

2012

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XIII, No. 18 (2012)

8 February 2012

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Introduction by Vladislav M. Zubok

Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky. *Stalin and Togliatti: Italy and the Origins of the Cold War*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780804774321 (hardcover, \$60.00).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-18.pdf>

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Introduction by Vladislav M. Zubok, Temple University

This remarkable book is not simply a translated version of the monograph published by the authors earlier in Italy (*Togliatti e Stalin. Il Pci e la politica estera staliniana negli archive di Mosca*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997). It is a carefully revised and expanded version, reflecting the research that Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavski (who passed away in November 2009) did for many years afterwards: the second updated version of the book in Italian came out in 2007. The book's subtitle, "Italy and the Origins of the Cold War" is explicated in the introduction as a placement of the Italian Communist party (PCI) "in the context of both Italian history and the international strategy of Stalin," the first archive-based evaluation of "the role of the party in the early Cold War." The book presents Italy as a square on Stalin's chessboard, with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) as a secondary, but important pawn in the grand European game. Rather new to those who did not follow Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky's publications will be revelations about the PCI's preparations for a civil war in 1947-48 after the communists left the government, and particularly the details on the continuing and generous financing of the PCI and the related networks of businesses and publishers by the Kremlin. These subsidies continued and even grew after Stalin's death.

Scholars of international communism and the Soviet empire will find this book extremely valuable. Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky disagree with those who marginalize Stalin as an ambiguous and indecisive leader, and shift the focus of the debate to the alleged struggle within the PCI, between the militant and the moderate 'factions.' The authors of *Stalin and Togliatti* persuasively demonstrate that the intra-party struggle in the PCI never crossed the boundaries and decisions dictated by Stalin from the Kremlin. While we already know much about Stalin's personality and ways, a glimpse at Togliatti's is new and fascinating. Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky describe the Italian charismatic politician not as a "single-minded Stalinist," but rather as an embodiment of "the contradictions of a totalitarian leader constrained to live in a democratic world." (315, 322) Very smart and cautious, Togliatti helped in 1948 to bring Italy back from the brink of civil war and to deter "the maximalist revolutionary wing of the PCI." (322) He did that, ironically, by staying a genuine Stalinist to the core. Contrary to the myths about Togliatti's evolution towards reformism, the book cites the recent archival evidence that the PCI leader "did everything in his power to push Moscow to occupy Hungary in 1956 and reaffirm Soviet control over Eastern Europe." (322-323) The book provides solid evidence that a staunch life-long Stalinist, like Togliatti, could be dogmatic and shrewd, ideological and pragmatic, totally loyal to the "Center" and flexible in rhetoric and local politics at the same time.

Contrary to dominant currents in Italian historiography, Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky emphasize that post-1945 Italian history was shaped not only by domestic factors, such as the weakness of liberal tradition and maximalist radicalism, but to a considerable extent by Soviet interference – with the PCI as a pliant tool. In particular, the authors attribute the reflexive and persistent anti-Americanism in Italy directly to the PCI's ideology and propaganda of "Stalinist philosophy and ideology" (325) They also argue that generous Soviet subsidies of and directives to the PCI helped to ensure "the victory of Stalinist Left

over the democratic Left” – with the resulting “visceral antireformism” and a futile distracting search for a “third way” between the Soviet model and European social democracy (325-326).

It is no wonder, then, that the book provoked a controversy among historians of Italian politics and society, and several reviews in this roundtable echoes this controversy. All reviewers, two of them distinguished Italian scholars, laud the extraordinary significance of the book. Pons, a leading expert on the Italian communist party, writes this is “one of the most important contributions to the re-writing of the history of the Italian Communist Party published in the last twenty years.” He singles out as a major achievement the authors’ conclusive proof that the Italian communism’s “organic connection to the Soviet Union in the Stalin era” and that the PCI – contrary to the long-standing myth - “was not so different from the other communist parties.” Romero agrees that Aga-Rossi’s and Zaslavsky’s “use of Soviet documents gave unprecedented depth and vividness to our perception of the inherent oneness of thought among the Communist leaders of that time”. He writes about their contribution to “a profound historiographical renewal” of attention to the factor of international Communism and its impact in Italy. Kennedy-Pipe, a cold war diplomatic historian, finds the book particularly useful in highlighting the impact of ideology on the internal politics of a major European country as a result of bilateral confrontation.

The Italian reviewers, however, are not ready to go with Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky all the way. Pons ascribes more autonomous agency to the PCI. The author of the best book about Enrico Berlinguer and Italian Eurocommunism, he presents a different portrait of Togliatti, who “believed in the primacy of Soviet interest and tried to harmonize it with the national policy of his party.” Pons fully admits that Togliatti’s “svolta di Salerno” – support of the Badoglio government and participation in it in 1943, instead of the demand of a complete democratic overhaul of Italian political system – was a policy prescribed by Stalin. Yet, he is quick to qualify this by presenting Togliatti as an active part of the decision-making process leading this this move – not a mere recipient of Stalin’s orders. He also agrees with the three main “case studies” demonstrating the PCI’s instrumental role in Stalin’s foreign policy (the dispute over Trieste, the issue of Italian POWs in the USSR, and the boycott of the Marshall Plan). He doubts, however, that Stalin always had a clear idea as to what to do, that his (and Cominform) policies had a clear blueprint. He also argues that Stalin never prepared for an adequate “offensive” in Western Europe in response to the Marshall Plan. There was “no thrust and no pattern” for the communist takeover in Italy.

Most of all, Pons disagrees with the conclusions of Zaslavsky and Aga-Rossi on the widespread negative influence of communism in Italian society in general, and among the intellectuals in particular. Pons argues that Italian post-1945 problems had nothing to do with Stalin and the USSR, but stemmed from the “national peculiarity,” specifically the “weakness of reform-oriented cultures.”

Romero takes issue with some underlining premises of the book even more explicitly. He views the Soviet-PCI relationship not as “domination-submission” but rather one of “sharing” the same “analysis” and views the Italian communists to be “part and parcel of a

Soviet-centered Communist movement.” In taking a stand against the book, however, Romero is curiously straddled: he admits that “the movement” was “largely unified around Moscow’s vision and strategy” and always followed Stalin’s directives. Yet – and in a seeming contradiction – he resists the notion that Stalin had the PCI under his thumb. He seems to believe that the closer analysis of the PCI internal discussions would prove this argument – a surprising belief given the fact that the PCI leadership preferred until 1956 to keep the archives of their secret deliberations in Moscow, rather than in Italy.

Romero disagrees with the book’s theses on the long-term impact of Stalinism via the PCI on Italian political and social developments. In his view, the authors take a one-sided position: while fixating on the Soviet influence in Italy, they deny any “responsibility” of the U.S. policies in shaping Italian realities during the early cold war. According to Romero, Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky imply that the PCI had “cultural hegemony” in the Italian historiography and other intellectual spheres. Here the debate becomes heated, as Romero accuses the authors of adhering to “historically flawed counter-mythology deployed by conservatives as a tool of their own cultural wars.” This debate, however fascinating, would take us far beyond the archival base of the book.

John Harper, an expert on American policies in Italy during the cold war, sides with Romero: he remains “unconvinced” by the book’s archival evidence, and found “too narrow” the key source, the ciphered correspondence between Togliatti and the Kremlin via Soviet ambassador Kostylev. Harper adheres to the view that he calls “traditional”: that “the PCI cultivated an autonomous position and had a mind and will of its own.” His evidence for this is Togliatti’s nationalist rhetoric to the party faithful and the electorate, Togliatti’s disputes with Tito over Trieste, and (a bit surprisingly) De Gaulle, who once said that “Communism subsists to the extent that it is nationalism.” Harper argues that the pervasive Italian anti-Americanism was not a Stalinist importation, but rather a grassroots and democratic phenomenon, the genuine feeling of those who “opposed American meddling in Italian politics and the Christian Democrat’s subservience to the United States.” And finally, Harper concludes that, Stalinist or not, the PCI “was one of the main founders and stake-holders of the new democratic state” in Italy – and gradually became “deeply attached” on the survival of Italian democracy.

As an expert in Soviet foreign policy, who spent years in Soviet archives and studied the history of Soviet communism, I am surprised that no reviewer commented on the remarkable culture of secrecy and conspiracy that enveloped the Soviet-PCI ties. None of the reviewers commented on the scale of Soviet financial subsidies to the PCI’s ideological, cultural, and publishing activities. Well known, no doubt, to Western intelligence services, these ties and subsidies remained unknown to the larger public, and, when leaked, triggered a reaction of denial from the same people who were quite ready to admit CIA operations during the Italian elections. I should once again praise the authors’ ability to obtain remarkable sources from the Kremlin archives. The ciphered cable correspondence between Moscow (Stalin) and Togliatti via Soviet ambassador Kostylev is especially valuable. In most cases, historians of the Cominform and Soviet foreign policy do not gain access to ciphered cables, and have to base their conclusions about the Kremlin’s decision-making on circumstantial evidence, such as papers of the Soviet leaders and the files of the

party and ministerial apparatuses. A number of important collections opened up since the Italian version of the book was published, among them the Molotov papers. Yet, to my best knowledge, nothing in those collections challenges the authors' conclusions.

