2018: 8) argues that two distinct features of the Russian Revolution make it stand out among the other 'grand revolutions' in world history: 'One striking aspect is that it was the first revolution carried out according to the specific precepts of an elaborate (Marxist-Leninist) theory of revolution. Its second outstanding characteristic is that it has been a rather protracted affair.' The Russian Revolution should be understood as 'the entire transition from the Old Regime to the new, from the Revolution of 1905 to Stalin's "revolution from above" and Purges of the 1930s' (Malia 2006: 254). For much of its history, Soviet socialism has been the subject not only of a heated historiographic debate but also of different interpretations deeply shaped by historical and political circumstances (see for instance Suny 2006; Pipes 1990) and aimed at highlighting its impact in the West.

The largest ideological contestation has been between an interpretation prioritizing the continuity of terror and violence, and one foregrounding the hopes of emancipation and equality. As Fitzpatrick (2017: 817) suggests,

For many years, two different and relatively monolithic interpretations of the Russian Revolution held sway, one in the Soviet Union, the other in the West. In the Soviet Union, 'the great socialist October Revolution' was a milestone in human history, signifying Russian leadership in the historically inevitable international transition from capitalism to socialism. ... Western historians of

the post war cohort ('traditional historians') saw October 1917 not as a popular uprising but as a coup d'état carried out by a small band of conspirators who exploited the anarchy that followed the collapse of tsarism. This collapse they interpreted as avoidable and caused by Russia's involvement in the world war and the political ineptitude of the tsarist regime ... The Leninist and Stalinist regimes were seen as deriving their authority principally from the application of terror.

The Russian Revolution was seen by traditional historians as leading to the suppression of all societal and individual initiative, and characterized by state violence against the population. A major debate arose among Western scholars in the 1970s between 'revisionists' and adherents of the totalitarian model. This new generation of western historians conducted an impressive amount of research in which the Revolution was investigated using a combination of traditional historiography, economic analysis, sociological inquiry and the methodology of political science. The result was a meticulously documented view of the Revolution 'from below', with the focus of attention not on the political 'leadership' - but on the activities, aspirations and motives of 'ordinary' Russian workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors, not only in the capital, but also in the regions (on the revisionist perspective, see Rabinowitch 1968, 1976; Koenker 1981; Mandel 1983; Koenker and Rosenberg 1989).

After periods where Marxist, totalitarian or revisionist accounts alternated, today there is no one single dominant interpretation of the Russian Revolution (Wade 2004). Some historians, including Fitzpatrick (2017: 817), maintain that '[w]ithout the Cold War as a framework, Western historians' discussion of the Russian Revolution has lost its edge and sense of relevance.' Other scholars point out instead that the key to understanding the revolution lies in the philosophical dimension of any radical emancipatory politics (Rancière 2004; Douzinas and Žižek 2010).

Although there is no systematic work analysing the European media debate on the October Revolution, it is reasonable to assume that the interpretative dispute that has marked academic historiography has been even stronger in the media field. The Cold War and the conflict between Western Europe and the communist world, the USSR's invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the great waves of anti-capitalist mobilization that swept across European countries during the sixties and seventies, the collapse and the near disappearance of the communist parties after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the growing difficulties in imagining a model of development alternative to capitalist globalization have represented important moments in which the Soviet experience has been revisited in the political debate of European countries.

Our choice to analyse the Italian intellectual debate in the media reflects the fact that in Italy the political confrontation on the meaning of the revolutionary past has assumed a marked ideological connotation closely linked to the history of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Such a high level of ideologisation of the political dialectics implies the presence in the Italian political debate of multiple conceptions and representations of the Russian Revolution. Since the mid-1920s, in fact, the 'Soviet model' has served as a term of comparison for all those political and cultural currents that have tried

to elaborate a reading (positive or negative) of mass society, capitalism, and the relationship between the State and the social classes. In addition to this, while it is true that the study of collective memory usually considers memoryscapes as being bound by tight social and political groups like the 'nation' (Halbwachs 1950 [1980]), the Russian Revolution constitutes an event that transcends national borders and the debate that took place in Italy constitutes an example of a wider process of reworking of the past (see Levy and Sznajder 2002).

3. Data Sample and Approach

As mentioned above, our dataset includes opinion articles about the October Revolution and the Soviet Union that were published in three major Italian newspapers in the anniversary years of 1977, 1987, 1997, 2007 and 2017. The three newspapers – *Il Corriere della Sera*, *L'Unità* and *Il Giornale* – were selected because of their different political leanings and intended audiences, which allowed for a comparison of diverging and possibly conflicting viewpoints on the value and relevance of the October Revolution for Italy's public and political life. *Il Corriere della Sera* is one of Italy's oldest, most reputable and most widely read newspapers; for a long time the organ of the conservative establishment in Italy, it has a centrist and moderate stance. *L'Unità*, founded in 1924 by Antonio Gramsci as the official newspaper of the PCI (Italian Communist Party), represented the main platform for communist debate for several decades. Since the dissolution of the PCI in 1991, it was supportive of that party's successor organizations until its crisis and subsequent closure in 2014 and then again in 2017.¹ *Il Giornale* was founded in 1974 by renowned journalist Indro Montanelli and a group of colleagues in disagreement with *Il Corriere's* new progressive editorial line; traditionally conservative, in the course of the 1990s it underwent a series of changes of ownership and editorial strategy which resulted in it becoming an outright populist right-wing daily. Circulation figures of all three newspapers in the selected anniversary years are provided in Appendix A.

The sample opinion articles (i.e. columns, co-eds, interviews, editorials and comments) were collected through searching the three newspapers' websites and online archives using a set of keywords related to the October Revolution. The searches covered each anniversary year, from 1 January till 31 December. All retrieved articles were then manually checked in order to filter out irrelevant samples. A final sample of 100 texts was thus obtained. Their distribution across newspapers and anniversary years is shown in Table 1 below.

	1977	1987	1997	2007	2017	Total
<i>Il Corriere</i>	13	20	7	3	12	55
<i>L'Unità</i>	6	6	6	3	--	21
<i>Il Giornale</i>	6	5	3	3	7	24
Total	25	31	16	9	19	100

Table 1. Distribution of opinion articles across newspapers and anniversary years

As we were interested to see how elements of the collective memory of the October Revolution were mobilized and re-framed to advance viewpoints about the present, we approached these texts as pieces of argumentative writing. Specifically, each article was deconstructed using a simplified model of argumentation (adapted from Kienpointner 1996) in order to identify the main claim, the supporting arguments and the explicit or implicit warrants (or conclusion rules). Adopting a critical discourse-analytic perspective, we then focused our attention on recurring topoi, that is, content-dependent argumentative schemes that are typical for specific fields of social action and which can be formalized and deconstructed as *'if/because X then Y'* statements (Reisigl 2014). More broadly, topoi are defined as 'common sense rationalities relating to a body of collective knowledge shared among groups and communities' (Burroughs 2015: 483; see also Boke et al. 2000; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Bauder 2008a, 2008b). A topos, in this sense, is that which justifies a line of argument but requires less justification itself as it is anchored in taken-for-granted knowledge. As Richardson (2004: 230) aptly puts it, topoi serve 'as reservoirs of generalized key ideas from which specific statements or arguments can be generated.' The analysis of topoi, Reisigl (2014) maintains, can provide insight into the specific character of discourses by highlighting controversial claims and exposing justification strategies, further linking certain topoi to broader discourses and narratives. In the scope of the present study, this kind of analysis was oriented towards mapping the ways in which intellectual debates surrounding the significance and legacy of the October Revolution contributed to shaping its evolving memoryscape in the Italian context.

