

# The Italian Communist Party's Opposition to the European Defence Community

Prof. Antonio Varsori

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RELATORE

Prof. Maria Elena Cavallaro

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CORRELATORE

Andrea Angelo Leonardi, 657932

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CANDIDATO

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# Introduction

*“I’m not a right-winger, and I’m not a leftist. I’m in favor of peace!”*

Natalia Ginzburg, *Family Sayings*

Natalia Ginzburg’s *Family Sayings* is filled with impressions, of memories of the day-to-day lives of the Italian people from the early days of fascism to the post-war period. Ginzburg recalls her mother’s words, reported above<sup>1</sup>, in a humorous fashion: Mario, her brother, had accused Lidia, their mother, of being “too bourgeois” and “a right-winger” after a fight over the way to properly maintain a wardrobe. This accusation sparked a discussion between Lidia and her husband, the latter concurring with their son as the former compared Turati and Bissolati, two Socialist leaders of the past generation, to Nenni and Togliatti, whom she held in very low regard. As this introduction sets out to describe the feelings of the Italian people regarding the issue of war as an instrument in the hands of governments and about politics at large.

The immediate aftermath of the Second World War was characterized by a widespread, if surface-level, enthusiasm. Not only were families reunited, in the most extreme cases after more than a decade, but the Italian people as a whole found themselves suddenly enjoying the freedoms the Fascist regime had been suppressing for twenty years. As the partisans were being celebrated through the streets, films, music, and dances from across the Atlantic came into the lives of the newly freed people. Pavese’s *Il diavolo sulle colline* provides a glimpse into the daily – and nightly – life of young people in the post-war period: dances, cafes, bars and countryside retreats act as the stage for Pavese’s novel, and they are the perfect environment for the celebration of life and freedom. What is conspicuously absent throughout the book, however, is politics.

While liberated, Italy was still fragmented and disheartened from the harshness of the last two years of war, and still needed to find its path to reconstruction: this introduction will look further into three elements of post-war Italy: its economic situation, the scars left by the war, and the visions of pacifism of the two main political parties.

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis’ author’s own translation.

## *Post-war Italy between the needs of reconstruction and political dire straits*

In the wake of the Second World War, Italy stood in the international arena as a defeated country, deeply scarred by the destruction of the Nazi occupation and by the clash of the Allies against the Axis' powers. The impact of the conflict on the Italian industrial complex was cumbersome: the industrial output in 1945 was less than a third of what it had been in 1938, and the situation was exacerbated by the country's lack of key raw materials such as iron and petrol and its reliance on imports<sup>2</sup>. Inflation compounded the economic strain of low output. While the cost of living skyrocketed to 23 times its pre-war level between 1938 and 1945, wages lagged significantly, increasing by less than half that amount.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Italy was far from immune from the ailments that were afflicting the other European countries: the Old Continent's transportation network and supply chains were still suffering from the consequences of the conflict. The growing popular demand for social and economic protection strained the already dwindling State coffers. This crux cannot be fully understood without taking into account the issue of foreign currencies. The European countries' inability to consistently export goods meant their reserves of foreign currencies were depleted, which in turn meant they were not able to import the materials needed for reconstruction<sup>4</sup>.

The Italian socio-economic landscape grows more dire when analyzed from a regional perspective. The poorest section of population in the country were southern agricultural workers, with a southern fieldhand's wage being just over half that of a northerner. On top of this, hundreds of thousands of people were left without shelter and were displaced from urban to rural areas, overpopulating them and sharpening the hardship fieldhands were facing<sup>5</sup>.

While Italy managed to regain a margin of autonomy in 1946, its economic challenges were all but solved. Inflation became a central issue once again at the end of 1946 and throughout 1947, with the exchange rate of the Italian *Lira* dropping from 528 to 909 per dollar between January and May 1947. The cost of living increased by 20% between December 1946 and March 1947, and again by 30% by June of the same year. Italian economist Paolo Baffi pointed to the

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<sup>2</sup> P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi, 1943-1988*, Einaudi, Turin, 2006, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ivi*, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> F. Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda, l'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa*, Einaudi, Turin, 2009, pp. 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

expansion of private credit as the root cause of the issue. A different view was that of Luigi Einaudi, at the helm of the Bank of Italy, who saw government subsidies for bread as the driver of inflation<sup>6</sup>.

Parallel to inflation, unemployment grew to be a structural issue. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the CLNAI had imposed a ban on redundancies. *Confindustria* had already achieved a partial softening of the policy in January 1946, which led to the termination of 240000 workers in the North by March of that same year<sup>7</sup>. The spike in inflation in 1947 forced the hand of decision-makers towards restrictive monetary policy, and by the end of the year the Italian economy saw 2.1 million unemployed people<sup>8</sup>.

Luigi Einaudi spearheaded the fight to inflation through a policy plan, the eponymous “Linea Einaudi”. Beginning in the second half of 1947, Einaudi implemented restrictive monetary policies: in late August, the interministerial Committee on Credit and Savings announced a new set of credit regulations, forcing banks to invest in government securities or depositing a substantial amount of liquid money with the Bank of Italy, which led to a drastic contraction in money supply. Furthermore, the discount rate was raised from 4% to 5.5%<sup>9</sup>.

By October, Einaudi’s measures had begun achieving the desired effect, with subsiding inflation and wholesale prices in decline<sup>10</sup>. The credit restrictions, however, led to a decrease in investments and, in turn, to a decline in production gravely affecting small and medium enterprises and brought about the aforementioned spike in unemployment<sup>11</sup>. By January 1948, production had dropped to 58% of 1938 levels. The situation was dire enough for Dunn, the US ambassador to Rome, to urge De Gasperi to take action<sup>12</sup>.

Economic historians’ opinions on Einaudi’s maneuver are split. On one hand, critics of Keynesian beliefs claim the strategy was inappropriate given the considerable unemployment the country was already experiencing, as well as the unused industrial capacity. On the other hand, supporters of the Einaudi line claim that the hardships and the eminently agricultural nature of

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<sup>6</sup> J. L. Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>8</sup> *Ivi*, p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> J. L. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>10</sup> *Ivi*, p. 149.

<sup>11</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 154

<sup>12</sup> J. L. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154.

the Italian economy in the late 1940s would have rendered a Keynesian solution ineffective<sup>13</sup>. Regardless of the appropriateness of Einaudi's monetary policies, the successful fight against inflation solidified the centrist hold on the urban middle class, who saw the government's action as an attempt to protect the quality of life of waged workers<sup>14</sup>.

The strict deflationary policy pursued by Einaudi was not determined only by causes pertaining to the internal political dynamics but were rather influenced by the United States. As a matter of fact, monetary stability had been set as a specific requirement to access the funds of the European Recovery Program. Undersecretary of State William Clayton had clarified in summer 1947 that participating European countries had to provide "satisfactory assurances" to the United States<sup>15</sup>. The Einaudi line was thus meant to reassure the Americans that their support would not be rendered pointless by rampant inflation but would be effectively employed to relaunch the Italian economy and to ensure stable monetary exchange on international markets; in other words, the US government wanted to be sure the Marshall Plan would be implemented in a context which would maximize the chances of social reconciliation and political stability<sup>16</sup>.

The long road that led to the Left's abandonment of the governing majority had begun earlier in 1947: as the Socialist Party split, with Saragat creating the PSLI, De Gasperi was forced into a government reshuffle, which begged the question of whether the new government should include Nenni's Socialists and Togliatti's Communists. While the resulting cabinet still rested on the support of the three largest parties, it witnessed a marked shift to the right, with fewer Leftist ministers sitting in government. In spite of this, Togliatti saw the reshuffle as a victory, as he believed the process showed that it was impossible to form a government without the Left's support<sup>17</sup>.

Togliatti's analysis, while shortsighted, was not without merit: as De Gasperi worked to form his new cabinet, he was being closely watched by the American *chargé d'affaires* Key; furthermore, after a harsh attack launched by Togliatti on the pages of *L'Unità*, the Christian Democrats' leadership took a stance against the alliance with the Left. De Gasperi himself had

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<sup>13</sup> *Ivi*, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>15</sup> J. L. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 141-142.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. "I dolori della crescita", in M. Gilbert, *Fuori dall'abisso. Dal fascismo alla democrazia, storia del miracolo politico italiano 1940-1954*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2024.

to intervene to quell the situation, highlighting how it would have been impossible to create a stable government without the Left's support at that time<sup>18</sup>.

As the Communist Party reaped political rewards from its activity during the Resistance years, bolstering its numbers in those areas where the fight against the Nazi occupants had been most ardent<sup>19</sup>, the US government watched the dire economic and social situation of Italy with increasing concern, as the American administration believed that Communism would thrive where living conditions were subpar<sup>20</sup>.

This concern was enhanced by a letter De Gasperi sent Truman on the 28th of April, 1947. The Prime Minister stated his intention to widen his majority to those parties that wished to strengthen the new democratic regime, but to do so he needed help; he was, in effect, asking to apply the Truman doctrine to Italy. Dunn confirmed the need to encourage De Gasperi's government reshuffle. De Gasperi welcomed the American input: he resigned the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in May, and on the 1st of June he formed his new government without the Left's support. The new cabinet could only count on a slim majority, dependant on the Right's support, but the rightward shift and the creation of a centrist, pro-Western government ensured that Italy would be watched sympathetically from Washington, and Rome could quickly cash in the American economic support<sup>21</sup>.

Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky highlight how Togliatti underestimated the importance of the government crisis, and did not put up a fight against the creation of an 'emergency' centrist government. Rather than seeing it as a momentous political upset that would rewrite the rules of the Italian government balance for the next 45 years, the Communist leader believed that De Gasperi would not have been able to keep the Left out of government for long, and that the reshuffle was merely a temporary tactic to ensure the stability required by Washington to send economic support<sup>22</sup>. In this phase, the most important item on the Communist agenda was to prevent its own political isolation, a task made all the more difficult by the Soviet Union's choice to reject and oppose the Marshall Plan. The Italian Communists' wholesale adoption of the Soviet

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<sup>18</sup> Cfr. "L'alleanza antifascista si logora: inflazione e tensioni sociali", in G. Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella guerra fredda, 1943-1978*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> S. Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow, the Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2000, pp. 26, 31

<sup>20</sup> M. Del Pero, "The United States and 'Psychological Warfare' in Italy, 1948-1955", in *Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, n. 4, 2000, pp. 1307-1308.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. "Fiori d'arancio o crisantemi", in M. Gilbert, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> E. Aga-Rossi, Z. Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin, il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007. p. 218.

line was politically expensive, as the economic benefits of the American intervention would strengthen the government and weaken those who opposed it<sup>23</sup>.

The American involvement in Italy was not limited to economic and financial support. In the months leading up to the April 1948 elections, Ambassador Dunn ensured that the US intervention was brought to the forefront of public discourse, giving a speech for the landing of every hundredth ship, being present at the inauguration of important infrastructure to highlight the source of the massive help Italy was receiving. In the meantime, across the Atlantic, the Italian American community orchestrated an informal lobbying operation: over a million letters were sent to the Old Country warning people against the “Red Menace”<sup>24</sup>.

On a more clandestine level, the Truman administration adopted drastic measures to ensure that left wing parties would not take power. On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the National Security Council recommended providing funding to Western-oriented parties<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, the American government elaborated contingency plans. Should the *Fronte Popolare* have won or insurged, the US was prepared to economically and militarily back clandestine groups and occupy Sicily and Sardinia to secure strategic naval bases in the Mediterranean<sup>26</sup>.

Italy’s post-war economic situation acted as a catalyst for the political polarization that culminated in the breakdown of the anti-fascist coalition in May 1947 and in the clash of 1948, reflecting the transformation of the international arena that was crystalized by the Truman doctrine. The political debate was no longer between different opinions and political philosophies, but rather between two opposing, irreconcilable ways of life<sup>27</sup>. De Gasperi’s Christian Democrats managed to establish themselves as the bulwark of order, of private property, of the link with the Western world. The Marshall Plan provided the Christian Democrats with a formidable weapon: the promise of long-term wealth and welfare to stake against the gamble of a socialist transition, right at a time when the forced Sovietization that was taking place in the East, symbolized by Prague’s *coup d’etat* in 1948, highlighted the coercive nature of Stalin’s action<sup>28</sup>. Left wing parties found themselves unable to overcome the challenge in spite of their grassroots presence. The Communist and Socialist parties had left their cabinet positions at a time in which Einaudi’s restrictive monetary policies eroded the bargaining power

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<sup>23</sup> Ivi, p. 220.

<sup>24</sup> Ivi, pp. 156-157.

<sup>25</sup> J. L. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>26</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> F. Romero, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

of workers. Their hard-line opposition to the Marshall plan was a cornerstone of their policies, as it had been placed at the top of the agenda by Zdanov in September 1947, driving a further wedge in the already troubled relations between East and West<sup>29</sup>. This position, however, put the Left at odds with the Italian hope of long-term economic welfare.

The elections of April 1948 witnessed a stunning victory of the Christian Democrats, who came just short of an absolute majority with 48.5% of the vote, and thus solidified the Western choice<sup>30</sup>. In spite of the electoral success, however, De Gasperi's government was unwilling or unable to pursue Keynesian economic reforms in spite the support of the American Economic Cooperation Administration but rather followed a conservative approach<sup>31</sup>.

### *War in the Italian public opinion*

While Italy began reconstruction and the renovation of its institutional architecture, it still bore the physical and psychological scars of the Second World War. These scars conditioned the way the Italian people perceived national and international security and even reshaped the way part of a population understood military power, setting the stage for the debate on collective security.

The First World War had already taught the Italian people that military conflict could upset social and economic dynamics, reaching far beyond the frontlines. The Second World War, however, constituted an unprecedented trauma, with civilians being directly involved in the fight. The Anglo-American air raids are the most obvious example, with virtually all major Italian cities being bombed between 1940 and 1945, with an official body count of around 60 000 civilians. The bombing campaign was carried out by the Allies with the strategic intent of wearing out the willpower of the population, as well as the Italian's loyalty to the Fascist regime<sup>32</sup>.

The Allies' strategy had a profound impact on the social fabric of the Italian people. The sudden havoc caused by the destruction of housing and infrastructure meant a lack of food and

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<sup>29</sup> A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino, Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2022, pp. 79-80.

<sup>30</sup> P. Ginsborg, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>31</sup> J. L. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-164.

<sup>32</sup> C. Baldoli and M. Fincardi, "Italian Society under Anglo-American Bombs: Propaganda, Experience, and Legend, 1940-1945", in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, n. 4, 2009, pp. 1018-1019.

shelter. The situation took a toll on the population, generating fear and undermining the regime's credibility as its inability to feed and protect the Italian skies became increasingly obvious<sup>33</sup>.

The scars of this experience had a cultural aspect as well. The end of the war brought about a gust of joy at first, but its long-lasting legacy was one of pain and sacrifice, with neorealist artists channeling the experience into their *opus*. On the other hand, the people still yearned to enjoy their newfound freedom in peacetime and to forget the war<sup>34</sup>.

The impact of this trauma, however, was not limited to the psychological sphere, nor was it strictly cultural; rather, it reshaped the way in which the Italian citizen understood the State's role in protecting them. With civilians bearing unprecedented horrors during the Second World War, it became clear that the State was no longer capable of protecting its citizens in the way it used to. It was now its role to provide social rather than physical protection. Italy shifted from being a neomercantilist State to being a trading State, relying on international markets rather than military power to advance its interests and provide a new type of protection to the Italian people<sup>35</sup>.

As the war drew on, an antimilitarist sentiment, or at least a feeling of exhaustion and rejection of war, developed in the Italian people. The despair was so deep-seated that women reportedly wished for the arrival of the British or, in extreme cases, for bombing and their own death, such was the wish for an end to the war<sup>36</sup>.

This sentiment grew and blossomed into the new political culture once the war ended. The Christian Democrats managed to poise themselves as champions of peace and antimilitarism, and, through their rejection of mass mobilization, distanced themselves from the memories of totalitarianism. The new political culture embodied by the Christian Democrats and by the anti-fascist coalition at large was thus enshrined in the Republican Constitution<sup>37</sup>.

Italy also witnessed a shift in rhetoric, from the "martyrs" who died for the fatherland that the fascist regime glorified attention was moved to the heroes of the Resistance<sup>38</sup>. This new narrative focused on the morals and civic sense of those who took to the mountains to fight the regime rather than power and loyalty to the State.

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<sup>33</sup> Ivi, pp. 1019-1020.

<sup>34</sup> S. Gundle, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> L. Paggi, "Antifascism and the Reshaping of Democratic Consensus in Post-1945 Italy", in *New German Critique*, n. 67, 1996, pp. 105-106.

<sup>36</sup> C. Baldoli and M. Fincardi, *op. cit.*, pp. 1029-1030.

<sup>37</sup> L. Paggi, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>38</sup> G. De Luna, *La Repubblica del Dolore, le memorie di un'Italia divisa*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2011, p. 34.

To summarize, the backdrop against which the debate about the European Defence Community took place starting in 1950 was one of an exhausted country where the State's legitimacy no longer resided in the power of its military but rather in its ability to guarantee peace and social security to its people. After the experience of the Second World War, militaristic rhetoric put off or even scared a considerable portion of the Italian people. The political environment was thus primed to host a debate regarding the appropriateness of further military obligations, because a project such as the EDC inevitably opened wounds that had yet to heal fully.

### *Christian Democrats and Communists: Two Visions of Pacifism*

Between 1948 and 1949, the transition from Antifascism to Anticommunism as the dominant paradigm in Western Europe radically transformed the political discourse, and especially the notion of "peace". As the Cold War took shape, peace ceased to be a universal value and grew into a point of political and ideological contention. In this context, the debate over the Italian accession to the Atlantic Treaty is a lens through which it is possible to analyze the diverging interpretations of the notion of "peace": for the Christian Democrats – or at least for their leader – a situation of stability to be achieved through the Atlantic allegiance; for the Communists, an antimilitarism tied to their internationalist tradition and employed as a tool to delegitimize the American supremacy.

The government's perspective is the one defined by the Prime Minister. According to De Gasperi, peace could not be detached from collective security and from the Atlantic choice. During the initial debate over the accession to the Atlantic Treaty, De Gasperi framed the alliance as a "preventive measure against war" that fit into the United Nations' framework. The Prime Minister explained at length that the nature of the Treaty was purely defensive, and that it aimed at "protecting peace and reinforcing national security". In his view the path of neutrality was outdated, as isolation was no longer an option for Italy, and that the Treaty would act as a balancing element in the region. He further reassured the Chamber that "no Country or bloc of Countries will need to fear the Treaty as long as they hold no aggressive aims", and, to bring the delicate issue of involving his war-scarred country in a military alliance closer to something that was dear to the Italian people's heart, linked the issue of security to economic recovery, framing

the alliance as a necessary premise to the improvement of the Italian economy and quality of life, stating that Italy could only build a stable economy if integrated in the Western system<sup>39</sup>.

The government's line was restated and defended later that year by Paolo Emilio Taviani, who at the time held the title of Vice-secretary of the Christian Democrats, during the debate that took place in July 1949 over the ratification of the Treaty. Taviani denounced the notion that Italy could pursue a "third way" or the path of neutrality, referencing the debate over Article 11 of the Italian Constitution and the acceptance on the part of the Constitutional Assembly of waiving portions of sovereignty to pursue peace and justice at the international level. In his in-depth analysis of the new international order, Taviani identified the end of the "balance of powers system" as the root cause of the necessity to join a wider community of States<sup>40</sup>. He further frames the accusations coming from the Socialist and Communist Parties of pursuing their foreign policy out of fear. The Vice-secretary held that the accession to the Atlantic Treaty was rather a "choice of steady and virile courage", the same courage that led the Catholic action during the resistance. In his vision, the Atlantic Treaty, together with the Council of Europe, would be steps towards "a world of peace and social progress"<sup>41</sup>.

Peace was thus not just absence of conflict, let alone a policy of non-alignment, but the participation to the defence of the Western world, which, Taviani recalled, had been part of the Italian's traditional policy during the *Risorgimento*<sup>42</sup>.

It should be highlighted that De Gasperi, well aware of the opposition to military commitments both within Parliament and in the public at large, emphasized the aspects of the Treaty that revolved around political and economic cooperation. Furthermore, he linked it with the signature of the Council of Europe, which took place at the same time, to frame it as a means to protect peace and ensure economic prosperity<sup>43</sup>.

In spite of the unity shown in Parliament when it came time to vote the ratification of the Treaty, the position of the Christian Democrats was a nuanced one, as shown by the heated debate raging inside the party. The prospect of involving Italy in a military alliance roused skeptical or even hostile reactions in significant sections of the Christian Democrats, especially its left wing: while the Church was discreetly sharing its wish for Italy to stay neutral, high-profile Christian

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<sup>39</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 11 March 1949, pp. 6768-6770.

<sup>40</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 15 July 1949, pp. 10406-10408.

<sup>41</sup> *Ivi*, p. 10415.

<sup>42</sup> *Ivi*, p. 10411.

<sup>43</sup> A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino*, *cit.*, pp. 120-121.

Democrats were voicing their opposition to the Treaty. Through their respective publications, Gronchi expressed his *tout court* neutralist positions, and Dossetti's current stated the need for equidistance, as Christians, in their opinion, held no link to either side of the budding Cold War<sup>44</sup>. Even though he was eventually able to navigate those dire straits, the presence of pacifist instances within his own party pushed De Gasperi to find a complex mediation, framing the Atlantic choice not as a betrayal of the catholic vocation to peace, but as its only credible guarantor.

From the benches of the opposition, Togliatti's Communist Party, after its defeat in the elections of 1948, found itself unable to prevent Italy's accession to NATO. From its minority position, the PCI was only able to fight against the Atlantic Treaty through propaganda<sup>45</sup>, and in this context the buzzword of "pacifism" became a strategic resource to break political isolation and achieve a deeper grassroots presence.

