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Italian Democracy and Republic Between the Antifascist Victory and the Cold War

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Abstract

In tracing the birth and evolution of Italy's republican institutions, one must consider the broader developments of the 20th century's «Thirty Years War» and the influence that communism/anti-communism polarisation played in the country's political life. This work traces the main stages of Italy's political, social and economic «stabilisation», analysing the successive phases of De Gasperi centrism, opening to the left and the organic centre-left. The domestic and international dimensions are viewed in constant relation.

Keywords: Post-War Italy, European Integration, Cold War, External Constraints, Centrism, Organic Centre-Left.

The most recent national as well as international historiography seems to agree on one point when it comes to tracing the democratic rebirth and the development of republican institutions in the Italian context. It is rather counterproductive to portray the Italian scenario as the result of a series of «diversities». On the contrary, it seems correct to include the Italian context in the broader evolution of the so-called Thirty Years' War¹. It is in this framework that Italy's specific features can be fully understood, that is, in their peculiar intertwining of national and international dimensions².

War, Resistance and Transition

Like every transition, the Italian transition from the twenty years of fascism and the war to democracy is the result of multiple and sometimes contradictory forces suspended between a world of yesterday and a world of tomorrow. Central to the former are the protagonists of the old liberal state, first and foremost the monarch and Badoglio. The world of tomorrow is that of the anti-fascist resistance that soon concentrates on the party component as its fundamental core. Between July 1943 and the Spring of 1944, the two worlds seem to clash, only to converge when the sovereign leaves the helm to his son. It is then decided to wait until the end of the

¹ E. Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco. La guerra civile europea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007.

² At long last a broad and well-documented summary of all this can be found in A. Var-sori, *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2022.

conflict before choosing an institutional framework and writing a new constitution. The roots of the clear break between a liberal Italy and a post-liberal Italy are to be found in the dramatic but foundational twenty months between the armistice and the Liberation. On the one hand, the bid for democratic reorganization guaranteed by the Resistance, in its different forms and degrees of intensity, and on the other hand the appearance of the Communist Party on the national scene with the so-called *svolta di Salerno*: these are the real points of fracture on which the Constituent Compromise will rest.

It is impossible not to notice how paradoxical this outcome is. The Republic would be a so-called «Republic of the parties» because the Resistance would determine its structure; all this was in large part the result of the bloody civil war connected to the birth of the Italian Social Republic and to the slowness of the Allies in pushing forward the front. The second paradox is that of the centrality of the PCI in Italian political life, which was never questioned from that moment on. Palmiro Togliatti entered the game of the Italian transition as an «external agent» of international communism first and foremost, accompanying the Italian transition on behalf of the USSR, and only then dedicated himself to the complicated task of nationalizing and normalizing the PCI³.

In this rapid reconstruction, the De Gasperi government formed at the end of 1945 and June 2, 1946 undoubtedly mark two major turning points with respect to the previously described rationale of the Resistance⁴. On the one hand, the statesman from Trentino, albeit in a gradual and circumspect manner, stands as the representative of a new Italian ruling class destined to break with the aggressive nationalism typical of the Fascist era⁵. On the other hand, the double vote of June 2, 1946 takes on the characteristics of a founding confirmation: it will be a Republic and it will be a Republic of the parties that played a leading role in the Resistance. In spite of controversies and accusations of fraud, the republican choice prevails and the three mass parties' triumph with it. Everything seems confirmed with respect to spring 1944. But a third element, already partly present in the Salerno turning point, is likewise confirmed: the potential polarization between communism and anti-communism, which will bulk large in the evolving political framework of the next forty-five years in Republican history⁶.

At that moment, however, there is one main need, which is to try and put the country back into the international context. This important goal, which is deeply linked to the foreign policy decisions of the fascist regime, underlies the potentially dramatic phase of the Peace Treaty.

³ R. Gualtieri, *L'Italia dal 1943 al 1992. Dc e Pci nella storia della Repubblica*, Roma, Carocci, 2006, pp. 27-65.

⁴ See particularly M. Ridolfi (ed.), *2 giugno. Nascita, storia e memorie della Repubblica*, vol. 1, Roma, Viella, 2020.

