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**Communism and Anti-Communism in Italy
1945-1989**

“La personalità nazionale (come la personalità individuale) è una mera astrazione se considerata fuori dal nesso internazionale (o sociale). La personalità nazionale esprime un ‘distinto’ del complesso internazionale, pertanto è legata ai rapporti internazionali”
[Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Einaudi, Torino, 1975, p. 1962]

While in the United States and in Great Britain post-1945 policies can be described as a basic shift from anti-Fascism to Anti-Communism, destined to influence the transnational climate of the Western world, in countries like Italy and France such shift determined a split between irreconcilable tendencies. Italy was the most extreme case. In the aftermath of World War Two, the image and perception of Communism in Italian society were much more divided and polarised than in Western European countries - major factors being the legacy of Fascist Anti-Communism, the influence of the Catholic Church, the impact of Anti-Fascist resistance and of the civil war that took place in 1943-45. The ambivalence between Anti-Fascism and Anti-Communism soon became central to the Italian Republic. On one side, the legacy of Anti-Fascism was reflected in the Constitution, thus providing legitimacy for the Communists as a component of the Republican political space. On the other side, the emergence of Anti-Communism de-legitimized Communists as a force enabled to rule the country. In the political realm such a conflict was mitigated even during the most acute moments of the early Cold War thanks to the wise conduct of the main leaders on both sides. But a twofold legitimacy – the constitutional one based on Anti-Fascism and the political one based on Anti-Communism - put nonetheless deep roots in political cultures and in the socio-cultural sub-systems. Contrary to all other Western European countries, including France, in the long post-war era Italian political culture was recurrently focused on the polarization between

Communists and Anti-Communists. This may appear as a paradox. In fact, in the political discourse on both sides, Cold War loyalties were often questioned, albeit with shifting emphasis. This happened, in particular, in the 1970s. Nevertheless, even when traditional Cold War culture was losing its grasp, the legacy of international loyalties and identities exerted its visible, if residual influence. The opposition between Communism and Anti-Communism was preserved in Italian political culture, in spite of its obsolescence.

In my paper, I intend to discuss the long-term consequences of this legacy, in the context of its international dimension as a decisive source for defining identity and culture. Therefore my focus will be on the interaction between the international system and the domestic political system. The first part of the paper is devoted to an assessment of the main features of the Cold War's impact on Italy from the end of the Second World War to the 1960s. The second part of the paper discusses the legacies of the Cold War in Italy by focusing on two case studies: II.1 The experience of "national solidarity" and its international constraints (1976-1979). II.2 The Italian Left and the Second Cold War (1979-1985).

I. The fabric of the Cold War 1945-1968

In the first year after the Second World War, the Christian Democrat party emerged as the major Italian party, announcing a central political role for the Catholics which had not been established after the First World War. Despite this, its international connections were quite uncertain and took time to be set. Only in early 1947 a significant rapprochement between the DC and the United States was outlined, to be established when the left forces were expelled from government in May 1947. In this respect, Italian Anti-Communism had domestic roots that were then overlaid by the international context. As a result, Italian Anti-Communism presented two distinct faces. On one hand, moderate liberals prevailed in the political leadership. Even after the beginning of the Cold War and their triumphal victory in the 1948 elections - that made them the dominant force of government and the centre of the political system for four decades - the Christian Democrats drew a clear line not only against the Communists but also against any involvement in the political game of the forces of the extreme right (obviously small but not insignificant) [Giovagnoli 1996]. On the other hand, the most extreme crusading tones emerging in Western

propaganda at the peak of the Cold War became widespread during the 1948 electoral campaign. The Catholic Church used its enormous influence in Italian society for recovering the idea of a radical choice between civilisation and barbarity, sometimes even resembling the same mood that had been distinctive of Fascist propaganda (“either Rome, or Moscow”). This apocalyptic appeal meant that what was menaced were not only liberalism or democracy, but also human life and its basic values. Accordingly, Communists had to be condemned as alien elements outcast from civil society and from the body of the nation - they could not be Italians, as their action were seen as a direct consequence of an international conspiracy led by Moscow.

The leader of the DC, Alcide De Gasperi, was able to distance his leadership from the direct influence of the Church [Craveri 2006]. While shepherding Italy’s membership into NATO, he avoided fuelling ideological confrontation and police measures against the Communists. He maintained a balance between the Americans and the Vatican – the two main sources of Anti-Communism, but also two reluctant partners, because of Catholic hostility towards American Protestant civilization – by providing his own strategy [Formigoni 1996]. By doing so, he also limited the radical attitude against Communism widespread in the popular opinion that supported government parties. Thus, in the Anti-Communist bloc, the leadership forged an image of the Communists as a *political* enemy. Such image, however, incorporated much more radical *cultural* images and civil war language, contributing to the formation of bloc identity.

Despite significant differences, a similar setting can be seen on the Communist side. The PCI emerged from the war as one of the main European Communist parties after having been a very small party in the early 1920s and a clandestine organization from 1926 onwards. The strength of Italian Communists relied on the prestige of the Soviet Union as well as on the role they played in Anti-Fascist Resistance. Their international connection was quite solid, initially representing a comparative factor of strength against the Christian Democrats. Their credibility as a national political force was outlined by participation in coalition governments as a consequence of Palmiro Togliatti’s moderate “svolta di Salerno,” in accordance with Stalin’s interests. They contributed to the writing of the republican Constitution. The basic contradiction between their national policy and the organic link with the Soviet Union did not prevent them from establishing their hegemonic role in the social and political

opposition front [Gozzini, Martinelli 1998]. However, Togliatti's moderate Anti-Fascism was constantly challenged by more radical tendencies. The widespread revolutionary feelings that had been limited at the end of the war re-emerged in the struggle against the Marshall Plan. Anti-American mobilization became central to Communist policy. The Communists' identification of threat was a mirror image of the Anti-Communist theory of conspiracy that made no distinction between national and international factors. American imperialism was perceived as presenting the same features of pre-war power politics, including the Fascist one. The basic ideas of the Communists about the Western world replicated Soviet dogma on distrust of liberal democracy and on the inevitability of economic collapse, mass poverty, and war.