In spite of the Left's efforts to prevent ratification, De Gasperi's government shepherded the Treaty through both Chambers and acceded to NATO. The successful joining of the Atlantic Alliance constituted a landmark moment in the Italian rehabilitation process, shifting the country's position from that of a defeated power relegated to the Mediterranean periphery of the Continent to that of a full-fledged, if lesser, member of the Western community<sup>46</sup>

The communist strategy was developed in close concert with Moscow. It resulted in the creation of the "Partisans for Peace", a movement which aimed at intercepting the widespread fear of nuclear war, thus mobilizing sections of the population that would normally not be sympathetic to the Communist cause and expanding the Party's electoral base. Togliatti, following Stalin's instructions to Western communists, launched a campaign to present the Soviet Union as a peaceful power, in stark contrast with the American imperialism<sup>47</sup>.

The opposition to the Atlantic Treaty was merciless, with Togliatti dubbing it an "act of war" both in public and in private, believing it to be an attempt by the American hegemonic power to push Italy into submission<sup>48</sup>. This vision was just Togliatti's, but it was shared by other Communist leaders. Sereni to, in a long speech against the Treaty, called his fellow members of

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<sup>44</sup> P. Craveri, *De Gasperi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, p. 369.

<sup>45</sup> S. Pons, "Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe", in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, n. 2, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino*, cit., pp. 120-121.

<sup>47</sup> S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri, visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento*, Einaudi, Turin, 2021, pp. 167-169.

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, p. 168.

Parliament to vote against “the government’s partisan and hateful policy, the subjugation to a foreign power, the Treaty of war, and war itself”<sup>49</sup>. However, it should be noted that the “pacifist” mobilization was a tool in Togliatti’s hand to pursue his own political aims, namely that of establishing a “national” way to Socialism that was peaceful and legal, a strategy that he would follow for a long time after the fight against the Atlantic Treaty in spite of the Cominform’s influence<sup>50</sup>.

Pacifism in the Communist Party operated on three different, intertwined levels: the exaltation of the USSR as a peaceful power or even a defender of peace, the framing of the American power as imperialist and, combining both, expanding the Communist presence in the cultural and social spheres<sup>51</sup>.

The two visions of pacifism facing each other off at the end of the 1940s were not just different, but irreconcilably at odds. De Gasperi’s “Atlantic pacifism” saw peace as a consequence of security. Only an armed Western bloc backed by the American might could hope to stave off Soviet aggression and ensure the stabilization of democracies in Europe. Giving up parts of State sovereignty was thus an unavoidable act of *realpolitik* in a fast-changing international arena: the world had suddenly grown too big for Italy to stand alone. On the other hand, Togliatti’s “Internationalist peace” turned the issue on its head, pointing to the very existence of military blocs and alliances and to American hegemonic aspirations as the root cause of threats to peace. After the election of 1948 and the Communist Party’s defeat, this stark difference became the sharpest weapon in Togliatti’s arsenal.

Despite the initial relief of liberation, post-war Italy faced a host of issues. The economic state of the country made it extremely reliant on foreign aid and thus foreign demands, leading to restrictive economic policies. The fresh memory of the lost war made the topic of another conflict especially sensitive for the Italian people, and once the matter of the Atlantic Treaty was brought to the forefront of the political debate, the opposing worldviews and allegiances of the Catholics and the Communists inevitably came to a clash.

In this context, the following year, European integration moved its first steps. While the Schuman Declaration, which successfully led to the ECSC, the Pleven Plan sowed the seeds of a debate that would last decades.

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<sup>49</sup> Senato della Repubblica, *Atti parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 26 March 1949, p. 6435.

<sup>50</sup> S. Pons, “Stalin, Togliatti”, *cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani*, *cit.*, p. 169.

The upsets of the last few years rearranged the international system, taking away alleged certainties that had lasted since the end of the Cold War, and the matter of European defence is once again at the center of the political debate. Therefore, this thesis aims to analyze the position and behaviour of the Italian Communist Party regarding the project of the European Defence Community.

# The Inception of the World Peace Council and the First Wave of Opposition to the EDC

## *From the Partisans for Peace to the World Peace Council*

In order to understand the inception of the World Congress of Partisans for Peace, it is necessary to look at the ideological cleavage that split Europe in half in the post-War era. The Peace movement began as a consequence of Andrej Ždanov's "two camp" doctrine, presented in September 1947 in Poland, at the Cominform's inaugural meeting. There, the Soviet ideologue declared the world to be divided in two: on one side, the imperialist and antidemocratic front, led by the United States, and on the opposing side, the antiimperialist and democratic front, led by the Soviet Union<sup>52</sup>. Looking at the world stage through this lens, and after the defeat of Western Communist parties in national elections, the "Struggle for Peace" became a cornerstone of the activity of Communist parties, building on the traditional repulsion for war of the socialist tradition a sharp tool of foreign policy<sup>53</sup>.

The first step to make this strategy come to fruition was the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, held in Wrocław, Poland in August 1948. The event managed to garner the participation of the *élites* of European culture and, while it was almost exclusively attended by intellectuals, it focused on the importance of leaving behind the abstraction that had characterized the peace movements of the 1930s to ensure the participation of working-class people moving forward. The Italian delegation was led by Emilio Sereni – who will keep spearheading the Communist effort in Italy for years – and included several authors, philosophers and politicians; the Congress itself was chaired by the Italian Renato Guttuso<sup>54</sup>.

The change of pace happened in April 1949 with the organization of the first World Congress of Partisans for Peace. The event was scheduled to take place in Paris, but the growing tensions between the two opposing blocs resulted in the French government denying visas to

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<sup>52</sup> P. Deery, "The Dove Flies East: Whitehall, Warsaw and the 1950 World Peace Congress", in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 48, n. 4, 2002, p. 450.

<sup>53</sup> V. Dobrenko, "The Soviet 'Struggle for Peace', the United Nations, and the Korean War", in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 26, n. 1, 2024, p. 48.

<sup>54</sup> G. Petrangeli, "I Partigiani della pace in Italia 1948-1953", in *Italia Contemporanea*, n. 217, 1999.

many members of Eastern delegations, forcing the Congress' leadership to split the meeting into two simultaneous events, one taking place in Paris as scheduled, the other taking place in Prague<sup>55</sup>.

The debate over the nature of this movement is still ongoing: some claim it was an instrument of Soviet *realpolitik*, while others believe that even though it was coordinated by the Cominform it was an outlet for genuine fears and political demands. From Moscow's perspective, the Peace Movement was meant to be used as an instrument of foreign policy, specifically as a counterweight to the United Nations system which was perceived as hostile<sup>56</sup>. The propaganda over the issue of peace, however, was so effective precisely because it managed to build upon real, widespread fears of the European population, such as that of a nuclear war or that of German rearmament. The Federal Republic of Germany was portrayed, especially in Eastern Europe, as revanchist and aggressive, and as a direct heir to Nazi Germany<sup>57</sup>.

This section will briefly introduce the evolution of the World Peace Council exploring the dynamics outlined above. It will first deal with the clash between the movement and Western governments, using the failed 1950 Sheffield Congress as a case study; it will then move to the unique role the Italian Socialist and Communist parties played in the development of the Peace movement; thirdly, it will discuss the role played by the fear of the nuclear genie and of the newly formed Federal Republic of Germany in the creation of the pacifist front.

### *Mass Mobilization and the Challenges of 1950-1951*

With the turn of the decade, the Movement increased its effort in an attempt to grow from a purely ideological front to a global political actor able to make its voice heard at the highest level and to shape public opinion. The organizational shift took place in March 1950 with the launch of the Stockholm Appeal. If the 1949 Paris Congress had created the structure of the Movement formally establishing the World Peace Council, the Appeal established its method: with the Appeal came a grassroots campaign to promote a ban on atomic weapons and to demand to treat any use of such weapons as a war crime. The success of the initiative was overwhelming, turning into what propaganda would dub a "people's referendum". The Movement ultimately

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<sup>55</sup> V. Dobrenko, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>56</sup> *Ivi*, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> Z. Maruzsa, "German rearmament in the Cold War", Cold War History Research Center, 2011, p. 1.

claimed to have collected 473 million signatures worldwide<sup>58</sup>. While most of these signatures were gathered in the Eastern bloc, in France and Italy especially the campaign proved to be a powerful means of political mobilization<sup>59</sup>.

The Appeal's goals, however, were not purely pacifist. Stalin meant to employ this critical mass to undermine the new international institutions. After the proclamation of Ždanov's "two camp" doctrine, the USSR no longer considered the UN system as a reliable protection of international security, but rather viewed it as a tool in the hands of the Western bloc, and the US especially<sup>60</sup>. The Stockholm Appeal thus became a way to legitimize the WPC in juxtaposition, if not in open contrast, with the UN; the former was framed as "the highest international body capable of enforcing the people's will" while the latter was portrayed as ineffective and subservient to American imperialism<sup>61</sup>. In today's terms, the Appeal was a tool used to exercise soft power, tying the US' hands: mass mobilization against the use of atomic weapons meant employing a nuclear arsenal would imply a massive cost in terms of political capital.

The outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 exacerbated the tension, opening the first "hot" front of the Cold War. The northern aggression and the subsequent UN-sponsored intervention to defend the southern half of the peninsula forced the WPC to make a choice between condemning the invasion and North Korea or falling in line with the Soviet narrative. It chose the latter option, supporting the USSR's disinformation campaign, lending its credibility and infrastructure to Stalin's propaganda machine<sup>62</sup>. In this phase, the WPC gave up its apparent neutrality and was reduced to the role of foreign policy tool in the hands of Soviet leadership.

While promoting the Stockholm Appeal and dealing with the Korean war, the WPC made efforts to make its way into the UN. Between 1950 and 1951, the Council made several attempts to send delegations to UN headquarters to present its resolutions. The aim was to be received by the highest UN bodies, establishing the WPC as an actor of the same level as the United Nations. Secretary General Trygve Lie agreed to meet a delegation in April 1951, but the WPC was unable to gather its members in due time. A written resolution was nevertheless submitted, urging the UN to adhere to the role outlined in the Charter and denouncing its supposed role as a servant of the dominant group. The Secretary General subsequently refused to meet WPC delegations

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<sup>58</sup> P. Deery, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

<sup>59</sup> V. Dobrenko, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>60</sup> *Ivi*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Ivi*, p. 36.

<sup>62</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 33-34.

stating that the UN could not welcome “those whose actions aim to weaken the UN, to undermine its credibility and inflate disagreements”<sup>63</sup>. The Soviet Union assumed the presidency of the Security Council in June of that same year; Yakov Malik, the USSR’s ambassador to the UN, sent invitations to the WPC delegation to facilitate the entry of the Council to UN headquarters, but for the second time, after the 1949 Paris debacle, WPC members were denied entry visas. Joliot-Curie denounced the US for violating the rights of the presidency of the Security Council and the UN for violating its own charter; the Soviet propaganda machine used the episode to support its claim that the UN had become a partisan institution and that the World Peace Council was only institution that could truly defend peace<sup>64</sup>.

The World Peace Council in the early 1950s did not just clash with the UN and the United States. The Congress scheduled for November 1950 was supposed to be held in London – although the British Peace Committee later switched the prospective location from London to Sheffield. The location had been deliberately picked to bring the white dove of peace in the heart of the Western bloc, in a city that represented a major centre of British politics and industrial capacity, to directly influence British public opinion and show the Peace Movement was not a phenomenon limited to Eastern Europe. The date was far from casual either, as the Congress was scheduled to take place at the same time as the meeting of the UN General Assembly, aiming to influence the works of the Assembly through a “London – or Sheffield – Manifesto”<sup>65</sup>.

The Labour government led by Clement Atlee found itself facing a dilemma: stopping the Congress *tout court* would leave the United Kingdom open to the accusation of authoritarianism, especially given the pride the nation took in its historical respect and defence of civil liberties; letting the Congress happen, however, would hand the Cominform a remarkable pulpit to share its propaganda right in the heart of Western Europe. Atlee’s apprehension was enhanced by pressure coming from across the Atlantic, as the US government feared the impact such an event would have on its own public opinion. Its response was to wage a quiet political war waged with bureaucratic weapons to “cripple” the Peace Congress. The weapon of choice was the *persona non grata* provision<sup>66</sup>. This course of action was justified, in the eyes of the British government, by the fear that the Congress might be more than an instrument of propaganda, but rather a “cover organization” that would lead to “industrial unrest and sabotage of rearmament”<sup>67</sup>. This fear was

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<sup>63</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>65</sup> P. Deery, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-453.

<sup>66</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 456-457.

<sup>67</sup> Bevin’s submission to the Cabinet meeting on 30 October 1950, as reported in P. Deery, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

shared by members of the Foreign Service such as First Secretary Jack Nicholls, as well as by the Chiefs of Staff<sup>68</sup>, leading the British government to settle on the hard line: in his speech to the Foreign Press Association in London, Clement Attlee stated the UK would not open its “doors to those who seek to come here to subvert [its] institutions”<sup>69</sup>.

The British government’s larger plan was carried out with precision: British authorities deliberately delayed the issue of visas until the last minute, leaving the Congress’ leadership in disarray: 1700 visa requests had yet to be addressed two days before the event. Those who were supposed to be granted entry were still turned away at the border: for example, WPC President Joliot-Curie was forced to return to France upon his arrival at Dover. Ultimately, the British policy landed on a strict non-admission rule, with only the most innocuous individuals being allowed into the country, thus separating the delegates from the organization’s leadership<sup>70</sup>.

The result of the British action was the logistical collapse of the Sheffield Congress. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, the members of the British Peace Committee declared the inability to carry out the event. The failure of the Sheffield Congress, however, led to an impressive display of flexibility and resilience of the WPC: on November 16<sup>th</sup>, the Congress, now relocated to Warsaw, was declared open by Joliot-Curie. In just four days, delegates flooded into Poland on trains, ships and airplanes<sup>71</sup>.

The British government regarded the operation as a success and used it to build a narrative about the weakness of Western Communists. It also believed that pushing the Congress to the east would prevent people from supporting the peace movement. The Socialist bloc, on the other hand, used the Warsaw Congress to present the “New Democracies” in the best possible light, so that the delegates would return to their home country and spread the word about the virtues of life in the East<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> P. Deery, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

<sup>69</sup> *Ivi*, p. 458.

<sup>70</sup> *Ivi*, p. 459.

<sup>71</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 463-465.

<sup>72</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 467-468.

## *The Italian Role in the Peace Movement*

From 1949, the World Peace Council evolved as an ideological tool and as a political actor through its Wrocław, Paris, Stockholm and Warsaw Congresses. While the Peace Movement of the Cold War began with Ždanov's "two camp" doctrine, the Italian Communist leadership's relation with the 'struggle for peace' dated further back.

The 'struggle for peace' had been an element of the Soviet 'divisive diplomacy' in Lenin's time, but it was Togliatti who brought it back into the fold at the 7<sup>th</sup> Comintern Congress. Togliatti's report to the Congress outlined a complex approach to the issue: the struggle for peace would give the Communist a powerful, reversible tool: on one hand, the defence of peace would allow the development of grassroots action to expand the party's basis; on the other, the opposition to imperialist war justified the need to be prepared for class war, and consequently the infiltration of the armed forces. He no longer wished to pursue an antimilitarist agenda but rather aimed to link the masses and the armed forces<sup>73</sup>.

Years later, after the defeat of Nazi-fascism and once the Communist Party was once again out in the open and represented in Parliament with Togliatti at its head, this experience would be brought into the fight against the EDC.

If Togliatti was the Italian forerunner of the 'struggle for peace', the chief architect of the Italian Peace Movement in the late 40s and early 50s was Emilio Sereni. A key figure of the Communist Party's leadership and commander-in-chief of the Italian peace committees, Sereni encapsulated the movement's two souls. The first, an unyielding faith in the USSR and in Ždanov's orthodox ideology; the second, a proclivity for political maneuvers and the construction of daring alliances<sup>74</sup>. His leadership aimed to energize the "struggle for peace", turning into a true "people's fight"<sup>75</sup>.

Sereni's action was meant to leverage the peace movement to lead the Communist Party out of the corner it was pushed into after its defeat during the April 1948 election. The goal was twofold: weakening the government coalition, and strengthening the Partisans for Peace, shaping

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<sup>73</sup> A. Guiso, *La colomba e la spada, "Lotta per la pace" e antiamericanismo nella politica del Partito comunista italiano (1949-1954)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2006, pp. 9, 19-21.

<sup>74</sup> S. Grundle, *op. cit.*, p. 49; G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, pp. 688-689.

<sup>75</sup> *Ivi*, p. 673.

them into a long-term actor against imperialism<sup>76</sup>. This way, the Left would eventually be able to break the Christian Democracy's monopoly on Italian politics. To this aim, he theorized the need to turn the individual support of intellectual *élites* into mass support, bringing social groups that would normally be outside of the Party's reach into the Peace Movement<sup>77</sup>.

In pursuit of a larger basis, the Italian Peace Movement constantly and almost obsessively looked contact with the middle classes and the Catholic spheres, attempting to capitalize on the evolving circumstances of Italian politics and on the widespread distrust towards American hegemony, a distrust that was shared even amongst government groups<sup>78</sup>. A clear example of this line is the inclusion in the Peace Committees of the *élites* of pre-fascist liberalism such as former Prime Ministers Francesco Saverio Nitti and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando<sup>79</sup>. Catholic participation was not as common and limited to fringes or individual participation, such as that of don Andrea Gaggero or the support of don Primo Mazzolari. This was due to the Vatican's opposition to the Movement<sup>80</sup>. The narrative insisted on the Movement's cross-sectional nature, sponsoring the participation of non-political figures such as Charlie Chaplin to highlight that the Peace Movement was not the Communists' prerogative<sup>81</sup>.

The struggle for peace grew together with the Communist Party's cultural policy. Sereni had been heading the cultural commission of the Party since 1948. His two positions came together as he led a campaign to defend the Italian national identity against "cosmopolitanism" and American cultural hegemony. The Party did not just fight American imperialism by opposing military alliances but launched a campaign against American products such as films or books, portrayed as "ideological rubbish" meant to corrupt the Italian people. The mobilization was not limited to the Party's structures, but included the Italian neorealist *intelligentsia*, and promoted national moviemaking as a means to stop Hollywood's "colonization"<sup>82</sup>.

The Italian Communist Party led the most effective mobilization campaign in the West. The Movement had such visibility in Italy that the Party began dubbing the Partisans for Peace as the "Sixth World Power" in its propaganda<sup>83</sup>. The Party's organizing capacity is highlighted

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<sup>76</sup> Istituto Gramsci Roma (IGR), Archives of the Italian Communist Party (AICP), Party Leadership Conclusions, 30 May 1950.

<sup>77</sup> IGR, AICP, Work Plan for the Peace Campaign against Atomic Weapons, 29 April 1950.

<sup>78</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 24 May 1950.

<sup>79</sup> IGR, AICP, "No alla Guerra!" Bulletin attached to Propaganda n. 23.

<sup>80</sup> G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, p. 669.

<sup>81</sup> "No alla Guerra!" bulletin, *cit.*

<sup>82</sup> S. Gundle, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>83</sup> G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, p. 683.

by the campaign to support the Stockholm Appeal against the use of atomic weapons. The Italian signature collection was more than a simple exercise of freedom of expression; it was a test of the strength of the Communist apparatus. The campaign could rely on the deep-rooted presence of the Communist party on the Italian territory: at the end of 1950, the Party had over 20.000 local Peace Committees between factories, rural, and urban areas<sup>84</sup>. By the end of the campaign, the Italian movement had collected almost 17 million signatures, or 35% of the population. It should be noted, however, that the outbreak of the Korean War and the related fear constituted a considerable advantage: on the eve of the outbreak, only 4 million signatures had been collected<sup>85</sup>.

The Party linked the fight for peace to issues such as the defence of the Italian Constitution and the opposition to the Atlantic Treaty: while the Stockholm petition went down in history for its impressive result, the Communist Party had already tested its mettle in 1949 through a petition against the Atlantic Treaty<sup>86</sup> and through parliamentary filibusters, bringing the issue to the attention of public opinion<sup>87</sup>. Government authorities reacted harshly and stopped signature collection in Rome, Milan, and Florence; the Left protested in Parliament, denouncing a violation of Article 50 of the Italian Constitution<sup>88</sup>.

Another pivotal moment of the early Italian struggle for peace took place in spring 1950. American-made weapons began landing in Italian harbours through the military aid programme (MDAP). The National Peace Committee gathered in Rome on March 30<sup>th</sup>, and sounded the alarm to mobilize local committees in Italian ports. First shipment arrived in Naples on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of April, as the *Exilonia* reached the harbour. Despite the heavy military presence and the government's ban on protests, workers went on strike. "L'Unità" described the strike as 'all-encompassing', while other newspapers were much more restrained in their appraisal of the situation. Socialist leader Pietro Nenni dubbed the protest as "a complete fiasco" in his diaries, and even Pietro Secchia, a member of the Communist leadership, reported that the protest lacked energy during a session of the Cominform Secretariat<sup>89</sup>.

Regardless of the entity of the protest, this event reveals the tension in the communist strategy between a natural insurrectional drive and the political realism of the Communist

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<sup>84</sup> *Ivi*, p. 682.

<sup>85</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership Conclusions, 12-13 September 1950.

<sup>86</sup> G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, p. 679

<sup>87</sup> *Ivi.*, p. 673.

<sup>88</sup> *Ivi*, p. 680.

<sup>89</sup> *Ivi*, p. 686-687.

leadership. The party leadership, Togliatti most of all, had been advocating a cautious line of action about the shipments of American weapons since the beginning of the year, warning against any headlong rush<sup>90</sup>. They wished to avoid an uncontrollable riot without a larger political project. The ultimate aim was not just to stop weapons from landing in Italian harbours, but to prevent the Italian industrial system from sliding back into a “war-based economy”<sup>91</sup>. Togliatti’s suggestion was to organize pacific protests led by the Party and by trade unions to prevent spontaneous, unorganized riots, and to oppose the “war-based economy” by promoting the CGIL’s production plan<sup>92</sup>.

