

LUISS



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Master's Degree in *International Relations*

Chair of *History of Italian Foreign Policy*

“Stealing the thunder from the Left.”
The role of the U.S. Embassy in the
Italian opening to the left, 1957-1963

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Everything you lose is a step you take.

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Introduction

In 1961, when Italian democracy was still poised between a violent right-wing experience and a still too divisive and uncertain center-left one, Pietro Nenni inaugurated the 34th Psi Congress with the foresight that often characterized him. "The politics of the democratic alternative, as practiced in the past years, does not sacrifice tomorrow to today, but moves from today to tomorrow, from the particular to the whole. It attacks one after another the reactionary positions, those in which the opponent is most exposed and isolated, proceeding by the method that peasant wisdom has enshrined in one of the many proverbs of our countryside. When you want to cut down a tree, it is not always useful to use a rope. With too much pulling, the rope can snap. Then it is better to dig around the tree to bring it down. The tree to be toppled is, for now, that of conservative and reactionary interests." Two years later, a democracy of alternation was born with the entrance of the Psi into the democratic and governmental sphere.

The political outcome of the 1960s, however, was only the concluding act of a decade-long journey that developed parallel to and was influenced by the superpower clash. The path to the first center-left government, and therefore to democratic alternation, had been all but linear, punctuated by parties separating and attempted rapprochements, internal and national political crises and changes of governments, by aspirations of international *grandeur* and the struggle to assert itself even as only a medium power. Along for the whole ride came the United States, the inconvenient but indispensable ally, monitoring and influencing the Italian political, cultural, social, and economic scenario since 1948 while attempting to make sense of the constant turnarounds and coup de théâtre of Italian life.

The main objective of this master's thesis is to attempt tracing the aforementioned path to the formation of the first center-left government, and thus the national opening to the Socialist forces, through the eyes and perceptions of Italy's main ally at the time and its diplomatic representation in the country. By way of the analysis of official documentation from the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations and other governmental bodies, the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of the main events of this phase of Italian politics and, consequently, of the successes and defeats of U.S. methods of influence. The consultation of primary sources also gives way to a comparison of the American views and predictions on Italian developments with the subsequent reality of the facts. Lastly, the analysis and development of the relations

maintained with key Italian political figures by high-ranking representatives of the administrations, as well as the State Department and the Embassy in Rome, allows for the reconstruction of the opening to the left from a psychological and personal point of view.

The first chapter will begin to introduce the Italian national political context in 1957, dealing with the Suez and Budapest aftermath and with the arrival of a new Ambassador in Via Veneto, J. Zellerbach. A first point of discussion will be introduced through the analysis of American expectations for the objectives that Italy had to improve or reach: total support to the Atlantic Alliance, a governmental power to the center-right coalition, absolute denial of any opening to the left, and most importantly, alignment with its most trusted ally, the United States, and promotion of the latter's democratic values.

Stemming from these clear points of reference, the second chapter will first discuss two of the most prominent figures of the Italian political scenario of the time, Amintore Fanfani and Giovanni Gronchi, different in terms of U.S. support and alignments but aligned in the Mediterranean arena. Along with an analysis of their roles in the 1958 political context and that year's elections, the relevancy and strategy of Enrico Mattei in the Mediterranean will also be investigated. The development of neo-Atlanticist aims, along with the attempt to redefine Italy's role in the international scenario, will all go through the rise of Eni's head.

The third chapter, on the other hand, will move away from the government forces to focus on the Leftist ones, attempting to describe the slow process of detachment of the Psi from the Pci, a defining trait of the whole opening to the left journey. Through this, a deep dive into the man behind the change, Pietro Nenni, will follow his fight to bring the Psi out of the Communist orbit and into the democratic one, taking advantage of the international détente and attempting to find some common ground again with the old partner, the Social Democratic party.

The fourth chapter will discuss the ideological changes brought on by the new Kennedy administration, which will slowly grow to be an ally of the center-left. The big contrast between the views of the administration and its key emissaries, particularly Arthur Schlesinger, and the State Department and Embassy will come into play at this time, slowing and weakening American input into center-left developments. The wait-and-see attitude of the American partner, divided by its own internal contrasts, will make it unable to effectively interpret the timeline and fast-paced changes that led to the Socialists entering the governmental sphere in a short time, while the Department and Embassy still struggled to find qualities such as trust and

reliability in the Psi. The fourth chapter will also explore the relations between Mattei and the USSR and his last acts, especially the slow attempt at rapprochement, with the American majors before his sudden death.

Lastly, the fifth chapter will concentrate on the actual enactment of the center-left, moving from the Psi external support to the fourth Fanfani government to its actual participation in the first Moro one, in the span of a year. For this result to be achieved, along with the containment of the crisis following the 1963 elections, the relevancy of the Kennedy visit in July of the same year will be discussed. The last portion of the thesis will be dedicated to the difficult start of the center-left, proving how all feelings of doubt, skepticism, personal interest, and internal hostility, influenced the experiment to the point of causing its first failure in 1964.

For the retracing of the process of the creation of the center-left, the consultation of primary sources, particularly those of the American National Archives and some Italian ones too, but also the memoirs of leading Italian political figures, was the fundamental basis of the treatment. Through a study of the volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States ranging from 1952 to 1963 and across two highly relevant presidencies, it was possible to reconstruct the slow and controversial process of evaluation of the opening to the left. The opinions and strategies employed by the Embassy and Department of State, along with simpler analyses of Italian domestic events, are often clearly expressed and summarized in the telegrams and visit recounts exchanged, while numerous reports compare the internal developments with the expected strategic goals of the two administrations, parallelly adjusting the aim on the basis of the complex twists and turns of the Italian political scenario.

Thanks to the continuous entries and the lively correspondence, which has been declassified for the most part, it was possible to interpret the historical events through an American lens. By informing the different administration bodies about internal occurrences, along with forecasting potential scenarios of development, the U.S. allows for the goals of its foreign policy agenda for the country to be reconstructed, together with the realignments and modifications required by an everchanging internal scenario and a Cold War international setting. Lastly, the interpretation and judgement of the actions and ideals of the most prominent political leaders of the time offered a new side of them, especially inserted in a Western and international context.

Finally, these primary sources were then combined with the discussion and commentary of experts on the topic through the consultation of secondary sources, in particular the texts of Leopoldo Nuti, Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, and the two collections respectively edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, and Agostino Giovagnoli and Luciano Tosi. These volumes incorporated further primary documents belonging to in-site American and Italian national archives, allowing for a deeper, current, and more multifaceted interpretation of the happenings.

At the root of my decision to explore this topic and historical period was a desire to continue the path I began during my undergraduate studies. My thesis, in fact, centered on the role of the American embassy in Rome and its psywar on post-World War II Italy, from 1948 to 1956, and how American influence shaped the political, cultural, and social reconstruction of Italy. The resumption of the master's thesis from the following year determined for me the closing of a historical path on the foundations of the creation of the First Italian Republic, starting from the genesis of the center-left to discuss and understand its initial mechanisms of operation and the founding motivations and dynamics that determined all subsequent political developments well into the 80s.

This dive into the Italy of the late 1950s and early 1960s from an American perspective turned out to be extremely rewarding and stimulating, both in the work of bibliographic research and in the writing process. I can only consider it the crowning achievement of two years of fulfilling studies and immense geopolitical passion, along with a theoretical approach to a world, that of Via Veneto, to which I have personally contributed.

1.

The Italian 1957: a new conception of an old political tradition

1.1. Italian politics and the new course of the second Eisenhower administration

In order to draw a cohesive and thorough picture of the process of *apertura a sinistra*, it is deemed necessary to set the national and international context of 1957, the year in which such analysis begins.

Like many others, Italy had found itself handling the aftermath of 1956, a year that proved crucial not just for the international setting but for the country's internal dynamics. The events of the past year fueled the national desire to play a more dynamic part in the international scenario as an active and involved player, one entitled to consultation on major world events. The progress of the European project and the entrance into the UN had also projected Italy into an enlarged decision-making arena, in which the country was rebuilding its reputation as a reliable long-term partner. Although Italy was still struggling to build up a defense force, the slow rise of its economic miracle was now starting to reach its peak force, benefiting the people but also bringing Italy into a dynamic and larger market. Many of these achievements and the aspirations Italy was working to fulfill as a medium-sized power were linked to its presence in the free world coalition and consequently, to the United States. A common denominator throughout the governmental changes was the wholehearted commitment to follow both bilaterally and multilaterally the international policies of the United States¹ and the Atlantic Alliance.

With "the friendship between the U.S. and Italy as a basic fact of Italian political life and the foundation of its foreign policy, [along with] the second important basis of Italian foreign policy [being] the NATO alliance,"² Italy was bound to reflect the internal and international developments of the American counterpart. As the first Eisenhower presidential mandate came to an end and the second one began, a foreseen changing of the guard took place in the diplomatic ranks of Via Veneto. For reasons of health, Clare Booth Luce had resigned from the Roman post at the beginning of 1956 and departed at the end of the same year, leaving the floor

¹ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, September 3, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

² Memorandum of a Conversation, Washington, September 25, 1957, Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

to James D. Zellerbach as the new Ambassador.³ Of mild temperament, Zellerbach had been an important asset in the re-election of Eisenhower in California. Most importantly, his knowledge and experience of Italy had been much greater than Luce's as between 1948 and 1950, he had been the Chief of Economic Cooperation Administration Special Mission to Italy, supervising and establishing the granting of the Marshall Plan funds. In his memoir "Anni d'America," diplomat Egidio Ortona describes Zellerbach as someone who "had already gone through the difficult phases of familiarizing with the character and customs of the Italian people, fostering - along with his wife - feelings of sincere friendship for our country."⁴

The new course of the Eisenhower administration and the end of the stark battle against Italian communist forces led by Mrs. Luce brought about a new American attitude in the Peninsula. What once had been an active and at times direct intervention in the political, social, and cultural affairs of the country, slowly turned itself into a more passive and observing stance. This new attitude was also visible through the official documentation: an outline plan prepared by the OCB of the Department of State, dated May 1957, clearly stated that "economic aid to Italy is no longer necessary or expected, [therefore] the U.S. should concentrate on facilitating a more normal, sound and self-sustaining relationship with Italy."⁵ With the end of the polarized ideological stance of the beginning of the 50s and the major difficulties of the reconstruction process of those years, the general trend set by Zellerbach was more based on delegation and autonomy of subordinates, although opinions differ regarding his actual incisiveness on Embassy affairs.⁶ It is in light of this lack of formal, common direction that one has to interpret the differing positions held within the U.S. Embassy and vis-à-vis those of the Department of State throughout the first phase of the process of the opening to the left. Said attitude appeared partially in line with a more disengaged, nuanced approach of the second Eisenhower term but essentially flawed by its delay in presenting a united front when reacting to the ever-changing Italian political scenarios.

The arrival of Zellerbach in Italy at the end of 1956 was met by the impact of the Khrushchev report and the Hungary crisis on the relations and internal dynamics of the Communist,

³ Editorial Note. Department of State, 1957. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

⁴ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

⁵ Outline Plan Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, May 15, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Top Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

⁶ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

Socialist, and Social Democratic parties⁷. Furthermore, the mounting government crisis of May 1957, which led to the end of the first Segni government and the formation of the Zoli one, and the preparation for the 1958 elections were notable matters to be faced.

Therefore, for most of 1957 and the beginning of 1958, the main Italian issue that the Eisenhower administration focused on was preparing for the elections. The goal was not only to curate the electoral campaign on the part of the U.S. Embassy but specially to convey years of foreign strategy⁸ and political support to the Christian Democracy and the Psdi into electoral success, also taking advantage of the moment of weakness of the Communist forces. In this regard, by February 1957, the Department of State had updated its *Progress Report*, the NSC 5411/2, to the main U.S. policy objectives reporting how “faithful adherence by Italian communist leaders to Soviet policy in Hungary has reduced popular support for the Italian Communist Party and increased Italian distrust of the Soviet Union. On the whole, the Italian Communist Party is somewhat weaker as evidenced by significant reductions in party membership and more divided than it was six months ago.”⁹

Although one should keep in mind that Italy was not among the priorities of American foreign policy, a high degree of focus and concern were always maintained on the internal political balance and the international position of the country. This clearly emerges from the progress reports prepared on U.S. policy towards Italy, which have been declassified for the most part. During the second half of 1957, the Department of State found Italy to be progressing towards U.S. goals slower than anticipated, which included a constitutional, democratic government, reducing the strength and effectiveness of the Italian Communist Party, and a healthy self-sustaining economy.¹⁰ Specifically, it was found that the 1957 government crisis had highlighted the inability of the Center parties to agree on a shared political line so close to an electoral period, and during a time in which the Pci was recovering from the shocks of 1956.¹¹ Notwithstanding the American understanding of the difficulties originating from said factionalism and the designs of the Dc to succeed at the expense of the other Center parties¹²,

⁷ From here on, respectively Pci, Psi and Psdi.

⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁹ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, February 13, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁰ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, September 3, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

no policy revision was deemed necessary by the U.S., who often interpreted endemic discrepancies as common twists and turns of Italian national politics.¹³ The NSC 5411/2 was updated but never truly modified. Ortona noted that “at the Department, the reaction [to the 1957 crisis] had been democratically tuned to an understanding of the political needs of the moment: Saragat was justified, the formation of a coalition government was still hoped for [...].”¹⁴ Although the Psdi had left the coalition and opened the governmental crisis of 1957, the effort to strengthen the party put in by the U.S. continued. Support was especially shown for its leader Saragat, who had “taken [a political position and courageous actions] over the course of the years in support of democratic society” during “times of struggle against dangerous threats to freedom,”¹⁵ as Secretary of State Dulles had noted in September during Saragat’s visit to Washington. Particular emphasis was put on the relevance of the Christian Democracy as “the bulwark of the democratic regime and Italy’s pro-Western orientation.”¹⁶

One could argue that part of the U.S.-Italian relations of the time was based on a *do-ut-des* mechanism: the support shown by the United States proved to be beneficial for the reputation of those parties, such as the Dc and Psdi, that promoted values in line with American ideals. While visiting Washington, newly-appointed Italian Foreign Minister Pella mentioned how the “cordiality shown Italy by the United States will be a significant contribution to the favorable outcome of the elections.”¹⁷ In exchange for this all-rounded support, Italy remained a staunch supporter of U.S. policies abroad and its international plan, carrying out, as Eisenhower confidently expressed, “a steadfast and successful foreign policy which has enabled our countries to cooperate so closely to our mutual advantage,”¹⁸ a strategic necessity that will be better discussed in the next paragraph.

In light of these tighter links, the United States often used its political allies as compasses to get a sense of internal developments, and the progression of the Socialist party in the Italian

¹³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁴ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D’America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

¹⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, September 10, 1957. Department of State, Secretary’s Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199, Italy. Confidential. Drafted by Engle. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁶ Outline Plan Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, May 15, 1957. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Top Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, September 25, 1957. Department of State, Secretary’s Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁸ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Confidential. Rome, October 10, 1957— 7 p.m., Department of State, Central Files, 611.65/10-1057. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

political scenario offers a clear example of that. Throughout the 50s, the possibility of opening the governmental floor to the socialist forces wasn't on the table for the American ally. Its superficial interpretation of the leftist forces could not differentiate the socialist spirit from the communist one, therefore an all-encompassing perception of the Left as a force to be defeated as a whole prevailed.¹⁹ Official documentation records how the potential reunification of the Socialist forces was a topic of interest for the administration, classified under "Major Operating Problems or Difficulties Facing the United States" in OCB reports. A sentiment of hostility originated from the Embassy too when analyzing a potential reunification of the Socialist and Social democratic parties, based on the fear that "Nenni's large party would absorb Saragat's small one, with the result that socialist unification could end under communist control."²⁰ All in all, the objectives that the United States set for the Italian context and the perception of the Pci-Psi as an enemy to defeat were in line with the Cold War phase of the late 50s, one still characterized by a strong clash between the blocks.

A confirmation of said analysis was often looked for in discussions with Italian political leaders. In 1956, while visiting Washington and New York, highly estimated Dc leader Amintore Fanfani strictly excluded the possibility to open up to the Left or coming to an agreement with Psi leader Pietro Nenni²¹; the following year, while visiting Washington, Saragat declared that he believed a Socialist reunification to be impossible, as Nenni still struggled to detach most of his party from the communists²². Lastly, during Nixon's visit to Rome, Prime Minister Segni manifested "his doubt that socialist unification could be achieved before 1958 [...] If socialist parties run together they, too, will lose ground."²³

One last consideration should be made on the United States' stance regarding the growing Socialist force in Italy. In line with what was earlier stated, the new tendency of the Eisenhower second administration is one of observance and careful, subtle influence. While the United States has very clearly defined its political objectives within the country, which are for the most part related to the grand design that the government is looking to instate in the West and the Atlantic Alliance, it is also allowing for some degree of political change to take place. The Outline plan of operations proves exactly this: "Unification [...] if carried out prematurely

¹⁹ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

²⁰ Usdgd, *Papers*, november 1956, n.382c, vol.6., cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 68.

²¹ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1280, Rome, March 28, 1957, Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-NI/3-2857. Confidential. In FRUS, *1955-1957*, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

would not only weaken Italian democracy and stability but would also make it difficult to achieve a new governmental formula satisfactory to U.S. objectives,”²⁴ to then establish that “During the present stage of Socialist unification negotiations it is of great importance for the U.S. to exercise the utmost discretion. We should on one hand do nothing publicly or privately to indicate that we favor the admission of the Nenni Socialists as presently oriented into the ranks of the democratic parties, but on the other hand, we should avoid giving the impression that the Nenni Socialists would be unacceptable under absolutely all conditions. We should be careful not to lead European Socialists to think we oppose an increase in democratic Socialist strength.”²⁵ All in all, the key value the United States will be looking to fulfill throughout the Socialist experience is that of democracy, and the idea that the finish line could be reached through different and unexpected paths slowly started creeping in around the end of the decade. Soon enough, it will seem the only way to achieve democracy without jeopardizing the political predominance of the historical ally.

1.2. The American search for a reliable Italian Atlanticism

Atlanticism and Europeanism are to be considered the two main guidelines of Italian foreign policy, one that Italy has attempted to shape in light of its historical, geographical, and political peculiarities.²⁶ Italy entered the last triennium of the 1950s with a renewed desire to increase its international weight. The Mediterranean appeared as an obvious area to expand the country’s pull. Finding an increasingly relevant role in the Mediterranean dynamics was not solely related to geographic and historical reasons but it inevitably intertwined with the geostrategic and geopolitical relevance that the sea had assumed in the Cold War dynamics and the American grand scheme. The Suez crisis had appeared as the perfect opportunity to take over the temporary power void left by France and the United Kingdom after their dismay, to which Italy reacted swiftly, immediately looking for the endorsement of the United States.

Although Italy’s reaction had been motivated by a desire to anticipate the Soviet takeover, the Department of State still appeared startled by the Italian tendency to negotiate its role in the

²⁴ Outline Plan Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, May 15, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Top Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Acanfora, Paolo. “La Politica Estera Italiana Nella Cultura Politica Democristiana.” *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

European and Mediterranean areas to take advantage of its undeniable geographic advantage.²⁷ Indeed, the interpretation that the major Italian party was giving to the new spaces that were opening up in the Middle East drew from former Dc leader De Gasperi's idea of Italian diplomacy as a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean.²⁸ In this setting, however, the official party line moved from an underlining colonial reference to a more propagandistic one.²⁹ The end goal of the Italian aspirations was that of shaping a foreign policy that could enhance the role and qualities of Italy as a partner; the Dc and the government were aiming at carving autonomous scope for action, however without questioning the alliance with Atlantic and European partners.³⁰ Therefore, it came as a surprise when the effort for improved Atlanticism turned into a form of neo-Atlanticism. A term inadvertently coined by Giuseppe Pella in 1957, it entailed an increasing degree of attention toward former colonial countries, the part of the Third World that the Dc mostly identified within the Mediterranean area, especially North African, and Arab countries. In turn, neo-Atlanticism would indicate a more neutral, less supportive stance towards NATO and Western Europe. The main interpreters of this foreign policy approach were President of the Republic Giovanni Gronchi and Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani, linked together through the figure of Florence mayor Giovanni La Pira and of ENI President Enrico Mattei. Their neo-Atlantic postures will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The shadow of neo-Atlanticism soon became worrisome for the United States, as parallelism could be drawn between the forces that favored an opening to the left and those that, through neo-Atlanticism, could potentially threaten the pro-Western positions held by Italy in the international setting.³¹ The 1958 elections served to prove that the Mediterranean initiative envisioned by the Christian Democracy was to be framed within Atlantic interests and objectives, and not to turn such aspirations into potentially neutral positions. This sort of test of pro-Atlantic, pro-European allegiance had already started at the end of 1957, when Secretary of State Dulles "appreciated Italy's consistent support in international matters, including the

²⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

²⁸ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

²⁹ Acanfora, Paolo. "La Politica Estera Italiana Nella Cultura Politica Democristiana." *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

whole range of problems in the Middle East. As a result of [our] experience, we have no fear of Italy subscribing to ideas such as the “third force” or neutralism.”³²

In a larger sense, Italy felt the urgent need to fulfill its duty to “facilitate the rebuilding of the unity among the members of the [Atlantic] Alliance [...] assisting [the action of the U.S.] with an autonomous action of equilibrium and conciliation both in Europe and in the Middle East.”³³ By affirming the American leadership in Europe first and in the Middle East then, the European project and the Atlantic Alliance, now less prone to cooperation in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, would have in turn been strengthened. This would have ultimately led to a strong benefit for the aspirations that the United States had in the Mediterranean region. Therefore, American assistance to the Middle East should have first encompassed the support to Europe, to then complement and incentivize more functional cooperation in the NATO settings.³⁴ In this setting, Italy would have gained a preeminent role with material and prestige benefits, defining the Atlantic, Mediterranean and European directories on which the country was basing the new course of its foreign policy.

The constant search for further collaboration and an increased role within the Western alliance is often mentioned in official documentation and conversations between the political forces of Italy and the United States: in the 1956 - 1957 report on “United States Policy towards Italy,” it is mentioned how “Italy requests, in return for following general U.S. leadership, increased consultation by the U.S. and support for specific Italian objectives. Italy desires forceful U.S. leadership of the free world, particularly in the Middle East.”³⁵ Similarly, during Vice President Nixon’s visit to Rome in 1957, President Gronchi, Prime Minister Segni, and Foreign Minister Martino renewed the desire for prompt consultation on matters affecting the Western alliance³⁶, so that, as brought up by Foreign Minister Pella, “Ital Govt must be put in position where it not

³² Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, September 25, 1957. Department of State, Secretary’s Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

³³ Appunto Ufficio III DGAP, 4 dicembre 1956, ASMAE, SG, On. G. Martino (1956), b. 117, cit. in A. Brogi, op. cit., p.

³⁴ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

³⁵ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, February 13, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

³⁶ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1280, Rome, March 28, 1957, Department of State, Central Files, 033.1100-NI/3-2857. Confidential. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

embarrassed before Parliament and Ital public opinion by unexpected developments concerning Italy on which she has not been consulted.³⁷”

The United States seemed to recognize the commitment and desires of Italy in the Atlantic Alliance framework, as proven by a recount by Ortona of a conversation held between Vice President Pella and Secretary of States Dulles on the occasion of the former’s visit to Washington. “[They] agreed to recognize the Atlantic Organization's contribution to world peace within the framework of which the two countries' policy directives move. [...] They gave special consideration to disarmament, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Noting the harmony of the two governments' views, the Secretary of State agreed to recognize Italy's important interest in those areas.”³⁸

Despite the insistent requests for information and consultation on the Italian part, underlined in multiple Embassy telegrams to the Department of State, the scarce defensive and military contributions Italy was able to offer delayed further involvement of the country in international and Middle Eastern affairs. Taking into consideration how “the Italian military effectiveness remains low and military capability has been further reduced by fuel shortages”³⁹ and “budgetary and manpower difficulties exist in meeting [NATO force] goals [...] Italian military effectiveness remains relatively low when compared to U.S. combat effectiveness standards,”⁴⁰ “FonOff undoubtedly is realistic enough to know Itals cannot expect to be treated as complete equal, since she cannot make equal contribution.”⁴¹ Therefore, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the United States started looking at Germany instead of Italy for new forms of cooperation, as it was considered to be a “wiser businessman” and to enjoy better relations with Middle Eastern countries. The bridges that existed before the Suez crisis between France, the UK, and the U.S. also hadn’t been burnt, leading Italy to fear being left out of reconciliation and further cooperation on a quadripartite basis.

³⁷ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, repeated to London, Paris, and Bonn. Rome, May 29, 1957— 10 p.m., Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5–2957. Confidential. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

³⁸ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D’America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

³⁹ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, February 13, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

⁴⁰ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, Washington, September 3, 1957, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

⁴¹ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Rome, September 11, 1957— 8 p.m., Department of State, Central Files, 665.88/9–1157. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

Ultimately, although the economic miracle was on the rise, Italy remained a defeated country that had enjoyed the mercy of a partner as powerful as the United States. The attempt to establish a new course for its foreign policy depended on the perks that the U.S. could get from the more limited actions of a medium-sized country. The real challenge for Italy was to draw a tailored foreign policy that encompassed Atlantic loyalty, international recognition, and national support and favored its economic interests.⁴²

⁴² Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

2.

Amintore Fanfani, Giovanni Gronchi, and Enrico Mattei: different sides of the same coin?

2.1. The 1958 elections and the state of the Christian Democracy at the turn of the decade

Before analyzing two of the most prominent figures of the late 50s Italian political scenario, it is deemed fruitful to touch upon the internal conditions of the Christian Democracy's party structure. Understanding the worsening internal divisions faced by the party in the late 50s helps to shed light on the progressive opening to the left.

From the 1948 elections and passing through the 1953 ones, the U.S. presence in Italy had always been too predominant for national political forces to ignore it. The two countries shared many similarities, which tied them together and furthered their unity. "so many Italians live happily in the US [...] US and Italian history also have in common their respective people's struggle for independence. [Segni said that] Although Italy achieved freedom later than the US did, there was nothing more alien to the Italian character than lack of freedom. Italians are more than advocates of independence, they are strong individualists. They admire the progress made in the US without sacrificing freedom. Italy has obtained material progress, too, especially since the war, and also without sacrificing freedom."¹

Particularly, the Embassy in Rome conditioned Italian political life through its different levels of support and favors so as to influence the overall political balance of the country. Since the rise of De Gasperi, the party deemed the most representative of U.S. foreign goals for the country had been the Christian Democracy. Through these favorable ties, the Dc stood almost unchallenged as the strongest and most voted political force in the country. In the same way that the U.S. considered the Dc the most reliable asset in the country to further its Western goals, the Dc leaders also relied on the American partner to increase their popularity and sense of reliability. Italian politicians seeking contact with the Embassy, and the ritual trip to Washington by any new Italian prime minister are just examples of the significant efforts pursued by the centrist parties to maintain the best possible and most profitable relationship with the United States. Throughout all the updated Operation Plans for Italy, the Dc appeared

¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, July 1, 1963, 10:45 a.m., Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D110, CF 2280. Secret. Drafted by Fraleigh and transmitted as enclosure 1 to airgram 63 from Rome, July 17. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

as the first and most reliable partner for the United States, placing “the primary U.S. interest in the Christian Democratic Party as now oriented, as the foundation of the democratic government and the pro-Western orientation of Italy”² among the programs and courses of action.

The 1958 elections were therefore faced by the American partner with a general expectation that the Dc would have succeeded and “will continue as leading party”³, running on a program of “progress without adventures”⁴ based on six main planks: bureaucratic reforms, education, labor, economic, foreign policy, and financial.⁵ Although the United States was well aware of the perceived controversies, weaknesses, and divisions that affected the stability and longevity of the Christian Democracy, the confrontations still hadn’t turned into clashes nor affected the voting process, and Fanfani still held a somewhat steady hand on the party as secretary.

More concern, however, surrounded the electoral results of the other right-wing parties as, despite the foreseeable success of the Dc, Ambassador Zellerbach still expected the party to “be unable to form majority government by itself.”⁶ The results of the Psdi, Pli (Liberal party), and Pri (Republican party) appeared as wild cards in the formation of the next government. Center parties approached the May elections separately, running independently, with parties and platforms playing a secondary role to political personalities, and in general, lacking the atmosphere of crisis of 1948 and 1953.⁷ Although the Dc “leaders appear confident party can overcome this [electoral law] disadvantage and at least hold its own”⁸, the possibility that the center parties would lose ground could have led to “serious problems in the formation of an Italian Government and Italian policy might undergo a reorientation.”⁹ Zellerbach, through reputable last-minute pre-electoral polls, reported Embassy’s expectations that no major shifts from the 1953 elections would have taken place, aside from an increase in Pli and Psdi votes.

² Report by the Operations Coordinating Board, November 7, 1958, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 22, 1958, 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5–2258. Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to Bonn, London, Paris, and Athens. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, March 6, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/3–1458. Confidential. Drafted by Niles W. Bond and John D. Jernegan. Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 1169 from Rome, March 14. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁶ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 22, 1958, 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5–2258. Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to Bonn, London, Paris, and Athens. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. April 30, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

In light of the actual results of the elections, the 1958 round confirmed an electoral trend that had started in the previous legislation, for which the centrist coalitions ended up being based on a razor-thin majority¹⁰, putting the Dc before the challenge of forming a stable majority government.

The electoral results of May 1958 brought some expected achievements and other challenging outcomes. Dc's conquests were welcomed as an "undebatable success" and with a touch of optimism, demonstrating that the U.S. foreign policy course followed up until that point was proving successful.¹¹ Fanfani registered how "46-48% of the new young voters had voted for the Dc alone, not because of superior Dc organizational work but rather for ideological reasons stemming from the progressive and forward-looking Dc social and economic program."¹² Psdi electors also modestly grew, albeit not as much as anticipated, whereas the significant increment of seats expected from the Pli didn't take place. Concerning the Pci-Psi, the only relevant surprise was the significant increase in seats gained by the Psi, which caused a certain degree of agitation in Via Veneto; however, the result was counterbalanced by the slight loss of ground of the Pci.¹³ As anticipated, no major shifts in power relations among parties took place, and the Embassy could disprove the administration's pessimistic predictions of the electoral outcome, which were instead judged as partially positive.¹⁴

The subsequent process of forming the government also proved a successful demonstration of alignment with U.S. expectations. Put in charge of forming a new government and not without difficulties, Fanfani united the Dc and Psdi forces and reached a bare majority in the Chamber with the external support of the Pri. The Pli, on the other hand, was left out of the formation for the anti-Dc campaign it had run during the electoral period¹⁵, and for the incompatibility of its policies with the Pri and Psdi's ones, as registered by the two parties leaders¹⁶. Taking into consideration the strong commitment to the American partner and its objectives shown by

¹⁰ Airgram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, December 20, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/12-2058. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and Zellerbach. Repeated to London, Paris, Bonn, and all Consulates in Italy. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹¹ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

¹² Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, June 18, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2758. Secret. Drafted by Bond. Sent to the Department of State as an enclosure to despatch 1685, June 27. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁵ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, June 18, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2758. Secret. Drafted by Bond. Sent to the Department of State as an enclosure to despatch 1685, June 27. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

Fanfani since the beginning of its mandate, the new government brought a new impulse to the Italian-U.S. alignment. With the second Fanfani government, “U.S. interest in a Center government was successfully met by the election.”¹⁷ The foreign ambiguities registered during 1957 seemed to have been brought back into the ranks, with a renewal and solidification of the expected equilibrium.¹⁸

The electoral bliss, however, wasn’t meant to last. Right at the end of 1958, NIE 24-58, a National Intelligence Estimate titled “The Political Outlook in Italy”, had concluded that people were looking for economic and social reforms but no radical change, something that the Fanfani government still wouldn’t have been able to grant them due to the limited political and economic assets available.¹⁹ Although rightfully expecting the Dc to continue to dominate the Italian political scene for the next legislation, Zellerbach disclosed the impression that there was an “apparent lack of viable alternative majority formula on presumption that present orientation actually represents present temper of Dc party and electorate.”²⁰ Indeed, the precarious position in the Chamber didn’t hold on for too long. The end of Fanfani’s second government in January 1959 proved the Embassy’s expectations wrong, as a mistake was indeed made in their forecasts, which expected the Fanfani government to last in power at least until the Dc Congress in April 1959.²¹

Between the 1958 elections and the next legislation of 1963 - the one in which the Psi will enter the governmental coalition -, five governments²² rose to power, each for about a year. Although all of them maintained close working relations with the United States²³ and showed a renewed commitment to democratic values and the Italian role within NATO, concerns remained spread among the Embassy and Department of State that the displayed weakness could have affected the state of bilateral relations. Furthermore, the continuous minority governments being formed and the progressive, albeit short-lived, inclusion of Right-wing elements in the governmental

¹⁷ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁸ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

¹⁹ Editorial Note. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁰ Airgram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, December 20, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/12–2058. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and Zellerbach. Repeated to London, Paris, Bonn, and all Consulates in Italy. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Three of which with Fanfani as Prime Minister.

²³ Taking into consideration the friendship that united Prime Minister Segni to Ambassador Zellerbach since the Marshall Plan times.

coalitions²⁴ generated a level of uneasiness that was paired up with the continuation of the Psi's superficial break with the Communists.

The presence of different currents within the Dc party itself at the mercy of powerful, yet conflicting personalities, left the United States fearing for potential realignments through the numerous attempts to form lasting governmental coalitions.²⁵ For this, a continuous commitment to supporting Dc minority governments with the participation of all or most of the Center parties, either from the democratic left or the right, even the neo-Fascist one, was recommended for a friendly democratic and pro-Western oriented Italian Government to stay in place.²⁶

Despite the factionalism of the Christian Democracy, the OCB continued to suggest "keeping in touch with all major factions while maintaining close relations with the present government. We should encourage the Christian Democrats as a whole to seek a broad and stable base for the government."²⁷ Going into the Florence Dc Convention of October 1959, Zellerbach underlined the differences of principle and personal rivalries between factions, with a deriving difficulty in "reconstituting old center party coalitions."²⁸ According to H. G. Torbert, Counselor of Embassy, the Congress' results depended on the capacity of present leaders to compromise and collaborate, potentially leading to new leadership after, with Fanfani and his *notabili* pushing their ambitions forward.²⁹

Torbert's predictions proved rightful with the strengthening of the Segni-Moro axis as a result of the Florence Congress, giving the U.S. hope for a reduction in party tensions.³⁰ The partial marginalization of Fanfani could have been interpreted as a sign that although much valued, he wasn't the only possible interlocutor for the American forces in Italy. The stance held by the Segni government, indeed, had pleased the Eisenhower administration, especially in Atlantic matters, and the coalition had grown to be more than a temporary, albeit still precarious,

²⁴ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁵ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1362 Rome, May 19, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-1959. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and the members of the Embassy Political State. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁶ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. July 8, 1959. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, October 21, 1959, 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/10-2159. Confidential. Repeated to London, Paris, and Bonn. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁹ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1362 Rome, May 19, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-1959. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and the members of the Embassy Political State. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

solution. Furthermore, the center-right coalition had been able to carry out some of Fanfani's social reforms³¹, allowing for positive developments to happen in line with OCB's expectations. For this, the Embassy's evaluations at the end of the decade had shifted towards the achievements of a short-term and a medium-term goal: the former was to maintain relations with the Segni government, temporarily renouncing the reformist pushes of Fanfani, who "may have helped Dc party somewhat in 1958 elections but his attempt in 1958 to govern on this basis was complete failure."³² The latter was to strengthen center-left moderate parties to reinstate an incisive four-party government formula and most importantly, distance Segni from the center-right coalition on which the government currently relied.³³ Through the Segni experience and particularly during the brief Tambroni government, the United States had concluded that the longer the Dc associated itself with the Msi (neo-fascist forces), the more negative the consequences for the former party would have been, with a subsequent backlash for the United States.³⁴

None of these concerns, however, led to modifications to the NSC 5411/2 until 1960, because of a perceived adequate "stability of the system that ensured adherence to a democratic form of government and free world coalition."³⁵ The exit of Fanfani from governmental positions in 1959 had created a significant vacuum in U.S. foreign policy, considering that the economic and social advancements that Fanfani had promised and that aligned with the wider operation plan hadn't taken place. Although the momentary stability offered by Segni delayed changes in the policy for Italy, the United States opened the revision motivated by the long crisis after the end of the latter's government and the violence during the Tambroni one, and in conjunction with Fanfani's comeback to government. The NSC 5411/2 had been drawn up in 1954, during the Boothe Luce time in Rome and when the Pci still had to enter its state of electoral stagnation. A lack of revision didn't equal no adjustments during the Eisenhower administration, as

³¹ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

³² Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to London, Bonn, Moscow, all Consulates in Italy, and Paris. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁴ Telegram 3999 from Rome to the State Department, "Memo of Conversation with Francesco Cosentino, Secretary-General of the Chamber and Gronchi's Legal Adviser", May 16, 1960, May 16, 1960, NARA, RG 59, CdF, b. 765.00/5-1660. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³⁵ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. July 1, 1959. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

objectives were adjourned based on the developments taking place within the country, but some aspects - especially the economic ones - needed redefinition.³⁶

The new document was drafted amid the July 1960 wave of violence, an element that transpires from the evaluations of those involved, along with the weakness of the Center and the potential discrediting repercussions on the “institutions of parliamentary democracy and [...] parliamentary representation for the moderate center parties, thereby strengthening the left and right extremes.”³⁷ While detecting a crisis of the Center, partially attributed to the perception that the Communist threat hadn’t been as strong as once was, the report also noted that throughout the numerous electoral appointments, a shift of the center of the political spectrum toward the left had been made. As expected, the focal point of the NSC 6014 was the Italian matter of opening to the left, and the increasing attention paid to both the internal instability and the slow rise of the Psi. The biggest change from the NSC 541 1/2 was indeed a partial opening to the possibility of conversing with the Socialist party without major risks, slowly working towards an independent relationship between the Dc and the Psi while the latter continued its path of redemption from Soviet stances. Not only was the document the first, clear signal that the United States was starting to take into consideration a new political course, but it also exemplified the beginning of the three-year struggle between the Embassy, Department of State, and CIA in reaching a cohesive view on the opening to the left³⁸. From the NSC 6014 on, exploration and cautiousness became the two keywords of two dissenting sides. These will soon become too caught up in theoretical discussion to act swiftly and decisively on the topic. Even when it was finally approved, in January 1961, the new framework provided by NSC 6014 did not introduce any radical changes.³⁹ The main objective of the United States in terms of political alignment was still to offer “maximum feasible support to democratic political forces as broadly based as possible, to achieve implementation of the reforms necessary to improve basic social and economic conditions in Italy, and increase public support for the Italian political system.”⁴⁰ For this, the final goal was still to sustain a moderate center formula for coalition governments, one that would further the commitments and plan carried out by Italy in

³⁶ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁷ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁹ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the international setting so far. In light of the lack of a relevant degree of impact of Italian instability on its role within NATO, in its relations with Western powers, and in fulfillment of Western democratic values, the NSC 6014 continued on a similar path of political support. All in all, the three objectives established in the NSC maintained the official line promoted throughout the Eisenhower presidencies and some of its clichés, proving that even through modifications, the focal points of U.S. interest stood still. “A strong, stable Italy: Free from Communist domination or elective Communist influence and subversion; Having a constitutional, democratic government and a healthy, self-sustaining economy; and Able and willing to make important political, economic, and military contributions in support of the Free World coalition.”⁴¹

The Rome Embassy saluted the Eisenhower administration in a state of great confusion and concern for the Italian situation and the incapacity of the Dc to find a shared purpose, avoiding a further polarization of forces. A first step in the right direction had been made by the comeback of Fanfani to government, for which “for the first time since 1958 Italy now has a government based on broad center parliamentary support which offers prospect of developing into effective governing instrument.”⁴² Despite the return to a wider coalition, the democratic basis still felt limited on the right, for neo-Fascists, and on the left, for Communists and Nenni’s Socialists, not allowing for normal processes of parliamentary government, proportional representation, and especially alternation of power to take place within a broader political spectrum.⁴³ The parties in power were essentially the only ones allowed to be, capable of reuniting only in front of the pressing danger of the Pci-Psi but otherwise caught up in internal conflicts of interest. The short-lived governments they managed to create could only work as such, as their creation was the mere result of power games and external pressures, while competition often worked out outside of Parliament.⁴⁴ In the eyes of the Embassy, “unifying factors are no longer operative and after 15 years of power Dc Party gives the appearance of having degenerated into league of warring factions, using ideological rationalizations only to justify competition for power.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴² Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴³ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to London, Bonn, Moscow, all Consulates in Italy, and Paris. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to London, Bonn, Moscow, all Consulates in Italy, and Paris. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

All in all, while changes at the White House were about to create a “New Frontier”, the Zellerbach mandate ended with the same spirit it had maintained throughout the four years in Rome: although the governmental coalition was considered a positive result and American goals continued to be guaranteed, it appeared as a temporary patch. Fanfani and the Dc were safe for the time being with the creation of the government of the “convergenze parallele”⁴⁶, one in the name of a spirit of renewed cooperation, but a long-term solution would have to be found to face the structural dilemma of the entire Christian Democratic party.⁴⁷ Soon enough, opening the space for the left will seem like the only solution to avoid a systemic collapse. The Dc was bound to rediscover its pulse and direction, turning the Center-Left from an eye-catching slogan to a reality under the aegis of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

2.2. America’s expectations of the figure of Fanfani

The 1958 elections brought to the forefront the Christian Democracy leader, Amintore Fanfani. Elected Secretary general of the party in 1954 shortly after his 22-day-long first government experience, throughout the 50s and early 60s he was undoubtedly the most permanent figure of reference for the United States, and in general, a permanent voice within the Italian political scenario.