The discussion around the book shows that the old divisions in the historiography, particularly on the nature of the international communism under Stalin (can it be "nationalist" while subservient to the Kremlin?) and about the comparative "evils" of Western communism and Western anti-communism (which one was a greater threat to liberal democracy?) are still around. The evidence and analysis provided by Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky, however, speak strongly. They demonstrate once again that in studying the effects of the early cold war on such "frontier" countries as Italy, one cannot any longer ignore international and transnational dimensions – and sources that can clarify these dimensions.

Participants:

Elena Aga-Rossi (or Agarossi) has taught as Full Professor of contemporary history and history of international relations in various universities in Italy and at the Scuola superiore della Pubblica Amministrazione in Rome. Her research interests focus on the history of political parties, Italian foreign politics, the Second World War, and the Cold War. Her current project involves a book on Italy and the Allies, 1943-1945. Among her publications are : *Stalin and Togliatti, Italy and the Origins of the Cold War*, (con Victor Zaslavsky) Stanford: Stanford University press, 2011 (Italian ed. *Togliatti e Stalin, Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1997, premio Acqui storia 1998, II ed. 2007); *Una guerra a parte, I militari italiani nei Balcani, 1940-1945* ((with M. Teresa Giusti), Il Mulino, Bologna, 2011; *A Nation Collapses*, Cambridge University Press, 2000 (Italian ed. *Una nazione allo sbando, l'armistizio italiano del settembre 1943*, Il Mulino: Bologna, III ed. 2003; *Operation Sunrise: the Secret Surrender*, con B.F. Smith, New York, Basic Books, 1979, (Italian ed. *La resa tedesca in Italia*, Feltrinelli, 1980; II ed. *Operation Sunrise*, Mondadori, 2005); *L'Italia nella sconfitta*, ESI, Napoli, 1985; *Gli Stati Uniti e le origini della guerra fredda*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1984.

Vladislav M. Zubok, Professor of History at Temple University, Philadelphia. He received Ph.D. in history in Moscow, and is the author and co-author of several books, including *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* with C. Pleshakov (Harvard University Press, 1996) that received the Lionel Gelber prize, and *A Failed Empire: the Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), that received the Marshall Shulman prize. Most recently, he published *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Belknap Press, 2009). He currently works on a project exploring the interplay of international and domestic factors during the final years of the Soviet Union

John L. Harper is Resident Professor of American Foreign Policy and European Studies at the Bologna Center of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). His book *The Cold War* was published by Oxford University Press in 2011. He is also the author of *America and the Reconstruction of Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1986); *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and *American Machiavelli: Alexander Hamilton and the Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Caroline Kennedy-Pipe is Professor of War Studies at the University of Hull. She is also Director of the Centre for Security Studies. Her publications include *The Origins of the Cold War* (2007), *Russia and the World* (1998) and numerous articles on the Cold War itself.

Silvio Pons is Professor of East European History at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata". He has written on Stalin's foreign policy, International Communism, Cold War History, Eurocommunism. In English he has published *Stalin and the Inevitable War* (Frank Cass: London, 2002) and co-edited *A Dictionary of 20th Century Communism* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2010). He is currently working at a history of International Communism in the twentieth century.

Federico Romero received his Ph.D. from the University of Torino in 1987. He is Professor of History of Post-War European Cooperation and Integration at the European University Institute. He has written on trans-Atlantic relations, Italy in the Cold War, United States foreign policy and European reconstruction. His latest book is *Storia della guerra fredda* (Einaudi 2009). He is currently working at an international history of European integration in the 1970s.

This book, published in Italian in 1997 and updated in 2007, is a thought-provoking contribution to the historiography of Western European Communism and the early Cold war period. Its main virtue is that, using reports written by Soviet ambassador to Rome, Mikhail Kostylev, available in the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, it provides a more complete picture than heretofore available of relations between the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) and the USSR. The authors seem intent on revising the conventional view (encouraged by Communist historians) of the PCI as a cautious and moderate party, and one which sought and enjoyed a degree of independence from the Kremlin. As for the elusive figure of Palmiro Togliatti, they cite contrasting interpretations. For the Catholic historian Pietro Scoppola, Togliatti fought for a degree of autonomy and began “a process of cautious disentanglement of Italian Communism from the Soviet model.” (310) According to the former Communist Aldo Natoli, however, Togliatti had been “constrained to become one of the protagonists in the Stalinization of the International Communist movement. Over the years, this constraint had slowly evolved into a voluntary and eventually zealous cooperation.” (310). For the authors, newly accessible documentation “unquestionably favors” the latter view. (310) Do they make a convincing case? In this reviewer’s humble opinion they do not, and at times do not seem entirely convinced themselves. Indeed, some of the evidence they scrupulously present and the conclusions they judiciously draw support the more traditional view: the PCI cultivated an autonomous position and had a mind and will of its own.

Early on, the book makes the basic argument that, given Joseph Stalin’s aim to enlarge the Soviet sphere, “foreign Communist parties could not represent their national interests even in principle.” (32) But they soon cite a June 1940 (i.e., during the Nazi-Soviet pact) document composed by French Communist Party (PCF) leader Maurice Thorez “appealing for greater resistance to the Nazi aggressor to guarantee French independence.” (40) In June 1944, Togliatti argued for the unity of the partisan movement because it “would accentuate the *national character* of our military arm and would strongly reconfirm the national character of our political agenda.” (95-96) Obviously, this was in line with Stalin’s policy at the time of giving precedence to the war effort against the Germans and to the formation of “national fronts.” But even if for some reason they had preferred not to, the Italian Communists would have been constrained to try to defend Italian national interests in order to put down roots and grow. On the question of Trieste (where until 1948 Moscow supported Yugoslav claims), the authors conclude that the PCI’s “public declarations in favor of an Italian Trieste masked behind-the-scenes maneuvering aimed at transferring the city to Yugoslavia to satisfy the interests of the Soviet Union and of the Socialist bloc.” (157) But this contradicts their own account showing that Togliatti initially clashed with Tito over the issue and then proposed a compromise solution, a trade of the less important town of Gorizia to Yugoslavia in return for Italian control of Trieste. On the equally vexed question of the tens of thousands of Italian prisoners-of-war unaccounted for in the USSR, the authors show that the PCI failed to take a strong position vis-à-vis Moscow. But they also note that even in the approaches to the question of Christian Democratic premier Alcide De Gasperi and Italian ambassador to Moscow Pietro Quaroni “it is difficult to find any

adversarial comments or policies against the Soviet Union. There was complete awareness of the fact that Italy was a vanquished nation that could not expect any concessions by the victorious powers.” (172) Although the Italian Communists delivered little or nothing of benefit to Italy from their Soviet connection, Charles de Gaulle’s shrewd observation that “Communism subsists to the extent that it is nationalism,”¹ nonetheless applies to the PCI. The party’s appeal to millions of members and non-members (representing about a third of the electorate by the 1970s) was never simply, or even mainly, that it would supposedly bring “real socialism” to Italy at some point. Many joined, or voted for, the PCI because (along with the memory of its resistance role, and its weight in local government and the trade unions) it opposed American meddling in Italian politics and the Christian Democrats’ subservience to the United States.

A notable feature of the book is that the authors take the Italian Communists to task “from the left” as well as “from the right.” They give a detailed and useful account of the March 1944 *svolta di Salerno*, Togliatti’s return to Italy and the PCI’s decision to support Marshall Pietro Badoglio’s monarchical cabinet. Preferring a national unity government for strategic reasons, Stalin vetoed Togliatti’s alternative policy calling for the discredited Marshall’s resignation and the abdication of the king. The authors acknowledge Togliatti’s moderating influence: “His role in preventing a civil war immediately after the liberation of northern Italy should not be underestimated. The fact that the revolutionary impulse, which continued to come to the surface during the Resistance within the party, was curbed was largely due to his own efforts.” (95) But voicing a lament typical of progressive historiography they add that the 1944 *svolta* had decidedly negative consequences. The decision to support Badoglio “invariably [sic] diluted the program of ‘striking at the head and saving the body,’ thereby delaying the democratic renovation of the state and undermining the policy of defascistization.” (115) This implies that Italy would have been better off if the PCI and its fellow anti-Fascist parties had taken a more radical, adversarial position. Although it is tempting to think otherwise, it is not at all clear that the British and American occupiers would have tolerated such an approach and/or that there was an *occasione perduta* (a missed chance) in 1944-45 for a thorough-going renewal of the Italian state. In any event, the authors offer little evidence to show how or why this might have come to pass.

