

'Propaganda by the Deed', 'Armed Propaganda' and Mass Mobilization: The Missing Link in the Left-Wing Terrorist Thinking

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Abstract : One of the strategic goals of left-wing terrorism, both in its Anarchist and Marxist-Leninist forms, was mobilization of masses as a first step in launching a revolution. However, in the canonical texts of left-wing terrorist literature (such as the works of Brousse, Nachaev, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Most, Heinzen, Guevara and Marighella) it is not clear how resort to terrorist tactics such as assassinations or bomb attacks will lead to mobilization of masses. This link is usually presumed and taken for granted. However, in other, less known terrorist texts, where there is some elaboration upon this link, two conflicting views emerge: (i) terrorist attacks are supposed to cause state repression which in turn radicalizes masses and opens up the way for recruitment and mobilization versus (ii) terrorist attacks are supposed to demonstrate the hollowness of the already existent state repression and thereby encourage mobilization of masses that are already radicalized but inactive due fear caused by state repression. The paper argues that terrorism studies have largely overemphasized the former while the latter has remained more or less unnoticed.

Keywords : terrorism, repression, radical left, mobilization of masses

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