Fanfani appeared as a tiny man with mobile, vivacious eyes, as Egidio Ortona describes in his memoir on the occasion of the Secretary’s visit to Washington in 1956.⁴⁸ Throughout his stay there and in the numerous meetings with journalists, businessmen, representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties, and most importantly, in his encounter with President Eisenhower, Ortona remembers him as “skillful, persuasive, loquacious ” and highlights his “most brilliant exposition of domestic policy issues.”⁴⁹ Ambassador Brosio also narrates parts of the visit in his diaries, describing Fanfani’s “politician's temperament, imprecise, quick to evade a subject, is placid in reaction, can be authoritative in a calm way, does not lose his temper, can moderate his aspirations and appear wise.”⁵⁰ When asked about the internal political scenario of Italy, his opinion is considered illustrative of the political climate in Italy,

⁴⁶ The label that was given to the July 1960 substantive agreement among all parties, excluding the MSI, for a truce government to take the country out of the turmoil of the adventurism of the Tambroni executive.

⁴⁷ Memo for the Secretary of State from EUR-Mr White, “The New Italian Government”, July 29, 1960, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 1917, 765.00/7-2960, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit.

⁴⁸ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D’America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Brosio, Manlio. *Diari di Washington (1955-1961)*, Il Mulino, 2008.

he “discards openings to the left, proclaims the need to help the minor parties, and does not underestimate the persistent communist danger while pointing out its current weaknesses.”⁵¹

So extensive and compelling had the American "lectio" been for Fanfani, and the traces of it lasting and positive, similarly the United States identified Fanfani as its point of reference. His advent to the presidency of the council had been regarded as an almost obvious step by the United States. Some of his personality traits and the ideas he put forward had made him a respected figure in the high ranks of Washington, leaving the impression of the Luce years of Fanfani as a "man of the left" behind. In official American documentation, Fanfani is not only remembered as smart and charismatic but most importantly as the privileged interlocutor for the United States as an active and potential protagonist in reaching expected goals⁵². His feelings of sincere friendship toward the United States and pro-Atlantic orientation were unquestionable, no matter the party in power or his role in politics, and his pragmatism made his reformist plans free from ideological constraints. In the years leading up to the Florence Congress, his determination to impose his leadership in the party and form a strong, active government was considered commendable, especially considering how the Embassy was attempting to emerge from the lack of pulse and determination of previous governments. Fanfani's strength and dynamism were, according to Dulles, beneficial to Italy and Italy's role in the Atlantic Alliance.⁵³

Fanfani's dynamic political personality and his aspirations aligned with the national and international picture the Eisenhower administration had drawn up for Italy, making the Secretary and then Prime Minister its most trusted executor. In the aftermath of the 1958 elections, in a telegram to the U.S. Embassy, “the President [Eisenhower] and the Secretary [Dulles] have been impressed by the vigorous campaign fought by your party and know that your electoral success promises an ever constant reinforcement of the democratic strength of Italy.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, in official documentation, numerous memoranda of conversations between Fanfani and Ambassador Zellerbach retrace the political developments of the country, on which the former was often called to express his and the party's views, predictions, and potential necessities, while also attempting to guide the American partner through the intricate changes of the pace of Italian politics. Thanks to said relation, in a post-electoral conversation

⁵¹ Brosio, Manlio. *Diari di Washington (1955-1961)*, Il Mulino, 2008.

⁵² Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. “Fanfani visto da Washington” *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁵³ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

⁵⁴ Telegram 4502 to Rome, June 10, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6- 458, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit.

Fanfani also highlighted how “the conduct of the Embassy throughout the pre-electoral period had been just right; it had been always in the background but had never intruded itself into the electoral contest.”⁵⁵

Maintaining strong working relations and adherence to U.S. objectives was clearly in Fanfani’s interest. Right after his 1958 electoral win, he addressed Ambassador Zellerbach to express how “although the U.S. as such was scarcely mentioned in the campaign, the presence of the U.S. was felt in the background and regarded with favor by a majority of the electorate.”⁵⁶ Now that “the election results had served to confirm and strengthen Italy’s ties with the United States,”⁵⁷ Fanfani wished to visit Washington to strengthen his position after a thin vote of confidence, believing that an encounter with President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles would have served his purpose. These visits were understood as means to strengthen one’s position in the country, despite the strong criticism moved by notable figures like Ambassador Brosio, who believed that “these visits, conceived as a method of domestic policy, are in themselves a mistake, but they have become a method of Italian diplomacy.”⁵⁸ Notwithstanding said discourse, Zellerbach suggested that showing public support on the American part would have favored the “initial vigor in preparation of an ambitious domestic program and in foreign policy.”⁵⁹, considering how Fanfani was both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The fall of the Fanfani government had been followed by the Embassy with a pessimistic attitude. The failure had been attributed to the attempt of implementing his forward-looking program at a steady pace, which, mixed with the thin parliamentary majority, had caused some conflicting interests within the coalition to rise, and a part of the Dc to go against its leader⁶⁰. For the most part, the United States was disappointed to see a partner and interlocutor go, one that had aligned so promptly with American values and that had reinforced Italy’s advocacy for its interest in the international scenario.⁶¹ Fanfani had been “the most cooperative of supporters of US and NATO policy”, albeit some degree of criticism appears in Department of State’s

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, June 18, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2758. Secret. Drafted by Bond. Sent to the Department of State as an enclosure to despatch 1685, June 27. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Brosio, Manlio. *Diari di Washington (1955-1961)*, Il Mulino, 2008.

⁵⁹ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁶⁰ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, October 21, 1959, 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/10-2159. Confidential. Repeated to London, Paris, and Bonn. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁶¹ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board, December 10, 1958, Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

documentation regarding an attempt to start an “adventuristic” course of foreign policy through timid initiatives in the Middle East and South America.⁶²

While still recognizing Fanfani’s value, the Embassy quickly got used to the new Segni-Pella paradigm, appreciating its stability and normalized balance, a position held during the Florence convention too when Fanfani was deemed as too polarized of a figure. Segni’s government, with Giuseppe Pella as foreign minister, adhered rigidly to the established foreign policy lines, continuing in the wake of the previous government, but resulting in a single-color directed toward a reopening to the right, a strict closure to the Psi and unquestioning Atlantic rigidity.⁶³ Soon, indeed, the U.S. understood that Fanfani's pragmatism and strength had not so much strengthened the Dc as alienated the center-right forces, which considered him too bold, and the left, which demanded more ideological and political commitment, within the party. Considered too domineering, and with too much power concentrated in his hands, he had cut off any form of dialogue within the party. These dynamics inevitably resulted in a widening of factionalism and personalism within it.⁶⁴

With his third government being formed in July 1960 and after the high degree of weakness, instability, and the negative use of force, the United States welcomed once again a cooperative and moderate coalition, although well aware of its shakiness. The role of Amintore Fanfani as a point of reference for the next administration was bound to continue in the opening to the left process.

2.3. Fanfanian neo-Atlanticism: the Italian “competenza speciale”

Along with the reformist turn that Fanfani attempted internally during his second and third governments, much of his efforts went into revolutionizing Italy’s foreign policy and diplomacy. Between 1958 and 1963, the various, yet unitary foreign policy perspectives of the Christian Democracy found in Fanfani its legitimate interpreter, one that managed the coexistence of Atlanticism and Europeanism within a wider framework characterized by elements of continuity and novelty. During this time, Fanfani held the primary role in defining Italian foreign policy and attempting to guide it past the European and Atlantic boundaries.

⁶² Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1362 Rome, May 19, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5–1959. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and the members of the Embassy Political State. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁶³ Formigoni, Guido. “Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)” *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁶⁴ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

Italy started opening up to a scenario wider than the Western one during the 50s, around the time Foreign minister Pella had inadvertently created the term neo-Atlanticism in 1957. Many interpretations had been given to the word but the one that stuck the most included a freer and more autonomous national action towards the newly independent countries, to be developed in connection to the American leadership in the West.⁶⁵

Once in power, Fanfani started theorizing the need to reconcile the Western soul with the Mediterranean one of Italy, bringing the country to an equal level with its allies through mutual and ongoing political consultation and autonomous regional initiatives.⁶⁶ Fanfani's policy accentuated neo-Atlanticism as an affirmation of Italy as a nation, thanks to an understanding reached with the hegemonic power and by pursuing the country's Mediterranean vocation, which, according to Fanfani, would make Italy equal to other allies. Since Italy believed that it retained special, traditional interests and influence in the area,⁶⁷ Rome could conduct its autonomous initiatives in the Mediterranean basin aimed at highlighting its international role, but also at proving its usefulness to the West.

The partially reformed outlook on the Third World, non-aligned countries, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean came about in concurrence with the first specks of détente and the continuation of the decolonization process, along with the boom of the economic miracle within the country. In this regard, Italy was interpreting international events through this new, neo-Atlantic lens, trying to break through international markets⁶⁸ and encourage the continuation of European integration.⁶⁹ By tying together national benefits and international changes, Fanfani looked for a higher degree of security for Italy, one that, through the Atlantic Alliance, the UN, and the continuing European project, would have protected and promoted Italy through integrated, long-term development.⁷⁰

The *fil rouge* that tied together these aspirations was the relationship with the United States, one to be constantly strengthened and valued. Such a link remained at the center of Italian foreign policy throughout the years, as the United States continued being the frame of reference.

⁶⁵ Formigoni, Guido. "Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁶⁶ De Leonardis, Massimo. "L'Italia nella Nato" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁶⁷ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁶⁸ Looking to continue the phase of strong economic development, ensuring that entering new markets would have led to more secure forms of supply of energy and feedstock.

⁶⁹ Tosi, Luciano. "Tra politica ed economia. I nuovi orizzonti delle relazioni internazionali italiane" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The tribute to Atlanticism was a precondition for Fanfani, one to always testify to the priority given to the American ally.⁷¹ Throughout the 1957-1960 OCB plan reports, the commitment of Italy to the Atlantic Alliance and, in general, to the Free World is continuously highlighted. In the updated NSC 6014, drafted at the end of the Eisenhower administration, Italy's collaboration with the Western power and its support to NATO are recognized and described as continuous despite governmental instability since the 1953 elections.⁷² Even during Fanfani's second government, a time during which there seemed to be forms of deviation from the American narrative, Fanfani himself never seemed to doubt how the Atlantic Alliance constituted the most important pillar of Italian foreign policy⁷³, a constant testimony of loyalty, efficacy, and steadiness. The United States had understood that "Italians were always willing to do what we wanted, as long as we wanted it badly enough,"⁷⁴ a way to legitimize themselves before the partner and also to take advantage of the support nationally and internationally.

In looking for a higher degree of security and involvement within the West, Italy attempted to give efficient and effective input to the Atlantic Alliance through its Middle-Eastern policy. Within a larger context of flexibility, the strategy of dialogue and confrontation that Italy was pursuing to achieve peace, politics, and diplomacy always had to remain present. For this, the goal for Italy was to become a regional point of reference for the U.S. and the European partners in the Middle East and positive confrontations with the USSR.⁷⁵

An important target for government forces was indeed ensuring that the USSR didn't prevail in the Mediterranean setting, leading to the Italian attempt to incisively intervene in the area, as the post-Suez crisis commitment showed. Considering the geographic proximity of the country to the areas of interest and the internal weight of the Pci, "Italy cannot look with complacency on Soviet moves toward the Communization of the Mediterranean area. Italian interest in the Arab problem is therefore intensified by an awareness of the Soviet determination to expand Communist strength in these nearby areas. The Italian concern in the Arab problem reflects Italy's hope that the Arabs will find the means for peaceful development and will be able to

⁷¹ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

⁷² National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁷³ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁷⁴ Report From McGeorge Bundy to Kennedy, June 15, 1963, cit. in De Leonardis, Massimo. "L'Italia nella Nato" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁷⁵ Orsini, Fabio Grassi. "La "rivoluzione diplomatica" del secondo governo Fanfani" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

keep the Russians out.”⁷⁶ A line can be drawn between said commitment and the intervention that Italy planned in the newly independent, Mediterranean Arab countries, where the battle for influence and dampening Soviet influence was still open.

In the general Arab uprisings, the Embassy had detected how, despite different takes on the reasoning and the instigator of said disruption, Italian public opinion agreed on the fact that “Moscow propaganda contributes heavily to Arab unrest.”⁷⁷ In the discourse, in which the official governmental line stated how “there is today in the Middle East a tide of nationalism and independence,”⁷⁸ Italy sought reassurance for both staunch pro-Europeans and those pressing for a special partnership with the United States in the Mediterranean. This alignment was to be preceded by the assertion of American hegemony and followed by the positioning of Italy as an advanced spearhead in the area.

In general, a common purpose prevailed to help move towards an articulated system of collective cooperation that confirmed American leadership in Europe and the Middle East, and within that system give a prominent role to Italy, with the prospect of material benefits and prestige. In attempting this role, right after the formation of his second government in a letter to President Eisenhower, Fanfani made known that “you can count on my collaboration, to the extent that it is within my power, to the purpose of turning the present crisis toward the objectives of peace for all and security for the Western World and to pave the way as soon as possible for a solution of the underlying problems which have created the present grave situation in the Middle East and Africa, from Algeria to Israel. To delay further the solution of such problems would aggravate the dangers of which the Italian Government and people are so fully aware.”⁷⁹

The link that Italian foreign policy always maintained with the United States didn’t appear as a circumstantial one: throughout official documentation, it is continuously underlined how Italian contribution truly aspired to both enhance Italy’s role internationally and promote itself as an equal and contributing stakeholder, always within a framework set by the U.S. However, the problem for Washington was always to determine how much and how to pander to Italy's desire for national assertion. A continuous, general expectation remained that “Italy will continue to

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation. July 29, 1958, 3:30 p.m. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 63 D 123, CF 1067. Secret. Drafted by Service. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Letter From Prime Minister Fanfani to President Eisenhower. Rome, July 18, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.13/7-2158. Confidential; Presidential Handling. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

give strong support to NATO and European integration moves. It will probably seek a greater voice in European circles and pursue a more active foreign policy, particularly in the Mediterranean area. More importantly, however, Italy will seek to maintain its close ties with the US.”⁸⁰ Based on said desire, “Italy has continued to press for a role in all major international consultations and negotiations affecting Europe and the Mediterranean area. The present government [Fanfani’s] has pursued this ambition with considerable activity. The major factors bearing on this ambition are Italy’s growing feeling of self-confidence and national pride and its increased economic and military strength.”⁸¹

In this regard, there was a sense of the need to sustain morale and increase the prestige of the Italian government in the international arena, while at the same time, a degree of suspicion towards Fanfani’s effort was found in 1958 memorandums: “Fanfani's motivation is in his interpretation of his own personal destiny. He is a man with a very precise mission - to rebuild Italian national power, to relieve Italian poverty, and to make the Italian voice heard in world affairs.”⁸² This consideration can be interpreted in light of the relations entertained by Fanfani that same year with Egypt’s President Nasser, partly to fulfill the pro-Arab tradition of the Dc but especially to safeguard Italy’s economic interests in the country.⁸³ Similarly to what was happening in Italian domestic politics, an appreciation for Fanfani's decisive character and a strong commitment to the improvement of the country was also revealed in foreign politics, however, flanked by personalization of his politics and pursuit of his interests first and foremost. Neo-Atlanticism itself only explicated the line long pursued by Italian governments: the prevalence of national interest, greater independence of Italy within NATO, and greater freedom of action in the Mediterranean, while strictly respecting the Atlantic alliance but also looking to improve it. The United States was mostly in favor of this position, as based on a manifestation of regained confidence and potential contribution to the renewal of the Atlantic alliance, while also opposing Soviet forces, but remained troubled by calls for permanent consultations and interpretations of neo-Atlanticism as a third force. “Our relations with Italy both bilaterally and concerning multilateral problems involving the UN or other international organizations have in general been excellent. The Italian Government has made special efforts

⁸⁰ Editorial Note. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁸¹ Office memorandum, July 25, 1958, NARA, RG 59, lot file 67D330, box 5., confidential, pp. 1-2, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 293.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Letter from A. Clarke (British Embassy, Rome) to R. Stevens (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London), Rome, September 13, 1958, NA, FO 371/136719, cit. in A. Varsori and F. Mazzei, op. cit., p. 123.

to ensure that Italy's voice internationally was heard and given due weight. It will not always be easy for us to accommodate this Italian desire for consultation and participation in major international decisions which only indirectly involve Italy. We should continue to give maximum support, wherever possible and appropriate, to the Italians on this score. It is important also that we continue to keep the Italians informed.”⁸⁴

Italy had turned its wish to be kept updated on international matters into a quest for consultation and, consequently, inclusion in final decisions on matters of interest. From the Italian perspective, to reach political unity in the West, and to put effort into solving shared problems, “it was necessary to go through a “permanent and prior political consultation,”⁸⁵ to “fulfill the tasks that geography or the particular historical moment assigns to each,” especially in the regional sphere proper to each, also to strengthen the alliance.⁸⁶ On the diplomatic discourse, both the Department of State and the Embassy concluded that increasing consultations with the Italian government on Middle Eastern and Mediterranean matters was a way to please Italy's national pride, removing any reasoning behind non-coordinated actions, and lastly allowing for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to use American support as a leveraging power nationally.⁸⁷

In general, consultations served a purpose for the United States too, as they represented an opportunity for Italian governments to renew their Atlantic commitment and to reassure the partner, who could in turn investigate and let its opinions be known on how Italy was conducting its presence in the Mediterranean. Often, the most pressing matter of discussion touched upon the activities of Enrico Mattei in the area, and how President of the Republic Giovanni Gronchi and partly the government were allowing the ruthless plans of Mattei to happen, without stopping him from jeopardizing Western energetic interests. The United States feared that Mattei's actions in the energy field were not only compromising the overall balance of the U.S.-Italy relations, along with the American objectives in the latter but also potentially jeopardizing the democratic stability of Italy itself. This topic will be discussed in depth later on.

Right in the Mattei-related orbit, what most concerned the American partner after 1956 was the new twist contained in some aspects of Italian foreign policy, one that pushed forward vague

⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation. US/MC/123. Geneva, July 12, 1959, 4 p.m. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 64 D 560, CF 1341. Confidential. Drafted by Stoessel on July 13 and approved by Merchant and Herter. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁸⁵ Tosi, Luciano. “Tra politica ed economia. I nuovi orizzonti delle relazioni internazionali italiane” *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016, p. 60.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

elements of nationalism and third-worldism, which could have potentially led to tendencies of neutralism.⁸⁸ The main reason for this uneasiness was related to the election of Giovanni Gronchi as President of the Republic in 1955, and his close ties with Enrico Mattei. The potential for a neutrality element in the neo-Atlantic policy was at times a source of friction between Italy and the United States, further proof of the divisiveness of the Fanfani figure both in national politics and on the international scenario: “The professions of friendship are in large measure a tactical device to offset the small majority in the parliamentary vote of confidence. To Fanfani, Italian interests come first. If close association with the U.S. serves these interests, then Fanfani will seek close cooperation. If in his judgment Italian interests would be adversely affected, as in the Middle East, then he would follow a nationalistic and independent policy.”⁸⁹ This attitude was further motivated by two aspects: the first is that the Mediterranean vocation could also be understood in a third-world sense, potentially appearing as an interest in supporting the Arab cause and sympathizing with non-aligned countries.⁹⁰ In a 1958 conversation between Fanfani and Secretary Dulles on the Middle East situation, Fanfani mentions how “the Italian concern in the Arab problem reflects Italy’s hope that the Arabs will find the means for peaceful development and will be able to keep the Russians out.”⁹¹ The second is an interpretation of Italian nationalism that when placed in terms of Mediterranean vocation with a dose of pro-Arabism, could not help but break out of the Atlantic schemes and orbit around Nenni’s neutralism.

For Washington, the key to the interpretation of Italian foreign policy remained, in one respect, that of opening to the left⁹², keeping in mind that often the forces that advocated a new neo-Atlantic course were the same ones that looked at opening up to the socialist forces with interest. Until then, the conduct of a dogmatic foreign policy had, in fact, also been used as a way to marginalize leftist forces, which were considered outsiders; according to the neo-Atlantic reformulation, on the other hand, a new meaning of foreign policy could have interested and led to dialogue with Nenni’s socialists.⁹³

⁸⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁸⁹ Office memorandum, July 25, 1958, NARA, RG 59, lot file 67D330, box 5, confidential, pp. 1-2, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 293.

⁹⁰ Brogi, Alessandro. *L’Italia E l’Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

⁹¹ Memorandum of Conversation. July 29, 1958, 3:30 p.m. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 63 D 123, CF 1067. Secret. Drafted by Service. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁹² Brogi, Alessandro. *L’Italia E l’Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

⁹³ Bini, Elisabetta. *La potente benzina italiana. Guerra fredda e consumi di massa tra Italia, Stati Uniti e Terzo mondo (1945-1973)*. Carocci Editore, 2013.

With the partial development of a new perception of the Psi, and mostly through some clear examples of Atlantic solidarity, the suspicion that the process of opening to the left could have weakened the Atlantic Alliance and in general, threatened Italy's pro-Western stance, subsided. Not only did the politicians of the Christian Democratic leadership prove their pledge to close relations with Washington, but they often were the ones to add new layers to the partnership both in the Mediterranean and within the Atlantic Alliance⁹⁴: sustaining the U.S.' role in the Lebanon crisis, for example, and most importantly authorizing the installation of U.S. missile bases on Italian ground, the latter being accompanied by an agreement in the use of said missiles that finally granted Italy the status of a special partnership with the U.S. and within NATO. Eventually, neo-Atlanticism was interpreted by the United States as a declaration of allegiance that at the same time departed from Atlantic orthodoxy in that "Italy's national interests [were] emphasized more than the ideological struggle of the free world against the Soviet bloc."⁹⁵ The United States had concluded that "probably all the neo-Atlanticists had some neutral tendencies," masked behind their "unquestioning pro-Americanism."⁹⁶ This could have come out if the United States did not grant the benefits Italy expected, which renewed the relevance of refining consultations with the Italian partner, finally satisfying aspirations for autonomy, utility, and *grandeur*.

The issues of neo-Atlanticism had manifested themselves when connected with developments in the national (the opening to the left affair) and international (the détente and internal disagreements within the West) frameworks. Although the United States ultimately recognized that Fanfani's policy would be useful to the Atlantic alliance, Fanfani lacked the power tools to be recognized as part of the greater allies.⁹⁷ Above all, domestic instability and differing views on foreign action, exacerbated precisely by the Christian Democrat leader himself, were contributing factors.

The Aretine leader did not neglect the connections of foreign policy with domestic policy, and he often had to reckon with the fragility of the Italian political framework, in which there were considerable divisions in the coalition and in the Dc itself about whether the country's foreign

⁹⁴ Varsori, Antonio. "La Politica Estera Italiana Durante La Presidenza Di Giovanni Gronchi: tra alleanza atlantica, integrazione europea e "vocazione mediterranea"." *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

⁹⁵ «Neo-atlanticism as an element in Italy's Foreign Policy», January 10, 1958, in National Archives and Records Administration, RG59, Reports of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Report n. 7641, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 273.

⁹⁶ Memorandum Secretary of State's Special Assistant for Intelligence (Cumming) to the Undersecretary of State (Herter), August 20, 1957, Intelligence Report n. 7641. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

policy should be more or less aligned with that of the United States.⁹⁸ It was therefore not surprising that the end of Fanfani's government in 1959 led to a significant revision of the executive's foreign policy intentions. Under Segni and Pella, there was a return to a principle of rigorous Atlantic obedience.⁹⁹

During the years of the Eisenhower administration, neo-Atlanticism merely translated into a communion of foreign policy elements that also defined Italian domestic politics: adherence to American causes, the search for a new form of stability, the desire to demonstrate that Italy was re-establishing its role as a middle power and, consequently, was driven by the desire to prove itself indispensable to the new European and Atlantic order. The success of this project, like the success of numerous governments, depended above all on the final American support. However, at times Italy stroked the complicated possibility of eschewing full adherence to American strategy in searching for benefits for the country.

With the new spaces opened up by the international developments of the late 50s, Fanfani tried to take advantage of them to increase Italy's political and economic influence. In the NATO context, which was considered a security guarantee, Fanfani saw the possibility of turning the country into a tool of mediation between the West and Arab countries based on its historical, geographical, and cultural ties with both parties. Said “Mediterranean vocation”, as Dulles defined it, was welcomed by the United States, who believed that “the close relations between Italy and Arab countries aren’t incompatible with being a loyal and active participant in the Atlantic alliance.”¹⁰⁰

Beyond aspirations of mediation and activism, the United States never expressed an official endorsement of Fanfanian autonomism and its mediating effect “on behalf of” Washington. America found a middle way made up of formal recognition and reasoned consultations, counting Italy as a partner in the Mediterranean area, but never allowing the country to actually take control of a broader action plan. All in all, the United States paid attention to the credit needs of Fanfani, without ever granting a pivotal role to Italy aside from verbal recognition and formal concession to satisfy Italian ambitions, “We are endeavoring to satisfy Italian ambition to the extent it does not conflict with any of our objectives, in the belief that it contributes to

⁹⁸ Varsori, Antonio. “La Politica Estera Italiana Durante La Presidenza Di Giovanni Gronchi: tra alleanza atlantica, integrazione europea e “*vocazione mediterranea*”.” *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

⁹⁹ Bini, Elisabetta. *La potente benzina italiana. Guerra fredda e consumi di massa tra Italia, Stati Uniti e Terzo mondo (1945-1973)*. Carocci Editore, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Telegram 1955 Dulles to Zellerbach, November 26, 1958, RG. 59, NA, b. 3609, 765.00/11-2658, cit. in A. Brogi, op. cit., p. 333.

government stability and the continuation of Italy's cooperation and support of our policies and aims."¹⁰¹

At the same time, however, the U.S. believed that Italy overestimated its influence in the Middle East, considering also its lack of ability to formulate concrete proposals to achieve an important rank in the Atlantic framework.¹⁰² Very few people at the Department of State and the Embassy seriously believed Italy could have been a mediation asset towards Arab countries. The space for autonomy granted to Rome was instead measured based on the correlation between Mediterranean initiatives and internal developments: the United States had noted how the Dc and Psi had started to converge on the claim for autonomous foreign action progressively, a union considered premature and therefore opposed, even in a setting of *vocazione mediterranea*.¹⁰³

Therefore, what the American partner deemed necessary to satisfy were simply the national ambitions that granted stability to the Dc government in power at the time, mostly through an appearance of prestige and deepened partnership. Lastly, since Italian neo-Atlanticism could have had relevant repercussions on American foreign policy too, any form of substantial bilateral partnership was pushed away, making it impossible for Italy to succeed in its goals itself.¹⁰⁴

Fanfani dreamed of appearing as a man of peace, someone who had been able to tie all the different souls (Atlantic, Mediterranean, European, Western) of Italy together creating a virtuous, new course of foreign policy based on American support to national aspirations. Nonetheless, despite his best efforts to prove the juridical equality of all members of the Atlantic Alliance while carving out a more significant role as a representative of the West during decolonization, Fanfani's ambitious foreign program didn't match the factual capabilities of the country. "During the past five years, successive Italian Governments have increasingly urged the United States and the other leading Western nations to recognize Italy as one of the major powers by admitting her right to participate in all major international conferences and all important Western decisions, particularly those affecting Italian interests. [...] There is no doubt

¹⁰¹ Office memorandum, July 25, 1958, NARA, RG 59, lot file 67D330, box 5, office memorandum, confidential, pp. 1-2, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 293.

¹⁰² De Leonardis, Massimo. "L'Italia nella Nato" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁰³ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

that an important element of Italian national character is that any important government official or leader must appear to play an important role in world affairs.”¹⁰⁵

The changes detected in foreign policy ended up being more of style than of substance¹⁰⁶ and Italy didn't succeed in molding American policy in the Mediterranean, but it also didn't surrender nor was he forced to endure it. While between the two partners remained a mostly unquestionable partnership, like Italian loyalty, American support also proved seesaw, purely because of the significant change Mattei was trying to bring to the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

2.4. The figure of Giovanni Gronchi amidst American insecurities

The election of Giovanni Gronchi as President of the Republic in April 1955 represented a bit of a breaking element in the course of Italian politics. Gronchi was an elusive figure who, thanks to his two mandates as Speaker of the House, had close ties with more or less all parties, having cultivated ideological relationships with the socialist left in particular. The arrival of the most prominent representative of the left-wing Dc to the Quirinale represented a change of pace vis-à-vis the De Gasperi age and, according to some, a first, timid win towards the opening to the left, considering that Gronchi was amongst those interested in this sort of development.

The election of the new President of the Republic didn't sit right with Washington and the U.S. Embassy in Rome, where Clare Boothe Luce was still conducting her anti-communist crusade. A sentiment of alarmism spread throughout the American institutions, fearing especially that the strong anti-communist effort carried out by the Embassy would soon be counterbalanced by some sort of support to Nenni's socialist while slowing down the opposition to the Pci in a climate of internal *détente*.

The election posed a series of problems for the American effort in Italy, considering that “Gronchi is one of the prominent Dc's who has for a long time championed leftward orientation in Ital politics. [...] In pursuit his ambitions Gronchi generally believed capable however dealing with either or both sides political spectrum.”¹⁰⁷ Despite registered tendencies of erratic

¹⁰⁵ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁰⁶ Gualdesi, Marinella Neri. “L'atlantismo e l'europeismo nell'azione politica di Fanfani” *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. *Rome, May 5, 1955—noon*. Department of State, *Central Files*, 765.00/5-555. *Top Secret; Priority*. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

and detached behavior, which Ambassador Luce described as “ambiguity concerning his views on foreign affairs and the opening to the Left,”¹⁰⁸ during their first official meeting, “He is acutely aware of his leftist reputation but he seeks appropriate occasions to disavow any intention associate self with Social-Communists and pays strong lip service to Western solidarity.”

The posture of Gronchi in the first period of his mandate was one of Catholicism, opposition to the Pci but not to the Psi per se, and a belief that a rapprochement to the Left was to be taken into consideration, albeit not one of the political sort but of the economic kind.¹⁰⁹ The times to bring the Psi into government were not mature enough, although the United States always kept a close eye on Gronchi’s relationship with Nenni, as they considered the latter (along with the Pci) as one of the main ones responsible for the election of the third President of the Republic.¹¹⁰ The beginning of the septennate also reflected poorly on American expectations for Italian foreign policy stance. According to the press, Gronchi was known for his “neutralistic” tendencies, to be paired up with his support to the opening to the left internally.¹¹¹ Gronchi was well aware of the misalignment of foreign policy views between the two sides, nevertheless finding himself pointing out that “if the U.S. had faith in me it would have faith in my policy.” He said that without mutual confidence, then there could be no fruitful collaboration and a free democratic policy could not be advanced.”¹¹² In foreign policy, Gronchi supported a more incisive role for Italy in the Mediterranean area, potentially stemming from a patriotic and nationalistic spirit. Differently from the majority of the Christian Democracy, the President of the Republic wasn’t as staunch of a supporter of the relations Italy had with the United States, at times looking for ways to sway the course of Italy’s international choices.¹¹³ With the new Gronchi era in concomitance with the 1956 events, the Embassy fearfully expected that “Present

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum of a Conversation Between President Gronchi and the Ambassador in Italy (Luce), Rome, May 21, 1955. Department of State, Central Files, 765.11/5–2455. Secret. Drafted by Luce. Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 2411 from Rome, May 24. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹¹¹ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

¹¹² Memorandum of a Conversation Between President Gronchi and the Ambassador in Italy (Luce), Rome, May 21, 1955. Department of State, Central Files, 765.11/5–2455. Secret. Drafted by Luce. Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 2411 from Rome, May 24. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹¹³ Varsori, Antonio. “La Politica Estera Italiana Durante La Presidenza Di Giovanni Gronchi: tra alleanza atlantica, integrazione europea e “vocazione mediterranea”.” *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

international diplomatic developments undoubtedly will strengthen belief that Italy's policy need not be completely dependent on the U.S. position."¹¹⁴

As a man that had embraced the neo-Atlanticist cause, Gronchi often mentioned how the foreign policy of Italy was unalterably anchored to the Atlantic Alliance¹¹⁵ and how he found himself on the same path as Eisenhower when supporting the opposition to USSR penetration of the Mediterranean area. However, some other basic claims of neo-Atlanticist autonomy were often started or repeatedly brought up by the President. Gronchi had been indeed one to always renew and push the need for consultation and cooperation further, believing that albeit correct and motivated, Eisenhower's planning for action in the Middle East had to include a country with which closer and fruitful collaboration could then be developed in the area.¹¹⁶

Despite being supposed to hold a neutral and detached role, he still managed to carry out a level of influence on Italian foreign policy during a proficient time of high degrees of transformation. In the paradigm of Fanfani's neo-Atlanticism, Gronchi somewhat pushed the ruling class to continue in its effort to reinstate the status of Italy as a middle power, one with relevance especially in the Mediterranean and in Europe while also carrying out relations with the United States within the Atlantic Alliance framework.¹¹⁷

Gronchi's most relevant flaw for the American partner, aside from the close ties with Enrico Mattei, was the feeling of distrust he gave, and decisions implemented by Gronchi were often interpreted by the Embassy as a sign of continuous untrustworthiness. The interpretation given to the role of the President of the Republic extended the powers granted by the Constitution by taking advantage of the latter's gray areas. "Gronchi, since he assumed the Presidency of the Italian Republic, has sought to broaden the powers of his office by taking action along lines where the Constitution is obscure or there is no clear precedent."¹¹⁸ Throughout official documentation, mention is made of interferences in ministerial matters and government policy,

¹¹⁴ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 5, 1955—noon. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-555. Top Secret; Priority. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹¹⁵ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, October 10, 1957— 7 p.m. *Department of State, Central Files, 611.65/10-1057. Confidential. Zellerbach met with Dulles on September 25.* In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹¹⁶ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia.* Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹¹⁷ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 5, 1955—noon. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-555. Top Secret; Priority. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹¹⁸ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

while also accentuating his power of appointment, the power of checking the Government's actions, and the right to take an active part in the formation of Government policy.

An interpretation offered by Saragat, Psdi Secretary, on the emphasis put on his role as President of the Republic, suggested that his eager activeness was motivated by the feeling "he must compensate for the fact that, unlike De Gasperi, he was never able to gain the leadership of the Christian Democratic Party or the Government. This failure left him with a determination to secure the substantive power of the State by another means; through imposing an interpretation of the Constitution that favored the widening of the Presidential prerogative at the expense of the Government."¹¹⁹

The United States never truly moved from the general sense of instability that Gronchi caused internally, therefore failed to accept any form of proposal in the foreign field. For instance, the President had attempted to convince Eisenhower to mediate for U.S. oil companies in the dispute with Mattei, as Gronchi suggested had been caused by misunderstandings. According to Zellerbach, said proposals were made as "he may hope capitalize on potential popular appeal pacifism and neutralism and also on Italian sensitivity on questions national prestige to further his own ambitions become leader non-Commie left force or coalition of forces in Italian politics (despite constitutional limitations on office of presidency)."¹²⁰

It is interesting to note how on certain aspects of Italian internal and foreign policy, Gronchi was a forerunner for developments that will only take place in the 60s. Internally, Ambassador Luce notes how already in 1955, Gronchi was envisioning the experiment of a *Dc monocolore* based on Nenni's support, in terms of a vast economic reform program, as the only alternative to coalition instability. Throughout his seven-year term, he often exposed his ideal project to move away from the "centrist *immobilismo*": "As Department aware, Gronchi apparently desires see change in orientation of Dc and Italian Govt toward left through some form of association of Dc with Psi, whether through direct Psi-Dc association or through Socialist unification and association of unified party with Dc in government."¹²¹ Said perspective could not avoid clashing with the effort made by the United States through the Embassy in the country, as the latter was working to push back in time as much as possible the inclusion of the Psi in

¹¹⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, September 10, 1957. Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 64 D 199, Italy. Confidential. Drafted by Engle. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹²⁰ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 30, 1957— 10 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/4-3057. Secret; Noforn. Repeated to London, Paris, and Bonn. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

the governmental sphere: “Because of his espousal of a more neutral and unilateral Italian policy within the Western Alliance and in the Middle East, Gronchi has proved to be an irritant with regard to certain U.S. foreign policy objectives. Gronchi’s affinity for the Left, in particular the Nenni Socialists, represents a possible danger to the control of the domestic political situation by the Center.”¹²²

In the foreign policy realm, as the previously mentioned OCB report stated, Gronchi’s actions irritated the American partner as they challenged the status assigned to Italy. The years of his presidency coincided with the intensification of Italy’s commercial and economic interests in the Mediterranean. The presence of powerful men like Amintore Fanfani and especially Enrico Mattei had furthered the fulfillment of the *vocazione mediterranea*, a framework that was undoubtedly favored by Giovanni Gronchi. Throughout Italy’s Republican history, Gronchi was one of the Presidents who most wanted to interpret the role of the official representative of Italy abroad through his institutional role.¹²³ Overall, in the space of foreign policy, Gronchi can be described as the supporting actor that allowed a new ruling class to rebuild and improve the international character of the country.

At the turn of the decade, the figure of Gronchi seemed to be less triggering for the United States. He had partly adopted a more low-profile policy during the Fanfani era, according to the U.S., “to be giving his support to Fanfani’s efforts to develop an effective program.”¹²⁴ Aside from the criticism sparked by his 1960 trip to the USSR and the decision to appoint the Tambroni government, for the time being, the troubles caused by Gronchi to the Embassy appeared more limited to the Mattei sphere.

2.5. Enrico Mattei and the challenge for a new order

The breakthrough of Enrico Mattei in the energy field started approximately ten years before the timeframe of this analysis but by the mid-50s, it had reached its peak in terms of foreign relations and oil gains.

Mattei was nominated vice president of Agip in 1946 and was put in charge of managing the dissolution and closure of the public company. As soon as he took office, he was able to assess

¹²² Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹²³ Varsori, Antonio. “La Politica Estera Italiana Durante La Presidenza Di Giovanni Gronchi: tra alleanza atlantica, integrazione europea e “*vocazione mediterranea*”.” *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

¹²⁴ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958–60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

the entity's development potential, convincing himself that maintaining it operational could be of great benefit to the country.¹²⁵ Indeed, by 1953, the Italian Parliament had approved the law instituting the *Ente nazionale idrocarburi* (Eni, from now on), a concoction of Enrico Mattei. His goal, as head of Eni, had always been that of using it as a system to bring Italy to energy self-sufficiency. This objective was tied to the scarce availability of underground resources in Italy, which made it necessary for the country to develop an independent stance in the international oil market.¹²⁶ This mission of fueling Italy would have allowed the country to achieve its industrial renaissance and modernization.

Despite the noble purpose of Mattei's plan and the enthusiasm with which he took over the field, facing the world market proved difficult. The creation of a parallel and exclusive market segment entailed facing the energy monopoly of the Seven Sisters, which Mattei did by challenging their fixed schema and strategizing against their weak spots.¹²⁷ By then, powerful countries and oil companies had understood the preciousness of petroleum, not wanting to budge on their advantageous geopolitical positions in oil-rich countries while also creating ties with the Arab governments to assure their predominance.