Togliatti maintained his leadership by rejecting the "Greek perspective" against hardliners and pressure from below even after the founding of the Cominform (September 1947) [Pons 1999]. The huge mass character and the appeal to the Constitution became distinctive features of the so-called "partito nuovo," as compared to other European Communist parties. This helped to limit anti-systemic and antagonistic tendencies largely prevailing among the rank-and-file and also among cadres. The Communist leitmotiv accusation against the DC of betraying the Constitution reciprocated a *political* image of the enemy. Nevertheless, such discourse overlapped with civil war *cultural* images and language that permanently endangered moderation while providing a fundamental identity base.

To be sure, the two blocs worked as basic components of the national society, capable of avoiding the outbreak of civil war. Recent historiography has put stress on this point, which is obviously decisive for our evaluation of the historical role played by the DC and the PCI in the origins of the Republic. West of the Balkans, Italy was the only country where the Second World War had been also a civil war. When the war was over, Italy experienced a precarious truce - being the only European country included in the Western bloc (with the exception of Greece) to risk precipitating into civil war when the Cold War began, in 1947-48. The role of the moderates on both sides, namely that of De Gasperi and Togliatti, was essential for avoiding a national catastrophe. Furthermore, their action paved the way for peaceful coexistence in the long run. The political moderation exercised on both sides provided the ground and the pedagogy for building republican citizenship [Ventrone 2007].

After 1948, the Christian Democrats were able to put into effect a moderate version of containment - rejecting the most uncompromising measures against the Communist party suggested at various moments by the Americans [Del Pero 2001]. In De Gasperi's thinking, the role played by the DC for limiting Communists was crucial to establish its political centrality, even from the point of view of the United States - while their eradication as a political subject would unpredictably change the same structure of the system by altering its constitutional foundations. The DC tried to de-politicize the memory of Resistance and practised continuity with the old order in State building, but maintained its commitment to the basic features of the Republic. As has been noted, there was a clash between "the radicalism of American plans for Italy, and the conservatism of the DC political project" - the former assuming that Italy needed a drastic modernization, both in terms of social reforms and of liberalization of the public sector, for becoming full member of the Atlantic Community, the latter believing that any dramatic fracture would jeopardize Italian stabilization [Del Pero 2003]. As for the Communists, the landslide defeat of the Popular Front in 1948 elections de-legitimized them as a force of government. But it strengthened their bloc cohesion. They monopolized the memory and virtue of Anti-Fascism. They forged a kind of "negative integration" into the national community of large popular strata, controlling their anti-systemic feelings, and providing them with a sense of the State and of citizenship. The diffusion of a mythological face of Soviet reality and politics, surrounded by feelings of social emancipation, provided a metaphor for averting revolutionary catastrophe. Although the "national road" of the PCI did not mean any substantial distancing from loyalty to the Soviet Union, the room for manoeuvre of the Italian Communists in the domestic context was large enough to allow Togliatti to reject Stalin's proposal that he become the Cominform's secretary - thus defending the legal and parliamentary way of his party [Pons 2001].

Nevertheless, the Christian Democrats' "containment of containment" and the Communists' "self-containment" could be exercised only at the price of maintaining the cohesion of the two opposing blocs. Both combinations deeply assimilated the *esprit* of the Cold War. Paranoid traits underlying the myth of an imminent "red scare" as well as of incumbent "fascism" continued to influence Italian life even after the stabilisation of the political system under centrist hegemony, the entry of Italy into NATO, and the division of Europe. Even moderate leaders could establish their leadership only

by speaking the language of civil war – though constantly acting against such outcome. Both sides received funding from Washington and Moscow, and organised semi-military secret organisations with the aim of preparing adequate reaction to the other side’s eventual use of force [Aga Rossi, Zaslavsky 2007; Bernardi 2007]. More important, both sides represented themselves culturally and socially as separate worlds. Although largely sharing Catholic values especially about family and education, and in spite of their endorsement of the Constitution, the Communist self-representation was not just that of a political opposition, as that of an “imagined community” (a “state inside the state”) with its own rituals and symbols based on the Soviet myth [Guiso 2007; Andreucci 2006]. So they were perceived by large sectors of the conservative public opinion, especially in the South, and by sectors of the State like the police and the military. Divided memories were established about the symbolic significance of the liberation day, the 25th of April – a national celebration that came over time to be honoured by the opposition alone [Paggi 1999; Ventrone 2006]. Accordingly, the opposing stereotypes of Soviet Communism as a radical challenge - a threat to the Western values of market and democracy, as well as to civilisation as a whole - and as a bastion of Socialism - a social system inherently superior and peaceful, struggling for its own survival against the Western Cold War - had a long-lasting significance, even after Stalin's death.