The book characterizes the PCI’s early postwar economic program as “openly anticapitalistic,” “antimarket,” and “inspired by the Soviet model.” (187, 191) In the words of another disaffected Communist, Luciano Cafagna, it combined ““messianic social promise”” with a ““protective safety net.”” (188) But the same could be said of the contemporary British Labour Party program. The difference between Labour and the PCI is that the British socialists were determined and effective when it came to reforming the national economy, while the Italian Communists for the most part paid lip service to their goals. A case in point was Communist finance minister Mauro Scoccimarro’s 1945 proposal for a currency conversion with attendant taxes aimed at wartime and Fascist-era profiteers (the famous *cambio della moneta*, briefly discussed in the book). Such anti-inflationary and

¹ Quoted in J.-R. Tournoux, *La Tragédie du Général* (Paris: Plon, 1967), 167.

revenue-raising measures were hardly anticapitalist and were adopted elsewhere in Western Europe after the war. Togliatti, hoping to cultivate and reassure the middle-classes, declined to back the proposal, helping to sink a useful reform supported by U.S. and non-Communist Italian economic experts. The PCI leader's cautious stance on the issue was of a piece with his support of an amnesty for former Fascists and inclusion of the controversial 1929 Lateran Pacts between the Fascist regime and the Vatican in the new constitution. The Communists did attempt to defend the jobs and purchasing power of their working class constituency but at no point tied their participation in government to the adoption of measures such as currency conversion or the nationalization of banks and public utilities. In striking contrast to early postwar French and British experience, no nationalizations were carried out.²

The authors acknowledge that the PCI cannot be described "as a totally subordinate entity, serving as the docile instrument of the Soviet dictator." (321) In the areas of mobilization-recruitment, and inter-party relations, the PCI enjoyed considerable leeway. Only in a third area, "relevant to Soviet foreign policy interests," did the Kremlin "rigidly control objectives and methods, leaving the PCI little room for maneuver." (322) But even here, they admit, "Togliatti and other PCI leaders should not be viewed as mere executors of Stalin's orders and directives." (322) When Stalin was undecided, the PCI could take the initiative and exert some influence. The relationship of the two is "paradigmatic of the Stalinist system, in which the center dominated the periphery but also sensed and responded to feedback from the periphery." (322) If so, the word "dominated" ought to be qualified by quotation marks. And the observation calls into question the authors' flat statement that the decision against armed action by the Communists on the eve of the April 1948 elections "was made by the Soviet leadership rather than by the PCI." (256) As they rightly point out, Togliatti had always considered the "Greek" or "insurrectional option" as "the greatest danger to the PCI." (233) Although he feared civil war during the election campaign, his position had not changed. In March, Togliatti requested a meeting with Kostylev to have Moscow's guidance but also to warn that armed action by the Italian Popular Front could trigger a wider war. Moscow then "ordered" the PCI to eschew an uprising. Stalin was strongly disinclined toward armed action, but there is no reason to believe he did not take Togliatti's warning into account. Had Stalin decided otherwise, the authors claim, "he would have found sufficient enthusiasm for armed insurrection among the PCI leaders, from [Pietro] Secchia . . . to [Pietro] Nenni [sic], and even to Togliatti himself."³ This is dubious, at least as far as Togliatti is concerned. Togliatti was not even enthusiastic about being designated premier in the case of an electoral victory, let alone about presiding over a suicidal uprising. "[I]f I accept," he told Kostylev, "there will be massive sabotage and resistance by the state apparatus, the bourgeoisie and the industrialists. The Anglo-American forces will support

² In France the coal, electrical, and gas industries were nationalized, along with the Bank of France, major deposit banks, civil aviation, and the Renault car company. In Britain the list includes railways, coal, iron and steel, gas, electricity, and the Bank of England.

³ Togliatti's rival Secchia was the leader of the "insurrectionist" faction of the PCI. Nenni was the leader of the Italian Socialist Party, allied to the PCI.

this sabotage.” (265) The authors say it is an illusion to think a Popular Front victory would have led to something other than “a Soviet-type society in Italy.” (273) In reality, it would have led to a reaction much like the one Togliatti predicted. In the case of the PCI’s acquisition of power by *legal* means, Washington planned to strengthen its military position in the Mediterranean, initiate military staff talks with selected nations, and provide the anti-Communist underground in Italy with financial and military assistance, among other steps.⁴

It is hard to avoid two conclusions about 1944-1953. First, Stalin had written off Italy and both he and Togliatti realized that the PCI’s acquisition of power would have triggered a counter-offensive by Italian anti-Communists, backed by the United States. Second, from De Gasperi’s point of view, if the PCI had not existed it would have been useful to invent it. The party was strong and provocative enough to alarm the Italian middle classes and the Americans and to convince the latter to provide serious economic aid. But it was fragile and co-operative enough not to pose a threat to the fledgling democratic political system. On the contrary-- and although the authors claim it was not a democratic party (320), and say nothing about its role in the writing and approval of the new constitution--the PCI was one of the main founders and stake-holders of the new democratic state. It soon became deeply attached to and dependent for its survival on the parliamentary system it had helped to build. The book concludes, intentionally or otherwise, on a note of ambiguity. Togliatti is portrayed as “a rigid defender of the Stalinist regime and empire” after 1953. (323) Yet he had the backbone to reject Stalin’s invitation to head the Cominform in 1951, quarreled with the Stalinist Thorez, promoted “polycentrism” and the autonomy of Communist parties in the late 1950s, and helped to inspire Mikhail Gorbachev’s reformism. After all of the authors’ efforts to judge and classify him, the reader is left asking, “Will the real Togliatti please stand up?”

⁴ See “Position of the United States with Respect to Italy in the Light of the Possibility of Communist Participation in the Government of Italy by Legal Means (NSC 1/3),” 8 March 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, 3: 779.

The Personal is Political: Stalin, Togliatti and the Cold War in Italy

Many people picking up this book might be tempted to see it as merely a view from the side-lines of the Cold War – the internal ideological war in Italy. An important sideline, of course, as the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) was the largest Communist Party in Western Europe, and Italy a central player in European politics, but a sideline for all that. However, such a reaction would be very wide of the mark, as this impressive collection clearly demonstrates. The book is especially strong in highlighting two aspects of the cold war – in Italy but also elsewhere – that have not, I think, been commented on enough in the recent literature: The *internal* ideological dimensions of the cold war and the impact personality has on ‘local’ policy and in particular the relationship between these two aspects.

Of course, the Cold War had numerous fronts, and the ideological struggle, which outlasted the territorial division of Europe made at Yalta in 1945 was central to all of them. And of nowhere was this truer than in Italy. After World War II, at least for a few years, Italy was a key testing ground for Stalin’s personal world view. Despite the fact that it had become home to some 600,000 British and American military personnel, Italy was initially regarded as a likely incubator for Communism by the Kremlin, partly because of what was perceived to be class polarization within society between the forces of Capitalism, led by the Christian Democrats in league with the Americans, and the opposing forces of Communism, the PCI led by Palmiro Togliatti. Togliatti had become leader of the PCI after his friend and mentor, Antonio Gramsci, was sent to prison by Mussolini. He spent much of the 1920’s, 1930’s and 1940’s in exile in the Soviet Union, returning to Italy only in 1944. It was then that, in the teeth of ideological hostility from within the PCI – and to some extent from outside also – he pushed the party to adopt the *svolta di salerno* - the Salerno turn – which saw the PCI support Italian democracy and abandon the idea of the revolutionary struggle by force of arms.

This book helps us to understand the twists and turns of this period extraordinarily well. The authors clearly demonstrate that, contrary to much Marxist historiography, an independent PCI in Italy was never much more than a myth. Moscow dominated the thinking of the PCI from the late 1920’s to the mid-fifties at least and was influential even under the famously volatile and erratic Khrushchev. Even after the death of Stalin in 1953, Togliatti was strongly influenced by Moscow although he, like Mao, never had much respect for Khrushchev personally.

Those of us who work in the field of International Relations are used, of course, to allegedly ‘structural’ accounts of how the world changed after 1945 and how the newly minted bi-polar system determined the actions of states - and statesmen. As Kenneth Waltz has long argued, this was a world where the actions of states were determined by the structural

logic of the system.¹ Not according to this book. What emerges here is a story of personality and enduring and in many ways charismatic leadership. In Cold War historiography, as opposed to the field of International Relations Theory we are indeed used to the interpretations of the grotesque dictator Stalin as a one-man band, outmanoeuvring FDR and Churchill on every occasion in pursuit of Soviet ambition. The stories of his cruelty, manipulation and impenetrable self belief dominate scholarly debates over why Europe took the shape it did after 1945. This collection provides us with another charismatic figure – Togliatti.

As the book clearly shows, the Italian leader was an incredibly durable figure, much like Stalin himself. Becoming Party Secretary in 1927, he was at the time of his death in 1964 still a central figure and leader of what had become a mass party – the largest communist party in Western Europe, heir to Gramsci and mentor to the man who would take over the PCI, Enrico Berlinguer. Along the way he survived assassination attempts, fratricidal strife within the PCI and two sets of changes of the communist party in Moscow. This is in many ways a study of how individual leadership really mattered to the shape of the Cold War in Italy and indeed Italian politics in general. Togliatti's embrace of Soviet ambitions and ideology was exactly that: an embrace, not an imposition. Relations were thus never equal between the Kremlin and the PCI; what emerges throughout this collection is the way in which Italian national interests were almost invariably sacrificed by the PCI and its masters in the Kremlin, not to the greater class and global struggle but (perhaps inevitably) rather to Soviet interests. The issue of Italian POWs, for example, is a sorry tale of Soviet obstructionism in providing details of those Italians held captive by Soviet forces and there is an even sorer story of the political difficulties of their repatriation after war. The fate of individual Italians sacrificed to the maintenance of Soviet power had little bearing on the PCI and its mission to satisfy Moscow. While the Communist movement in Western Europe long feasted on its reputation as a glorious anti-fascist bulwark, the tale here is murkier. This is not so much a question of how central Togliatti had personally been in the resistance to fascism but rather more about creating a mythological past to sustain Communist claims to legitimacy.

In terms of the broader debates over the origins of the Cold War there is an abundance of evidence here for those scholars who have pointed to the limits and limitations of Soviet power after 1947. There was, according to this account, an obvious lack of Soviet interest in exercising power in Italy after the rejection of the Marshall Plan (by the Soviets themselves) and the seismic events of 1948 which saw a reinvigorated United States under Harry Truman 'face down' through the airlift Communist attempts to force the American presence out of Berlin. In fact the story of this book is that Stalin's ambitions were 'relatively' restrained and he rarely hesitated to sacrifice global revolution to the more mundane tasks of supporting the Soviet national interest, in what became, certainly in the case of Italy and Western Europe, a defensive, not an offensive, strategy. Meddling was perhaps too difficult and certainly too dangerous after the creation of NATO.