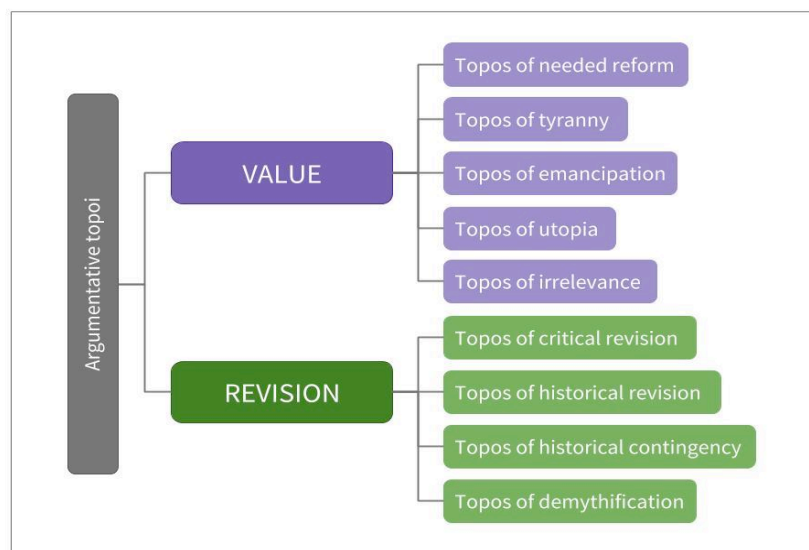


Figure 1. Typology of topoi

The analysis allowed us to identify several recurring argumentative topoi variously related to the October Revolution and the Soviet experience. These topoi were then classified into two thematic macro-categories to enable comparison and generalization. The first category is that of VALUE, which

includes argumentative schemes resting on evaluative definitions of the October Revolution and the Soviet project. The second category, REVISION, encompasses topoi centered on the distinction between the realities and the imaginaries of the Soviet revolutionary experience. An overview of the attendant topoi is provided in Figure 1, while an overview of the distribution of topoi across the sample texts is provided in Appendix A. The specific structure of each of these topoi will be presented and illustrated with concrete examples² in the next section.

4. Analysis: Mapping the October Revolution Memoryscapes

4.1 The Legacy of the October Revolution in Italy

On the occasion of the centenary of the October Revolution, several contributions were published in Italy, including a volume edited by Di Maggio (2017) which examines the representations of the Revolution in the public debate and in Italian political cultures from 1917 to 1991. For the political and cultural currents of the left, but also for the Catholic, liberal, conservative and right-wing ones, the image of the Revolution has been intertwined and, in many cases, has overlapped with that of the Soviet Union. As Di Maggio (2017: VII, *our translation*) argues,

This has been happening since the late 1920s as a result of the construction of the Stalinist State, the progressive exhaustion of the project of the world revolution, launched in 1919 by the Third International, and the beginning of the process of nationalization of the communist parties.

During the most acute phase of the Cold War (1945-1953), the revolutionary ideas born in 1917 continued to be a source of inspiration for socialists and communists who used the myth of the October Revolution as an instrument of legitimacy at the national level. The unity between communists and socialists, built during the fight against fascism, was based on a common reading of the revolutionary experience.

In the thirty-year period from the second half of the fifties to the first half of the 1980s, there were intense and contradictory efforts by socialists and communists to rethink the legacy of 1917 and rework their conception of revolution in the light of the social and cultural changes affecting the capitalist West and the progressive tarnishing of the image of real socialism. In this phase, in the Italian left, as in other European countries, the dichotomy between 'revolutionaries' and 'reformers' emerged and consolidated. This cleavage began with the events in Hungary in 1956 and progressively radicalized with the Prague Spring of 1968 until the Polish crisis of 1980. In Italy, in the eighties there was a real cultural turning point characterized by the debate on the 'totalitarian' nature of every revolutionary process. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of the Italian left, the idea of the revolution born in 2017 was finally backgrounded in the face of the emerging neoliberal hegemony (see Di Maggio 2017).

4.2 The 1977 Anniversary: Taking the Revolution Seriously

In 1977 the Soviet Union was under the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, who had consolidated his power in the early 1970s following the ousting of Khrushchev in 1964. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the subsequent formulation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, which claimed the right of the USSR to use military force to maintain communist rule in nearby socialist countries, Brezhnev had resumed a policy of *détente* with the West, which would end in 1979 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In Italy, the political climate was marked by growing tensions and the radicalization of some political movements, both on the left and the right, into violent extremism (this period would become known as *Anni di piombo*, i.e. the Years of lead). The PCI had been following an independent line from Moscow for several years already, advocating a peaceful transition towards socialism and then establishing a political alliance with the Christian Democrats in the 1970s known as *Compromesso storico* (historic compromise). The break with the Soviet Union had culminated in 1976, when PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer officially embraced political pluralism and gave new impetus to Euro-communism, a revisionist trend aiming to produce a new, non-Soviet aligned, version of communism.

The twenty-five selected opinion articles with a focus on the Soviet Union, published by *Il Corriere*, *Il Giornale* and *L'Unità* in 1977, distinctly reflect these developments. The most prominent voice is that of historian, politician and journalist Leo Valiani, author of seven articles out of the total thirteen from *Il Corriere*. His attitude towards the Soviet Union is one of serious but constructive criticism: while acknowledging the lack of civil and political rights and the regime's ongoing shift towards oppressive bureaucratization, Valiani champions Russia's libertarian tradition and contemporary dissidence as potential drivers of change. The analysis shows that most of his arguments share the common premise that the Soviet regime needed to engage in reform efforts to overcome its inner contradictions, for example (Valiani, 16/1/1977):

- (1) You can stifle freedom for a very long time, but you cannot prevent the desire for freedom from rising again. If it does not want to be reduced to an absolutist reaction and meet the same fate as all despotism, socialism must become liberal.³

The general structure of this argumentative scheme can be summarized as follows: *the Soviet project is marred by serious contradictions (such as restrictions on freedoms), therefore substantial reform is necessary and should be encouraged*. This topos, which we shall call *topos of needed reform* (macro-category: VALUE), presupposes an evaluation of the Soviet Union as a social and political project with certain emancipatory potential but not (yet) capable of realizing it fully.