The cultural and social impact of this first wave of “struggle for peace” was deep. The movement managed to seep into the daily life of the Italian people through local festivals, sporting competitions and other initiatives that brought together politics and entertainment. The “Feste dell’Unità” and beauty pageants such as “Miss Vie Nuove” became means to spread awareness about the issue of peace and to attempt to share a counterculture to oppose the newly arrived American dream<sup>93</sup>. The movement became, in Sereni’s words, “the most revolutionary fight” possible, at least in that historical circumstance, as it allowed the Party to inspire the people at large<sup>94</sup>.

### *The Ghost of the Third Reich*

As the Peace Movement began its development, the Italian Communists, together with their Socialist counterparts, understood they could leverage the “German question” to enhance the power of the struggle for peace. Exploiting the fresh wound of the war meant giving heft and meaning to the fight against military alliances.

Sereni was well aware of the importance of this tool. In January 1950, he reported to the Communist party leadership that the Italian delegation had successfully pushed for the creation of a committee on German rearmament<sup>95</sup>. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this strategy was not autonomously created by the Italian Communists but was part of a larger diplomatic scheme

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<sup>90</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 24 January 1950.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> S. Gundle, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>94</sup> G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, p. 685.

<sup>95</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 24 January 1950.

by the Kremlin to portray the Federal Republic of Germany as heir to the Third Reich. The fear this created was a cornerstone of Communist strategy in the early Cold War to influence public opinion on both sides of the Iron Curtain<sup>96</sup>.

The Peace Movement's communication strategy was not abstract, but operated with surgical precision, striking the nerves of collective memory. Leftist parties spelled out the equation both in Parliament and in the streets: the new American-led order was just Hitler's "New Order" under a different guise. Socialist Deputy Lelio Basso, in a long speech in Parliament, highlights this effectively:

"Abbandoniamo quindi questa illusione di una Unione europea in funzione di terza forza! Noi sappiamo che ogni passo avanti che si fa verso questa cosiddetta unione è un passo avanti sulla via dell'assoggettamento dell'Europa al dominio del capitale finanziario americano ed è altresì un passo avanti verso la formazione di una piattaforma europea in funzione antisovietica. Ridotta a questa espressione, l'Unione europea somiglia profondamente all'Europa di Hitler: anche allora "Europa in marcia" era una delle espressioni care alla dominazione nazista, così come oggi "Europa in marcia" è espressione cara alla dominazione americana."<sup>97</sup>

This short excerpt from his speech delivered during the debate about the ratification of the Statute of the Council of Europe is one of the many parallels drawn between the Nazi ambition to dominate Europe and the US' presence. While Basso's words were officially about the Council of Europe, it's important to remember that, because of a deliberate scheduling on the government's part, the ratification of the Statute took place just days before the ratification of the Atlantic Treaty, making the first step of European integration liable to this kind of accusation.

Basso's narrative was not limited to the political *élites* of Western Europe and the United States. He defended national identities and the right of different countries to pursue their own interests, in an apparent break from the traditional Socialist internationalism. Referencing French writer and rebel George Politzer, Basso likened the notion of a new "European national identity" to the Nazi strategy of wiping out national identities<sup>98</sup>

This political operation was especially effective in Italy, where the population was still struggling with the trauma of the war. The image of the German soldier was far from acceptable: it was still deeply tied to the "Nazi beast", something that went beyond humanity. Piero Calamandrei used to liken the Germans to "Huns coming down from barbarous countries"<sup>99</sup>; he furthered explained how it was impossible for the scar to fade, as the "butcher's face" was still

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<sup>96</sup> Z. Maruzsa, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 13 July 1949, p. 10298.

<sup>98</sup> *Ivi*, p. 10300.

<sup>99</sup> F. Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano: la rimozione delle colpe della Seconda guerra mondiale*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2013, p. 153.

fresh in the memory of the people, making it impossible for the Italians to accept their former occupants as new allies<sup>100</sup>. In this context, the fight for peace became more than a simple rejection of armed conflict, but a shield against the return to a traumatic past.

Sereni himself understood that to fully take advantage of this fear and to expand the political basis of the Communist Party, it was necessary to go beyond traditional political language. In a draft pamphlet, his opening lines abandon the Marxist vocabulary: “L’urlo delle sirene, la luce si spegne. Ci si alza in fretta da letto. Un brivido di freddo, nella stanza gelata”<sup>101</sup>. The pamphlet did not want to speak the language of politics, but, in his poetical style, wished to summon the anguish of the Second World War. The narrative reveals that what is being described is not the past war, but “A new war, being prepared in the boards of big banks and by the generals in America and in Paris”<sup>102</sup>.

Looking at the inception of the World Peace Council, both at the international and at the Italian level, shows how the movement grew into a complex political actor, reaching beyond the simple execution of Ždanov’s “two-camp” doctrine. While Moscow might have initially meant to employ the Peace Movement as an instrument of its foreign policy, especially as a counterbalance to the United Nations, the WPC’s evolution in the West, and especially in Italy, turned the Movement into a hybrid creature. Talking of independence would be extreme, as showcased by the UN resolution debacle, but the national characteristics of the Italian movement gave it a unique character. The strength of the Italian struggle for peace lied precisely in its ability to detach itself from the traditional schemes of Soviet propaganda, using a novel vocabulary to reach new social groups. The Stockholm Appeal is the moment in which this effort comes to fruition and the Movement manages, through its numbers, to create true “soft power”.

The Italian Communist Party was able to turn the Partisans for Peace into a true anomaly in the Movement because of the country’s social fabric. Thanks to Sereni’s ability to bring together Marxist ideological orthodoxy and nimble political maneuvering the Communist Party managed to expand the individual support of members of the intellectual *élites* into mass support, leading to the success of the Stockholm Appeal and to the rehabilitation of the Left after the defeat of the 1948 elections. The struggle for peace became a symbol of the Leftist defence of

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<sup>100</sup> *Ivi*, p. 177.

<sup>101</sup> G. Petrangeli, *op. cit.*, p. 683.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

the Constitution and of national identity against imperialism and “cosmopolitanism”, chipping away support from government groups like Christian Democrats or Liberals.

In conclusion, the early efforts of the Italian Peace Movement should not be seen as a temporary surge in idealism, but rather as the run-up and dress rehearsal of the opposition to the EDC that would be fought in the years to come. The mobilization against the Atlantic Treaty and the use of atomic weapons, from signature collections to the protests in Italian harbours, acted as sharpening tools for the Party’s political weapons. Building on the legacy of Togliatti’s position at the 7<sup>th</sup> Comintern Congress, the struggle for peace became the instrument to prepare the masses to class war and to antimilitarist opposition. When the battle over the EDC broke out with the Pleven Plan, the Party already enjoyed a well-established political infrastructure and a rhetorical narrative that the country had already acquainted itself with.

### *The First Spark of European Common Defence: the Pleven Conundrum*

To understand the efficacy of the assault launched by the Italian Communist Party against the Pleven Plan, it is first necessary to dissect the inception of the Plan itself. As a matter of fact, the project was not a direct result of the convictions of European federalists, nor was it developed on ideas shared by the Western governments; on the contrary, it was the disjointed, improvised response to a sudden shock that shook the Atlantic Alliance. This section aims to summarize the traumatic genesis of the debate over European Common Defence in the crucial semester going from June to December 1950. The analysis will highlight the events that, starting from the outbreak of the Korean war, acted as a catalyst for evolution, forcing the United States to break a taboo and impose German rearmament to their European counterparts.

By examining diplomatic documents from Italy and the United States, as well as Italian parliamentary minutes and Jean Monnet’s memoirs, this section will discuss how the Pleven Plan was not conceived as a federalist project, but as a technical ploy to dilute German divisions in a larger supranational structure. Highlighting the contradictions, the legal weaknesses, and the strategic doubts that developed during this first phase of the debate will be instrumental to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the Communist arguments.

## *The American Ultimatum*

The summer of 1950 marks a shift in transatlantic relations. It is the moment when the underlying assumptions of Cold War security in Europe are finally shattered, and military might soars to the top of political priorities. Until June 1950 the architecture of Western security had rested on the delicate balance created by American nuclear superiority which allowed for a weak conventional presence on the Continent, the outbreak of the Korean war changed the rules of the game, forcing governments to change strategies.

The immediate reaction in Western government and decision-making circles was that the events in the Far East were of extreme concern. The Soviets had begun rearmament of Eastern Germany, and Konrad Adenauer believed that the Korean war Stalin's practice run before launching his assault on Western Europe<sup>103</sup>. While his country was geographically exposed and without its own military defences, the German Chancellor stated his fear, shared by many, that "the fate of the world [would] not be decided in Korea but in the heart of Europe"<sup>104</sup>. This fear became the catalyst for a shift in Western strategy.

The defence doctrine for Western Europe in effect at the outbreak of the Korean war was based upon the Rhine-Ijssel line. In case of attack, Western forces would have to fall back across these lines, which implied – much to the dismay of the Dutch Foreign Minister – not only the abandonment of Germany but also that of the Northern areas of the Netherlands<sup>105</sup>. It was then clear that the line of defence had to be moved to the East, thus encompassing the Federal Republic of Germany.

Being able to maneuver in German territory was essential for Western defence, but the expectation – held especially by the French – of using the FRG's territory as a buffer area was unreasonable. If the Western alliance expected Germany to cooperate, they had to offer something in return, namely the inclusion in the defence scheme. Protecting such a large additional area required additional troops, troops that only West Germany could supply<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, Collins, St James's Place, London, 1978, pp. 337-338.

<sup>104</sup> E. Furdson, *The European Defence Community: A History*, The Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 68.

<sup>105</sup> *Ivi*, p. 79.

<sup>106</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, pp. 101-102.

Therefore, the bottleneck of Western defence became what Europeans, the French above all, feared most: German rearmament.

The fear inspired by the outbreak of the Korean war was the political leverage the US needed to move forward with the construction of the Western defence system. The Secretaries of State and Defence agreed on a plan of action: the US would promise to reinforce the Eastern border of the Alliance with four extra divisions and with the creation of an integrated command system for the NATO forces in return for the rearmament of West Germany. This solution would have solved a quantitative problem by providing extra troops – hailing from Germany – and by improving coordination between the Western armed forces<sup>107</sup>

This is the backdrop against which Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State, met British Foreign Minister Bevin and French Foreign Minister Schuman in September 1950. European defence was the item on the agenda. Up until that point, the Allied policy towards Bonn's government had been to proceed incrementally. The new line, however, marked a shift in gear demanded by the sudden need to step up the conventional defence forces in Europe. During the meeting with Bevin and Schuman, Acheson stated that “[a]ny really valid plan for the defense of Western Europe had to be one which encompassed the maintenance of the western position in Germany”, which made it necessary to employ German forces<sup>108</sup>. Schuman had been warned by Jean Monnet about the likelihood of the issue of German rearmament coming up but did not heed the warning believing that French Defence Minister Jules Moch<sup>109</sup> would end the discussion before it began<sup>110</sup>. Finding himself cornered, the French Foreign Minister agreed to let the FRG build up its police force, but not to rebuild a professional army, as Germany “could not be expected to contribute to European defense to the same extent as an NAT country since it [was] not a signatory of the Pact”<sup>111</sup>. Jean Monnet reports harsher language used by Schuman in that context: “Why on earth are you in such a hurry? Why not begin by forming your unified command and integrating into it what already exists? There would then be time to bring in the Germans later”<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> L. Sebesta, *L'Europa indifesa, sistema di sicurezza atlantico e caso italiano, 1948-1955*, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze, 1991, p. 54.

<sup>108</sup> United States Delegation Minutes, First Meeting of the Foreign Ministers, New York, Waldorf Astoria, September 12, 1950, 3 p. m., in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1950, Western Europe, Vol. III, n. 568.

<sup>109</sup> Moch, the French Minister of Defence, was a socialist and an ardent anti-German.

<sup>110</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>111</sup> United States Delegation Minutes, 12 September 1950, *cit.*

<sup>112</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

Ultimately, Schuman stood alone in New York. Schuman's hope to find support in the British Foreign Minister quickly faded. Bevin took Acheson's line both during that meeting and at the Atlantic Council four days later, leaving France isolated. The French wished to postpone the German question until the Western defence system had been built, but the American overarching logic consisted in "destroy[ing] any logical basis" for the French positions, claiming that there was no reason to do so: the Soviet, Acheson believed, only cared about balance of power, regardless of whether Western power employed German troops<sup>113</sup>.

The forward strategy was further discussed at the full Atlantic Council meeting of September 1950, where the Americans firmly restated the need to set up the line of defence to the East of the Rhine and with the non-negotiable contribution of German troops. The depth of the American commitment is testified by their pledge to raise the number of troops to the level of Korea, where a war was actively being waged<sup>114</sup>.

By the end of September, no technical agreement had been reached, but the Americans had scored a political victory: the genie of German rearmament was out of the bottle, and it could no longer be pulled back in. The North Atlantic Council's final document stated "Germany should be enabled to contribute to the build-up of the defence of Western Europe"<sup>115</sup>. The language was extremely cautious, but it nevertheless established that the Occupying Powers would examine the specifics of the German contribution<sup>116</sup>.

The French *élites* were apprehensive. The American plan of bringing German divisions into the Western defence system was the prelude of the resurrection of the *Wehrmacht* and the political death of the Schuman Plan, as a FRG with full sovereignty over its military destiny would have no interest in sharing coal and steel<sup>117</sup>. On the other hand, a *tout court* opposition would have led France to isolation and, in all likelihood, to a German rearmament process led by Washington against French will and interest. It became necessary to find a way out that would not lead to the reconstruction of a German national army nor to inaction<sup>118</sup>. Sailing through these dire straits, French decision-makers began drawing up plans to "Europeanize" the German soldier the same way they were doing with steel and coal.

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<sup>113</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>114</sup> L. Sebesta, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>115</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>118</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 342-343.

## *Drafting a Paradox*

As the French came to terms with their inability to completely halt the American plan, the French *élites* were scrambling to elaborate a counter-strategy that could save France from isolation without allowing Germany to regain full sovereignty on military matters. The answer did not come from the military ranks nor from the Quai d'Orsay, but from Jean Monnet's office. On his desk, he hatched the scheme that Churchill would later dub a "sludgy amalgam"<sup>119</sup>: the Pleven Plan.

The plan's development process highlights its nature of political artifact rather than military project. Monnet deliberately kept military experts and technicians out of the loop, believing they would pointlessly complicate things, and gathered the same team of devoted men with which he had developed the Schuman Plan: Hirsch, Uri, Clappier, Reuter and Alphan<sup>120</sup>. The objective was not to create a plan for an effective army, but to solve an impossible political equation: fulfill the American demand for German troops while preventing the establishment of a German national army. His three pillars were clear: no plan could allow for the establishment of an independent German armed force; the first forces to be deployed in Germany should have done so under European command; no decision should have been taken before the signature of the ECSC treaty<sup>121</sup>. His intention was to extend the economic functionalism he had already funneled into the Schuman plan to the question of defence: if coal and steel could be handled by a supranational authority, so could soldiers.

The project, presented by Prime Minister René Pleven to the National Assembly on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1950, laid out a baroque architecture for the European integrated army, designed to drown out the German soldier in a cosmopolitan structure. The technical core of the proposal was the notion of integrating the armed forces at the level of "the smallest possible unit"<sup>122</sup>. While the United States – and traditional military logic – suggested building the joint force by providing divisions, self-sufficient units of 10 to 15 thousand men, the French plan suggested taking the national contingents apart to battalions of around 1000 men<sup>123</sup>. This way, German units would be deprived of any logistic or operational autonomy, encased in nationally diverse units under

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<sup>119</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>120</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

<sup>121</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 348-349.

<sup>122</sup> *Ivi*, p. 347.

<sup>123</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

international command. This solution constituted an aberration and would lead to linguistic and operational difficulties on the battlefield, but it answered the preeminent French need of preventing the restitution of any semblance of national authority over military matters to the German government.

The Pleven Plan did not constitute an anomaly only on the strictly military level. The prospective overseeing institutional structure would be comprised of a European Minister for Defence, answerable to a supranational assembly and to a Council of Ministers<sup>124</sup>. The supranational character of the project, however, was hollow: without a true European federation holding the monopoly of force, the Pleven Plan created a Stateless army, a headless body. The decision-making power was left undefined or implicitly put to the Supreme Allied Commander<sup>125</sup>.

A deep asymmetry was deliberately built into the plan's architecture. The goal was to defend French preeminence on the Continent: while all German units would have been integrated into the European army, France would have maintained national control over non-integrated forces<sup>126</sup>. The German soldier would not have been part of a national army, but fodder for a stateless force, while France would have held its – presumptive – status as a world power.

As will be elaborated further below, many contemporary observers, including British and American diplomats, immediately identified the Pleven Plan as a political tactic. Its function was not a military one; it was rather a bid for time, an attempt to halt the German rearmament by bogging down the Allies in endless negotiations<sup>127</sup>. Monnet's condition not to move forward with the issue of the integrated army before the signature of the ECSC treaty, thus tying the issue of defence to the pace of economic diplomacy, perfectly epitomizes the logic behind the French line of action. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1950, during the session of the National Assembly, an institutional monster saw the light: France had accepted the American ultimatum and returned with a proposal that nobody could dismiss, but nobody could make it work.

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<sup>124</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

<sup>125</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>126</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>127</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

## *The Doubts amongst Diplomats and the Italian Caution*

The Pleven Plan did not solve the Gordian Knot of Western defence; rather, it opened a season of doubt and debate. While Paris was hoping to seize the diplomatic initiative, the reaction in Washington was glacial, torn between technical disbelief and suspicions of sabotage.

In the eyes of the Truman administration, and of the Pentagon especially, the French proposal appeared as an insidious abstraction. George Marshall, who was heading the Department of Defence, initially dismissed the French project, still pushing for his own plan of a controlled rearmament process for West Germany<sup>128</sup>. The negative appraisal was shared by the highest military officers of NATO, with all twelve Member States agreeing that attempting to form effective fighting forces by mixing small units of different nationalities was militarily unsound and would not lead to success<sup>129</sup>.

On the political side of things, the feeling that the Pleven Plan was no more than a bid for time was widespread:

“Is the French proposal merely deliberate delaying action or is it an attempt to dominate the German situation or alternatively is it advanced in all good faith as the best if not the only way of obtaining approval of French public opinion?”<sup>130</sup>

The words of Lewis Douglas, American ambassador to the United Kingdom, reveal the doubts, shared by many in the US and the UK, about the true French aim. While Dean Acheson had publicly welcomed the Pleven Plan and claimed it deserved further study<sup>131</sup>, the pressure for a NATO solution to the question of German armed forces did not let up. The mediation of Charles Spofford provided a temporary solution: in December the impasse was unlocked with the Spofford Compromise: German units would be recruited right away and put under Atlantic command while the details of the European army were worked out<sup>132</sup>.

In this fluid scenario, the Italian position, developed by Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza and Prime Minister De Gasperi, was characterized by cautious realism. Italy had signed its peace treaty just three years earlier and was still working to obtain full rehabilitation in the international

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<sup>128</sup> J. Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>129</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>130</sup> The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, 27 October 1950, in *FRUS*, Vol. III, n. 241.

<sup>131</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>132</sup> M. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

system, and it could not afford the grandiose obstructionism style of the French. On the other hand, the Italian government feared the possibility of being completely pushed to the side by the USA, the UK and France in the decision-making process.

In September 1950, during the meeting of the Atlantic Council, as the issue had just been brought up, Carlo Sforza had already stated that while he understood the doubts about German rearmament, the West should take the risk, as the opportunity to bring Germany into the Western fold would not arise again<sup>133</sup>. This statement follows a telegram sent by Tarchiani just a few days earlier in which he warned the Minister that according to the Americans had decided in favour of German rearmament and that the debate would revolve around how to involve FRG troops into the European system<sup>134</sup>.

Italian diplomacy took on a pragmatic approach regarding the Pleven Plan. In a telegram dated October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1950, Italian Ambassador to Paris Pietro Quaroni clearly decoded the French intentions: the Plan was meant to buy them time and to soften the blow of German rearmament. In his words, the plan was to “shrink the pill”, so to make sure the French Parliament and public opinion would be able to “swallow it”<sup>135</sup>.

The Italian government's position about the Plan can be understood through Sforza's speech delivered on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. While addressing Parliament on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, he fully endorsed the institution of a European joint army, on the condition that it would not prejudice the immediate implementation of the integrated Atlantic force previously agreed upon in New York<sup>136</sup>.

The comparison between his words about NATO and European forces reveals his shrewd approach to the issue of defence in the Western bloc and Italy's position within it. If he defended the principle of equality regarding the Atlantic force, stating that the Commander would be “shared by all, and would draw his authority from all to exercise his powers”, and that the Commander “would not be a foreigner to anyone”<sup>137</sup>, he adopted a very different position as regards the German position within the prospective common European army. In his words, the Plan “[...] was devised by conceiving of a German army not as absolutely independent like the

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<sup>133</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>134</sup> L'Ambasciatore a Washington, Tarchiani, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sforza, settembre 1950, in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI)*, 11th Series, Vol. IV, n. 408.

<sup>135</sup> L'Ambasciatore a Parigi, Quaroni, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sforza, 24 ottobre 1950, in *DDI*, 11th Series, Vol. IV, n. 446.

<sup>136</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 10 November 1950, p. 23553.

<sup>137</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23552.

Italian army, the French army, or the Belgian army, but as a series of units (for example, a division, because smaller units would be inefficient) incorporated into other armies, without a General Staff<sup>138</sup>.