A subtle if significant duplicity, albeit scarcely a symmetry, should also be noted in perceptions and attitudes of the two manichaeic Weltanschauung dominating and confronting each other in Italian society in the aftermath of the great divide of the Cold War. The Communist sub-culture was in its essence politically oriented, combining a rough Leninist pedagogy for the masses with an intellectual appeal. The eclectic approach to Communist militancy of the PCI might easily tolerate religious faith as well as absorb American cultural models that increasingly captured the imagination of many young people [Gundle 2000]. At the same time, intellectuals were often attracted by the rejection of Americanism and its mass culture, seen as a degeneration of the European cultural heritage. Anti-Communism presented instead a strong pre-political ingredient, combining the defence of Western liberties against Communist dictatorship with a primitive mass ideology based on the preservation of elementary components of society such as family, property, and religion. The Catholic sub-culture also had, however, a

powerful hold on popular imagination and a strong media presence even if it lacked the intellectual prestige the Left enjoyed.

The lack of a “social-democratic compromise” between state, capital, and labour in Italy provided the socio-economic background for the stance of both sides [Spagnolo 2001]. The moderate and conservative belief was that Communism represented a consequence of the country’s backwardness and would automatically disappear under the impact of economic reconstruction and gradual modernisation, regardless of any development of welfare. In fact, a kind of “passive revolution” was carried out through capitalist modernization – one that made it easier to contain the influence of the Left. However, the anti-welfare approach of the Italian “economic miracle” helped the Communists to denounce the lack of reform thinking in the ruling classes of the country, to marginalize Social Democratic orientations, and to assert themselves as advocates of modernization [Gualtieri 2001]. Their unsophisticated picture of Italian capitalism as inherently backward, in spite of its dynamism, and the inability to perceive the national society’s growing interdependence with the Western system became virtues instead of vices. Communist support in the weakest sectors of society was facilitated even in the conditions of modernization by fear that social rights and income improvement might be reversed – as people maintained memory of what had happened under the Fascist regime. Togliatti’s “partito nuovo” was a catch-all party more than a class-based one, capable of maintaining its Communist profile while adapting itself to capitalist prosperity (and even governing such prosperity in crucial regions of the country). Bipolarity became a fundamental feature of Italian society and political culture - even before the definitive bipolarization of the political system actually emerging at the end of the 1960s.

This may result in an over-simplified picture. Especially the anti-Communist world was highly complex and fragmented, even more than the world of the Italian Left was. Italian Anti-Communism obviously underwent an evolution, which can be summarised as a process of “secularisation.” The gradual weakening of the influence of the Catholic Church in Italian society that took place as a consequence of the “economic miracle” in the 1960s also meant change in the ideological components of Italian Anti-Communism. However, it basically maintained its original dual structure. On one hand, moderation prevailed in the Christian Democrat party, whose majority rejected the option to let fall the Anti-Fascist barrier by associating the radical right to power and decided to let the Socialists join the government in the early 1960s - thus enlarging the

sphere of political legitimacy to rule the country. On the other hand, antagonism against the left was harsh and widespread in the so-called “silent majority” of public opinion as well as in state apparatuses. The very launching of the centre-left governments was the outcome of an acute conflict in the ruling classes, in which democratic Anti-Communism prevailed preventing the menace of a military coup d'état [Craveri 1995]. The “secularisation” of Italian Communism was not a straightforward process, either. Despite the shock brought about by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and by the subsequent Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, belief in the Soviet myth did not decline rapidly. The very myth of the Soviet Union that helped the Communists to ensure their cohesion, to found their own mass culture, and to exercise hegemony over the Left, had prevented them also from expanding their influence in Italian society. But the domestic isolation that followed the year 1956, after the break with the Socialists, had the effect of reinforcing the Communist bloc's social and political cohesion, including its link with the Soviet Union and with the International Communist movement [Pons 2004; Spagnolo 2006]. The combination between flexible political opposition to the new centre-left alliance and bloc cohesion allowed the PCI to resist quite well the attempt of the centre-left governments to marginalize Communist implantation and political culture.

I do not pretend to analyse such complexity. My purpose here is just to stress the following points, which may be seen as aspects of an Italian peculiarity in post-war international European history:

- a) The socio-cultural cleavages of Italian society were obviously transformed by the modernisation of the 1960s, but the basic split occurring with the Cold War divide revealed remarkable persistence shaping its “special democracy” - from the mid-1960s (when German Social Democrats entered the Grand Coalition) the only democracy in Europe to be based on one party of permanent government and one party permanent opposition.
- b) The birth of new political movements as a consequence of 1968 created all over Europe, and in Italy too, a broader context for challenging the Cold War system, whose loyalties were openly contested and dismissed. The revival of Anti-Fascism occupied a significant place in the Italian political discourse and looked like a national discourse to some extent detached from Cold War topics.
- c) Italy was not the only European country where loyalties towards Soviet Communism were maintained in relevant sectors of the national society for two decades and more after the beginning of

the Cold War – France experienced the same situation. After 1968, however, Italian Communism underwent significant evolution, distancing itself from Soviet Communism, embracing European integration as a political perspective, and achieving political consensus never reached by any Western Communist party.

- d) The launching of European détente (Ostpolitik), as distinct from bipolar détente, and the development of European integration in the early 1970s created a new environment that mitigated bipolar loyalties and a network that might help in managing political transition, as was the case for Portugal. In this respect, Europe and Europeanism became particularly important to Italian political forces, either reluctant to adopt a strong Atlanticist position (the Democratic Christians and the Socialists) or willing to accept the country's Western alliance without embracing Atlanticism (the Communists).
- e) The bipolar structure of the Italian political system definitively emerged in the 1968 elections and reached its peak by the mid-1970s - reflecting bipolarism in the international system in a way that did not exist in any other European country. Despite changes in the Cold War order, Italy's "special democracy" would be maintained because of the combination between Anti-Communist reaction (national and international) and the limited capacity to achieve a real breakthrough by the political subjects aiming at change, to begin with the Communists.