The other commentators from *Il Corriere* are divided between those who share Valiani's standpoint and those who, on the contrary, are radically critical of the USSR's oppressive and dictatorial system. The latter stance is well exemplified by the following excerpt (Fejtö 6/11/1977):

- (2) The October Revolution, followed by the civil war, held back in Russia the radical demolition of the secular structures that capitalism and the bourgeoisie had undertaken at the end of the

19th century. Secular structures – bureaucratic, centralizing, paternalistic, intolerant of every hotbed of autonomous decision – that were only curtailed and disjoined, but not destroyed, by the Russian Revolution. And which, little by little, have re-emerged under the aegis of the Communists.⁴

Criticism of this kind rests on the premise that since the October Revolution and the Soviet regime are (were) oppressive and of a totalitarian nature, they (and their legacy) should be utterly rejected, which we propose to refer to as *topos of tyranny* (macro-category: VALUE).

Quite dissimilarly from *Il Corriere*, commentators at *L'Unità* exhibit a considerable degree of ambivalence about the value and significance of the revolutionary project. In half of the six articles, in fact, the Soviet project is celebrated as a milestone in the global struggle for equality and social justice but simultaneously called into question for its serious shortcomings. Similarly, other authors emphasize the emancipatory potential of the Revolution, but at the same criticize the unchecked power of the Communist Party (Benedetti 6/11/1977) and Stalinism's departure from the original aspirations for freedom (Berardi 6/11/1977). Here we see the interplay of two specific argumentative schemes: while critical attitudes towards the October Revolution and its subsequent developments largely hinge on the above-discussed *topos of needed reform*, positive attitudes rest on what we shall refer to as *topos of emancipation* (macro-category: VALUE), which has the following structure: *since the Soviet revolutionary struggle holds the promise of liberation from exploitation and oppression, its manifestations should be embraced (and its failures condoned)*.

Aside from their ambivalent attitudes, commentators writing for *L'Unità* appear much more concerned than their counterparts to critically reflect on western narratives and interpretations, including their own, of the Soviet experience. The corresponding argumentative scheme is the *topos of critical revision* (macro-category: REVISION), which can be deconstructed as follows: *(aspects of) the Soviet experience have been distorted – either by western agencies or by the regime itself – to serve certain ideological purposes, therefore they should be subject to serious revision and critique*.

The most polarized evaluations of the October Revolution and the USSR are found in *Il Giornale*, whose editorialists boldly condemn the despotic and illiberal character of the Soviet regime. Five out of six opinion pieces contain clear instances of the *topos of tyranny*, which is employed to discredit Italian communists and especially to refute Euro-communism as a non-viable political project on the basis that the latter is not a real alternative to Soviet orthodoxy but rather a direct outgrowth of it.

4.3 The 1987 Anniversary: Between Revision and Transformation

At the time of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, the Soviet Union was in the midst of a process of dramatic transformation. Gorbachev, elected general secretary in 1985, sought to reform the USSR's economic and political structures through the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. *Glasnost* was aimed at increasing transparency in government activities, thus encouraging popular scrutiny and criticism of the leaders, along with some

forms of revisionism of the Soviet past. *Perestroika* was a comprehensive process of economic and political restructuring geared towards making socialism work more efficiently through limited liberalization and market-like reforms. In Italy, the social and political turmoil of the 1970s had dissolved in the early 1980s amid significant economic progress and a gradual decline of political participation. The political rise of Bettino Craxi, who was strongly opposed to the *Compromesso storico*, had led to the consolidation of the Socialist Party (PSI), a pro-European reformist party, to the detriment of the PCI.

The articles from 1987 show a highly polarized public opinion with regard to the Soviet Union's democratizing efforts and their implications for Italy's internal political situation. The sheer number of articles – thirty-one, higher than any other anniversary year considered in this study – is already an indication of the heated nature of the debate. Gorbachev's reform program is generally regarded with scepticism by *Il Corriere* commentators, who express doubts about his ability to surmount the constraints of the old Soviet order. A more optimistic attitude is prevalent in *L'Unità*, where the examined authors look favourably on the reform process as an opportunity for the PCI to regain momentum and reinvent itself in the face of changing times. In *Il Giornale*, there are clear attempts to delegitimize Italian communism by dismissing the Revolution as a mere coup d'état and by stressing analogies between the Soviet regime and the previous Tsarist era.

Across the three newspapers, the memory and public representations of the October Revolution are both called into question and strategically re-framed to articulate present concerns and demands. The analysis of argumentation shows a strong predominance of topoi belonging to the macro-category of REVISION (Appendix B). The *topos of critical revision* is found in two-thirds of the articles from *L'Unità* (in continuity with 1977) and, notably, also in one-third of the articles from *Il Corriere*. Here it is employed by prominent intellectuals to circumscribe their endorsement of Gorbachev's efforts to introduce democracy in the USSR. A sophisticated illustration is found in the following excerpt by Vittorio Strada (30/5/1987), a renowned literary critic and academic known for his rapport with Soviet dissidents:

- (3) [F]or this regime it is essential to defend the historiographic and ideological thesis according to which the “October Revolution” is the necessary and regular consequence of the Russian and the world's historical development. Because it is here, according to Marxism-Leninism, that lies the source of the historical legitimacy of a power, the communist one, which, having eliminated from its beginning every democratic freedom and every authentic election, has, in its own eyes, no foundation apart from the “passive consent” of the population, which is obviously important on a practical level, but not on the ethical-political one.⁵

Equally common as the *topos of critical revision* is the analogous yet more radical and forceful *topos of demythification* (macro-category: REVISION), which has the following structure: *the October Revolution and/or the Soviet Union have been mythologized and uncritically idealized by its adherents, who should finally confront its true nature*. In *Il Corriere*, this topos is used to challenge the global myth of the 1917 Revolution by emphasizing its

complex and multifaceted historical reality, as illustrated by the following passage (Ronchey 11/10/1987):

- (4) What happened on that day seventy years ago ... was properly an armed putsch, a coup by the Leninists rather than the much-celebrated “revolution”. A few shots on the stuccoes of the Winter Palace, the shot from the cruiser *Aurora*, a few clashes, and the provisional government of the moderate socialist Alexandr Kerensky was overthrown. Everything else is but epic legend, or invention by figuration much like Sergej Ejzenstejn’s movie sequences.⁶

In addition to these, there is a third topos which is most salient in the articles from *Il Giornale* but is virtually absent from the other two newspapers: the *topos of historical revision* (macro-category: REVISION). Arguments based on this topos are framed as appeals to revise historical misconceptions concerning the October Revolution and the USSR, focusing in particular on elements of continuity or rupture with other periods in Russian history which are assumed to have gone unacknowledged. A clear illustration is provided by the following excerpt from a front-page editorial in which Indro Montanelli, editor-in-chief of *Il Giornale* and one of the most prominent intellectuals in Italy’s modern history, disparages the ‘official truth’ of the October Revolution as forgery (Montanelli 6/11/1987):