In the following weeks, the warm welcome Sforza had given to the French plan cooled down as the negative reactions of the other Western governments became apparent. Furthermore, Sforza began holding his own doubts about the French scheme: on top of the concern he had about the expediency with which the NATO joint force would be created, the Foreign Minister feared the Pleven Plan was a Trojan horse for a French attempt to restate its primacy in the Continental environment and to create the basis for the establishment of a European “third force”<sup>139</sup>.

Nevertheless, Sforza understood that the French project was a chance for the Italian government to sit back at the negotiating table on equal grounds with the Western Powers. Both Germany and Italy were defeated Powers of the Second World War, but Sforza meant to leverage the privileged position Italy had obtained by joining NATO to reach equal footing with the other Western powers while keeping Germany bound to the role of a lesser ally. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister had more contingent interests in mind, namely the need to ensure the French good will in the context of the negotiations over the European Community of Coal and Steel<sup>140</sup>. As a matter of fact, the Italian concerns about international prestige were compounded by the country’s lack of natural resources and the need to avoid being overwhelmed by the French and the German. Italy’s sympathetic approach was functional to achieving the French concession of iron supplies from Algeria<sup>141</sup>.

Overall, the first phase of the debate over the Pleven Plan ended with a political paradox that will mark the EDC’s entire arc. France, when faced with Dean Acheson’s ultimatum and with the ghost of a “German Korea”, managed to stave off a German national rearmament process through a headlong rush towards a form of military federalism without political groundwork. The Plan was meant to solve the need for German soldiers without granting Bonn the dignity of building its own General Staff; if France saw the Plan as a way to drown out German military sovereignty, Italy saw it as a runway to regain its equality in the international system.

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<sup>138</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23555.

<sup>139</sup> A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino*, *cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ivi*, p. 146.

## *The Die is cast: the Left's first offensive against the Pleven Plan*

The launch of the Pleven Plan was not just the cause of rampant doubts amongst Western governments; it also became a spark for a heated internal debate in Italy, turning the matter of common defence into an ideological battlefield. For the Italian Left, the French plan was no mere institutional trick to hamper the efforts of bringing the Federal Republic of Germany into the Western defence system. It was the materialization of the inherent threats of the Atlantic Treaty, and the first step in a long march led by the United States and headed towards a third world conflict.

Through the study of parliamentary minutes and of Communist propaganda, this section aims to analyze the opposition's actions both within and outside Parliament and to frame them in the larger international context, highlighting its role as an instrument in the hands of the USSR.

### *The Parliamentary debate over the Nenni and Giacchero motions*

“Italian cobblers, prepare the boots then, perhaps out of cardboard, for our infantrymen, because the armored troops of the European army will be led by that technician, General Guderian!”<sup>142</sup>

This memorable line from Gian Carlo Pajetta encapsulates the tone of the first wave of debates over the European army. The opposition used parliamentary debates to reach out to the people, to sear the notion that letting the Pleven Plan come to fruition would lead to the same disasters witnessed during the Second World War into the minds of the Italian public.

The issue of the Pleven Plan and German rearmament reached the Chamber of Deputies during the afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, marking the transition from something to be discussed behind close doors to a matter of public interest. If over the previous weeks European diplomats and experts had been looking for technical solutions to respond to the American demands, the parliamentary debate immediately showed that from the Italian perspective the question transcended military aspects, but it concerned Italy's very position in the bipolar order.

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<sup>142</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 9 November 1950, p. 23522.

The debate revolved around two motions, one presented for the opposition by Socialist Pietro Nenni, the other presented for the government by Christian Democrat Enzo Giacchero.

Nenni's motion based its juridical architecture on the assumption that the institution of a common army constituted a "maiming of national sovereignty" and an unwarranted extension of the obligations deriving from the Atlantic Treaty. To back this principle, Nenni attached an amendment to his own motion, enumerating three operational limits for the government to follow in any negotiation concerning the creation of joint armed forces:

- "1) no foreign commands or troops in Italy, nor Italian troops outside our borders;
- 2) barring foreign troops and military equipment from the use of Italian territory, harbours, airports, barracks, and means of transport;
- 3) no obligation that would automatically involve Italy in a war"<sup>143</sup>

Giacchero's antipodean motion followed a different political philosophy and pursued a different aim. The Christian Democrat saw military integration as a necessary corollary of collective security, achievable only through "new and deep obligations of a federal character". The majority's motion did not just support rearmament, but gave it political meaning in the larger European frame: the common army was explicitly identified as the "premise and requirement" to make the "desirable German contribution" politically acceptable. Where Nenni built walls to protect State sovereignty, Giacchero tried to tear them down, linking rearmament to the creation of a "first federal core" for the Old Continent<sup>144</sup>.

The socialist argument was meant to dismantle the government's narrative according to which the European army constituted nothing more than a natural evolution of the already ratified Atlantic Treaty. Nenni forcefully rejected the notion that the matter of the European army was *res judicata*, stating that the accession to NATO did not endow the government with a blank check for rearmament and military integration<sup>145</sup>.

The cornerstone of Nenni's reasoning was the contradiction between the assurances given to Parliament by the government in 1949 and the architecture of the Pleven Plan regarding the issue of automatic involvement in military engagements. Nenni reports that the previous year, during the intense debate over the Atlantic Treaty, De Gasperi had achieved parliamentary

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<sup>143</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, Afternoon session 7 November 1950, pp. 23413-23414.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23414.

support by stressing that the obligations deriving from the Treaty would not lead to any automatic involvement in armed conflicts and guaranteeing that every decision regarding war would remain in the gift of the Italian Parliament as established by article 78 of the Italian Constitution. In Nenni's eyes, the establishment of a common army would have rendered hollow this constitutional principle. The integration of armed forces under supranational command would have pulled Italy into a war as a consequence of decisions taken elsewhere, stripping Parliament of its prerogatives<sup>146</sup>. In this phase, the Left's retooled the notion of national sovereignty. Abandoning the traditional class internationalism, Nenni stood as a protector of a sacred constitutional sovereignty, seen not as a nationalist concept, but as a last line of defence against the submission to foreign powers. The Socialist leader argued that the Constitution allowed to cede sovereignty to protect justice and peace, not to hand Italian troops to a foreign commander that would not protect Italian national interests<sup>147</sup>.

As a matter of fact, Nenni had framed the American strategy as aggressive, describing containment not as a defence measure, but as an instrument of international policing meant to repress movement of liberation. He claimed that the US had begun acting as a battleaxe for imperialist interests, stressing that high-profile Americans such as General Marshall stated they were fighting Communism, not the Soviet Union<sup>148</sup>.

Nenni further linked the international level to internal issues anticipating grim consequences. In his view, German rearmament and the automatic nature of the obligations deriving from the establishment of a European force would turn a Third World War in a civil war in Italy. He warned the majority that a joint military force built with no account for the deep cleavages still running across Italian society would put the home front at risk<sup>149</sup>.

After a more relaxed session held on November 8<sup>th</sup> which witnessed an exchange between Christian Democrat Enrico Medi and Communist Pietro Ingrao, the Left struck again in full force on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

The address of Socialist Deputy Giusto Tolloy constitutes a first militarily qualified attack in the Opposition's offensive. It left behind the generic pacifist ethos to focus on a critique of the US strategy which. In his opinion, the access to an integrated defence system, and thus to a common European force, would not protect Italy, but merely turn it into a launching pad for the

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<sup>146</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23417.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23415.

<sup>149</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23423.

intrinsically aggressive American strategy. Tolloy demonstrates a deep understanding of the internal workings of the Pentagon, chronicling to the Chamber the “Revolt of the Admirals” of 1949. Referencing a document sourced from the US Senate Armed Services committee, the Socialist highlights the cleavage between the old school of the US navy and the new “total war” doctrine based on atomic bombing<sup>150</sup>, based on the “B-36 strategy”, built on long-range bombers meant to strike the heart of the Soviet Union from forward bases built far from US territory<sup>151</sup>.

With sharp rhetoric acumen, Tolloy references further American sources, quoting General Bradley and the Reader’s Digest magazine, to claim that the US only needs Europe as an expendable foothold, and highlights the military paradox of claiming to build a front on the Elba River when most of it flows through Soviet-controlled territory<sup>152</sup>. The Socialist’s entire speech is precisely built around the military hypocrisy and contradictions of the Atlantic strategy to claim that the Italian government meant to bind the country not to a benevolent protector, but to an aggressive power that was planning a preemptive war in which the destruction of Europe would be considered acceptable collateral damage.

The political counterpart to Tolloy’s military argument was delivered by Communist leader and member of the Chamber of Deputies Gian Carlo Pajetta, who shifted the focus from military analysis to the political submission of De Gasperi’s government to the USA. His attack moved from the government’s pursuit of a sort of “secret diplomacy” that circumvented Parliament<sup>153</sup> and built an argument claiming that the government was giving up its autonomy over foreign policy.

Pajetta accused the government of abdicating its sovereign prerogatives, demoting the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to an echo chamber of the US Department of State. In his view, this submission was epitomized by the Italian refusal to establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China – other Western powers like the United Kingdom had already sent diplomatic envoys to China – which meant that Italy was no longer capable of autonomously choosing its international counterparts<sup>154</sup>.

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<sup>150</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 9 November 1950, p. 23503.

<sup>151</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23501.

<sup>152</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23507-23508.

<sup>153</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23515.

<sup>154</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23518; this accusation in particular warrants close attention because it ties into the larger efforts of the International Peace Movement.

Borrowing from the French *L'Équipe*, Pajetta claims that while London and Paris show reluctance and negotiate, imposing conditions to the United States, Italy unquestioningly accepts Washington's directions. "The Italian camel always holds the same opinion as the man caning him", he stated, painting Sforza and Pacciardi not as statesmen, but as mere agents driven by delusions of grandeur, eager to offer up Italian troops to a cosmopolitan army without asking anything in return<sup>155</sup>.

The true heart of Pajetta's attack, however, was not the accusation that the government lacked autonomy or that the Plan had no legs. Rather, it was the mobilization of the fear of the Germans. The Plan had been developed to answer the need to include German soldiers in the Western defence system, and Pajetta leveraged this fact to shift the narrative from European integration to the scars left by the recent wars. The Communist had already employed the Italian fear of the Germans in their propaganda, but in his address Pajetta referenced specific articles on the German press, including interviews to General Guderian, to denounce how the West was rehabilitating the Wehrmacht's *cadres*<sup>156</sup>. Summoning up the memory of the massacres led by the Nazis in Italy, explicitly citing Marzabotto and the Fosse Ardeatine, Pajetta warns against the rehabilitation of an army that, according to the German press, claimed to have "taken up the mantle of the European duties" fighting against the USSR<sup>157</sup>.

In this context, the Italian Communist Party, through Pajetta, completed a considerable ideological turn, setting aside the traditional Socialist Internationalism in favor of strategic nationalism, a form of "sacred egoism"<sup>158</sup> evoked to defend military sovereignty. To strengthen his thesis, Pajetta told the story of the Partisan brigades of Valsesia, that welcomed foreign allies but proudly refused to cede command of Italian units to foreign officers<sup>159</sup>. The objective was to rouse national pride to delegitimize the European Army, framing it as a mercenary force where Italian soldiers would end up as indentured servants to foreign leaders.

The discussion of the two motions came to a close on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November after a clash between Sforza and Nenni. The Foreign Minister and the Socialist Leader restated the position

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<sup>155</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23519.

<sup>156</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23521-23522.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> This choice of vocabulary is especially interesting. The expression "sacred egoism" had famously been employed in October 1914 by Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra, the liberal Prime Minister who would ultimately involve Italy in the First World War. While the expression is generally looked down upon, it is important to note that the Prime Minister had used it in a speech about the reasons why he meant to remain neutral and to not join the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

<sup>159</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23525.

we have already discussed above, with the former defending the recent developments as *res iudicata* and reassuring the Chamber that the parliamentary prerogatives concerning war would be left untouched<sup>160</sup>, while the latter denounced the risk of an automatic involvement of Italy in an armed conflict and the danger of a possible rehabilitation of the *Wehrmacht*<sup>161</sup>.

The novel element of Nenni's speech is the connection he draws between foreign and domestic policy. Rearmament, the Socialist leader claimed, was unwarranted in Italy's social and economic condition, and would reap no positive effect, but only "add misery to misery in a country where misery has already reached and surpassed its breaking point", inevitably leading to repression on the home front<sup>162</sup>.

His argument was backed by Communist Nadia Gallico Spano who further elaborated on the social costs of rearmament. Her rhetoric leveraged emotional language, referencing how "Italian mothers are not willing to give up their children, to watch their children die"<sup>163</sup>, but her line of reasoning hinged on the social cost, on the trade-off between allocating resources to rearmament when the country demanded social protection, with a specific reference to a hospital in her constituency in Cagliari<sup>164</sup>.

The Chamber debate ended with a defeat for Nenni's motion, with 132 votes for and 268 against, and a success for the majority with the adoption of Giacchero's motion<sup>165</sup>. While the government found its victory in numbers, the parliamentary debate gave shape to the Left's opposition and created the pivots around which the future debate would revolve.

### *Rinascita and the development of the theoretical political line*

While members of Parliament carried out the debate in the Chamber over the Plevan Plan, analysing the issues of sovereignty and summoning the ghost of the *Wehrmacht*, another ideological offensive was being launched on the pages of *Rinascita*, the theoretical periodical directed by Palmiro Togliatti.

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<sup>160</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 10 November 1950, pp. 23553-23554.

<sup>161</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 23555-23560.

<sup>162</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23561.

<sup>163</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23566.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 23579-23580.

The Communist line of reasoning rested on the assumption of urgency, the conviction that the world found itself on the verge of the outbreak of a third global conflict which would be precipitated by the decision to encourage German militarism. According to this narrative, the project of military integration is not meant to defend Europe but to provide fodder to American generals the likes of MacArthur. The reference to the Korean war is scathing: the UN intervention is presented as an imperialist aggression meant to hurt the People's Republic of China, and Truman's threats regarding the use of atomic weapons are used as proof of the West's aggressive nature<sup>166</sup>.

The Italian government is accused of surrendering in a way that transcends the loyalty owed to allies and becomes treason of national interests. De Gasperi and Sforza are painted as "madmen pushing for war", guilty of vapidly promoting the atomic intensions of the US without any diplomatic caution when even Clement Atlee had at least concerned himself with the position of his Parliament. The magazine denounces the lack of preparation for a modern conflict, stressing the economic and military conditions, and claims Minister Pacciardi is looking to fight under foreign generals<sup>167</sup>.

The critique was not limited to the alleged warmongering. A different article on *Rinascita* attacks Atlanticism with what Vezio Crisafulli, author of the article, calls the "Potsdam alternative", juxtaposed to the Pleven solution. To dismantle the Western project of German rearmament, Crisafulli falls back on the outcomes of the Potsdam summit: full demilitarization, German unification and complete withdrawal of the allied forces<sup>168</sup>. This formula, agreed upon by the Allied powers at the end of the Second World War, is presented as a guarantee against the birth of a revanchist German army.

Crisafulli attacks the Europhile rhetoric backing the Pleven Plan, calling Europe an "amorphous fetish worshipped by self-appointed Europhiles to serve the American capital"<sup>169</sup>: supranational integration was not a genuine attempt to surpass nationalism but a mask for Washington's strategic interests.

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<sup>166</sup> "Appello Urgente", in *Rinascita*, year VII, n. 11-12, 1950, p. 501; the article is not signed.

<sup>167</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 501-502.

<sup>168</sup> "Solo Potsdam risolve la questione tedesca", in *Rinascita*, *cit.*, p. 522.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

The analytic juxtaposition of the diplomatic inception of the Pleven Plan on one hand, and of the reaction of the Italian left on the other, reveals a fundamental political paradox. The offensive launched by the Italian Communists and Socialists in late 1950 was built upon a narrative, that of a revanchist German rearmament that would come to fruition through the Pleven Plan, that clashes with what emerges from the reading of diplomatic documents.

In Parliament, the People's Front talked of a new *Wehrmacht*, reborn under the command of Nazi officers such as Guderian and describing the Pleven Plan as an instrument of American imperialism. The debate between Western governments held behind closed doors tells a different story. Monnet's plan was not a way to press the gas pedal and accelerate German rearmament, but a political tactic to put the brakes on, circumvent the American ultimatum, and prevent the establishment of a German General Staff. The hypocrisy, or at least the short-sightedness, of the Italian left rested exactly in this crux: Washington saw the French plan with skepticism, suspecting the French of an attempt to sabotage or at least slow down military integration.

However, the mismatch between the object of the attack – a project to establish an inefficient supranational European army – and the arguments of the attack – against German and American militarism – cannot be brushed off as a mistake or as a local electoral tactic. It descended from the Italian Communist Party's external ties, and from its need to respond to Soviet security demands. The Italian campaign against the Pleven Plan was not an isolated phenomenon, but it fit into the larger diplomatic counteroffensive by the Soviet Union in the wake of the Korean war.

The new dynamism of the Western bloc and the American push for German rearmament had put the Kremlin on high alert, leading it to steer the World Peace Council towards a new phase of direct political action<sup>170</sup>. The arguments presented by Crisafulli in *Rinascita*, presenting the Potsdam conclusions as an alternative to the Pleven Plan, was nothing more than the translation of the Prague Resolution adopted in the Eastern bloc in October 1950<sup>171</sup>. Similarly, the parliamentary accusations revolving around the opposition to the remilitarization of Germany and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China were

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<sup>170</sup> M. D. Shulman, *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963, pp. 154-155.

<sup>171</sup> *Ivi*, p. 149.

relaunched just a few days later at the second congress of the World Peace Council which started on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November<sup>172</sup>.

The Left's battle against the Pleven Plan in late 1950 was not an attempt to defend Italy's Constitution or its sovereignty, but an attack on the home front in a global war of position. While using the protection of national interests against a foreign, imperialist power, the Left acted as a bullhorn for Soviet interest, leveraging the public French plan to unhinge the budding Western defence system.

Silvio Pons' "dual allegiance" theory stresses the tension between the international bond that linked the Italian Communist Party to Moscow and the eminently national character that Togliatti's party was developing; while in previous years this tension had been resolved by the translation of the Cominform's line into a shorthand that the Italian people could understand and appreciate, allowing the Party to operate in a concrete way in the national context<sup>173</sup>. The comparison between the Italian and Soviet rhetorics, however, reveals very little difference, and highlights how, in this phase and regarding this issue, Togliatti's Communists were closely toeing the Eastern bloc's line.

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<sup>172</sup> *Ivi*, p. 155.

<sup>173</sup> S. Pons, "Togliatti, il PCI e il Cominform", in E. Aga-Rossi, G. Quagliariello (eds.), *L'altra faccia della luna, i rapporti tra PCI, PCF e Unione Sovietica*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997, pp. 286-287.

# 1951: The Common Army from Loitering Tactic to Grand Design

## *Paris and Brussels, Bonn and Rome*

*December 1950, an agreement is reached*

While the debate raged in Italy throughout November, the turmoil that the Pleven Plan had sparked between the governments of the Western powers was subsiding. As the dust settled, Pleven and Schuman flew to London on the 2nd of December to meet with Attlee and Bevin. The military chiefs of all 12 NATO Member States, France included, had expressed doubts about the feasibility of the Plan<sup>174</sup>, and it was necessary to soften Paris' stance. The British managed to mollify the French, and Pleven reported to his ministers that he intended to heed, at least partially the Allies' requests. In spite of the Socialists' protests, a compromise was reached. France would accept the compromise put forward by the American Charles Spofford: the national unit would be a "combat team" composed of 5000-6000 troops<sup>175</sup>, but better equipped and more diverse within itself than a regular brigade on the conditions that the combat teams would not be granted autonomy over their own supplies, that German groups would not be joined together, that the total German force would be less than a fifth of the total joint army, and that Germany would not be allowed to establish its own Defence Ministry or General Staff<sup>176</sup>.

While the French and Americans had finally reached a provisional agreement, it was time for the Germans to take part in the debate that revolved around them. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer welcomed the plan in principle but stated two conditions to accept it. First, the entire territory of the FRG would have to be included in the European defence project, to make sure that Germany would not become a sacrificial lamb to cover the retreat of the Allied troops. Second, German units would have to be granted equal status to those of the other nations. He

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<sup>174</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>175</sup> D. Preda, *Storia di una speranza: la battaglia per la Ced e la Federazione europea*, Jaca Book, Milano, 1990, p. 33.

<sup>176</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

also voiced doubts about the legal and political level: Adenauer was concerned by “[François-Poncet’s] statement that they were prepared to accept proposals to replace the Occupation Statute by agreements provided that the principle affording the legal basis for the continued presence of the armies of the Western Allies in the area of the Federal Republic was not changed”. The Chancellor protested against this line of reasoning, stating that the German surrender did not give the winning powers the right to establish a perpetual occupation of Germany<sup>177</sup>.

Adenauer’s concerns were not the only barrier arising from Bonn. A further layer of issues came from the FDR’s Basic Law and from West German public opinion. The *Grundgesetz* allowed for accession to systems of collective security, but did not provide any legal basis for the recruitment of West German soldiers. Drafting troops would thus require an amendment to the Basic Law, which required a two-thirds majority. This hurdle, and the requirement for its solution, was all the more difficult to solve precisely because of issues concerning the German public opinion: a considerable fraction of the population had no interest in rearmament, the horrors of the Second World War being still fresh in their memory, and believed that since it was the Allies who had led to a situation in which Germany needed to be defended, it was the Allies’ responsibility to defend it. This sentiment was enhanced by the notion that the first enemy the West Germans would face were their Eastern counterparts, their “kith and kin”<sup>178</sup>

In the meantime, the USSR launched an open-faced attack against the project through a note to the French Ambassador in Moscow. They suggested a conference of Foreign Ministers to discuss the application of the Potsdam conclusions and the demilitarization of Germany<sup>179</sup>, a claim for which they had already laid the groundwork through the Peace Movement, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The ministers of the 12 NATO Member States met in Brussels on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December to work out a way forward. In this context, the Spofford compromise, amended as the French had requested, was adopted on the condition that the joint forces would be integrated into NATO; General Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Allied Commander of the new force. The announcements, however, were held off until the meeting requested by the Soviet Union took place. To allow the swift build-up of the Atlantic armed forces, it was decided to carry out two parallel processes, one to define the specifics of the German involvement in NATO, the other

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<sup>177</sup> K. Adenauer, *Memoirs 1945-53*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1965, pp. 312-313.

