

Armed Proletarian Nuclei

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

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SUMMARY

Formed: 1974

Disbanded: 1978

First Attack: July 25, 1974: NAP members kidnapped a university student in Naples. They released him in exchange for ransom the same day (No casualties).¹

Last Attack: April 15, 1978: NAP members staged an explosion outside of the Christian Democratic Party offices in Mestre, near Venice (0 killed).²

OVERVIEW

Armed Proletarian Nuclei (NAP) was Southern Italy's most powerful left-wing terrorist organization in the early 1970s. NAP fought against capitalism and promoted a classless society in Italy. The group focused on prisons as the ultimate symbol of state repression and had operational cells both within and outside of prisons. It struck an alliance with the Red Brigades in 1976 and dissolved soon afterward; the Red Brigades absorbed some of its remaining members and assets.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Armed Proletarian Nuclei (NAP) emerged in Naples as a left-wing terrorist group in 1973 from student and worker protests, similar to other Italian left-wing terror groups. NAP, however, was the only terrorist organization with a strong presence in Southern Italy, and focused its efforts to benefit the very poor rather than the working classes who were the chief concern of the terror groups in the more-industrial north.³ The group had a unique focus on prisons, viewing prisoners as a "sub-proletariat," the ultimate victims of capitalist repression.⁴

NAP was formed through contacts between prisoners and the extra-parliamentary leftist group, Struggle Continues (LC), after the LC founded a Prison Commission to investigate prison conditions in 1970.⁵ In the early 1970s, prisoners across Italy protested conditions and demanded penal reform, and the LC supported them both financially and rhetorically.⁶ The LC's Prison Commission at first called for freeing all prisoners, but there gradually emerged a split in the Commission between those who advocated violence to change the system and those who embraced a more moderate, reformist course. The Prison Commission dissolved due to these tensions in 1973; its radical wing broke with the LC to form NAP.⁷ NAP claimed its first attack in 1974.⁸

The group was loosely organized into autonomous cells with no real central authority. NAP had active cells within prisons that occasionally attacked guards, but the group staged most of its major attacks against political targets outside of prison.⁹

NAP also struck an alliance with the Red Brigades (BR), Italy's main terrorist group based in the north, in 1976. The groups cooperated on some attacks in Naples; the BR otherwise had little presence in the south. When NAP dissolved two years later, the BR absorbed its remaining assets.¹⁰

NAP was short-lived and quite violent. Its fighters had perhaps the highest mortality rate, in proportion to its membership, of any Italian terrorist group on the left, both because of firefights with law enforcement and accidental explosions.¹¹ One such accident, which killed one of its members and wounded another, led to the police discovery of NAP's main Naples base.¹² The group briefly moved its headquarters to Rome afterward, but police soon discovered its bases there as well. NAP dissolved in 1978.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Giovanni Gentile Schiavone (Unknown to Unknown): Schiavone was a medical student and had been a member of the left-wing extraparlimentary group Struggle Continues.¹³ He had twice been arrested in protests prior to joining NAP.¹⁴

Giuseppe Vitaliano Principe (1973 to 1975): Principe was one of NAP's founders and had been active in student and antifascist protests in Naples. He was killed and another member of NAP was wounded when a bomb they were assembling went off accidentally in Naples on March 11, 1975.¹⁵

Pietro Sofia (1974 to Unknown): Sofia was one of NAP's leaders within prison. He briefly escaped a Florence prison, where he had been serving a 17-year sentence for murder and robbery, in October 1974. He was rearrested the same month in a bank robbery attempt. He afterward formed an "internal nucleus" in prison.¹⁶

Giuseppe "Sergio" Romeo (1974 to 1974): Romeo was one of NAP's first members in Naples. He had been imprisoned as a teenager and became acquainted with the history of the Black Panthers and Tupamaros while incarcerated. After his release he served on the Prison Commission of Struggle Continues. He was killed along with another member of NAP in a bank robbery attempt in Florence on October 29, 1974.¹⁷

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- Year unknown: 65 people have been prosecuted for their involvement in the group (La Mappa Perduta)¹⁸