II. The legacies of the Cold War 1968-1989

II.1 The experience of "national solidarity" and its international constraints (1976-1979)

By the mid-1970s the PCI, as the major opposition party, gathered increasing support that revealed social pressure from below for change and for overcoming Italian "special democracy" – a spontaneous movement *de facto* aimed at making Italian democracy "normal" in the context of European integration and of the democratization of Southern Europe (after the fall of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece, and Spain). Against the context of an economic crisis threatening to de-legitimize the ruling classes, a split increasingly took place inside the Anti-Communist front. From 1974 onwards, relevant components of the Christian Democrat party,

under the leadership of Aldo Moro, saw the need of associating Communist opposition to national responsibilities – thus replicating ten years later towards the Communists the “opening to the left” undertaken in the 1960s towards the Socialists, in order to maintain DC’s centrality. Moro’s “strategy of attention” was about institutional collaboration with the PCI and the trade unions, one that would put into question the old distinction between constitutional and political legitimacies, however without openly repudiating it. Such perspective was a reply to the challenge put forward by the PCI leader, Enrico Berlinguer, through the proposal of a “historic compromise,” calling for the immediate fall of the Anti-Communist barrier and the recover of Anti-Fascism as the authentic base for Italian democracy. More than about demolishing the two traditional blocs implanted in Italian society, both Moro and Berlinguer thought about liquidating the mutual images of political enemies created by the Cold War - sharing the idea that international détente would put an end to Cold War constraints over the country’s sovereignty [Gualtieri 2004].

On the international level, however, neither Washington, nor Moscow conceived détente as a process for political change in Europe. To the contrary, for both powers détente was a conservative response to the social and political unrest of 1968 and a way of strengthening the bipolar order. In this respect, any solution to the Italian crisis that would bring Communists into the government was fiercely contrasted by both superpowers. Kissinger feared a domino effect provoked by the combined influence of the Portuguese revolution and of Italian Communists in Southern Europe – regardless of how authentic their autonomy from Moscow was. He firmly maintained that any association of the Communists to government would be harmful to NATO. The Soviets suspected that Eurocommunism might become a dangerous heresy and that PCI participation in the government could open scenarios for change in East Central Europe. Marginal as it was for influencing the Italian context, the Soviet search for legitimacy and stability in its own sphere of influence nonetheless interacted with Anti-Communism in the West. It may be said that, by the mid-1970s, as Anti-Communism was losing its grasp in Italian domestic policy, it was enforced from abroad by the United States in the context of bipolar conservatism - finding a hold in sectors of the political system (the so-called “American party” composed by right wing components of the DC and by minor moderate non-Catholic forces) as well as in the public opinion [Giovagnoli, Pons 2003].

The role played in the 1970s by the legacy of the split between Anti-Communism and Anti-Fascism in Italian society has yet to be analysed by historians. Anti-Fascism was re-launched as a label of the “new left,” as well as of the traditional forces of the left, but Anti-Communism had its relevance as a reaction against the pressure for political and social change generated by 1968. This opposition contributed to creating the acute climate of violence that characterised the Italian crisis of the 1970s. The perception of the Anti-Communist legacy now provided ground for constant suspicion and even obsession for a reactionary coup on the Communist side. Not all of this was paranoia. The extreme right was responsible for a whole series of bloody terrorist attacks, to begin with the bombs in Milan of December 1969. Their actions found protection by shadowy segments of state apparatuses. The sources and authors of the so-called “strategy of tension” still have to be clearly ascertained. However, the Communists were inclined to see any Neo-Fascist resurgence as revealing plots organised by fully “degenerate” organs of the state, directly supported by foreign intelligence, to combat their ascendancy in the political arena. This was nothing other than a legacy of the cultural Cold War. The DC was now seen more as a corrupt mafia than as a Cold Warrior, but it could hardly be a legitimate power or a partner anyway. On the opposite side, Anti-Communist opinion, more or less moderate, was inclined to perceive the students’ movement, violent street fighting, and even red terrorism as an undifferentiated by-product of Marxism. Accordingly, the roots of political violence should be found in Communist influence over Italian society. The Anti-Communist view was not entirely paranoid, either. The mythology of a “new resistance” and the relaunching of a revolutionary calling based on Marxist revival were undoubtedly a feature of former Communist militants as well as of 1968 *gauchistes*. But such a reality was seen through the lens of Cold War legacies, thus rejecting any chance for democratic legitimacy to the PCI despite its firmness in fighting against political violence and defending the institutions of the Republic – harshly contested, in fact, by the forces of extra-parliamentary “new left” [Taviani 2003]. On both sides, the image of the enemy and the language of civil conflict persisted regardless of the changing attitudes of major political forces.

In the political game, as ever, moderation prevailed over socio-cultural divisions. The national strategies of DC and of PCI were carried on in the aftermath of the 1976 elections, when bipolarity reached its peak (the two parties collected almost three quarters of

the voters). The new government led by Giulio Andreotti was formed thanks to Communist neutrality in the Parliament. Thus the “national solidarity” experience was launched by maintaining a distinction between the two principles of legitimacy in the republican space – the Communist “non-vote” on the Andreotti government reflected association to institutional responsibility more than opening any clear political prospect. For more than one year, the Democratic Christians would essentially defend that solution as the boundary to feasible collaboration, though without excluding an evolution, while the Communists pressed for a part in the majority and in government. The byzantine formula of “national solidarity” achieved no real understanding in Washington or in the Western European governments. All rejected the possibility of any Communist involvement in ruling Italy - despite the belief in European integration held by the PCI and Berlinguer’s public statement that PCI autonomy was better guaranteed under the Atlantic Alliance than it would be under the Warsaw Pact. In other words, the national strategies of the main political forces were largely disconnected from interaction with the international actors [Gualtieri 2006; Pons 2006].