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979. Reading Mass, Addison-Wesley.

The world that this book discusses is, of course, long gone. But in addition to its painstaking exploration of an important and rather neglected aspect of cold war history, that of Italy, the book might also give us something to ponder for today. One only need think of the relationship of George Bush and Tony Blair (or indeed, the relationship of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown!) to realize just how central the personal aspects of politics are to the successful outcome (or not) of policy. For all that politicians will often say that what really matters are 'the issues' (whatever those issues might in fact be) – the issues always come wrapped up with, and are presented by, individuals: people who we can like, or detest, admire or repudiate. History – of the cold war, of our own times – is never just about 'social forces' or 'systemic structures', however important such things are: it is about the messy, not always rational and often maddening interplay of likes and dislikes, charm and menace, that characterises the interpersonal relations of the individuals that make it up. Togliatti was, by all accounts, a rather cold and distant personality driven by ideology perhaps, but also clearly by ego. In international politics he was, however, always outplayed by a man with a bigger ego still – Stalin.

This book is one of the most important contributions to the re-writing of the history of the Italian Communist Party published in the last twenty years. The availability of archival sources after 1989-91 has been crucial to historians not only regarding the former Communist countries but also about Western Communist parties - even more so in the Italian case, as archives were opened both in Moscow and in Rome. It is worth recalling that the most serious effort to undertake a study of the new sources after the end of Communism in Russia and Europe was promoted from the early 1990s thanks to Italian cultural institutions, in particular the Feltrinelli Foundation in Milan. Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, among others, took part in a pioneering conference organized by the Feltrinelli Foundation in 1994, with a paper that was three years later developed into their book.¹ Though obviously presenting different views, historians involved in that conference shared a basic assumption - the relationship with Moscow must be seen as a central historical issue for the Communist parties (including the PCI) even in the postwar era. This topic was often overlooked or even neglected in previous historiography on the PCI, which was mainly absorbed by the national aspect of Italian Communism. One of the tasks to be accomplished by employing the new sources was to restore the international side of the story as the only way to build up a proper historical understanding of Italian Communism. This is an essential background to the book here reviewed, one to which this reviewer has also contributed.²

Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky emphasize the hierarchical relationship between Stalin and Togliatti. They have good reasons for this. In the aftermath of the war, no fundamental political and strategic decision of the Italian leader in international policy was taken without asking for Stalin's thinking and attitude. Like all other European Communist leaders, Togliatti believed in the primacy of Soviet interest and tried to harmonize it with the national policy of his party - though this was fairly easier at the end of the war, when the anti-Fascist coalition was still in place, than some years later, when the Cold War had begun. Contrary to what a long standing narrative told us, the so-called "svolta di Salerno" - the political proposal to establish a coalition government that created the premise for Communist influence in postwar Italy - was not an autonomous choice of Togliatti's, since his political line resulted from a meeting with Stalin held just before he left Moscow, in the night of 3-4 March 1944. Evidence from the diary of Georgi Dimitrov provides us with such crucial information.³

¹ *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, edited by F. Gori and S. Pons (London: Macmillan, 1996).

² *Dagli archivi di Mosca. L'URSS, il Cominform e il PCI, 1943-1951*, a cura di F. Gori e S. Pons, (Roma: Carocci, 1998). S. Pons, *L'impossibile egemonia. L'URSS, il PCI e le origini della guerra fredda (1943-1948)* (Roma: Carocci, 1999). S. Pons, "Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3 (Spring 2001): 3-27.

³ G. Dimitrov, *Diario. Gli anni di Mosca (1934-1945)*, a cura di S. Pons (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), pp. 691-93.

The authors could have shown more accurately how the meeting between Stalin and Togliatti was the starting point of a wavering and uncertain definition of policy in Moscow on the Italian question - what should Soviet diplomacy and the Communists do in the first European country liberated by allied armies, which was quite probably destined to stay under Western influence. They observe that Togliatti was the first to think of Communist participation in the post-Fascist Badoglio Government, at the time of the Moscow Conference of October 1943, and that later he abandoned this hypothesis in favour of the idea of following the anti-monarchic uncompromising suggestions carried out by anti-Fascists in Italy. However, the authors maintain that the Kremlin did not support the radical turn embraced by Togliatti and Dimitrov in late January 1944 (63-64), while we know that Molotov approved it.⁴ Eventually Stalin did not just reject the line advocated by Dimitrov and Togliatti (66), but also a line that had been sanctioned by Molotov - quite probably because in the meantime the opportunity had appeared to establish diplomatic relations with the Italian government. In other words, when Stalin took his final decision he was choosing between two different options that had previously emerged - eventually resolving himself to combine the Soviet recognition of the Badoglio government with Communist participation in it -, and not simply imposing his will on blind subordinates. The focus on the subordination of Togliatti and the polemics against old historiographical interpretations should not lead to our overlooking the real decision-making process.

Nevertheless, the authors convincingly argue that the political line followed by Togliatti from March-April 1944 was not an Italian peculiarity. As other scholars have demonstrated, it was instead a general line adopted by Stalin towards the European Communist parties, later suggested to the French Communists as well. Italy was the first country where the formula of “national fronts” was applied to the formation of government, though the increasing emergence of “spheres of influence” in the second half of 1944 would entail different consequences between East Central Europe and Western Europe.⁵

Soviet policy was probably less consistent and the Communist movement less monolithic than the authors assume, even at the end of World War Two. Despite directives from Moscow, pressures for radical action even in the West were widespread in the parties as well as among personalities. The most important Soviet diplomat in Europe, Aleksander Bogomolov, harshly criticized Togliatti for his restraint as early as the fall of 1944. The Greek Communists’ insurrectionist line (eventually taking the outcome of the uprising and repression in December 1944, out of Stalin’s control) was clearly influenced by the Yugoslavs and had supporters inside the PCI. The question of Trieste could not be resolved

⁴ S. Pons, *Togliatti e Stalin*, in *Togliatti nel suo tempo*, a cura di R. Gualtieri, C. Spagnolo, E. Taviani (Roma: Carocci, 2007), p. 206. RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 1231, ll. 1-2.

⁵ For a review, see S. Pons, “Stalin and the European Communists after World War Two (1943-1948),” in *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe. International Perspectives, 1945-1949*, edited by M. Mazower, J. Reinisch, and D. Feldman, *Past&Present Supplement 6* (2011): 121-38.

easily, causing tension between Togliatti and Tito, and Moscow took some months before coming to a decision in favour of the Yugoslavs' claims (a conclusion reversed in a few days after the Western reaction to the Yugoslav occupation of the city in May-June 1945). No doubt, however, Togliatti always leaned on Stalin's authority, even more than Tito did. After having repeatedly asked for Moscow's arbitration, Togliatti accepted Stalin's decision on Trieste, though this obviously damaged attempts to enhance the national image of the Italian Communists (143-44). At the same time, he rejected the "Greek line" by upholding the priority of preserving the international war coalition and to avoid civil war in Italy, thus following Stalin's apparent orientation in Western Europe.

The main sources of the book, essentially based on the diplomatic correspondence between the Soviet Ambassador in Rome, Mikhail Kostylev, and the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and on records of his conversations with Italian Communist leaders, provide strong evidence of the close relationship between the PCI leadership and Moscow even after the end of the war. Interesting insights are supplied on a number of momentous issues concerning the role of the PCI in the coalition governments up to May 1947, and on how the problem of reconciling the role of a ruling force with the implantation of a mass party preoccupied Togliatti. The background to the rejection of the Marshall Plan and the sudden shift of the Italian Communists from cautious openness to radical (and self-damaging) refusal, under Stalin's pressure, is highlighted by the relevant evidence (see particularly 227 ff.).

There is, however, also a limitation here. The correspondence between Moscow and the Soviet Embassy in Rome is in fact almost the only archival source used in the book. In particular, the authors failed to employ archival documentation on the Cominform available in Moscow at RGASPI (the Cominform papers and, especially, the personal papers of Zhdanov and Molotov). This weakens their analysis of the establishment of the Cominform and of the period after September 1947 - though the book contains important information about the para-military organization then created by the Communists and about Moscow's funding. The authors rightly state that Stalin's policy towards Italy can be understood only in the "historical context", taking into account above all Yugoslavia and Greece (256). But again, Stalin's strategies are presented as fully coherent, while the radical turn outlined by mobilizing the Western Communists in order to destabilize the Western bloc was largely contradicted and reversed a few months later, in the mounting conflict with Tito. Moscow furnished material support to the Greek Communists when the civil war started again in the Spring-Summer of 1947 (257), but the Greeks were not admitted in the Cominform (despite pressures from the Yugoslavs) and in February 1948 Stalin dismissed their struggle as hopeless (a verdict fully confirmed at the second Cominform conference in June 1948, when Tito was excommunicated). The Communist coup of February 1948 in Prague announced the definitive Sovietization of East Central Europe, but did not prepare an offensive in Western Europe, despite perceptions of the Communist threat.