⁵ See G. Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella Guerra Fredda (1943-1978)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, pp. 82 ff.

⁶ See R. Pertici, *Il vario anticomunismo italiano (1936-1960): lineamenti di una storia*, in L. Di Nucci, E. Galli della Loggia (eds.), *Due nazioni. Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003, pp. 263-334.

The Paris Speech: August 10, 1946, a Punitive Treaty

One needs to pay extreme attention to the transition of summer 1946. On the one hand De Gasperi presented himself as a democrat and an anti-fascist, as the representative of the new Republic, ready for the difficult task of combining Mazzini's aspirations, Catholic universalism and the internationalism of those who supported the international communist revolution. The idea, of course, was to assume all the blame for the war waged by fascist Italy, but at the same time to praise the profound constitutive effort of the different forms of resistance that banded against fascism, first, and then Nazi-fascism. De Gasperi was also keen to extol the efforts of the reborn political parties, ready to stand as the true constituent subjects of the new institutional structure that had just emerged from the referendum of June 2nd. On the other hand, in concluding his speech De Gasperi seemed to be warning the victorious allies of the risks inherent in any exemplary punishment of Italy: if there was to be punishment, it should be sacrifices that made sense. The treaty should therefore afford Italy an opportunity to rebuild herself and endow her new institutions with the credibility necessary for Rome to take full part in the post-war international system⁷.

Italy from Marginal to Central?

In the short term, however, none of the things De Gasperi asked for materialized for Italy. Given the docile stance of the Truman-Byrnes tandem and the extremely punitive approach of the USSR, Italy was forced to sign humiliating conditions. Once the document became known, it was the current government above all that bore the consequences. The stability of the government was at risk, the economic difficulties were evident and a sinister social climate was setting in. As Nenni recalled in his diaries of the time, De Gasperi was at the mercy of events, considered too far to the left by the right and too conservative by the left. The image of «Christ on the cross» seemed truly apt⁸. That was the moment, however, when the first decisive issue clarifying and determining the country's western choice was spelt out: De Gasperi's trip to Washington at the beginning of January 1947.

From the domestic point of view, the trip can be interpreted as a search for economic aid and, at the same time, as a quest for re-legitimization of the political leadership. Nonetheless, it was necessary to clarify the international framework within which the trip was to be considered.

After the Summer of 1943 the Italian peninsula was not at the centre of the war priorities of the anti-Nazi alliance, which concentrated on opening the new front that Stalin had repeatedly and unavailingly requested. The Soviets, excluded from the Allied Control Commission in November 1943, came back into the game largely through the Italian Communist Party and specifically through Palmiro Togliatti and the so-called *svolta di Salerno*. Well before the acceleration

⁷ See in particular G. Formigoni, *Alcide De Gasperi 1943-1948. Il politico vincente alla guida della transizione*, in A. De Gasperi, *Scritti e discorsi politici*, vol. III, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008, pp. 96-105.

⁸ Cit. in E. Aga Rossi, *L'Italia tra le grandi potenze. Dalla Seconda guerra mondiale alla Guerra fredda*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2019, p. 266.

of tensions between East and West, Stalin himself took it for granted that an Italy occupied by Anglo-American forces would end up moving and rebuilding herself within the Western domain⁹. But that did not prevent Stalin from obtaining as many advantages as possible at the expense of Rome or trying to use the country as a sort of «bridgehead» for his own activism in Yugoslavia and in general in the Balkan and Mediterranean area. This explains Moscow's particularly punitive attitude towards Italy at Potsdam, later confirmed during the Peace Treaty, dominated by US fears that the now tottering anti-Nazi alliance would be torn to pieces by Stalin. The US compliance was also the result of a long tug of war between London and Washington. British diplomacy had no doubt about a punitive approach, largely linked to the old imperial vision of controlling the Mediterranean area. The United States of Roosevelt, on the contrary, from the beginning of 1945 seemed bent on encouraging a true democratic turn in Italy, reintegrating her into the peaceful post-war context. As is well known, Roosevelt's death, use of atomic weapons by the U.S., but especially the Soviet aggression and desire to muzzle the Kennan-Truman duo, decisively changed the picture and set the stage for De Gasperi's trip.