The advocates for change saw the search for a new national arrangement as a priority. Both Moro and Berlinguer, from different perspectives, believed that such an accomplishment could represent a *fait accompli* producing over time more lack of concern than hostility in international opinion. The principle of “neither interference nor indifference” adopted by the new Carter administration (January 1977) seemed to open some chance for tolerance in Washington. Consequently, international issues were removed from the “common program” signed by the major political forces in June 1977, as a basis for government action. Only between October and December 1977 did the protagonists of “national solidarity,” including the Communists, approve a common document on the principles of Italian foreign policy, stressing their tribute to the Atlantic Alliance and to European integration. This was the only real effort to stabilize “national unity” in the Italian political system of the 1970s [De Felice 1996]. Moro probably believed that a such step might strengthen his design of gradual involvement of the Communists in a subordinate position. Berlinguer saw it as a prelude to entry into the political majority. Both considered foreign policy as nothing more than a tool of internal policy. Both had their own reasons.

From the point of view of Moro, the removal from the political scene of Kissinger, his *bete noire*, opened the door for better understanding with the United States. Actually he established a close dialogue with the new US Ambassador in Rome, Richard Gardner. The relative tolerance of the Carter administration could be seen as providing more ground for a double policy of the Christian Democrats, whose goal was at the same time playing on the institutional responsibility of the Communists and eroding their political consensus – as such a responsibility entailed unpopular measures to face the economic crisis while remaining at the margins of political power and being unable to claim at least the trade off between “austerity” and government. Although such a cynical approach might reflect more Andreotti’s outlook than Moro’s, all the Christian Democrats were willing to defend their central place in the political system, in crisis as it was [Craveri 1995; Giovagnoli 1996]. From the point of view of Berlinguer, Eurocommunism as a means for achieving international legitimacy was at its height and provided credibility in term of PCI autonomy from Moscow. The Soviets’ increasingly bitter reaction against Eurocommunism as a form of “revisionism” indirectly confirmed that the Italian Communists had taken the right position. Initially, furthermore, the conduct of the Carter administration looked encouraging, at least different from Kissinger’s, and the Italian Communists for the first time established some relationship with the American ambassador [Pons 2006]. Lacking a strong foreign partner, they enforced their reliability as Anti-Fascists, exploiting the divisions of the Anti-Communist camp, and exercising pressure for the logical outcome of “national solidarity,” a real political coalition to rule the country in time of emergency.

The elusive national strategies of Moro and Berlinguer were opposed by substantial continuity in the conduct of the great powers, probably enforced by the first signs of the crisis of détente. The Soviet Union formally provided (unrequested) support for the Italian Communists, but behind the scene attacked them by assuming that Eurocommunism as well as “national solidarity” just meant yielding to Western blackmail and losing contact with popular masses. The paradox was that any move of Moscow would damage the PCI: too close a relationship would harm the credibility of Eurocommunism, but further distancing might turn into a split undermining the strength of the party. The United States reaffirmed their stand against any participation of the Communists in the government in a famous declaration issued on 12 January 1978. The declaration was disappointing for those who had hoped for more flexibility, but

Washington had never really encouraged such expectations. Undoubtedly, Carter's policy had been wavering and incoherent, eventually unable to provide a detachment from Kissinger's views [Wall 2006]. Naively expecting to find a Social Democratic PCI when he arrived in Italy, ambassador Gardner could not fully appreciate PCI independence from Moscow. However, neither the DC nor the PCI promoted much effort of persuasion about "national solidarity." At the end of 1977, Moro even played on American ambiguities, asking Gardner for Washington's political intervention only in the case of new elections, as a consequence of the failure of negotiations to involve the Communists in the parliamentary majority. Fearful of a successful outcome of negotiations, and listening to advice from Anti-Communist political opinion, Gardner decided instead to pressure Washington for the declaration of January 1978 [Gardner 2004].

The reaction of the great powers to the evolution of "national solidarity" was therefore as rigid as predictable. Was it also crucial for deciding the destiny of Italy, as many deterministic narratives of the 1970s assume? That is highly doubtful. What was crucial was the combination between national and international Anti-Communism, on one hand, and the fragility of change strategies, on the other. The American position only contributed to exacerbating the Italian crisis, providing no positive solution by its indirect support to tendencies merely determined to erode Communist consensus. But the crisis of "national solidarity" was on its way. The political situation was one of stalemate, as relations between the major political forces and their strategies had yet to be clarified. Popular opinion supporting the protagonists of "national solidarity" was still divided between those upset with the opening to Communists and those frustrated because of insufficient opening. Measures undertaken against the economic crisis did not make the government more popular. Political violence in the country reached its peak and increasingly extremist forces on the left addressed themselves against "national solidarity." In no other European country could violence and even terrorism count on such a relatively extended area of indifference and neutrality, let alone underlying episodic consensus, as was the case for Italy. The kidnapping of Moro by the Red Brigades in March 1978 was not the beginning of the political crisis, as is often wrongly assumed – it marked its culmination [Giovagnoli 2006]. To be sure, his moderate profile was an obvious target for terrorists with a worse-is-better philosophy. His hidden enemies would not help to save his life, and his allies would

have their hands tied by the principle of avoiding any legitimization of terrorism. The death of the most important interlocutor of the Communists severely weakened the search for any further agreement in the context of “national solidarity.” The Communists went back to opposition few months later, in January 1979.

