

There are lots of pages written on the Italian Resistenza. We will focus on two crucial representatives of the war of Liberation: Ferruccio Parri and Palmiro Togliatti. They had different life and political stories but they contributed to the cause with similar ideas, even if arising from different reasoning. Contrary to what is commonly thought, of the two, the most “revolutionary” was Parri, the ex-combatant, and not Togliatti, the communist.

We will start from the description of the Resistenza, that represented the redemption of a people.

On 25 July 1943, when the Gran Consiglio of the Fascism approved the Grandi’s Agenda which caused the fall of the Mussolini’s Government and his arrest, Italian people and troops hoped that the war was about to end. In fact, the announcement with which Badoglio said that Italy would continue the war on the side of the Germans was received with disappointment.

After 45 days, on 8 September 1943, was reached the armistice which with Italy surrendered to the Allied forces. The Germans immediately put in place the “Operation Achse” which led to the military occupation of the whole Italy, that fully succeeded.

More the Germans exercised their power, more the Italians had to take a position. The Resistenza can be seen like an act of disobedience against those who had the strength to being obeyed. Liberation war was for the Partisans an happy moment, a moment of an absolutely freedom.

A lot of people, in particular antifascists, thought that the only way to chase away the fascism was the defeat in the war. People, instead, experiences the war passively and a lot of them thought that it was a good idea to ally with the Germans to obtain a quick victory.

One of the highest goals of the Resistenza was to win a national identity again, after twenty year of fascism. But a good part of Italy had suffered the misery of war, but not the moral shock of the insurrection. Despite this, the numbers, even if not always reliable, talk about 80 thousand partisans combatants in

April 1945 and in those 80 thousands there's the redemption of a people who has freed from nazifascism and has led Italy to become a Republic.

Claudio Pavone, in his essay on the Resistenza, has shown that we can look at the war of Liberation under three points of view: a patriotic war, a civil war and a class war.

The first definition stems from the idea that the war had been a war of fascism and not the war of the Italy, then the real war for the Italians was the one born after September 8, to chase away the nazis from their soil.

The definition of the war of liberation like a civil war has always found hostility between antifascists. This because it has been often tried to hide the fact that the fascists could be considered Italian, because submissive and servants of the Germans. But this was not possible, especially for the many Italians that accepted the govern of the Rsi, although with more or less mental reservations. And also the violence was often justified assimilating as much as possible the inner enemy to the outer one.

The last interpretation of the Resistenza is the one that looks at it as a class war. The major left wing parties carried out a policy of national unity, so they had to calm down the revolutionary instincts of their bases, but they not always succeeded.

Resistenza was the moment in which politics returned to be a totalizing effort. Every partisan aspired to a better future, often an utopian one. But a large part of the Resistenza tried to avoid that the politicization led to excessive influence of the parties on the war of Liberation, and also this target was not totally achieved.

Having regard to the large political consciousness present in those years, there was the fear that this would disappear after the liberation. In part this happened: of the whole resistant society only a small portion entered the new emerging political society.

Now we will analyze the two major brigades of the Resistenza, the Garibaldi brigades, linked to Pci, and the Giustizia e Libertà brigades, linked to PdA,

that respectively counted about the 50 and the 20 percent of the man mobilized.

The first ones born on September 20 in Milan. The Pci tried to saved the unified policy of the Resistenza, disproving the link between it and the brigades, which resulted not credible.

The second ones took the name from the homonymous political movement born in Paris in 1929. And like that political movement they were made of people with different ideas like liberals, socialists and republicans.

The two commanders of the brigades, Longo of the Garibaldi brigades and Parri of the Giustizia e Libertà brigades, had a good relationship because of their same cautious approach both on the armed struggle and on the general political framework. The two brigades, however, had different views on some matters, like the role of the officials of the old Royal army, or the politicization of their components, or the class struggles in the war of liberation, or the role of the internal commissions, established in September 1943.

Anyway, both the brigades wanted to avoid the excessive influence of the parties in the struggle and always wanted to strengthen the unified policy of the Cln.

Now we focus before on Ferruccio Parri and then on Palmiro Togliatti.

To understand the importance of Parri in the Resistenza we need to start from his youth and analyze the reasoning behind his political evolution that led him to be a young elitist in a democratic revolutionary.

He was born in Pinerolo 19 January 1890. His father was a follower of Carducci in literature and a follower of Mazzini in politics. Both ideals were taken up by his son, that took from his father the moral intransigence against the corruption of his times above all and the conviction of the greater importance of the collective good than the particular interests.

He studied classics at the Torino University.

His desire for renewal of national values was frustrated by an environment aimed mainly to the increase in material well-being and the protection of the economic interests of social groups related to industry and by a government ruling class, embodied in the figure of Giovanni Giolitti, retrograde, corrupt and closed respect to any proposed of renovation and modernization. His first political reflections was characterized by the critic to the parliamentarianism and the hope of a new aristocracy call to supplant democracy and progressive ideologies ; he was critical against socialism too.

World War I was a fundamental moment for Parri. He thought to fight not only to defend national boundaries but also for the renewal of the nation. He was disappointed to see an army made up of farmers misled by socialism and officials from a backward bourgeoisie. He realized that the masses were not to be excluded, but organized and began to consider better democracy.