The Issue of 1947. De Gasperi in the US and the Break with PCI

It is important we make a careful historiographical assessment of the dual transition of 1947, that is, the trip to the United States and the Prime Minister's decision to end the experiment of a government that included Communists and Socialists. Obviously, the PCI got the idea that Italy was beginning to become subordinate to Washington, that exclusion of the left from government was synonymous with a U.S. diktat. In reality, historical research has shown the centrality of the De Gasperi leadership in bringing Italy into the dynamics of the Cold War, partly revising the idea of an Italy where such dynamics came about substantially as a matter of course. Both during his trip and once back in Italy De Gasperi impressed on the American President and Secretary of State the concrete danger of a country poised to throw itself into the arms of communist propaganda. Italy's weakness became a strategically decisive factor, causing Marshall concern. Not surprisingly, considering this warning from Italy, he threw himself into devising the proposal that a few months later would become the European Recovery Program. In this context, acting still completely on his own and in contrast with some DC circles, De Gasperi opted to break with the left, essential from his point of view to preserve and consolidate the faltering national interest. After the summer of Marshall's Harvard speech and the Paris conference, Italy went from being a marginal to a central area of US activity. This was the second step in the process: De Gasperi managed to insert his party and consequently country into the «strategic space» between a frightened bourgeoisie and its main external source of aid¹⁰. From a purely constitutional stand-

⁹ E. Aga Rossi, *L'Italia tra le grandi potenze. Dalla Seconda guerra mondiale alla Guerra fredda*, cit., pp. 252-278.

¹⁰ J.L. Harper, *L'America e la ricostruzione dell'Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986; K. Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the origins of Cold War. Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

point, Italy preserved her image of resistance. The Constitutional Charter was the result of the keen European debate of the Thirties and Forties; not by chance were there so many similarities between the Republican Constitution and that of the French Fourth Republic.

The Second Definitive Milestone: 18 April 1948 and the Invention of Centrism

With the electoral campaign and the Christian Democrat victory of April 18, 1948, the western alignment of the country was complete. Between February and March Stalin decided not to opt for the use of military force in the country, especially given his unsuccessful attempts in Iran, Greece and Turkey and the increasingly complex relationship with Tito. The electoral campaign took on the tone of a clash of civilizations, a display of populism on both sides that would toxify the political framework of the country for years to come. The dichotomy of democracy versus dictatorship, capitalism versus socialism and Christianity versus atheism prevailed. Fundamental to the final Christian Democrat victory was no doubt the role of the Church, both through Vatican intervention and through mobilization of Actionism under the leadership of Luigi Gedda. The victory of 1948 was first and foremost a success for the «border statesman» who prioritized the national interest but at the same time turned to the international arena to gather the impulse needed to deal with the fragile Italian context.

With the victory of 18 April 1948 and the election of Luigi Einaudi as President of the Republic, centrism was consolidated. The election of Luigi Einaudi was a stabilizing factor reassuring liberal scepticism as to the stability of the new democratic system. Centrism was as much a national option as a formula for international alignment (we will soon see its European dimension). It was also the fruit of a victory, paradoxically, as clear-cut as it was ambiguous. The DC could not govern alone and must in any case opt for a coalition government. Not by chance, from the outset centrism became synonymous with marginalization of the two «extreme» wings. A third, perhaps more complicated task was then to be accomplished: that of maintaining a balance between an increasingly conservative liberal component and a fragmented quarrelsome left-wing component¹¹. De Gasperi becomes the true «doctor» of the «difficult Italian democracy», in Aldo Moro's later definition. In a situation of conflicting and lacerating relations, it was important to rebuild but also to change. De Gasperi steered the situation: on the one hand, thanks to wise use of Marshall Plan resources, he stabilized the socio-economic framework; on the other, he reined in the designs of part of the ecclesiastical world and part of his own party.

¹¹ P. Pombeni, *L'Apertura. L'Italia e il centro-sinistra*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2022, p. 19.