Mattei entered the Middle Eastern scenario right when this paradigm started to weaken as a consequence of the beginning of the decolonization process. Middle Eastern governments started pushing for a higher degree of involvement in both the production and decision processes and the distribution of revenues until then feeling limited and subjugated.¹²⁸ Mattei played on this shared sentiment of emancipation from the Anglo-Americans, looking for ways to produce or buy oil autonomously and conveniently without the misleading control of resources to "stabilize the oil market."¹²⁹

Generally speaking, Mattei entered the market at the most proficient time, not just being able to sympathize with the Arab cause but also creating a system of *do-ut-des* where both sides could fulfill their needs and claims much more conveniently, without the need to submit themselves to the monopolistic tyranny of the Seven Sisters. Producing countries were looking to redefine their handling and selling conditions, along with new sources of capital, whereas

¹²⁵ When ENI was founded, Agip was one of the four parent companies, along with Agip Mineraria, SNAM and ANIC, and formed its backbone.

¹²⁶ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹²⁷ Maugeri, Leonardo. *L'era del petrolio: Mitologia, storia e futuro della più controversa risorsa del mondo*. Feltrinelli, 2006.

¹²⁸ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Italy was attempting the diversification of its supplies. The emancipation attempt, therefore, followed the strategy applied by Mattei during the first phase of his plan: acquiring search permits abroad to eventually produce a share of the country's own oil.¹³⁰

The first fruitful step made by Mattei to enact said plan took place in 1955 in Nasser's Egypt, where he bought a minor share in the International Egyptian Oil Company.¹³¹ If Italy had been maintaining a neutral political position towards Egypt in the years of the Suez crisis, on the other hand, economically and commercially, the two countries had signed a deal to initiate oil exploration in South Sinai, following the principle of participation.¹³²

The real earthquake for the international oil system, and the peak point for American opposition, coincided with the Iranian deal of 1957, signed with Reza Pahlavi. According to the deal, the NIOC (National Iranian Oil Company) would have authorized Eni to carry out explorations on a very large portion of Iranian soil.¹³³ The most defining and threatening trait of the deal was the very favorable conditions granted to the Iranian partner, which broke away from the common 50-50 partition: Mattei's new oil policy included the creation of a visa capital company that would extract and process crude oil by sharing burdens, earnings, and responsibilities. This new type of company would have introduced a much more advantageous profit distribution system for the producing countries, as they would get 75 percent of the proceeds and the foreign company the remaining 25. In the case of the Iranian deal, the costs of research and exploration would have been borne entirely by Agip.¹³⁴

The choice of signing Eni's first two major deals with countries like Iran and Egypt didn't appear completely casual to the trained eye. The two countries played very different positions in the international dynamics, with Iran being extremely in favor of Cold War blocks in the Middle East to push back the Soviet threat, and Egypt being at the head of the non-aligned movement. However, they came together to share a level of frustration towards the United States. At the end of the 50s, Egypt was still recovering from the failed promises of the Aswan dam. In contrast, Iran was struggling with the little economic and military support granted by

¹³⁰ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹³¹ Maugeri, Leonardo. *L'era del petrolio: Mitologia, storia e futuro della più controversa risorsa del mondo*. Feltrinelli, 2006.

¹³² Cricco, Massimiliano. "Giovanni Gronchi e Il Mediterraneo Negli Anni Cinquanta: Dalla Crisi Di Suez Alle Relazioni Politico-Economiche Con La Libia" *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

¹³³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E L'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹³⁴ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

Washington. The agreements with Eni were therefore intended by the Arab countries as means to increase their negotiating powers vis-à-vis the major trusts but not to cut them off entirely.¹³⁵ The course of the 1957 events had been closely followed by the United States, particularly by the Roman Embassy. Objections to Enrico Mattei on the American side, however, weren't limited to the Iranian deal, as those had started already in 1953 following the decision to nationalize the Italian oil industry. The main reasons behind the American alarmism were both the neo-Atlanticist intentions and the intertwined internal developments. Mattei's actions appeared to be partly encouraged by the neo-Atlanticist desire to support Arab nationalism, along with creating a wider space for autonomous Italian action. The Department of State, and partly Dulles and Eisenhower, showed concerns regarding the impact of the two deals on Middle Eastern stability, accusing Italy of opportunism and selfishness despite its international commitments.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, the President and Secretary didn't align with the overall concern expressed in the OCB Progress Report that followed the Iranian deal, as they found the latter to be a form of normal competition, considering how "there was nothing sacred about the 50-50 formula."¹³⁷

Aside from the Iranian deal, much of the late 50s official American documentation is devoted to the analysis and discussion of Mattei's actions, considering that he continued scoring major deals in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya soon after. The Department of State's concern on the matter fully tied in with the outlook on neo-Atlanticism: "The United States is concerned by Mattei because of his influence on certain aspects of Italian foreign policy. His operations, both inside and outside Italy, have tended to foster nationalistic ideas and unilateral action by Italy in the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America. These operations are now one of the points of departure for Italy's claims of "special interest" and "special competence" in that area."¹³⁸ A point of observing Eni's activities very carefully was made in OCB reports in late 1959, both in the political and economic field, as any form of approach from the United States could have passed as an attempt of encouragement.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board. Washington, September 3, 1957. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹³⁸ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹³⁹ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. July 8, 1959. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

In a conversation between Horace Torbert and Ambassador Ortona dated 1957, a clear message came across for which the concerns of the Department towards Mattei weren't related to his adventurism in the oil field but instead lay in the threat that he could have posed to the stability of Italian democracy.¹⁴⁰ Both Dulles and Eisenhower hadn't been excessively worried by the Iranian deal because they were aware of the industrial weakness of Italy in the sector. However, they were now growing receptive to signals of preoccupation and opposition to the arbitrary politics of Mattei coming from the government. Mattei's lack of finances was stopping him from developing high-stakes programs, something that oil companies were aware of; however, his interference in the market, if backed up by the government, could have led to some level of retaliation in the form of fewer investments in the country.¹⁴¹

The space that Mattei had opened for himself in the Western and Mediterranean contexts was undoubtedly putting obstacles on the path of the Roman Embassy, having to ensure that the commercial clashes between Mattei and American oil companies in the Middle East didn't traverse the political relationships among the two countries.¹⁴² In a conversation with Ambassador Zellerbach held right after the 1958 elections, Ambassador Ortona had attempted to introduce the idea that Mattei would be soon harmonizing its actions with those of Fanfani and Gronchi. However, he disappointedly noted that Zellerbach found Mattei to be "detrimental to Italy; he sees it from the angle of the potential American investor in Italy, and the mere fact that Mattei might discourage American investment makes him think it constitutes harm. [...] I can't budge him. What strikes me most is the premeditation to avoid conciliation."¹⁴³

The fear that Mattei could be facilitated in his plans by strong governmental support wasn't unmotivated, and a very stark contrast emerged in the level of involvement of the two governments in the oil-related affairs of their respective country. The wide-ranging activities of Eni were interpreted as contributing to Italian efforts to increase its international recognition as one of the major powers of the West. There was a widespread feeling among the Department and the Embassy that Italian politics had been backing up Mattei in his efforts and was now unable, and unwilling too, to limit him. "Mattei has achieved a position of strong political influence in Italy from his control of a number of deputies, influence on the press, access to government funds through ENI, a close personal relationship with President Gronchi, and considerable public support. It is doubtful whether, at this stage, any organ of the Italian

¹⁴⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁴¹ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Government could exercise effective control over Mattei's activities, either domestic or foreign."¹⁴⁴

Some implications of the "questione Mattei" seemed to be proving said suspicions right. Since the matter had already become political, and not limited to the economic sphere, Washington had started detecting that parallel to manifestations of Atlantic belonging and hegemony, the Italian partner had started suggesting ways to amplify Italy's role within this framework. Various levels of the Italian political and diplomatic arenas started suggesting opening a discussion between high U.S. representatives of the government and oil companies and either Eni or the Italian government on the state of relations in the petroleum field. Minister Pella too had appointed Ambassador Brosio to transmit his belief that "the intervention of our two governments was necessary to prevent clashes between Eni and the American oil interests."¹⁴⁵ Brosio also believed that although the dynamics involved private American oil companies and Eni, implications for the excellent political relations between the two countries could rise as a consequence, eventually offering objections to the anti-American extremist factions in Italy.¹⁴⁶ The Department of State's interpretation of these calls for cooperation served Mattei's plan to use the medium of Italian diplomacy to obtain a more substantial position in the international petroleum field and, in turn, grant Italy a greater voice in international affairs. To this effect, the Department believed that it was under the pressure of President Gronchi that numerous attempts were made by Eni to approach American companies and develop a form of policy and operation coordination.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Zellerbach found Eni to be "a parastatal agency which is widely regarded as synonymous with the Italian governments" and that "public opinion certainly can make no distinction between Eni as a public agency and the policies of the existing government,"¹⁴⁸ an interpretation that perceived the demarcation line between Eni and the

¹⁴⁴ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation. January 16, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 865.2553/1-1658. Secret; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Long on January 17. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁴⁶ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

¹⁴⁷ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. April 30, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, December 23, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.13/12-2958. Secret—Except As Otherwise Indicated. Drafted by Barnett and Torbert, partially from Zellerbach's notes. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

government as extremely thin. This also entailed an increase in the responsibility of the Italian government to guide Eni's activities "in manner consonant with GOI."¹⁴⁹

Differently from Italy, the official line held by American governmental institutions was that the U.S. government had no direct relationship and therefore, no say in the American oil companies' actions, instead regulated by the law. As independent private industries, the government was in no position to speak for said companies, let alone negotiate or make commitments in their name. Despite being an irritating problem between the two countries, issues between Mattei and oil companies were amenable only through direct settlements.¹⁵⁰

The Department of State was more than aware that the Italian government, either through Mattei or otherwise, would have continued pressuring and taking steps to acquire some participation in the oil resources of the Mediterranean area and the Middle East. Gronchi in particular had appeared preoccupied with the competition among oil companies, calling for an intergovernmental discussion on the exploration and exploitation of petroleum.¹⁵¹ This suggestion connected to the feeling of hostility perceived by Gronchi in the treatment reserved by American oil companies towards Eni. It had been suggested to find a degree of accommodation for the Italian desire if the obtained results could favor American interests through the changes in Italian internal and foreign politics.¹⁵²

However, despite the U.S. assert of non-intervention in commercial operations of private companies, the fierce ways of Mattei were matched by the American recoupment in Libya at the beginning of 1958. An agreement signed by Standard Oil replaced the longstanding negotiation that Eni had patiently carried out with the regime. Apparently, the Libyan government had changed its mind last minute, stating that no government-owned companies could be granted concessions according to a never-before-mentioned petroleum law (Eni will manage to bypass this law and score the deal the following year).¹⁵³ Albeit without proof, Italian diplomacy probably rightfully suspected that there had been a form of collusion of the American government with the interests of Standard Oil, pushing this situation past a simple affair of

¹⁴⁹ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, January 28, 1958, 7 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 865.2553/1-2858. Secret; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵⁰ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. April 30, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵¹ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1129. Rome, March 7, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 865.2553/3-758. Confidential. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵² Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. December 10, 1958. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 61 D 385, Italy 1958-60. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵³ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

commercial competition, and trespassing into the territory of interference and discrimination.¹⁵⁴ In other countries, Eni had also been denied the possibility to join consortiums through forms of small participation by the same oil companies constituting them.

The United States strongly denied any sort of accusation made in these terms, renewing that the government was bound to stay out of petroleum-related initiatives, and adding that strict anti-trust laws complicated the creation of new groups for foreign activities that American oil companies might have strived to create.¹⁵⁵ In turn, potentially trying to sway the Italian accusations, it was implied that the reason for the Libyan failure all lay on Mattei's shoulders, who seemed to be trying to assign the blame for his commercial failures to U.S. oil companies. A disturbing suggestion, commented Under Secretary of State Herter.

All in all, whatever degree of responsibility the United States might have held in the Libyan affair was accentuated by the logical implication of it, as the Department of State refused even any form of preliminary consultation among governments to try and settle differences, let alone bring oil companies together. Furthermore, in terms of governmental influence, Ortona recounts in his memoir how all the efforts to bring together Eni and American oil companies were hampered by the Italian Office of the Department of State, as the hosting of a meeting between the parts was made impossible by the refusal of the U.S. government to create a point of contact. The final goal of Italy was to smooth over the passive-aggressive and vaguely blackmailing attitude of the United States to ensure that political relations between the two countries continued on a close path of excellence.

This reconciliatory effort, however, wasn't shared equally by all Italian representatives. Gronchi continued expressing both concerns over the Middle East, with Italy being left on the sidelines, and the oil situation, and also a degree of resentment towards the "low blow" in Libya against Eni.¹⁵⁶ The relationship between Gronchi and Mattei fit right into the complex international scenario being built during those years, with their visions being aligned to the point of almost creating a "parallel" form of diplomacy.¹⁵⁷ The concept they both shared of the new role played by Italy in the Mediterranean and Middle East led them to play a ruthless game

¹⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation. January 16, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 865.2553/1-1658. Secret; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Long on January 17. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1129. Rome, March 7, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 865.2553/3-758. Confidential. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁵⁷ Nardi, Lucia. "Mattei e Gronchi: Scelte Di Politica Energetica Nelle Carte Dell'Archivio Storico Dell'Eni" *Giovanni Gronchi E La Politica Estera Italiana (1955-1962)*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Federico Mazzei, Fondazione Piaggio, 2017.

internally and internationally. Mattei's actions stepped on the toes of both historical allies, like the United States, but they also disregarded the advice of the Italian government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting behind the former's back and ignoring the difficult Cold War and Western alliance balances.

In this setting, Gronchi was often appointed as the closest ally Mattei had in promoting a wide-reaching foreign policy for the country but also major changes within that same country, looking at the Socialists as the new force to rebalance government coalitions. The highest point of the two's alignment came with the Iranian deal, the first step towards not only a greater relevance for Eni but for Italy too. Gronchi and Mattei together represented the face of a country in which there was an ongoing "natural resurgence of Italian national pride and hence sympathy towards people like Gronchi and Mattei who insist Italy must be taken into account at least in those fields of special interest to her."¹⁵⁸

The Iranian deal proved fruitful for Italy too, leading to a mutation in the foreign policy field. The incisiveness and determination of Mattei's actions further inspired the country to develop an international approach with the same characteristics.¹⁵⁹ As previously stated, the notable role that Eni was building in the international scenario had given a pulse to the new course of national foreign policy, especially in reviving the *vocazione mediterranea*. For this, characters like Gronchi and Fanfani supported Mattei's ambitions to a certain degree.

Eni's ventures continued vigorously in the years of the second Fanfani government. The development of Fanfani's neo-Atlantic policy, therefore, went hand in hand with Mattei's successes. The development of national interests and the enhancement of the Mediterranean vocation, with an ultimate goal of mediation, would be combined with internal socio-economic reforms and the amplification of Italy's geographical and geopolitical peculiarities. The correspondence of intent between the parties led Fanfani and Mattei to support each other, and the State Department itself became convinced that Fanfani's support for Mattei served to promote the government's international projects.¹⁶⁰

The potential threat posed by Mattei was also intertwined with matters of national politics, as the United States feared the political relations between Fanfani and the head of Eni the most. However, while both were advancing claims that were potentially dangerous to U.S. interests,

¹⁵⁸ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, September 11, 1957— 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 665.88/9-1157. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹⁵⁹ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

it was preferable to favor those of a man like Fanfani, who was advancing assertions of an "autonomous presence" along with guarantees of strong loyalty, rather than a man like Gronchi, who was stopping at claims of autonomy. Specifically, as a supporter of the opening to the left, Mattei could have potentially convinced the Dc secretary to take further steps in the inclusion of Nenni's socialists in the governmental coalition, leading to a normalization of the relationship among the forces that the United States continued to deem rushed. Eni's financial donations in the name of the cause started right in 1957, feeding into the narrative.¹⁶¹

The same argument made on the Gronchi-Mattei axis can be replicated for the relationship between Fanfani and Mattei. This too was based on an alignment of rhetoric and aspirations in domestic and international politics, as Fanfani and Mattei's intents corresponded, making the 1958 government fertile ground for neo-Atlanticist foreign policy objectives. The Department of State concluded quite soon how the support given to Mattei by Fanfani was a way to promote the Dc leader's foreign goals. This way, Mattei's companies would have been supported and vice-versa, Fanfani would have found a powerful means to concretize his politics. The height of this relationship was touched during the third Fanfani government, until the sudden death of the head of Eni; Mattei's activities in Russia will be debated in the setting of the Kennedy administration.¹⁶²

Although the United States generally appeared alarmed by such close relations, Eisenhower was aware that Fanfani was nevertheless attempting to influence Mattei based on Western interests, thus bringing him closer to the United States. Fanfani endeavored to make Mattei appear as a source of benefit to the West, thus contributing to the Alliance as a protagonist and not putting himself in competition with it.¹⁶³ Fanfani's virtue in dealing with the U.S. ally was to present himself as the only man capable of collaborating with figures such as Mattei and Gronchi, while at the same time knowing how to keep them at bay. Furthermore, Fanfani had understood that to increase the international recognition of Italy, the country had to be linked to one of the great powers, therefore favoring America's interests remained the focal point. Although the encounter between Fanfani and Mattei fueled the claims of neutralism and third-worldism within neo-Atlanticism, ultimately, the United States still came to terms with the neo-Atlantic tendencies of the Christian Democrats, weighing the benefits of supporting Fanfani overall and the potential losses caused by his aspirations.

¹⁶¹ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

¹⁶² Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁶³ Brogi, Alessandro. *L'Italia E l'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo*. La Nuova Italia, 1996.

At the end of the Eisenhower administration, Mattei was still brashly challenging the world order, focusing his efforts to bring Italy much resource at a low price. The United States had found a way to partly tame his wild ways but the Kennedy administration, albeit with less of a hostile attitude, will still need to build its personal path to contact and coexistence.

3.

The Italian Left and the beginning of the Socialist field change in the Eisenhower administration

3.1. Psi vs. all: the misalignment from the Pci and the struggle for Socialist reunification

Before turning the page to the 60s, it is deemed necessary to inspect the relationships held by the Psi with the other left-wing counterparts, the Pci and the Psdi. Only by following the steps of the split between the two souls of the Italian Left and the difficulties in reuniting the Socialist forces, one can comprehend the process that led to the Psi being included in the governmental coalition by 1963.

In the early 50s, Psi and Pci appeared linked in every field, especially in the polls. The cooperation had started in the second post-war period when it had been motivated by “the abandonment by the Communists of the maximalist position. The Communists adopted a policy of participation in the government [...] This led to a new pact for unity of action signed in 1946.”¹ Because of this, the internal Catholic forces accused them of being “opposed not only to religion but also to a righteous social order.”²

The alignment of the Psi with the Pci had been based on Nenni’s belief that uniting the left, because of its common experience of resistance and its faith in the Soviet Union, would have prevented the neo-Fascist reactionary forces to come back into power. The creation of the Popular Front and its arrival on the electoral scene in the 1948 elections coincided with a period of strategic favor for Moscow.³ Areas shared by the two parties included municipal and provincial councils expressed by majorities obtained with the votes of the two parties; participation of the two parties in common political and trade union organizations, such as the CGIL; *frontismo*, whereby the Socialists believed that a general alliance with the Pci for the conquest of power was possible; and in some cases even, especially in very small towns, unified sections of the two parties.

Soon, however, it became clear that the Psi would have continued holding a position of mere opposition if the alliance with the Pci was to continue. In an attempt to reverse the alliance, its

¹ Nenni, Pietro. “Where the Italian Socialists Stand.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213–223.

² Fanfani, Amintore. *Diari: 1956-1959*. Rubbettino. 2011.

³ Romano, Sergio. *Socialisti E Comunisti Nel '900 a Volte Alleati, Sempre Nemici*. Lettere al Corriere della Sera, 2010.

opponents struggled to put themselves at the head of the Psi and potentially start a compromise with the Dc.⁴

The period of *détente* had allowed the Socialists to be benefitted in the electoral sense, and starting from 1953, the leader Pietro Nenni had grown more conscious of the increase in national weight that the party was achieving thanks to the more favorable international conditions. Ten years in advance, Nenni had correctly predicted that the Psi would be the only party outside of the coalition ones to have the potential to access Palazzo Chigi, expecting other parties to meet Psi's necessities without many adjustments being required. For this, Nenni had also believed that a break with the Pci forces would have not been necessary: from a position in government, the Socialists could have worked to transform society based on their dogma, while collaborating with the Pci, put in an external position.⁵

Moved by the conviction that no internal political realignment would be required, and still maintaining a high degree of ideological support towards the Soviet Union, Pietro Nenni faced the first phase of opening to the left as a general shift of the political axis to the left, both domestically and internationally.⁶ With virtually no attempts on the Socialist part to positively answer to the glimpses of the opening coming from the Dc, the latter's leader Fanfani had soon gone back to distancing the party from the other faction.⁷

In the meantime, the American ally, who was still pursuing a highly anti-Communist policy, had very clearly shut down any potential conciliation between the Dc and the Psi. Nenni was considered too attached to the Pci and the USSR, which would have opened the way to Communist infiltration if the Socialists were to reach the government.⁸ Expectedly, the reaction of Ambassador Luce at the dawn of the opening to the left had been to "use all of the [United States] influence to prevent the participation of Nenni's Socialist Party to government."⁹

The unexpected election of Gronchi to the Presidency of the Republic negatively affected the strategy of the United States, for the time being, considering the support of Gronchi to the Leftist cause mentioned in the previous chapter. Nenni too, declared himself positively satisfied with the result, with which he had much to do, and he considered it a first win in the name of

⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. "The United States, Italy, and the Opening to the Left, 1953–1963." *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2002, pp. 36–55.

⁵ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁶ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁷ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁸ The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Offices, June 29, 1953, in FRUS, 1952-54, vol. VI, *Western Europe and Canada*, pp. 1620-21, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 58.

⁹ Draft memorandum, *sans date*, 1953, in NAW, RG 59, Lot File 58 D 357 - Subject Files Relating to Italian Affairs 1944-56, b. 6, f. Policy Debates, Winter 1953-54, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 59.

the opening to the left.¹⁰ 1955 was also the time around which Mattei had started his penetration of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern area, while a further improvement of the international conditions continued to preoccupy the opposers of the Socialist opening.

Washington was aware of the connection between the détente phase and the smoother state of Italian political relations: “The old, relatively clear-cut distinction between the Center and the Left seems to be fading and Nenni finds it relatively easy to proceed with a straight face to proclaim continued unity of action with the Communists at the same time that he expresses willingness to support the Government on domestic legislation. In continuing these two paradoxical lines of action he has the advantage that there is no significant international policy matter on the parliamentary agenda during the next few months that would force him to unmask himself (the Center being united on foreign affairs).”¹¹

Overall, the ambiguity with which Nenni was operating to increase the relevance of the Psi led to a general sense of distrust among his opposers, since the signs of his alignment with international communism, and most importantly with the Italian communist party, weighed more than any attempt to open forms of collaboration with centrist parties.¹² Because of this indecisiveness, at the beginning of 1956, the detachment operated by Nenni from the Communist forces passed more as a convenient choice rather than an ideological separation. In fact, it was deemed as a merely strategic move that of differentiating Psi ideology from the Pci one around the 20th Congress of PCUS, as those disappointed by the new line adopted by Moscow could have merged into the Psi right before the administrative elections, while Nenni continued to renew his secret allegiance to Moscow.¹³

It’s hard to truly establish where the Psi stood in the aftermath of the PCUS Congress as it seemed to distance itself from the actions of the Soviet Union and, consequently, of the Pci, while also reassuring Pci leader Palmiro Togliatti that no break would have taken place. Related to a potential fracture, it also has to be taken into consideration the dependency of the Psi on Pci and Eastern European finances. The Embassy was aware that, if ever Nenni wanted to fully break away from the Communists and realize the opening to the left, finding financial resources

¹⁰ Nenni, Pietro. *Tempo di guerra fredda. Diari 1943-1956*. SugarCo, 1981.

¹¹ Memorandum From the Director of the Office of Western European Affairs (Jones) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant), Washington, January 17, 1956. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/1-1156. Secret. Drafted by Engle and Freund. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

¹² Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹³ Telegram 3302 from Rome (Jernegan) to the SecState, March 3, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-59, b. 3604, 765.00/3-356, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 54.

would have been a determining factor.¹⁴ With such links in place, it would prove hard to even interrupt the subservient relation and substitute it with wider forms of autonomy by applying a slower form of separation between the parties.

To follow the evolution of the Italian Left, 1956 is a key year. Far more than the Congress, the events of Budapest showed to an astonished Italian public opinion a significant divide between the Psi and Pci, with the latter being totally isolated in justifying the Kremlin's actions. In his diaries, Nenni noted how "Soviet intervention in Hungary digs a gulf between us and the communists. By now the controversy is about to become open and public,"¹⁵ with the Socialists supporting the insurgents. Little by little, it had become more necessary for the Psi to follow an independent course of action.¹⁶ Said reaction had also been noticed and appreciated by opposing political forces and by the Embassy.

The events of Budapest, along with the aftermath of the Suez crisis, had inevitably posed the Pci in a difficult political position, as it was now open for criticism from the staunchest anti-communist forces, starting from the Dc. The Communist party closed itself off and many prominent intellectuals separated themselves from it, while the topic of opening to the left continued to grow as Nenni declared the collaboration with the Communists "over."¹⁷ Between Togliatti and Nenni, views of bipolar balances began to differ, with obvious consequences for the country's political arrangements. Given the aforementioned link between events in domestic politics and those on the international stage, Italy's fate was also at the mercy of the interests of the superpowers, with the United States opposed to any form of opening to the left.¹⁸

In his essay "Where the Italian Socialists Stand", Pietro Nenni commented on the 1956 events and the Pci's reaction offering the Psi's perception. "The party contested the assertion that Soviet power had been weakened solely by the crimes, errors and "personality cult" of Stalin; and proceeding from there to matters of principle, it criticized the Communist conception of party, government, power and the construction of socialist society. In what happened in Hungary it saw the confirmation [...] of our condemnation of pacts for united action [...], as also

¹⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁵ Nenni, Pietro. *Tempo di guerra fredda. Diari 1943-1956*. SugarCo, 1981, p. 756.

¹⁶ Nenni, Pietro. "Where the Italian Socialists Stand." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213-223.

¹⁷ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹⁸ Argentieri, Federigo. *Il proletariato contro la dittatura. Protagonisti e interpreti del 1956 ungherese*. Golem Edizioni, 2021.

of the statement made during more recent Psi congresses as to the impossibility of a joint Socialist-Communist effort to attain power on the governmental level.”¹⁹

The slow process of detachment from the Communist party didn't entail a parallel, progressive rapprochement to Saragat's Psdi. The aggressive rhetoric put into place by the Republican administration since the Boothe Luce's times had envisioned a potential reunification of the two based on the struggle to bring Nenni as close to the center as possible, pressuring him into weakening his stance to the point of forcing him to negotiate from an unfavorable position.²⁰ The increasing strength of Nenni's position throughout the beginning of the 50s had made such an approach much less feasible, considering the attitude of unavailability to compromise displayed by Nenni. For this, Psdi leader Saragat soon began perceiving the Psi leader as the “main threat”²¹ to democracy, considering that the party didn't align with the pro-Western stance of the Social Democrats. To him, Nenni had the strategic power to exploit its pretend attitude of “friend of democracy” to increase the party's supporters and better leverage its interests through negotiation.

The results of the 20th PCUS Congress and, most importantly, the Hungarian crisis, had constituted a further powerful incentive to proceed toward the creation of a unified socialist party, even with all the limitations arising from Nenni's uncertainties.²² Earlier that year, Nenni and Saragat had met in Prolognan after ten years of animosity between the two parties. An attempt to disengage from the Pci on Nenni's side and embark on the center-left journey was apparently already being considered by the Psi leader but the layers of involvement shared with the Communists at the municipal, provincial, and trade union levels were still too rooted.²³

A degree of confusion also came out of the Prolognan talks, as the version recounted by Saragat seemed much more clear-cut than Nenni's one in terms of the Psi intentions to break ties with the Pci if the former was to join the governmental coalition. Furthermore, according to the version offered by Saragat, Nenni was ready to almost totally convert and align with the Social-democratic setup. In the conversation between the Psi leader and Togliatti, or at least in the account of it, Nenni seemed to have the impression that Saragat was aiming at constituting a

¹⁹ Nenni, Pietro. “Where the Italian Socialists Stand.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213–223.

²⁰ Clare Boothe Luce, *Italy and the European Situation*, January 8, 1957, in Archives of the Council for Foreign Relations, Minutes of meetings, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 20.

²¹ Telegram 1556 from Rome (Luce) to the Secretary of State, November 3, 1955, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-59, b. 3603, 765.00/11-355, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 42.

²² Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

²³ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

Socialist government supported by the Pci or even at reunification of all Leftist forces in one party.²⁴

Despite the lack of tangible results and the confusion around the views expressed, the Prolognan meeting started party debates on both sides. Most importantly, it caught the Embassy's attention. The American forces were both interested in the perspective of the Psi-Pci detachment while at the same time dubious of Nenni's real commitment to the cause. There was an overall interest to leave the pro-Western stance of the Psdi intact, and in a perspective of future reunification, this should have taken place favoring American interests and under the stronger influence of the Social Democrats. For this, the line held by the U.S. in terms of Socialists reunification was to strengthen the Psdi as a whole and follow the detachment of the Psi from the Pci before publicly supporting the coming together of the forces.

In the eyes of the Embassy of Rome, which had been aware of the Prolognan meeting before it happened but still failed to analyze it with the right tools, the encounter represented an apparent acceleration of the Socialist reunification. A somewhat reassuring analysis of the situation was offered by Fanfani during his 1956 visit to Washington. In a conversation with Dulles, the Dc leader had frankly declared the lack of trust towards Nenni, who, he believed, was trying to keep the attention on the Psi high hoping to anticipate the national elections of 1958 to the spring of 1957.²⁵ Fanfani, on the other hand, trusted Saragat's loyalty and his cautious approach. A certain level of preoccupation was still noted by the American forces, as Fanfani still deemed the topic as "urgent".

The fundamental differences detected between the two parties hampered any positive result that may have come out of the 1956 events, much to the Embassy's relief. This had been proven during "the Psi's Venice Congress in February 1957, during which the terms of the Nenni Socialists did not meet Social Democratic demands and the leadership of the two parties did not make substantial concessions to each other."²⁶ Nonetheless, the merger was just postponed, not eliminated, therefore the Embassy still had to find a way not to come out as an opposer of the Socialist coming together but still manage to slow it down.

These efforts were surely favored by the confusion and contradictions coming from the directing bodies, slowing down the merger themselves. In this regard, the CIA believed that, by

²⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

²⁵ Memorandum of Conversation (Fanfani, Ortona, Manzini, Dulles, Murphy, Beam, Torbert), August 27, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-59, b. 3605, 765.00/8-2765, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 70.

²⁶ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board. Washington, September 3, 1957. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

declaring the intention of continuing consultations with the Communists, Nenni had proven his lack of intent to truly separate himself from the Communists and potentially lose the lead on his party as a consequence; unifying the Socialist forces in one party would have obliged him to share the power and responsibility with Saragat.²⁷

Ahead of the 1958 elections, the Eisenhower administration adopted a more passive stance of discouraging any form of reunification as soon as the discussion came back on the table, deeming it only possible through Psdi superiority and consequently hampering it.²⁸ “During the present stage of Socialist unification negotiations, it is of great importance for the U.S. to exercise the utmost discretion. We should on one hand do nothing publicly or privately to indicate that we favor the admission of the Nenni Socialists as presently oriented into the ranks of the democratic parties, but on the other hand we should avoid giving the impression that the Nenni Socialists would be unacceptable under absolutely all conditions. We should be careful not to lead European Socialists to think we oppose an increase in democratic Socialist strength.”²⁹ The Department of State and Embassy too were still attempting to establish the consequences that a potential reunification could have had on Italian stability and, consequently, on American interests.

All these efforts put in place by American diplomacy were tied to the conviction that the Psi should have substantially progressed towards autonomy from the Communists for the U.S. to even phantom a *rapprochement* of the two forces. Despite the appearance of interest towards the Psdi, the declaration of independence from the Pci made during the Psi Congress in 1957 hadn't equal to a declaration of opposition too, instead indicating that a form of collaboration with the Communists would continue in the labor and cooperative fields.³⁰ Furthermore, in October of 1957, Nenni and Togliatti signed a “consultation pact”. This had seemed to water down the previous “unity of action” pact, but it still declared the continuation of cooperation between the forces.³¹

At the threshold of the 1958 elections, Fanfani had presented his view on Left-wing results by stating the expectation that the Pci would have lost a little strength, and the Psi too because of

²⁷ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

²⁸ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

²⁹ Outline Plan Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board. Washington, May 15, 1957. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Top Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

³⁰ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board. Washington, February 13, 1957. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 61-143.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Nenni's weakened position of subserviency.³² Furthermore, the game was still very much open for the Psdi to capitalize on these fortuitous conditions, considering the support coming from the United States too. However, "internal disorganization and divided on whether to cooperate with parties to Left or Right, [Psdi] has conducted somewhat drab, spotty and uninspired campaign."³³

The increase in votes gained by the faction of the Psi in favor of reducing Socialist-Communist cooperation and the strong distrust expressed by Togliatti towards Psi policies during the pre-electoral phase sent a clear message on the electorate's expectations for the Psi future. Over the course of 1957, during the Segni government crisis, numerous demonstrations of interest to collaborate with the Psi emerged from different political forces. Although refused by Nenni, who dismissed playing a resolutive role in the matter, this indicated a new perception of the Socialist party. While the pressure of the potential reunification had forced the Psdi direction to temporarily exit the governmental coalition, the Italian political system had reached a state of quasi-paralysis that required new horizons to be opened and explored to avoid an impasse³⁴; opening up to the Psi was the only extra-governmental coalition option.

With Nenni mostly keeping away from the Dc orbit and governmental scene, the Department of State didn't perceive the necessity to update the operation plan for the country and simply kept supporting Dc and Psdi. In 1957, Saragat traveled to New York in a non-official visit that still interested the American ally, considering that Saragat was viewed with "extreme favor and [he was] considered as one of the main planks of our most direct diplomacy."³⁵ During his stay, the Psdi leader had the chance to meet with VP Nixon, Secretary Dulles, and Defense Minister Quarles. Nixon in particular had much appreciated the role played by Saragat and the general efforts in the reconstruction of Italy. When asked about the party merger, Saragat deemed it "impossible, at least for now," as Nenni was still a prisoner of his own party's, which he only controlled one third of.³⁶

In the meantime, the Office of Intelligence, Research, and Analysis of the Department of State had developed a new outlook on Psi-Pci-Psdi's relations, which completely differed from the

³² Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, March 6, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/3-1458. Confidential. Drafted by Niles W. Bond and John D. Jernegan. Transmitted as an enclosure to despatch 1169 from Rome, March 14. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³³ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 22, 1958, 8 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-2258. Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to Bonn, London, Paris, and Athens. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

³⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁵ Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Embassy's. The challenge posed by the Psi to the Pci, despite not generating a total detachment, had weakened the Communist leadership. However, the indecisiveness of Nenni in clearly detaching the Psi from the Pci, mostly due to the uncertainties tied to the future of the party if it were to grow independent, allowed the Pci to still maintain an overall hold.

Furthermore, what could have really shaken the Communists went beyond the simple separation of the Socialist forces: if Nenni truly wanted to capitalize on the internal Communist crisis, he would have had to accelerate the reunification with the Psdi significantly, also fulfilling it according to his leftward terms and not Saragat's.³⁷ A newfound sense of cohesion between the two Socialist parties seemed all but feasible, both to realize and to maintain. The INR had also estimated the Psdi to be severely divided after the 1957 Congress and without a clear majority.³⁸ The little losses registered by the Pci in the 1958 elections, along with the little gains of the Psdi and the moderate increase in seats of the Psi, didn't change the political division of the country as much as expected, since the results didn't particularly nudge the Socialist parties towards the same direction. Fanfani had let the Embassy interpret his plan to solve the Socialist problem by detaching the autonomists from the rest of the party to create a new party, which would have collaborated with the Dc from a position of subordinacy.³⁹ The less resolute Saragat, whose party had a desperate need to "regain strength and prestige,"⁴⁰ feared that the Psi would have used its electoral advantage as leverage to increase its influence on the Social Democratic Left.⁴¹

Furthermore, after the 1959 Psi Naples congress, during which 58.3% had voted on the motion to cut ties with the Communists, opportunities and registered advances made by the party towards autonomy had been wiped out by its own contradictions. This proved that "it cannot, without breaking the united popular front concept, become a really democratic party and achieve the material benefits of an actual or potential participant in the governing process."⁴² The perception of the Embassy came from the continuation of the alliance of the Psi with the

³⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁸ "The Crisis of the Italian Democratic Socialists", Intelligence Report n. 7639, December 20, 1957, in NAW, RG 59, Reports of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 126.

³⁹ Airgram G-134 from Rome to the Secretary of State, May 28, 1958, in NAW, RG 59, Cdf 1955-59, b. 3608, 765.00/5-2858, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 167.

⁴⁰ Rome (Zellerbach) to the Secretary of State (Tel. 108), July 11, 1958, in NAW, RG 59, Cdf 1955-59, b. 3617, 765.13/7.1158, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 170.

⁴¹ Rome (Zellerbach) to the Secretary of State (Tel. 3783), June 12, 1958, in NAW, RG 59, Cdf 1955-59, b. 3608, 765.00/6-1258, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 172.

⁴² Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. No. 1362. Rome, May 19, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-1959. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and the members of the Embassy Political Staff. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

Pci in the numerous local government coalitions, in the Communist-dominated CGIL, in cooperatives.⁴³ Therefore, protecting the Psdi from Naples' kickbacks remained prioritized.

Right around this time, the failure of the U.S. Embassy in Rome and the Department of State to correctly analyze and interpret the differences between the Left-wing forces became blatant. For the entire duration of the 50s, Pci and Psi were considered on the same trajectory; the incapacity to differentiate a governmental Left from an opposing one, distinguishing their original traits too, slowed down and partly invalidated the capacity of correctly analyzing the heterogeneous political alignments of Republican Italy.⁴⁴

For this, it isn't surprising that by 1959, a year before the realization of the government of "convergenze parallele", the Department of State still interpreted "the entry of a more flexible Socialist party on the political stage will probably have an unsettling effect on the political alignment since this initial step toward a more democratic posture coincides with the trend toward the left developing in the Italian electorate. The long-term implications of a drift in Italy toward Socialist orientation would not necessarily be favorable to the maintenance of Italy's position in the Western community."⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Department also connected the increased autonomy achieved by Nenni in 1959 as an undermining element for the structure of the Psdi and consequently, for the stability of the Fanfani government. Before the fall of the latter, the Embassy and Department had made a point to enact measures to stop any form of explorative negotiation in view of a *rapprochement*.

Only by July 1959, when the Segni government had gone to power and Saragat had externalized his ferocious opposition to this political union, refusing to be part of it, the OCB slightly modified the operation plan for the country, applying a strategy of passive influence to the U.S. thinking and of encouragement of autonomist elements to redefine its relations with the Psi.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the overall feeling was one of doubt that the Psi had actually become independent and free from Communist influences not only in the field of national politics but also in trade unions, cooperatives, and local administrations, where the ties were extremely tight.⁴⁷

⁴³ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to Secretary of State Dulles. January 20, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/1-2059. Confidential. Drafted by Frank E. Maestroni. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴⁴ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁴⁵ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to Secretary of State Dulles. January 20, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/1-2059. Confidential. Drafted by Frank E. Maestroni. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴⁶ Report by the Operations Coordinating Board. July 8, 1959. Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁴⁷ Airgram G-279 from the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, December 20, 1958, attached as TAB C to Memorandum to the Under Secretary from L. Merchant, "Increasing Pressure on Stability of Fanfani

Entering the new decade, the slow developments of the Left-wing political scenario had developed enough to evidentiate the changes that affected the protagonists. With the fall of the Segni government, the Embassy didn't look at the Psi as particularly threatening. It was aware that the potential experiment of engaging the Socialists in government was still in the hands of the Dc, and any attempt to undermine the transition to the new government wouldn't have benefitted the Psi's cause. Therefore, the abstention of the Psi was expected, especially after a secret meeting was held with the party leader Nenni, and the Embassy felt no need to urge the Psdi to be cautious of the Psi.⁴⁸

The impression of the Embassy on the Psi's advancements right around the time of the NSC 6014 is somewhat subjective: Zellerbach had been called to Washington in the spring/summer of 1960, leaving the interim conduction of the Embassy to Horsey first and then Torbert, who weren't known for their support to the opening to the left. In the spring of that year, Horsey noted to the Department that "solidarity of Communist-Socialist Left has been somewhat weakened as development toward democratic socialism, which has characterized all other socialist parties, gradually and very belatedly operates in Italy, producing so-called "autonomous" movement within Psi, Nenni has put himself at the head of this faction and is skillfully keeping Dc on the defensive. He has posed conditions for his support which are superficially moderate."⁴⁹

In a conversation held by Counselor Torbert with the Dc Secretary in the summer of unrest, Moro had been called to defend his approach towards the Psi, which was based on moving the party towards the area of government based on both the positive signals coming from Nenni and the necessity to test the actuality of the changes that had appended within the party.⁵⁰ Torbert showed a high level of skepticism before Moro's political vision, aligning with what Horsey had noted, "while Psi is now substantially autonomous from Pci, all these policies happen also to coincide with Pci policies. Unofficial hints abound of Nenni's readiness to compromise but, against the background of the last 15 years, skepticism of center and right of

Government", December 31, 1958, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-59, b. 3608, 765.00/12-3158, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 186.

