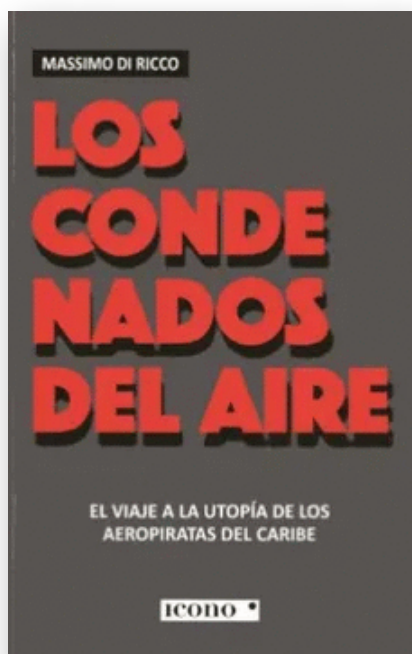


MASSIMO DI RICCO

Massimo is a university lecturer, historian and journalist. He holds a PhD in Mediterranean Cultural Studies and a Research Master's in Communication and Journalism from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. He has worked as a journalist in Spain, and reported as a correspondent from Lebanon and Egypt for Italian press. As a researcher and lecturer, he focuses on the role of transnational political actors in contemporary history, relations between the Middle East and Latin America, the politics of the Arab world, and critical approaches to international journalism. His articles have been published in academic journals and in outlets including *Al Jazeera*, *Middle East Eye*, *The National*, *El Espectador* and *Razón Pública*.



Massimo Di Ricco tells the story of the golden age of skyjacking in Colombia, a highly original text that combines journalistic research and narrative history with a brilliant chronicle of a tragi-comic true crime story. The book reads like a thriller, in which the author gradually reveals the mystery of the hijacking.



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The Wretched of the Skies *The hijackers' search for a Caribbean utopia*

Colombia / 2019 / 286 pages / *Literary Journalism & Reportage* / Territory: World
Primary publisher: *Icono Editorial*

On 30 May 1973, two armed individuals, their faces covered by black hoods, hijacked an Electra HK-1274 aircraft operated by Colombian airline SAM, en route from Pereira to Medellín. The forgotten tale of the bizarre and lengthy hijacking of the SAM plane provides a narrative frame within which to tell the wider story of the wave of surreal hijackings that occurred in the golden age of skyjacking in Latin America, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with Cuba the favoured destination. In a world characterized by calls for progress but divided by the Cold War, at a time of revolutionary political ideals and the emergence of the mass media, the skyjackers – who often came from humble backgrounds and were not necessarily overtly political – had utopian aspirations: they dreamed of starting a new life on an unknown and imagined island.

The text reconstructs the story of the two hijackers, and explores the true motives behind so many other skyjackings of the time. *“They were not so much followers of Che Guevara as a cross between the downtrodden peasants of an Ignazio Silone novel, frustrated by the impossibility of influencing the changes transforming the society all around them, the streetwise hustlers of Pier Paolo Pasolini, willing to break the law to survive and enjoy whatever fleeting moments come their way, and the subalterns of Antonio Gramsci’s theories, almost completely excluded from history.”*

• English translation sample available here: <https://shorturl.at/itAJ5>