The European Choice and a Specific New Brand of De Gasperi Centrism

If centrism is a form of «dynamic stabilization» that at least potentially enlarges the democratic area of the country, De Gasperi sought other external guarantees that would strengthen the embryonic republican system in the first steps of the European integration process.

Alan S. Milward's interpretative paradigm best explains the «European» choice of De Gasperi's centrism. The ECSC was an emblematic instance of functional integration among European economies, designed to «rescue» European states that were dominated by a mixed economy and by the sharing of state and market. De Gasperi's support for the Monnet-Schuman proposal was enthusiastic from the outset despite the discontent of some industrial circles and part of Italian diplomacy. For De Gasperi, European integration promised the solution to a series of shortcomings in the national political and economic system. Italy's interest and the European interest might converge. Rather than Europe being an «external constraint», a characteristic ever since the 1970s, what was taking place was a proper «Europeanization», or rather «Euro-westernisation», of the country's political and economic framework set in motion by the Prime Minister¹². This had a clear reformist objective. The impossibility of «opening to the left» for reasons related to the communism/anti-communism dichotomy generated a sort of «outlet valve» on the pro-European front which served De Gasperi as mechanism for responding to the communist challenge.

The other qualitative leap in De Gasperi's Europeanism tied up once again with the evolving framework of international relations in the Cold War area. The evolution of events following the outbreak of the Korean War and the militarization of containment brought to the forefront the issue of rearming the German area and the consequent proposal for a European Community of defence. De Gasperi, increasingly squeezed by the activism of the so-called «Roman party» and by the anti-Atlanticist criticism of his own party's left wing, opted to relaunch Europeanism. He seized on the theme of defence as an ideal terrain for true political revival. His proposal to endow the EDC with a parliamentary assembly went in the same direction. Given moment of difficulty for the US leadership because of Korea, Rome aspired to be the driving force behind the process of European integration. In that context, a favourable international framework seemed likely to emerge for the advancement of centrism.

Two Years of Frustration for Centrism

The continuous tensions within the government coalition and within the DC itself became increasingly untenable. Dossetti's departure from the scene, and the so-called «Sturzo operation», created embarrassment and difficulties for De Gasperi. He therefore opted for a classic attempt at institutional stabilization. It seems a real gamble to have used the majority bonus as an instrument to make coalition government improbable. As is well known, an impressive campaign of ideological confrontation was mounted, leading the Left to coin the term «*Legge truffa*»

¹² See R. Gualtieri, *L'Italia dal 1943 al 1992*, cit., pp. 79 ff.

and helping to nip the quorum in the bud by a few thousand votes. In that 1953 vote, the attempt to advance De Gasperi-led centrism was blocked¹³.

What remained was the external international dimension of any possible centrist stabilization, and this to a large extent also failed between 1953 and 1954. The death of Stalin and the end of the Korean War acted as stabilizing elements in a scenario of uncertainty. The vote of the French National Assembly on May 30, 1954 definitively quashed any prospect of European defence as an embryonic political breakthrough in the process of European integration. What remained of the Europeanist facelift to De Gasperi's centrism? There remained, undoubtedly, the idea that Rome could not merely exploiting its geographical and political position riding the crest of the Cold War, nor for that reason could it consider itself indispensable to the functioning of international equilibrium. There remained a form of Euro-realism as presented by an elderly and tired De Gasperi at his last Congress of the Christian Democrats in June 1954: a Europeanism that was certainly linked to Atlanticism but that even more than the latter must underpin the evolution of Italian domestic politics.

Waiting for an Opening to the Left?

Ora questa della partecipazione dei socialisti al governo è certo questione senza dubbio importante, questione che dovrà un giorno essere risolta. Ma tale soluzione non è possibile fare solamente dall'angolo visuale della socialità. Ma deve affrontarsi in pieno come problema integrale di politica interna e internazionale esaminando principi, riserve e rischi¹⁴.