D. RESOURCES

The bulk of NAP's financial resources came from the ransom of two kidnappings the group conducted in 1974.¹⁹ NAP separately kidnapped a university student and an industrialist that year, netting a total of 1.7 billion lire,²⁰ with which the group opened bases and bought firearms and explosives.²¹

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

NAP was based first in Naples and then in Rome. The group formed in Naples and was the chief armed group in Southern Italy during the early 1970s.²² It achieved national prominence with attacks outside prisons in Naples, Milan, and Rome in October 1974,²³ but had difficulty establishing an organized presence outside Naples in the early 1970s.²⁴ NAP had bases in Milan and Florence but staged few successful attacks in either city.²⁵ It moved its headquarters to Rome in 1975 after authorities dismantled its main Naples base and arrested much of its Naples membership.²⁶ NAP's Roman bases, too, had been mostly dismantled by 1976.²⁷

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY & GOALS

NAP sought to impose a classless society through violence. The group focused in particular on recruiting prison inmates, viewing them as the ultimate victims of capitalist repression, and saw prisons as a potential "school of communism" from which class revolution could originate.²⁸ NAP did not have a consistent program regarding the prison system or freeing prisoners, however. In separate documents the group called alternately for the penal system to be reformed or destroyed entirely.²⁹

NAP's ideological leaders were influenced by the writing of anti-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon. The LC Prison Commission that would later give birth to NAP named its manifesto "Liberate All The Wretched of the Earth," borrowing part of its title from Fanon's best-known work. NAP also borrowed ideologically from the writings of George Jackson, an imprisoned member of the U.S. Black Panther Party whose shooting death by a prison guard sparked prison riots in the U.S.³⁰

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

There is no observable evidence that this group has engaged in political activity.

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

NAP carried out targeted killings and kidnappings, and relied more on explosives than did other left-wing terrorist groups.³¹ NAP's attacks on prisons distinguished it from most other left-wing terrorist groups, but NAP also attacked popular left-wing targets such as the police, magistrates, and the parliamentary parties Italian Social Movement (MSI) and the Christian Democrats (DC).³²

NAP was one of only five groups to conduct kidnappings out of over twenty Italian militant organizations.³³ It was a distant second to the Red Brigades (BR) in its use of the tactic, conducting three over the course of its lifetime in contrast to 18 attributed to the BR. Two of these, conducted in its first year, were fundraising ventures. NAP's third and final kidnapping was the political abduction of a Supreme Court justice the following year. The group released him in exchange for a prisoner transfer.³⁴

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

July 25, 1974: NAP members kidnapped a university student in Naples. They released him in exchange for ransom the same day. (0 killed).³⁵

October 1, 1974: NAP members staged simultaneous explosions outside of prisons in Naples, Milan, and Rome. The explosives were rigged to loudspeakers that self-destructed after transmitting a NAP communiqué. (0 killed).³⁶

December 18, 1974: NAP members kidnapped a liquor producer in Naples. They released him in exchange for ransom four days later. (0 killed).³⁷

May 6, 1975: NAP members kidnapped a Supreme Court judge in Rome. They released him five days later in exchange for the transfer of three prisoners, two of them NAP founders, to other prisons, and the radio broadcast of a NAP communiqué. (0 killed).³⁸

December 14, 1976: NAP members opened fire on police officers from a van in Rome. One police officer and one member of NAP died in the firefight; two police officers, including a deputy commissioner, were wounded. (2 killed, 2 wounded).³⁹

March 22, 1977: A NAP member killed a police officer and a zoo guard in Rome. The victims had been trying to arrest another NAP member who had escaped from prison (2 killed).⁴⁰

April 15, 1978: NAP members staged an explosion outside of the Christian Democratic Party offices in Mestre, near Venice. (0 killed).⁴¹

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

This group has not been designated as a terrorist organization by any major national government or international body.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

There is no publicly available information about the relationship between this group and community in which it resides.