⁴⁸ FSD n. 985, "The Psdi and the Current Crisis- Attitudes and Developments", April 11, 1960, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 1916, 765.00/4-1160, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 287.

⁴⁹ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to London, Bonn, Moscow, all Consulates in Italy, and Paris. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

Dc party is perhaps understandable.”⁵¹ This came at a time during which the Psi led a strong battle alongside the Pci against the Tambroni government and to its main supporter, the neo-fascists of the Italian Social Movement.

With the return of Zellerbach at the head of the Embassy, any step towards the opening to the left had been put on hold. Torbert and Moro had convened that in the event of a new failure of the Socialist inclusion in the governmental formula, the project would have been set aside to attempt a renewal of the centrist formula. In a letter to Dc Secretary Aldo Moro dated March 3, 1961, Nenni too confirmed that the path towards a union was developing but it still had to fulfill its potential. "I told you and Fanfani at the time that we could go no further than abstention [...] This will not, of course, be the abstention of August 1960, but the commitment of unreserved support against opposition maneuvers or motions and for the passing of laws implementing the program [...] Abstention on the investiture vote is considered by me as the most correct parliamentary form to emphasize that there is not, or not yet, between our parties collaboration, but meeting on a program and on the consolidation and defense of democracy [...] I think it is beneficial for today not to overstep the limits of the real situation.”⁵²

The lack of proactive action and the overall limited attention paid on the American part to the right-wing involution of the summer of 1960 is easily explained by the happening of U.S. domestic policy. Naturally, the upcoming presidential elections of November were the main if not sole focus for the country. The end of the second Eisenhower administration, and consequently, the impactful degree of change that a new one would have brought, inevitably diverted the attention from the foreign partners, as the time for a medium and long-term intervention had come to an end. Furthermore, the rise of a Democratic candidate to the presidency led to essential administration changes, rather than a continuation of the Republican party line, that delayed the redefinition and stabilization of the American role in the country even more. Therefore, for the time being and in between the administration change, the Embassy found it impossible to do anything besides strengthening the Dc, as the Psi still appeared not committed enough to grant guarantees of its reliability.⁵³ This interpretation

⁵¹ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6-2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. Repeated to London, Bonn, Moscow, all Consulates in Italy, and Paris. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵² *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

⁵³ FSD n. 1164 from Rome to the State Dept., “US Policy on Internal Italian Politics”, June 6, 1960, in NAW, RG 84, Rome emb. CF 1959-61, b. 9, f. 350 Italy 1961, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 293.

differs from the CIA one, according to which Nenni “was showing increasing and clearer signs of his desire to break from the Communists.”⁵⁴

By 1960, according to the latest NSC Report, the leftist sentiment was still strong. The new strategy implemented by the Pci showed the concerns deriving from the Socialist autonomy and most importantly, the fear of isolation in the political scenario. “During 1948-58, the Communist national vote has remained almost stationary, and the significant gains have been made by the Psi.”⁵⁵

Despite Communist concern,⁵⁶ the positive signals given by the Psi in distancing itself from the Pci weren’t decisive enough to consider the detachment completed, as the Socialists still aligned with some fundamental claims of the Pci, especially in foreign policy. Furthermore, Nenni had decided to present shared electoral lists with the Pci in municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants.⁵⁷

The NSC 6014 ended up representing a middle ground of the two dissenting opinions of the U.S. forces: those in favor of the opening to the left and those who believed the Psi to still be too immature. Nenni appeared still too opportunistic and the general process had not gone far enough to lend confidence that the Psi had now become its own party, a feeling shared by the Dc too. With “many democratic center-left elements feel that limited confidence can be placed in Psi support for a Dc government and that such action would result in a more rapid move by the Psi toward complete autonomy,”⁵⁸ the United States recommended supporting the evolution of the Psi as a completely autonomous and democratic party, with policy lines distinct from and antagonistic to those of the Communist party.

While waiting for Nenni to fully commit to a new course of the Italian Socialist Party, and for the party to become anti-Communist, Western-oriented, and fully supporting European and Atlantic solidarity,⁵⁹ the United States could continue to delay the resolution of the internal controversies on the course of the opening to the left. Soon enough, the events of Italian politics will seem to choose for themselves.

⁵⁴ Briefing Note for PB Mtg. 7/15/60, “U.S. Policy Toward Italy”, July 13, 1960. in DDEPL, WHO, OSANSA Records, 1952-61, NSC Series, Briefing Note Subseries, b.11, f. [Italian Political Situation and US Policy toward Italy], cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 299.

⁵⁵ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵⁶ This concern will prove partly unmotivated, as in the 1960 elections the Pci will gain votes, differently from the losses registered in the Psi. The Psdi will be able to come out of the electoral test better than expected.

⁵⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁵⁸ National Security Council Report. NSC 6014. August 16, 1960. Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 6014 Series. Secret. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

3.2. The ever-changing man behind the party

Ever since the De Gasperi times, Pietro Nenni had been aware that the influence of international politics on the internal dimension of Italy was only bound to grow. He rightfully anticipated that the ties between the two dimensions were about to become extremely close, projecting the dynamics of the U.S.-USSR clashes on the Italian scene too. This intuition relevantly tied in with the development of the Psi, which was favored by the period of *détente* and, more generally, by the development of the confrontation between blocks.

As early as August 1953 Nenni linked the trend approaching international peaceful coexistence to a possible leftward evolution of Italian politics. The path was slow: for several years the party remained tied to an anti-capitalist hypothesis that did not address the problem of governing the system. On the subject of foreign policy, judgments favorable to the new climate of international *détente* alternated with criticism towards Western policy.⁶⁰ The change in the interpretation of the domestic and international dimensions, along with the *modus operandi* of frontal confrontation, would be a decade-long endeavor.

As well as the entire Italian political scenario, the Psi was immersed in the influence of the larger ideological confrontation but, differently from most, the party found itself straddling the two dimensions. The autonomist current led by Nenni was aware of being the interpreter of a choice that carried political implications, that of bringing together Psi and Dc, especially for the latter force. In order to justify this new political course, old elements of the concept of a democratic state were interpreted as required passages to transition from a social and economic capitalist system to a socialist one. Through this process, the third way would have been created.⁶¹

The original interest of Pietro Nenni to ride both the Western and Leftist dimensions and create a “third way” has been discussed in the previous paragraph. In the ten-year span between those original, non-compromising ideas and the official entry of the Psi into the governmental coalition, a long process of adjustment, transformation, and cooperation necessarily took place. The presence of Nenni’s party at the highest governmental level is part of the tendency to cluster in the center and marginalize the extremes, injecting new lifeblood in a weak system that relied on centrism.⁶²

⁶⁰ Craveri, Pietro. *La Repubblica Dal 1958 al 1992*. Storia d’Italia. Vol. 24, UTET, 1996, pp. XVI–1076.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Marchi, Michele. “Italian Democracy and Republic between the Antifascist Victory and the Cold War.” *Ricerche Di Storia Politica, Quadrimestrale Dell’Associazione per Le Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, il Mulino, no. speciale/2022, 2022, pp. 55–66.

The creation of the center-left did not entail a mere political encounter but it carried along cultural and social implications. The expectation of Nenni was that of introducing forms of social advancements, while also achieving a form of cultural elaboration and an answer to the matters of the modernization of the country, creating an overall point of encounter between political cultures.⁶³ Said process of transformation still entailed a high degree of complexity to realize an operation that involved multiple dimensions and, consequently, a series of issues.

As seen, for a long while, the process wasn't favored by the American ally, especially by the Roman Embassy. Nenni had expressed positions of strong favor towards the détente, not aligning with the established views of anti-communism and support to the United States like the other European Socialist parties had done. The Italian Socialists held a position of neutralism and criticism towards the Atlantic alliance, and consequently, of the Atlanticist position of the Dc. Nenni, too, admitted the differences between the Psi and other European Socialist parties, stating that the former was "more strongly attached than most of them to the doctrine of scientific Socialism, that is, Marxism. It operates in quite different economic and social conditions, partly because of the development of democratic government and a democratic way of life has been slower in Italy than in other countries."⁶⁴ Therefore, foreign policy proved one of the most effective ways for the American partner to test the reliability of the Psi's openings.⁶⁵

During the Venice congress, Nenni had made his first concessions to Italy's role in NATO, accepting its participation in the Alliance as long as it remained geographically limited and only of defensive character. Despite being a close supporter of Enrico Mattei and having neutralistic sights, the Psi leader considered neo-Atlanticism to have suddenly appeared out of nowhere as a temporary deviation from the Atlantic orthodoxy. In 1961, Nenni was still declaring the neutralism of the party and the adherence to the national and international foreign policy platform. In this regard, NATO was perceived as a parliamentary choice related to domestic reasons rather than international and made instead of a policy of neutrality, which would have guaranteed Italy's security and contribution to world peace.⁶⁶

⁶³ Marchi, Michele. "Italian Democracy and Republic between the Antifascist Victory and the Cold War." *Ricerche Di Storia Politica, Quadrimestrale Dell'Associazione per Le Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, il Mulino, no. speciale/2022, 2022, pp. 55–66.

⁶⁴ Nenni, Pietro. "Where the Italian Socialists Stand." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213–223.

⁶⁵ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁶⁶ Nenni, Pietro. "Where the Italian Socialists Stand." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213–223.

Secretary Dulles, along with the whole Department of State and Embassy, could only react with a strong form of short-term opposition to any form of opening towards collaboration with the Psi. The Embassy had come to consider Nenni an “unbeatable master in the art of deception and confusion,”⁶⁷ exploiting the need for stabilization of Italian democracy to only advance his interests.

The harshness in the judgment of the U.S. towards the Leftist forces came from the conviction that once one knew the Soviet reality and Leftist aspirations, it was impossible to support them bona fide. American analysis excluded a priori the sincerity of Nenni’s sentiments, considering the political and cultural lack of a critical analysis of the communist experience on his part. The inconsistency of his position was exemplified by the maintaining of strong ties with the Pci and the USSR while also declaring that “it is now clear that under the communist flag you cannot win in the West, at least in the current state of affairs.”⁶⁸

In the American analysis of Psi developments, the OCB report plan interpreted Nenni’s actions as more of a way to start tearing down the anti-communist feeling rather than achieving autonomy for his own party.⁶⁹ Pairing up the international détente with the internal one could have been the new strategic approach, as the Embassy deemed that the new prominence of the Socialists in the crisis seemed to correspond to a Soviet investment in the Psi, rather than the Pci, to unhinge the compactness of the Western alliance and generate a neutralist turn.⁷⁰

Despite the slow and at times not so subtle turn of the Psi after 1956, the American partner didn’t modify his general judgment. An overall feeling spread that the Psi was taking advantage of the Communist embarrassment, and the warning signs of an incumbent separation between the Psi and the Pci were interpreted by the Embassy as simply a mind game to superficially discern one from the other, in the attempt to increase the Socialist’s success at the administrative elections of that year. In a telegram to the Secretary of State, once again, Nenni was depicted as “still obviously selling Moscow’s product” and “an individual whose dishonesty seemed to far exceed what his profession required.”⁷¹

To face what was being defined as the personal “Operation Nenni”, the United States adopted a subtler policy, a “ju-jitsu” approach that would try to exploit the weaknesses and the internal

⁶⁷ FSD n. 1819 from Rome to the Dept. of State, April 30, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-1959, b. 3604, 765.00/3-356, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶⁸ Nenni, Pietro. *Tempo di guerra fredda. Diari 1943-1956*. SugarCo, 1981.

⁶⁹ OCB, “Detailed Developments of Major Actions Relating to US Policy Towards Italy”, December 8, 1955, in NAW, RG 59, Lot File 62D430, b. 21, f. Italy, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 42.

⁷⁰ Craveri, Pietro. *La Repubblica Dal 1958 al 1992*. Storia d’Italia. Vol. 24, UTET, 1996, pp. XVI–1076.

⁷¹ Telegram 3022 from Rome (Jernegan) to SecState, March 3, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955-1959, b. 3604, 765.00/3-356, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 54.

tensions of the Italian left in order to disorganize it and generate more confusion within its ranks.⁷² The overall goal of this strategy was to ensure that any step taken toward reunification would happen according to American standards and interests. Through the OCB reports, it can be noted that the U.S. was called to adjust its strategy of frontal action to adapt to the “legal” way the Italians were combating the Communist party, which followed the electoral route.⁷³ Attacking the Left frontally could have sparked a sense of solidarity, whereas a less obvious jujitsu strategy, aimed at ensuing chaos, proved functioning in the analysis of the Embassy. This detected a stark tendency of the electorate to move away from extremist parties.

A new path different from the democracy of alternation was needed to prevent democracy itself from becoming a purely formal exercise. The opening to the left sought to move in this direction, following the evolution of Europeanism and the country's position in the initial context of détente.⁷⁴ By the late 1950s, Nenni's party had passed through the "most favorable moment of socialist expansion as a social fact, as a political and cultural fact, as the welding of tradition with prospects."⁷⁵ The issue of most concern to Americans about this growth concerned socialist positions on foreign policy and alliances, the calling card for a revision of the party's identity.⁷⁶

Overall, American governmental circles and the press continued to define the Psi in oversimplified terms, by saying that “it differs, for the worse, from the other Socialist parties of Western Europe; that it is a copy of the Communist party; that it does not make much effort to exercise a democratic influence inside Italy; and that in foreign policy it espouses the brand of neutralism often identified with the Soviet point of view.”⁷⁷

The fear of the left remained the pivot on which the United States tried to strengthen its position in Italy, accompanied by further tests of the reliability of the center-left experiment. The NSC 6014 is a good indicator of the continuation of a mixed support/wariness approach maintained by the Department and Embassy throughout the entire opening to the left experience: in it, note

⁷² John D. Jernegan to John Wesley Jones, June 26, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, Central Decimal Files (hereinafter Cd Files) 1955–1959, Box 3605, 765.00/6–2756. The document was released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 54.

⁷³ John D. Jernegan, *Chargé d'affaires* ad interim, to John Wesley Jones, Director, Office of Western European Affairs, May 17, 1956, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1955–1959, Box 2539, 611.65/5-1726, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 63.

⁷⁴ Marchi, Michele. “Italian Democracy and Republic between the Antifascist Victory and the Cold War.” *Ricerche Di Storia Politica, Quadrimestrale Dell'Associazione per Le Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, il Mulino, no. speciale/2022, 2022, pp. 55–66.

⁷⁵ Nenni, Pietro. *Intervista Sul Socialismo Italiano*. Edited by Giuseppe Tamburrano, Laterza, 1977.

⁷⁶ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁷⁷ Nenni, Pietro. “Where the Italian Socialists Stand.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1962, pp. 213–223.

was made of the positive development of the party in becoming more autonomous from the Pci, for which a higher degree of flexibility was recommended. The trend of detachment was expected to continue, with the Psi becoming less of a disruptive factor for the Italian political scene. The trust in Nenni, however, never ceased to be up for debate.

The real turn in the Socialist question will come along in the 60s. A deeper and more spot-on analysis will allow the American partner to get a better sense of the Psi as a party and of its developments, which will be seen as less and less threatening. In 1966, the Psi and Psdi will reunite in a united party, only two years after the election of Saragat to the Presidency of the Republic. The trajectory of Italian Socialism exemplifies a larger season of reforms and a new course of the Italian political system, with its barriers of mistrust and suspicion finally starting to be torn down.

4.

The new (Socialist) frontier: John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Italy's 1961

4.1. A new approach for a new era

The beginning of a new decade coincided with the beginning of a new administration, that of Kennedy. His victory had given encouragement to the more progressive forces within Italy, especially the moderate Left ones, to strive for a more dynamic foreign policy approach. Immediately, the new administration gained sympathy and support among a large chunk of the political class, due also to Kennedy's Catholicism and progressivism, despite the little contact and knowledge of each other coming both from the American and Italian sides.¹

The Massachusetts Senator wasn't new to the Italian diplomatic ranks, part of which had encountered JFK during his rise to the White House. In particular, there existed ties between the President and Ambassador Egidio Ortona, having the two met during the latter's tenure in Washington. In 1957, because of the good friendly relationship with him and Jackie, Ortona had been asked by Kennedy to be the one to hand over the commendation of the Order of Merit of the Republic he was being awarded.² Of him, Ortona remembered especially "his constant search to grasp some sort of opinion from his interlocutor that could be useful towards its electorate."³ Kennedy had also met Fanfani in 1956 when he charmingly told him to have read a book of his.⁴

The arrival of the new Ambassador Reinhard in April 1961 inaugurated a season of mutual acquaintance with the general public and political class, with the United States attempting to get its bearings in such a changing scenario. A change of pace for the Embassy also took place: the representatives previously appointed by Eisenhower for the Roman post, respectively Boothe Luce and Zellerbach, had come with political baggage and domestic influence. The newly appointed Ambassador, on the other hand, was a man of the diplomatic service who had studied in Italy before the war, and who had a profound knowledge of the Soviet and

¹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

² Ortona, Egidio. *Anni D'America*. Vol. 2: La diplomazia: 1953-1961., Il Mulino, 1985.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

Mediterranean world.⁵ He wasn't a wrong choice per se but an extremely cautious one, continuing to pursue an anti-communist agenda without new formulas, a potential indication of the initial approach of the new administration to the internal debate. The first few months of the administration, in fact, were characterized by a continuity of the foreign policy path followed by Eisenhower.

Continuity also came on the Italian part in ensuring a positive state of relations between the two countries. A renewal of the Italian commitment to NATO was expressed right away in a conversation between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Brosio.⁶ Fanfani still played a relevant role in informing the administration on certain aspects of current affairs, offering his perspective on different topics and helping the American forces navigate Italian matters from a domestic point of view.⁷ Alongside the renewal of strong ties of friendship and collaboration, Italy continued to carry out requests for consultation and moral and economic support to avoid appearing as a secondary power in the Atlantic Alliance.⁸

Interestingly enough, the person called to deal with the implications of U.S. foreign policy in the country and to present the new course of it to the allies wasn't Ambassador Reinhard but Ambassador at Large W. Averell Harriman, sent to Europe as a personal representative of Kennedy. The title of roving Ambassador had been granted to Harriman not only based on his long, diplomatic career but also by virtue of his wide-reaching and far-seeing progressive takes, which the supporters of the New Frontier hoped would be influential on the new course of Kennedian foreign policy.

Through the talks held by Harriman at the beginning of 1961, during a Western Europe-wide trip, a hint of the administration's new record was given before Reinhard's arrival. Over the course of three days, the roving Ambassador had met with Fanfani, Saragat, Segni, Mattei, and Gronchi during an exploratory mission. This trip fit right into the desire of Italian leaders to be

⁵ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, January 26, 1961, 4:30 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 611.65/1-2661. Confidential. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, March 11, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 110.15-HA/3-1161. Secret. Drafted by Walters. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, July 17, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/7-1761. Confidential. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

consulted on international affairs. During these talks, the matter of the opening to the left was obviously touched upon, also considering the upcoming Psi Congress in March.⁹

In discussion with Gronchi, there was a feeling of Harriman wanting to test the actual advancements made on the inclusion of the Psi in the democratic sphere, and overall the state of Italian politics. After admitting that only a few tangible steps had been achieved, Gronchi felt compelled to persuade his interlocutor that the Psi could still be counted on to continue on the path to separation. The President felt that the slow fall of the Pci in the evolution towards a modern economy would eventually lead a big part of the electorate to find a new point of reference. Between the two Socialist parties, Psi and Psdi, Gronchi felt that the former would be favored if Nenni finally decided to reach an agreement with the Dc; differently, there was little room for Saragat to further improve the strength of the Psdi, it being already a compromising party.¹⁰ Harriman's evaluation still found the pace at which autonomy was being reached disappointing, five years after its beginning.

Saragat, on the other hand, presented a rather different situation for which a degree of skepticism towards Nenni's ability to detach from the Pci was justifiable, a reason to continue being opposed to the entrance of the Psi in the governmental coalition. The prolonged trade union collaboration between the parties and the Psi's foreign policy stance made it unreliable,¹¹ although the Dc didn't seem to be of the same notice. Despite overall support for the cause, Fanfani too didn't seem willing to expedite Socialist inclusion in the governmental majority, let alone cause a government crisis to open the majority to the entry of the Psi.¹²

Despite conflicting opinions emerging from the leaders during their encounters, Harriman came back to the United States with a cautious but positive take on the opening to the left, which he referred to Kennedy, and a positive impression of the preparatory introductory talks. Overall, an alignment could have been drawn between Kennedyian reformism and the aspirations of Italian political leaders. Furthermore, the two states found similarities even in their stances towards international affairs, all signs of an upcoming proficient collaboration. Indeed, from the talks on foreign strategy, Gronchi and Fanfani seemed to fit right into the new reformist and

⁹ No significant signs of change were registered during the Congress: a neutralist line was confirmed for the Psi's foreign policy stance, Nenni was confirmed party secretary (55%) with a slight loss in votes, showing that party is still internally divided.

¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation (Gronchi, Harriman, Walters), March 11, 1961, in LOC-MD, WAH Papers, Special Files-Public Service JFK-LBJ, Trips and Missions, b. 526, f. 14, 1961 Western Europe, Mideast, Asian Subcontinent 25 Feb.-26 March (Rome), cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 333.

¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation between Amb. Harriman and Giuseppe Saragat, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 1/20/61-4/30/61, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 331.

¹² Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

socio-economic developmental perspective that the Kennedy administration had been planning to promote.¹³

Slowly, the Kennedy administration had started to evolve past the continuation of the path laid by Eisenhower and instead was inaugurating a new course of reformism and progressivism that aimed at supporting Western forces with similar goals to defeat communism through isolation.¹⁴ The preconditions that emerged from the first contacts between the Italian political scene and the Kennedy administration seemed promising but the latter still had to begin finding a way to unravel the tangled knot of Italian politics.

Some lines of continuity were maintained with respect to the Eisenhower period, like the support of the four government parties and the knowledge that the precarious governmental situation was the only viable one at that moment. Among these parties, aside from the constant point of reference represented by the Dc, the Psdi continued to be a subject of interest for the new administration, although it was recognized that the party didn't hold that significant of an electoral weight. "Main strength of present government is lack of viable alternative, vividly demonstrated last year when almost all other possible combinations were tried, and failed. Unfortunately, energies of government leaders are largely absorbed by continuous factional and party maneuvering which daily confronts them. As result they have too little time for planning and execution of current and new programs. In any case, their margin of political power is so slight that they dare not make moves significantly vulnerable to partisan attack. Decision-making power of government is thus inhibited."¹⁵ During that time, Fanfani had been mostly focused on showing the upsides of collaborating at the municipal level with the Psi, since the Dc considered the complete detachment of the Psi from the Pci something that would have happened in a remote future.

A factor of change compared to the previous administration was centering the debate on the Psi, moving from the almost certainty that the inclusion of it in government was just a matter of time. This new take fit well in the rhetoric of the newfound interlocutor of the Kennedy presidency, Dc leader Aldo Moro.

The election of Moro to the Secretariat of the Christian Democracy had been somewhat of a surprise, as it would have caused some degree of marginalization of Fanfani and overall

¹³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁴ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹⁵ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, February 1, 1961, 7 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/2-161. Confidential. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

polarization. At the turn of the decade, while his destabilizing persona was starting to be figured out, Fanfani still appeared as the most reassuring figure of the two to the American ally, mostly because of his sure demeanor. Moro, on the other hand, was considered a puppet figure with a modest personality.

Between the two, a substantial difference in leadership existed as “Moro practiced a kind of cautious «voluntarism» based on two fixed points: the unity of the party and the approval of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.” Moro approached the beginning of a new governmental equilibrium with much caution and a dose of uncertainty.¹⁶ The process of opening to the left most definitely brought a degree of secularization of both the party and the national political setting,¹⁷ and at the same time, it presented Moro as a mediating and conciliatory political figure, leading the Kennedy administration to move past Fanfani’s centrality rather quickly. While maintaining a degree of party unity, Moro managed to move past Fanfani’s impetuosity and create the conditions to detach from the past formula of centrism. “Active party management in the hands of the relatively non-controversial Moro, who has so far shown substantial finesse and ability to gain acceptance of disparate elements within the party.”¹⁸ The formation of the government of “convergenze parallele” in July 1960 was a testament to Moro’s prestige and ability to bring forces together and achieve a large parliamentary majority, considering that he had been the mastermind behind the third Fanfani government. With the four-way government being sworn in, the Psi abstained from the vote of trust for the first time, a further step of detachment from the Pci and another victory for Moro.

By inaugurating the 8th Congress of the Christian Democrats, Moro substantiated the idea that the Embassy believed that the secretary and the Prime Minister were fully aware of the foreign policy implications that the inclusion of the Psi in the government would have had for the allies. The two also seemed prepared to deal with the internal splits within the party that this decision would have entailed, as despite temporary obstacles, official documentation described Moro as “party secretary so committed in this direction,” as “Dc party organization has become

¹⁶ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹⁷ Formigoni, Guido. *Aldo Moro. Lo statista e il suo dramma*. Il Mulino, 2016.

¹⁸ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, No. 1362, Rome, May 19, 1959. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/5-1959. Confidential. Drafted by Torbert and the members of the Embassy Political Staff. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

progressively more and more committed to notion of Center-Left government supported by “positive abstention” of Psi.”¹⁹

In a meeting with James E. King Jr. in May 1961, Moro had established that the Psi could have been the only party that would have granted the Dc a larger national dimension and control of local governments. The Dc had a good hold on Southern Italy but not as much of the North in terms of municipalities.²⁰

During the Congress, Moro had expressed his consideration of the Dc as a party of the people, thus opposed to extremism and a defender of democracy and freedom. From this originated its position in favor of broadening the base of democracy as the only feasible direction, even though the Psi had negative aspects and raised doubts. One would act with a “sense of responsibility, given the advantages that lay in an enlargement of the democratic area,” but also implement a “serious and balanced evaluation of the risks involved in the operation, of the gradualness that it must adopt, of the ways, the most cautious, according to which it can be proposed, of the prices that can be paid, but also of the insuperable obstacles that can lead to a renunciation in order to hold fast to values, personal and social, they indeed truly inalienable.”²¹

Nenni, too, had believed that the turn towards a Center-left formula wasn’t dictated by a state of parliamentary necessities but as a consequence of societal evolution.²²

What still stood in the way of the completion of the project was the need for guarantees from Nenni regarding the split from the communists in trade unions and local administration. According to Moro, progress towards the center-left soon reached a point of no return.²³ However, for it to take place, the Psi had to open up to an adjustment of its foreign policy in particular, whereas Nenni still hadn’t granted guarantees that Moro deemed convincing enough.²⁴ The biggest nightmare for Moro remained attempting to clarify the relations between Pci and Psi. In correspondence between Nenni and Moro dating back to 1962, the latter highlighted how “at this decisive moment we need your understanding of political reality, your authority, your loyal support. I always have in mind [...] your responsible recognition of the need for a deepening and clarification of the position of the Psi, which will remove, rather than

¹⁹ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, No. 3827, Paris for Thurston and Finn, Rome, April 24, 1960, 12 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/6–2460, Confidential. Transmitted in two sections. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

²⁰ Carte Archivio Personale Cavazza, Box 1, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 202.

²¹ Pombeni, Paolo. *L’apertura. L’Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Rome, October 28, 1961, 2 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/10–2861. Secret; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

²⁴ Carte Archivio Personale Cavazza, Box 1, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 202.

pretexts, reasons for concern from those who fear in good faith that there is still a possibility of collaboration of socialists with communists in politically decisive cases.”²⁵

The Kennedy administration could have ideally been in line with the results originated from the Christian Democracy Congress: “We are alive to possible advantages in isolating Communists and strengthening Italian democracy which might result from obtaining Psi support for government [...] we would consider it serious development for West if formation of such government with Psi collaboration were to result in any change in Italian support for NATO or in Italy’s foreign policy in general.”²⁶ From the White House, Moro had asked for continuous support to the Dc, support to the 1960 Fanfani government, and, most surprisingly, support to Nenni.²⁷ However, the understanding and settling of thorny situations in Western-allied countries were soon set aside.

Despite Italy not being a priority whatsoever in the grand foreign policy scheme of the United States, therefore the attention was limited even in simpler times, the events of 1961 - Cuba and the Berlin Wall - took up much of the administration's time, leaving more local-based institutions like the Embassy to follow the evolution of political dynamics. The guidance provided within the international system by Kennedy’s “New Frontier” didn't automatically translate to the national setting, which wasn’t influenced by the concept as much as many intellectuals would have wished to. The actual push towards the creation of a center-left came from the partial disengagement of the U.S. from the European context due to more pressing matters in new contexts. For this, Italy approached a new form of anti-communism generated by the singular, domestic experience of a Socialists - Communists break up, while the local American vessel mostly watched it happen.

4.2. Looking for unity: dissenting perceptions on the formation of the Center-Left

With the relevant groundwork laid by Harriman and a communion of intents established, Italy seemed ready for the new Ambassador to take over. Something that failed to be considered, however, was the internal state in which the Embassy had been left at the end of 1960, one of misalignment when it came to the opening to the left affair. A level of resistance to the planned

²⁵ *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

²⁶ Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Italy. Washington, November 8, 1961. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret; Limited Distribution. Drafted by Knight, cleared by Tyler, and approved by Ball. The time of transmission is illegible. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

²⁷ Carte Archivio Personale Cavazza, Box 1, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 202.

or expected changes continued to come from the bureaucratic apparatus of the Department of State, which had no intention of modifying habits and interests. This degree of disinclination was underestimated by the Kennedy administration throughout his entire presidency²⁸, as the struggles to bring all administrative forces to an agreement on the Psi inclusion in government proved.

The first point that must be made touches upon the nature of the internal debate when deciding on a strategy for Italy. The overall goal of creating a center-left wasn't opposed per se, as the United States recognized the condition of immobility that Italian democracy had almost reached. The center of the debate was how to act in front of this opening process, whether to encourage it, passively observe it and adjust accordingly, or ultimately oppose it. Furthermore, doubts also affected the stance to maintain when relating to Nenni.²⁹

The voices closest to Kennedy perceived the political events undergoing in Italy as determining its democratic future. Those that supported a more modern and dynamic U.S. position in terms of Western Europe foreign policy, like Arthur Schlesinger and Harriman, believed that the opening to the left would have never taken place if the administration didn't send a clear message of support, considering that Nenni would have also struggled to finalize control of the party, making the creation of the center-left impossible from a position of non-absolute predominance.³⁰

The evaluation made by Harriman during his Roman stay was met by a lack of enthusiasm by Via Veneto, both because the roving Ambassador seemed to want to separate the new administration from the previous one with too strong of an approach but especially because the Embassy lacked the long-term vision that a statesman like Harriman had.³¹ The Embassy was in no rush to favor the completion of the Psi separation from the Pci, differently from what the Department of State had indicated, as the limits and perils of it continued to outweigh the benefits of inclusion. Furthermore, the Embassy believed further engagement to not be as proficient, since the Socialists hadn't been able to capitalize on the efforts made by the Embassy and the Dc to complete the process of independence.

²⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

²⁹ Nuti, Leopoldo. "The United States, Italy, and the Opening to the Left, 1953–1963." In *Journal of Cold War Studies*, The Mit Press, Summer 2002, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 36-55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

“There was no sign of a favorable change on the key issues of internal security and foreign policy which still create a wide gap between the Psi and the “center” parties. The “American ideal” exercises a certain attraction in the Psi [...] and the composition and tone of the new Administration in Washington greatly helps the projection of this image [...] All this, however, has little if any effect on the *pace* of the development of Psi “autonomy”. [...] Our posture toward the Psi should continue to be one of sympathy with the objectives of moving away from the Communists, of strengthening democracy, and of adopting foreign policy positions in tune with the harsh realities of the day. Our interest lies in the systematic encouragement of this trend, in such a manner and to such an extent that what we do does not significantly contribute to governmental instability or give the impression that we believe that Psi support can yet safely be considered a determining factor in a governing majority.”³²

The position from which the Embassy moved in 1961 was one of renewed caution. The partial opening that Via Veneto was starting to accept in terms of municipal and provincial collaboration with the Psi was still quite far from considering an entrance of the Socialist party at the national level. Despite the new foreign ideas put forward by Nenni, which weren’t in contrast with Atlanticism anymore, the U.S. government was still distrustful of the international position of the Psi, which still held neutralist hints.³³

The Psi was continuously pushed towards a higher degree of autonomy and detachment, based on the outdated stance that no substantial encouragement of opening to the left would have originated from the Department of State unless the Psi truly proved change. “It can reasonably be said that it is taken for granted in Italian political circles that the U.S. is supportive of the goals of the autonomists. We have been careful, however, and will continue to be careful, not to give the impression that we believe the time has come when it would be prudent to accept the Psi into a nationwide coalition. [...] Such an impression, if it took shape, would almost certainly lead to the fall of the government and a prolonged period of crisis and indecision with unpredictable consequences.”³⁴ The course of action had been that of closely monitoring the position of Nenni and the autonomist portion of the Psi in relation to the Dc, and occasionally slightly correcting the course of action if it steered away from the expected and desired

³² Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, No. 961, Rome, April 26, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/4-2661. Confidential. Drafted by Horsey. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

³³ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

³⁴ Despatch 931, April 17, 1961, Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/4-1761, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit.

direction.³⁵ At the same time, the fight against Communism was to continue, reducing and then finally destroying the strength of the Pci, safeguarding Italy's democracy as a priority.³⁶

A similar, yet less critical and more objective stance had been taken up by the CIA in a report from April 1961. The basic fear behind the process of creation of the center-left regarded the internal conditions of the two parties involved, as the CIA had estimated that the fight within the Dc had become polarized too. The actual achievement of the Psi autonomy and the consequent agreement between the political forces was going to depend on the leadership of both parties and their capacity to first, handle the constantly disapproving minorities within their political formation, and then to gather the support of other external political, ecclesiastical, and economic forces, including those that favored such opposing minorities.³⁷

Differently from the urgency and incisiveness with which the administration wished to intervene on the matter so as to push it forward, the Embassy predicted that two more years or so would have still been required for the Psi to cease being suspended between Communism and democratic socialism.³⁸ In this scenario, the pace of the development wouldn't have greatly depended on external influence, and generally speaking, the strategy of action would have changed daily depending on domestic contingencies.

The policy that the Embassy recommended to maintain towards the Psi for now, considering the relativity of American weight, was based on: "(a) Broadening of existing contacts with Psi autonomists; (b) Inclusion of Psi autonomists in social functions; (c) Invitations to Psi autonomists for USIS cultural programs; (d) Contacts with Psi journalists, labor leaders, and communal officials in fields such as education, together with presentation of books and other USIS materials; (e) Loan of USIS films and equipment to Psi groups; (f) Development of low-key programs in USIS branches aimed at attracting labor audiences, particularly Psi; (g) Sponsorship of labor grants for Psi autonomists to visit the United States."³⁹

Whereas the Embassy, represented in its stance by Horsey, highlighted the risks that came with the opening to the left, the administration, through the persona of Lister and after his departure, of Schlesinger, focused on the opportunities and benefits that would come along the opening to

³⁵ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³⁶ Usdgd, *Policy recommendations about the Italian situation*, drafted as part of Despatch 899, April 11, 1961. Department of State, n.281b, vol. 4, April 11, 1961, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 203.

³⁷ Usdgd, *The outlook for Italy*, of Cia, Files 91, 50 copies, n. 001484, vol. 21, April 10, 1961, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 197.

³⁸ Despatch From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, No. 961, Rome, April 26, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/4-2661. Confidential. Drafted by Horsey. In FRUS, *1961-1963*, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

³⁹ Despatch 931, April 17, 1961, Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/4-1761, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit.

the left. The supporters of the opening to the left process believed that starting from the Embassy in Rome, warm support should have been shown, and at the same time, the Kennedy administration should have taken a step forward and considered economically supporting Nenni.⁴⁰

The latter group believed that the presidency of Kennedy represented a profitable opportunity to encourage those processes of modernization that Italy was still behind on, the success of which interested the United States too, like the modernization of the fiscal system and the introduction of legislation on minimum wage.⁴¹ Strengthening the overall ties with the Psi and encouraging economic and social reforms in anticipation of a government that included the Socialists, so as to also consolidate the shifts happening in their policy, were other takes put forward by Lister.

The Socialists had welcomed Kennedy's election, as he appeared more aligned with the Italian center-left and living proof that a Catholic man could lead a progressive platform.⁴² The support offered right away by the new administration in the opening to the left had proven far more incisive than the Embassy's one, which was deemed as characteristically resistant to change.⁴³ According to the White House, in fact, such a process couldn't be simply based on a passive wait for the Psi to spontaneously, fully detach from the Pci and fulfill the domestic and foreign policy expectations of the U.S. It was necessary to encourage the party to take such steps, while also maintaining a degree of flexibility and patience to see the strategy evolve until fulfillment.⁴⁴

In reality, some timid degree of renewal on the topic had spread throughout the Roman Embassy too, especially through a redefinition of the relations with the Psi in the wake of the new judgment about the United States that Kennedy had successfully prompted. Through pressure and conditioning, the Embassy had decided to incentivize economic and social reforms, promoting the slow creation of a modern party structure that could top the Pci organization.⁴⁵ This way, through a consolidation of the autonomist forces within the Socialist party, the Department believed to be able to demonstrate its interest to work with the Psi in the event of

⁴⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. "The United States, Italy, and the Opening to the Left, 1953–1963." In *Journal of Cold War Studies*, The Mit Press, Summer 2002, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 36-55.

⁴¹ Policy Recommendations Drafted as Part of Despatch 899 of April 11, 1961, in DDRS 1978-281b, vol. 4, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 343.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁴⁴ Policy Recommendations Drafted as Part of Despatch 899 of April 11, 1961, in DDRS 1978-281b, vol. 4, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 343.

⁴⁵ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

a full separation.⁴⁶ The guidelines offered by the Bureau of European Affairs of the Department of State for Italy, dated July 1961, still recommended not to exaggerate the encouragement of a Psi independence, not wanting to “not to go too far ahead of the line followed by the more responsible progressive leaders of the Dc.”⁴⁷

The biggest obstacle that complicated the overcoming of a sentiment of distrust towards the Socialists was their lack of commitment and alignment to the line of foreign policy pursued by the Christian Democracy. The estimate of the credibility of the Psi's separation from the Pci would be measured in the foreign policy changes made by the former. In particular, the declarations of uncertainty about Italy's role within NATO put forward by Nenni preoccupied the Department of State at a time in which sturdy Western cohesion was of relevance. As supposed by a Minister of the Fanfani government, Giuseppe Codacci-Pisanelli, in a conversation with President Kennedy, “the President opened by referring to the Italian political situation and asking what was going to be done about Nenni. [...] Those who hoped by making a deal with Nenni to isolate the Communists were doomed in his opinion to disappointment, witness, he said, the recent statement to this effect by Riccardo Lombardi of Nenni's party. The most difficult aspect of this problem was accordingly foreign policy.”⁴⁸

As a consequence of a document dated November 1961 titled “The declarations of the Italian Socialist party on the Berlin, NATO and neutralism matters” prepared by the Department of State, a general feeling of alarmism had spread due to Nenni's opponent Lombardi declaring the entrance of Italy in NATO as a clear mistake⁴⁹. These declarations had been made by Lombardi in the Parliamentary discussion on the Berlin crisis, during which he had spoken in the name of the whole Psi. The speech was made during a time in which efforts were thickening to probe the possibilities of creating a center-left government, a possibility obviously hampered by Lombardi's attitude, which seemed to have proven the Psi's unchanged immaturity.⁵⁰ In the meantime, Nenni kept pushing for a clear neutralist line.