The lucidity of the judgment of a tired and ill De Gasperi, again in his speech to the 1954 DC Congress in Naples, captures in full what was certainly a hasty reading of the situation. That is, the idea that a simple split between the PCI and the PSI would enable the latter to enter the area of government and consequently kickstart the so-called «opening to the left». In De Gasperi's words one senses all the complexity of an operation that involved multiple dimensions and raised a series of intertwining and critical issues at that start to the second decade of post-war Italy.

On the one hand, one needs to remember the ferment within the Catholic world: both in the Vatican circles of Pius XII's declining long pontificate and in the associations, first and foremost Catholic Action amid the delicate final phase of Luigi Gedda's leadership. On the other hand, though stabilized by the centrality of the Bretton Woods system and by the evolution of a concerted and inclusive capitalism, the so-called «Italian miracle» contained numerous points of economic fragility, especially for its inequalities and disparities, even territorial ones. The overall impression is that of a notable acceleration bringing with it frustrations and unfulfilled hopes in broad sectors of public opinion. The post-De Gasperi's brand of centrism here took on a largely managerial character, accentuating its anti-communist stance. Fanfani's new leadership of the DC was struggling to emerge and suffered an important setback in 1955 when the time came to

¹³ M.S. Piretti, *La legge truffa. Il fallimento dell'ingegneria politica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003.

¹⁴ Cit. in P. Pombeni, *L'Apertura*, cit., pp. 33-34.

elect a successor to Luigi Einaudi as President of the Republic. Although the election of Giovanni Gronchi was hailed by the socialist leader as a personal victory heralding a breakthrough for socialism, in reality the ambiguity of that election says it all about the difficulties of that phase. The election of the Speaker of the *Camera dei Deputati* was a real blow to Fanfani's leadership. At the same time, the new president presented himself to the Chambers in a speech more suited to the Head of State of a presidential regime than a system dominated by parliamentarianism¹⁵. To make matters worse, the international framework was poised for a decisive turn in 1956.

That year marked firstly an important step towards stabilization in the bipolar confrontation: there was no involvement by the United States or the Western bloc in the internal affairs of the Soviet bloc, even in the face of the ferocious repressions of October/November 1956. With the 20th Congress of the PCUS, Khrushchev's leadership emerged definitively, and his accusation of Stalinism had a disruptive effect, in particular in the Italian political and ideological setting: on the one hand, Nenni returned the Stalin prize, while the trade unions showed solidarity with the Budapest insurgents; on the other hand, the Communist Party tended to minimize. In the broader geopolitical interpretation, 1956 saw a definitive retreat by the former European colonial empires (Paris and London in the disastrous Suez adventure), nor should one overlook the subsequent acceleration of the process of European integration.

Three conditions were thus poised for a shift towards a systematic new stabilization of the centrist formula which had never truly revived after Alcide De Gasperi left the scene: Nenni's definitive distance from Togliatti's PCI, Pius XII's demise and the acceleration of Fanfani's leadership ready to combine voluntarism and reformism.

Opening to the Left by Way of Normalizing Anticomunism

Participation by the socialists in government of the country, from the start, has had at least two important implications. On the one hand, it is a potential means of stabilizing the Italian political-institutional system which, since the 1953 attempt, has been characterized by chronic instability and a continuous alternation of government coalitions. The presence of Nenni's party in the control room is thus part of that movement of clustering in the centre and marginalizing the extremes, indispensable for the proper functioning of the system. On the other hand, the centre-left has a program of its own: it is a work of cultural elaboration and an answer to a series of questions regarding the modernization of the country as well as a point of encounter between political cultures.

The initiative, and it could not have been otherwise, was in the hands of the Christian Democrats and their unexpected new secretary, Aldo Moro, who was elected secretary after the internal party operation that led to marginalization of Amintore Fanfani¹⁶. In a certain sense,

¹⁵ See the essay by A. Giacone in S. Cassese, G. Galasso, A. Melloni (eds.), *I presidenti della Repubblica. Il Capo dello Stato e il Quirinale nella storia della democrazia italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2018.