- (5) In communist mythology, Lenin is celebrated as he who buried czarist despotism. That’s an utter lie. When Lenin returned ... despotism had already been liquidated by a liberal and progressive bourgeoisie seeking to establish democracy. It was against this rule-of-law and humane regime, not against absolutism, that Lenin organized the so-called “October Revolution” ... It was a masterstroke. But it was a blow, a coup, not a revolution. ... The Event, whose 70th anniversary is celebrated today, is a falsification of public records. ... The revolution then came, and what a revolution! But it came from above, at the hands of despots who made more deaths in a few years than Tsarism had made in centuries.⁷

The prevalence of critical and openly revisionist attitudes is also reflected in the recurrence of the *topos of tyranny*, whereby the USSR is portrayed as a perverted and corrupt system driven by the hegemonic and dictatorial aspirations of its leaders. Numerous instances are found in both *Il Corriere* and *Il Giornale*. In *Il Corriere*, the topos is employed to dismiss Soviet ideology as unable to reconcile its propulsive force with the repression of its opponents (Spriano 11/10/1987), its promise of liberation with its ominous outcomes (Melograni 11/10/1987), its irrational tendencies with the demands of real-world politics (Galli della Loggia 11/10/1987). In *Il Giornale*, the emphasis is on the conspiratorial character of the Revolution (Montanelli 6/11/1987 and Cavallotti 7/11/1987) and the inflexible rule of the Soviet communist party, portrayed as the ‘supreme tribunal of history’ (Cancogni 30/11/1987).

4.4 The 1997 Anniversary: Life After Communism

The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the final dissolution of the USSR in 1991 had a tremendous impact on the global political landscape, causing communism to lose much of its political relevance and popular appeal both in the East and the West. In Russia, historical revisionism had become mainstream, leading to the repudiation of official Soviet narratives. In the West, the end of Soviet communism had prompted left parties to deeply revise their ideological positioning. In Italy, the PCI had ceased to exist in 1991, supplanted by a social-democratic party, the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left) and a hard-left minority party, the PRC (Communist Refoundation Party). The PDS had won the 1996 general election as part of a centre-left coalition, establishing itself as the biggest party in the country. After the election, the PRC had decided to offer external support to the cabinet led by Romano Prodi. However, tensions had soon emerged both within the coalition and within the party, which would shortly lead to the formation of a rival communist movement, the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI).

The significance and impact of these key developments are clearly reflected in the empirical data. To begin with, the total number of opinion pieces that explicitly thematise the October Revolution or the Soviet regime (sixteen) is significantly lower as compared to 1987. Although this might obviously depend on fluctuations in the USSR's level of newsworthiness as compared to previous periods, it could also be regarded as evidence of communism's general loss of salience and political legitimacy in the Italian context.

With regard to contents, the analysis revealed salient differences between the three newspapers in terms of both focus and approach. The seven articles from *Il Corriere* are largely critical of the Soviet experience and its public representation, as indicated by the frequent use of the *topos of tyranny* (VALUE) and the *topos of demythification* (REVISION). Apart from these, another *topos* is widely employed to justify appeals to cast aside the Soviet revolutionary experience as being irrelevant to present concerns. We propose to call it the *topos of irrelevance* (macro-category: VALUE). Nowhere is this *topos* better exemplified than in an editorialist's pitiful comments about Italian communists taking part in the anniversary celebrations in Moscow, which convey the idea that allegiance to (Soviet) communism is anachronistic and more akin to an act of faith than to a viable political standing (Righetti 7/11/1997):

- (6) A journey has begun in the company of a ghost. A cumbersome ghost, whom everyone can characterize as they wish: threatening or folkloric, or gently consoling. ... Tomorrow the keen travelers will be taken to the house where Lenin spent his last years and there will be a public debate on communism in the third millennium. A trip in the company of a ghost may resemble a religious trip. [The group leader] admits: "Everyone has their own place of worship, Catholics have St. Peter, we have Moscow."⁸

As with the previous two anniversaries, in *Il Giornale* the *topos of tyranny* is most prominent and it is used to reject *in toto* the Soviet experience and deride its applauders. One author contends that the October Revolution was

but a coup d'état concocted by Lenin which paved the way to the horrors of totalitarianism (Caprara 8/11/1997). Another disparages current celebratory narratives of the Soviet legacy by rejecting Soviet communism as an oppressive and deadly regime (Gandola 8/11/1997). The third (Socci 7/11/1997) urges Italian post-communist political leaders to finally acknowledge not only the errors, but also the horrors of communism:

- (7) ... the same scenario repeated itself wherever communism took power, even without Stalin: massacres, terror and hunger. Yet even scholars, at a recent conference on totalitarianism, only spoke of “Nazism and Stalinism”: the word “communism” is taboo. The notion that the horror was already there and readily available in Marxism continues to be forbidden.⁹

Quite different is the case of *L'Unità*. It is striking to note that all six articles from the sample are wholly or substantially based on reported viewpoints rather than the authors' own.¹⁰ What is more, evaluative judgments of the October Revolution and the Soviet Union are sporadic and rather ambivalent, fluctuating between condemnation of Soviet-era political repression and marginal attempts to reclaim the progressive spirit of Soviet communism. This finding suggests a general reluctance among Italian leftist thinkers, for whom *L'Unità* would be a natural arena for debate, to take a clear stand on the relevance of the Soviet revolutionary experience for contemporary political struggles. Instead, the discussion largely revolves around the rather less controversial topic of the reasons why the Soviet regime had failed, with a clear preponderance of the *topos of utopia*. This *topos* (macro-category: VALUE) can be deconstructed as: *since the Soviet revolutionary project is (was) marked by contradictions inherent either in its doctrine or in its practice, it is (was) doomed to fail and thus should be regarded as utopian*. For example, in an interview a historian argues that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the result of the pernicious illusion, nourished by Marxist doctrine, that society could be governed scientifically (Mecucci 7/11/1997), while another commentator speaks more generically of ‘irreconcilable contradictions that had become incurable’ (Guerra 7/11/1997).

4.5 The 2007 Anniversary: Irony and Irrelevance

Ten years after the 1997 anniversary, which came at a time when the legacy of the post-1989 transformations still inspired much debate and critical reflection in left-wing circles in Italy and Europe, the 2007 anniversary epitomizes the growing political irrelevance of the Soviet project. Although memories of the communist era still retained their contentious character and divisive force, especially in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, the conflation of Soviet communism and Nazism under the rubric of *totalitarianism* in mainstream political discourse had expedited the dismissal of the October Revolution, its tradition and themes as a thing of the past. In Italy, this was clearly reflected in the progressive marginalization, notably within the left, of old-time communists and Soviet nostalgics. The rise to power of Romano Prodi and his heterogeneous centre-left coalition (The Union), which culminated in 2006 with the formation of the first government supported by the entire parliamentary left since post-WWII times, had

triggered a further shift away from revolutionary communism into a strongly social-democratic, reformist and pro-European political agenda.