There was nothing inevitable in the failure of “national solidarity.” However, its political basis had been weak from the very beginning. The experiment had strong adversaries, but its protagonists cannot be exempt from criticism. Moro was an ambiguous leader. Much more than other Christian Democrats, he showed openness towards the Communists, but his strategy also entailed the erosion of their political consensus, indirectly conceding room of manoeuvre for his conservative party colleagues, like Andreotti [Gualtieri 2006]. He might have thought about the gradual development of alternative groupings fully legitimized to ending Italian “special democracy,” but he also defended the contradictory principle of DC “centrality” in the political system – a legacy of the Cold War and a code identifying the political projection of Anti-Communist tradition. Although cautious in his international conduct, he misread the significance of détente and put stress on a merely national strategy. His effort for removing the image of the political enemy was sincere, but his strategy was hardly coherent. It can hardly be seen how it might open the way for overcoming the distinction between Anti-Fascist inclusion of the Communists in constitutional legitimacy and Anti-Communist exclusion of the Communists from political legitimacy.

Berlinguer was no more consistent. His “historic compromise” was much more a proposal for coalition building between the two former enemy blocs than a real perspective for liquidating “special democracy.” He had a pessimistic view of the country as more similar to Chile – therefore exposed to the threat of a reactionary coup like that carried out by general Pinochet in September 1973 with Kissinger’s connivance – than to other European countries. His assertion of Anti-Fascist legitimacy against Anti-Communist tradition was intended to end the Cold War, but the monopoly of Anti-Fascism reflected as well Cold War legacies – as a code for identifying the political identity of national Communism and of the Italian left. Berlinguer struggled at the same time for the legitimacy of the Italian Communists to rule a Western European country and for their role as reformers of Soviet Communism – two goals that proved to be scarcely compatible [Pons 2006]. He deceived himself about détente as a factor for change in single European countries. While Eurocommunism might evoke sympathy in Western public

opinion, it could achieve no allies in Europe [Pons forthcoming 2009-10]. He understood that change itself was crucial for turning political adversaries to change as well, but he kept limits as he felt that the bloc of the Left might come under most radical transformations.

As they represented the weak side of the story and the force more deeply engaged in self-reform, the Italian Communists may merit some additional remarks. Whatever the conditioning of adverse factors on their choices, Italian Communists could not figure out dilemmas originating from their own identity and mind. Though the emergence of a Eurocommunist critique of the Soviet Union had obtained resonance abroad and challenged the Cold War order, its impact was limited by the determination not to break with Moscow. The assumption was that an eventual break would weaken the influence of PCI both internationally, losing its self-proclaimed role of a bridge towards Eastern Europe, and nationally, dissipating the legacy of “partito nuovo.” The PCI’s choice to prevent a break with Moscow depended heavily on identity politics hardly coherent with the reality of larger European policy: first, the idea that a radical challenge to Moscow, even more than advocating pluralism and democracy as universal values, would have the consequence of an undesired “normalisation” and “social-democratisation” of PCI; second, that maintaining a special relationship with the Soviet world made sense because “real Socialism” could be successfully reformed, possibly revealing unexpected potential; third, that Soviet Communism, albeit backward and inapplicable in the West, maintained a role for counter-balancing American power and Americanisation [Pons 2006].

By the end of the 1970s, Communism in Italy had undergone substantial changes. Despite its reluctance to dissolve the formal relationship with Moscow, the PCI had become functionally autonomous. Although its search for a “third way” was devoid of any concrete political prospect, the PCI’s political culture had become, to a significant extent, neither Soviet nor Social Democratic. But the failure of “national solidarity” determined nonetheless the persistence of a basic opposition between Communism and Anti-Communism in the political system and in the political discourse. The split in the Anti-Communist front was repaired – though changes inside that front would occur because of a new Socialist approach. While the country slowly came out of its crisis – to a large degree because of the very stand of “national solidarity” as red terrorism had committed suicide by killing Moro and political violence gradually vanished – the centre-left alliance was relaunched.

Communists were again excluded from power and would never come back into government. The outbreak of the so-called Second Cold War after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) would contribute to restoring the opposition between two blocs in the political system – despite the fact that Atlanticist loyalties had obviously changed and that Soviet loyalties had almost disappeared. Such opposition could hardly be said to follow the division between conservatives and Social Democrats that was typical of the main European countries (including those of recent democracy like Spain). It was an Italian peculiarity.

II.2 The Italian Left and the Second Cold War (1979-1985)

The relaunching of Anti-Communism during the Second Cold War, especially after the establishment of the Reagan administration in the United States (January 1981), found fertile ground in Italy. Bipolarity in the domestic context no longer reflected international alliances, but it worked nonetheless. On one side, the neo Anti-Totalitarian thrust of Reagan was used by Italian Anti-Communists as a means of political struggle against the residual influence of the PCI (despite its deep crisis after the end of “national solidarity,” the party still collected almost one third of the electorate). On the other side, the critical positions accumulated by the PCI were not eliminated by the crisis of détente, and culminated in the “rift” with Moscow, in the aftermath of the coup d'état in Poland (December 1981). Berlinguer harshly condemned the coup in a famous television interview. Soon thereafter, for the first time, an open excommunication was pronounced by Moscow against the PCI in a “Pravda” editorial. Relations between the two former partners were frozen, while attempts to split the PCI were carried on by the Soviets behind the scenes. Nevertheless, there was no further evolution in the Italian Communists’ criticism of the Soviet Union. They established warm enough relations with European Social-Democrats, but did not establish any alliance with them. Their distancing from Moscow represented an aspect of the re-affirmation of “diversity” from all other national political forces, seen as compromised by participation in a long-standing corrupted “regime” under the shield of the Western Cold War. Consequently, the “rift” had no real impact in the domestic political arena [Pons 2006].