¹⁶ For an in-depth overview see M. Marchi, *Centro-sinistra e storia nazionale. Alcune riflessioni sul caso italiano*, in G. Bernardini, M. Marchi (eds.), *A cinquant'anni dal primo centro-sinistra: un bilancio nel contesto internazionale*, «Ricerche di Storia Politica», 2 (2014), pp. 135-145.

the end of any possible opposition to opening to the left was marked by the events of Genoa following the birth of the Tambroni government. On April 8, 1960, the MSI's vote of confidence in the executive and the subsequent riots in the square made opening to the left inevitable. But inevitable is not synonymous with feasible, at least as that opening to the left was originally conceived.

First, we must underline the difference in leadership style between Fanfani and Moro. Moro practised a kind of cautious «voluntarism» based on two fixed points: the unity of the party and the approval of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A united Catholic party must ensure government of the country and could not disregard the approval of the Holy See. From this point of view, the centre-left became the vehicle for the definitive secularization of the party and the national political framework¹⁷.

This process, made up of mediations, break-ups, accelerations and withdrawals, reached a first goal at the Christian Democrat congress in late January 1962. Moro was ready to lead the party, united and with the ecclesiastical «blessing» of Pope John XXIII, to the launching of the first centre-left government with the agreed support of the Socialist MPs. It was not yet a proper centre-left, but the most possible in the situation.

Events in the international system hinged on the so-called «new frontier» represented by Kennedy's presidency. The green light to the operation of opening to the left was dictated, on the one hand, by the US showing less interest in the European area (considering the development policies and the greater attention to bipolar competition there)¹⁸; on the other hand, the Italian case marked the consolidation of a new form of anti-communism, an original response to the breach in the solidarity pact between socialists and communists.

If, as already mentioned, opening to the left was expected to provide a series of answers to the economic and social transformations that the country was experiencing, it would be ungenerous to affirm that all sense of a deliberate policy was lacking within the DC. Personalities such as Saraceno, Andreatta, Ardigò and many others insisted on the modernising role of a center-left. For Moro, however, opening up to the left was an «entirely political» matter: it was the real antidote to a quite possible and in some ways probable degeneration of the vexed Italian democracy.

Organic, but Drained. Moderate, but Decisive?

Recent historians are unanimous in speaking of the opening to the left as a process that took a decade to materialize in the December 1963 formula of a Moro-Nenni government. The recurring verdict is that it generated few concrete results and a large number of missed opportunities. One universal and explicit lament is that reformism failed to take hold in the Italian political context. Traces of «missed reformism» pessimism emerged even before the so-called organic centre-left was launched.

¹⁷ On Moro I refer the reader to G. Formigoni, *Aldo Moro. Lo statista e il suo dramma*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, pp. 119-169.

¹⁸ U. Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia e la nuova frontiera. Stati Uniti e centro-sinistra 1958-1965*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1998.

As early as May 1962, under a government led by Fanfani with external support from the Socialists, the forward-looking thrust of Ugo La Malfa's *Nota Aggiuntiva*¹⁹ does not seem to have been grasped at all. The urgency transpiring from that document, i.e., the idea of a program useful for modifying and orienting the economy by leveraging reforms in the public interest, such as education and health care, met with no clear, rapid or univocal response in the political world. The good intentions of progress foundered on the usual opposing vetoes. On top of those vetoes, however, with the approach of the spring 1963 elections, there was added the powerful theme of reforms effected by excluding the political force to the left, namely the PCI²⁰.

Instead of a transition towards socialism, a transition towards democracy took place. Nenni and Moro become the two protagonists of political-institutional stability in the 1960s Republic of parties. This systemic aspect of the «opening» was anticipated by Moro in the aftermath of the 1963 elections (where the DC lost about a million votes) when he opted for Segni at the Quirinal and rejected any hypothesis of involving the PCI.

The first six months of the organic centre-left at this point became the simple antechamber to a managerial centre-left, with the truly unenviable difficulties of a political but also social framework. With the apparently marginal reform of coupon tax, a potential flight of capital began: the Governor of the Banca Italia and the Treasury Minister, Guido Carli and Emilio Colombo respectively, sounded the alarm. Within the DC, the most conservative circles naturally made their voices heard and even the President of the European Commission, Hallstein, was mobilized to call the country to order. The fall of the cabinet led by Moro in June 1964 was certainly not a bolt from the blue.