The progressive removal of the experience of the October Revolution from mainstream public debates in Italy is evidenced already by the very low number of articles published on occasion of the 2007 anniversary: nine in total, three for each newspaper (the lowest figure of all five anniversaries considered). The three opinion pieces from *Il Corriere* contain instances of the *topos of tyranny* (VALUE) and the *topos of demythification* (REVISION). The first *topos* appears in two articles in which the same author criticizes, from different angles, the supposedly ambivalent relationship of certain sectors of the Italian left (interestingly, *L'Unità* itself is a target of criticism) with the legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution. In one case, the author justifies his critical stance through reference to the atrocities and clashes brought about by the Revolution; in the other, he attacks communist leader Oliviero Diliberto for being the only one among his fellow members of the Party of the Italian Communists to have fervently joined the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow; his argument rests on the premise that the Revolution was inherently anti-democratic, as it was a reaction against Kerensky's democratic regime rather than, as is often thought, a rebellion against tsarist oppression (Galli della Loggia 30/10/2007). This last caveat exposes the underlying *topos of demythification*, which figures most prominently in the third article: in advancing the argument that the October Revolution did not necessarily follow from the February one, the author draws a distinction between the 'myth' of Bolshevism and its 'true face', that is, between its promise of collective liberation and its gruesome realization (Fertilio 22/10/2007).

A similar combination of argumentative schemes is found in the three articles from *Il Giornale*, which share a stigmatising and ridiculing attitude towards Soviet apologists. One piece condemns Diliberto's fervour for the feats of the October Revolution as an irresponsible defence of the massacres that ensued (Guzzanti 7/11/2007). Another article calls for the ousting of Diliberto from Italian politics resorting to an analogous *topos of tyranny* (VALUE): the October Revolution and the USSR were against democracy and freedom of thought, therefore they should be repudiated just like their adherents (Foa 7/11/2007). The *topos of demythification* is most prominent in the third article, where it appears in combination with the *topos of irrelevance* (VALUE): by ironically pointing out how Halloween celebrations in Moscow were more popular than those for the October Revolution anniversary, the author argues that the Revolution has lost its relevance and thus deserves to be forgotten (Foa 8/11/2007).

It is, however, in the pages of *L'Unità* that the marginalization of pro-Soviet communists, and of the revolutionary ideals of 1917, takes its most striking form. Two out of three articles take (once again) Diliberto's participation in the anniversary events as a pretext to discredit his party's pro-Soviet tradition and ideological orientation. Any sign of affection for, or allegiance to, Soviet Russia is depicted as misplaced and anachronous, and Soviet apologists are openly called upon to revise their understanding of the October Revolution and dissociate themselves from its legacy. The *topos of critical revision* obviously occupies a central place in these arguments, alongside the *topos of*

utopia and the *topos of irrelevance*. This is perhaps best illustrated by the following excerpt (Abbate 24/10/2007):

- (8) ... Oliviero Diliberto will be in Moscow to commemorate, together with other Italian militants from his organisation, the ninetieth anniversary of the October Revolution. A round digit. But also an expired one. Definitely expired. In so many consciences.¹¹

4.6 The 2017 Anniversary: The October Revolution on Trial

The year 2017 marked the hundredth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. In Italy, the momentousness of the occasion inspired much public debate and cultural production, ranging from the publication of books, magazine special issues and multimedia contents to the organization of conferences and exhibitions. Conversely, the anniversary had very limited resonance in the political sphere, where it was generally met with indifference or occasional cliché-ridden rhetoric even by left-leaning political leaders. At the time, Italy was ruled by a coalition government supported by the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) along with centre-right forces. Growing dissatisfaction with the government's social and economic policies would usher in the subsequent decline of the Italian left, which would culminate in its devastating defeat to anti-establishment and right-wing populist parties in the 2018 general elections.

The magnitude of the hundredth anniversary of the October Revolution contained, and partially reverted, the tendency towards its trivialization and ironic dismissal observed in the articles from 2007. The authors now seem much more committed to a more serious and better targeted critical appraisal of the history and legacy of the Revolution. Quite illustrative of this attitude are two articles from *Il Corriere*, which purport to put the October Revolution *on trial*¹² by bringing together the diverging views of prominent scholars in a structured debate (Carioti 29/1/2017, 8/8/2017). Equally revealing is the fact that nearly a third of the articles are extensive reviews of books dealing with the Soviet experience from historical, socio-political, and historical-fiction perspectives, which attests to a renewed interest in penetrating its complexities from a detached perspective.

In line with this, the *topos of demythification*, which was so prominent in previous anniversaries, appears to have 'lost ground' to the *topos of critical revision*. In fact, the argument that the October Revolution and the Soviet regime have long been the subject of misconceptions which should be re-examined critically is central in nearly half of the opinion pieces from each newspaper. There is, however, a salient difference in how this specific *topos* is deployed. In *Il Corriere*, the focus is on particular aspects of the Soviet experience that according to the authors deserve greater recognition, such as the regime's seemingly paradoxical tendency to suppress internal dissent with harsher measures than those directed at external enemies (Romano 4/6/2017), the fact that the Revolution did not actually allow the workers to take power for themselves (Carioti 25/6/2017), or the present-day relevance of Stalin's approach to managing competing nationalisms (Carioti 12/10/2017). In *Il Giornale*, on the other hand, the *topos* is framed as an appeal to Italian leftists to discard *their* misconceptions about the Soviet

revolutionary experience and finally acknowledge its undemocratic and totalitarian character.

Several editorialists took the opportunity to delve into the reasons why the Soviet regime failed, pointing out – through the *topos of utopia* – that the inability of Soviet communism to live up to its promises of an egalitarian industrial society largely depended on the inherent flaws of Marxism itself (Carioti 12/10/2017; Berti 5/2/2017; Sacchi 12/11/2017; Solinas 30/12/2017). The only dissenting voice is that of a historian (Poggio 21/3/2017) who argues that

- (9) One cannot ... give in to determinism and believe that the entire Soviet parable was already inscribed in the form assumed by the dictatorship of the proletariat in the fire of civil war. ... [The era of the Revolution has been] a great season of creativity that we still feed on, even though we know little about the world from which it arose.¹³

His argument is based on the premise that the Soviet revolutionary project failed due to contingent factors, therefore its political and ideological premises should not be too easily dismissed as preposterous or wrong, which is the logical opposite of the *topos of utopia*. We propose to call this specific *topos* the *topos of historical contingency* (macro-category: REVISION).

Although the 2017 anniversary brought a fresh critical glance at the Soviet experience, this did not lead to any substantial reconsideration of its possible merits and advantages. Opposition, condemnation and utter rejection remain in fact the most common attitudes expressed by editorialists from both *Il Corriere* and *Il Giornale*. It should be noted, however, that the *topos of tyranny* is used more often in relation to the October Revolution than to the USSR. In *Il Corriere*, charges of tyranny are made on the grounds that the Revolution failed to empower the workers (Carioti 25/6/2017), destructed existing liberties (Carioti 8/8/2017), and reversed through a coup d'état the democratic course inaugurated by the February Revolution (Battista 4/11/2017). The theme of the coup d'état is also salient in two articles from *Il Giornale* which denounce the despotic character of the 1917 Revolution by pointing out its continuity with the subsequent establishment of a Bolshevik party dictatorship (Sacchi 12/11/2017) and the emergence of a totalitarian state (Berti 5/2/2017).