<sup>178</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.* pp. 94-95.

<sup>179</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.* p. 36

one to discuss the establishment of a common European army where the Federal Republic of Germany would serve on equal grounds with the other European powers<sup>180</sup>.

This compromise was once again Spofford's skillful work. He framed the NATO integrated force and the project of a European army not as in competition, but complementary to one another. De-coupling the two projects solved military and political doubts, allowing the negotiations to progress<sup>181</sup>.

### *Cracks in De Gasperi's government?*

Parallel to the debate within NATO, a discussion was taking place within the Italian government circles. The fragility of De Gasperi's centrist government became apparent in an internal crisis triggered by the Party Leadership's attempt to exercise tighter control over the activities of its parliamentary groups. On the initiative of prominent figures such as Gonella, Dossetti, Rumor and Taviani, a formal proposal was made to the Chamber caucus to introduce the obligation for MPs to seek prior authorisation from the party before undertaking any political initiative. Although this measure had the joint support of the centrist majority, of Dossetti's current and of the caucus' leadership itself, it was rejected as it did not obtain a majority among the deputies. In this context, Amintore Fanfani skillfully exploited the opportunity to distance himself, taking an intermediate position that criticised both the right wing, hostile to any form of group discipline, and the left wing, which advocated strict regimentation. By emphasising to his allies the inappropriateness of forcing the issue with unpopular and potentially ineffective rules, Fanfani managed to disorient both internal factions, leading in the short term to the mere replacement of Cappelletti with Bettiol as group president. This situation was the first clear sign of the process that would gradually erode De Gasperi's leadership, shaping the post-De Gasperi Christian Democracy<sup>182</sup>.

As the situation evolved between Paris, Brussels and Bonn and De Gasperi fought an internal struggle within his own Party, the Italian struggle for peace carried on through the turn of the year. As reported by Andrea Guiso, three important motions were discussed in Parliament between December 1950 and January 1951.

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<sup>180</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>181</sup> E. Furdson, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>182</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, pp. 461-462.

The first motion was presented to the Chamber of Deputies by social democrat Giovanni Giavi. First presented in July 1950, the Giavi motion was amended at Saragat's request: the resulting text called on the Italian government to promote the stabilization of the Korean situation and protect world peace based on international law; it was a rather neutral motion which implicitly put the blame on the North Koreans. While the government made the motion its own, Giavi's speech perfectly fit the Communist Party's rhetoric about peace, so much so that the Communist propaganda machine began working to spread it as much as possible<sup>183</sup>. It was in the context of the debate over Giavi's motion that Communist Deputy Aldo Natoli accused the government of squandering the State's money on rearmament at a time when the Italian people were barely meeting its basic needs. He went further and conjured the 17 million signatures collected for the Stockholm appeal to accuse De Gasperi's executive of ignoring the popular will, which, in his words, had condemned the American warmongering and the Italian government's foreign policy. His address advocated disarmament, the absolute ban of atomic weapons, and the condemnation of any kind of "war propaganda"<sup>184</sup>.

The blow coming from the Senate was perhaps even heavier. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1951, the Senate began discussions over two motions regarding the issues of war. The attack came from two sides: on the one hand, Socialist Senator Pertini's position was to be expected. On the other, however, was a critique coming from Senator Parri, at the time part of the Republican Party and thus a member of the majority. The former Prime Minister acknowledged the American efforts to fight nazi-fascism during the war, but he stressed the strain rearmament expenditures were putting on the Old Continent at a time when European countries were already struggling. He further stated that the Italian accession to the Atlantic Treaty "did not contain a mandate for the US to represent our interests, there is no mandate for the US to stop us from making our voice heard at the European level"<sup>185</sup>. The Pertini motion was built around the principle of national sovereignty, which was becoming a pivot for the peace campaign; high profile Senators from the Left rose to speak in support: Lussu, Scoccimarro, Terracini, Pastore<sup>186</sup>, all contributed to the debate. The most interesting feature of this phase of the discourse over peace is the attempt to reach out to discontents within the Christian Democrats: Pastore explicitly mentioned and

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<sup>183</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

<sup>184</sup> *Ivi*, p. 341.

<sup>185</sup> *Ivi*, p. 347.

<sup>186</sup> Raffaele Pastore, the Communist senator, not to be conflated with trade unionist Giulio Pastore.

commended Catholics who had spoken up against war<sup>187</sup>, while Scoccimarro even stated that Communists would support a bourgeois government if it were to protect peace and country<sup>188</sup>.

Later in January, Pajetta, in a private meeting with members of the Communist Party's Organization office, expressed satisfaction with the results of the parliamentary debates. He believed that more and more people were feeling an arm conflict was a looming threat, making the peace campaign more effective. He encouraged his colleagues to be open to those within government circles who held doubts about the executive's foreign policy to sow discord amongst the majority<sup>189</sup>.

### *“Europe's MacArthur” visits Italy*

As the Left was trying to erode the government's support in Parliament, General Eisenhower was touring European capitals. This moment is pivotal, as it represents the first concrete step in the institutionalization of a stable, long term American presence on the Continent, expanding on the letter of the Atlantic Treaty. The General's mission was to appraise the political and military situation of the countries involved in the Western defence system as a preliminary step; the Italian Left leveraged the opportunity to denounce the American interference in Italian and European affairs. The formal meetings thus became a catalyst for a political offensive in the streets.

#### *The view from the grand palaces*

In the grand scheme of the clash between Western and Eastern bloc and of the sudden rearmament of European countries, Eisenhower's visit was more than mere scouting for technical details: it took on a profound political meaning. As the Supreme Allied Commander met the European governments, he was not only assessing the military potential of the troops he was meant to lead; rather, he was testing the mettle of European peoples and governments, gathering

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<sup>187</sup> *Ivi*, p. 352.

<sup>188</sup> *Ivi*, p. 357.

<sup>189</sup> *Ivi*, p. 359.

information to convince the Congress and the American public opinion to invest power and resources<sup>190</sup>.

In the eyes of Italian diplomacy, the General's visit was a crucial test. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, two days before Eisenhower's arrival, Ambassador Tarchiani met with Secretary of State Acheson and restated the Italian determination to meet the US's requests. He claimed that Italy "could, wants to, and knows how to face the crisis according to the general interest with boldness unmatched by any other country"<sup>191</sup>. Tarchiani's eagerness turned out to be more than justified. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, after the General's stay in Italy but before his return to Washington, Sforza was informed by the Foreign Ministry's Director of Political Affairs of Eisenhower's responsibility to report to President Truman and to break the stalemate in the US Senate and thus needed "sufficient proof" of the European will and capacity to face immediate sacrifices. The information had come through General Gruenther, Eisenhower's chief of staff, who also suggested a number of policies the Italian government should announce, such as the enhancement of the draft and the ramp up of defence spending<sup>192</sup>.

Other than strictly political and military considerations, another delicate aspect of Eisenhower's Italian stop concerned the defence of public order. On the eve of his visit, the General held some worries about Rome, as he had heard rumors of the Communist efforts to mobilize the masses<sup>193</sup>. As it turned out, his visit improved his view of the Italian government's ability to protect stability. Back in Washington, the General expressed positive views to the President and his Cabinet. Two points were especially relevant. First, De Gasperi's stance: the Italian government was described as "very tough with the communists and really on top of the situation"; second, the failure of the Communist mobilization: Eisenhower reported not seeing a single protestor<sup>194</sup>.

In his telegram to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Dunn, having consulted a high official of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, interpreted the alleged weakness of the protests not to a deliberate tactical choice on the part of the Italian Communists, but rather a symptom of their

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<sup>190</sup> Il rappresentante nel Consiglio Atlantico, A. Rossi, al ministro degli esteri, Sforza, in *DDI*, 11th Series, Vol. V, n. 164.

<sup>191</sup> L'ambasciatore italiano a Washington, Tarchiani, al ministro degli esteri, Sforza, in *DDI*, 11th Series, Vol. V, n. 163.

<sup>192</sup> Il direttore generale degli affari politici, Guidotti, al ministro degli esteri, Sforza, in *DDI*, 11th Series, Vol. V, n. 183.

<sup>193</sup> Notes on a Meeting at the White House, January 31, 1951, in *FRUS*, 1951, European Security and the German Question, Vol. III, Part 1, n. 248.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

“incapacity to arouse mass interest in its political maneuvers”, as Italian workers would not be willing to “undergo sacrifices and suffering” when the issue on the table was political and had no immediate economic ramifications<sup>195</sup>. This view was backed by Eisenhower, who held that the strength of the Communists was not in numbers but in a “small hard-core of communists”<sup>196</sup>.

The success of Eisenhower’s visit to Italy allowed De Gasperi’s government to gain good standing in the General’s strategic overview of Europe. As reported by Rossi Longhi, the Supreme Allied Commander saw Europe as “a long triangular peninsula”, with the basis on the Elba River and the vertex in Gibraltar, and countries that appeared to be in the periphery could acquire great importance through a potential counterattack on the sides<sup>197</sup>. In this light, and given the strength of De Gasperi’s government Eisenhower perceived during his visit, Italy was now in good standing when compared to other European partners – such as the Netherlands. Eisenhower “was convinced that if Italy had the cause and had the leaders, she could fight”<sup>198</sup>.

### *The view from the streets*

While in the rooms of government buildings people were concerned with the high political and technical aspects of Eisenhower’s visits, thinking of the Italian contribution to the Atlantic defence system and about the US contribution to the Italian budget, the Supreme Allied Commander’s visit was being used to mobilize the streets. The event became a catalyst for the Communist peace effort, and Leftist leaders did not miss the chance to leverage it against the sitting government.

The Italian Communist Party framed Eisenhower’s visit not as a diplomatic event, but as a raid by a foreign military power. In the days leading up to the General’s arrival, *L’Unità* dubbed him as “Gauleiter” or “Europe’s MacArthur”<sup>199</sup>. The pages of the newspaper are filled with titles against the General, against war, and recalling Article 21 of the Italian Constitution<sup>200</sup>.

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<sup>195</sup> The Ambassador in Italy (Dunn) to the Secretary of State, in *FRUS*, 1951, Europe: Political and Economic Developments, Volume IV, Part 1, n. 247.

<sup>196</sup> Notes on a Meeting at the White House, January 31, 1951, in *FRUS*, *cit.*

<sup>197</sup> Il rappresentante nel Consiglio Atlantico, A. Rossi, al ministro degli esteri, Sforza, in *DDI*, *cit.*

<sup>198</sup> Notes on a Meeting at the White House, January 31, 1951, in *FRUS*, *cit.*

<sup>199</sup> Cfr. *L’Unità*, 14 January 1951, at: <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>200</sup> Cfr. *L’Unità*, 16 January 1951, at: <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

The Communist strategy throughout Eisenhower's visit was to highlight the militarization of the public space by De Gasperi's government. Rome was described as a city under siege, locked up by "hosts of guards and *carabinieri*", where the General is forced to move under the cover of arms. The core of the Roman mobilization was a rally held by Union leader Giuseppe di Vittorio, described as a "Massive demonstration" in which Di Vittorio linked disarmament and workers' rights<sup>201</sup>.

*La Stampa*, on the other hand, framed the protests as a public order nuisance, relaunching the government's preemptive measures against public servants who would choose to strike. Dissent was not presented as a political right, but as a seditious act<sup>202</sup>.

If *L'Unità* presented a striking country, *La Stampa* described the situation as calm and under control, stressing the orderly situation in the Capital. Eisenhower's visit, rather than being framed as proof of the American warmongering nature, is presented as peaceful and friendly. The General is said to be focused on stability, on culture and religion; the newspaper also relaunched his statements on economic support to help rearmament<sup>203</sup>.

The real dissonance, however, comes down to the reaction the papers had to the protests that did break out in the streets. *L'Unità* reports news of law enforcement attacking protestors and opening fire against them, leading to deaths in Comacchio, Adrano and Piana degli Albanesi, pinning the responsibility on the government and openly speaking of "murders". These deaths, elevated to martyrdoms, are used to show the incompatibility between constitutional democracy and the Atlantic presence in Italy, which led to killings and to the violation of Article 21 of the Constitution<sup>204</sup>. *La Stampa*, on the other hand, frames the deaths as isolated incidents caused by the protestors. The events are presented in an aseptic style, reporting the death toll and with very little political analysis concerning the protests<sup>205</sup>.

The debate was not limited to the pages of newspapers. Communists in Parliament harshly criticized government. The honorable Cavallari accused the government of being "arid" and inhumane, pursuing a policy of repression that "put workers to death without due process, workers who are only asking for peace and work to feed their families"<sup>206</sup>. The honorable Berti

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<sup>201</sup> Cfr. *L'Unità*, 18-19 January 1951, at: <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>202</sup> Cfr. *La Stampa*, 15-16 January 1951, at <http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/>.

<sup>203</sup> Cfr. *La Stampa*, 19-20 January 1951, at <http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/>.

<sup>204</sup> Cfr. *L'Unità*, 19-20 January 1951, at: <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>205</sup> Cfr. *La Stampa*, 19 January 1951, at <http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/>.

<sup>206</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 19 January 1951, p. 25464.

went further and accused the government of specifically targeting Piana degli Albanesi, a socialist stronghold in an attempt to put an end to the Left's momentum<sup>207</sup>. Addressing Undersecretary of the Interior Bubbio, Berti stated that there would be no reason why law enforcement would open fire if not on specific instructions from the government<sup>208</sup>.

General Eisenhower visit exemplifies the two opposing sides of the argument. If De Gasperi's government could consider the visit a success, establishing Rome as a credible partner in the European defence system and Italy as a place where the public order was stable, the Communists managed to polarize the visit, deepening the cleavages running across the country. The peaceful atmosphere witnessed by the General was not the result of a widespread support for the government foreign policy, but rather the outcome of Scelba's powerful security policy. The other side of the argument was that the government was repressive and infringed upon the Constitutional rights of the Italian people, with the events of Adrano, Comacchio and Piana degli Albanesi acting as powerful symbols for the Left.

### *Peace, Loyalty or Party Politics? The Magnani-Cucchi affaire and the Covelli Order of Business*

Another event that should be mentioned about the beginning of 1951 is the sudden resignation of two Communist Deputies: Valdo Magnani e Aldo Cucchi.

In his speech on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January to the Province Congress of Reggio Emilia, Magnani unexpectedly broke the Party line. His speech moved from a reflection on the "atmosphere" that had developed within the Party that allowed for no dissent, pointing to unity as the most important value. He then attacked those comrades who believed that the only way for the Revolution to move forward was through war, a notion that, in his words, "[was] tolerated in our party". For some, the peace campaign was just "a sort of mask"<sup>209</sup>. Distancing himself from those who were hoping that the revolution would come through an invasion of the Red Army, he presented an

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<sup>207</sup> *Ivi*, p. 25465.

<sup>208</sup> *Ivi*, p. 25467.

<sup>209</sup> V. Magnani, "Intervento di Magnani al VII Congresso provinciale della federazione comunista reggiana", in V. Magnani, A. Cucchi, *Dichiarazioni e documenti*, Rome, p. 12, at: <https://www.bibliotecaginobianco.it/flilibri/MAGN-CUC/12/>.

order of business that opposed the Atlantic Treaty, but stated that Communists would oppose an invading army regardless of its origin<sup>210</sup>.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, Magnani presented his letter of resignation from the Party and from the Chamber of Deputies, once again denouncing the Party's subservience to the Soviet Union and its abandonment of the original Socialist democratic spirit. That same day, Aldo Cucchi resigned in solidarity, accusing the Party leadership of opposing "freedom and democracy within the Party"<sup>211</sup>.

The Communist press wasted no time: in an article on *L'Unità* titled "Two traitors", the Press Office of the party states that Magnani and Cucchi were "renegades without principles, enemies of the working class and of the Party, and an instruments of the enemies of Communism, of the Soviet Union and of all honest defenders of peace, liberty and independence of Italy"<sup>212</sup>.

While Magnani and Cucchi's resignations from Parliament were ultimately turned down by the Chamber of Deputies<sup>213</sup>, and the Party line was not affected by the scandal. The episode, however, is a good example of the hard line the Communist leadership took, especially when it came to the Soviet Union.

The Magnani-Cucchi *affaire* takes on an especially interesting light when analyzed together with a move that took place a month later. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, the Chamber of Deputies began discussions on an order of business put forward by Monarchist Deputy Alfredo Covelli. The text read:

"The Chamber [of Deputies] approves the extraordinary appropriations for the national armed forces, the rearmament of which – within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance – holds preeminent value for the defence of peace, national integrity, and social stability;

affirms that, for the mobilization of all the nation's moral and material resources towards this end, Government action is necessary, aimed at further eliminating within national public opinion certain grounds for dissent, disheartening perplexity, and bitter controversy;

holds that the current Minister of Defence cannot, in the fulfillment of the duties assigned to his Ministry by the present law, represent a guarantee for all citizens"<sup>214</sup>

The letter of the order of business leaves very little room for doubt, and Covelli's address following its public reading further clarified the position of support to rearmament, to the Atlantic

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<sup>210</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>211</sup> *Ivi*, p. 20.

<sup>212</sup> *L'Unità*, 29 January 1951, p. 1, at: <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>213</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, afternoon 30 January 1951, p. 25728.

<sup>214</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 2 March 1951, p. 26699.

Treaty and to Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander; it also reiterated the attack to the Minister of Defence, already clear in the text and that constituted a *de facto* motion of no confidence.

Five days earlier, the Communist leadership met at their headquarters in Via delle Botteghe Oscure. Longo, reporting on the political situation, put forward a proposal to vote in favor of the Covelli order of business to support the informal motion of no confidence<sup>215</sup>; while Covelli ultimately withdrew his text and thus prevented a vote from taking place, the episode is worth mentioning because of its timing. Just a few weeks earlier, the Communist apparatus had expelled Magnani and Cucchi, branding them as traitors and attacking them both in Parliament and in the press for the crime of claiming that Communists should oppose aggression from all sides. Now, the Party Leadership considered supporting an unequivocally NATO-supporting motion to tip the scales against a sitting Minister. A far cry from Scoccimarro's claim in January that the Party would support a bourgeois government if it protected peace.

### *The Berlin Appeal and Togliatti's "Outstretched Hand"*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, the Conference to discuss the structure of the European army was convened in Paris. With the American *placet* secured, the French opposition quelled and the German conditions met, what started off as an attempt to stall the rearmament of West Germany was shaping up to be a concrete political project. While the actual work of the Conference was cumbersome, substantive meetings took place in April for the first time after the inauguration<sup>216</sup>, the Left nevertheless saw the summit as something that turned the abstract issues they were fighting against into a real threat.

The rapidly evolving situation forced the Communists' hand, making them step up their efforts. Palmiro Togliatti came back from Moscow on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, marking the beginning of a new offensive against the government. The heart of this new offensive was the Berlin Appeal of the World Peace Council, a text that called for the signing of a peace pact between the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and the People's

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<sup>215</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 28 February 1951.

<sup>216</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Republic of China<sup>217</sup>. The Appeal was adopted by the WPC about a month after Stalin's interview on the *Pravda*, in which the Soviet leader declared that a third global conflict "was not unavoidable" and called precisely for a peace pact between the five powers<sup>218</sup>. The Appeal, which would constitute the pivot of the Communist action for several months, once again aimed to mobilize all sections of public opinion, going beyond the traditional Communist base.

This international situation was the backdrop for the VII Congress of the Italian Communist Party, which took place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1951. It was in this context, from the stage of the Adriano Theatre in Rome, that Togliatti officially launched his proposal for a "peace government":

"The issue of peace... becomes the most important issue of all, the one upon which the solution to all others depends. It is proceeding from these observations that, at the recent congress of the Milan Communist Federation, speaking on behalf of our Party's Leadership, I declared that—recognizing the gravity and urgency of the task of preserving peace for the Italian people—we, who are the largest opposition party to the current government of the Italian bourgeoisie, are prepared to withdraw our opposition, both in Parliament and throughout the country, to a government which, by radically modifying Italy's foreign policy—that is, by releasing Italy from those commitments that are inevitably leading it toward war—would prevent our homeland from being dragged into the vortex of a new armed conflict."<sup>219</sup>

It was not the first time that a high-profile Communist leader implied, or even explicitly suggested, that they might support a non-socialist government: for example, as mentioned above, Scoccimarro had already brushed the idea in Parliament in January 1951. There are, however, two features that should be highlighted. First, while Scoccimarro was one of the most influential members of the Party, the stage of the Congress had a much deeper political impact, especially when the floor was held by a Secretary who had just achieved a victory *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Party Leadership and even Stalin by retaining his position in the Italian Party instead of being transferred to the Cominform<sup>220</sup>; second, the Secretary's words were uttered in the larger context of the Communist attempt to erode the Christian Democrats' support from within leveraging the Vatican's doubts and the dissent within the governing party<sup>221</sup>. Togliatti's outstretched hand thus becomes a further instrument in the Communist opposition's toolbox.

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<sup>217</sup> L'Unità, 27 February 1951, p. 1, at <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>218</sup> R. Martinelli, G. Gozzini, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano, Volume VII: dall'attentato a Togliatti all'VIII congresso*, Einaudi, Torino, 1998, p. 216.

<sup>219</sup> Togliatti's address to the VII Congress of the Italian Communist Party, as reported in R. Martinelli, G. Gozzini, *cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>220</sup> Cfr. "Il Gran Rifiuto", in R. Martinelli, G. Gozzini, *op. cit.*, from p. 184.