After the war he joined in the movement of combatants, a variegated movement, that will result in major personalities both of the fascism and the antifascism. Up to the march on Rome, he had underestimated fascism. After that he realized its dangerousness and became one of the main enemies of Mussolini. His evolution continued: he accepted more and more the democracy and abandoned the anti-socialist positions, understanding the importance the working class movement for the development of the nation.

He organized the escape of Filippo Turati together with Carlo Rosselli and Sandro Pertini and was arrested and sentenced to a slight penalty, because of the fact that Mussolini feared him, because he was neither communist nor socialist, but a former combatant with national values. But, in a round-up against the components of Giustizia e Libertà, he was sentenced to an overall penalty of six years.

In the 30s, then, the years of greatest consensus of the regime, he dedicated himself more to the family than politics.

After the Armistice he returned on the political scene and became one of the main characters of the Resistenza. He hoped that this time could have been

finally renewed the nation, but his political plan was immediately conditioned by the large party fragmentation of the Resistenza and by the international constraints that didn't allow the Resistenza to become a real army. He started from anti-communist position, but then he understood that the war needed to be fought along with the communist. He wanted that the movement of the Resistenza would be unite.

He didn't have good relationship with the Allies. Their reports were based on mutual mistrust, because of the fact that he wanted that Italy would be considered a cobelligerent force, not a defeated country while they wanted to maintain control on our country.

He gathered in his person many positions: head of the Military Committee of the CLN of Milan, representative of the PdA in the CLN and head of the partisan movement in his party.

In the first months of 1945 he was a prisoner of the Germans and was freed on March 7 by a complex interplay of exchanges between military leaders and political Germans and Allies.

Allies carried him in Switzerland first and in the freed Italy, with Cadorna, after. Then, after April 25, antifascist forces chose him to become the Prime Minister of the first government after the Liberation. He wanted to do great reforms for the nation, instead his government was considered from the other forces a transitional government. After a crisis opened because of liberals and Christian democrats the government fell on December 10 1945.

On the life of Palmiro Togliatti we know everything because of his relevance in the Italian political world during his entire life. We will focus here on the years of the Resistenza and on the reasoning that led him to conceive the "Svolta di Salerno" and bring the Pci in the Italian constitutional area.

After 18 year of exile he came back to Italy on march 27 1944. In a crowded press conference he announced the "Svolta di Salerno" that consisted in three points: the preservation of the unity of the democrats and liberal antifascist forces, the postponing of the institutional question after the end of the war,

with the election of a constituent assembly and the creation of a new transitional government with the participation of the great mass parties.

Historians often agree with the claim that Togliatti was acting on the impulse of the USSR. He actually came to conceive the Svolta by reading the peculiarities of the national and international situation.

The British thought to keep our country in a state of dependence both political and material.

The Americans departed from the intention to do "tabula rasa" of the old world and the old ruling classes of the Axis countries and delegate the responsibility to the winners of the future world order.

The USSR recognized the Badoglio government March 13, 1944, probably to create the best conditions for the success of the initiative of Togliatti.

The consolidation and the development of the Great Alliance represented for Togliatti a key part to keep the peace after the war.

Regarding the authorship of the Svolta di Salerno, some documents unearthed in Moscow seem to support the hypothesis that the new line was originally conceived by Togliatti, who proposed it, already near the end of the Fascism, to the leaders of the USSR and the international communist movement. The proposal was initially considered with suspicion by both the Italian comrades and the Soviet leaders. The situation was later unlocked from the consent of Stalin.

The primary objective was to freed the country as soon as possible and that it should have been achieved not only by the Anglo-Americans: only in this way a terrible treatment after the war would have been avoided. In addition to promoting the renewal of the state and repudiate the Fascist foreign policy, however, it was necessary to make effective the co-belligerence as the main way of the Italian redemption.

He wanted that after the war Italy would lead a policy of peace and cooperation with the major democratic nations. He proposed, then, a new vision of the link democracy-socialism, based on the theories of Gramsci,

which provided for a republic based on a democratic constitution and political pluralism, not on domination by a single party.

After the liberation, it should have started the third step time of the Togliatti's strategy. After national unity against Germany and unity between communists and socialists was time to create an alliance between the three major parties mass: Pci, Psiup and Dc.

National independence for Togliatti was the possibility for Italy to have autonomy to develop its own foreign policy under the system of the European nations, which had to be based on the unity of the great anti-fascist powers and cooperation between peoples. Independence therefore anything but nationalistic.

On December 29 1945, in the fifth Congress of the Italian Communist Party, Togliatti explained his program of progressive democracy. The program was divided into three levels: the re-establishment of a democratic state, with a Constitution that was supposed to be some sort of plan for the future, the development of a new foreign policy, based on the harmony between the three Great Powers and the processing of a new economic policy, based on independence and cooperation among the nations and their economic interdependence.

In conclusion, Parri failed to revolutionize the nation as he wished and Togliatti found himself, along with his party, in a difficult situation from an international point of view, which will accompany him throughout his life, because of the failure of the alliance between the three Great Powers due to the cold War. Despite this, however, both gave with their commitment and their ideas a fundamental contribution to the liberation first and then the reconstruction of a country devastated by twenty years of dictatorship and a tragic war.