5. Concluding Remarks

Drawing on the concept of *memoryscape* as a crucial device for the study of the ways collective memory is socially constructed, we have shown how the social representations (memory) of the October Revolution were strategically activated and re-framed within Italy's intellectual debates in the press over a period of fifty years. We chose to investigate ten-year anniversaries as critical turning points in which media attention on a past event intensifies and significant changes can occur in its *memoryscape*. Furthermore, we tried to show – consistently with the idea that *memoryscapes* should be considered as models of as well as models for (Kapralski 2017) – how these changes must be related to the evolution of the political and ideological context within which

both media and public intellectuals operate and position themselves. To this end, we integrated the analysis of the main arguments that have been used by journalists and commentators to make sense of the historical meaning and relevance of the October Revolution with a summary reconstruction of the Italian political framework on the occasion of each anniversary. Finally, a critical discourse analytic approach – based on the analysis of the main recurrent argumentative topoi – allowed us to show how discourses of the past may be used to justify specific claims, advance particular agendas, and legitimate political viewpoints in the present, thus reshaping related memoryscapes in more or less substantial ways, as summarized in the following text.

On the 1977 anniversary, three distinct interpretations characterize the three newspapers. In *Il Corriere*, the dominant attitude towards the October Revolution and the USSR was one of serious but constructive criticism. Quite ambivalent, instead, were the stances adopted by commentators from *L'Unità*, who celebrated the Soviet project as a milestone in the global struggle for equality and social justice but, at the same time, criticized its autocratic tendencies. Western narratives of the Revolution were also called into question on the premise that commonplace perceptions should be supplanted by critical scrutiny. Editorialists from *Il Giornale* were inclined to link their negative evaluation of the October Revolution, due to the despotic and illiberal character of the subsequent Soviet regime, with severe criticism of the Euro-communist project that had marked a historic turning point for the PCI.

In 1987, differences became more blurred and revisionist arguments became prevalent across all three newspapers. Commentators from both *Il Corriere* and *L'Unità* called into question biased, distorted or outdated notions and narratives of Soviet Russia, urging a critical revision of the 'myth' of the October Revolution. The two newspapers diverged in their interpretation of the current changes in USSR: In *Il Corriere*, the ongoing crisis and transformation of the Soviet regime was ascribed to the inherent inability of Soviet communism to live up to its ideals, whereas editorialists from *L'Unità* welcomed the reform process undertaken by Gorbachev as an opportunity for the PCI to regain momentum. As in the previous anniversary, *Il Giornale* harshly criticized the October Revolution and its surmised democratizing impact, depicting the USSR as a perverted and corrupt system driven by the dictatorial aspirations of its leaders.

In 1997, almost no positive comments on the October Revolutions were present in the three newspapers. Commentators from *Il Corriere* were largely critical of the Soviet experience as well as of popular imagination of the October Revolution; amid appeals to demystify and cast aside the revolutionary experience as irrelevant to the present, allegiance to Soviet communism was dismissed as mere nostalgia. Even in *L'Unità*, aside from marginal attempts to reclaim progressive elements of Bolshevism, most arguments thematised the reasons behind the failure of the Soviet experience, stressing in particular its irreconcilable contradictions and the misplaced hope of its leaders to govern society scientifically. In *Il Giornale*, the Soviet experience was rejected *in toto* and its supporters ridiculed. Emphasis was placed on the 'horrors' - apart from the 'errors' - of communism, which was more or less explicitly equated to Nazi-fascism under the rubric of

totalitarianism. Moreover Soviet crimes were not considered as a mere accident of history, but rather as already inscribed, or implicit, in Marxist ideology.

In 2007, the ideals embodied by the October Revolution seemed to have lost much of their political significance and intellectual appeal as compared to 1997. Not only did this anniversary attract little attention from observers of Italian politics (at least as far as mainstream press is concerned), but an examination of the attitudes and arguments of the few who cared to intervene revealed the degree to which the legacy of the Soviet experience was trivialized and often used as pretext to ridicule political opponents. More importantly, the analysis showed how the marginalization of the revolutionary ideals of 1917 and their supporters was most acute in the left-leaning *L'Unità*. This suggests that the October Revolution had not simply ceased to be a reference for the Italian left, but had become somewhat of an inconvenient memory, a burden to be dispensed with.

In 2017, the year of the hundredth anniversary, the Italian intellectual debate seemed characterized by a renewed interest in revisiting the value and significance of the October Revolution with a critical eye, without indulging in condescension or sarcasm. The arguments about its supposed irrelevance and the need to demystify its grand narratives that marked the 2007 anniversary had given way to more temperate and balanced attitudes, alongside a sober reflection on the reasons behind the collapse of the Soviet Union. To be sure, the evaluation of the October Revolution and the Soviet regime still remained largely negative. Despite efforts at taking stock of its legacy, however, the Soviet revolutionary experience appeared now to have lost all of its potential to shape political attitudes, either as an object of criticism or as a source of inspiration, its substance and ideas irreversibly consigned to history.

In conclusion, we would like to advance three general considerations. Firstly, the diachronic selection of articles (1977 to 2017) published in three newspapers with very different political-ideological positioning. These were framed within a summary reconstruction of the relevance of the Soviet experience and legacy in the evolving Italian political context. This allowed us to show how the interpretations of one of the most important and controversial events of the 20th century have not only radically changed over time, but were retrospectively influenced by the tensions that, from time to time, crossed the national and international political field.

Secondly, the revolutionary memoryscape that, up to the seventies, saw the co-existence of conflicting interpretations became increasingly characterized by a prevalence of topoi that imply a negative reading of the October Revolution and the subsequent Soviet project. This change goes hand in hand with the crisis that affected the left in Italy (and beyond) due to the growing difficulty of elaborating an overall alternative to the expansion of both a capitalist economic organization and a neoliberal political project on a global scale (Harvey 2005).

Finally, with the exception of the centenary, the interpretations proposed in all three newspapers appear to have become less rich, articulated and detailed over time. A tendency can be noted to flatten out on superficial and stereotyped reconstructions, reducing one of the most significant events of the

20th century to a simple manifestation of a kind of Russian ancestral culture that is depicted in a way that recalls the orientalist gaze of which Edward Said (1978) has told us.