The following days were traumatic for the Christian Democrat leader. The problems piled up: the movements within the DC were at risk of splitting from the centre-left, and Senate President Merzagora attempted to launch a «technical» government. One should not underestimate the so-called «noise of sabers», an expression signifying the danger of an extreme right wing linked to important milieus in the administration of the country²¹. The launching of the second Moro government on 22 July 1964 marked a clear and definitive break from the solidly hard-line centre-left at the beginning of the decade. The «new centre-left» stood as the «mediating rationalisation» of a political system in serious difficulty in face of the tumultuous wave of reconstruction and modernisation brought by the «economic miracle». As has recently been pointed out, that the Catholic Church was opening up to the world and trying to adapt to the so-called «new times» seems somehow the counterpart to a policy under siege, capable only of systematizing but not of opening a new path. In this respect too, however, there was no lack of contradictory aspects, once again all internal to social development in Italy in particular. The

¹⁹ The *Nota aggiuntiva* was a document additional to the annual economic report of the Minister of the Budget (*Relazione generale sulla situazione economica del Paese per il 1961*). La Malfa was Minister of the Budget from 21 February 1962 to 20 June 1963.

²⁰ U. Gentiloni Silveri, *Storia dell'Italia contemporanea 1943-2019*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020, pp. 72-92.

²¹ See the documentation in M. Franzinelli, A. Giaccone (eds.), *Il riformismo alla prova. Il primo governo Moro nei documenti e nelle parole dei protagonisti (ottobre 1963-agosto 1964)*, Milano, Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 2003.

Christian Democrat Party, which, in Moro's words, had to «become an alternative to itself» and had to «guarantee the government of the country», found itself having to come to terms with a society that was less and less Catholic and with a Church bent on trying to bring itself up to date. The chaos and conflict of the 1970s would be the result of an accumulating series of contradictions to which the centre-left, in its «hard-line» version, would try to provide a solution, but in its «mediating» connotation would end by giving up²².

A Stabilized Republic?

The central theme in the twenty-year period 1943-1963 is that of stabilization of the Italian democratic system at the end of a double failure, that of liberal Italy and of the fascist heresy. Looking slightly deeper, the question was to stabilize the political-institutional, but also economic and social, framework moving from «bourgeois democracy» to «social democracy»²³. Alcide De Gasperi and the Catholicism of «his» DC provided the tools for this «socialization». The real «passing of the baton» was that between De Gasperi and Aldo Moro, rather than between De Gasperi and Fanfani. Grafted onto this framework, starting from the early 1950s, was the transition from reconstruction to growth; the development of the so-called affluent society must be read in terms of the Italian context within the arena of the so-called «vexed democracy». And finally, from the end of 1946 to the beginning of 1947 all this was determined by the Cold War. For Italy, the semantic horizon was that of the American West, for reasons linked to the outcome of the war, even before being a political choice. Europeanism afforded a sort of mitigation of liberal-capitalist Westernism, making it acceptable to the liberal-Catholic De Gasperi, but above all to the circles of Roman Catholicism that were more critical of the overseas superpower. For stabilization to be possible, in that impossible democracy of alternation, a dual normalization was needed. For what concerns the PCI, Togliatti's leadership, the parliamentarisation of the system and room for the exercise of communist power at a local level worked in this direction, at least during the first twenty years of the republic. On the other hand, some substitute was needed for the democracy of alternation lest democracy itself ended by becoming a purely formal exercise. Opening to the left, once the institutional stabilization has faded, sought to move in this direction, going along with the evolution of Europeanism and of the country's position in early background of détente. With the organic centre-left, the Republic of parties in the Cold War reached its point of maximum equilibrium. At the same time, however, it ushered in immobilism and inefficiency in a system that was blocked in terms both of alternation and of «voluntarism» as well as political planning. In the following twenty years, in a framework of changing international relations, the transition would be from stabilization to fossilization of the system.

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²² P. Pombeni, *L'Apertura*, cit., pp. 250-251.

²³ C. Maier, *La rifondazione dell'Europa borghese*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1999.