<sup>221</sup> Cfr. "Dialoghi e brusii. Il Pci, i cattolici e la 'lotta per la pace'", in A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, from p. 361.

The “peace government” is not the only theme of the peace movement that Togliatti developed and elevated during the Congress. The defence of the Constitution played an important role in his address. Linking peace and socialism, he stated:

"It will be said that the demands we are presenting are social and socialist demands, and therefore irreconcilable with the proposal we are making to withdraw our opposition to a government that pursues a policy of peace... The struggle for socialism and the struggle for peace cannot be separated... to be even more precise and concrete, I affirm that there exists a political platform for a movement in defence of peace and for the transformation of economic and social structures such as we desire and upon which we believe the good of Italy depends. This platform is the Constitution of the Italian Republic... This is the platform of the policy of peace, work, and freedom that we propose to all of Italy. Here it is declared that Italy will never pursue a policy of war. Here the right to work is affirmed; here is sanctioned the worker's right to remuneration proportional to the quantity and quality of his work and sufficient to ensure a free and dignified existence for himself and his family. Here are provided the government programs and controls on the economy to direct it toward social ends, measures suitable for destroying situations of monopoly, the participation of workers in the management of enterprises, and an agrarian reform that limits the extent of land ownership throughout Italy. Here the fundamental freedoms of the citizen are proclaimed and, first of all, workers are guaranteed the freedom to conduct broad economic and political action for the implementation of that social program which is outlined in broad strokes within the Constitution itself. Here, then, is the political platform that we propose for the salvation of the country, to guarantee Italy peace, work, and freedom. To achieve these objectives, we place our party at the service of the Italian people."<sup>222</sup>

While the defence of the Constitution had already played a role in the Italian struggle for peace, its use had always been episodic. Togliatti’s framing created an organic line of reasoning through which the Italian Constitution, the struggle for peace, and socialism came together. The fundamental law was no mere bourgeois compromise, but a platform for a wide alliance that would serve “all of Italy”.

The whole Congress was built around the issues of foreign and security policy. Martinelli and Gozzini report that this imbalance in the agenda, with one topic dominating all others, was a unique feature of the VII Congress: national interest, the internal political struggle, the fight for the social rights enshrined in the Constitution, all was tied to the larger issue at play, namely the struggle between the two opposing blocs<sup>223</sup>.

The primacy of foreign policy carried over into the electoral campaign for the local elections of May-June 1951. During a leadership meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, Pajetta suggested the propaganda should dramatize the vote by linking a victory of the majority parties to an imminent war; Sereni recommended using the Berlin Appeal for a five-power peace deal as an

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<sup>222</sup> Togliatti’s address to the VII Congress of the Italian Communist Party, as reported in R. Martinelli, G. Gozzini, *cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

instrument of electoral pressure: the Peace movement would push the electorate to vote for the candidates that supported the Appeal<sup>224</sup>.

The campaign for the Berlin Appeal continued beyond the local election phase: in September, Sereni reported a better working environment for the signature collection in support of the Appeal when compared to that of the electoral campaign or of the Stockholm Appeal. The number of local Peace Committees had decreased from 16 thousand to 12 thousand, but the quality of the work itself was higher. His only complaint was the stiffness of the *cadres*, unable to distinguish between the action needed in the context of the Party and what was needed in the context of the Peace movement<sup>225</sup> — a complaint that Roasio had already raised in February<sup>226</sup>.

The Appeal was treated by the Communist party as a referendum on the government's foreign policy, if not the government itself. The goal was to turn the Peace movement into a political entity capable providing a concrete contribution to the creation of the “peace government” by creating a large network of allies that would support such a government<sup>227</sup>.

While the VII Congress and the Berlin Appeal did not radically change the language and the items used by the Communists to oppose the centrist government, the Atlantic Alliance and the European army, they gave cohesion to the various arguments the Left was using to attack the stance of the government about Italy's global alignment and its rearmament policy.

## *A Federalist Choice*

The local elections of May-June 1951 were a success for right-wing parties, which led to a fight within the Christian Democracy: De Gasperi had to fight to keep his party in line<sup>228</sup>. The crisis led to a government shuffle in July, which culminated in the exclusion of Dossetti's current from government<sup>229</sup>; as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Dossetti was one of the most vocal leaders of the Christian Democracy when it came to opposing the Atlantic Treaty: he believed in a policy of equidistance, holding that Christians had no link to either side of the Cold

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<sup>224</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 20 April 1951.

<sup>225</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 26 September 1951.

<sup>226</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 28 February 1951.

<sup>227</sup> IGR, AICP, Working plan for the Partisans for Peace movement, 26 September 1951.

<sup>228</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, pp. 470-471.

<sup>229</sup> *Ivi*, p. 475.

War. The government shuffle was also the moment when Carlo Sforza, who had held the Foreign Ministry since 1947 retired, leaving De Gasperi to hold the title *ad interim*.

As the government reshuffle came to a close, the Paris Conference published its *rapport intérimaire* which, taking stock of the situation, enumerated the issues over which the delegations needed directions from their governments, implicitly admitting to a temporary standstill<sup>230</sup>. One of the biggest cruxes was the legal and political basis the common army would rest on, and on this issue Altiero Spinelli would give his contribution to the Italian government.

Spinelli's Federalist movement had acquired considerable sway amongst Italian *élites* and was attempting to pressure the centrist government into making the federalist ideal its own, turning it into something concrete. Through a memorandum addressed to De Gasperi, Spinelli stressed the hierarchy between a government and its military command and the legal aberration that would come to be the common army were to be created without a State to answer to. His recommendation was to have the Paris Conference establish a European Constituent Assembly to create an entity that would have both the legal status and the legitimacy to lead the common army<sup>231</sup>: the creation of a collegiate political component of the new European entity would make it easier to convince national Parliaments to give up their sovereign prerogatives, as the prospective European executive would be overseen by a Parliamentary assembly; furthermore, the assembly would ease the worries regarding the common budget<sup>232</sup>. The creation of a political component to the European project served a more contingent need as well: if De Gasperi had successfully shepherded the ratification of the Atlantic Treaty through Parliament in 1949, it was also because of his shrewd idea of linking it to the accession to the Council of Europe; transforming the EDC from a simple military alliance to a grander political project served the same purpose, and would have allowed the Italian government to effectively fight the Left's accusation of warmongering<sup>233</sup>.

De Gasperi's Europhile turn was further strengthened by the developments taking place across the Atlantic. If the initial reaction of the Truman administration regarding the Pleven Plan had been suspicious, the summer of 1951 witnessed a debate within the American upper echelons regarding the European Defence Community. The notion of the common army was no longer

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<sup>230</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>231</sup> A. Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2010, p. 99.

<sup>232</sup> L. Sebesta, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>233</sup> A. Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa, cit.*, p. 99.

seen as a dilatory tactic, but rather as an earnest attempt to further the process of European integration<sup>234</sup>.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October the Italian delegation to the Conference received instructions based on a strong Federalist imprint. The note called for a shared budget and, on a more general level, for the construction of a larger federal structure of which the common army “should be a consequence, not a premise”. On the following day, the Italian delegation presented an *Aide-mémoire* that recommended the adoption of a supranational solution to the issues presented by the *rapport intérimaire*<sup>235</sup>.

De Gasperi restated his stance at the meeting of the Atlantic Council held in Rome in late November, at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of NATO countries, explaining the importance of creating a political community on top of the EDC. However, he accepted the notion of “transitory solutions”<sup>236</sup> to comply with the request that “the Paris Conference would conclude its activities at the earliest possible moment, so that a definitive report could be made to the Council for consideration at its next meeting”<sup>237</sup>.

Just a few days later, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, De Gasperi took the stage at the Assembly of the Council of Europe and launched the federalist idea for the first time in such a public forum. In his “fleeting occasion” speech, De Gasperi stated that purely technical or administrative solutions would create a “superfluous, perhaps even oppressive structure” unable to move younger generations. He explained his belief that if the armed forces were to be merged, then the Fatherland they were called to defend would need to be “visible, solid, and alive”, and the EDC project thus needed to establish a common Assembly and a common executive, as well as a common budget<sup>238</sup>.

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<sup>234</sup> A. Varsori, *Dalla rinascita al declino*, cit., p. 157.

<sup>235</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>236</sup> Verbatim record of the fourth meeting of the eighth session of the North Atlantic Council held at the Foro Italicò, Rome, On Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1951 at 11 am, pp. 47-48, at [https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/nato-archives-online/c/1/1/c116169aba8c13eaf73dc9dac7774f3c75ed6ce319caecbf4b80da173fd3061/C\\_8-VR\\_4\\_ENG\\_NHQL742014.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/nato-archives-online/c/1/1/c116169aba8c13eaf73dc9dac7774f3c75ed6ce319caecbf4b80da173fd3061/C_8-VR_4_ENG_NHQL742014.pdf).

<sup>237</sup> Verbatim record of the fourth meeting of the eighth session of the North Atlantic Council held at the Foro Italicò, Rome, On Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1951, at 3pm, p. 8, at [https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/nato-archives-online/1/e/6/1e6cdfb776655b697bcf6686abd41dbc9287a1193121666c772bb7f193dec878/C\\_8-VR\\_6-FINAL\\_ENG\\_NHQL742028.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/nato-archives-online/1/e/6/1e6cdfb776655b697bcf6686abd41dbc9287a1193121666c772bb7f193dec878/C_8-VR_6-FINAL_ENG_NHQL742028.pdf).

<sup>238</sup> De Gasperi’s speech to the Council of Europe Assembly, 10 December 1951, at [https://www.cvce.eu/obj/discorso\\_di\\_alcide\\_de\\_gasperi\\_strasburgo\\_10\\_dicembre\\_1951-it-7dbeb557-c313-4703-a237-d909f35a2c25.html](https://www.cvce.eu/obj/discorso_di_alcide_de_gasperi_strasburgo_10_dicembre_1951-it-7dbeb557-c313-4703-a237-d909f35a2c25.html).

The Communist reaction to De Gasperi's speech was quick to arrive. On the pages of *L'Unità*, the President of the Council was criticized for his "subservient speech" and dubbed as "the most American in class" for its intention of giving up national sovereignty in favour of a supranational entity with authoritarian traits. According to the Communist press, the creation of a European army was not a symptom of the genuine intention of creating a more integrated continent, but a way to covertly allow the German military *cadres* to gain power: the front page of the newspaper on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December cried out "The nazi ministers of war will hold power over the armed forces of Italy, born from the Resistance!". The Communist critique also focused on the cost of the operation, which would take away resources from the support of the populations hit by the flood in Polesine. De Gasperi's political line was framed as "antinational", aimed at binding Italy to a war alliance and thus contrary to the interests of the people<sup>239</sup>.

## *The Balance of 1951*

1951 was a crucial transitional phase for the debate over the European defence system and, as a consequence, for the Italian political situation. The year had begun under the shadow of the doubts about the Plevin Plan and with the search for a military compromise that would both satisfy the American demands and quell the French fears, and it ended with a concrete project and Federalist turn by the Italian government.

In spite of the evolution of the common army project, the Communist language showed remarkable consistency. The struggle for peace, while acquiring more internal cohesion through Togliatti's reasoning, shown by his address at the VII Congress, still hit the same nails: German rearmament, national interest, Constitutional principles. The unmoved mover of the Italian Communists' opposition to the joint army becomes even clearer in light of the clash between the Magnani-Cucchi incident and the behaviour of the Party Leadership regarding the Covelli order of business, leaving very little doubt about the Communist will to protect Soviet interest and to undermine the unity of the sitting government's majority.

In spite of the continuity of the Communist action, 1951 was an eventful, pivotal year which shaped the battlefield of the following years. The question was no longer about the number of German divisions or the role of Germany in the Western defence system, but the very nature

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<sup>239</sup> Cfr. Front pages of *L'Unità*, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December 1951, at <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

of the Italian Republic and its role in the larger European project. On one side, De Gasperi tied the future of Italian democracy to its integration in a larger European political community; on the other, the Left criticized the project as a surrender to a foreign power.

# 1952: The Year of the Signature

## *International developments*

If the last months of 1951 marked considerable progress in the EDC project, with De Gasperi's federalist turn and the American pressure to expedite negotiations, the beginning of 1952 witnessed some tension over the project both in France and in Germany. Hallstein, State Secretary at the Federal Foreign Office, requested the FRG's accession to NATO, either directly or through the EDC, meeting Schuman's firm opposition. The root cause of the clash lies in the known fear of a fully independent German armed force on the side of the French, and in the will to achieve parity of status to avoid the position of a "mercenary force" on the side of the Germans<sup>240</sup>. In spite of the tensions, by the end of February both the *Bundestag* and the *Assemblée Nationale* ultimately voted in favor of the motions of confidence presented by the respective governments — although the French National Assembly did so only with a narrow majority<sup>241</sup>.

## *The Lisbon Atlantic Council*

The German and French governments were able to smooth over the tensions right before the meeting of the Atlantic Council held in Lisbon between the 20th and the 25th of February. The main item of the order of business was the European Defence Community, its role and its specifics. The Lisbon Atlantic Council should be analyzed not only for its importance to the development of the project *tout court*, but because the juxtaposition between the minutes of the meeting and the staple of Communist propaganda reveals the match between what the Left denounced and the governmental action.

Regarding the issue of German rearmament, the Italian Left had already launched an attack on the use of the territory of the FRG as a forward platform for bombers. During the first

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<sup>240</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>241</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 210-211.

day of talks, General Gruenther highlights the need to build 26 airfields in West Germany<sup>242</sup>. Two days later, on the 22nd of February, Dutch Foreign Minister Stikker put the estimated troop contribution of the FRG at 12 “*groupements*” — a unit of 12.000 to 13.000 men —, as well as 1100 aircrafts<sup>243</sup>.

The issue of Constitutional constraints came up on the 22nd of February as well. As De Gasperi explained his point of view, championing the case for a federal solution for the EDC, the Italian Prime Minister stated that “in several countries there are Constitutional problems that cannot be ignored as we look for legal language for the reciprocal guarantees, and we need to find language that allows us to avoid the long procedures of Constitutional amendment”<sup>244</sup>.

A third element that was near and dear to the heart of the Communist propaganda machine was the notion that the joint European force was nothing more than a Trojan horse for the Atlantic Alliance, that is to say, the United States. Federalists and those who tried to imagine Europe as a third force were unceremoniously grouped in with the “American imperialists”<sup>245</sup>. This fear seems to be confirmed by Spofford’s words: he stated that the EDC and NATO “should be based not on the concept of two separate bodies working independently toward the same objective, but rather on the concept of two closely related organizations, one working so far as this objective is concerned, within the framework of, and reinforcing the other”<sup>246</sup>. The point was further driven home by the Chairman, who stated that NATO and the EDC were “one and indivisible now and in the future”<sup>247</sup>.

The minutes of the meetings in Lisbon reveal how the fears the Italian Left was leveraging to mobilize public opinion were turning into concrete policies behind closed doors. Through NATO and the European integration process, the FRG was indeed beginning rearmament, and, as foreseen by Tolloy, American Generals were already looking into the specifics of building airfields in the West German territory. The accusation lobbed at the government of attempting to circumvent or even violate the Constitution found apparent validation in De Gasperi’s wish to find a legal framework that would avoid the need to amend the Constitution. Furthermore, the

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<sup>242</sup> Verbatim record of the second meeting of the council held on Wednesday, 20th February 1952 at 6pm at the Instituto Superior Tecnico, Lisbon, Nato Archives Online, p. 23, at <https://archives.nato.int/verbatim-record-of-meeting-251>.

<sup>243</sup> Verbatim record of the second meeting of the council held on Friday, 22nd February 1952 at 3pm at the Instituto Superior Tecnico, Lisbon, Nato Archives Online, p. 15, at <https://archives.nato.int/verbatim-record-of-meeting-252>.

<sup>244</sup> *Ivi*, p. 19.

<sup>245</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, p. 602.

<sup>246</sup> Verbatim record of the meeting held on 22nd February 1951, *cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>247</sup> *Ivi*, p. 39.

notion of the EDC as the US' "Trojan horse" is supported by the hierarchical relationship between the prospective European army and NATO described by both Spofford and the Chairman.

This overlap between the decisions reached in Lisbon and the fears stirred by Communist propaganda reveals a paradoxical dynamic. Although the technical details regarding the construction of 26 airfields or the German *groupements* remained covered by military secrecy, the Left's campaign managed to accurately intercept the political substance of what was being discussed behind closed doors. Even without knowledge of De Gasperi's private admissions regarding the need to avoid the long procedures of constitutional amendment, the opposition intuitively identified the EDC project as a potential infringement upon national legal sovereignty.

Communist propaganda, which denounced the European force as nothing more than a "Trojan horse" for the Atlantic Alliance, thus found factual validation—albeit unknown to contemporaries—in the statements regarding the hierarchical and indivisible relationship between the two organizations. In this sense, the acceleration witnessed in Lisbon did not provide direct evidence for the public debate at the time, but it demonstrates a posteriori how the "propagandistic" fears of a subordinate Europe and an aggressive German rearmament corresponded almost perfectly to the real policies being cemented in diplomatic secrecy.

### *Stalin's note*

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, Stalin reached out to the Western world suggesting an alternative settlement of the German question. Building on his previous position, namely the need to rely on the Potsdam conclusions rather than to find unilateral and separate solutions for East and West Germany, Stalin argued it was necessary to expedite the conclusion of the peace treaty with Germany by preparing a draft to submit to an international conference to be convened "in the nearest future". He added, "It is understood that such a peace treaty must be worked out with direct participation of Ger in the form of an all-Ger Govt.", and as such the occupying powers should promote the promotion of an all-German government. The note included a Soviet-written draft for the peace treaty which provided for the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of occupying forces. This unified Germany, whose borders would follow those established at Potsdam, would be permitted to establish its own national armed forces and military-industrial complex, but would not be obligated "not to enter into any kind of coalition or military alliance

directed against any power which took part with its armed forces in war against Germany”<sup>248</sup>. This last point was the main crux for the US. After days of intense diplomatic activity, the US sent a reply that was as glacial as diplomatic etiquette allowed. The text stated that the US Government believed it would not have been possible to engage in talks before the formation of the all-German government, that the Potsdam conference did not reach a definitive conclusion regarding the issue of German borders, and that the US Government was opposed to the notion of a militarily sovereign Germany that was not tied to associations with other countries, as it “might jeopardize the emergence in Eur of a new era in which internatl relations wld be based on cooperation and not on rivalry and distrust”<sup>249</sup>.

Wilfried Loth conducted an in-depth analysis of the drafting process of Stalin’s note through the Soviet Foreign Office’s documentation to ascertain whether the note was merely a dilatory move or if it had deeper goals. He claims the note was not an initiative born in a vacuum and out of an immediate need, but rather the result of a process started in 1951 by the Soviet Foreign Office as a response to the acceleration of the West German rearmament process<sup>250</sup>. The Kremlin did not wish to launch its proposal before it had ensured public support for the peace plan<sup>251</sup> by framing the Western powers as obstacles to the long-term settlement of the German question<sup>252</sup>. The elements that lead to believe the Soviet initiative was more than a short-term tactic go beyond the procedural: Loth highlights Stalin’s direct intervention to amend the text to curb the usual class war rhetoric against “imperialist forces”, electing to use the less charged expression “aggressive forces”, and he ensured explicit reference to the German national interests<sup>253</sup>.

The international developments in the months leading up to the signature of the Treaty Establishing the European Defence Community reveal two fundamental elements for the analysis of the Communist action against German rearmament and the establishment of the EDC. First, while the initial wave of opposition to the project was waged against the Pleven Plan, a French manoeuvre aimed at preventing the rearmament of the FRG and its accession to the Atlantic

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<sup>248</sup> The Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Embassy of the United States, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1952, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Germany and Austria, Vol. VII, Part 1, n. 65.

<sup>249</sup> The Secretary of State to the Office of the United States High Commissioner for Germany, at Bonn, *Ivi*, n. 78; the document reported in *FRUS* is not the final note delivered to Vishinsky, but a draft sent to the High Commissioner for Germany which the volume reports “is the same except for a few minor textual differences”.

<sup>250</sup> W. Loth, “The origins of Stalin’s note of 10 March 1952”, in *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, n. 2, January 2004, p. 67.

<sup>251</sup> *Ivi*, p. 76.

<sup>252</sup> *Ivi*, p. 78.

<sup>253</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 80, 82.

Alliance, the arguments the Italian Left employed found remarkable confirmation in the works of the Atlantic Council of Lisbon, held behind closed doors. The West German territory was indeed meant to host airfields for the “forward defence” strategy, and German troops were indeed being reorganized into large units with Konrad Adenauer demanding parity of treatment. Furthermore, not only was the EDC clearly being set up as a cog in the larger NATO machine, De Gasperi was acknowledging the constitutional constraints that might stall the project and, rather than take the long road of constitutional amendment, was hoping to circumvent the issue through the Treaty’s legal specifics. Second, the merciless campaign against the Germans which leveraged the fresh scar of the Nazi-led horrors, would have to be reworked to fit the new narrative imposed by the Soviet note of March 10<sup>th</sup>. Regardless of the glacial response coming from the United States, the plan to expeditiously reach a settlement of the German question by reunifying the two sides of Germany and signing a peace treaty demanded a reworking of the Italian Communists’ propaganda.

### *The Great German People: a New Communist Narrative*

If ever since the beginning of the debate over Italy’s accession to the Atlantic Treaty the Communist Party had constantly leveraged the memory of the horrors perpetrated by the Germans during the Second World War, the Soviet note begged a change in tone. In a first page article of *L’Unità* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, the unsigned author chronicles the German situation since the end of the war with deep emphasis on the lack of equal rights with other nations. Complying with the Soviet strategy outlined above, the article pins the responsibility of the German situation on the Americans, who “put their hands on the entire West German economy with a bandit-like operation that makes the outcome of the First World War pale in comparison”. Wielding the ghost of a German civil war, *L’Unità* denounces the American refusal of the East German efforts for reunification, and it exalts the USSR’s efforts to protect “itself, for Europe, and for the very same German people” by ensuring Germany be reunited and rendered neutral: “the problem of a great people cannot be solved by condemning it to a situation of inferiority, nor by arming a part of it against the other; there is no peace for Europe if there is no peace for Germany”<sup>254</sup>.