In Italy, as the authors remark, there was no thrust and no pattern for a Communist takeover. Already by mid-December 1947, Stalin made clear to the hardliner Pietro Secchia that civil war in Italy was not on the agenda, approving Togliatti's arguments to that effect. Mass mobilization against the Marshall Plan had limits, though the Soviet leader

ambiguously stated the one should be ready for any ~~evidence~~ convenience - a typical Communist pronouncement. Between the end of 1947 and the first months of 1948, on the eve of the political elections of April, what went on in Italy was a dangerous escalation in the mutual perception of menace on both contending political sides. In such a climate, quite well portrayed in the book, Togliatti took the initiative to probe Stalin about the prospect of civil war in Italy, receiving a response even more prudent than a few months before. Given the relations between the PCI and Moscow, Togliatti's move is scarcely surprising. According to the authors, the Italian Communists "faithfully followed the policies laid out by Stalin, including the decision of whether to resort to armed insurrection" (262). This seems undeniable, but some important nuance has been lost here. In fact, we know that Togliatti told Kostylev that even in case of a response from Moscow in favour of insurrection, the PCI would take action only in extreme circumstances and he warned that this would probably lead to a new world war.⁶ Now, if words have meaning, while asking for Stalin's attitude, Togliatti was also expressing his own view (as he had done a few months before) in the oblique Communist mood - a view quite reluctant towards embracing the scenery of civil war. To be sure, "Togliatti's moderation", as the authors argue, "would not have saved Italy from a civil war" had Stalin decided otherwise (262-63). Still, Togliatti played a not entirely passive role, possibly looking forward to Moscow's response also as a means to controlling the most radical tendencies in the party. The combination between Soviet interest in focusing on the building of the Eastern bloc, avoiding dangerous involvement in a central Western country like Italy, on one side, and Togliatti's prevailing stance to self-restraint, on the other side, was the decisive factor - as the aftermath of the attack against the same Togliatti would soon confirm in July 1948. Stalin's sense of the limits of his own power had not averted civil war in Greece. Contrary to the situation in Greece, the role of Italian political personalities (De Gasperi in primis, but also Togliatti and Nenni) was crucial to prevent the country from jumping into a catastrophic abyss.

Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky seem satisfied with the accomplishment of a single task: showing how Togliatti depended on Stalin in strategic international decisions and how the PCI was not so different from the other communist parties. Their book achieves this task. In particular, they provide a significant contribution to highlighting the existence of a core political culture and language shared by all Communists in the late Stalin era. But what are we told about "Italy in the Cold War" and about the persistent presence of Communism in Italian postwar society? The basic idea of the book is that the Italian Communists established their "hegemony" and that, thanks to Stalin's leadership, they put into effect successful policies, despite their failure to seize power by parliamentary means. It's hard to follow the authors along such interpretation for two reasons:

First, the rejection of the Marshall Plan imposed by Stalin produced a very negative outcome for all the Western Communist parties, and the PCI was no exception. In April 1948 the Italian Communists suffered a landslide defeat clearly influenced by their

⁶ M. Narinsky, Stalin, Togliatti e Thorez (1944-1948), in Gori, Pons (eds), *Dagli archivi di Mosca*, pp. 82-83. APRF, f. 3, op. 3, d. 198, ll. 55-58.

senseless mobilization against American aid (not balanced by any concrete prospect of Soviet aid). This is a point underlined by the same authors, quoting the authoritative judgment of Charles Maier (219).⁷ As a matter of fact, the PCI was excluded from any influence on government for decades to come. Subsequent Communist mobilization against Italy's entry into NATO was a failure. The Christian Democrats dominated the Italian political system. Catholic hegemony, not a Communist one, was established in the country. In this light, the idea that the PCI was successful in its attempts "to undermine the Western camp from the inside" (3) is contradictory and unconvincing. True, the PCI gained consensus between intellectuals, largely as a reaction against defeat, and preserved its huge mass base, displaying its mobilizational capacity in the pacifist anti-American campaigns and outlining its majority role in the Italian left. But this was essentially a survival strategy, if an extremely skillful and effective one. And it was mainly Togliatti's strategy, not Stalin's. To be sure, the Soviet dictator inspired peace propaganda and campaigns in 1949-50 (288-98). Nevertheless, he tolerated but never encouraged the PCI's praxis to lessen ideological vigilance, including anti-religious prejudices, to maximize Communist roots in all social strata, and he obviously had nothing to do with the cultural conquest of intellectuals projected through Gramsci's writings. The significant influence of the PCI in Italian society should be put in this more realistic perspective.

Second, the long-standing presence of the PCI in Italian society and its capacity to maintain a large majority of votes in the Left up to 1989 cannot be understood exclusively in terms of international history. The political defeat of the Popular Front in 1948 no doubt prevented Italy from running the risk of shifting towards the "socialist camp". Then, as the authors state, "democracy and free political competition saved the PCI from itself" (326). But why could the PCI maintain mostly intact its strength for almost four decades after Stalin's death, while other Western Communist parties could not, including the PCF? Wasn't there at work some national peculiarity of the country - quite discernible even in the early post-war years - for example the weakness of reform-oriented cultures not only inside the Left, but also between the moderates and in Italian society? Furthermore, when the PCI reached its peak of consensus under Berlinguer in the 1970s, was it because of the persistence of the Stalinist myths and heritage - which in fact were falling apart in Europe and in the world -, or was it because of its capacity to adapt to republican democracy, attaining credibility among non Communist voters, despite the ambiguity of residual links with the Soviet Union? The book by Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky provides no key to such questions. Nevertheless, it is worth reading in order to gain a considerable picture of Italian Communism's organic connection to the Soviet Union in the Stalin era.

⁷ On the impact of American containment in Europe, see now F. Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), pp. 49-72.

This is an unusual book, in format as well as content. Originally published in Italy in 1997 (with a revised edition in 2007) it used the newly opened Soviet archives to explore the relationship between Soviet and Italian Communist leaders at the close of World War II and during reconstruction. Its focus on the constant correspondence and conversations that took place in Moscow and then at the Soviet Embassy in Rome, once Togliatti had got back to Italy in March 1944, is enlightening. We see close coordination, with the Soviets collecting detailed information and the Italians regularly and carefully consulting Moscow on major decisions. We see an Italian Communist party (PCI) with ample autonomy in its domestic activities, close consultation with Moscow on strategic decisions concerning national policies and politics, and direct Soviet guidance on most matters – certainly all the major ones - affecting Soviet foreign policy interests. Thus, we have a valuable view on Stalin’s priorities and goals in Southern Europe. Perhaps more revealingly, we see a PCI leadership that does not so much submit to Moscow but rather shares Stalin’s overall analysis of the opportunities and predicaments facing the Communist movement in the post-war landscape, and partakes of his strategy of consolidating Soviet power in Eastern Europe while preserving and, if possible, enlarging Communist influence in the West. In short, Togliatti and his comrades were part and parcel of a Soviet-centred Communist movement whose outlook was largely unified around Moscow’s vision and strategy (and when different views emerged, they were prepared to follow Stalin’s directives anyway). However intellectually refined, they were Stalinists. As the authors state, “The common ideology and Communist identity determined analogous choices and reactions” (323).

The original book took aim at the widely-held notion that the PCI was a different type of Communist party, with an independent culture and a different vision of the relationship between socialism and democracy. It proved that for the Stalin era this notion was bogus. In doing so, it highlighted those moments when the PCI’s identification with Soviet socialism contrasted most vividly with Italian interests and put the PCI in a tight spot: on the issue of Trieste, on the disappearance of most Italian POWs in Russia, and on the Marshall Plan.

That the PCI’s adherence to Soviet strategic views and goals sidelined it in a robust but often awkward and ultimately ineffective opposition had already been established in the historiography on Italy’s reconstruction¹. But Elena Aga-Rossi’s and Victor Zaslavsky’s use of Soviet documents gave unprecedented depth and vividness to our perception of the inherent oneness of thought among the Communist leaders of that time. They contributed

¹ See John Harper, *America and the reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Federico Romero, “Gli Stati Uniti in Italia: Piano Marshall e Patto Atlantico” in F. Barbagallo (ed.) *Storia dell’Italia Repubblicana* (Torino, Einaudi, 1994) vol. I, pp. 231-289; Giampaolo Valdevit, *La questione di Trieste 1941-1954: politica internazionale e contesto locale* (Milano: F. Angeli, 1986).

to a profound historiographical renewal on post-war international Communist coordination that had a particularly important dimension in Italy².

The book's focus on debunking the legend that Italy had "a 'different' type of Communism" (273) and its consequent reliance on one set of records (the Soviet documents), was its main asset but also its limitation. And not much has changed in this revised English edition. There is a new introduction and some updated discussions of the large literature published since, but in structure and thrust the text is still very close to the initial one. This means that it is quite original and useful in conveying the PCI leadership's adherence to the Soviet perspective, but also rather narrow in its analysis and not particularly innovative in its interpretations.

In their discussion of the origins of the Cold War, which they chose to frame in terms of "ultimate responsibility" (13), the authors emphasize the "fundamental incompatibility between Soviet and liberal-democratic systems" (13). Cooperation was virtually impossible and antagonism the most probable, almost inevitable outcome. Rivalry took the form of a Cold War because the Soviet leadership and its Communist allies believed in (and in fact could not even imagine anything but) "a relentless struggle between two camps" (14). For Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky this clinches every argument, and they criticize those historians who dwell on some degree of "responsibility" of the United States and the West³.