Notes

1. For this reason *L'Unità* does not appear in the 2017 sample.
2. The selection of examples was based on two main criteria: (i) explicitness of the argumentative structure of the passage with respect to the relevant topos; (ii) representativeness of the thematic and stylistic variety of the sample texts. All the translations into English are our own. Original texts are provided in footnotes.
3. In the original: 'Si può soffocare la libertà anche per un periodo molto lungo, ma non si può impedire che il desiderio di libertà risorga. Il socialismo, se non vuole ridursi a reazione assolutistica e conoscere la sorte di tutti i dispotismi, deve farsi liberale.'
4. In the original: 'La Rivoluzione d'Ottobre, seguita dalla guerra civile, ha frenato in Russia quella demolizione in profondità delle strutture secolari che il capitalismo e la borghesia avevano intrapreso alla fine del XIX secolo. Strutture secolari – burocratiche, centralizzatrici, paternalistiche, intolleranti di ogni focolaio di decisione autonoma – che sono state soltanto decapitate e disorganizzate dalla Rivoluzione russa, ma non distrutte.'
5. In the original: '... per questo regime è essenziale la difesa della tesi storiografica e ideologica secondo cui la «rivoluzione d'Ottobre» è il portato necessario e regolare dello sviluppo storico russo e mondiale, poiché sta qui, secondo il marxismo-leninismo, la fonte della legittimazione storica di un potere, quello comunista, che, avendo eliminato fin dal suo inizio ogni libertà democratica e ogni autentica elezione, non ha, ai suoi stessi occhi, altro fondamento, se si esclude quello del «consenso passivo» della popolazione, importante sul piano pratico, ovviamente, ma non su quello etico-politico.'
6. In the original: 'Quel giorno di settant'anni fa ... l'evento fu propriamente un *putsch* armato, un golpe dei leninisti più che la celebrata «rivoluzione». Qualche sparo sugli stucchi del Palazzo d'Inverno, la salve dell'incrociatore *Aurora*, pochi scontri, e cadde il governo provvisorio del socialista moderato Aleksandr Kerenskij. Tutto il resto è leggenda epica, o invenzione per figurazione come nelle sequenze di Sergej Ejzenstejn.'
7. In the original: 'Nella mitologia comunista, Lenin viene celebrato come l'affossatore del dispotismo zarista. Vero nulla. Quando ... Lenin rientrò ..., il dispotismo era già stato liquidato da una borghesia liberale e progressista che cercava d'instaurare la democrazia. Fu contro questo regime legalitario e garantista, non contro l'assolutismo, che Lenin organizzò la cosiddetta «Rivoluzione d'Ottobre». ... Fu un colpo da maestro. Ma fu un colpo, un golpe, non una rivoluzione. ... Il Fasto, di cui oggi si celebra la settantesima ricorrenza, è un falso in atto pubblico. ... La rivoluzione poi venne, e che rivoluzione! Ma venne dall'alto, e per mano di despoti che di morti ne fecero in pochi anni più di quanti lo zarismo ne avesse fatti in secoli.'
8. In the original: 'E' iniziato un viaggio in compagnia di un fantasma. Un fantasma ingombrante, al quale ognuno può dare fisionomie diverse: minacciose o folcloristiche, o soavemente consolatorie. ... Domani i volonterosi viaggiatori saranno trasportati nella casa dove Lenin trascorse gli ultimi anni e lì ci sarà un pubblico dibattito sul comunismo nel terzo millennio. Un viaggio in compagnia di un fantasma può somigliare a un viaggio religioso. Nicola Teti lo ammette: «Ognuno ha il proprio luogo di culto, i cattolici hanno San Pietro, noi Mosca».'
9. In the original: '... lo stesso spettacolo si è ripetuto dovunque il comunismo abbia preso il potere, anche senza Stalin: massacri, terrore e fame. Eppure perfino gli studiosi, in un recente convegno sul totalitarismo, hanno continuato a parlare di «nazismo e stalinismo»: la parola «comunismo» è tabù. L'idea che l'orrore fosse già, tutto compreso, chiavi in mano, nel marxismo continua a essere proibita.'

10. Four are interviews with historians and writers, one is a critical review of a newly published book on Russian historical revisionism, and one is an elaboration on Antonio Gramsci's complex views on the USSR.
11. In the original: '... Oliviero Diliberto sarà a Mosca per commemorare, assieme ad altri militanti italiani della sua organizzazione, il novantesimo anniversario della rivoluzione d'ottobre. Cifra tonda. Ma anche scaduta. Decisamente scaduta. In moltissime coscienze.'
12. Both titles contain the word *processo*, which is Italian for 'trial'.
13. In the original: 'Non ci si può ... abbandonare al determinismo. e pensare che l'intera parabola sovietica fosse già inscritta nella forma assunta dalla dittatura del proletariato nel fuoco della guerra civile. ... [L'epoca della Rivoluzione è stata] una grande stagione di creatività di cui ancora ci nutriamo, anche se poco sappiamo del mondo da cui è scaturita.'

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Appendix A

Average daily circulation of *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Giornale*, and *L'Unità*:
1977, 1987, 1997, 2007, 2017 (Source: Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa)

	1977	1987	1997	2007	2017
<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i>	560,924	515,491	686,095	661,053	226,452
<i>L'Unità</i>	191,813	175,391	234,983	203,897	59,698
<i>Il Giornale</i>	n/a	176,808	78,411	52,718	--

Appendix B

Distribution of argumentative topoi across the sample texts

Legend										
Topoi of VALUE:										
- V1: topos of needed reform										
- V2: topos of tyranny										
- V3: topos of emancipation										
- V4: topos of utopia										
- V5: topos of irrelevance										
Topoi of REVISION:										
- R1: topos of critical revision										
- R2: topos of historical revision										
- R3: topos of historical contingency										
- R4: topos of demythification										
1977										
<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i>										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Baglivo, A.	'Chi era Stalin? Il figlio di Lenin e il nipote di Marx'		✓							

Licata, G.	Chissà se è scoppiata la rivoluzione russa?									
Melograni, P.	I burocrati dello zar con la tessera comunista		✓		✓					
Perazzi, M.	E Stalin disse: realismo		✓							
Ronchey, A.	Com'era bella la Russia vent'anni fa	✓								
Russo, G.	Divorzio fra socialismo e dittatura	✓								
Valiani, L.	Marx, Dio e una tuta da operaia				✓					
Valiani, L.	C'è qualcosa di nuovo all'est	✓								
Valiani, L.	I socialisti	✓								
Valiani, L.	C'è speranza di libertà	✓								
Valiani, L.	Comunismo: la dittatura è inevitabile?									
Valiani, L.	Dai populistici russi alle brigate rosse	✓								
Valiani, L.	I contadini, Tito e Mao	✓			✓					
L'Unità										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Benedetti, C.	Com'è oggi la società sovietica	✓		✓						
Berardi, G.	Quella grande svolta nella storia del mondo	✓		✓			✓			
Boffa, G.	Il mondo e l'Europa 60 anni dopo l'Ottobre			✓					✓	
Boffa, G.	L'Ottobre e l'URSS nella ricerca storica						✓			
Cerroni, U.	Dai primi soviet alla nuova Costituzione	✓					✓			
Guerra, A.	I nuovi traguardi dopo la vittoria sul sottosviluppo	✓		✓						
Il Giornale										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Bettiza, E.	I sovietici hanno vietato a Carrillo di prendere la parola al Cremlino		✓							
Damato, F.	Gli appiedati									
Fejtő, F.	Uno scisma dalla civiltà		✓				✓			
n/a	Breznev richiama i Pc all'ortodossia. Berlinguer difende		✓							