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<sup>254</sup> *L’Unità*, 15 March 1952, p. 1, at <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

While the Communist press offers relatively little coverage on the Western reply of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, as the Italian attention was turned to the latest development of the issue of Trieste, the March 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the newspaper provides another example of the shift in narrative. Western powers, and especially France, the UK, and the US, are condemned for turning down the Soviet initiative and for their refusal to put an end to the abnormal German situation. The Second World War is no longer described as waged against Germany, but as against Hitler, and the refusal to recognize the borders discussed at Potsdam is framed as the Western powers “making the revanchist wishes of Krupp and Guderian their own”<sup>255</sup>.

While the press was the first stage on which the new narrative became evident, the discussion in Parliament underwent a shift as well. The previous chapters have discussed the parliamentary debates over the question of German rearmament. After Stalin’s note, the rhetoric used in Parliament by the Left changed. An example of this change is the address by Socialist Senator Casadei on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April. The Senator draws a clear distinction between the German people and the Bonn political *élites*, rejecting the notion that European security necessarily rested with a rearmed Federal Republic of Germany and the only question left was whether it would be integrated into a larger joint force or if would be part of a coalition, shifting the focus on the choice between rearming and disarming, a choice that “people have already solved by siding with disarmament”. He launches a defence of the German people, painting it as a victim of the machinations of American imperialists and of Adenauer’s government and highlighting the paradox of France, Great Britain and Italy, countries who had suffered because of German militarism. encouraging Adenauer’s efforts to wrangle his people into accepting rearmament<sup>256</sup> in spite of almost the entirety of it rejecting its consequences<sup>257</sup>. Far from being a defence of German nationalism, Casadei’s position mirrors the Soviet strategy of neutralization: the Senator supports the right of the German people to put a stop to the “unjust division of Germany”, to reconstruct national unity and to conclude a peace treaty that would reinstate their national independence. Much like Stalin’s note, Casadei does not rule out the existence of a German armed force *a priori*, but he allows for it on the condition that it be constrained by a strict national defence criterion: “a small national army, meant to defend the national territory”, as opposed to a powerful and aggressive *Wehrmacht* integrated in the Atlantic system<sup>258</sup>.

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<sup>255</sup> L’Unità, 26 March 1952, p. 6, at <https://archivio.unita.news/>.

<sup>256</sup> Senato della Repubblica, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, 3 April 1952, p. 32396.

<sup>257</sup> *Ivi*, p. 32399.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

The Left's parliamentary effort carried on after the signing of the Treaty Establishing the EDC. In June 1952, as General Ridgway, the new Supreme Allied Commander, was touring Europe, Palmiro Togliatti took the floor of the Chamber of Deputies. His address was once again in step with the new line established with the note of March 10<sup>th</sup>. The Secretary defends the unity of the German people, denouncing the Atlantic strategy of trying to "break it in two"<sup>259</sup>. His reasoning rests on two pillars: on one hand, the defence of German national unity against the partition imposed by the imperialist American interest, on the other, the attack against the rebirth of "armed groups of German imperialism". The distinction is crucial: Togliatti stresses the difference between the German people and the *Reichswehr*, implying that the FRG's rearmament is not necessary for the security of Western Europe, but a threat to the Soviet Union and to Europe itself. The Secretary draws a parallel between the Korean war and the European theatre: American imperialism was going to "light Europe up with the same fire that burns in Korea", using the cleavage running along Germany as a trigger<sup>260</sup>. His defence of Germany is ultimately a barrier against the return of a revanchist militarism steered by Washington.

The analysis of the Party's press and of the Left's language in Parliament, epitomized by Casadei's and Togliatti's speeches, showcases how the opposition's rhetoric moved in step with the Kremlin's evolving diplomatic strategy. Stalin's note is the culmination of an internal process of foreign policymaking, and it imposed a radical amendment of the Italian Left's political discourse, with the radical antigermanism and antinazism leveraged up until that moment turning into a defence of the German national unity.

This transformation was based on the creation of a dichotomy between the German *volk* on one hand, portrayed as peace loving and as a victim of Washington's schemes, and, on the other, Bonn's government, described as a harbinger of US imperialism. The shift allowed the Left to oppose the EDC in a more nuanced way, leaving behind the simple ghost of German revanchism *tout court* and solidifying their position as defenders of national sovereignty and identity against the American hegemony. If only a few weeks earlier the "German divisions" were one of the most effective boogymen employed by the Communists, they were now accepting and even endorsing the reestablishment of German national armed forces, under the condition that the country be reunified and rendered neutral: such a process of rearmament would not have been, according to their logic, a concession to an old enemy, but a layer of defence

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<sup>259</sup> Camera dei Deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Minutes of the Assembly, Afternoon, 17 June 1952, pp. 38922-38923.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

against the “Koreanization” of Europe and against the integration of the old *Wehrmacht* into the Western defence system.

### *The Signature and the Opposition*

The Treaty Establishing the EDC was signed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, accompanied by a special protocol to link the EDC and NATO: the military guarantees of the Atlantic Alliance would be extended to all Member States of the EDC. The special protocol was a way to extend the NATO guarantees to West Germany without the necessity of the country joining NATO itself<sup>261</sup>.

While the Treaty Establishing the EDC was signed in May, the Italian Parliament witnessed no organic debate on the issue until October, when the order of business brought the Foreign Ministry’s budget to the floor. Both the leaders of the Popular Front took the floor during the debate, Nenni speaking on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Togliatti on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

In his analysis of the situation, Nenni expressed the belief that the EDC project had been branded since the beginning by an “original sin”, namely its unqualified subordination to the Atlantic Treaty. According to the Socialist leader, the European project was small and exclusionary, limited to countries led by catholic governments, and as such the EDC was not truly capable of leading to a genuine, autonomous federal union until it “cut off the umbilical cord with the United States”<sup>262</sup>. Togliatti built on this point, branding the EDC as “the Atlantic Treaty’s child”, meant to mask with the illusion of unity an operation to sever the Old Continent and Germany especially<sup>263</sup>. He rejected the Italian government’s Europhile behaviour as something that deepened the cleavage between East and West.

The heart of the Left’s argument is the German question. Nenni claimed that speaking of European unity as Germany was severed in two was “unprecedented foolishness”<sup>264</sup>. As such, Bonn’s rearmament was not criticized simply because of an opposition to militarism, but because it would have “sealed the permanent partition of Germany”<sup>265</sup>. Nenni strengthened his claims by referencing German sources, such as Schumacher’s political will, to highlight how Western

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<sup>261</sup> L. Sebesta, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>262</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Afternoon, 16 October 1952, p. 41547.

<sup>263</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, 17 October 1952, p. 41596.

<sup>264</sup> Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Afternoon, 16 October 1952, p. 41547.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

rearmament would not alter the balance of power in the region but would lead to rearmament on the other side of the Iron Curtain. He outlines a scenario in which, by encouraging the FRG's rearmament, the Western bloc would be handing Bonn's *élites* the means to annex East Germany *manu militari*, which would in turn lead to a general war in Europe<sup>266</sup>.

Togliatti put forward an alternative procedure. Rejecting the United States' timeline which called for a general election to be held before the unification of Germany, which he saw as a strategy to ensure Western hegemony, the Secretary recommended the preliminary establishment of a unitary government to bring back unity and national sovereignty, on the model of the Italian National Liberation Committee, only to hold elections at a later time. The creation of the EDC would prevent the establishment of a true European system, based on a common market and on the pacific coexistence of different social systems<sup>267</sup>.

### *The Failure of High Politics*

1952 is characterized by a profound asymmetry between the importance of the international developments and the action of the Italian Left. On one hand, the European diplomatic scenario undergoes a considerable acceleration – from the work of the Atlantic Council in Lisbon, to Stalin's launch of a peace plan for Germany, to the signature of the Treaty Establishing the EDC – on the other, the Italian Left's response appears as though the highest levels of political decision-makers were busy elsewhere.

1952 appears to be a moment in which the Italian Communist foreign policy is fundamentally other-directed. As far as the EDC is concerned, the Party looks like little more than a transmission belt for Moscow's wishes adding virtually no originality to the political line dictated by Stalin's diplomatic strategy. The narrative shift imposed by the Soviet note of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March is adopted and relaunched by Party and press without apparent friction or reworking, quickly turning the ardent antigermanism of the first wave of opposition to the common European army into a defence of German national unity. The new line is not the result of an internal debate, as confirmed by the virtual absence of discussion regarding the EDC at the highest level – namely, the Party Leadership – in the archival sources surrounding 1952. Rather, it is an echo of

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<sup>266</sup> *Ivi*, p. 41548.

<sup>267</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, 17 October 1952, p. 41597.

a decision taken by the Kremlin aimed at preventing a rebalancing of the conventional military power on the Old Continent.

The Peace Movement, which in past years had been a formidable instrument of mass mobilization in the hands of the Communist Party, suffers from a sluggish action in 1952. After the success of the Stockholm Appeal with 16 million signatures and the slightly lesser result of 14 million signatures for the Berlin Appeal, the Movement launched a series of initiatives – against biological warfare, against German rearmament, against the economic consequences of rearmament, for the defence of national identity<sup>268</sup> – in the run-up to the third congress of the World Peace Council to be held in Vienna at the end of the year. Guiso reports that these campaigns were less effective than the ones held in previous years, a natural consequence of the constant state of mobilization in which the Movement had been led since its foundation and of the lesser appeal it had on the hard-liners who wished for revolution<sup>269</sup>.

Ultimately, 1952 is characterised by a paradox. At a moment in which the process of European integration was moving forward at break-neck speed, with military institutions being one step away from being established, the Italian Left abdicated its role of active opposition to the government's foreign policy, handing the keys of its international strategy to the Kremlin.

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<sup>268</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, pp. 605-606.

<sup>269</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 624-625.

## The EDC's Swan Song

1953 was a pivotal year for the Italian stance regarding the EDC. Both international and internal factors came into play: Stalin's death in March opened the door to a first easing of international tensions, a hope that is further strengthened by the July armistice in Korea, which cooled down the hot front of the Cold War. On the home front, the first half of 1953 hinged around the national elections to be held in June, and, as a consequence, around the debate on the electoral law. With the electoral result and the end of De Gasperi's era, the EDC gave its swan song and the Left's opposition entered its last phase.

### *The "Swindle law" and its ties with the EDC*

The government began working on electoral reform in 1952. This choice stemmed, as reported by Craveri, not by simple electoral math, but by the conviction that only the centrist parties in government would be able to stave off the creation of a "destructive union" by the Right-wing and Leftist extremists<sup>270</sup>. Believing that the Italian Republic had yet to reach political maturity and stability, he saw a majoritarian electoral law as a means to ensure continuity of government and of foreign policy. Such was the importance of the initiative that the Prime Minister decided to spearhead the reform himself, taking charge of the political planning and only charged Scelba with the execution and the parliamentary fight<sup>271</sup>.

The law's drafting was far from easy, with several frictions developing within the majority. While the threshold to award the extra seats had been fixed at 50%, thanks in part to the contribution of President Einaudi who believed an absolute majority was a requirement to legitimize the disproportional allotment of seats, the exact entity of the "prize" was a point of great contention<sup>272</sup>. The smaller parties in the majority feared that a larger allotment of extra seats would disproportionately benefit the Christian Democracy; Saragat in particular voiced the

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<sup>270</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, pp. 593-594.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *Ivi*, p. 595.

concern that the CD would eventually be able to govern alone through its own absolute majority<sup>273</sup>, pushing its lesser allies out of government.

The Council of Ministers eventually settled on a text that provided for the assignment of 65% of seats to a coalition that gathered over 50% of the vote, a result that, in spite of some further clashes within the governing majority, was eventually adopted by both houses of Parliament<sup>274</sup>.

The battle over electoral reform was fierce. In order to pass the new electoral law, the Chamber of Deputies held an uninterrupted session lasting from the 18th to the 21st of January. In his closing remarks Togliatti spared no punches, and accused the government of forcing Parliament into untenable sessions in order to approve an illegitimate and unconstitutional reform<sup>275</sup>. The Secretary's words were just a small part of the larger debate, which concerned both method and merit as the discussion also revolved around the supposed abuse of the question of confidence<sup>276</sup>. The debate grew even harsher in the Senate, the President of which resigned days before the vote, stuck as he were between the rock of the Communist filibuster and the hard place of the government's procedural bravado<sup>277</sup>.

### *The Communist Opposition*

Togliatti's party forged a link between the so-called "swindle law" and the EDC by rebranding the latter as the "international swindle law"<sup>278</sup>. As Guiso reports, the operation was more than mere electoral rhetoric: it reflected the Communist Party's view of the electoral reform as a scam perpetrated against the Italian people in an attempt to serve foreign interests. The Communist narrative painted De Gasperi not as a national leader, but as the henchmen and executor of decisions taken in Washington: if the Prime Minister was portrayed as a servant to American interests, Togliatti was presented as the bulwark of Italian identity and independence; the Communist Party and the Christian Democracy at large were presented respectively as the

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<sup>273</sup> *Ivi*, p. 597.

<sup>274</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 598-599.

<sup>275</sup> Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 18 January 1951, pp. 45836-45837.

<sup>276</sup> Cfr. Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, Minutes of the Assembly, 17 January 1951.

<sup>277</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 599.

<sup>278</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, p. 637.

“party of honesty” and the “party of self-serving intrigue”<sup>279</sup>. This narrative turned an eminently technical question, the seat allocation mechanism, into an issue of morals and revolving around the risk of war. The electoral reform would, according to this view, artificially and create an absolute majority to drag Italy into a war-mongering system.

In light of the analysis of the verbatim records of the Lisbon Atlantic Council of 1952<sup>280</sup>, the implications of the electoral reform and, as a consequence, of the Communist opposition, appear deeper. While the Council of Ministers eventually settled on a 65% majority because of the opposition of smaller majority parties, the Christian Democrats’ upper echelons were dead set on awarding 2/3 of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies to the winning coalition<sup>281</sup>. Such a qualified majority would have allowed the Christian Democrats and the government parties the ability to amend the Constitution without the risk of their decision being put to the test of a referendum, thus circumventing the need expressed in Lisbon by De Gasperi to draft the Treaty Establishing the EDC in such a way that constitutional amendments would not be needed. A large majority would also have been beneficial to the ratification effort, an issue that was kept on the top of the agenda by the American Secretaries of States of both the Truman and the Eisenhower administrations<sup>282</sup>, solidifying the credibility of the Communist argument.

Because of these reasons, the Communist party was able to effectively link the electoral reform to the issues of foreign and security policy, using the “swindle law” as proof of De Gasperi’s subservience to Washington. While the Christian Democrats were eventually able to pass the reform, their victory, as shown by the electoral results of 1953, was a pyrrhic one.

## *International détente and the elections of 1953*

### *Stalin’s death*

Stalin’s death on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March and the subsequent establishment of a less monolithic leadership in the Soviet Union marked a significant shift in the stance of the Italian Communist

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Cfr. *supra*.

<sup>281</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

<sup>282</sup> D. Preda, *Sulla soglia dell’Unione, la vicenda della Comunità Politica Europea (1952-1954)*, Jaca Book, Milan, 1994, pp. 310, 314.

Party, influencing its opposition to the EDC. Togliatti was suddenly faced with the need, enhanced by the violent repression of protests in East Berlin, to reevaluate his relationship with Stalin's figure, and tightened ties with Soviet President of the Council Georgij Malenkov, who called for "pacific coexistence" as a preemptive measure against atomic war<sup>283</sup>. While the Party leadership found itself without a clear line coming from Moscow for the first time in Republican history, Togliatti wasted no time to create a link between the potential international easing of tensions and the potential for a change at home: on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, he attacked De Gasperi's government by stressing the difference between the international *détente* and the Cold War climate that persisted in Italy, epitomized by the recent adoption of the new electoral law<sup>284</sup>.

The Soviet leader's death also led to a rearrangement of the line of action of the international Peace Movement: the focus was shifted on the possible solutions to the Korean war, on building bridges with other pacifist movements yet unlinked with the World Peace Council, and on smoothing out the anti-Western rhetoric, perfectly fitting the larger climate of *détente*. This effort is showcased by the decision to move the headquarters of the movement from Prague to Vienna, a neutral country<sup>285</sup>. The new line is exemplified by the General Resolution adopted in November later that year by the World Peace Council: while the denouncement of the German rearmament process was still present there was no explicit reference to the West, and the attack against the EDC was framed as preparatory to a meeting between the Four Powers; the tone of the resolution was generally more conciliatory than what would be expected given the rhetoric of the past years<sup>286</sup>.

### *The electoral campaign and the end of De Gasperi's era*

As relations between the two blocs underwent a period of relaxation, the battle against the EDC played a pivotal role in the electoral campaign of 1953 and in the beginning of the second Republican term of Parliament.

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<sup>283</sup> S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri*, cit., p. 140.

<sup>284</sup> A. Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, pp. 218

<sup>285</sup> E. Aga-Rossi, V. Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin, Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007, p. 278.

<sup>286</sup> IGR, AICP, General Resolution of the World Peace Council, 28 November 1953, Vienna, in "Partigiani della Pace 1".

During a Party leadership meeting on the 12th of February, Togliatti clarified the priorities for the year and for the electoral campaign, putting the creation of a peace government at the top of the list<sup>287</sup>. The opposition to the EDC was a centerpiece of the Communist electoral propaganda, effectively summarized by the slogan “against the European army for peace and independence in Italy”<sup>288</sup>. Gian Carlo Pajetta, as leader of the Communist Press and Propaganda section, chose to steer the electoral campaign beyond intellectual debates to leverage the fears of the physical consequences of war. Aware that the electoral power of the Christian Democrats rested in the clear improvement of living conditions in Italy from the end of the Second world war to 1953, Pajetta juxtaposed the government’s success in material reconstruction to its disregard for the risks of an imminent conflict. To highlight the importance of the emotional argument, it is useful to mention his suggestion of sending out postcards calling men to report for duty, warning that a vote for the Christian Democrats meant a vote for war<sup>289</sup>.

This campaign reaped positive effects, as the elections resulted in a failure of the governing majority to reach the required 50% threshold, falling short by just 57,000 votes, and the “Swindle law”’s majority bonus did not come into effect. The Communist party gathered 22.6% of the vote, and, between them and the Socialists, the Left reached a total of 37.3%. Agosti reports that this result was achieved through the support of minority lists, including, not without some irony, the *Unione Socialista Italiana* founded and led by Valdo Magni<sup>290</sup>.

While the result of the elections solidified the Christian Democracy’s position as the largest political force in the country and entrenched it as the pivot of any possible government majority, it also led to the instability of the centrist government: bringing the right wing into the majority would destabilize the balance of the four governing parties and the internal balance of the DC itself, and creating an alliance with the Left was impossible because of the staunch opposition of both the Communist and the Socialist parties to De Gasperi’s foreign policy. Throughout the summer, the Prime Minister attempted, without success, to find a solution that would assure balance within government and the confidence of Parliament. Eventually, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was entrusted to Giuseppe Pella, who had up until that point held the Ministry of the Treasury. The new executive managed to obtain the Parliament’s

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<sup>287</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 12 February 1953.

<sup>288</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, p 635.

<sup>289</sup> *Ivi*, p. 640.

<sup>290</sup> A. Agosti, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

confidence with the support of the Monarchists<sup>291</sup>. The elections of 1953 marked not only the end of De Gasperi's tenure as President of the Council of Ministers, but also the end of Italy's federalist turn: with De Gasperi gone, Rome was no longer the trailblazer of European integration, as Pella's government approach to the question of the EDC was lukewarm at best, as will be elaborated below.

The first six months of 1953 thus shuffled the cards of the Italian position towards the European common army: Stalin's death and the relative relaxation it led to made the matter feel, albeit temporarily, less urgent, and the electoral upset changed the political balance in Parliament, leading to the fall of the Europhile government and to the establishment of a much less enthusiastic executive.

## *Pella's government, the Trieste question and the Peace campaign*

### *A Shift to the Right*

Giuseppe Pella's government filled the power vacuum left by the failure of the eighth De Gasperi cabinet by creating an executive that was, at least initially, meant to be one of transition. It was born under the steering influence of President Einaudi, and it garnered diverse Parliamentary support that went beyond the four parties of De Gasperi's governments: the DC was joined by the liberals, the republicans, and the monarchists, with the Social Democrats and the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* abstaining from the vote of confidence<sup>292</sup>.

The marked difference in Pella's approach to the EDC when compared to De Gasperi became apparent even during the debate over the confidence in the new government. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, Christian Democratic Senator Natale Santero introduced an order of business that would have committed the new government to "a foreign policy that would ensure the ratification of the EDC and the conclusion of the treaty establishing the Political Community, instruments

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<sup>291</sup> D. Preda, *Sulla soglia dell'Unione*, cit., pp. 377-378; it should be noted that, as De Gasperi held the *interim* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the last years of his presidency, Giuseppe Pella was usually his right-hand man at high-level international meetings, such as the Atlantic Council of Lisbon in February 1952. In that context, Pella had tried to obtain economic concessions, especially regarding the right to emigration for Italian workers, in the context of the discussion over the EDC.

<sup>292</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 618.

that are necessary for the European renewal and the protection of peace”<sup>293</sup>. The following day, when Pella took the floor to address the Senate, he stated that Santero’s order of business “could definitely be accepted by the government with no reservations”; nevertheless, the Prime Minister requested the order of business to be turned into a recommendation, a non-binding instrument. Santero accepted his request<sup>294</sup>.