To the contrary, a harsh competition arose between the Communists and the Socialists. The Socialist leader Bettino Craxi challenged the PCI after the successful pattern employed by Mitterand against the

PCF. There was, however, a significant difference. While the competition in France, harsh as it was, did not prevent the formation of an alliance that took Mitterand to power in 1981 (and the PCF in government though in an obvious subordinate position), this did not happen in Italy, despite the twilight of the DC's centrality in the political system. Quite significantly, the principle of alternative leadership in the country's government was established only *inside* the Anti-Communist front – when firstly the republican Giovanni Spadolini and then Craxi assumed the premiership. The rules of Italy's "special democracy" did not fundamentally change. In fact, the Italian left would maintain its basic division as it had been forged by the development of national and international bipolarity in the post-war era. Such opposition came to be personified in the irreconcilable figures of Berlinguer and Craxi. The international aspect of their opposition seems particularly revealing. In fact, the PCI and the PSI represented their disputes as replicating the same differences that took place in the European left, namely between the German Social Democrats and the French Socialists – thereby *politically* choosing a deployment internal to European politics and to the European left. But they ended by taking sides scarcely in line with their European interlocutors and replicating, to a considerable extent, the positions of Gorbachev and of Reagan – thereby *culturally* following a deployment that reflected Cold War legacies.

The central European question in international affairs during the first half of the 1980s was undoubtedly that of the so-called Euro-missiles – the Western reaction against the challenge launched by Moscow by installing new strategic missiles threatening Western Europe. From this standpoint, the respective alignment of the Italian Socialists with Mitterand's pro-Atlanticist firmness, and of the Italian Communists with SPD "pacifism," could easily be seen. Craxi sided with Mitterand's positions in favour of the NATO installation of Euro-missiles even before assuming government leadership (July 1983). Thus Craxi obtained full legitimacy for his candidacy to govern the country [Colarizi, Gervasoni 2005]. His administration immediately had to face the strongest wave of pacifist movements on a European scale in the second half of 1983. While holding firm in his pro-Atlanticism with regard to East-West relations, he lent his leadership the stamp of autonomy from the United States on other issues of international policy, starting with the Middle East [Varsori 1998]. Berlinguer's path appears to be the opposing one. After the end of the "national unity" experience, he largely ignored the problem of legitimization that he had faced in the mid-1970s. The battle against

Euro-missiles was placed at the centre of the PCI's international policy. This position found partners not only thanks to the rise of significant pacifist movements, but also after the SPD's shift to critical positions against NATO installation of Euromissiles and in favour of further negotiations. These positions were to represent a political reference for the PCI.

However, if we turn our attention to how the respective political positions were justified and how, in particular, the conduct of the Soviet Union had to be interpreted in the light of the Second Cold War, then we are led to see that the differences between the two forces of the Italian Left were even more pronounced, taking on the appearance of a dichotomy. The Italian Socialists carried on the Mitterand option, which had obviously more general strategic implications in the competition with the Communists, as a pattern for establishing Socialist hegemony over the Left. In this respect, they tried to establish a new paradigm for Anti-Communism, one rejecting Catholic conservatism and instead challenging the Communists on the agenda for reforms and modernization. Openly focusing on the question of how the reformist Socialist culture could foster PCI's evolution, they pressed on the terrain of the "Soviet question" at the very moment when this card appeared the most playable. Among the coordinates followed by Craxi's leadership group and by the intellectual forces supporting it, two appear to be of particular relevance: the grounds for dissent from the German Social Democratic positions, and the attention to the issue of the crisis of "real Socialism." The two points were closely linked. The Italian Socialists criticized the SPD's anchor to Ostpolitik both because it was doubted that this process had favoured change in the East, and because it was believed to have eventually encouraged the USSR's power politics instead of strengthening European peace. This was not necessarily the radical Reaganist criticism of détente as appeasement. Like the French Socialists, the Italians rather thought that détente had exhausted its thrust and that the USSR's worrisome drift required different responses. No less than Mitterand, Craxi believed that this did not exclude dialogue, but one conducted from a position of firmness. In particular, the insistence on the theme of security in Europe – but also on "flexibility combined with firmness" – was a central point in Craxi's political stand on the eve of the first deployment of American missiles on European territory, scheduled for December 1983 [Colarizi et al. 2004].