	l'eurocomunismo										
Ricossa, S.	L'Urss cambia il pelo, non il vizio		✓		✓			✓			
Settembrini, D.	Quel giorno a Pietrogrado la storia voltò pagina		✓								✓
1987											
<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i>											
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4	
Boffa, G.	Non basta salvare l'odiato Bucharin						✓				
Colombo, A.	Trozkij. Il profeta armato										
Ferrara, G.	Lama: 'L'avvenir non è più quello'							✓			
Fortini, F.	Proprio alle 10 di quella sera?		✓								✓
Galasso, G.	Il Pci, l'URSS di Gorbaciov e la 'spinta propulsiva'										
Galli della Loggia, E.	Lenin avrebbe sparato sul '68				✓						
Guatelli, A.	Nessuna verità se Lenin resta dio							✓			✓
Melograni, P.	Lenin. La ragion del Soviet		✓		✓						
Mieli, P.	Democratico sradicato										
Moravia, A.	Un'immagine indimenticabile						✓				✓
Oliva, C.	Fu vera storia non ideologia										✓
Ronchey, A.	Dal palazzo d'inverno all'ultimo impero						✓				✓
Scabello, S.	Il disgelo di Nikita e la congiura di Suslov							✓			
Siniavskij, A.	'Usciti dalla foresta, ci trovammo in una caserma'				✓						
Spriano, P.	'E noi faremo come la Russia...'				✓						
Strada, V.	Un mito secolare						✓				
Strada, V.	Bandiera rossa con molte rughe		✓				✓				
Strada, V.	Fu lo spirito di febbraio a infiammare l'avanguardia		✓				✓				
Valiani, L.	Stalin. L'erede brutale		✓								
Veca, S.	E a me ricordano i giacobini		✓				✓				
<i>L'Unità</i>											

Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Boffa, G.	Ottobre vicino o lontano?						✓		✓	
Boffa, G.	I conti con 70 anni di storia						✓	✓		
Chiaromonte, G.	Capitalismo e socialismo					✓				
Chiesa, G.	Lenin impose la rivoluzione									
Libertini, L.	Perché disprezzare la terza via?				✓		✓			
Villari, R.	La discussione vera che bisogna fare nel Pci	✓					✓			
Il Giornale										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Cancogni, M.	Disco sempre rosso per Trotzky		✓							✓
Caprara, M.	La glasnost del Pci									✓
Cavallotti, G.	La tragedia cominciò come una farsa		✓				✓	✓		
Maximov, V.	Proprio uno zar							✓		
Montanelli, I.	Falso in atto pubblico		✓					✓		
1997										
Il Corriere della Sera										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Belardelli, G.	Borghesia, la Grande Paura									✓
Caprara, M.	Cossutta: «Ecco dove sbagliò Berlinguer. L'Ottobre vive anche oggi»			✓						
Medail, C.	Gorbaciov: 'Però fu Lenin il primo a fare autocritica'									
Righetti, D.	Cento italiani a Mosca: ecco i nostalgici della Rivoluzione					✓				
Strada, V.	Lenin. Lo spettro dell'anticristo									✓
Strada, V.	1917 L'anno che sconvolse il secolo		✓							
Strada, V.	Altro che 'liberale': Lenin restò dittatore fino all'ultimo		✓							
L'Unità										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Guerra, A.	Sì, critica radicale. E il bilancio deve essere equo				✓		✓			

Mecucci, G.	Salvadori: 'Erano convinti di controllare la storia e invece...'				✓						
Pons, S.	Gramsci. Tutti i dubbi sull'Urss			✓							
Romano, A.	Oleg Chlevnjuk: 'Vinse Lenin, ma la partita fu molto incerta'							✓			
Tito, A.	1917, l'altra rivoluzione							✓			
Tulanti, M.	'Ma io, scrittore conservatore, rimpiango l'impero'			✓							
Il Giornale											
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4	
Caprara, M.	L'Ottobre rosso che cambiò in peggio il mondo		✓								
Gandola, G.	Ultrarossi, ma non di vergogna		✓			✓	✓				
Socci, A.	Il silenzio dei colpevoli		✓		✓		✓				
2007											
Il Corriere della Sera											
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4	
Fertilio, D.	Se in Russia nel '17 avessero vinto i democratici										✓
Galli della Loggia, E.	L'ottobre di Veltroni		✓								
Galli della Loggia, E.	Bugie leniniste		✓								✓
L'Unità											
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4	
Abbate, F.	Kerenskij e Diliberto		✓			✓	✓				
Gravagnuolo, B.	1917, cronaca del giorno in cui nacque il Novecento		✓								
Gravagnuolo, B.	Ottobre, 90 anni e li dimostra tutti				✓		✓				
Il Giornale											
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4	
Foa, M.	Diliberto: 'In Italia la salma di Lenin'		✓								
Foa, M.	'Rivoluzione d'Ottobre? Macché, è Halloween'					✓					
Guzzanti, P.	Le mummie del comunismo		✓								
2017											

<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i>										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Battista, P.	Due rivoluzioni una contro l'altra. Così la Russia diventò bolscevica		✓							
Carioti, A.	Colpevole o innocente? Rivoluzione del '17 a processo	✓	✓		✓					
Carioti, A.	Processo a Lenin (Putin assolto)			✓						
Carioti, A.	Nella Russia del 1917 non presero il potere gli operai		✓				✓	✓		
Carioti, A.	La rivoluzione di Lenin non è finita				✓		✓			
Cinnella, E.	La vera rivoluzione russa ha centododici anni		✓					✓		
Mieli, P.	Stalin vinse con il sorriso									
Poggio, P. P.	La rivoluzione rimossa						✓		✓	
Renzo, B.	Il mito e il tramonto						✓			✓
Romano, S.	Il vangelo secondo Lenin				✓		✓		✓	
Valentino, P.	Il corpo di Lenin, che fare? 'E' arrivata l'ora di seppellirlo'				✓					
Valentino, P.	Un orizzonte di incertezza per il leader del Cremlino									✓
<i>Il Giornale</i>										
Author	Title	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	R1	R2	R3	R4
Berti, G.	La Rivoluzione d'ottobre fu il colpo di Stato di un'élite che esordì chiudendo l'Assemblea costituente...		✓		✓			✓		
Binelli, R.	A Mosca si ritrovano i nostalgici del comunismo cento anni dopo la rivoluzione d'ottobre					✓				
Mascheroni, L.	Se il Pd rimpiange la rivoluzione d'ottobre		✓				✓			
Mazzuca, G.	Se Stalin è un gadget e Benito un reato		✓							
Sacchi, M.	Rivoluzione? No, colpo di stato elitario		✓		✓		✓			✓
Solinas, S.	La Rivoluzione d'ottobre? È tutta nel 'Caso Tulaev'		✓		✓					
Valle, M.	Il conflitto senza fine fra russi «bianchi» e «rossi» si è spostato sulla Senna		✓							