The matter of foreign policy was still the most divisive topic within the Psi, with the autonomist forces on one side and the pro-Communists ones on the other; the former was attempting to

⁴⁶ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁴⁷ *Guidelines of US Policy Toward Italy*, in JFKPL, NSF, b. 120, f. Italy General 7/1/61, Guidelines of US Policy toward Italy, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, January 9, 1962, Department of State, Presidential Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 66 D 149, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 370.

⁴⁹ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁵⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

operate modifications to the foreign policy line of the majority of the party to open to collaboration with the Dc, however without much expectations from the Embassy.⁵¹ “We are inclined to think that division in Psi itself would hamper concerted pressure by Psi on center-left government to accomplish long-term policy objectives and that some compromise of these aims with Christian Democrats would be likely.”⁵²

The differences in long-term foreign policy objectives with respect to NATO were too strikingly different for the Dc to justify a realignment. Furthermore, despite the support Fanfani and Moro displayed towards the opening to the left, they were also aware of not only the international implications of said alliance but especially the risk of damaging intra-Dc divisions.⁵³

Despite the negative judgment of the Psi due to the partial anti-NATO, pro-neutralist orientation, according to an Embassy telegram to the Department of State, if the Psi entered government, Reinhard didn't expect “center-left government to have much more effect on foreign policy than reinforcement of such initiatives in favor of negotiations and détente as have characterized recent Fanfani actions.”⁵⁴ Overall, the common points of interest shared between the American and the Italian ally throughout fifteen years of partnership - the centrality of NATO⁵⁵, anti-Communism, and economic support - ensured that “if difficult issues of foreign policy should arise, we believe there would be sufficient support for Western objectives, particularly from Saragat in Psdi and from many elements in Dc, to resist Psi pressure and even bring government down rather than move toward neutralist position.”⁵⁶ The perception of uncertainty about the future of Italian alliances and foreign policy, however limited, remained the center of the bitter debate between opponents and supporters of the center-left: those who believed that the political weight of the Pci would only be reduced through the opening to the left, the foreign risks to be taken were of smaller magnitude. Differently, for those skeptics who considered Nenni's party unreliable and unable to efficiently operate a renewal of Italian society

⁵¹ Usdgd, *Airgram, foreign service despatch*, from Embassy (Rome), n. 81c, vol. 5, November 14, 1961, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵² Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Rome, October 28, 1961, 2 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/10-2861. Secret; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ In 1962, the *New York Times* published an article titled “Fanfani swears loyalty to Nato”, according to which the Communists were deemed as forces in contrast with the Italian tradition.

⁵⁶ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Rome, October 28, 1961, 2 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 765.00/10-2861. Secret; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

through the formation of the center-left, the prospect of a gradual slide of Italy to neutralist positions seemed too high a price to pay for a potential ineffectual operation.⁵⁷

By the end of 1961, the Department was still struggling to come to terms with the possibility of a return to centrism being long gone.⁵⁸ To it, the creation of a center-left was a possibility rather than a necessity, therefore the official line pursued by the Department was merely based on a continuation of encouragement of Psi independence from the Pci to one day include the former in government, as now a differentiation of the two had been operated by the U.S. “In discussion with Psi Autonomists US reps should confine selves to reiteration of our concern over and disagreement with current Psi foreign policy positions and our hope that Party will move to wiser positions in future.”⁵⁹

The seemingly conciliatory tone of the Embassy and the Department fit in the attempt to redefine their attitude towards the Socialist party, wanting to promote a more positive image of the Department of State and the U.S. at large. As the possibility of a center-left government happening continuously became more tangible, there was a desire to show how the Department was interested in following the future of Italian democracy and partially influencing its development according to policy standards.⁶⁰ Ensuring now that the Psi structure was adjusted according to American standards, would one day facilitate the granting of American support to a hypothetical center-left government.⁶¹

Notwithstanding this attitude, any attempt to walk this path of conciliation kept being thrown out,⁶² and the masked, unchanged hostility to the opening wasn't missed by Kennedy's special assistant, Arthur Schlesinger. As will be discussed in the next paragraph, Schlesinger had been highly critical of the position taken by American diplomacy. On the topic of non-interference, Schlesinger commented that: “The critical issue in Italian policy continues to be our attitude toward the ‘opening to the left.’ [The State Department] still adopts the attitude that the Psi is

⁵⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁵⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁵⁹ Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Italy. Washington, November 8, 1961. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret; Limited Distribution. Drafted by Knight, cleared by Tyler, and approved by Ball. The time of transmission is illegible. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁶⁰ *Guidelines of US Policy Toward Italy*, in JFKPL, NSF, b. 120, f. Italy General 7/1/61, Guidelines of US Policy toward Italy, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 370.

⁶¹ Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to the Under Secretary of State (Ball), Washington, November 1, 1961. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁶² Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

engaged in a unilinear drift toward the west and implies therefore a passive, wait-and-see policy on our part—i.e., it implies that it is OK for us to stand by until the situation has evolved, at which time we are then free to accept or reject the possibility of Dc–Psi collaboration.”⁶³

Despite the attempt to mix theoretical support and factual opposition to the opening to the left, the official diplomatic line that continued to be upheld prioritized a strategic attitude of non-interference. As established by the Bureau of European Affairs, the Embassy personnel had been instructed not to give out too much in conversations with Italian political actors. Faced with the prospect of new developments in Italian politics, the Embassy and the Department merely advised against the immediate implementation of a center-left government, suggesting that it’d be postponed until a more favorable time.⁶⁴

Overall, the Department of State believed that the opening to the left was anything but imminent, considering the lasting potential of the third Fanfani government. This attitude was linked to the attempt at avoiding being clearly identified as a determining supporting or opposing force in the completion of the opening. Following instructions, the Embassy avoided intervening in any way between 1961 and 1962 through concrete initiatives, and when the predictions proved wrong and the creation of the center-left became imminent, the United States claimed that considering that Italian parties had decided to attempt the political experiment, not much was left to do for the partner.⁶⁵ The debate within the administration, however, never truly stopped.

For Italy, the first year of the Kennedy administration ended with a softening of the Department and Embassy’s positions. Not only an actual non-interference had been established, one that didn’t entail making the American preoccupation towards Psi foreign policy positions known, but also a decrease of the overall weight of those most strongly opposed to the opening to the left. Only a few months before the creation of the fourth Fanfani government, created with the external support of the Psi, the Embassy started rejecting the distant and perplexed attitude that had characterized its stance towards the opening to the left up until that point. Less hostile positions coming from Via Veneto helped bring even more supporters closer to the cause.⁶⁶

⁶³ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁶⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l’Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁶⁵ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁶⁶ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell’Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

4.3. Arthur Schlesinger: mastermind or mere supporter?

A voice stood out from the administration's more or less detached and alarmist analysis, that of Arthur Schlesinger. History professor at Harvard, two-times Pulitzer Prize winner, and among other things, a staunch supporter of economic progress and social justice, Schlesinger was part of the group of intellectuals that Kennedy had surrounded himself with, and which believed that the new president would have inaugurated a course of American foreign policy made of democratic changes and a review of the international perception of the United States.⁶⁷

Schlesinger had gotten to know Kennedy during his Harvard years but the close relations between the two mostly developed in the run to the White House and during Kennedy's presidency, while Schlesinger learned to develop a strong attachment to the family. Despite the decades-long partnership, the two didn't always share a complete identity of views, as Kennedy sometimes believed Schlesinger to be too progressive. The president-elect had originally intended to give Schlesinger an ambassadorship before Robert Kennedy proposed that he served as a roving ambassador. At the end of January 1961, right after Kennedy was sworn in, he was appointed Special Assistant to the President to then gain an influential role and a sort of autonomous political pull.

Starting from a young age, Schlesinger had become acquainted with Italian history up close, thanks to his dad, a history teacher at Harvard. After the end of World War II, he visited Italy and met Nenni and Saragat, maintaining contacts with circles close to the Italian Socialist Party and Psdi. He also participated in all the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the 1950s in Europe, created to counterbalance the Communist cultural influence in Europe. His invitation to the *Il Mulino* conference of April 1961, therefore, stemmed from both his role as a New Frontier intellectual and his understanding of the Italian political situation.

An attempt to capitalize on the slow center-left evolution was made by the Bologna-based *Il Mulino* group, the organizer of a political-scientific conference on European-United States relations. "The international policy of the United States and the responsibilities of Europe" event had the intention of bringing to Italy some of the intellectuals of reference of the New Frontier. The Italian democratic left, in their view, had to tune in to that world by now, so it was time for the Psi to fill the cultural gap and move past the ideological prejudices that separated the Psi from the rest of the Western Socialist parties, inaugurating a more incisive

⁶⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

and modern political approach.⁶⁸ Beyond the specific results of the conference, the mere participation of some figures such as former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, jurist Hans Morgenthau, and historian Schlesinger, who was also a leading man in Americans for Democratic Action⁶⁹, was deemed proficient.⁷⁰

The inauguration of the conference also coincided with the period of arrival of new Ambassador Reinhard and was therefore considered a way to present the foreign policy plan proposed by the new administration. Considering the more conservative forces that dominated the political scene of most Western European countries, the organizers of the Bologna Congress strived to represent receptive interlocutors of the New Frontier plans proposed by Kennedy.⁷¹

The leading figure in organizing the conference was above all Fabio Luca Cavazza, one of the most prominent figures of *Il Mulino* with important connections within the White House staff. Cavazza was supported in his efforts by Victor Sullam, a Jewish-Italian professor operating in Dc, and later on, by James E. King, senior analyst at the Institute for Defense Analysis.⁷² In the period before Kennedy's election, Cavazza and Sullam had traveled across Europe to gather interlocutors among American professors and economists. Formal and informal relations had been developed by the two all over, and with the 1961 electoral win, many of their established contacts had gone to cover governmental positions. The participation of James E. King in the Conference amped up the relevance of the event, as he continued Cavazza's scouting mission with his American colleagues, Schlesinger included. The latter's request to Kennedy to participate in the Bologna activities had been justified by the positive effect that sending a White House representative among European intellectuals would have, highlighting the close connection of the new administration with these sorts of events.⁷³

Cavazza deemed it very important to go directly to the administration, aware of differences in view of the White House vis-à-vis the Department of State and the Embassy. The *Mulino* conference, in fact, had more than mere cultural purposes: the presentation of the progressive stance of the Kennedyian foreign policy aimed at favorably influencing the Italian Left, especially the Psi, and potentially encouraging a faster ideological revision. Furthermore, the

⁶⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁶⁹ The most advanced liberal group connected to the Democrats.

⁷⁰ Formigoni, Guido. *Storia dell'Italia nella guerra fredda, 1943-1978*. Il Mulino, 2016.

⁷¹ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

⁷² Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁷³ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

opening to the left was going to be contextualized in a larger process of change to bring Europe up to speed with the progressive element of the new administration's foreign policy.⁷⁴ The indirect political purpose wasn't that secretive, as the Department quickly made the connection between *Il Mulino* and its favorable positions to include the Socialist party in government.⁷⁵ Overall, the Congress hoped to reach a level of international resonance to legitimate those supporting the center-left as new, innovative interlocutors.⁷⁶

The Congress ran from April 22 to April 25, right after the Cuban Bay of Pigs debacle. The main topic of the event remained the need for a re-examination of the political attitude that had spread towards the old ruling class of Europe, now that a more transformative time had seemed to have begun under an increasing American influence. This way, the matter of the Italian center-left remained in the background, while the New Frontier dominated the interventions during the Congress.⁷⁷ The Congress also served to partially mitigate the effects of the anti-Castro mission on the U.S. reputation, at least among the participants.

Overall, the political-scientific results of the *Mulino* Congress weren't as groundbreaking as sought. The international context hadn't been the most favorable, and the speeches given by the various participants were of too different a mold. The few Italian participants were labeled as too verbose and rhetorical, sometimes even rambling, by their American counterparts, while the American deliverance appeared mediocre and simplistic to the domestic eye compared to the Italian political and cultural style of delivery.⁷⁸ Despite the political-scientific underachievements of the Congress, the improvement of Italian-American relations shouldn't be underestimated, especially long-term.⁷⁹ The topics discussed represented a framework of reference for a larger political redefinition of Western relations, the concepts of freedom and democracy, and a need for renewal shared by the Kennedy administration.

The older European ruling class was partially alarmed by the changes introduced by the new administration vis-à-vis the courses of the previous ones, as the new perspective might have weakened Western positions. However, the Bologna event still made the European partners feel heard and encouraged by the Kennedy administration, while also interesting numerous

⁷⁴ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁷⁵ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁷⁶ Premessa, 27 gennaio 1961, in ACS, Archivio ULM, b. 47, f. 4, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 348.

⁷⁷ Carte Archivio personale Cavazza, scatola 2, fascicolo 1961, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 201.

⁷⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁷⁹ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

American participants to the Italian political case, helping the country gain a degree of sympathy for its reformist and autonomist efforts in Washington governmental circles.⁸⁰ Through the debate, in fact, direct contacts between the *Mulino* group and American intellectuals and politicians were established, along with a network of extra-institutional connections that helped the formulation of American policy toward Italy in the moment of need. Among these, figures like Leo J. Wollemborg, the Roman correspondent of the *Washington Post*, whose articles played an important function in presenting to the American public a positive image of the center-left, and James E. King, stood out. In the long run, the efforts of the *Mulino* helped to bring together supporters of the opening and to openly present opinions differing from those of the Roman Embassy.⁸¹

Along with participating in the Bologna event, King also met “with a number of senior Italian Government and party leaders together with Chargé Horsey to explore their views on the possibility of an opening to the left, by means of the inclusion of the Italian Socialist Party in a governing coalition.⁸² Although King explained his status as a private citizen, both U.S. and Italian officials regarded him as an unofficial emissary of the Kennedy administration. In addition to his meeting with Nenni, King was received by President Gronchi, Prime Minister Fanfani, Christian Democratic Party secretary Aldo Moro and a number of senior parliamentary leaders.”⁸³

The encounter with these political figures in Rome, which had been strongly opposed by the Embassy as an intrusion in official diplomacy, had been forced by an overall refusal of the Italian political forces to participate in the conference, both wrapped in the internal crisis dynamics and incapable of understanding the long-term benefits of an initiative outside of the official institutional scope.⁸⁴

King left Rome with the general feeling that the opening to the left was bound to take place sooner or later without significant destabilizing results for the Italian government. King had gotten the feeling that a substantial agreement was shared by those whom he had met on the future participation of the Psi in government, although some had deemed it as far away in time. As recounted in King’s memorandum of the trip, which however didn’t resonate much with the

⁸⁰ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁸¹ Memo for AS Jr., in JFKPL, AS Papers: Subject File: Italy, b. WH 12, f. 2/1/64 - 2/29/64, December 12, 1961, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 388.

⁸² Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

⁸³ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸⁴ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

Department, the Dc leader and the Psi one seemed aligned and motivated to reach a turning point, albeit without rushing. The political forces were still searching for some form of active support from the U.S. government.⁸⁵

Schlesinger seemed the man willing to understand and answer to such needs, in the wake of a renewed interest in Italian political conditions after the *Mulino* Congress.⁸⁶ In the summer of 1961, Prime Minister Fanfani had been expected in Washington on an official visit, an opportunity that Schlesinger had intended to take advantage of to act on the discussions of the previous months. Particularly, the planned meeting between Fanfani and Kennedy was soon established to be a fruitful occasion to achieve clear presidential support for the creation of the center-left.

According to Schlesinger, “Italy’s series of delicately balanced Centrist governments, hobbled by barely half of the parliamentary votes, have been characterized by a form of ‘immobilismo’ which has hampered dynamic movement toward reform. Meanwhile, Communist strength has been inching up on the Left. A final break between the Pci and the Psi, which would result from an opening to the Left, would destroy Communist hopes of achieving a parliamentary majority and create a dynamic non-Communist alternative.”⁸⁷

Despite the improvement of Schlesinger’s relationship with some parts of the Department of State, which were starting to warm up to the idea of opening to the left, and the closer relations developed with high-profile bureaucrats within it, the preparation of Fanfani’s visit became one of the tensest times of a season of direct confrontation between the Department and the White House.⁸⁸ In drafting the briefing papers to be presented to Kennedy, the Department of State had let its personal judgments and outdated ideas be the basis for strong opposition to Schlesinger’s ideas of proceeding favorably towards an opening to the left. The biggest objection was still centered around the Psi’s immaturity to access government, while the stance to be held by the U.S. was of non-interference, allowing for the Italian political situation to develop autonomously.⁸⁹ Generally speaking, the Department believed that the President

⁸⁵ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸⁶ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

⁸⁷ Department of State, Italian Desk Files: Lot 68 D 436, Pol 7 Visit—Fanfani—1961. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy—General, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L’Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁸⁹ Platt, A. “La politica estera americana nei confronti della sinistra italiana”, 1945-1976, in *Il Mulino*, vol. 26, n. 249 (Jan-Feb 1977), pp. 546-73.

shouldn't have touched upon the opening to the left in his encounter with Fanfani, and omitted it from the prep documents.

“Experts in the Italian section of the State Department spent all of 1961 predicting that the opening to the left would not happen for many more years. When the prospect of the opening to the left became close, they advanced another thesis: the operation would go through anyway and thus did not need the chrisim of the United States. The most widespread attitude was that the United States should not encourage such a political initiative that would also deal a severe blow to communism in Italy and throughout Europe, but that Nenni and his party should rather undergo a series of tests of purity before they could earn American approval. As always, the risks weighed far more heavily than the benefits.”⁹⁰

On the other hand, the President's special assistant found this attitude contradicting, as twenty years of presence in Italy had never stopped the Department from meddling in domestic affairs. A different set of briefing papers ended up being prepared by Schlesinger, in which the omitted opportunities of supporting a coalition government supported by the Psi to isolate the Pci were highlighted.⁹¹ Suggestions were made too on how to nudge Fanfani in the direction of expressing opinions and party needs to encourage the completion of the Communist isolation, along with requesting forms of aid from the United States to favor the opening.⁹²

The attitude held by President Kennedy throughout the meetings didn't seal any of the two sides as the winning one, ultimately defining the contrasting dynamics within the administration. In the official encounters, Kennedy seemed to discuss mostly international politics, from Berlin to Vietnam, and according to the Department of State, only a few words were spent on the strength of the Pci and the repercussions of isolating it on the Italian Parliament during a luncheon.⁹³

Official documentation is a powerful tool not only to perceive the perspective of different American institutions when analyzing Italian domestic affairs but also to understand the discrepancies that stood out in the recounts. Differing recounts exist of Fanfani's visit, as, according to Schlesinger, the two statesmen did discuss the matter of the center-left in a private, informal meeting on the side. It had been Kennedy himself to reveal to Schlesinger how he had expressed to Fanfani his sympathy towards the center-left development if the Prime Minister

⁹⁰ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁹¹ Memorandum for Arthur Schlesinger, June 9, 1961, in NAW, RG 59, Conference Files, b. 120, f. Italy General, 5/1/61-6/31/61, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 363.

⁹² Memorandum for the President, June 10, 1961, in JFKPL, AS Papers, Classified subject File, b. WH 12, f. Italy 6/1/61-8/31/61, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 364.

⁹³ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

deemed it as a good idea.⁹⁴ The topic was off the official agendas, therefore no primary sources are available to confirm said declarations. Fanfani too kept the conversation to himself for several months after the event, despite being the most interested in the President's go-ahead.⁹⁵ Whether or not this unofficial blessing was given, Kennedy still supported Schlesinger's actions in the upcoming months to further the center-left agenda, a matter of which the Department of State was informed right away. Despite the presidential go-ahead and the continuation of the opening to the left regardless of American positions, diffidence and clear rejection from the bureaucratic ranks still slowed down the political process.

"The president's decision was immediately communicated to the State Department. In theory, it should have been enough; in reality, it marked instead the beginning of a long exasperating struggle. It took almost two years to persuade the State Department to comply with the president's policy. As of mid-1961, the leaders of the center-left parties no longer harbored any doubts about the nature of the changing of the guard that had taken place in Washington, and while they found little confirmation of this in the State Department's attitude, they knew full well from experience that embassies are not usually in the vanguard of progress."⁹⁶

Throughout his efforts to bring Italy towards the creation of the center-left, as noted by Cavazza, Schlesinger was a friend and supporter of the country and had helped bring Italian political discourse into the hallways of the White House. The sympathetic support expressed by Kennedy had helped renew the efforts towards the center-left halfway through 1961, with even Psdi leader Saragat supporting a hypothetical collaboration with Nenni's Socialist in the governmental majority, which represented a sudden change in demeanor potentially following the orientation expressed by the President's cabinet on the topic.⁹⁷

Overall, however, despite Schlesinger promoting an agenda that reflected the interests of Kennedy for Italy, the actual involvement of the President in domestic affairs remained limited and mostly detached, with his trip in July 1963 to Rome being the peak expression of support to the creation of the center-left.

The general goal was the same, that of isolating the Pci and ensuring a determining diminishment in its political, social, and cultural influence. However, the ways to achieve such results differed: the Department aimed at minimizing the possibilities of effectively realizing the center-left government by exclusively highlighting the dangers related to it. On the other

⁹⁴ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁹⁵ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁹⁶ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁹⁷ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

hand, the President's cabinet believed that no end goal would have been reached without any actual help from the United States, adopting a more flexible attitude before the sometimes tactical uncertainties of the Psi without excessive scrutiny of every position assumed.⁹⁸

The battle fought by Schlesinger and those in the administration that supported the ongoing process of opening to the left wasn't matched in efforts by their supposed leader, as the refusal to financially support Nenni's Psi showed. Despite the official administration line having been circulated in the Department of State, one of the reasons behind the slow adaptation of it to the new regime for Italy was the lack of continuous involvement from Kennedy past the few moments that required his direct intervention. This way, the bureaucrats could justify their misalignment from Schlesinger's idea as following official directives. The President's attitude of backing up the supporters of the center-left gave Schlesinger a degree of freedom of action, while also not officially changing the position of the U.S. and forcing it on the Department of State, alimented the dichotomy between the official, rigid Department's position, and an unofficial, progressive White House one.⁹⁹

Ambiguity ruled over the debate on the center-left right entering the determining biennium of 1962-1963.

4.4. Enrico Mattei's *Risky Business*

To conclude the panoramic of the beginning of the 60s in Italy, further inquiries must be made on Enrico Mattei, this time centered on his relations with the Soviet interlocutor. The difficulties in managing Mattei and keeping him within a controlled range of action transcended administrations, putting Kennedy in front of the entrepreneur's aims and expectations, all during a time in which the détente had been put on hold and tensions with the USSR were resurging.

The approaching of Mattei to Khrushchev's USSR had begun in the second half of the 50s, during the Eisenhower administration. The competing position of relevance that Mattei had been attempting to establish in Southern countries, and especially with Egypt's President Nasser, was inevitably linked to the USSR as part of a dispute for influence over the area. While the U.S. struggled to move past the interpretation of Nasser as a Hitlerian threat, the Italian forces, Fanfani along with Mattei, had on the other hand understood that taming the Soviet

⁹⁸ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁹⁹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

influence in the Mediterranean went through separating Egypt from Moscow and convincing the latter to diminish its encouragement to Nasser's cause.¹⁰⁰

Moving from the dual interest to have a stronger hold on the Mediterranean area and approach new energy partnerships, the ties with the USSR that Mattei started forming in 1958 appear as an obvious strategic evolution. The economic benefits of identifying the USSR as a major economic partner were advantageous enough to exactly fit in Mattei's plan of acquiring resources at a low price for Italy.

Mattei hadn't been the first to sign supply contracts with the Soviet Union, as Germany and Austria had come first. Yet, his visit to Moscow and Beijing in December 1958 significantly troubled the American partner and its relationship with Italy, something made known by Zellerbach to Fanfani. Despite the Prime Minister's justification that Mattei had mere trade purposes in mind, feeling pushed eastward by the vetoes of American majors, and was in no violation of international laws, the publicity that a prominent man like Mattei had been searching for with such a trip went past "simply [being] a case of straight private industry looking for trade arrangements. [...] In this case, however, we are talking about a parastatal agency which is widely regarded as synonymous with the Italian government."¹⁰¹

Realistically, in fact, a degree of criticism was also directed towards Amintore Fanfani, who had intended to gain political advantages from Mattei's ties with Khrushchev. Italy's aspirations to play an increased role of mediation and promotion within the Atlantic Alliance did go through an encounter with Soviet Russia. Considering Italy's aspirations to become a bridge between the two superpowers, the establishment of a form of competitive coexistence with the Soviet Union with shared common ground, avoiding the exasperation of the international conflict, fit right into the country's vocation. This way, while satisfying neo-Atlanticist goals, the integration of Middle Eastern countries in a newly established form of dialogue would also take place. Aware of the troubles that political relations with the Soviet Union would have caused, and considering the far more useful alliance with the United States to maintain, Fanfani found the solution in the formalization of a strong economic bond operated by Mattei.¹⁰² Russia was perceived as an irreplaceable commercial opportunity by domestic economic operators.

¹⁰⁰ Riccardi, Andrea. "Radici Storiche e Prospettive Ideali di una Politica Estera" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, December 23, 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 765.13/12-2958. Secret—Except As Otherwise Indicated. Drafted by Barnett and Torbert, partially from Zellerbach's notes. In FRUS, 1958-1960 vol. VII, *Western Europe*, Documents 203-281.

¹⁰² Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

Through the coordination of the Ministry of Commerce and the converging intentions of Fanfani and Mattei, Eni's activity in the Soviet Union soon grew to represent the most relevant aspect of Italian strategy concerning Moscow. At the basis of the first Eni-USSR deal signed in 1958, there was the importation of 15 million tons of crude oil. For the future, Mattei hoped to establish a correspondent deal to export synthetic rubber, and the 1958 visit had allowed him to make this aspiration known. "Mattei felt he had been out-bid by Americans for European markets (notably France) for the synthetic rubber being produced by his Ravenna plant, and that piling up of stocks forced him into looking for other outlets. This resulted in the deal with the USSR and in the exploration of possible outlets in China."¹⁰³

Mattei's intuition paid off in the Soviet context: the possibility of trading through exchange operations immediately proved to be the best choice, as Soviet Russia had been short of currency for foreign purchases for some years and favored these sorts of arrangements. The Italian Embassy in Moscow and Soviet institutions significantly facilitated and encouraged a constant improvement of the two countries economic and oil relations. In fact, according to Eni's official documentation, the results obtained were due more to the wishes of Soviet economic entities and those of some Italian circles than to a conscious and planned purchasing policy on the part of Eni. It was, on the contrary, certainly planned to open a channel for the export of Italian products with Russia.¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless, Mattei's relations with the Seven Sisters, in particular with American oil companies and, as a reflex, with the United States, took a heavy toll. Despite Eni being labeled as too little and too limited of a company to effectively impact the energy market, it still resulted in a source of disturbance and a breaking element, especially Mattei's accusations and megalomaniac attitude. According to Mattei, the American majors had been practicing artificial techniques in the market by imposing very high prices for Middle Eastern oil, an action that didn't comply with normal competition laws. This unbalanced dynamic encouraged investments to research and extract oil in the American region, consequently favoring the Seven Sisters.¹⁰⁵

While Mattei hoped for a system-wide reform of the oil market, since the entrance of Russian crude had given way to a more price-competitive structure, Western oil companies and their

¹⁰³ Aseni, De, b. 2, fasc. 2, furniture di SBR all'Urss, da Roberti a Fornara, Ratti, Rivara, del 10 settembre 1958, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 300.

¹⁰⁴ Aseni, fondo Marcello Boldrini, b. 6, fasc. 200, lettera n. 10.370/02, da Mattei al ministro per le Partecipazioni statali, Bo, del 12 febbraio 1962, pp. 1-2, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 492.

¹⁰⁵ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

governments felt an increasing threat originating from Eni. In particular, “the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey had been worried for some time over the various implications of the developing Soviet “oil offensive,” and particularly of Italy’s involvement therein through the operations of the State-owned petroleum company, Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI).”¹⁰⁶

Specific to the Soviet case, it had appeared clear since the beginning how the main goal for Eni in its relations with Russia was opening a channel to export Italian products. “Under the leadership of Enrico Mattei, AGIP and some of its sister state-owned companies are exporting sizable quantities of synthetic rubber to the Iron Curtain; are providing engineering service for the construction of the new crude pipeline system behind the Iron Curtain aimed at Western Europe; are instrumental in negotiating sizable supplies of pipe; and, lastly, are beginning to discuss tanker construction in Italy for Russia.”¹⁰⁷

The last act the Eisenhower administration had to deal with was the protocol signed by Mattei in October 1960, according to which, in exchange for material and technological inventories, Eni would be granted 13 million tons of crude oil over the course of three years. The fixed price per barrel, in particular, was pinned at almost half the price of the Middle Eastern one (\$1.26 vs. \$2.49).¹⁰⁸

Aside from the economic implications of the deal, Eni and the Italian government were immediately reprimanded by Western chancelleries and oil companies, which felt damaged by the protocol. “The contract AGIP has negotiated places them in the position of realizing a profit at price levels which are ruinous for the importers of Mid-East crude. AGIP is using this situation to the fullest, with the objective of forcing American, British, French, Belgian, and Italian independent oil companies into a strong loss position in Italy, and further complicating the relationship of these companies with Middle Eastern governments. If the Italian Government continues to favor product price levels geared to the cost of Russian crude with all the long-term dangers this implies, the companies relying on Middle East supplies will either be forced out of business or to further reduce price postings in the Middle East with all the consequences this entails.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, March 11, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 110.15–HA/3–1161. Secret. Drafted by Walters. In FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278–323.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, March 11, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 110.15–HA/3–1161. Secret. Drafted by Walters. In FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278–323.

According to Washington, the Italian choice had created a form of dependency on Soviet crude oil, as it highlighted the low cost of Russian supplies due to the lack of royalties being collected. This, in turn, would have led to a strengthening of the Communist bloc and its industrial development through the supply of goods, and ultimately, endangered all Western countries.¹¹⁰ Controlling Mattei's action, therefore, had to become a priority for the Italian government, although the high ranks of Standard Oil were doubtful that this would happen without strong, external pressures from the Department of State: at the end of the day, the actions of Mattei, despite being abusive, still brought cheaper petroleum products for the benefit of Italy.¹¹¹

The third Fanfani government, which had just risen the summer before these events, saluted the Eisenhower administration through a long and compact diplomatic mediation. From the Suez crisis on, Fanfani had attempted to resonate with American oil companies to work with Mattei and improve the international position of Eni, a state entity that still functioned in competition with all the other companies operating in a regime of full freedom.

The answers received, he pointed out, never went past formal recognition of his requests or an admission of impotence before the decisions of independent oil companies, which had indirectly forced Mattei to find alternative ways to fulfill his energy goals. "It is not in our will at all to prefer the USSR. We only want to get the oil we need in conditions that are not harmful to our industry." The Prime Minister seemed to affirm that, like Mattei, he believed in the correctness of a policy with energy self-sufficiency as its goal, a more fitting way to express his "the end justifies the means" mentality.¹¹²

Here lay the center of the solidarity between Fanfani and Mattei, and the reasoning behind their alignment in foreign policy terms.

In line with the good relations shared by the two, on the USSR deal, Nenni wrote in this regard: "This is a big deal that saves Italy some sixty billion and opens a vast field to the intensification of exchanges with the East. An almost revolutionary operation that provoked attacks in America and repercussions in Italy. Segni, Pella, and Scelba in particular complained about it. Despite this, the agreement was ratified by the government. Mattei says he wanted to give America a warning so that it would understand that it can no longer continue to exploit us by charging

¹¹⁰ Tremolada, Ilaria. "Mattei, Fanfani, l'Eni e le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Rome, March 11, 1961. Department of State, Central Files, 110.15-HA/3-1161. Secret. Drafted by Walters. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹¹² Assr, Faf, sez. I, sottos. 4, s.sottos. 3, b. 14, fasc. 17, rapporto segreto, colloquio presidente Fanfani-Stikker (Palazzo Chigi 9 ottobre 1961, ore 19-20), cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 326.

exorbitant prices on Middle East oil. This must change, and Mattei seems determined to do so if his legs are not crushed. We must help him in the nation's interest.”¹¹³

The change of administration meant that a new attitude and strategy could be developed toward Mattei. The pragmatic and modernizing culture of environments such as Eni and *Il Mulino* already fit better in the schemes of the Kennedy period, also offering a clean slate to redefine an ad hoc synergy of partnership. Despite the track record set with the previous administration, according to some observers, Eni’s attitude towards the new direction was expected to be unpredictable. In a memorandum sent to the Roman Embassy dated 1961 and titled “Notes on Eni, Mattei, and Soviet Oil,” Niccolò Pignatelli, vice president of Gulf Oil Company responsible for Italy, explained how “there is no such a thing as an "oil policy" of Eni. It has changed and continues to change with an extemporaneous and empirical approach, depending also, but not exclusively, on political circumstances of national and international nature, or determined by the mood and instinct of Mr. Mattei, the almighty chairman of Eni. The only constant factor remains Eni's struggle with the major western oil companies.”¹¹⁴

Harriman’s visit to Italy still served as a first point of contact and a test of the attitude put forward by Mattei. In a private meeting between the two, held at the end of his visit to Rome, the first contact between the parts was made after years of tensions with the government of the U.S. Most of the conversation centered around Mattei’s resentment towards Western oil companies. “He spoke with burning indignation of the discrimination practiced against Italy and against his group in particular by the main US and British oil companies.”¹¹⁵

During the conversation, Harriman also grasped a sense of the reasoning behind Mattei’s actions, related to the Western failure to establish satisfactory deals with Eni or offer advantageous conditions to the producing countries: “He had made deals with the Soviet Bloc simply because the Western oil companies pursued a blind policy of short-term profits without regard to the long-term effects thereof. He again expressed his indignation at this treatment saying, “we too are allies, we too are part of the West, and want to remain with the West.” He said that the attitude of these petroleum companies in the producing areas was equally blind. They did not realize that the world had changed and that the peoples of these areas were no longer content with a 50 percent share of the profits and the oil companies telling them not to

¹¹³ Nenni, Pietro. *Tempo di guerra fredda. Diari 1943-1956*. SugarCo, 1981.

¹¹⁴ Despatch from Embassy (Rome) to Department of State, n. 265, September 28, 1961, NARA, RG 59, 865.2553, b. 2695, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit., p. 306.

¹¹⁵ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

meddle in the oil business because they knew nothing about it. It was not merely the profit that they were after but was a sense of participation.”¹¹⁶

Appreciation was instead expressed regarding the USSR’s oil policy, for which substantial quantities of Soviet crude oil were put on the market at much more competitive prices than Western produce, relying on the construction of oil conducts to distribute petroleum around Europe. On this topic, the conversation had taken on rather sour tones, although Harriman had later shown himself to be particularly interested in Mattei's arguments about Eni's policy.¹¹⁷ The Embassy had in fact quickly established that “Mattei did not appear to have any particular bias in favor of the Communists and [Reinhard] cited Mattei’s history in leading anti-Communist partisans at the end of the last world war. It was Mattei’s pride that he had succeeded in keeping his organization entirely separate from the Communist partisans. The Ambassador suggested accordingly that Mattei was not political in his orientation but was an opportunist whose interests were focused on the oil and related industries.”¹¹⁸

In the year before his sudden death, the Embassy still found that “the problem of Mattei was a longstanding one and that there were no particularly new elements in the situation other than the ever-growing magnitude of his activities. [...] Italy had a long-standing complex about being short of energy. Eni and Mattei had become Italian institutions answering the Italians’ national desires in the energy field.”¹¹⁹

Another aspect briefly discussed by Harriman and Mattei was the domestic political situation of Italy and the effects of the reduction of communist influence on it. According to Mattei, and in line with the support he’d always given to the creation of a center-left, the ongoing changes in Italy still lacked social advancements, while the interests of some factions didn’t allow for the Psi to be brought into the democratic arena.¹²⁰

In consonance with his political views, on the eve of the formation of the fourth Fanfani government, the Roman Embassy and Department of State started examining the potential responsibility Mattei held in the establishment of the new government dependent on the Psi.

¹¹⁶ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation (Amb. Harriman, Mr. Enrico Mattei, Mr. Di Brazza Savorgnan (*sic*), Col. Vernon Walters), March 10, 1961, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 1/20/61 - 4/30/61, cit. in L. Nuti, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

¹¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 17, 1962. Department of State, Secretary’s Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330. Secret. Drafted by Knight and approved in M on April 2 and U on April 5. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Memorandum of Conversation (Amb. Harriman, Mr. Enrico Mattei, Mr. Di Brazza Savorgnan (*sic*), Col. Vernon Walters), March 10, 1961, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 1/20/61 - 4/30/61, cit. in L. Nuti, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

Publicly, the Department attempted to downsize his initiatives in relation to the political lineup, despite his well-known support to the cause, and also disputed those rumors that pinned Mattei as the mastermind behind the opening to the left, now also working as a Soviet spy to bring Italy out of the Atlantic Alliance.¹²¹

As referred to Secretary of State Rusk upon questioning, Ambassador Reinhard believed Mattei capable of going overboard with the tones of his declarations but that even his power had its limitation since the Italian Government had managed to make him back down. The main goal of Eni remained that of succeeding in the commercial arena, and according to Reinhard's judgment, he hadn't been entirely successful in that respect: "He had not found oil in Italy, his development of gas supplies had been made possible by a discovery made by American companies, and the cost of the oil he produced himself was uneconomically high by any objective standard."¹²²

Often, Mattei had clarified that he bought Soviet crude just because of the more convenient prices vis-à-vis those on the international market and that he remained available to bring his business to whoever could match such costs.¹²³ Any attempt of political and press influence made in the attempt to support the opening to the left had coincided with an aspiration shared by a significant portion of the Italian political scene, with or without Mattei's support.

Nonetheless, the Department of State still noted how the beginning of the center-left experiment had been bringing new sources of complication to the problem constituted by Mattei's activities. Now that the administration had decided to support the entry of the Socialist party into the governmental coalition, it was necessary to tie all loose strings and ensure tight control of all aspects of the process. Opinions started circulating about a new course of action to adopt in regard to the head of Eni, establishing the administration's future stance to limit the damage caused by the entrepreneur. The time had come to transform Mattei into an ally, both to take advantage of his national weight and to limit his destructive power.¹²⁴

The American strategy to win Mattei over went through forms of collaboration, involving him in profitable operations that would have provided sources of oil and restrained purchases of

¹²¹ The Secretary of State to U.S. Embassy Rome, March 7, 1962, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 2695, 865.2553/3-762, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 518.

¹²² Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 17, 1962. Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330. Secret. Drafted by Knight and approved in M on April 2 and U on April 5. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹²³ US Embassy Rome (Reinhardt) to the Secretary of State, March 9, 1962 (n. 2367), document obtained through FOIA, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 519.

¹²⁴ Maugeri, Leonardo. *L'era del petrolio: Mitologia, storia e futuro della più controversa risorsa del mondo*. Feltrinelli, 2006.

Soviet crude. Oil companies were to be advised to involve Mattei in their concessions and reach some accommodation with him, after the first validating form of recognition came from the United States.¹²⁵

Initially, a rapprochement in the commercial field between Eni and either Exxon or other majors would take place to solve problems at the company level and reach a satisfactory understanding of crude purchases through inter-company negotiations. Only at a later time, the U.S. would have approached the Italian government on the state of relations with Enrico Mattei. Past attempts to pressure Italy's political powers to limit Soviet oil imports were understood as efforts to defend the oil cartel and limit Eni's bargaining power, therefore striking an agreement with Mattei favorable to his interest would instead be prioritized to achieve harmonious relations among Western oil companies.¹²⁶

Some degree of flexibility was also required and expected from Mattei, as Eni would have had to modify his behavior if it were to be admitted among the majors: "an arrangement with Mattei would presumably have to include some undertakings on his part such as: 1) that he would not interfere with the percentage split with the governments of producing countries; 2) that he would be "fair" to the Western oil companies in Italy itself both with regard to markets and exploration; and 3) that he would reduce his trade in oil with the Russians."¹²⁷ Through these compromises, Italy would have ceased being part of the oil-poor countries.