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Like many other left-wing terrorist groups, NAP emerged from Italy's legal left-wing organizations, which had formed as alternatives to official left-wing political parties and whose members sometimes engaged in violence. NAP's founders were members of the legal group Struggle Continues (LC), from which the terrorist group Front Line also originated. Some of NAP's founders had decided to take up arms against the Italian prison system after serving on an LC commission investigating prison conditions in Naples.

Different branches, or “nuclei,” of NAP conducted attacks under different names, including October 29 Nucleus, Sergio Romeo Nucleus, and Without Cease for Communism.⁴²

In 1976, NAP forged an alliance with the Red Brigades, Italy's largest left-wing terrorist group, and conducted joint attacks with the BR.⁴³ Much of NAP's membership in Rome was arrested the same year, and NAP ceased to exist as an independent organization two years later.⁴⁴

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

The mobilization of prisoners in Italy that directly preceded NAP's formation borrowed from the model of the U.S. prison riots sparked by the death of George Jackson, a member of the Black Panther Party who was shot dead by a prison guard.⁴⁵

MAPS

- Italy

¹ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience* : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 75.

² National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2011). *Global Terrorism Database* [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd> Incident 197804150002. Available: <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=197804150002>

³ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. pp. 173, 233.

⁴ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 56.

⁵ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 57.

⁶ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 66.

⁷ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 67.

⁸ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience* : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 75.

⁹ "Nuclei Armati Proletari (NAP) - Italia." Archivio '900. Available:

<http://www.archivio900.it/it/sigle/sigl.aspx?id=781>, and Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available:

<http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>

¹⁰ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience* : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 13.

¹¹ Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>

¹² Barbato, Tullio. *Il Terrorismo In Italia Negli Anni Settanta : Cronaca E Documentazione*. Milano: Bibliografica, 1980. pp. 27 -28.

¹³ Weinberg, Leonard, and William Lee Eubank. *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987. p. 64.

¹⁴ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta*

¹⁵ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. pp. 100-101.

¹⁶ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 94.

¹⁷ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 92.

¹⁸ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 91.

¹⁹ Progetto Memoria. *La Mappa Perduta*. Roma: Sensibili alle foglie, 1994. p. 68.

²⁰ Barbato, Tullio. *Il Terrorismo In Italia Negli Anni Settanta : Cronaca E Documentazione*. Milano: Bibliografica, 1980. p. 27.

²¹ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience* : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 75.

²² Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>

²³ Ferrigno, Rossella. *Nuclei Armati Proletari : Carceri, Protesta, Lotta Armata*. Napoli: La città del sole, 2008. p. 173.

²⁴ Barbato, Tullio. *Il Terrorismo In Italia Negli Anni Settanta : Cronaca E Documentazione*. Milano: Bibliografica, 1980. p. 27.

²⁵ Weinberg, Leonard, and William Lee Eubank. *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987. p. 64.

²⁶ Weinberg, Leonard, and William Lee Eubank. *The Rise and Fall of Italian Terrorism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987. p. 64. and Jamieson, Alison. *The Heart Attacked: Terrorism and Conflict In the Italian State*. London: M. Boyars, 1989. p. 295.

²⁷ Barbato, Tullio. *Il Terrorismo In Italia Negli Anni Settanta : Cronaca E Documentazione*. Milano: Bibliografica, 1980. p. 28.

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- ²⁸ Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>
- ²⁹ Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>
- ³⁰ Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006. Available: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>
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- ³² Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intelligence. "I Nuclei Armati Proletari ovvero carcere e mitra." *Il terrorismo in Italia negli anni Settanta*. 2/2006.fckLRavailable: <http://www.sisde.it/gnosis/Rivista7.nsf/ServNavig/21>
- ³³ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 25.
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- ³⁵ [^] Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 75.
- ³⁶ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2011). *Global Terrorism Database [Data file]*. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd> GTD IDs 197410010001, 197410010002, and 97410010003. Available: <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.
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- ³⁸ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 76; Gnosis Rivista Italiana di Intell.
- ³⁹ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 76 and Associazione Italiana Vittime.
- ⁴⁰ Pisano, Vittorfranco S. *Terrorism and Security : the Italian Experience : Report of the Subcommittee On Security and Terrorism of the Committee On the Judiciary, United States Senate*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1984. p. 76 and Associazione Italiana Vittime.
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