However, the Italian Socialists put distinctive emphasis on seeing the USSR as a totalitarian regime and an expansionist power of an

imperial nature. This special emphasis was ambivalent. On one hand, it was fed by remarkable sensitivity to the figures and forces of opposition in Eastern Europe, obviously with particular attention to Poland. This helped to present the future of Soviet Communism quite problematic to the Italian Left, scarcely prepared for such scenario. Much more than the Italian Communists, the Socialists were aware that the USSR and “real Socialism” were in a crisis open to unpredictable outcomes. On the other hand, the insistence on the anti-totalitarian motif had strong polemical implications against the Communists, which became an end in itself and reduced to the contingencies of domestic policy the attention to the issue of freedom for the East. This gave rise to a tendency of the Italian Socialists to slip from Mitterand’s realism to Reagan’s anti-Communist ideological imperative without finding a sufficiently consistent balance point. Their proximity to Reagan’s paradigm on Communism, as compared with the German and with the French Socialists as well, was to deepen the cultural clashes hinging on the traditional Communism/Anti-Communism polarity within national society. Consequently, the attempt to provide a “modern” version of Anti-Communism proved to be scarcely effective. Instead of pressuring Communists, Craxi struggled to prevail over Christian Democrats and take the lead in the Anti-Communist front. The obstinate disavowal of the evolution of Italian Communism, the insistence on continuing to represent it as an appendix to the Soviet world, and the refusal to accept its growing legitimacy as a force of the European Left, offered a contingent position of strength in the political game, but ended up depriving Craxi of a sense of direction at the historic moment of the end of Communism, in 1989. The instrumental interaction between international policy and domestic politics impoverished the initial intuitions regarding the crisis of Communism, and was a root cause of the degeneration and loss of hegemonic impetus of Craxi’s PSI in the second half of the decade [Cafagna 1996; Colarizi, Gervasoni 2005].

The Italian Communists’ increasing self-representation as part of the European Left suffered from a contradiction. The political axis established with the SPD in the first half of the decade with regard to defending détente actually concealed a substantial divergence. Unlike the German Social Democrats, the Italian Communists did not acknowledge the threat that the USSR actually posed to the security of Western Europe, and their criticism of Soviet “power politics” maintained a distinction in quality from the image attached to American “imperialism.” Berlinguer kept a vision substantially

different from that of the European Socialists. He hoped for reform of “real socialism” not simply for the safety of European peace, but also for the ideal purposes of Socialism – as though even if the “Soviet model” was no longer suitable, its reform would lend a certain anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist dignity. The perplexities that emerged even among Communist intellectuals as to the prospect of reforming Soviet Communism did not shift his orientation. It was a foundation of identity politics that prevailed in the late Berlinguer – the invention of a tradition based on the notion of the “third way” between the Social Democratic model and the Soviet one [Gualtieri 2006; Pons 2006]. Such a way of thinking appeared sufficiently rooted as to not be destined to dissolve with the death of Berlinguer. It was even corroborated by Gorbachev. The Italian Communists saw his Perestroika as generated in part by their political influence, and felt themselves committed to Perestroika as the USSR’s reform process they had waited for a long time. They entertained the illusion that Gorbachev would launch a reform of Communism. The paradox of Gorbachev’s impact on Italian Communists is that it ended up hindering, and not stimulating, awareness of the crisis of Communism. It prevented them from full acceptance of the Social Democratic orientation, in spite of their growing links with the European left. The internal factor of alienation from the political game and head-on collision with the Socialists was equally meaningful for maintaining the legacy of Berlinguer after his death. The collapse of the Berlin Wall caught the Italian Communists adrift, making them improvise a change aimed at safeguarding their own profile as a force of Italian democracy, but with fragile cultural bases [Possieri 2007; Pons, forthcoming 2008].

Politically divided along the same lines of differentiation as between the French and the German Socialists, the two forces of the Italian Left diverged even more deeply from the standpoint of their respective political cultures. The crisis of Communism thus had in Italy an impact and significance far greater than in other countries of Western Europe, with the paradoxical result of deepening the long lasting split placed at the heart of the Italian Left. The Italian Communists’ response, aimed above all at defending their own identity, no longer equated with Soviet Communism or with the Social Democracies either, pushed towards blind conflict. The Italian Socialists made a decisive contribution to shifting the conflict to terms of traditional Anti-Communism although they saw the twilight of Communist identity. The Cold War’s incorporation within the Italian Left was to be stronger than the will to relegate it to the past

that had marked the Socialists' and Communists' political discourse. The end of the Cold War, instead of being a liberating event, heralded the demise of both duelling parties.

Cold War legacies conditioned Italy's national context more deeply than elsewhere. During the 1980s, the image of the Communist enemy was still alive in Italian Anti-Communism. The Socialists' attempt to modify Anti-Communist tradition by challenging the PCI on the modernization of political culture was a rational one. But it resulted in a tenacious unwillingness to accept the reality of a Communist party that had gradually become a national democratic force - which explained the persistence of PCI's influence and its "abnormal" leading role in the Italian Left. Thus, Anti-Communism maintained its compactness as a basic structure of the Italian political system even when the Cold War was coming to its end. As for the Communists, their denunciation of the increasing corruption of the political system was certainly well founded. But their self-proclaimed "diversity" was a defensive response to their own crisis and a way for re-inventing bloc opposition in moral terms. This contributed to the persistence of the employment of Anti-Fascism as an identity notion, as it had been under the influence of the Cold War.

The Cold War and the role of Soviet Communism were perceived in Italy as much more crucial than in other European countries - regardless of the changing international environment of the two decades preceding 1989. Although Cold War culture had largely exhausted itself, the legacy of the old international loyalties and identities exerted its visible, if residual, influence. This was not simply the consequence of the presence of a Communist party in Italian society. It was the consequence of the endurance and ambiguities of the opposition between Communism and Anti-Communism - as it was forged and preserved in Italian political culture, in spite of its obsolescence, both by the dynamics of the domestic context and by the constraints of the international system. All of this created the premises for the persistence of an Italian peculiarity. The two legacies interacted, contributing because of their extremes to the endurance of the frailty of civic culture in Italian society. Italy has been the only Western European country in which, after the end of the Cold War, the uncertain frontier of a "post-Communist" transition in the leading force of the Left has been confronted by a fierce "post-anti-Communist" discourse of the forces of the Right.

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