Due mainly to the huge use of funds for unsuccessful international explorations, Eni was going through a period of considerable financial difficulties, to the point that the Bank of Italy prohibited it from issuing new bonds. So, starting in 1961, Mattei was invited to a series of confidential meetings with some key figures in the Kennedy administration, including Harriman, and Under Secretary George Ball, during which the political path to implementing the U.S. proposal was laid out.¹²⁸

Talks of the commercial reunification started spreading rather quickly among those involved; the oil companies' initial reactions to the politically agreed project were not positive, slowing

¹²⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 17, 1962. Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330. Secret. Drafted by Knight and approved in M on April 2 and U on April 5. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹²⁶ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, April 25, 1962, 11 a.m. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Confidential; Priority; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 17, 1962. Department of State, Secretary's Memoranda of Conversation: Lot 65 D 330. Secret. Drafted by Knight and approved in M on April 2 and U on April 5. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹²⁸ Maugeri, Leonardo. *L'era del petrolio: Mitologia, storia e futuro della più controversa risorsa del mondo*. Feltrinelli, 2006.

the State Department's execution of it to seek common ground with the majors.¹²⁹ During a lunch at Villa Taverna, Mattei had expressed to Under Secretary Bell his frustration towards the attitude held by the major oil companies towards him over the years, fighting him and attempting to keep him out of oil-rich areas. However, he also recognized the changes that were taking place on their part to make more room for Eni in the oil industry. Appreciation was then shown by the head of Eni in hearing the Under Secretary's complacency to the ongoing improvement of the relations, as the Department had recognized the relevancy of Mattei's work and the need to keep communication open with him.¹³⁰

The scheming of the Department and Embassy, in line with Kennedy's wishes, proved to be slowly functioning. Secretary of State Dean Rusk personally had invited Exxon's number two, Howard Page, to begin negotiations with the Italian company, suggesting that the American company sold oil to Eni at favorable prices. A few days before Mattei's plane exploded in the air, a letter of intent had been prepared between the two companies, in which Exxon agreed to supply Eni with oil at a discounted price for five years. The deal was later on signed by Mattei's successor.

The only existing documentary indications, the agreement with Exxon in particular, seem to suggest that the difficulties between Eni's president and the big oil companies could have gradually been smoothed out, and Mattei ceased to be such a controversial figure due to his Soviet relations. This validates the thesis that, although doubts and hostility toward Eni remained within the majors, there was nevertheless a growing belief that a negotiated solution could be reached.¹³¹ The Exxon deal had already been a first, significant step towards the neutralization of Mattei.

In 1962, the center-left lived through the loss of two of his staunchest supporters with Enrico Mattei's death and the end of Giovanni Gronchi's presidential mandate. These events were of extraordinary importance for the evolution of the opening to the left. With Mattei, part of the neutralist and Third-Worldist ideals of a new course of Italian foreign policy burned out, despite having generated so much fear in previous years; those that looked at the opening to the Psi as a way to improve the international profile of Italy through a different foreign policy lost a point of reference. The neo-Atlanticist axis based on the vision and aspirations of Mattei, Gronchi,

¹²⁹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹³⁰ Telegram From the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State. Rome, May 27, 1962, 3 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 110.12-BA/5-2762. Confidential; Priority; Limit Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹³¹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

and Fanfani crumbled under the death of the first, the political “elimination” of the second, and the formation of the first Moro government for the third. It is believed that the version of the center-left that took place the following year resulted far less risky, from the point of view of Italy's international positioning, than the one that could have been implemented with Mattei still presiding over Eni.¹³²

¹³² Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

5.

From abstention to participation: the Psi's entry in the "stanza dei bottoni"

5.1. America's unresolved doubts

The new year rang in under the sign of the crisis. The mounting of the governmental deadlock had begun in the second half of 1961, in concomitance with the acceleration of the process of opening to the left. Signaling the fast-paced evolution towards the alliance between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats, Secretary Aldo Moro informed the Embassy of the party's wish to open to the Psi before the next elections. At the same time, he had also clarified how unnatural it would have been for the Dc to open to the right, as the time for democratic convergences had finished. In order to avoid breaking the balance of Italian political life, the direction of the party was working to create a new party majority.¹

The Embassy watched the crisis unfold with no attempt to intervene, following instructions to not interfere in the events leading up to the formation of the 1962 government. Schlesinger and his followers continued criticizing the wait-and-see attitude displayed by the Embassy, believing that the lack of initiative or displayed support for Dc-Psi collaboration was damaging the relations at a time of crucial change for Italian politics. However, the passive stance held by the Embassy moved from the Department's certainty that the opening to left was still far from being realized and also from the desire to avoid being pointed to as the culprit of a potential failure.²

Despite everything, skepticism continued playing a part in any analysis put forward by the Embassy, which predicted that a hypothetical government depending on the Psi would have been "less cooperative than the previous ones on foreign policy and communist-related matters," bringing about a slow erosion of Italian foreign policy rather than a dramatic change.³ Only if the Psi were to enter government before significantly modifying its foreign policy views, the Department could envision itself breaking the official position of non-interference to actively oppose the creation of said government.

¹ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

² Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³ Telegram 2263 from Rome (Horsey) to SecState, January 11, 1962, in NAW, RG 84, Rome emb. CF 1962-1964, b. 13, f. Petroleum Jan.-Jun. 62, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 445.

At the threshold of the beginning of the government crisis, the United States was still debating the opening to the left as an eventuality for the upcoming years while arguing how “the Christian Democrats, as well as the Socialists, seemed to have less and less confidence in the possibility that cooperation between the two parties was to take place at that moment.”⁴ Furthermore, the Department’s Italian Desk interpreted any further step towards the agreement as an event of minor scope: rather than an opening to the left, it was highly probable that only a mere programmatic convergence would have taken place at a formal level.⁵ President Kennedy, too, remained cautious and didn’t speak openly on the matter.

The adverse judgment of the United States proved ineffective at the inauguration of the Christian Democratic Party’s National Congress of January 27 - February 1, 1962. During the Congress, Moro was confirmed party secretary with a wide majority, validating his conduct of the Dc and especially the direction given to the creation of a new governmental majority. During the meeting, Moro had opened the proceedings by “enshrining the inclusion of the programmatic content of center-left politics in the Dc,”⁶ then approving a plan for the formation of a government led by Fanfani and enjoying the external support of the Psi.⁷ As estimated by Reinhard, the Congress also had the merit of reconciling the various currents in the party, bringing about new cohesion, vitality, and self-confidence, and appointing Moro as the true central figure of the Dc, in that he was able to bring the various party currents together.⁸

The results of the Congress in terms of the imminent intentions of opening to the left expectedly inaugurated the government crisis, with the Pri and Psdi abandoning the majority and Fanfani presenting his resignation to Gronchi the day after the closing of the Congress. Since Moro had clearly struck off the possibility of recreating a center-right formula, in light of the events of summer 1960, the only direction to be taken was the one leading towards the Psi. The Department of State, too, wouldn’t have supported the entry of the Msi in the government majority and the consequent moving of the political axis towards the right. According to its analysis, such an event could have offered an asset to the Communist propaganda, along with

⁴ Telegram 2333 from Rome (Reinhardt) to the Secretary of State, January 23, 1962, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 1919, 765.00/1-1562, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 448.

⁵ Briefing on Italian Government Crisis for your Luncheon with the Italian Ambassador, January 20, 1962, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 1919, 765.00/1-2062, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 448.

⁶ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L’Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁷ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸ Telegram 2412 from Rome (Reinhardt) to the Secretary of State, February 3, 1962, in NAW, RG 59, CdF 1960-63, b. 1919, 765.00/2-362, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 449.

creating a discrepancy with the American interests in Italy.⁹ The support granted by the Msi to the Tambroni government had already created enough instability to still consider an opening to the right as feasible and proficient.

The country's leading party now found itself having to deal with a national crisis of leadership, deciding to rely on a risky form of collaboration to salvage the decadent state of Italian democracy, the opening to the left being a matter of defense and development of the country itself.¹⁰ "An understanding with the Psi is the only direction in which we can look for the political leadership of the country and the defense of institutions. [...] The relationship with the Psi is a historical problem, in the sense that it touches the existence and the major lines of development of Italian democracy."¹¹

On February 10th, Gronchi gave Fanfani the task of forming a government between the Dc, Psdi, and Pri with the outside support of the Psi. Nineteen Christian Democratic ministers, three Social Democrats, and two Republican ones were appointed. With the Parliament's vote of confidence, on February 22, 1962, the fourth Fanfani government was born and the first center-left one, thanks to the Psi's positive and planned abstention in the vote of trust.¹² For the time being, "in case of agreement on the program, the Psi can only give external support. [...] The question of whether the Socialists should participate in the government, or be organically integrated into the majority, and the question of the relationship between central and local powers is a matter solely for the congresses. [...] The Psi will do what it considers necessary and useful to give a wider development to the policy of democratic advancement and economic and social development of the country, but it will do so in its autonomous determination rejecting any and all external pressure."¹³

On February 21st, attorney general Robert Kennedy and Arthur Schlesinger found themselves in Rome for the day. Despite making no mystery of the rift within the administration over the course to be taken in the Italian context, their presence in Rome the day before the formation of the first center-left government was interpreted as a good omen and a tacit endorsement.¹⁴

⁹ Usdgd, "Draft document," of the Department of State, *Italy: guidelines for policy and operations*, n. 001393, vol. 18, January 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁰ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Formigoni, Guido. *Storia dell'Italia nella guerra fredda, 1943-1978*. Il Mulino, 2016.

¹³ *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

¹⁴ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

On the other hand, Via Veneto welcomed the events of January and February with the expected resigned acceptance and lack of enthusiasm. The Department was still focusing on the work having to be done to distance the Psi from the Communists and make the party independent, a judgment moved from a strong degree of diffidence and a renewal of the American domestic and foreign policy beliefs.¹⁵ Despite being aware of the significant advantages that the opening to the left could have brought in the long run, the United States still had to remain vigilant before the implementation of the center-left, especially regarding the monitoring of its relations with Italy and the latter's foreign policy development.¹⁶

“Cooperation with the Psi, if wisely pursued, could bring impressive long-term gains for Italy. It could add to the ability of Italian Governments to adopt much-needed constructive programs. It could broaden the “area of democracy” in Italian politics. It could lead to the political isolation of the Communist Party. [...] However, the ultimate risks of such an association for Italian democracy and for the United States are also impressive. Forty percent of the Psi Party continues to favor close unity of action with the Communists. Even under its present “Autonomist” leadership the Psi urges a greater degree of “independence” vis-à-vis the U.S., confesses to a tendency towards neutralism. [...] In domestic affairs it opposes discriminatory measures against the Communists.”¹⁷

As evaluated by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the only body that had been capable of correctly estimating the development of Italian politics, the United States would not have needed to oppose the new course of Italian policy directly, because such a choice could have backfired in the long run: the only valid approach was to try to persuade the parties committed to the center-left experiment not to abandon the traditional pro-American alignment of Italian foreign policy.¹⁸ It was easy to detect the ambiguities present at the basis of Socialist foreign policy, but it was more complex to estimate the impact of these on the conduct of the Italian government. Despite widespread alarmism, the Bureau ruled out that Italy's Atlantic positions would be radically threatened.¹⁹

¹⁵ Usdgd, *Italy: guidelines for policy and operations*, of the Department of State, n. 538c, vol. 7, January 30, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁶ Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy. Washington, February 20, 1962. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. in FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy, “Our Assessment of and Actions with Regard to a Possible Italian Government Supported by the Italian Socialist Party”, February 20, 1962, in FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹⁹ Research Memorandum REU-28, “Implications of an Italian Center-Left Government”, February 28, 1962, in JFKPL, AS Papers, Subject File: Italy, b. WH 12, f. 2/1/62-3/20/62, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 451.

Now that it had been set in motion, there was a general attempt at avoiding putting forward a categorical evaluation of the opening to the left, although the Department's desired timeline for the opening to the left had been disregarded in favor of much faster development. However, the imminent election of a new President of the Republic was, according to Reinhard, an element of destabilization relevant enough to slow down the process of opening, weaken any new government, and test the longevity of the operation.

The "calculated but serious risk"²⁰ of the center-left started off having to battle relevant issues. The difficulties that had the potential to break off the center-left experiment centered around the program and the ministers had chosen. For instance, the Dc had doubts over the nationalization of the electric industry, something that the other coalition parties and the Psi were staunchly supporting. Because of the doubts surrounding the mode to enact reforms, the risk was that of generating an undetermined and vague program made of lax timing and promises.²¹

The desire to create a stable and long-lasting programmatic center-left with Fanfani at the head of the government overpowered any internal dissent. Moro declared himself aware of the existing perils of the new political experience and the need for vigilance and caution; nonetheless, a moderate degree of positivity was maintained as the experiment could have still turned out successful in normalizing the Italian political situation and widening the democratic basis.²²

Despite the initial reformist momentum that introduced advancements in favor of workers and farmers, older and younger social groups, and families, Moro had formulated and had been following a cautious step-by-step approach to collaboration, especially in the foreign policy realm.²³ In a conversation with Reinhard a month after the formation of the government, the Dc leader had described the center-left as "an experiment that had to be tested", still displaying trust in its success.

Moro's prudence wasn't reassuring enough in the eyes of the Embassy. What had been defined as an experiment by Moro was "generally agreed to be in our interest (a) because it gives the middle-of-the-road group a working majority and thereby makes for political stability in Italy; (b) because it means the defection of the Socialist party (Psi) from the pro-Communist left and

²⁰ *Italy's ruling party gives leftist a role*, in "New York Times", February 2, 1962.

²¹ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy. Washington, February 20, 1962. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

thereby promotes the political isolation of the Communists; (c) because it makes possible programs of social and economic reform and thereby opens up an attack on the conditions which breed communism.”²⁴ The problem didn’t seem to lie in the fundamentals of the government, as “the key people are good and that the composition of the government is satisfactory,”²⁵ but once again in the foreign policy stance displayed by the Psi.

The basic fear was that an approach of the Psi to the governmental sphere might have led to a form of surrender of the foreign gains made in the past years. This was motivated by the fear that “PSI influence could very well, unless the center parties held completely firm, affect Italy’s support for NATO, Italy’s primary reliance on ties with the U.S., the position of Italian free trade unions and cooperatives vis-à-vis cooperation with Communist organizations, Italy’s contribution to Western defense with particular regard to its defense budget and to the stationing of U.S. forces in Italy, Italian support for controls by NATO countries over strategic trade with the Bloc, and Italy’s role in the U.N., with particular reference to its relations with the uncommitted and emerging nations.”²⁶

American doubts over the influence that the opening to the left might have had on foreign policy issues were highlighted by Schlesinger in a conversation with Nenni during his short Roman stay.²⁷ During this, he managed to get a sense of the political spirit of the moment while expressing U.S. approval of Italy’s political evolution. In terms of foreign policy, the impossibility to align the Psi’s neutralist position with Atlantic policies was matched by an expression of support for the Western policy of reduction of tensions, especially in the relations with the Soviet Union. To Schlesinger, Nenni’s loyalty to NATO wasn’t incompatible with criticism of certain Alliance policies; for the time being, despite not being its biggest supporter, Nenni understood that bothering NATO wouldn’t have brought positive consequences.²⁸

Differently from the opinion of the State Department, the differing foreign policy positions of the parties, like their views the role of Italy in the Western alliance and the international position of the country, didn’t seem to constitute insurmountable barriers to party collaboration. For the

²⁴ Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy. Washington, April 27, 1962. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. Drafted by Komer. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

²⁵ Memorandum on the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State–Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting. Washington, March 23, 1962, 11:30 a.m. Department of State, PPS Files: Lot 69 D121, Italy. Top Secret. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

²⁶ Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy. Washington, February 20, 1962. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. in FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

²⁷ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

²⁸ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

time being, the foreign policy positions that the U.S. considered potentially alarming, as they diverged from its interests, weren't deemed as harmful by the majority forces; however, if the Psi were to ever enter the governmental coalition, its desire to change Italian foreign politics to introduce new elements would most generally generate internal dissent and need for compromise.²⁹

In attempt to rectify past mistakes and catch up, the Department of State was looking to define an improved policy line to adopt. As Washington started developing forms of consultation to better follow and understand the Italian political development, note was obviously made of the forecast error recorded on the effective realization of the center-left, which had left the United States behind and divided. The fear of being accused of intervening and interfering in the "great debate" had forced the Department to let the Italians decide for themselves, despite putting "primary emphasis on the need to ensure that Italian foreign policy was not affected by the formation of such a government."³⁰

Perceptive of these efforts, Moro had informed the Embassy how Nenni was not only committed to not supporting any amendment the Pci might have proposed for legislative proposals but he had also promised not to enter any new local councils with the Communists after the elections.³¹ Overall, the Socialists had broken their formal political alliance with the Communists at the national level and on a series of topics, and Fanfani too had perceived that "the Italian Socialist Party was moving toward a more positive participation in the democratic life of Italy and that the Socialist Parties of Europe were moving in a similar direction. They were now becoming more concerned with freedom than with material improvements, perhaps because substantial gains had been achieved in the latter field."³²

Nonetheless, this commitment hadn't been sustained long enough to make the Psi a trusted partner in the American eyes. According to the State Department, the ties shared by the Socialists with the Pci at the local level in the trade union, political, intellectual, cultural, and

²⁹ Usdgd, *Italian socialist foreign policy*, of the Department of State, from Roger Hilsman to the attention of the Secretary of State, n. 003191, vol. 20, April 27, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 215.

³⁰ Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy. Washington, February 20, 1962. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Italy. Secret. in FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

³¹ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

³² Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, June 23, 1962, 5 p.m. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 533, CF 2123. Secret. Drafted by Walters and approved in S on June 26. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

cooperative fields entailed that some of the positions chosen by the Psi still somewhat served Communist's interests.³³

The Embassy's take was that "The autonomy of the Psi from the Pci is all in this statement: "there are no ties, there is no discipline that obliges the socialists to be systematically and in every situation in agreement with the communists", but we must record that in the last three years the Psi has been unable to take a step without following shoulder to shoulder with the Pci."³⁴ The overall evolution of the Psi had been slow up to that point, with political and organizational difficulties that had led Nenni to decide not to clarify the Psi's ties with the Pci before the 1963 elections.

Despite external evaluations estimating the continuation of relations, the Communist party had been putting up a strenuous fight to stop the complete detachment of the Socialist forces and spoil the success of the center-left. The Psi had been accused of betrayal and selling out to management and U.S. interests,³⁵ causing the national isolation of the Pci. By making ridicule of anti-Communism, the Pci had been attempting to disprove the element of subversion attributed to it, emphasizing instead the peaceful path to socialism.³⁶

Most importantly, an internal revision on the nature of Italian and European capitalism had sparked within the Pci, now called to decide how to break the isolation while avoiding a detachment from the USSR.³⁷ The debate taking place within the Communist party actually showed that despite Togliatti's line being hegemonic in the leadership group and aligned with the international communist movement, the process of political and ideological revision had seen younger innovators try to solve the problems generated by the center-left and Soviet foreign policy line with a revisionist spirit.³⁸ A juxtaposition subsisted between the lively internal debate, animated by an attempt to push towards a renewal of the ruling class and its political culture, and the static party scheme repeatedly put forward and centered around Togliatti's leadership and adherence to Pcus' congresses.

³³ *Guidelines for Policy and Operations: Italy*, May 1962, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. Guidelines for Policy and Operations, May 1962. Cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 463.

³⁴ Usdgd, *Airgram*, from the Embassy in Rome to the Department of State and the White House, n. 002010, vol. 19, August 18, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 217.

³⁵ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

³⁶ Usdgd, *Airgram. Communist Party Central Committee Meeting*, n. 003194, vol. 20, March 23, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 216.

³⁷ Usdgd, *Memorandum; Renewed crisis in the Italian communist party*, of the Department of State, signed by Roger Hilsman director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, directed to Secretary, Bureau of Intelligence and Research; n. 332c, vol. 3, June 8, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 216.

³⁸ Usdgd, *Airgram*, from the Embassy of Rome to the Department of State and the Embassies of London, Moscow, Paris, Belgrade, Bucharest, Budapest, Prague, Sofia, Warsaw, Bonn, Hong Kong and Brussels, n. 002012, vol. 19, August 31, 1962, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 199.

The Pci appeared caught up in its own political game, being the most relevant Western Communist party while also being stuck at the margins of the Italian political scene as an opposing force. The economic improvements Italy had been going through since the mid-50s were most definitely not helping the Communists to steady nor increase their electoral base. The White House, in particular, felt that the temporal correspondence of the creation of a stronger governmental alliance with the economic miracle had the potential to translate into more for the people in terms of meaningful social and political reforms,³⁹ a fundamental form of development to ensure future Italian political stability. The less space was left for political uncertainties and economic underdevelopment, the less fertile ground for the Communist forces would have been available to attract the lower social classes.

Slowly and still continuing to be on the alert, the U.S. government apparently seemed to reconcile itself to the new political course and modify its position on the Psi, now no longer regarded as an outsider. The events of the past year had proven the White House right in terms of the full break of the Psi from the Pci, bringing the latter into the democratic area.

Notwithstanding this indisputable development, the debate remained tense over the operational measures to be implemented in the process of opening, especially in terms of the support to grant to Nenni's party. According to those like Reinhardt and the CIA who opposed the Psi being supported by the administration, the growth of the Socialists would occur at the expense of the center parties, not of the Pci, whereas the latter would have derived greater respectability. The opposing argument, in favor of providing aid, moved from the fact that the Psi was already receiving forms of secret assistance from the government through state-owned enterprises. It was in the U.S. interest to grant further support to the Psi as a whole party, as a split would have not been beneficial in that it could have reduced Nenni to a condition similar to the one of Saragat.⁴⁰

Any form of debate on the progression of the Psi conversion and the state of the encounter with the Dc was bound to be soon interrupted by the discourse on the 1963 elections, the real keystone of the whole process of turning to the left. In October 1962, in a speech before the Socialist Party's Central Committee, Nenni had posed the matter of the Socialists officially entering the *stanza dei bottoni*, an achievement considered as a real conquest for the new

³⁹ Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to Vice President Johnson. Rome, September 5, 1962. Johnson Library, Vice Presidential Security File, VP Johnson's Trip to Middle East. Secret; Eyes Only. Vice President Johnson visited Italy on September 5 at the conclusion of a trip to Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and Iran. Komer accompanied him. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁴⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

legislation.⁴¹ In his attempt to clearly outline the Psi political platform for the next elections, Nenni had managed to offer further proof of the irrevocable split from the Communists by displaying his commitment not to form regional governments with the Pci in areas where they could have gained a majority together. This represented the hardest test until then, that of operating a total and costly Psi disengagement effort at the local level.⁴²

Supporting the government from the outside didn't satisfy Socialist aspirations anymore, now wishing to fully enter the governmental coalition. Paling his inspirations, Nenni had ushered in a new phase of the unresolved U.S. confrontation, calling even the most favorable forces to measure themselves against the events of 1963.

5.2. Farewell, Mr. President

As was now usual during the Kennedy administration, a jolt had once again revived and accelerated the debate on center-left developments. The central theme of the debate was now the upcoming April 1963 legislative elections, which came at a time of uncertainty.

The relationship between the Dc and the Psi was still relying on shaky bases, characterized by a lack of shared views. The overall balance of the Italian political system was undermined by the ongoing transitional period, one that could have finally brought the Socialists to the highest ranks of power. At the threshold of the electoral test, the Christian Democrats feared not being able to gain their usual degree of consent among the traditional electorate if they didn't take a step back toward their original political positions; for this, a spirit of detachment and standby characterized their attitude in the months before the elections.⁴³ This attitude was also put forward by Moro in the Dc National Council of November 1962, during which the Secretary had suggested caution before Fanfani's pressure for an organic center-left, not knowing whether times were "mature" enough. This stance had been interpreted by Nenni as a clear attempt to slow down the process of inclusion in government.⁴⁴

Despite the rising tensions, the Board of Intelligence Estimates in January 1963 presented an improved and much less pessimistic evaluation of the center-left experiment through the redaction of an evaluation document, "National Intelligence Estimate 24-36/Implications of the

⁴¹ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁴² Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁴³ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁴⁴ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

Center-Left Experiment in Italy.”⁴⁵ The document served first and foremost as a guide to reading the focal points of the center-left experiment to be examined by President Kennedy. “Center-left cooperation in Italy, the so-called “opening to the left,” has worked very well since its inception in February 1962. The coalition has remained united, the parties have shown the elasticity necessary to survive the vicissitudes of coalition, and some important laws have been passed. There were no fundamental changes in Italian foreign policy. [...] The Socialists neither sought nor obtained foreign policy commitments, except for the vague declaration that Italy would work together with its allies for the peaceful solution of international problems.”⁴⁶

According to the text, the 1963 elections weren’t bound to produce relevant changes in the support gained by the various parties, therefore not introducing major differences for the center-left experiment. Washington was under no illusion about the relevance of the hypothetical results the center-left could have achieved: the experiment was expected to continue developing through times of uncertainty and through a slow process of Communist isolation before producing the desired results, which still depended on the weight of the Dc-Psi collaboration. Sooner or later, the Socialists would have entered the governmental majority and adopted the foreign policy changes that other parties expected, however not immediately following the elections of the upcoming spring.⁴⁷

A degree of optimism fundamentally relied on an underlying attitude of wait-and-see skepticism. Both the administration and the Roman Embassy had read and approved the text, proof that the White House had “made progress in getting State and CIA to look forward instead of backward on what is essentially a question of opportunities versus risks.” NSC Staff Member Komer noted to Schlesinger and Bundy that “My impression from my talks with Embassy Rome is that we are moving toward consensus on the matter of enhancing the split between the Italian left Socialists and Communists. Ambassador Reinhardt claims that any remaining differences are essentially those of timing rather than viewpoint.”⁴⁸ The administration's top leadership had now clearly aligned itself in favor of opening to the left, but the line of bitter disagreement over how much to help the Socialists in the elections continued, as indicated by Bundy to President Kennedy.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ NIE 24-63, “Implications of the Center-Left Experiment in Italy”, January 3, 1963, in JFKPL, AS Papers, WH Files, Subjects: Italy, b. WH-12, f. Italy Cia Reports 1/3/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 587.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁴⁹ McGeorge Bundy to the President, Weekend Reading, January 12-13, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF, b. 318, f. Index of Weekend Papers, 1/63-3/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 589.

Approaching the elections, the line upheld by the administration reflected the positions and forecasts suggested by Fanfani during his trip to Washington in January 1963, once again confirming the American practice of relying on Fanfani's opinion as *fait accompli*. Along with discussing the "slow but undeniable success" that the center-left experiment had been so far and expected to continue after the elections, Fanfani had predicted that the April elections would have registered a slight decrease of Dc and Pci votes and an absolute gain for Psi, Psdi, and Pri. The electoral resurgence of the Social Democrats was indicated as something to look forward to and to support both to ensure the future political balance of the country and the success of the center-left. The emphasis on the need for the Psdi to bring back a clear statement in the elections, with a consequent increase in Saragat's strength, was highlighted in preparation for Saragat's visit to Washington, scheduled for the following February.⁵⁰

The visit served to renew and reinforce the historically close ties between the Psdi and the U.S., providing support to Saragat in the midst of the electoral campaign. The American ally never doubted the Atlantic and Western commitment of the party, and especially during the Eisenhower administration, Saragat had been one of the most attentive and cautious political figures when discussing the opening to the left process. To maximize the possible strengthening of Saragat's electoral position, during his Washington visit, a meeting was arranged between him and Kennedy, also for the latter to inquire about the effectiveness of the center-left government. The support that the Psdi leader was now offering to the cause, along with a degree of reassurance, seemed to help dissipate the fears of the State Department,⁵¹ as the Embassy too had deemed the trip successful for both the alignment of the Psdi to pro-American positions and especially for Kennedy's impression of Saragat.⁵²

In the overview offered to the President on Italian political developments, Saragat had painted the center-left formula as "an attempt to carry out social reforms and provide for the welfare of the people in order to draw the laboring class away from the extreme left and into the democratic area. [...] Psi leader Nenni should be given every assistance in breaking away from the Communists, short of any concessions in matters of foreign policy. There our attitude must be absolutely firm. He forecast success in winning the Psi over to democracy, if relations with it

⁵⁰ Memorandum of Conversation (Meeting with PM Fanfani, 09.00 hours, 17 January 1963), in JFKPL, AS Papers, Classified Subject File, b. WH 12a, f. Italy 1/14/63-1/31/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 590.

⁵¹ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998

⁵² Airgram A-1238 from Rome to the Secretary of State, "Saragat's Impressions on recent Visit to the United States", March 2, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy, b. 120, f. 3/1/63-3/31/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 592.

are conducted with courage and firmness.”⁵³ A point was also made of the need for the Psi to further shift its foreign policy from neutralism to support of the Atlantic cause, considering the closeness that some Dc leaders like Fanfani and Moro had to the socialist movement.⁵⁴

The two visits served as new points of discussion for the American center-left debate, serving as an official recognition of the new course with the two leaders and center-left sponsors arriving in the United States with presidential demonstrations of full confidence and support. Despite the successful work of reassurance, a degree of preoccupation was put forward by the Department regarding the weak implementation of the proposed governmental economic and social reforms, as the overall program didn't seem strong enough to get through the transitional time that Italy's society was undergoing. Once again, through an anti-socialist interpretation of the center-left, the Department of State wrongly predicted the Socialist participation in government as something for the years to come and not for the upcoming legislation. As Reinhard's analysis upon Fanfani's return showed, the results of the visit had been interpreted in a diametrically opposite way by American forces. Beyond an enhancement of Fanfani's personal prestige, Kennedy's openings contrasted with electoral uncertainty and fear from opposing sectors. While Kennedy's work found support from center-left advocates, who enjoyed the American legitimation of the Psi in the governmental area, the Embassy and Department deviated from these positions, bringing them increasingly toward strict isolation.⁵⁵ It would only be Kennedy's visit in July of 1963 to finally cut the bull's eye and offer total support to the center-left, but not before the April 28 elections cast a shadow on the validity of the path of openness followed thus far.

The American partner, as well as the center-left supporters, expected to pass the electoral test with moderate success, thinking the almost-certain losses suffered by the Dc would have been compensated by a Psdi and Psi success, along with a decrease in Pci's electoral strength. And yet, despite an overall confirmation of the existing political equilibrium, some surprises confused the Italian political scenario, forcing it into a deadlock until November of the same year.

⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, February 15, 1963, 12–1:10 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, Pol-Italy. Confidential. Drafted by Seidenman and cleared in the White House on February 26. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, February 15, 1963, 12–1:10 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, Pol-Italy. Confidential. Drafted by Seidenman and cleared in the White House on February 26. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁵⁵ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

Dc losses surpassed expectations, going from 42,3% to 38,3% in the Chamber and from 41,2% to 37,3 in the Senate, a result that generated fear regarding the safety of the party's hegemony. The losses weren't balanced by a sufficient success of the Socialist parties: the Psdi had gone from 4,6% to 6,1% at the Chamber and from 4,4% to 6,3 in the Senate, whereas the Psi, along with the Pri, had remained immobile. The most striking results, however, were that of the two parties which had virtually opposed themselves to the center-left experiment: unexpectedly, the Liberals gained +3,43 points, gaining a 7% in both the Chamber and Senate and reuniting the votes of the right-wing opposition; the Pci, on the other hand, grew from 22,7% to 25,3% in the Chamber and 21,8% to 25,4% in the Senate, going against declining forecasts.⁵⁶

It was precisely the Christian Democrat electoral failure, substantially unexpected by the party leaders, to be the cause of the explosion of the fragile balance. The breakdown proved that a way had yet to be found to converge the essential demands of the party and those of the rest of the majority into a shared and stable synthesis. The fundamental assessment of the defeat operated by the more moderate leaders of the Dc sought its causes in the Dc center-left policy, and in Fanfani as its main executor: the loss of the traditional center electorate which had moved towards the right was brought on by of an excessive softening of anti-communist domestic and international positions, which had backlashed and created a sinking of the internal ideological cornerstones.⁵⁷

Despite having achieved the necessary coalition numbers, with 60% of the seats being in the hands of the pro-center-left parties, the potential of the experiment was significantly weakened by the electoral results. The hardest obstacle for the opening to the left seemed to be disappearing, finding legitimacy in the Western setting, as "under the center-left government, however, the Socialists increasingly oriented themselves toward European unity, accepted Italy's NATO role, although with limitations, and showed willingness to explore Italian participation in the MLF."⁵⁸ Now, the basis for internal support was now lacking. The electoral results had clearly indicated, through a mostly stable final result, to be moving more toward the left but bypassing the Psi in the process. An operation of polarization appeared to be developing on both sides of the spectrum, with the Dc being the furthest force to the right the same way

⁵⁶ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁵⁷ Formigoni, Guido. "Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

⁵⁸ Briefing Paper Prepared in the Department of State. Washington, June 14, 1963. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D110, CF 2274. Secret. Drafted by Gammon. Cleared by Tyler and Brandin. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

that the Pci was to the left, as nothing more extreme had a significant political weight, creating an “imperfect bipolarism”.⁵⁹

If the results were to be interpreted in light of the complicated efforts of the past few years, the center-left didn't seem to be the best instrument to combat Communist influence, not being able, at least for the time being, to operate the isolation process that it envisaged, instead being the main reason behind the first, real electoral success of the Pci in years.⁶⁰

The partial electoral losses of the Dc weren't the most concerning aspect per se, as the incumbent legislation had been a confusing one, moving from the center-right to the center-left with many difficulties in the middle. The fear was now that the restless feeling that seemed to be rampant among society would also become dominant in determining electoral behavior.⁶¹ To face this, the ruling Dc class was now called to a difficult duty, that of measuring the extent of damage and defining an updated and cautious course of action: “As politicians begin agonizing examination of just what happened in these elections and what possibilities are now open to democratic forces in Italy, only fact immediately apparent is that there is no pat explanation of disappointing results and no easy solution to what may become prolonged period of governmental instability.”⁶²

Despite feeling a significant degree of responsibility, Fanfani still refused to let alarmism dominate the process of dealing with the aftermath, as he didn't want the center-left experiment to come out destroyed. First, he concluded that the major electoral losses suffered by the Dc were registered where the party presented itself as more right-oriented but without being able to explain how the Psi had not been able to push back the Communist advance.⁶³ Furthermore, the CIA noted how Fanfani had attributed the size of the defeat to the lack of basic party organization, therefore based on technicalities.⁶⁴ In line with Moro's opinion that a definitive clear-cut from the Pci was needed now more than ever, Fanfani commented that without the center-left experiment, a united Leftist front would have triumphed over the Dc.⁶⁵ According to the Embassy's interpretation, this electoral round had seen an increase in votes for the

⁵⁹ Craveri, Pietro. *La Repubblica Dal 1958 al 1992*. Storia d'Italia. Vol. 24, UTET, 1996, pp. XVI–1076.

⁶⁰ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁶¹ Craveri, Pietro. *La Repubblica Dal 1958 al 1992*. Storia d'Italia. Vol. 24, UTET, 1996, pp. XVI–1076.

⁶² Editorial Note. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁶³ Craveri, Pietro. *La Repubblica Dal 1958 al 1992*. Storia d'Italia. Vol. 24, UTET, 1996, pp. XVI–1076.

⁶⁴ TDCS-3/546,370, “Comments of Premier Fanfani on the Elections and Post-Elections Possibilities”, May 7, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 5/1/63-5/7/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 601.

⁶⁵ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

Communist forces because of protest votes cast by those who didn't feel represented by any of the ruling parties, Psi included.⁶⁶

By claiming that the only way to proceed was towards a left-wing policy and a center-left majority, both Fanfani and Nenni ran an electoral and party risk: indeed, the internal divisions within their respective political ranks and election results all seemed to indicate that it was too early to bring the Socialist Party into the governmental formula. However, both had also anticipated the developments that would have taken place within the year: Fanfani was aware of the internal dissatisfaction with his line of conduct, as the high party ranks started discussing the investiture of Moro as the new Prime Minister, while Nenni had sensed the Dc attempt to relocate towards a revisited centrist formula with a new government direction.⁶⁷

The State Department also caught wind of the debate on the ostracization of Fanfani but had decided to only monitor the situation from the outside without a dramatic interference, despite believing that a forced center-left would have been the only governmental formula to avoid an impasse similar to 1959-1960 one. "We believe that only Italians are in a position to decide about the center-left. During the period before the center-left government was formed and during its existence, the U.S. Government has therefore refused either to press for or to counsel against the experiment. Both advocates and opponents of the experiment have criticized this posture, but we believe that it was and remains the correct position for us to take."⁶⁸

The American stance fitted well in the general reaction to the electoral result. Aware of the complex and at times unpredictable functioning of the Italian political system, a tone of resignation was mostly adopted, waiting to see how negotiations would have developed without the alarmism that would have characterized government bodies just a few years before. The preoccupation with the Pci success was counterbalanced by a moderate optimism for the overall resilience of the center parties, which now had to work together to open the coalition to the Socialists, ensuring that the center-left became a reality not just from a formal standpoint but especially in terms of reforms.⁶⁹

In particular, the State Department found that the results of the elections didn't particularly influence Italian foreign policy or the relationship with the United States. The pro-Communist

⁶⁶ Telegram 2416 from Rome to the Secretary of State, May 13, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 5/8/63-5/14/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 601.

⁶⁷ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁶⁸ Briefing Paper Prepared in the Department of State. Washington, June 14, 1963. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D110, CF 2274. Secret. Drafted by Gammon. Cleared by Tyler and Brandin. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁶⁹ Memorandum to Governor Harriman from G. Lister, "Italian Election Returns", May 1, 1963, in LOC-MD, WAH Papers, Subject File, b. 484, f. Lister George, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 600.

forces that were still left in the Psi were now mostly gone and replaced by more moderate positions. The increased work to continue developing the center-left experiment, paired with the electoral success of the Psdi, reassured the American partner that its interests were safe.⁷⁰ Difficulties in the formation of the governmental team were still foreseen. The Roman Embassy right away noted the suspicious and recriminatory psychological climate within which the negotiations started, hinting at the possibility that the resolution of the crisis wouldn't be imminent. Some of the most notable leaders, Saragat in particular, had started a tough campaign against and within the Dc itself, for which the main culprit for the electoral failure was Fanfani; the continuation of the center-left depended now on a change in government leadership.⁷¹ For this, at the end of May, almost a month after the elections, Aldo Moro had been put in charge of attempting to form a new government, which, according to the Dc leader, would have included the Psi in its majority.

The negotiations between Moro and Nenni lasted about three weeks and too many difficulties hindered them, at the expense of the Embassy's hopes that Moro's presence as Prime Minister would bode well for the success of the consultations. The effort to agree on a program that ensured the recovery of the coalition on the electoral level was matched by the need to keep both parties together and at the same time lead them into government. Nenni, in particular, had to measure with difficulties not only with the minority currents within the party but also with his own autonomist one, increasingly disagreeing with his leadership conduct. An actual evaluation of the real degree of weakness registered by Nenni internally was only captured by the Embassy halfway through the negotiations, indicating that his capacity to bring the Psi into the democratic and governmental arena was spoiled, with no room for recovery, by the internal rifts.⁷²

For once, the forecasts of the Embassy proved correct: despite Nenni being able to find common ground with Moro and come to an agreement on the formation of the government, on June 17th, the autonomist current of the Psi and Lombardi, part of the Central Committee of the party, rejected the proposal of the coalition put forward by Nenni; the following day, Moro relinquished the attempt to form a new government. Not only was the leadership of the Socialist party in a crisis but the Italian political scenario was too. For the time being, it proved

⁷⁰ Department of State Memorandum, "Effect of the Italian Elections on Future Government Stability", May 4, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 5/26/63-5/31/63, cit. in L. Nuti, *op. cit.*, p. 602.

⁷¹ Telegram 2416 from Rome to the Secretary of State, May 13, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 5/8/63-5/14/63, cit. in L. Nuti, *op. cit.*, p. 602.