Few historians today object to the first part of such an argument. That a Marxist-Leninist reading of history, centred on international class struggle, shaped the Communists' view of the world in the 1940s and cast Soviet strategy in a mould of bipolar antagonism, might have surprised some scholars until the early 1990s but it is now almost a truism. More importantly, such exclusive focus on ideology, expectations and intentions does not leave any room for the other actors' agency, much less for actual outcomes. Stalin certainly imagined and shaped a world of bipolar antagonism, but the Cold War he got was not the one he wanted. An Atlantic alliance instead of intra-capitalist rivalries, a solid arc of containment pivoted on West Germany and guaranteed by American arms, an interconnected and soon booming Western economy: these key components of the Cold War system were the nightmare rather than the creation of a Marxist-Leninist worldview. The authors' chosen focus on the shared culture of Italian and Soviet Communists – epitomized by those meetings and exchanges at the Soviet embassy in Rome – makes their evaluation of effects and outcomes rather problematic even in the Italian theatre. They do

² See for instance Silvio Pons, *L'impossibile egemonia: l'URSS, il PCI e le origini della guerra fredda, 1943-1948* (Roma: Carocci, 1999); Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (eds.), *Dagli archivi di Mosca: l'URSS, il Cominform e il Pci, 1943-1951* (Roma: Carocci, 1998); Fabio Bettanin, *Stalin e l'Europa: la formazione dell'impero esterno sovietico, 1941-1953* (Roma: Carocci, 2006). Andrea Guiso, *La colomba e la spada. Lotta per la pace e antiamericanismo nella politica del partito comunista italiano, 1949-1954* (Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2006).

³ Their examples are Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007) and V.O. Pechatnov, *Stalin, Roosevelt, Truman: SSSR I SshA v 1940-kh godakh* (Moscow: Terra, 2006)

not use archival sources on the PCI internal debates, they hardly peruse the party's publications, they do not explore the ways in which adherence to Soviet priorities played out in the party as a whole, much less in public opinion at large, and their contextualization of the party's choices within the country's political interplay is discontinuous and haphazard.

Thus, their commendable work of illuminating "the shared ideology and vision, the shared *lingua franca*" (p. 80) does not translate into the comprehensive analysis of "Italy in the Cold War" that the subtitle promises. Was the Italian peculiarity of a Left dominated by Communists, with Social Democracy marginalized, an effect of Soviet-style penetration and manipulation of the Socialist Party or did it derive from that party's (and the nation's) larger historical conditions and trends? The Soviet stance on Trieste, and the acrobatics it required from Togliatti, obviously damaged the PCI but how did it affect Italy's international position, the Allies' attitudes and the forging of Italy's Western alignment? The Communist rejection of the Marshall Plan substantially weakened their political and electoral appeal. We know the rationale for such a choice in the Soviet's "two camps" strategy, but how did the PCI leaders discuss it, how did it play out in the body of the party, how was it utilized by its adversaries, and how relevant it was in the PCI's electoral defeat of 1948? The authors do not provide answers to this and other questions, and insist – instead – on the Soviet character of the PCI culture and strategy, highlighting the numerous instances when it defined policy choices.

The end result is that a precious, illuminating source is under-utilized as it is directed solely at proving Soviet influence, with the paradoxical result that Moscow's indubitable sway over the PCI strategy in Stalin's years comes to be seen as a resounding accomplishment of Soviet policy towards post-war Italy. In the authors' own words, "the PCI's attempt to undermine the Western camp from the inside...met with obvious success" (3). How are we supposed to square this with the patent failure of the PCI strategy to keep Italy from becoming a solid member of the Western coalition and alliance? With its largely self-imposed opposition role deriving from, among other factors, the Soviet-induced rejection of Marshall aid? With its crucial 1948 electoral defeat that enthroned Christian Democracy at the centre of a national political system that relegated the PCI to opposition for decades to come? The authors maintain, quite convincingly, that it was primarily Stalin's strategy – rather than an in-built aversion of the PCI – to preclude the option of armed insurrection and civil war. Was this reading of the co-relation of forces a symptom of strength and "success"?

The PCI certainly maintained robust roots in Italian society, but that is the only yardstick by which its strategy can be deemed effective: the party's own survival as a mass organization. Ever since 1947, and all the way to the mid-1970s, it did not seriously affect economic policies, it played an obstructive and sporadic role in social policies, and had no influence whatsoever on Italy's foreign policy choices, which remained consistently Western-oriented and anti-Soviet. Even if we leave aside the long-term waning of the Soviet myth throughout Western Europe, Communist post-war policies spelled weakness and defeat in the face of containment, in Italy no less profoundly than elsewhere.

Upon reading and re-reading this puzzling book, the only explanation I can find to this conundrum resides in the notion of “cultural hegemony”, which the authors generously bestow on the PCI and see as a ubiquitous factor dominating Italian life for the entire duration of the Cold War. Once again, I find their reading unpersuasive. The Italian Communist Party had a commanding sway on the Italian Left, at least until the late 1970s, that pivoted on a mythological identification of democracy with anti-fascist unity. Its Marxist culture also exerted considerable influence in broad sections of Italy’s intellectual life, from cinema to literature, but very little, if any, in crucial media like radio and television, which it did not penetrate until the mid-1970s, and even then only partially. And the spreading culture of consumption had a corrosive, if not subversive, effect on the outreach, influence and even self-confidence of Communist culture⁴.

Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky insist, in particular, on a pervasive and persistent prevalence of Communist views in historical scholarship and writing (which they appear to credit with a mighty influence upon the nation’s self-image and identity; I have – I must say - a rather more humble opinion of the historians’ sway in the public arena). In their view, “the most detailed and widely disseminated version of Italian historiography...was produced by Communist historians” (p. 23). Certainly in the post-1968 decade Marxist historiography rode high and spread that notion of the PCI’s “continuous evolution toward greater independence from Moscow” (p.24) that the authors effectively disprove for the early post-war era. This, however, was hardly the case in the 1950s and 1960s, when the liberal (if not nationalist) historical tradition was robustly healthy. Nor was Marxist historiography to remain upon its commanding heights for long. By the 1980s it was in full retreat, and the history of the republican era started to be re-written – at long last on a documentary basis - with little deference to a Communist party mythology that had lost all its lustre. In fact, all the major works that shape the political historiography of post-war Italy - and produce a range of interpretations that, although not consensual, converge around a cluster of shared views – are by scholars whose outlook is anything but Marxist, much less Communist, and who have no truck whatsoever with Communist self-righteousness⁵.

In their effort to expose Communist “cultural hegemony”, Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky get so carried away that they detect its pernicious influence in every reading of Togliatti that differs from theirs. The absurdity of branding the first book by a then 29-year-old historian, who in 1995 proposed a less critical interpretation of Togliatti’s policy on Trieste, as

⁴ Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Emanuela Scarpellini, *Material Nation: A Consumer’s History of Modern Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

⁵ Just to mention a few among the most relevant, Piero Craveri, *De Gasperi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006); Mario Del Pero, *L’alleato scomodo: gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)* (Roma: Carocci, 2001); Ennio Di Nolfo, *Le paure e le speranze degli italiani (1943-1953)*, (Milano: Mondadori, 1986); Guido Formigoni, *La Democrazia Cristiana e l’alleanza occidentale: 1943-1953* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996); Agostino Giovagnoli, *Il partito italiano: la Democrazia Cristiana dal 1942 al 1994* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996); Antonio Varsori, *L’Italia nelle relazioni internazionali dal 1943 al 1992* (Roma: Laterza, 1998).

“official PCI historiography” (p. 156) is unfortunately symptomatic⁶. The claim of an extended, pervasive Communist “cultural hegemony” over a solidly Western, Catholic, capitalist country uninterruptedly governed by coalitions pivoted upon the Christian Democracy is an historically flawed counter-mythology deployed by conservatives as a tool of their own cultural wars. It mirrors the now defunct legend of Italian Communist “difference”, and they feed upon each other. Historians should contextualize and deconstruct them, rather than perpetuate them.

⁶ The reference is to Roberto Gualtieri, *Togliatti e la politica estera italiana : dalla Resistenza al trattato di pace, 1943-1947* (Roma: Ed. Riuniti, 1995)

**Author's Response by Elena Aga-Rossi, professor emeritus of contemporary history,
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I would like to begin by thanking Thomas Maddux for organizing this roundtable, and my colleagues Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, Vladislav Zubok, Federico Romero, Silvio Pons and John Harper for participating in it.

As we noted in the introduction, our book was not intended as yet another of the many histories of Italian Communist party (hereafter, PCI). It is a study of Soviet policy towards the international Communist movement, and in particular of the relations with the PCI. This topic did not receive adequate historical attention prior to our book, in part because of the Communist party's denial of close and clandestine ties with the Soviet Union and also because the relevant documents are absent from the PCI archives in Rome: they were either withdrawn or remained in the Soviet Union, where all the PCI archives were sent in the 1950's. Only the partial opening of the Soviet archives in the early 1990's (some of which have since been closed to historians) gave us the possibility to be the first scholars to consult the Soviet foreign ministry archives on Italy, particularly the crucial correspondence of the Soviet ambassador Mikhail Kostylev reporting to the Kremlin his daily encounters with PCI leadership. Our first essay on this topic was published in 1994, and it was expanded into the first edition of our book in 1997. A second edition, revised with new material, was published in Italy in 2007 – the English translation with a new introduction is the topic of our roundtable.