⁷² Airgram 1822 from Rome to the Department of State, June 15, 1963, in JFKPL, NSF: CO: Italy General, b. 120, f. 5/15/63-5/25/63, cit. in L. Nuti, *op. cit.*, p. 604

impossible to create any form of governmental coalition stable enough to be a reformist program supported by the population. The creation of a temporary, one-party government guided by Giovanni Leone was the only feasible choice, although Leone was recognized as mediocre and bland, and the government without inspiration nor public support, to the point of being named a “governo balneare.”⁷³

Surprisingly, the Embassy and Department of State had appeared displeased by the temporary failure of the center-left and by the internal party turn against Nenni, as they believed that a continuous development towards the center-left would have granted stability and security. The new threat posed by an increase in Communist electoral strength had made the Psi either less dangerous or reliable enough for them to set aside grievances about foreign policy and the completion of Socialist withdrawal from cooperation with the Communists.⁷⁴ Overall, a feeling that the Psi could guarantee a sense of stability and put a stop to the electoral growth of the Pci spread, believing that the longevity of a governmental majority depended on the stability of it too, characteristics impossible to achieve without the Psi.⁷⁵

The newfound and growing support of Via Veneto to the center-left and the already confirmed approval of the administration didn't influence the Italian political environment enough and in time to change the course of the Leone government. No mystery had ever been made of the support granted by the Kennedy administration to the center-left as one of its main promoters of its growing success, both in the private and public sector, in Italy as well as in the United States. The increasing importance of figures like Schlesinger⁷⁶ and Harriman testified this: at the beginning of April 1963, in fact, Kennedy appointed Harriman as undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, giving him the most important position in the State Department hierarchy only after Rusk and undersecretary Ball. Harriman had been advocating the opening to the left since the beginning of Kennedy's mandate, and now found himself in a prominent position within one of the bureaucratic structures that had expressed the most perplexity about the new course. This granted the supporters of the center-left a solid point of reference to promote their cause more easily.⁷⁷

⁷³ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁷⁴ Briefing Paper Prepared in the Department of State. Washington, June 14, 1963. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D110, CF 2274. Secret. Drafted by Gammon. Cleared by Tyler and Brandin. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁷⁵ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁷⁶ Bello, Francesco. *Diplomazia culturale e guerra fredda. Fabio Luca Cavazza dal Mulino al centrosinistra*. Il Mulino, 2020.

⁷⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

Despite the administration not having been able to significantly influence the electoral process in a psychological, propagandistic, and financial sense, having consolidated its support too late, the visit of President Kennedy in July 1963 couldn't have come at a worse time. The formation of the Leone government, which had just been granted the vote of trust by the time Kennedy arrived in Italy, was a symptom of a continued crisis, a solution defined as "administrative government" by the U.S. only found to attempt to hold still while moving past endemic difficulties.⁷⁸ The only available and permanent institutional interlocutor for Kennedy was President Segni.

Nevertheless, the short Roman stay allowed for the President to formally meet some of the leading figures on the Italian political scene, Nenni in particular, and at the same time to shed light on some of the ideas that the president matured on the subject of the center-left and the American take on it. The documents prepared by the Department and the White House staff for the visit presented an aligned, positive opinion for which the center-left was the only possible combination to grant parliamentary stability and to efficiently fight Communist propaganda, all while maintaining a strong U.S.-Italy bond. If the experiment was to be given up, such a decision would have taken a toll on the Italian parliamentary stability, generating internal party fractures and leaving even more spaces open for the Pci. Not only was the experiment supported as something indispensable but its main exponents were also benignly praised: Nenni, in particular, was described as one of the most "able politicians in Italy" and "maybe the most popular too,"⁷⁹ completing the identification of the Psi in its secretary. Great support was given to the Socialist leader in sight of the Socialist Congress, planned for July and then pushed back to October.

The official meetings held by Kennedy with some of the leading figures of the Italian political scene, President Segni and Dc leader Aldo Moro, mostly gravitated around Italy's role within NATO and alliances in a general sense, renewing the closeness between the two countries and reminding the influence of foreign policy on domestic one and vice versa. The encounter with Moro in particular was based on his centrality in the Italian political scenario, on the friendship shared with the U.S., and on the appreciation for his persona and strategy; however, it also centered around the conviction that he would soon be Prime Minister, showing at the same time

⁷⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁷⁹ The President's European Trip, The Political Situation in Italy: Biographies, in DDRS, 1977/267B, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 610.

the caliber of the administration's judgment of the Christian Democrat leader and the forecasting error about an immediate resolution of the crisis.⁸⁰

Undoubtedly, the most prominent moment of the presidential visit was the reception in the Quirinale gardens, during which Kennedy was able to meet the main Italian politicians and have a quick and informal exchange of views with many of them. The most politically relevant episode of the evening was undoubtedly the meeting between Kennedy and Nenni, a rather long and private conversation that seemed to consecrate the future of Nenni's work in a positive sense. "Nenni was then about seventy-two years old, with his little wisps of white hair, short, and standing next to the president, who was a very tall man and seemed particularly fit that night. The only other person present was a young woman, President Segni's personal interpreter. And they stood in the middle of this platform and talked and talked and talked. [...] Nenni got off the platform absolutely enthralled and could not have been happier, walked up to his wife, put his arm around her shoulders and walked away with her whispering something-apparently he was delighted, and wiped his eyes. Later, Mrs. Nenni told us that her husband was simply delighted with the president and the conversations he had had with him."⁸¹

The Department of State narrated the encounter as a back-and-forth between the two, during the course of which Kennedy had asked why, in a situation of growing prosperity, such a bizarre election result had been achieved, and especially whether the Psi could have cooperated with the majority.⁸² Nenni, after confirming his total and undoubted willingness, had framed the communist success in the continuation of conditions of poverty and marginalization of those who had not benefited from economic growth.⁸³ As described by the Socialist leader in his diaries, Kennedy had revealed that he had urged a meeting with him given his interest in democracy in Italy. Again according to the recount, Nenni had not solicited the meeting or the investiture of the center-left, and Kennedy had reached Italy unrelated to domestic political interests.⁸⁴ Overall, he commented how the destiny of the center-left didn't depend on investiture or foreign vetoes, but by the responsible decisions of the Psi and the Dc. Beyond the support of the White House and the opposition of the Department and especially the Embassy

⁸⁰ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁸¹ *Oral History Interview with W.N. Fraleigh*, in JFKPL, pp.11-12, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 617.

⁸² Memorandum of Conversation, July 1, 1963, in FRUS, 1961-63, vol. XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸³ Memorandum of Conversation. Rome, July 1, 1963. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D 110, CF 2275. Confidential. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

⁸⁴ Nenni, Pietro. *Gli anni del Centro Sinistra. Diari (1957-1966)*. SugarCo, 1982.

in Rome, decisions on national life depended on quite other factors. However, the excellent impression of Kennedy as an open and outspoken young man was still noted.⁸⁵

Despite what Nenni said, mystery had never been made of Kennedy's appreciation for the center-left experiment, in line with the more progressive voices of his staff: proving his declaration of support right, in a private conversation held in Rome, Kennedy did confirm how important he found the center-left experiment and the success of the Socialist-Catholic cooperation to be.⁸⁶ As he reported to Schlesinger back in Washington, Kennedy also didn't find anyone to be against the opening to the left and the American support for it.⁸⁷

Therefore, it isn't wrong to frame the conversation as a moment of extraordinary relevance for the state of U.S.-Italian relations: that long conversation under the eyes of all the other parties, Togliatti included, unequivocally decreed the end of the American hostility toward the Psi, sending a clear political signal to the Socialists, as well as to all other parties, about what were the expectations and desires of the partner for the future of Italian politics.⁸⁸

That night in the Quirinale gardens was bound to be remembered as crucial also for the fate that awaited President Kennedy. His murder in Dallas on November 22nd came only a few weeks after the resignation of the Leone government and right before the creation of that center-left that he had greatly supported. His death caused not only a national and international shock and loss, but Italy also came to find itself without its most relevant and valuable interlocutor. "Kennedy was a hope if not yet a certainty of peace. From this moment everything becomes more difficult. Even our ministerial crisis, a small thing compared to the deprecated event, takes on different proportions. I went tonight to the U.S. Embassy to sign the register. There was a silent and distressed crowd."⁸⁹

The center-left was now left to reshuffle the cards on the table through frantic political activity to ensure that the opinion of the American ally had not changed with the new presidency,⁹⁰ potentially thwarting national efforts toward the center-left for an unexpected and cruel tragedy.

⁸⁵ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁸⁶ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

⁸⁷ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Mariner Books, 1965.

⁸⁸ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

⁸⁹ Nenni, Pietro. *Gli anni del Centro Sinistra. Diari (1957-1966)*. SugarCo, 1982.

⁹⁰ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

5.3. “Moro ha fatto il governo”⁹¹

The success scored by the center-left with the visit of President Kennedy still left much work to be done. Particularly, the internal situation of the Psi appeared desperate while approaching its 35th party Congress in October 1963. The climate constituted a change of pace compared to the first half of the year, when the opening to the left seemed said and done. The round of consultations that followed the resignations of Leone stood as the last possible resort for the creation of the center-left, as, according to Fabio Luca Cavazza, the Psi seemed more caught up in its internal struggle than focused on entering government. Socialist reputation was already damaged enough by the tendency to underestimate the political relevance and the urgency of what had been such a long and complex process projected.⁹²

Approaching the Congress, Nenni now needed to gain up to a 60% majority in the party elections to regain control through clear party support. The exigence of granting finances and overall assistance to the leader was shared by the Embassy in particular, along with the CIA, as the entrance of the Psi in the democratic arena seemed like the only path to achieving modern and progressive purposes, along with national stability and Communist isolation. Needless to say, the events of the summer and fall of 1963 were followed with a high degree of attention by the American government bodies. From an official point of view, of course, the Kennedy administration continued to maintain a neutral attitude toward the Italian political debate. However, in the various conversations held with representatives of the Italian government and parties, members of the administration, and the president himself did not forego the occasional indirect hint that made it clear how the administration considered the choice of the center-left perfectly legitimate.⁹³

While the Psi prepared for the Congress, with Nenni's counterpart Lombardi seemingly regretting his high degree of opposition that had led to the failure of the negotiations over the summer, the Dc also had to regroup and find a new common denominator to unify the party, as “the state of mind of the groups and of the threats of splitting made by some parliamentarians, we note the great difficulty of getting certain exclusions accepted that may appear to be

⁹¹ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁹² F.L. Cavazza to V. Reuther, July 12, 1963, in WSU-ALUA, UAW Reuther-Carliner, b. 35 f. 20, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 625

⁹³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

prejudicial in nature.”⁹⁴ Once again, Moro had managed to bring about an internal reconciliation that not only agreed on restarting the negotiations with the Psi but that also established the official entrance of the party into a potential governmental majority, instead of remaining in a position of external support. A closer cohesion of the Dc during the turbulent time was required to present a united front, as internal personal rivalries were causing a perceived weakness that facilitated the Communist effort to stir up tensions between the Socialists and Christian Democrats.⁹⁵

All the non-Italian forces that had had an interest or had simply followed the process of the formation of the center-left, from the Vatican to the British Labour party, and of course the Kennedy administration, followed the proceedings of the Socialist Congress with bated breath. In the wake of it, an alignment of forces had formed that pressured and encouraged the autonomist current to resume dialogue with the Dc. Nonetheless, entering the Congress, Nenni had clarified that despite his position in obvious favor of the experiment, “any pressure or worse any commination could only have a negative effect. The Psi will do what it considers necessary and useful to give wider development to the policy of democratic advancement and economic and social development of the country, but it will do so in its autonomous determination rejecting any and all external pressure.”⁹⁶

Entering the 35th Congress, which would have hopefully ensued a continuation of the negotiations with the Dc and the potential creation of the first center-left government, the American forces were attempting to formulate positive predictions, almost of moderate optimism, but at the same time aware that the outcome of the Congress would have depended on Lombardi's behavior and that a sudden reversal of the situation was always lurking. All in all, the political transition was a delicate one, as the whole party was called upon to lift its reservation about organic participation in a center-left government, trying to settle the deep disagreements between Nenni, an autonomist, and Lombardi, at the head of the leftist current.⁹⁷ The Congress lasted four days, from October 25th to October 29th. The unrolling of it and the conclusions reached proved the expectations right. Lombardi's positions were extreme and

⁹⁴ *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

⁹⁵ Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy from the Department of State, August 15, 1963, “Current Italian Political Situation”, in JFKPL, AS Papers, Subject File: Italy, b. WH 12a, f. 7/16/63-7/31/63, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 628.

⁹⁶ *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

⁹⁷ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

seemed to be going against the entire political setting of the party, seriously attempting to question the possibility of negotiating with the Dc. Lombardi's main claim was based on the fear of an organic collaboration with the Christian Democrats, as "the difficulties in economic and financial policy issues have diminished but are sharpening on the matters of majority delimitation and Atlantic foreign policy. The concessions demanded of the Socialists on these two grounds contribute to building the overall framework against whose limitations only the Dc believes it can make the whole party accept the center-left discourse. But those conditions are dictated by the need to cope with the expected hostility of undefined American circles in Italy to which great power is attributed, which do not always identify with the official directives of the State Department, and which nevertheless are thought to be sufficiently powerful to organize resistance to the center-left sufficient to paralyze it."⁹⁸

An interesting aspect that had emerged during the Congress discussions had been that of the American influence on the conduct of the party and the political experiment itself, brought up by Lombardi. The opposition of the Embassy against the formation of the center-left was evaluated as the example of the test the U.S. was attempting to run when pushing for the creation of the center-left, one of conversion of the Psi to an Atlantic belonging. Overall, American positions did influence Socialist positions and the internal debate, since according to the party ruling class, the United States continued considering the Psi as something to be carefully watched and influenced.⁹⁹

Despite the explicit controversy with Lombardi and the continuation of internal dissent, the autonomist current came out as the winning one from the Congress, allowing for Nenni to have a majority wide enough to secure the direction of the party, for the organic collaboration to start taking place, and for the "central committee and socialist parliamentary groups to negotiate on the basis of a broad, deep program for the renewal of the country, up to and including direct participation in a center-left majority and government."¹⁰⁰ For this, the 35th Congress of the Psi was positively met by all the center-left supporters.

Only a few days after the end of the Congress, Prime Minister Leone resigned his position, pushing forwards the slow and inexorable accomplishment of the organic center-left. Moro and Nenni had finally stabilized both the party majority and the external allied support, despite the constant presence of hostile factions within both parties. In a situation that mirrored the

⁹⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Landolfi, Andrea. *Storia del Psi*. Milano, SugarCo, 1990.

beginning of the rapprochement and the journey to Socialist independence, the international climate of continued détente between the two superpowers had facilitated the dialogue between Psi and Dc, especially in foreign policy terms. An indirect contribution to the center-left experiment had been made by the renewed and strong course of the Kennedy course in international terms.¹⁰¹

Once appointed to form a new government, the first with the direct participation of the Socialist forces, Moro found himself battling a new wave of obstacles in the preparation of the policy document. Nenni was particularly insisting on “emphasis should be placed on the character and renewal purposes of center-left politics, legitimized by the country's new problems. It is this character that justifies the coalition of the four parties and the meeting with the Psi. As for the delimitation of the majority, a formula seems acceptable to us, which moves from the political fact of an agreement of the four parties and the reasons that exclude the others, extreme right, liberals, and communists. This majority is such that the government can deal with a broad and organic program of renewal.”¹⁰² Initially, the program drafted by Moro appeared heavily influenced by the collaboration with the Socialists, to a point deemed so unacceptable by the Dc currents to adopt the rule of incompatibility between the office of prime minister and party secretary, replacing Moro with Rumor to lead the secretariat.

All debates on the formation of the first center-left government were interrupted by the sudden death of Kennedy. His tragic end had the potential to either stall the proceedings or bring the solution to the crisis close as, despite the commitment of L.B. Johnson to carry on with the policies of his predecessor, it was still necessary for Italy to still ensure the new administration's adherence to the center-left. On November 25th, a bilateral encounter between President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, Senate President Merzagora (who had also taken part in Kennedy's funeral), Foreign Affairs Minister Piccioni, and Italian Ambassador Fenoaltea, as a first point of contact to renew the relations between the partners. The Italian participants made sure to present a quick, yet substantial peek into the formation of the new government by reassuring the President that principles of foreign policy, Italy's steadfastness in NATO, and an absolute, unconditional, unqualified friendship with the U.S. in all the organisms that form the living structures of the relationship would all be maintained.¹⁰³ All in all, Johnson declared

¹⁰¹ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

¹⁰² *Pietro Nenni - Aldo Moro Carteggio: 1960-1978*. Fondazione Nenni, Roma & La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1998.

¹⁰³ Memorandum of Conversation. Department of State, Central Files, Pol-It-US. Confidential. Drafted by Frank and approved in the White House on December 2. Washington, November 25, 1963, 7 p.m. In *FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

himself reassured from the encounter, expressing positive judgment on the collaboration and understanding between the two countries whose relationships wouldn't change with the new administration.

With the last apparent obstacle on the formation of the center-left having been passed, the only diatribes to be settled on the issue were internal ones. As the title of the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* “La faticosa elaborazione del programma del centro-sinistra”¹⁰⁴ exemplified, the grim historical moment and the continuation of wearisome and very serious disagreements led the final steps of the opening to lose their momentum, turning what should have been a political milestone into the simple end of a long and divisive debate.

The American partner was following Moro's efforts closely. As noted by Reinhard in a classified telegram to Rusk, “Premier-designate Moro is encountering difficulties in building the new government. [...] Problems arise from the allocation of ministerial posts. Despite repeated appeals from Moro, the Socialists, and Nenni himself, Fanfani has reiterated his refusal to enter the government, saying that he believes he is more credible if his support for the center-left comes from outside and furthermore that he wants to work on reorganizing the DC. Socialist leader Lombardi also refused. Their refusal to participate in the government highlights the clashes in the DC and Psi. [...] The second problem was created by Psi Secretary Saragat, who asked to be appointed foreign minister, but there are difficulties that escape us.”¹⁰⁵ Scelba too, only a few days before the vote of trust for the new government, had announced that his current would have abstained; the threat only fell short of becoming reality following the grave warning from *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican publication, not to jeopardize Catholic unity.

Amidst all the troubles, on December 5th, the first center-left government was finally born, proving the success of the opening to the left. Prime Minister Moro and Vice-Prime Minister Nenni had managed to bring together Dc, Psi, Psdi, and Pri in a new government formation, in which fifteen ministers belonged to the Dc, five were Socialists, three were Social Democrats, and one belonged to the Republican party. Saragat was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs for his uncompromisable Atlanticism. Moro said of the composition of the executive: “The majority is strictly limited to the four parties committed to it, the forces of which are necessary and sufficient to the coalition. Remaining therefore outside the majority, naturally according to

¹⁰⁴ “The arduous development of the center-left program”.

¹⁰⁵ Usdgd, Incoming telegram from the Embassy of Rome to the Secretary of State, from Reinhardt to Rusk, confidential, n. 003282, vol. 16, November 30, 1963, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 303.

the rules of the democratic method and parliamentary dialectic, are the right-wing forces and also the Liberal Party on the one hand, the Communist Party on the other.”¹⁰⁶

It goes without saying that this achievement didn't take place in a climate of serenity and accordance. Aside from the internal Christian Democrat dissent, the Psi came out more divided than ever. Despite having finally defeated historical vetoes and establishment resistance, with the Italian labor movement finally entering the area of government, the party minority had refused to grant the vote of trust to the new government, also replacing Pietro Nenni at the head of the party not with the most obvious choice, Riccardo Lombardi, but with Francesco De Martino. The split of the Socialist minority at the center of this contrasting motion, the *carristi*, was now taken for granted, and by early 1964 the Psiup was born.¹⁰⁷

The troubled times awaiting the government were immediately detected by the Embassy. Via Veneto was well aware of the limits of the new coalition and its fragility, having recognized that “the first stretch of road the new government would have to travel would have been really bumpy;”¹⁰⁸ however, this was still the best and only way to ensure a stable future for the country. “Despite appearances, all the problems of center-left government formation are far from being solved. First, a simple mechanism of relations and joint work will not be easy to achieve with socialist ministers except Nenni. [...] Moreover, the non-participation of Fanfani and Lombardi weakens the government. Although the four parties are bound by a common program their relationship is not clear. It is impossible to predict at present how long the new government will be able to last and whether it will be able to build a common base around the center-left philosophy, isolate the Communists, promote reforms, bring the government closer to the people.”¹⁰⁹

In the continued support granted by the Embassy and White House to the new government, a degree of puzzlement was shared with numerous factions of the Italian political scenario. The coalition had appeared divided and hard to manage since its beginning, due also to the internal struggles the two main parties were facing. It seemed, according to Reinhard, that the stability

¹⁰⁶ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Agosti, Aldo. *Il partito provvisorio. Storia del Psiup nel lungo Sessantotto italiano*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Telegram 1640 from Rome to the SecState, December 13, 1963, in NAW, RG 84, Rome emb. CF 1962-1964, b. 6, f. 350 Italy July-December 1963, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 657.

¹⁰⁹ Usdgd, Incoming telegram from the Embassy of Rome to the Department of State, “New government in Italy”, n. 003283, vol. 17, December 5, 1963, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 303.

promised and anticipated by Moro and his government was now an increasingly distant hope.¹¹⁰ For the time being, it was essential to continue to ensure Italian belonging and strength within NATO and of its Western orientation, in terms of foreign policy, and the isolation of the Pci, as these aspects corresponded to the most pressing American interests for the country.

Amid the difficulties, confirmation of Italian Atlanticism and alignment with the United States wasn't delayed, reassuring the administration through the Embassy on at least some programmatic points of the new government. "When one thinks that only three years ago Psi was pro-communist and now is participating in government and had accepted NATO and Western obligations, one realizes what a great step forward has been made in Italy. There has been great strengthening of forces favoring the West. Saragat said he fully realizes things will not be easy. Many battles must be fought but he is very optimistic regarding the future."¹¹¹ In an initial broad discussion of foreign policy at the Council of Ministers, Moro announced that "friendship with America, the pillar of our foreign policy, has been largely confirmed."¹¹² At the basis of Moro's prudence in foreign policy once at the head of the government heavily relied on the historical-political consideration that "it is not advisable to leave the United States isolated, not wanting to encourage the abandonment of Western solidarity, which is the best real guarantee of the continuation of the policy of détente."¹¹³

Many challenges awaited the new government, which only remained in power until the summer of '64. In the chaos generated by party misalignments, coalition debates and dissenting views, external attacks, and the worsening of the economic conditions, the perseverance of Moro and Nenni never diminished. Finding some points of continuity, especially in the support of the American ally, appeared as the only lifeboat the center-left government had at its disposal.

¹¹⁰ Usdgd, Incoming telegram from the Embassy of Rome to the Department of State, the Embassy of London, and the White House, "The difficulties of the center-left", n. 003286, vol. 16, December 13, 1963, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 303.

¹¹¹ Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State. Paris, December 16, 1963, 6 p.m. Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 66 D 110, CF 2345. Confidential. Drafted by Meloy and concurred in by Gordon and Little. Rusk and Saragat were in Paris to attend the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, December 16–17. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹¹² Formigoni, Guido. "Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹¹³ Assr, Faf, b. 35, f. 4, Telegramma di Moro a Fanfani, September 25, 1965, cit. in A. Giovagnoli and L. Tosi, op. cit.

5.4. A coalition spoiled by wariness

The creation of the new government represented an ambitious attempt, preceded by years of a frantic search for alliances and understandings. Now that it had finally become reality, the executive had been showing signs of the internal conflict that characterized it from its earliest weeks, as numerous were the currents opposed to the success of the political line-up. The government experience appeared unstable and shot through with internal divisions within the majority parties from the very beginning. In the monitoring of the Embassy in Rome, in addition to the perplexities generated by the behavior of the Psi, a new source of concern had arisen from the dependence of political and parliamentary life on internal party debates, which conditioned and made the autonomy of the institutions increasingly difficult, now at the mercy of the party secretariats.¹¹⁴

Among all the voices taking part in the political debate, attention immediately focused on Nenni and Moro, the leaders of the main coalition parties. The intense scrutiny under which the activities of the two were put soon led the center-left through a process of personalization, turning Moro, Nenni, and their possible disagreements into the central focus of the governmental experience.¹¹⁵ For the time being, despite the compromising stance of both leaders, Moro was still faced with the need to demonstrate his capacity to hold the role of Prime Minister, while Nenni hadn't accessed the governmental arena since 1947.¹¹⁶

The weakness of the coalition mirrored the troubles through which the country was going, especially in its attempt to develop a system of power and of party alternations to grant a democratic development of the country. The Socialists immediately started looking into the relationship the Dc had developed with the national bureaucracy, moved by the purpose of enlarging the democratic base of the State through the inclusion of workers and new cultural and social strata. Nenni felt that entities such as the main centers of power, police and secret services, the Army, and the judiciary, had been shaped in the Dc's own image to develop a relationship of mutual conditioning and control, limiting the access of the population and weakening the control of Parliament over the Italian democracy.¹¹⁷ By raising the first questions about the Christian Democrats' *modus operandi*, Nenni had shown an intention to avoid the

¹¹⁴ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Formigoni, Guido. *Storia dell'Italia nella guerra fredda, 1943-1978*. Il Mulino, 2016.

¹¹⁷ Nenni, Pietro. *Gli anni del Centro Sinistra. Diari (1957-1966)*. SugarCo, 1982.

marginalization of the Socialists in government and a continuation of the Dc's maintenance of monopoly.¹¹⁸

Along with a discussion on the starting social and bureaucratic basis, the new government found itself having to handle a very tense economic situation that was stressing the financial market. According to Nenni, the positive advancements in terms of production and spread of well-being weren't matched by basic civil and social services, along with a concerning, widening gap between North and South and city and countryside. "The reorganization of the state and the planning of consumption production, more than economic miracles, condition the future of the nation in a task that requires many years."¹¹⁹ According to an analysis elaborated by the CIA in January 1964, if the new government were able to rapidly prove its real capacity to deal with the economic difficulties of the country, a successful future would be assured;¹²⁰ otherwise, the state of the economy would indeed have undermined the coalition's performance, along with the ability to actually carry out reforms and win the confidence of the public and businesses to overcome the economic crisis.¹²¹

Overall, whereas the support to the coalition guided by Moro was undeniable, the confidence in the economic development of the country raised more questions, as proved by the loan of over a billion dollars granted by the U.S. government in March 1964 to offset losses in Italian foreign exchange reserves.¹²² Despite the lack of enthusiasm of the Embassy before an unchangeable and weak stalemate, accompanied by an uncertain skepticism that awaited new developments, Americans were huddling in defense of Moro and what he stood for, trying to understand the prospects toward which Italy was heading.¹²³

Notes of dissent were originating from a wide variety of actors, as a sense of weakness that had pervaded the government, unable to reach out and engage the people, was observed.¹²⁴ It seemed that the result of the creation of the center-left wasn't living up to the expectations, except for the foreign policy area, where Saragat had managed to become a reassuring figure for the United States. Saragat was convinced that through an updated and increased role in the

¹¹⁸ Usdgd, *Special report: the Moro government's program and prospects*, Cia document, Office of Current Intelligence, n. 003073, vol. 18, January 3, 1964, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 304.

¹¹⁹ Nenni, Pietro. *Gli anni del Centro Sinistra. Diari (1957-1966)*. SugarCo, 1982.

¹²⁰ Usdgd, *Special report: the Moro government's program and prospects*, Cia document, Office of Current Intelligence, n. 003073, vol. 18, January 3, 1964, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 304

¹²¹ Usdgd, Incoming telegram from the Embassy of Rome to the Secretary of State, sent to the Embassies of Bonn, London, and Paris, n. 000863, vol. 17, March 8, 1964, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 305

¹²² Formigoni, Guido. *Storia dell'Italia nella guerra fredda, 1943-1978*. Il Mulino, 2016.

¹²³ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹²⁴ Usdgd, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *Airgram: Notes on the Italian situation*, for the Department of State, sent to the Embassies of Rome and Paris, n. 003301, vol.16, April 23, 1964, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 304.

international scenario, particularly in the Atlantic Alliance, Italy could have been able to strengthen democratic institutions and, consequently, complete the isolation of the Communist party. Through a recentering of the policy of alliance, Italy could have repositioned itself in a useful role to fulfill American interests in Europe, giving a connotation to the role of useful mediator similar to that of the Fanfani governments. As a reaction to the growing weakness of the internal scenario and of the political capacity of the government coalition, the internal contradictions were battled through a stronger and more focused foreign policy approach.¹²⁵

The growing relevance of Saragat in the American eye meant possibly thinking about working to favor a reunion between the Psdi and the Psi. The preoccupations of Moro before the foreign policy approach of the Psi, however, were too pressing of a matter, favoring American demands to identify more and better guarantees and consultations on the NATO issue for the sake of the relationship between the two countries.¹²⁶

Despite the doubts and skepticism demonstrated by the Johnson administration before the Italian crisis and expressed by a *connoisseur* like Schlesinger too, the strongest source of opposition to the work of the center-left came from the Dc's own ranks, embodied by President of the Republic Segni.

Segni had come after the turbulent years of the Gronchi presidency, despite the latter's numerous attempts to score a second mandate. The run for the Quirinale of the Christian Democrat and former Minister of Foreign Affairs had been particularly supported by Rumor and Colombo, along with the economic and clerical milieus. His win, scored with just 443 votes at the ninth ballot, had been registered as underwhelming and interpreted as a skillful move operated by Moro to counterbalance the forthcoming participation of the Socialists into government with a conservative president.¹²⁷ The Embassy, on the other hand, saw the election of Segni as a disavowal of previous months' openings.¹²⁸

As a matter of fact, Segni was well known for his anti-center-left positions, as he perceived the advancements of the Pci in electoral terms as a symptom of the excessive compromise and weakening of the Dc before the Socialists. The Embassy in Rome could not help but judge positively the departure of Gronchi and the installation of a figure like Segni: from the point of view of the stability of the forthcoming government, the future developments of Italian politics,

¹²⁵ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Pombeni, Paolo. *L'apertura. L'Italia E Il Centrosinistra (1953-1963)*. Il Mulino, 2022.

¹²⁸ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

and even the survival of the center-left experiment, Segni's victory was defined by Reinhardt as the best solution in light of the difficult circumstances in which the elections had turned. Gronchi leaving the Quirinale, on the other hand, removed a figure the United States had always viewed with suspicion from a position of extreme influence.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, the Embassy itself acknowledged that the election result was not so much based on the center-left dispute, thus not interpretable in a political sense, but definitely influenced by reasons related to the personal relations between the main Dc leaders and their struggle for power.¹³⁰

The basis of Segni's concerns stemmed from what he believed would have been the longer-range impact of the opening to the left on Italian foreign policy. The full support Segni had always granted to NATO solidarity and close friendship with the United States¹³¹ was testified by his continuous search for confirmation of an explicit Atlanticist foreign policy commitment in Dc leader Aldo Moro.¹³² Right before the beginning of his mandate, in a letter sent to Italian Ambassador Fenoaltea, he had revealed his doubts about the center-left based on the certainty that "an Italian government supported by socialists will slide toward almost neutralist positions even with formal deference to the Alliance. But I fear the most serious complication of the strengthening of internal communism that will take us from neutralist positions to pro-Soviet positions."¹³³

The disapproval and the preoccupations expressed by Segni about the political situation and the growth of the Pci, along with at most tolerating the center-left, had often been shared with the Kennedy administration and the Embassy, to the point of revealing to the President through confidential telegrams suspicions and hostility toward the experiment.¹³⁴ During the Presidential visit of the summer of 1963, Segni had particularly requested a private encounter with Kennedy, without any other ministers, so to speak freely of his opposition to the center-left. Particularly, Segni couldn't understand "President Kennedy's unwarranted support for the center-left idea,"¹³⁵ an experiment that Segni even tried to obstruct during the formation of the

¹²⁹ Mura, Salvatore. *Antonio Segni. La politica e le istituzioni*. Il Mulino, 2017.

¹³⁰ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹³¹ Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State. London, June 24, 1962, 7 p.m. Department of State, Central Files, 611.65/6-2462. Secret; Priority; No Other Distribution. In FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, *Western Europe and Canada*, Documents 278-323.

¹³² Nenni, Pietro. *Gli anni del Centro Sinistra. Diari (1957-1966)*. SugarCo, 1982.

¹³³ Segni, Antonio. *Diario (1956-1964)*, Il Mulino, 2012.

¹³⁴ Mura, Salvatore. *Antonio Segni. La politica e le istituzioni*. Il Mulino, 2017.

¹³⁵ Background Paper, The Role of President Segni in Italian politics, January 7, 1964, in NAW, RG 84, Rome emb. CF 1962-64, b. 1, f. 030 Visit of Pres. Segni, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 658.

Moro government in the fall of 1963, telling the Americans, when he had to give in, that he had at least demanded that key political ministries be firmly controlled by "safe" political figures.¹³⁶ Through the recount of these episodes, it is possible to draw a thin line connecting the *modus operandi* of the Gronchi presidency with the Segni one, especially making note of the blame imputed to Gronchi for behaviors outside of the constitutional areas, but finally replicated by one of his own accusers. The growing nervousness of the new President of the Republic manifested itself several times in an attempt to overrule the government, similar to what Gronchi had been blamed for in the past, but this time to correct the government's domestic and foreign policy from the right.¹³⁷

Moving from the Embassy's evaluation that "Segni is against the new government headed by Moro. It is to be assumed that he is working to bring it down sooner rather than later. His critical role is becoming more and more explicit,"¹³⁸ the Department of State was careful in recommending to President Johnson not to give Segni the idea of pandering to his ideas regarding Italian politics, as he might have sought to yield apparent presidential support against the Moro government. It was essential not to share with Segni the doubts and sources of tension noted by the Embassy in particular about the conduct of the center-left government, wanting to avoid encouraging activities that could have weakened the government even indirectly.¹³⁹

The aforementioned feeling of skepticism and confusion that the Italian situation was generating in the American interlocutor, matched by the fear that Italian democracy could have evolved backward because of the incapacity to consolidate party collaboration, didn't leave the former Dc leader Fanfani out of the picture. The current led by him, which played a role of disturbance in the activities of the new government, was characterized by the conviction that the center-left wasn't irreversible, indirectly asking for the abandonment of the Socialist party. According to a hasty judgment passed by the CIA on Fanfani's future possible moves, the tactic pursued looked for an increased position of prestige and personal power, potentially waiting for the center-left's failure to regain weight within the party and possibly, the conduction of a future government.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Formigoni, Guido. "Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹³⁷ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

¹³⁸ Usdgd, Incoming telegram from the Embassy of Rome to the Secretary of State, Francis T. Williamson, n. 003308, vol. 16, January 8, 1964, cit. in U. Gentiloni Silveri, op. cit., p. 304.

¹³⁹ Memorandum for the President by the Secretary of State, "Your Meeting with President Segni", January 9, 1964, in NAW, RG 84, Rome emb. CF 1962-64, b. 1, f. 030 Visit of Pres. Segni, cit. in L. Nuti, op. cit., p. 658.

¹⁴⁰ Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *L'Italia E La Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti E Centro-Sinistra, 1958-1965*. Il Mulino, 1998.

Nonetheless, the actual interpretation of the non-irreversibility of the center-left seemed more to be intended as a necessity not to be conditioned by the Psi and Psdi strategies rather than going back on the Dc word. The American evaluation glossed over Fanfani's removal from all party and government leadership positions and foreign policy responsibilities for nearly two years. Once back on the public scene, Fanfani had revived the theme of concerns and necessary actions to establish a specific international horizon for peace. The most important aspect, however, was his renewed commitment to still support a slow, yet unified recomposition in the management of the party. His fundamental goal remained that of urging a more pronounced Christian Democrat initiative to take over center-left politics, which was beginning to be worn down by the critical economic situation and by what he interpreted as contradictory pressures from the Dc's minor allies.¹⁴¹

The irreparable crisis that ushered in the first summer of the center-left, at the end of June 1964, demonstrated once again Aldo Moro's mediating ability and, at the same time, the necessity of improving the understanding between the Dc and the Psi and the inherent weakness of the shared governing agreement. The fall of the Moro government had been unexpected, and clarity was being demanded of Nenni's party. The resolution of such a difficult moment would result in the formation of the second Moro government in July of the same year, still marked by the same weaknesses and contradictions, but also by a desire of the Socialists to remain in government and the Dc to redeem itself.

The launching of the second Moro government on July 22, 1964, marked a definitive break from the hard line followed to create a center-left at the beginning of the decade. As a tumultuous wave of reconstruction and modernization settled in, the second Moro government opened up a new phase of mediation and rationalization of a political system that had been put under too much stress.¹⁴² The Christian Democrat Party, which, in Moro's words, had to "become an alternative to itself."

The inauguration of a new course also brought on the consolidation of the center-left as the new orthodoxy in relations between Rome and Washington, just as centrism had been in the 1950s: a formula that was flawed, precarious, and destined for a life as troubled as ever, but far better, from the American point of view, than all the other alternatives available.¹⁴³ If the July 1964

¹⁴¹ Formigoni, Guido. "Fanfani, la Dc e la ricerca di un nuovo discorso di politica estera (1954-1968)" *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, edited by Agostino Giovagnoli e Luciano Tosi, Marsilio Editore, 2016.

¹⁴² Marchi, Michele. "Italian Democracy and Republic between the Antifascist Victory and the Cold War." *Ricerche Di Storia Politica, Quadrimestrale Dell'Associazione per Le Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, il Mulino, no. speciale/2022, 2022, pp. 55-66.

¹⁴³ Nuti, Leopoldo. *Gli Stati Uniti E l'Apertura a Sinistra. Importanza E Limiti Della Presenza Americana in Italia*. Editori Laterza, 1999.

crisis did not end in a showdown, as Segni secretly hoped, it was also because those who had sought it could not count on the support of the United States. In Washington, in fact, a vision of Italian politics had become established that gave the center-left an irreplaceable role in keeping the Italian system in balance.¹⁴⁴

The trajectory of it, however, will be marked by two deeply significant events in the course of Italian history and politics: the death of Palmiro Togliatti and the sudden cerebral thrombosis of Antonio Segni, which will leave him alive but paralyzed. The concurrent disappearance from the national scene of two of the strongest opponents of the center-left, after years of battles and strenuous opposition, would change the political order in ways still unknown, while the attempt to include all components in the constitutional perimeter and political-social system to boost Italian democracy would continue until the end of the First Republic.

¹⁴⁴ Varsori, Antonio. *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*. Il Mulino, 2022.

Conclusions

So what was the influence of the United States in the political process that led to the formation of the center-left? What role did the Embassy of Via Veneto really play?

The six-years-period considered has allowed for a reconstruction of almost the entirety of the process of opening to the left, reaching its climax in 1963. The position of most actors involved in the experiment profoundly changed throughout it all, starting from 1957-1958, when the forces opposed to any form of rapprochement between the Dc and the Psi were favored by the domestic context and especially by the policies enacted by the American ally both within the country and indirectly, at an international level. The slow path of conversion of Washington and especially of its diplomatic representation was as challenging as the creation of the center-left was, defined by a high degree of doubts, skepticism, alarmism, and a general sense of confusion in attempting to untangle the complex Italian skein.

Under both administrations considered, the biggest source of American concerns originated from the potential foreign policies that a Dc-Psi government might have pursued. U.S. officials had reconstructed the fil rouge that moved from Fanfani and his neo-Atlanticist aspirations to the goals pursued by Enrico Mattei, a staunch ideological and financial supporter of the center-left. The creation of it, therefore, could have spiked interest in achieving a higher degree of independence and relevance in the Mediterranean and Western context, introducing neutralist positions inspired by the Psi's foreign views that would have undermined Italy's membership in NATO, and ultimately, the country's relations with the U.S.

The undulating course of the opening was obviously influenced by the differing attitudes of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, in its ways and timing. At the beginning of the analysis, for instance, the relevance and influence of the Boothe Luce triennium still played a relevant part in the promotion of an unwavering anti-Communist position of the Embassy, derailing any attempt to even approach the Socialists from afar. In particular, the absolute refusal to let Nenni ride the wave of international détente to mimic it internally led to the failure of the proposal for a center-left experiment, conceived in 1955–1956, instead insisting on the prolonging the purification of the Psi until 1960, when U.S. doubts regarding the actual detachment from the party's earlier pro-Sovietism had softened but not completely faltered.

In this regard, the early U.S. opposition to the opening to the left allowed the Socialist-Christian Democrat encounter to unroll on a less dangerous basis than if it had taken place in the early 1950s. Particularly, the diametric changes in the opinions of early center-left supporters, Nenni in particular, were indicative of how the international context and American influence changed the experiment, abandoning its neutralistic goals in favor of a Western and democratic character.

Despite the undeniable influence and presence of the United States in Italy, its absolute dominance in the process of opening to the left cannot be overestimated. The U.S. presence in Italy was so important that no Italian political force could ignore it, especially the way that the Roman Embassy projected American influence in the country and its political life. The significant effort made to preserve the best possible relationship with the United States, as demonstrated by the high regard that Italian politicians held for the American ambassador and other Embassy staff, and the relevance of the trips to Washington for important Italian political figures, testify how indispensable American support was at the end of the day.

Nonetheless, the mistake of considering the United States as an omnipotent force that ruled over Italian domestic dynamics shouldn't be made. The domestic affairs of Italy remained an internal matter, sometimes pushed towards economic and social improvements to advance the structure of the country and align it with American strategies, but nonetheless in the hands of its own national protagonists in terms of tactics, strategies, and political culture. As long as the Christian Democracy, the favored ally since the post-war period, continued leading the country in the Western and Atlantic scope and on an anti-Communist note, the details of ruling didn't concern the United States. As a matter of fact, the high degree of autonomy often brought domestic and some international strategies, especially during the Fanfani-Mattei neo-Atlanticist alignment, at odds with the interests of the United States. Essentially, similarly to the way in which the country proceeded to "Italianize" the Americanization of the way of life and its customs during the Marshall Plan years, an experience that was solely registered in Italy, even the process of including the Socialists in government took place with a distinct and non-manipulable national trait, putting a peculiar, domestic accent on the attempted foreign policy goals that the United States had been pursuing in the West for the sake of its interests.

In the Eisenhower administration, in particular, the American strategy didn't always succeed: Giovanni Gronchi was elected to the presidency of the Republic despite representing and

supporting some of the claims that went against the U.S. strategy in Italy, particularly support for the enfranchisement of the Psi and increasing Italy's position on the international stage. Furthermore, the Eisenhower administration also had to adapt to the coming and going of Fanfani, attempting to launch him as a dynamic and reformist leader but also witnessing the internal divisions his persona caused to the party. The U.S. also worked significantly to attempt to stop any form of contact between the Dc and the Psi but the wait-and-see attitude adopted by the Embassy and Department of State will merely let the process of opening to the left continue without American supervision rather than convincing the centrist party to desist.

The Kennedy administration severely amped up the reformist pressure vis-à-vis the Eisenhower times, as during this period American diplomats pushed for the Italian government to adopt political and social reforms to match the country's economic modernization. Through these reforms, they believed, the Communist Party's propaganda among the poorest sections of the population would be weakened, and the Pci isolated.

Nonetheless, the administration wasn't able to play that impactful of a role both because the center-left deal was too close to being sealed and especially because of the internal divisions in analyzing and handling the process. The paradox of the Kennedy years had allowed for the direct emissaries of the President to openly support and scheme for the opening to the left, granting the absolute support of the administration, while Kennedy continued not to intervene nor to speak about the Italian events, allowing for the Department of State to continue its campaign of skepticism, detachment, and wait-and-see positioning, justified by the following of the official diplomatic line.

However, it is of absolute certainty that, although belated, the favor portrayed by President Kennedy facilitated and accelerated the closing of the deal. By 1963, when the process of the opening to the left reached its climax through many difficulties, the support granted by the administration, Department, and finally the U.S. Embassy in Rome to bring in the new course, finally turned the situation in favor of the supporters of the center-left. If one thinks of all the obstacles and contradictions that accompanied the formation of the first Moro government, it is hard to imagine how he and Nenni would have succeeded in their efforts to bring the Psi into the majority if the Kennedy administration had displayed hostility rather than support.

At least partially, the softening of the American position and the overall feeling of trust in the government majority finally reached surely positively influenced the ongoing national

discussion. Albeit more helpful than the clear opposition of the 50s, the wait-and-see attitude displayed until that point, along with the close monitoring of the continuation of the Psi detachment from Communist ties and particularly of the actions of Nenni, hadn't favored the state of the relations.

At the basis of the American strategy under both presidencies was the desire to avoid being blamed as the force that had caused the ultimate failure of the center-left, but also being pointed as one of the forces that had supported its creation. All in all, the goal of the U.S. was that of observing and monitoring the situation, potentially intervening if its interests were at stake, but ultimately letting Italy deal with the entirety of the experiment by itself.

This narration fits well into the description of a later State Department intelligence analyst, Tom Fina, of the impact of U.S. policies in Italy, "the United States there, and in other places in the world, frequently has what you might call the *tilting power* to shift decisions marginally one way or another. And we had resources at that time, financial resources, political resources, friends, the ability to blackmail, all the things that a great power at the peak of its power traditionally has done [when] dealing with its friends and its enemies."

In the effort to convert Italian democracy from a centrist orientation to a center-left formation, the transformation, at least partially, of the American opinion toward Nenni helped pave the way for change. This allowed for the proposed opening to the left to gain momentum, even though some American representatives, like Schlesinger, had been advocating for a higher degree of support for a long time, so as to ensure a steadier and faster success of the opening. For this, it is realistic to assume that a degree of influence, particularly on the external environment, on the creation of the center-left depended on the clearance of the United States, with all the implications that came along. In this regard, it may even be debated that in part, some of the Italian choices and the determination at times shown in favor of the center-left depended on a desire to please the United States on the issue. Essentially, some of the decisions made at the national level were partly motivated by the belief that the United States strongly wanted the Italian partner to proceed in this way, even though the great divisions between the Department, Embassy, and Presidency often seemed to prove otherwise.

The American influence on the matter still needs to be placed in a broader context of the evolution of U.S. Western foreign policy, which consequently transformed the basic contours of the Italian political system. The continuous struggle to defeat Communists also through more localized strategies culminated in potentially the biggest failure of the American tactic in Italy in the center-left framework, both in terms of analysis/forecasts and in the long-term reformist

benefits of the Socialist entrance into government. The failed attempt to limit the influence of the Pci, isolating it to the margins of Italian politics, led to the imagined bold reformist boost falling short of the mark. While Italy was strongly kept aligned with the Western camp, within which its role and reliability increased, the Pci remained on the scene, occasionally scoring some electoral successes, and in general, continuing to answer to the portion of the population that wasn't touched by the economic boost of the late 50s, and instead had now fallen prey of the increasing city-countryside and north-south gap. All in all, the long-term anti-Pci policy failed right in the country where the strongest Western Communist party operated, and the various attempts made with a purpose of opposition, either encouraging a reformist process or calling for the implementation of a more aggressive policy toward it, have always slipped out of American hands.

The slow implementation of the center-left contributed to downsizing its reforming effectiveness, leading its actuation to coincide with the first phase of economic recession after the uninterrupted expansion of the previous years and thus making it more difficult for the first Moro government to enact those reforms that could have been the backbone of the new course. From this point of view, the long gestation of the experiment produced a result contrary to the expectations of the United States, which had ultimately bet on the center-left precisely because of its alleged reformist capacity.

The supposed transformation of Italian democracy became more of a formal exercise than an actual change. Soon enough, Italy once again fell into the trap of immobilism, attempting to enlarge the democratic base to include as many forces as possible to avoid imminent paralysis, while expecting such elements to take up their own role in the distribution and management of power, accepting the substantial maintenance of the general framework established in 1948 with the Dc at its head.

The United States, influent but not omnipotent, couldn't do anything besides ensuring that its interests continued being guaranteed. Truth is that the center-left hadn't been born from a desire to widen the political system or to reach a form of democratic alternation like in the rest of the European political systems. The opening to the left had failed to go beyond the rationalization of a political system that, in order not to implode because of tensions deriving from a significant historical change, had to forcefully adapt itself to a new frame of reference compatible with it. As *Il Mulino* had concluded in 1963, "To understand the historical significance of the center-left and its values and ends, it may be appropriate to identify the historical situation in which it originated. The center-left was not born out of a revolutionary situation, nor did it derive from intense popular pressure: it was formed as a shift in a parliamentary balance, advised to the

most astute politicians by the attrition of previous political balances, and was made possible by the rising wave of the economic miracle which is leading our economy to the stage of neo-capitalism, introducing mass consumption, high wages, the ideology of prosperity.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ *Per un esame di coscienza degli amici del centro-sinistra*, in “Il Mulino”, 129, July 1963.

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Summary

Starting from 1957, with the advent of the second Eisenhower presidency, the United States was pursuing a strong clash with the Soviet bloc. The Communist forces were opposed and untrusted, and although the direct intervention in European countries had turned into a more nuanced and passive one, the Old Continent was still relying on the United States for legitimation and external support. With economies blossoming and societies adapting to more modern, at times imported lifestyles, the focus of the West could finally move on prioritizing the development of political and military substructures, such as the European project and the Atlantic Alliance.

Italy appeared, in the mid-50s, as a country finally able to stand on its own feet, hustling towards a time of economic benefit, on the path to regain its position as a middle power, and consequently, able to develop international ambitions too. Right before the political momentum of Amintore Fanfani, Aldo Moro, and Pietro Nenni began, the country appeared to be reaching the objectives that the United States had expected: total support to the Atlantic Alliance (although a defensive contribution was still lacking), a governmental power to the center-right coalition, absolute denial of any opening to the left, and most importantly, alignment with its most trusted ally, the United States, and promotion of the latter's democratic values.

On its part, the U.S. was still closely following the internal developments of Italy, recognizing its merits, acknowledging its requests, and registering its chronic flaws. Italy was abiding by the rules of a pro-Western, Atlantic country, with governments publicly supporting the American ally and attempting to fulfill the country's commitments. Some degree of supervision was still deemed necessary, especially in the Mediterranean setting, where the requests for further consultation and the aspirations for a more prominent role could have led Italy to search for higher forms of autonomy. Nonetheless, the United States perceived 1957 Italy as a mostly stabilized, loyal, and engaged country, whose achievements in turn favored American interests. The 1958 electoral results confirmed the strategy implemented until then, with significant support granted to the Christian Democracy and its pivotal role within governmental coalitions. During this time, the United States had specially kept Dc leader Amintore Fanfani close, as he was considered the most effective and reliable representative of American goals in the country. His feelings of sincere friendship toward the United States and pro-Atlantic orientation were

unquestionable, and his pragmatism made his reformist plans free from ideological constraints. His strong leadership, at least until the rise of the Moro one, had always pleased American institutions, as they also benefited from the full recognition granted by Fanfani to the ally. Not only had Fanfani been aiming at implementing forward-looking social and economic reforms, aligned with the contents of the NSC 5411/2, but especially he had been perceived as the most cooperative of supporters of U.S. and NATO policy, dispelling fears of Italian neutralism and third-worldism.

Despite the notable level of shared trust, Fanfani also looked for ways to improve Italy's international stance autonomously. During his time as the head of government, Fanfani held a primary role in defining Italian foreign policy and attempted to guide it past the European and Atlantic boundaries. According to the neo-Atlanticist interpretation of Italian foreign policy that the ruling class pursued at the end of the decade, Italy should have achieved a higher degree of autonomy to reconcile its Western and Mediterranean souls, bringing the country to an equal level with its allies through mutual and ongoing political consultation and autonomous regional initiatives. The freer action toward newly independent countries through autonomous initiatives in the Mediterranean basin was theoretically enacted within an Atlantic, Western, and American framework. This way, Fanfani aimed at increasing the relevance of Italy as a middle power within the Alliance, becoming the regional meeting point for the West and the Middle East.

During the Fanfani and Gronchi years, Italy often called for more continuous forms of consultation, attempting to transform Italy into an active contributor to the handling of Atlantic and Western matters. The international role that Italy attempted to gain at the end of the 50s would have served the country in achieving a prominent position within the West, giving Italy a higher degree of independence and freedom of action, which would have been employed to favor the United States' goals, keep the USSR out of the newly independent countries, and fulfill the Italian *vocazione mediterranea*.

In the end, the United States ultimately recognized that Fanfani's policy would have been useful to the Atlantic alliance and accepted a certain degree of neo-Atlanticism. However, they only granted formal support and recognition to the cause, fulfilling the national ambition to offer stability to the Dc through an appearance of prestige and partnership. Any form of substantial recognition of Fanfani's aspirations was pushed away to avoid repercussions on American interests. Said policy struggled to take off also because of the issues of neo-Atlanticism that had

manifested when connected with developments in the national and international frameworks. Similarly to the internal political arena, Fanfani forever lacked the power tools to be recognized as part of the greater allies.

Differently from the overall alignment with the United States operated by Fanfani, President of the Republic Giovanni Gronchi never made a mystery of his “leftward and neutral” orientation. Fanfani was aware that the Mediterranean vocation of the country would depend on the support of the United States, taking into consideration the benefits the latter could have drawn from it. Gronchi, on the other hand, always seemed to be playing on the razor's edge, looking for points of contact and support from the United States while both supporting the opening to the left and a more incisive role for Italy in the Mediterranean area, potentially stemming from a patriotic and nationalistic spirit.

The Gronchi years were lived by the Roman Embassy and the Department of State with a feeling of distrust and apprehension, also considering the attempts made by Gronchi to broaden the powers of his office by taking action along lines where the Constitution presented gray areas or no clear precedent. The sense of instability perceived by the United States when relating to Gronchi shifted in the foreign policy arena too, where through claims of neutralism and calls for consultation, all within the Atlantic framework, Gronchi relentlessly worked to advance the status of Italy and push those personalities that could have allowed Italy to achieve said improvement.

Gronchi and Fanfani's aspirations converged on the figure of Enrico Mattei. Mattei's main goal as the head of Eni was to bring Italy to energy self-sufficiency at a cheap price, due to the scarce underground resources of the country. This purpose tied into the desire for Italy to be more powerful, independent, and capable of defining its own international stance. Both Mattei's relationship with Gronchi and Fanfani fit right into this new role imagined for Italy. The incisiveness and determination of Mattei's actions, with the Iranian deal being the major example of this, further inspired the country to develop an international approach with the same characteristics. The notable role that Eni was building in the international scenario had given a pulse to the new course of national foreign policy, especially in reviving the *vocazione mediterranea*. For this, both the Prime Minister and President of the Republic supported Mattei as a way to promote the government's international projects and aspirations.

Not only an alignment existed in terms of foreign goals and rhetoric but also internally. Mattei never made a mystery of being a staunch supporter of the opening to the left, rubbing off on Fanfani as well. Perhaps the biggest point of contrast between Italian forces and the Embassy and Department of State was exactly represented by these domestic and international aspirations. The ruthless games played by Mattei in the Mediterranean soon transcended the commercial sector and entered the political one, potentially undermining the excellent relations between the two partners. Whereas the Italian political class had attempted to create a point of contact with American institutions and the major oil companies, the U.S. formally maintained a line of neutrality and non-interference in oil affairs. Nevertheless, a high level of tension and concern towards Mattei's actions and the support offered by Italian diplomacy remained until the death of the head of Eni in 1962.

The formation of the Segni government in 1959 will bring back a degree of order and expected adherence to American standards, both internally and in the Atlanticist arena. The Department will be able to push forward for a little longer a revision of the American strategy in the country but the violence of the summer of 1960 with the Tambroni government will bring the NSC 6014 plan to life.

At the end of the Eisenhower presidency, Enrico Mattei continued to pursue high-stake interests in the Mediterranean and the USSR, with Gronchi and Fanfani supporting the beneficial aspects of his efforts. The United States always kept a close eye on the neo-Atlanticist assertions, as they believed they constituted the framework for the opening to the left process as often, the forces that advocated a new neo-Atlantic course were the same ones that looked at opening up to the socialist forces with interest. Mattei too, morally and economically, always stood as one of the major supporters of the process.

A *fil rouge* connected all the events of the end of the decade: the process of opening to the left could have weakened the Atlantic Alliance and in general, threatened Italy's pro-Western stance, while also favoring the forces that pushed for a higher degree of neutralism and, in turn, of detachment from the United States.

Another source of weakness for the Italian role in the West and in the relationship with the U.S. was represented by the Ps and its growing political ambitions.

The evolution of the Psi throughout the 50s was all but linear. A period of international *détente* had created a favorable setting for Psi leader Pietro Nenni to attempt to inaugurate a new phase

of its party, one made of more autonomy and more impact on the domestic political scenario. Initially, the Socialist leader didn't see the need to upgrade the fundamentals of the party to adapt it to the internal context, especially in the foreign policy realm and in regard to NATO. A detachment from the historical Communist ally was also not in the books, as Nenni was looking to create a third way between the two domestic and international block orientations.

The intense and close relationship with the Communist party, instated from a shared purpose and moral alignment, defined the party for a good part of its history, delaying its development as an independent entity and complicating the reform of the Italian political setting. The ties set between the two parties especially in the trade union, municipal, and provincial environments proved extremely difficult to unravel. Furthermore, leaving the Pci behind would have created significant economic issues for the Psi, which would have to stop relying on Moscow's funds, and it would have entailed some level of power-sharing with Psdi leader Saragat.

On the other hand, whereas the Christian Democracy remained receptive and somewhat supportive of the very slow process of enfranchisement operated by the Psi, the Psdi counterpart, guided by Saragat, deemed Nenni and the autonomist portion of the party as inconclusive in its goals and dangerous for the country. Despite the events of 1956, from the 20th Congress of PCUS to the Prolognan talks, and especially the Budapest events, which could have been a strong nudge in the reunification direction, a rapprochement between the parties will not happen until 1966.

These dynamics of attempting to change some aspects of the ideology and alignment of the party remained closely observed by the United States and its bodies in the country. The reunion of the Socialist forces, according to the Department of State, was to take place only when times would be mature, which entailed an effective separation of the Psi from the Pci, especially in foreign policy, and a rapprochement led mostly by the Social Democratic forces, promoting interests in line with the American ones. If the coming together of the forces or the entry of the Psi into government were to happen too soon, this could have led to the Communists penetrating the center of the political scene and demolishing the anti-Communist efforts made by the United States in Italy for the past two decades. The implementation of a ju-jitsu kind of strategy on the American part aimed at playing a more passive and disengaged role, one to exploit the weaknesses and the internal tensions of the Italian left in order to disorganize it and generate more confusion within its ranks instead of a sentiment of solidarity among Leftist forces. Tests

to evaluate the factual detachment of the Psi from the Pci that went past a formal discourse and desire continued to be made.

With the beginning of the new decade and the rise of a new administration, the fear of the left remained the pivot on which the United States tried to strengthen its position in Italy, accompanied by further tests of the reliability of the center-left path. The NSC 6014 basically left the process of opening to the left poised in between supporting forces and opposers doubting the reliability of the Psi, while the general distrust oriented towards Nenni hardly improved. The Psi generated less fear of being able to change the fates of the entire Italian political system, with Nenni mostly abstaining from playing a determining role for the moment, but a sentiment about doubt of the achievement of independence remained in the background. For the time being, the only strategy the U.S. could think of enacting without openly supporting or denigrating the opening to the left process was that of encouraging the autonomist forces to continue on this path of independence.

The opening to the left, in the meantime, was growing more oriented on the implementation of social reforms and the definition of a new form of democracy, one that would abandon the static situation of immobilism that had paralyzed the Italian political system in the mid-50s. The change in the administration brought a breath of fresh air for the opening to the left process. The kick-off of the New Frontier had inaugurated a time of promised progress and reforms, encouraging the moderate Left forces in Italy to strive for a more dynamic foreign policy approach, and most importantly, advancements in the creation of the center-left. Overall appreciation had been shown to John F. Kennedy by Italy since its win: he was proof that Catholicism and progressivism could exist together without interference. In terms of country-wide support, an alignment could have been drawn between Kennedyian reformism and the aspirations of Italian political leaders. Furthermore, the two states found similarities even in their stances towards international affairs, all signs of an upcoming proficient collaboration.

The end of the Eisenhower administration had also brought new diplomatic representatives to Via Veneto, operating a differentiation of roles. Through direct emissaries like roving ambassador W. Harriman and special assistant A. Schlesinger, the administration started presenting the implications of its new foreign policy course, while also testing the grounds of the Italian ally in terms of domestic policy. On the other hand, the appointed Ambassador Reinhard managed the diplomatic course in a more general sense.

A degree of continuity with the Eisenhower period was maintained, at least initially, like the shared foreign policy goals and the centrality of NATO. Furthermore, the Dc and Psdi continued to be the most relevant points of reference in a weak political system but a new interlocutor had taken over the primacy of Fanfani. New Dc Secretary Aldo Moro had managed to keep the party together, playing a mediating and conciliatory role within the Dc while also bringing all political forces together to create the government of “convergenze parallele”.

In the meantime, Moro continued supporting and working for the creation of the center-left, despite the awareness of the domestic and international complications that this would have created. To him, in fact, the enlargement of the democratic basis of the Italian Republic was the only way left to move past the centrist immobilism, continuing to promote values of freedom and democracy. With a clear goal in mind, Moro had looked for presidential support to the cause right away, leveraging the common goal of isolating the communists.

The Italian Socialist Party, however, hadn't made the endeavor easy. In 1961, the split of the Psi from the Pci still hadn't completely taken place in trade unions and local administration; most importantly, the changes introduced in the party's foreign policy position hadn't been incisive enough to believe the party was truly reformed. Aside from the continuing internal divisions between the pro-Communist forces and Nenni's autonomist ones, a neutralist stance was maintained as the official foreign line brought on by the party. This carried damaging implications for the improvement of American support to the cause of opening to the left, as the estimate of the credibility of the Psi's separation from the Pci would be measured in the foreign policy changes made by the former to align to the Christian Democratic line of conduct. Moro's biggest struggle fit right into the uncertainty about the future of Italian alliances and foreign policy, as the differences in long-term foreign policy objectives with respect to NATO were too strikingly different for the Dc to justify a realignment.

Similar to the slow adjustment of the Psi to Christian Democrat standards, the Department of State and Rome Embassy had also failed to drastically improve their support of the Psi. The Psi was continuously pushed towards a higher degree of autonomy, but caution and detachment remained at the bottom of the relationship, while the Department still struggled to define how to support and operate within the process of opening to the left. The partial opening that Via Veneto was starting to accept in terms of municipal and provincial collaboration with the Psi was still quite far from considering an entrance of the Socialist party at the national level,

considering that Nenni hadn't given up on his neutralist foreign policy stance nor had appeared to be truly fighting against the Pci.

The relevant difference between the position of the Department vis-à-vis that of the administration remained a constant factor of instability throughout the 60s. Whereas the Embassy, represented in its stance by Horsey, highlighted the risks that came with the opening to the left, the administration, through the persona of Lister and after his departure, of Schlesinger, focused on the opportunities and benefits that would come along with the opening. The latter group believed that, through warm support and the granting of finances, the U.S. could have operated in favor of the opening to the left, not only working for the isolation of the Communist forces but also bringing about social and economic processes of modernization that Italy was still behind on.

The desire to avoid holding a passive and detached stance towards the Psi and the process of inclusion of it in government manifested itself in the relationships held by some administration representatives with the domestic forces that supported the opening to the left. In particular, the Conference held in Bologna by *Il Mulino* in April 1961 served to establish direct contacts between the Mulino group and American intellectuals and politicians, along with a network of extra-institutional connections that helped the formulation of American policy towards Italy in the moment of need. The conference, titled "The international policy of the United States and the responsibilities of Europe", wished to bring together intellectuals of reference to the New Frontier from the U.S. and Europe. In the domestic setting, on the other hand, the debate on the progressive stance of the Kennedyian foreign policy aimed at favorably influencing the Italian Left, especially the Psi, and potentially encouraging a faster ideological revision. Furthermore, the opening to the left was going to be contextualized in a larger process of change to bring Europe up to speed with the progressive element of the new administration's foreign policy. The results generated by it represented a framework of reference for a larger political redefinition of Western relations, the concepts of freedom and democracy, and a need for renewal shared by the Kennedy administration.

Among those that found a new degree of interest in the process of creation of the center-left, the presence of Kennedy's special assistant, Arthur Schlesinger, in Bologna, turned him into a close friend and supporter for part of the Italian political forces. Schlesinger represented those that believed the administration needed to embrace the opportunities that a coalition

government with the Psi would have brought to the efforts of isolating the Pci forces. Thanks to his proximity to Kennedy, he was able to bring the cause to his attention, gaining the President's sympathy for the cause and support for Schlesinger's actions to further the center-left agenda.

Despite the presidential go-ahead to continue toward the opening to the left, it took two more years for the Department of State to comply and to move past its diffidence and rejection. To it, the center-left was a possibility rather than a necessity, therefore, aside from encouragement of Psi independence, the official line held by the State Department and the Embassy was one of non-interference. This attitude was linked to the attempt at avoiding being clearly identified as a determining supporting or opposing force in the completion of the opening.

One of the motives behind the slow adaptation of the Department to the official administration line was the lack of continuous involvement from Kennedy past the few moments that required his direct intervention, like his July 1963 trip. The President's attitude of backing up the supporters of the center-left gave Schlesinger a degree of freedom of action, while also not officially changing the position of the U.S. and forcing it on the Department of State, allowing for the gap between the official, rigid Department's position, and an unofficial, progressive White House one, to grow.

Another characterizing element in the years of the Kennedy administration was the game played by Enrico Mattei and the efforts to keep him in check. Whereas the Eisenhower administration mostly followed Mattei's actions in the Middle East, from 1958, the principal interlocutor had become the USSR, which offered crude at cheaper prices than the average market. The economic benefits of identifying the USSR as a major economic partner were advantageous enough to exactly fit in Mattei's plan of acquiring resources at a low price for Italy. Throughout the years, in fact, Mattei had managed to develop a form of trade based on exchange operations with Moscow, based on the acquisition of tons of crude oil at low prices in return for material and technological inventories.

According to the head of Eni, the decision to move east-ward had been somewhat forced by the hostility of the American majors and their practice of artificial techniques in the market through the imposition of very high prices for Middle Eastern oil, an action that didn't comply with normal competition laws. Mattei didn't necessarily prefer to negotiate with the USSR but

following his policy of energy self-sufficiency, the low cost of Russian supplies had been too advantageous.

Despite the limited consideration of the Seven Sisters of Mattei's actual influencing power, the U.S. – Italian relations still took a toll following Eni's Russian deal. Eni and the Italian government were immediately reprimanded by Western chancelleries and oil companies, considering that a form of dependency on Soviet crude had now been created, strengthening of the Communist bloc and its industrial development through the supply of goods, and ultimately, endangering all Western countries.

The Italian government, with Fanfani at its head, never appeared too alarmed by Mattei's action. For a long time, there had been an attempt to mediate and bring the majors to work with Eni but the disregard of any cooperation proposal on the American part had made the deal with the USSR feel more than justified. The diplomatic mediation surrounding this turn of events continued during Kennedy's administration, which could have potentially offered a clean slate to redefine an ad hoc synergy of partnership.

In the first talks held by the administration with Mattei, the head of Eni had manifested his disappointment towards the discrimination and Western failure to establish satisfactory deals with Eni or offer advantageous conditions to the producing countries. The goal was still to solve the complex about being short of energy, a goal to achieve with whoever granted Eni the most profitable and advantageous conditions.

The last year before Mattei's death was spent trying to develop a new strategy of cooperation to downsize the threat presented by Eni. Now that the administration had decided to support the entry of the Socialist party into the governmental coalition, it was necessary to tie all loose strings and ensure tight control of all aspects of the process. Mattei being a supporter of the center-left and having partially influenced the 1962 government, made it necessary for the Department to have him as an ally rather than a loose cannon, both to take advantage of his national weight and to limit his destructive power.

The political strategy developed in this regard was to establish a profitable collaboration between Eni and American oil companies, granting him recognition and compromising to the point of helping Italy exit the group of oil-poor countries. However, the oil companies' initial reactions to the politically agreed project were not positive, slowing the State Department's execution of it to seek common ground with the majors.

By 1962, the pressure of the Department of State had served to reach an agreement between Exxon and Eni, proof that hostile feelings could have been substituted by cooperation through negotiation, finally leading to neutralization. Mattei's death never allowed for such development to take place.

The 1962-1963 biennium proved a challenging time for many other reasons other than Mattei's sudden death, the majority of which was related to the political turmoil Italy was undergoing in working to achieve the center-left.

While the Embassy continued holding its wait-and-see attitude, watching the 1962 political crisis unfold amid the administration's complaints, Moro had very clearly indicated his intentions to open to the Psi before the next elections, set for April 1963. On the occasion of the Dc National Congress of January 1962, Moro had been confirmed party secretary with a wide majority, a result that validated his efforts in terms of the center-left experiment, effectively opening the doors for the creation of a new governmental majority. The Congress had the merit of reuniting the various party currents and appeasing internal clashes thanks to the constant effort of its secretary to mediate and keep the party together.

Right as the Congress ended, the governmental crisis opened up with the abandonment of the government majority of the Pri and Psdi, following Moro's approval of the plan to form a new government supported externally by the Psi. Finally, the Dc had abandoned once and for all the possibility of looking at the right to create new government formations; the Tambroni experience had been too negatively impactful to even consider injecting such a degree of instability in the democratic system again, a decision that the United States supported too in its tireless effort to protect its own interests.

The creation of the fourth Fanfani government, on February 22nd, 1962, saw the participation of the Dc, Psdi, and Pri, with the outside support of the Psi that had positively abstained in the vote of trust. The first center-left government had been created, despite the lack of access of the Socialists into the governmental majority, as Nenni still felt this step as a decision to be taken by the Socialist Congress at a future time.

The opening to the left and the fast pace at which it was developing did respond to some American interests; nonetheless, the Department of State and Embassy welcomed the new government with a lack of enthusiasm and the usual skepticism, closely monitoring all developments to ensure that the Italian partner continued on a democratic, pro-American

alignment in terms of foreign policy before the ambiguous neutralism still displayed by Nenni at times. The fear was that the Dc would have significantly surrendered in terms of foreign gains made in the past years to accommodate the future entrance of the Psi in the majority.

Despite the success scored by the supporters of the center-left, the Dc leader was also aware of the cautiousness and patience that had to be maintained in the unrolling of the experiment, especially in light of the internal contrasts that could have undermined the creation of a stable and long-lasting programmatic center-left. The guarantees that Nenni had been offering Moro in terms of anti-Communist commitment and NATO belonging helped strengthen his case before American claims of the slowness with which Nenni had operated the detachment of his party from the Pci, and his intentions not to clarify the ties with it in trade unions and local dimensions before the 1963 elections.

Although the administration recognized the Psi break from the Communists and its legitimate entrance into the democratic area, with Nenni being less of a controversial figure, pressure was still made for greater implementation of the social and economic advancements Italy had been attempting to enact, as only through modernization Italy could have ensured future political stability, leaving no ground for the Communist forces in the lower social classes as reforms would have fixed political uncertainties and economic underdevelopment. Before the economic miracle results, in fact, the Pci had found itself struggling to redefine its ideological basis past the static party scheme centered around Togliatti's leadership and Pcus belonging.

Despite the internal difficulties and the external attempt to isolate the party, the 1963 elections unexpectedly proved the strength of the Pci. Whereas the Dc expected some degree of electoral loss, coming out of one difficult and unstable legislation, the strategy implemented was based on the foreseen success of the Psi, Psdi, and Pli to compensate for any losses of the Christian Democrats. In all Italian and American forecasts, the Pci was still expected to register a decrease of its strength, similarly to the Dc, reassuring the allies about the final success of the center-left coalition at the polls.

The actual results of the elections seemed to prove that the center-left experiment wasn't as welcomed by the Italian population as expected. Now that Italy had managed to pass the hardest test, that of getting American and Western support, it failed the last test, with the electorate moving towards the left but bypassing the Psi, bringing more than a million additional votes to the Communist forces. This way, the expected Dc losses weren't compensated by the success

of the Socialist parties, among which only the Psi had increased of around 2% its positions in the Chamber and the Senate. Along with the Communist success came the liberal one, the only other party that had virtually opposed the opening to the left.

The coalition parties still reached an overall 60% of the seats but the experiment was, for the time being, tainted. The fundamental assessment of the defeat operated by the more moderate leaders of the Dc sought its causes in the Dc center-left policy, and Fanfani as its main executor: the loss of the traditional center electorate which had moved towards the right was brought on by of an excessive softening of anti-communist domestic and international positions, which had backlashed and created a sinking of the internal ideological cornerstones.

The center-left didn't seem the right instrument to bring the Pci into isolation, and instead, it had helped the latter party score its first, real electoral success in years. By claiming that the only way to proceed was towards a left-wing policy and a center-left majority, both Fanfani and Nenni ran an electoral and party risk: indeed, the internal divisions within their respective political ranks and election results all seemed to indicate that it was too early to bring the Socialist Party into the governmental formula. Fanfani, in particular, was aware of the internal dissatisfaction with his line of conduct, as the high party ranks started discussing the investiture of Moro as the new Prime Minister, who will indeed be appointed with the task of forming a new government in May of the same year.

The American forces had reacted with resignation to the results, registering that no significant changes would have impacted Italian foreign policy or the relationship with the United States. Furthermore, the success of the Psdi had been a positive note, as Saragat remained a point of reference and a strong and trusted ally for the U.S., as proven by his trip to Washington and the meeting with Kennedy at the beginning of 1963.

The failure to form a new government was to be blamed on the suspicious and recriminatory psychological climate in which the negotiations were conducted. The ousting of Fanfani had served to partially calm the situation but now Nenni was finding himself battling the minority currents within the party and his own autonomist one too. In fact, despite Nenni being able to come to an agreement with Moro to form the first, real center-left government, the Central Committee of the Psi rejected the proposal of the coalition put forward, wrecking the attempt to create a new government on June 17th. Not only was the leadership of the Socialist party in

a crisis but the Italian political system too, incapable of creating anything more than an administrative government for the time being.

The disappointment of the State Department and Embassy before the failure to form the first center-left government proved that they had finally come to terms with the stability and reformist pull the Psi in government could have brought, especially in stopping Pci growth. Nonetheless, the administration's support hadn't been strong enough and hadn't come in time to influence the electoral result and stop the formation of the Leone government. The formation of the so-called "governo balneare" was supposed to answer to the pressing issues of instability and the systematic crisis of Italian politics, a temporary solution to survive the summer and await more mature times.

Right in the midst of one of the deepest political crises ever registered in Italy after 1948, President Kennedy arrived in Rome. The short Roman stay allowed for the President to formally meet some of the leading figures on the Italian political scene, Nenni in particular, and at the same time to shed light on some of the ideas that the president matured on the subject of the center-left and the American take on it. The documents prepared by the Department and the White House staff for the visit presented an aligned, positive opinion for which the center-left was the only possible combination to grant parliamentary stability and to efficiently fight Communist propaganda, all while maintaining a strong U.S.-Italy bond.

In his official meetings with President of the Republic Segni and Dc secretary Aldo Moro, Kennedy mostly looked for reassurance in foreign policy terms, reminding its influence on domestic policy and vice versa. However, the most prominent encounter the President had when in Rome was an informal one, held with Pietro Nenni in the Quirinale gardens after the State dinner. The two entertained a long and complicit conversation before all the guests, talking about the bizarre electoral results and confirming the reliability and availability of the Psi to officially access government. The meeting served the purpose of giving the final, decisive push to the center-left experiment, proving and confirming once and for all the absolute support for the cause of the Kennedy administration. Therefore, it isn't wrong to frame the conversation as a moment of extraordinary relevance for the state of U.S.-Italian relations: that long conversation under the eyes of all the other parties, Togliatti included, unequivocally decreed the end of the American hostility toward the Psi, sending a clear political signal to the Socialists, as well as to all other parties, about what were the expectations and desire of the partner for the

future of Italian politics. Unfortunately, Kennedy won't be alive to see the center-left come to life, being shot in Dallas on November 22nd, only a few weeks after Leone's resignation and a few days before the formation of the first Moro government.

The only obstacle that stood in the way of success, now, was the one being posed by the forces within the center-left protagonists. Approaching the 35th Psi party Congress of October 1963, Nenni knew that this round of consultation would have been the last possible resort for the creation of the center-left. Another failure would have constituted the final nail in the coffin of his leadership. Despite a degree of regret from Nenni's opposer, Lombardi, to have caused the failure of Moro's first attempt at forming a government that included the Psi in the majority, Lombardi's positions were extreme and seemed to be going against the entire political setting of the party, seriously attempting to question the possibility of negotiating with the Dc. The most significant point of conflict stemmed from the idea that the American ally, who had been following the process carefully, still didn't trust the Psi and was working in favor of the center-left to finally bring the party to a domestic political conversion and to support Italy's Atlantic belonging.

Despite the explicit controversy with Lombardi and the continuation of internal dissent, the autonomist current came out as the winning one from the Congress, allowing for Nenni to have a majority wide enough to secure the direction of the party, for the organic collaboration to start taking place, as Giovanni Leone had resigned his position right after the end of the Congress.

In the same way that the Psi had to find its unity again to solidify Nenni's leadership and ensure the reliability of the party before the center-left test, the Dc, and Moro in particular, also had to work to compact the party according to shared positions.

Once appointed to form a new government and with party stability reached by both, Moro and Nenni started working closely together to accomplish the center-left, also being favored by the international climate of détente and dialogue between the blocs.

The drafting of a shared coalition program wasn't painless, with all parties having their own claims and internal currents to answer to. Initially, the program drafted by Moro appeared heavily influenced by the collaboration with the Socialists, to a point deemed so unacceptable by the Dc currents to adopt the rule of incompatibility between the office of prime minister and party secretary, replacing Moro with Rumor to lead the secretariat.

The tragic death of Kennedy will change the course of the government formation. Moved by the desire to steady Italian politics and complete a project that Kennedy himself had supported, work for the center-left accelerated further. At the end of November, in a bilateral meeting between new President L.B. Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, Senate President Merzagora, Foreign Minister Piccioni, and Italian Ambassador to Washington Fenoaltea, Italy reassured the new administration of its full membership in NATO and the Western bloc, but above all of its very close friendly relations with the United States. Johnson, announcing that he wanted to continue on the path inaugurated by Kennedy, gave his support and positive judgment to the formation of the center-left, removing all doubts and paving the way definitively toward the definitive opening.

Despite the difficulties encountered by Moro and noted by the Embassy in the distribution of ministries, the first center-left government, composed of the DC, Psi, Pri, and Psdi, was born on December 5, 1963.

Troubled times awaited the new coalition right from its start. Despite having finally defeated historical vetoes and established resistance, with the Italian labor movement finally entering the area of government, the party minority had refused to grant the vote of trust to the new government, also replacing Pietro Nenni at the head of the party not with the most obvious choice, Riccardo Lombardi, but with Francesco De Martino. The split of the socialist minority protagonist of this contrasting motion was now taken for granted, and by early 1964 the Psiup was born.

Both Lombardi and Fanfani had also refused to join the new government, fueling the internal divisions within majority parties that began right away. The weakness of the coalition mirrored the troubles through which the country was going, not only in its attempt to develop a system of party alternations to grant a democratic development of the country and of its power but in many other fields. The Socialists immediately started looking into the relationship the Dc had developed with the national bureaucracy, moved by the purpose of enlarging the democratic base of the State through the inclusion of workers and new cultural and social strata.

Notes of dissent were originating from a wide variety of actors, as a sense of weakness that had pervaded the government, unable to reach out and engage the people, had been observed. However, the strongest source of opposition to the work of the center-left came from the Dc's own ranks, embodied by President of the Republic Segni.

Segni had always been known for his strong anti-center-left position, and his election had been motivated exactly by the attempt to balance the opening to the left with a conservative representative at the Quirinale. However, in his attempts to always ensure NATO solidarity and an explicit Atlanticist foreign policy, one of close friendship with the U.S. too, Segni often demonstrated his strong doubts about the reliability of the center-left even to the American partners, Kennedy included, who had instead increased their support for the cause. Similarly to what Gronchi had been accused of doing, Segni attempted to cross its constitutional responsibilities and take advantage of the “grey areas” to advance its anti-communist agenda through an overruling of the government to correct its domestic and foreign policy from the right.

For this, following the private meeting that the President of the Republic had requested with President Kennedy to warn him about the long-term perils of the center-left, the new administration was strongly advised not to show any sort of sympathy or support to such ideas, so to avoid unbalancing the opening process toward a situation unfavorable to Moro.

Despite maintaining a detached but supportive front, a degree of puzzlement was shared by the State Department and the Embassy regarding the Italian political scenario. The coalition had appeared divided and hard to manage since its beginning, due also to the internal struggles the two main parties were facing, despite the Psi having left isolation. It seemed, according to Reinhard, that the stability promised and hoped for by Moro and his government was now an increasingly distant hope.

The unexpected fall of the Moro government in June 1964, albeit quickly replaced by his second center-left one, proved how damaging the weakness and clashes among parties had been for the state of Italian democracy. With the repeated attempts to forcefully continue down the path of democratic alternation, the supposed transformation of Italian democracy became more of a formal exercise than an actual change. Soon enough, Italy once again fell into the trap of immobilism, attempting to enlarge the democratic base to include as many forces as possible to avoid the imminent paralysis, while expecting such elements to take up their own role in the distribution and management of power, accepting the substantial maintenance of the general framework established in 1948 with the Dc at its head.

The United States, influent but not omnipotent, couldn't do anything besides ensuring that its interests continued being guaranteed. Truth is, the center-left hadn't been born from a desire to widen the political system or to reach a form of democratic alternation like in the rest of the European political systems. The opening to the left had failed to go beyond the rationalization

of a political system that, in order not to implode because of tensions deriving from a significant historical change, had to forcefully adapt itself to a new frame of reference compatible with it.