Significantly, until the publication of the first edition of our book in 1997, the close PCI contacts with the Soviet Union were flatly denied, and the party was portrayed as evolving towards ever growing autonomy from the Soviet model and ideology. Thus, in the canonical history of the PCI by Paolo Spriano in five volumes, Soviet ambassador Kostylev and his contacts with Togliatti did not rate a mention¹.

For this reason, Romero's criticism of our book for ignoring the internal politics of the PCI and the PCI's evolution after Stalin's death is somewhat beside the point. Our focus is on the Stalinist epoch, that is the PCI during the 1943–1953 decade. We also examine internal PCI issues, but only those relevant to Soviet relations and discussed by Palmiro Togliatti and other PCI leaders with the Soviet ambassador. The Italian constitution was not one of them. Also, I was surprised by Pons' and Romero's comments that we had not consulted other archives and sources. A look at the introduction, where we enumerate the various Soviet archives (16-19), and at our endnotes and bibliography should suffice to reject this surprising accusation. True, we could not use the Molotov and Zhdanov papers simply because they were not open at the time of our research, but Chuev's conversations with Molotov are an important source that we cite frequently². We extensively used not only

¹ P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, 5 voll., Torino: Einaudi, 1967- 1975.

² F. Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym*, (Moscow: Terra, 1993); English ed: A Resis, ed. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin's Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993)

Soviet and Italian publications and archival sources, but also American and British, as well as the invaluable documentation coming from the Cold War History Project. However, as was specified in the subtitle of the Italian edition³, our book primarily relies on the incredible richness of Moscow archives and focuses on USSR-PCI relations in the context of Stalin's foreign policy. Soviet documents not only prove beyond doubt the strict dependence of the PCI on Moscow, but also testify to the real values and priorities of the PCI, the ideology of its leadership, its strategies to reach power, and its evaluation of the other parties, enemies and allies alike. Given what we found in the Moscow archives, it is understandable that historians like Harper, who are still convinced that “the PCI cultivated an autonomous position”, can be disappointed.

In our book, the Italian political arena is seen through the eyes of the PCI leadership and particularly Togliatti himself. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe has pointed out the importance of Togliatti's forceful personality to the history of the PCI, which became the most important Communist party in Western Europe. We examine the origins of the Cold War as refracted in Italian politics, because each deterioration in U.S.-USSR relations caused immediate reverberations in the policies pursued by the PCI and because the Cold War divided Italy into two camps contending for power. In the American edition of the book, we added an introduction to explain why in our opinion the Italian case could contribute to the debate on the origins of the Cold War. We did not intend to discuss “responsibility” for the outbreak of the Cold War, as the task of the historian is to try to understand the past, rather than pass judgment. If one looks at the series of events that brought about the Cold War, it seems clear to me that American and Soviet goals for postwar Europe were simply not compatible, given Stalin's overall strategy in the Mediterranean area. Most scholars now agree on the relevance of ideology, which convinced Soviet leaders of the inevitability of a relentless struggle with the capitalist camp, (as was clearly stated at the time by Molotov and the Soviet ambassador to the U.S. Nikolai Novikov). This conviction was tempered by Stalin's belief in “the correlation of forces” and the need for caution and patience whenever the Soviets did not have an absolute predominance of power. In our view, the Soviet dictator was never “wavering and uncertain”, as Pons describes him, following Ivan Maisky. Instead, he had very clear ultimate aims and was convinced that the correlation of forces would favor him sooner or later. Until that time, in order to ensure the reconstruction of his war-ravaged country and consolidation of control over Eastern Europe, Stalin chose the division of Europe into spheres of influence – first discussed in December of 1941 during Anthony Eden's visit to Moscow and again in 1944 with Winston Churchill– that assigned Italy and Greece to the western camp.

During the war, to maximize the war effort, the Soviet Union supported the formation of coalition governments in countries fighting against Germany, with Communist parties encouraged to participate in various national fronts. We describe in our book how this policy, inaugurated immediately after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union with a series of

³ Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin. Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Bologna: Mulino, 2007 (II ed.).

directives given to the Comintern⁴ was imposed on all Western Communist parties in the following years, including the Italian and the French Communist parties. Victor and I discovered, on the basis of Georgi Dimitrov's yet-to-be-published diary, that the collaboration with the Badoglio government was imposed by Stalin on a reluctant Togliatti, who had favored continued opposition to the conservative Badoglio government by the antifascist forces⁵. This discovery provoked a series of attacks against us in Italy, as it infringed on the myth of an autonomous decision by Togliatti. According to Marxist historiography, Togliatti upon his return to Italy from the Soviet Union had convinced the antifascist forces to collaborate with Badoglio – the so-called *svolta di Salerno*. This myth was created by the same Togliatti, who tried to dispel any doubts engendered by the near-simultaneous Soviet recognition of the Badoglio government by falsely claiming that he had left Moscow before that decision. After accusing us of falsification, the historian Aldo Agosti asserted in his biography of Togliatti that it was Dimitrov or “*qualcuno ancora più in alto di lui*”, presumably Stalin, who proposed an anti-Badoglio policy, whereas Togliatti favored collaboration.⁶ Pons, who has edited an Italian translation of a selection of Dimitrov's diaries, accepts our version, as does Kennedy-Pipe, who aptly notes that our book makes clear that “an independent PCI in Italy was never much more than a myth”.

On the other hand Pons still blames us for holding a monolithic view of the Communist movement. In fact, we gave various examples of Stalin's flexible and pragmatic *modus operandi*: contrary to Pons' assertion, we wrote of the existence of different positions in the Soviet Foreign ministry regarding Italy, adding that this situation probably encouraged Togliatti to take the initiative⁷. We also gave various examples of Stalin's flexible and pragmatic *modus operandi*: in particular we reported what I think is one of most telling examples of the Stalinist decision-making process: the stenographic notes of the meeting of Soviet, Bulgarian and Yugoslav leaders on February 10, 1948, to discuss the Greek civil war. At that moment, Stalin accepted the Yugoslav request to continue supporting the Greek partisans, although he expressed his doubts citing the unfavorable “correlations of forces”⁸.

⁴ Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, *Stalin and Togliatti: Italy and the Origins of the Cold War*, (hereafter *Stalin and Togliatti*), 45 ss.; on Stalin's strategy E. Mark, *Revolution by Degrees: Stalin's National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941-1947*, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper n. 31, Washington D.C, 2001.

⁵ *Stalin and Togliatti*, 66-67.

⁶ A. Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Utet, 1996), p. 274. On the harsh polemics which followed our account of the “svolta di Salerno” see the preface to the second Italian edition of *Togliatti and Stalin* and the final section of the second chapter.(7-16; 80-87), which have been omitted in the English edition; also Ugo Finetti, *La resistenza cancellata* (Milano: Ares, 2003), 240-243.

⁷ *Stalin and Togliatti*, 64

⁸ *Stalin and Togliatti*, The stenographic notes of the meeting have been published in “Istoricheskii Arkhiv” 4 (1997): 92-123; for Stalin's statement: ibid. 102; his translation in *Stalin and Togliatti*, 259.

The reviews give short shrift to what is another original aspect of the book: situating Soviet foreign policy towards Italy in the broader context of Stalin's Mediterranean strategy. Thus, we added to the second edition of our book important and previously unavailable documentation on the evolution of Soviet policy towards Yugoslav territorial ambitions and on the Soviet support of the Greek Communist movement. New documentation also gives us deeper insight into questions of the PCI paramilitary apparatus and the generous financing of the PCI by the Soviets. Neither of these aspects has attracted the interest of our critics, as if these findings are trivial or well-known.

Instead, Romero criticizes our limited scope and reproaches us for not having paid sufficient attention to the internal debates of the PCI – a topic already exhaustively examined by other historians. The records of the Party executive and of the Central Committee meetings during the period under discussion contain hardly any discussion of foreign policy except for repeated exhortations on exporting the Soviet model of democracy and a total subservience to Soviet directives. A clear example is the complete reversal of PCI policies after the First Cominform Congress at Szklarska Poreba in September 1947, when the policy of antifascist unity was replaced by an aggressive stance of general strikes and “bitter struggle”. The lone dissenter inside the party, Umberto Terracini, was rebuked by Togliatti, who “mentioned the possibility of an imminent insurrection” stating that a “Communist cannot exclude it forever”⁹. Indeed, Togliatti had never completely excluded the possibility of a revolutionary insurrection: the organizational efforts and mobilization of the postwar years were intended to keep the party on the edge between legal action aimed at expanding the PCI towards a mass party and extra-legal action preparing for a possible civil war. The PCI was at the same time “a party of government and of opposition”, as we have titled the third chapter. On the basis of PCI and Christian Democrat party records, the Italian Interior Ministry records and American documentation, Chapter 8 of our book describes the months from the autumn of 1947 to the spring of 1948, when both parties were preparing for a possible breakout of civil war. In December 1947, mostly likely as a response to a meeting of the PCI executive committee (the record of this meeting is notably absent from the PCI archives), there was a dramatic meeting of the DC leadership, where all the factions of the party agreed that the armed forces were not reliable because of Communist infiltration and discussed the possibility of creating a volunteer military corps to defend the legal government and democracy in Italy¹⁰. During the same period, the American National Security Council in Washington debated at length the alarming news coming from Italy and opted for financial and military assistance to anticommunist parties, but deciding against direct intervention even in case of a communist-dominated government gaining power¹¹ a detail that Harper does not mention. In the end, the decision not to resort to armed insurrection to seize power was taken by Moscow, in response to Togliatti's direct request for instructions

⁹ *Stalin and Togliatti*, 244

¹⁰ *Stalin and Togliatti*, 246-248.

¹¹ *Stalin and Togliatti*, 250-251.

relayed through Ambassador Kostylev on March 1948, on the eve of Italian elections. We write that on this occasion, as in many others, Togliatti himself favored a moderate position: his “caveat on the danger of armed insurrection leading to a greater war was equivalent to taking a position against armed action”¹².

Still the PCI we describe differs radically from the moderate reformist party portrayed by so many Italian historians for many years. Those historians considered the existence of a PCI military structure a fiction and the plans for insurrections *una montatura* by the American secret services, to cite M. G. Rossi's essay “*Una democrazia a rischio*” in the prestigious *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*¹³, where the risk, according to the author, did not come from the left but from the right. Both Harper and Romero have focused in their publications on the American interference in Italian political life that under the banner of anticommunism “trampled every traditional concept of national sovereignty” (*che travalicò ogni tradizionale concetto di sovranità nazionale*),¹⁴ without ever discussing Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Italy.

Very few historians would agree with Harper's comparison of the postwar PCI program with that of the contemporary British Labour Party. Togliatti buried *il Piano del lavoro* proposed by the CGIL, the communist trade union, and considered social-democratic parties as enemies to the end of his life. Even in the early 1980's, the PCI secretary at the time, Enrico Berlinguer, was convinced of the “crisis of the capitalism and imperialism” and rejected a “social-democratization of the PCI”.¹⁵ This, of course, falls outside the scope of our discussion.

Let me now move on to another fundamental issue, the fact that the USSR was not only one of the two post-war superpowers, but also the center of the international Communist movement. For fifty years the history of the Cold War has been written only on the basis of western sources, but now it is no longer possible to ignore “the other side of the moon”¹⁶, the documentation of the ex-Soviet archives and eastern literature. Both Harper and Romero, as specialists on the American side of the Cold War relying mostly on American documentary sources, tend to place the U.S. and the USSR on the same plane and, in John Gaddis' words, to accord “equal legitimacy, and therefore more or less equal respectability” to both states¹⁷. They also tend to view the relations between the PCI and the USSR in the

¹² *Stalin and Togliatti*, 256.

¹³ M. G. Rossi *Una democrazia a rischio* in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, Einaudi (Torino, 1994), 968.

¹⁴ F. Romero, *Gli Stati Uniti in Italia*, in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, cit. 282.

¹⁵ As is clearly shown in the exchanges he had with his friend and advisor, A. Tatò (*Caro Berlinguer, note e appunti riservati di Antonio Tatò a Enrico Berlinguer, 1969-1984* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003).

¹⁶ This was the title of a collection of essays (Elena Aga-Rossi, Gaetano Quagliariello, eds., *L'altra faccia della luna, I rapporti tra il PCI, PCF e Unione Sovietica* (Mulino: Bologna, 1997), which intended to test the first results of the “silent revolution” brought about by the ex-Soviet documentation.

¹⁷ J.L. Gaddis, “The Tragedy of Cold War History”, *Diplomatic History* (Winter 1993): 8

same light as relations between the Christian Democrats and the U.S. even now, when the opening of the Soviet archives has made it impossible to ignore the peril facing Italian democracy had the left parties won the 1948 elections. Previously, only the American financing of the DC was acknowledged, while it is now clear that both powers subsidized their client parties in Italy and that the Soviet financing of the PCI was massive. The reviewers underestimate the significance of PCI's allegiance to the international Communist movement, which always gave precedence to Soviet political interests over any national ones.

Romero and Harper portray the PCI as a relatively fragile party without great influence in Italian life. This is perplexing, given that the same party had two million adherents in 1947 and had a grassroots organization unmatched by other parties. When we speak of the PCI's efforts to undermine the Western camp from the inside, we refer to the Communist opposition to every pro-Western choice of the Italian government, from the Marshall plan to the Atlantic Pact to European integration. The apex was reached with the organization of the Partisans of Peace movement, which under the banner of the fight against war and against the atomic bomb consolidated the identification of the left with democracy and antifascism and of the Italian government with American imperialism. The PCI's massive propaganda effort succeeded in collecting 16 million signatures in Italy for the Stockholm declaration and for a number of "campaigns" related to the Korean war – against the transit of American weaponry, against the atomic bomb, and so on. The Communist initiative always maintained sufficient flexibility and ambivalence to opt for either growing the PCI's membership and network of alliances within the bipolar political contest that followed the outbreak of the Cold War or for rapidly putting the "mass party" onto a civil war footing, in case the threat of a civil war actually materialized.¹⁸

A network of communist spies in Italian institutions and industries passed information to the Soviets on sensitive security-related issues, such as the production of weapons, and the Italian armed forces were infiltrated by officials loyal to the party. This put Italy in a marginal position in the Western bloc.

The Cold War divided Italy in two camps, one anticapitalist, anti-American, and pro-Soviet, the other philo-American and favoring adherence to the Western bloc and to European integration. The PCI opposed the process of European integration and tried to deligitimize the government forces as 'slaves' of the U.S. Alcide De Gasperi was labeled a reactionary and fascist and accused of not defending Italian interests because he was born in a part of Italy that belonged to the Austrian empire before the First World War. Romero admits that the PCI "had a commanding sway on the Italian Left, at least until the late 1970s, that pivoted on a mythological identification of democracy with anti-fascist unity. Its Marxist

¹⁸ Andrea Guiso, *La colomba e la spada, "lotta per la pace" e antiamericanismo nella politica del partito comunista italiano (1949-1954)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006). For a similar analysis of the French Communist Party see P. Buton, « Le pacifisme communiste de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à la guerre froide », in Maurice Vaisse ed., *Le pacifisme en Europe des années 1920 aux années 1950* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1993), 303-324.

culture also exerted considerable influence in broad sections of Italy's intellectual life, from cinema to literature, but very little, if any, in crucial media like radio and television, which it did not penetrate until the mid-1970s." In spite of this, he rejects our assertion that Communist historiography largely held sway the 1950's and 60's, even though most of the well-known historians of those decades were also active in the PCI.¹⁹ The PCI's efforts on the cultural front were spearheaded by such important Communist-dominated institutions as Istituto Gramsci and Fondazione Feltrinelli, which started their cultural activities in the postwar years. The PCI secretly financed a major 'independent' publishing house, Einaudi, that brought out books of interest to the Communist party or recommended by the Soviet Union. The PCI also established a number of other publishing houses, the most important being Editori Riuniti. The party successfully curtailed the publication of books on the Soviet purges and gulags.²⁰

We dedicate ample space to the question of Trieste, on which recent literature confirms our thesis based on Soviet archival documentation that Togliatti acquiesced to the annexation of Trieste by Tito's Yugoslavia, thus sacrificing the national image of the PCI on the altar of internationalism²¹. On this important topic, which shows Togliatti to have been in thrall not only to Stalin but also to Tito, Pons agrees with what we write, while Romero and Harper limit themselves to marginal comments. Romero considers "absurd" our conflation of "the first book by a then 29-year-old historian, Roberto Gualtieri who in 1995 proposed a less critical interpretation of Togliatti's policy on Trieste" with "official PCI historiography". Although we do not use this expression, it should be noted that the Gualtieri's book *Togliatti e la politica estera italiana* was published by Editori Riuniti, prefaced by the historian and PCI senator Giuliano Procacci, and that Gualtieri would ascend rapidly through the party ranks, first as vice director of Gramsci Foundation and now as deputy in the European parliament for the PD (*partito Democratico*). The description of Gualtieri's argument as a "less critical interpretation" hides a distortion of the historical record, since the archival documents are unequivocal. Unlike Harper, I do not see any contradiction between Togliatti's abandonment of Trieste and his half-hearted subsequent efforts to save the image of the party by proposing a swap of Gorizia for Trieste – a proposal that even his Socialist ally Pietro Nenni found unacceptable.

¹⁹ To mention some of the best known: Rosario Villari, Ernesto Ragionieri, Giorgio Candeloro, Paolo Spriano, Gastone Manacorda, Pasquale Villani, Mario Mirri, Paolo Alatri, Enzo Santarelli, Alberto Caracciolo, Franco Della Peruta, Giuliano Procacci, Armando Saitta, Delio Cantimori (who after 1956 left the party). Villari and Saitta wrote the most popular school textbooks. On the Marxist historiography see the recent book by Giulia Zazzera, *La storia a sinistra* (Bari: Laterza, 2011).

²⁰ See E. Aga Rossi, "L'influenza sovietica in Italia nel periodo staliniano," in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, eds., *Un ponte sull'Atlantico, l'alleanza occidentale 1949-1999* (Milano: Guerini, 2003). For example, when Laterza was pressured by Benedetto Croce to publish the book *Un mondo a parte* by the Polish intellectual Gustav Herling, the book's distribution was blocked.

²¹ Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale* (Bologna: Mulino, 2007); Patrick Karlsen, *Frontiera rossa, il PCI, il confine orientale e il contesto internazionale, 1941-1955* (Gorizia: Leg, 2010); Raoul Pupo, *Trieste '45* (Bari, Laterza, 2010).

In conclusion, the full story of how a Stalinist party could become a co-founder of the Italian democracy after twenty years of the fascist regime has yet to be written. But this was not our aim. Instead, we sought to provide a fuller picture of the links between the PCI and Soviet Union and of the latter interference in Italian political life made possible only by the opening of the Moscow archives. I hope we have achieved this aim.

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