Pella’s request to turn the order of business into a recommendation constitutes a *de facto* rejection of Santero’s request and, more generally, of any obligation towards the process of European integration. While it was not in either side’s interest to bring the issue to a vote, especially during the debate over the government’s confidence, the episode highlights the divisions within the government majority and even within the Christian Democracy itself, a fact that the Communist propaganda would use later in the battle against the EDC<sup>295</sup>

Although Pella presented himself as a technocrat on loan to politics, his government rapidly acquired a complexion that transcended mere administration. Pella sought to forge a direct consensus with public opinion appealing to sentiments that resonated with the moderate and conservative electorate. His leadership was characterized by an attempt to channel the moods of that 'latent right' which, although present within Italian society and the DC itself, did not fully identify with the reformist centrism of the preceding years. This strategy—aiming to render a centrist majority interchangeable with one open to the Right—created a political vacuum regarding fundamental ideas and directives. Consequently, the DC found itself engulfed in an identity crisis, caught between the necessity of supporting a government led by one of its own and the fear of seeing its political stance and international alliances compromised. De Gasperi, though relegated to the role of party secretary following his governmental defeat, continued to support Pella out of discipline and to avert early elections that might have proven disastrous; nevertheless, he did not conceal his misgivings regarding the nationalist drift the executive was adopting<sup>296</sup>.

This shift is epitomized by the stance Pella took regarding the question of Trieste. In late August, as a reaction to Pella’s inflammatory statements during the parliamentary debate over confidence to his cabinet, Belgrade declared the need to reappraise its stance towards the Trieste issue. This event precipitated a crisis: the Italian government drafted plans to move troops to the

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<sup>293</sup> Senato della Repubblica, Atti Parlamentari, 21 August 1953, Morning, pp. 210-211.

<sup>294</sup> Senato della Repubblica, Atti Parlamentari, 22 August 1953, pp. 225, 254.

<sup>295</sup> IGR, AICP, Panorama politico italiano sulla CED, 31 March 1954, in Partigiani della pace 1.

<sup>296</sup> Cfr. P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, “La solitudine di De Gasperi”, pp. 615-627.

Eastern border and urged the US, the UK and France to intervene. Tensions kept escalating, with both Italy and Yugoslavia laying claim to the entirety of the FTT in spite of the Western powers' attempt to rein the situation in. In September, in a speech at the Campidoglio, Pella stated he meant to hold a referendum in both zones of occupation of the Free Territory of Trieste. The Campidoglio speech constituted the jewel of Pella's approach regarding Trieste: it was characterised by strongly nationalistic and vindictive tones, and the Prime Minister pulled no punches even when it came to the US and the UK, guilty of perpetuating an unjust stasis in Italy's easternmost region. This 'surge' over Trieste responded to a precise internal political logic: Pella sought to legitimise himself in the eyes of public opinion as the defender of national integrity, garnering the applause of the monarchist and MSI right wing<sup>297</sup>.

The Prime Minister's show of force was a partial success. If the issue of Trieste had slowly but steadily slipped out of Italian hands over the previous years, the change of pace imposed by Pella led on a public announcement on the 8<sup>th</sup> October: the English and the Americans would withdraw their forces from the A Zone of the FTT, giving up control of the area in favour of the Italian government. This solution created a *de facto* situation, it did not solve the larger question of sovereignty over the area, nor did it lead to or even encourage a *détente* between Italy and Yugoslavia<sup>298</sup>. Nevertheless, and even taking into account the fact that the declaration of the 8<sup>th</sup> of October would not come into effect because of Tito's opposition, Pella managed to reverse the slow process of erosion of Italian claims over the A Zone and prevented the internationalization of the FTT<sup>299</sup>.

Pella's maneuver over Trieste had deep implications for the EDC as well. The Italian government attempted to establish an inseparable political link between the resolution of the Trieste question and the ratification of the EDC Treaty. The logic was simple: the Italian Parliament would never ratify the EDC, which involved a transfer of military sovereignty, unless the Western Allies first guaranteed the return of Trieste to Italy<sup>300</sup>.

Pella used the Trieste issue to effectively freeze the ratification process of the EDC, even though it had been approved by the Council of Ministers. This strategy appealed to the Right,

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<sup>297</sup> Cfr. "La prova di forza italiana", in M. De Leonardis, *La "diplomazia atlantica" e la soluzione del problema di Trieste (1952-1954)*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Napoli, 1992

<sup>298</sup> M. De Leonardis, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>299</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>300</sup> D. Preda, *Sulla soglia dell'Unione, cit.*, pp. 396-397.

which was hostile to supranational European integration, and found support among the Left, which saw the postponement of the EDC as a success for its peace campaign<sup>301</sup>.

In light of considerations outlined above regarding the international détente, the Communist Party initially adopted an attitude of calculated tolerance. Togliatti, strengthened by the electoral success of 7 June, saw the Pella government as an opportunity to weaken the Atlantic alliance. Togliatti's hope was that Pella, with his nationalist approach and spurious parliamentary support, would pursue a foreign policy more independent of the United States, perhaps one of a neutralist character. When Pella took a hard line on the Trieste question in September 1953, coming into conflict with the Anglo-Americans, Togliatti interpreted these moves as a possible attempt to unshackle Italy from the bond with the Atlantic Alliance. The Secretary's optimism was such that he believed it possible that Pella would bring the Socialist Party back into the government majority. Togliatti, although concerned about Nenni's autonomist tendencies, declared that the PCI would "do all they [could] to assist the PSI without compromising it" in the event of an opening to the Left, provided that class unity was not broken.<sup>302</sup>

However, the Communist Party's attitude changed radically towards the end of the year: Pella's hard stance on the EDC-Trieste question fired back and caused a harsh reaction from Belgrade and general upset in the UK and USA; meanwhile, it encouraged and emboldened the Italian nationalists, tightening their ties with the Pella government. This led to the Central Committee meeting of the 7th December 1953, where Togliatti made a sharp turn, describing the internal situation as "particularly difficult, confused and serious", in stark contrast to the improvements on the international scene. Tolerance gave way to a frontal attack against the Christian Democrats, now considered "solely as the enemy to be confronted". In the eyes of the communists, Pella's nationalism had proved to be not a prelude to national independence, but a tool to shift the political axis to the right and pave the way for authoritarian solutions<sup>303</sup>.

### *The Communist action after the elections*

As Pella's executive settled in and dealt with the issue of Trieste, the Communist Party carried on its opposition to the EDC. The political turning point of this new phase can be

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<sup>301</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, pp. 633-634.

<sup>302</sup> A. Agosti, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>303</sup> *Ivi*, p. 224.

identified in the Party Executive Committee meeting of 5 November 1953. At that meeting, Palmiro Togliatti, analysing the political situation that had arisen following the political downfall of Alcide De Gasperi, laid down the line to be followed in the coming months: it was imperative to launch “a major campaign against the EDC and against the German army”<sup>304</sup>.

Togliatti's intuition was based on a pragmatic reading of the internal contradictions within the Western bloc. As Emilio Sereni pointed out at the same meeting, the EDC was now opposed not only by the left, but also by a substantial section of “people who support the Atlantic Pact”<sup>305</sup>. This rift in the opposition camp offered the PCI the opportunity to break out of its isolation, transforming the battle against German rearmament into a cross-party national platform.

The summary notes on the activities carried out between 15 October and 15 December 1953 show how the issue of the EDC had become increasingly important and a priority during those two months. A trio of conferences aimed at creating a critical mass of dissent was held in the North of the country, specifically in Firenze, Modena and Bologna. These events were not simply party rallies, but moments of broader political convergence. At the same time, an unprecedented form of bottom-up, cross-border pressure developed: as the French Parliament began discussing the ratification of the Treaty establishing the EDC, several Italian provincial and local peace committees sent telegrams directly to parliamentarians across the Alps to ask them to oppose German rearmament and the treaty in general, thus internationalising the protest and creating an axis between public opinion in the two countries<sup>306</sup>.

Other than the three major conferences, several smaller ones were held throughout the countries during those months. In addition to leading PCI figures such as Gian Carlo Pajetta, the conferences held between November and December saw the active participation of senior Army officers, including General Gastaldi and Colonel Eboli. The presence of career military personnel gave the campaign a patriotic and technical legitimacy that the Communist Party alone could not have guaranteed. The conferences were attended by representatives of the Church, the army and various points on the political spectrum, confirming the successful attempt to present the EDC not as an anti-communist bulwark, but as a threat to national sovereignty and peace, felt across

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<sup>304</sup> IGR, AICP, Party Leadership, 5th November 1953.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> IGR, AICP, Summary Notes on the Activities held between 15 October and 15 December 1953, National Peace Committee.

civil society, thus fitting the larger aim of the peace movement of appealing to sections of the population that were traditionally far from leftist ideas<sup>307</sup>.

Finally, the mobilisation sought to strike an emotional chord linked to recent memories of the world war and Nazi occupation. A symbolic example of this narrative was the event organised in Venice, attended by Umberto Terracini. On that occasion, a German delegation delivered “gift packages” to the orphans of those who had died in the extermination camps<sup>308</sup>. This symbolic gesture served to overturn the Atlanticist narrative: while the Italian government was preparing to ratify a treaty that would rearm West Germany, the peace movement was building bridges of solidarity with the “new” democratic Germany in the name of the victims of Nazi-Fascism.

## *1954: the Failure of the EDC*

### *Pella's crisis and the Scelba cabinet*

The beginning of 1954 marked a delicate transition for Italian foreign policy and for Italian foreign policy and for the Communist Party's strategies. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1953, Scelba had openly criticized Pella's government and called for the creation of a new centrist government with the participation of the Christian Democracy, the PSDI, the PLI and the PRI. The situation was heightened by De Gasperi's comment that Pella's cabinet was a “friendly government”, stressing the distance between the Prime Minister's position and his own<sup>309</sup>. Pella resigned the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1954, after attempting to stabilize his position through a government reshuffle which his own Party Leadership rejected<sup>310</sup>. The Communist Party had appreciated and leveraged his position towards the EDC question, but they believed that it was precisely his lukewarm treatment of the subject that led to his downfall, and they pointed to “American hands” as the true cause of the government crisis<sup>311</sup>.

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> M. De Leonardis, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> IGR, AICP, Panorama politico italiano sulla CED, *cit.*

Pella's downfall paved the way for Amintore Fanfani's attempt to form a government. This was a delicate moment for the Communists, as their main ally, Nenni's Socialist Party, believed they might have a chance to enter government once again. As a matter of fact, Nenni considered the notion of abstaining from the vote of confidence to Fanfani's government, which could have led to a rift with the Communists<sup>312</sup>. The Communist Party Leadership quickly attacked the notion that Fanfani could represent a progressive alternative, with Berlinguer and Togliatti highlighting how the prospective Prime Minister's platform was deeply anti-Marxist and pro-EDC: his aim to "obtain Trieste and the EDC together" was seen as an acceptance of German rearmament with no true upside. When Parliament failed to give its confidence to Fanfani on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, the Communists sighed a sigh of relief<sup>313</sup>.

After the failure of Fanfani's cabinet, President Einaudi stroked the notion of appointing De Gasperi for the ninth time, but the former Prime Minister refused the job. The mantle was taken up by his Minister of the Interior, Scelba, who De Gasperi supported staunchly. Scelba's appointment sparked harsh protests which led to several deaths. Scelba managed to obtain the confidence of both Chambers, but his majority was narrow, with only five votes in the Senate. His majority was not commanding enough to confidently push for the EDC's ratification<sup>314</sup>

Scelba's ultimate appointment brought back a level of clarity to the situation: his marked anti-Communism brought the debate back to a more traditional dichotomy, and his repressive action led to accusations of "out-and-out McCarthyism"<sup>315</sup>. Despite Scelba's Atlantic hard line and pressure from the American administration for rapid ratification, the government found itself forced to inherit the ambiguity of the previous period. Scelba had to admit, in private talks with Foster Dulles, that the issues of Trieste and the EDC were now "psychologically connected" and that the Italian Parliament would be unlikely to vote on the latter without a solution to the former<sup>316</sup>.

It should be noted that Scelba adopted a more conciliatory approach to the question of the EDC than Pella had. He was sensitive to the pressure coming from Washington: Dulles had recently declared at a meeting of the Atlantic Council that, should the ratification of the EDC have failed, it would have been impossible for the US to guarantee Western European security,

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<sup>312</sup> A. Guido, *op. cit.*, pp. 646-647.

<sup>313</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 648-649.

<sup>314</sup> P. L. Ballini, "La mancata ratifica del trattato della Comunità Europea di Difesa: da De Gasperi a Scelba", in P. L. Ballini (ed.), *La Comunità europea di difesa*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2009, p. 422-423.

<sup>315</sup> A. Agosti, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>316</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

and the US would thus have to reappraise their foreign policy<sup>317</sup>. Furthermore, while, as mentioned, he acknowledged the existing link between the question of Trieste and that of the EDC, Scelba stated that the ratification of the Treaty establishing the EDC was too important to be dependent on the resolution of the Trieste issue<sup>318</sup>.

Ambassador Tarchiani, however, observed that while Scelba's stance might have appeared softer, the guiding principles of Italian foreign policy remained the same<sup>319</sup>: on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, for example, Scelba warned Dulles of the inherent risks of bringing the ratification of the EDC to the floor without a preliminary settlement of the Trieste question, either through a full resolution of the FTT situation or by implementing the declaration of the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, a position supported by both De Gasperi and Pella<sup>320</sup>. While both the White House and the US ambassador to Rome placed great importance on the issue, Scelba's overture to the Secretary of State fell on deaf ears: Dulles rejected the Prime Minister's arguments regarding Trieste, dismissing the matter out of hand and refusing to acknowledge the alleged link between Trieste and the EDC<sup>321</sup>.

Regarding the potential split between the Communist and Socialist Parties, the Scelba government offered guarantees: its clear rejection of the Socialists reduced Nenni's room for maneuver, reuniting the opposition front. Furthermore, figures such as Terracini sarcastically noted that, compared to De Gasperi, Scelba paradoxically offered less risk of authoritarian "coup-like" involutions<sup>322</sup>.

In this context of fluidity and stalemate, where the Christian Democrat Right was holding back on the EDC out of nationalism and the internal and external Left out of anti-Atlanticism<sup>323</sup>, the Communist Party was preparing to launch a new offensive, no longer based solely on the defence of national sovereignty, but on a theme of universal scope.

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<sup>317</sup> D. Preda, *Sulla soglia dell'Unione, cit.*, p. 400.

<sup>318</sup> *Ivi*, p. 401.

<sup>319</sup> P. L. Ballini, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>320</sup> M. De Leonardis, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

<sup>321</sup> *Ivi*, p. 406.

<sup>322</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, pp. 649-650.

<sup>323</sup> IGR, AICP, *Panorama politico italiano sulla CED, cit.*

## *Atomic fear*

The Communist strategy underwent a profound development in Spring 1954. As Scelba tried to ensure parliamentary approval for the ratification of the Treaty establishing the EDC, the Communist leadership launched one last campaign against the European army, linking it to a renewed fear of atomic warfare. This new paradigm was developed after the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, when Malenkov claimed that a world war waged with atomic weapons would lead to the “end of civilization”. The statement broke with Stalin’s traditional doctrine based on the inevitability of socialist victory, and provided Togliatti with a theoretical basis to redefine the efforts in Italy<sup>324</sup>.

At the Central Committee meeting on 12 April 1954, Togliatti gave a dramatic speech, warning that the use of thermonuclear weapons could lead to the “destruction of all life on earth”. He temporarily abandoned orthodox Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, much to the disappointment of Pietro Secchia, who feared the abandonment of the concepts of class and country in favour of a generic “humanity”. — Togliatti argued for the need to explore “the field of relations between all groups of contemporary humanity” with a “radically new” spirit, since “the problem we face is new, different, it has never existed before”. The political objective was to create a broad movement for the “salvation of human civilisation”, capable of transcending ideological barriers and isolating the supporters of the policy of blockade and rearmament, identified with the Atlantic leadership of the Christian Democrats. This universal message was aimed at the catholic spheres. Togliatti and the Communist leadership defined a clear distinction between the upper echelons of the Vatican and the Christian Democrat leadership on one hand, and the catholic masses on the other. As such, the Communist propaganda did not call for an abandonment of faith, nor did it attack catholic beliefs, but it called for “mutual understanding” to save civilization<sup>325</sup>. Secchia observed with marked disdain the long shift in Togliatti’s rhetoric, from “class”, to “fatherland”, to “humanity”; his vision, however, would soon be defeated: in October later that year, after a scandal involving one of his main aides, Togliatti removed him from the influential position of director of the organization in favor of Amendola, who was much more sympathetic to the Secretary’s approach to political struggle<sup>326</sup>.

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<sup>324</sup> S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri*, cit., pp. 140-141.

<sup>325</sup> A. Agosti, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>326</sup> S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri*, cit., pp. 140-141.

This development came after weeks in which the Communist Party closely monitored the local organizations tied to the Christian Democracy, such as the CISL union or the ACLI circles, as well as the youth divisions of the party. The Communist Party believed that the catholic basis was open to anticapitalist themes and was expressing discontent towards Scelba's ardent anticommunism. This conviction was strengthened by the recent Pope's address against thermonuclear weapons, which led the Communist leadership to believe a breach in the catholic masses was possible<sup>327</sup>.

On the operational side of things, the strategy consisted in joining the issue of the EDC with that of thermonuclear weapons, presenting them as deeply intertwined rather than parallel. A bulletin by the National Committee of the Partisans for Peace clearly indicated the two themes should be treated together to paint an apocalyptic scenario of Europe torn by a nuclear war waged between two opposing blocs<sup>328</sup>. On the propaganda side, however, the Communist Party had to maintain a somewhat ambiguous line: while condemning the H bomb on a general level, the propaganda apparatus had to explain how the Soviet nuclear arsenal was protecting peace by acting as a deterrent for American aggression, rejecting the idea that the two superpowers were equally responsible for global instability. The ultimate goal was to transform the fear of atomic annihilation into concrete political opposition to German rearmament: if the EDC was a prelude to total war, opposing it became a moral imperative for anyone, including Catholics, who wanted to ensure the survival of the nation and humanity<sup>329</sup>.

### *The missed ratification*

Since the beginning of the year, the Europhiles in the Italian government circles had been uneasy regarding the ratification process. In January, as Fanfani tried to stabilize his government, De Gasperi sent him a letter urging him to deal with the issue as soon as possible, and especially before France could come to a conclusion on the matter<sup>330</sup>. In March, President Einaudi expressed concern about the possibility that European nations had missed the "fleeting moment" for

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<sup>327</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, pp. 653-654.

<sup>328</sup> IGR, AICP, Bollettino del comitato nazionale partigiani pace ai comitati provinciali, 8 April 1954, in Partigiani della Pace 1.

<sup>329</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.*, p. 656.

<sup>330</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

integration, and the Old Continent would thus be torn between the US and the USSR's spheres of influence<sup>331</sup>.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, the Council of Ministers decided to turn the ratification of the EDC into a question of confidence; Taviani believed that they would have had a parliamentary majority in favor of ratification even without the issue of confidence, which, he stated, was being used to avoid filibustering<sup>332</sup>. He was worried, however, that it would turn into a harsh battle which would have heavy implications for the country, especially if, as he believed, France was ultimately going to vote against ratification<sup>333</sup>.

As the government carefully moved forward with the ratification process, the Communist Party tried to expand the bases for its opposition. An internal circular from the Party, intercepted by the authorities, explicitly called for work to be done on the monarchists and supporters of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, who found themselves caught between Atlantic pressures and their nationalist rhetoric on Trieste. Inspired by their French counterparts, the Italian Communists believed that they could forge an alliance with opposing forces over the issue by rallying around nationalism<sup>334</sup>.

As Scelba's government kept loitering around the question, the news coming from across the Alps confirmed the concerns of the Europhiles. Pierre Mendès-France newly elected after the Dien Bien Phu defeat, attempted to water down the treaty by weakening its supranational nature, thus making it more acceptable to the Gaullists; his amendments would have delayed the creation of the EDC by eight years and would have led to its dismemberment after a hypothetical German reunification.<sup>335</sup> From his retreat in Sella di Valsugana, a tired and sick De Gasperi observed the collapse of his vision with desperate lucidity. On 14 August, five days before his death, he wrote a final, heartfelt letter to Fanfani, predicting that the cause of the EDC was now lost and that Europe was destined to delay its unification for decades. With bitterness, De Gasperi denounced the return of nationalist groups, describing the spectacle as "desolate and a sad omen". His criticism did not spare the Italian government, which he believed was guilty of keeping itself on the bench and subordinating the European ideal to contingent tactical calculations over the question of Trieste. The rhetorical question he addressed to Fanfani — "But what is poor Italy

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<sup>331</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

<sup>332</sup> *Ivi*, p. 401.

<sup>333</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

<sup>334</sup> A. Guiso, *op. cit.* p. 658-659.

<sup>335</sup> P. L. Ballini, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

there for?” — resounded like the political testament of a man who saw Italy at risk of passively accepting the decisions of others, reduced to participating in a “sample of troops” without political dignity<sup>336</sup>.

De Gasperi passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1954, eleven days before the ultimate failure of the EDC. As the country accompanied the hearse from Trento to Rome, Togliatti, despite having been De Gasperi's implacable opponent, wrote an editorial in *L'Unità* to mourn the former Prime Minister. The Secretary chose to emphasise “what [they] had in common, what [they] experienced together in a common aim, even if only temporarily” recalling with nostalgia the period of the Constituent Assembly and anti-fascist collaboration<sup>337</sup>. This posthumous tribute was not without political calculation: Togliatti used the memory of De Gasperi to highlight the phase of democratic “great unity” of 1945-47, implicitly contrasting it with the “pettiness” of his successors (Scelba and Fanfani) and the Atlantic turn of the 1950s.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, the French National Assembly rejected the Treaty Establishing the European Defence Community adopting a *question préalable* requested by General Aumeran, which circumvented the debate of the treaty altogether, thus putting an end to the first attempt to build a European federation<sup>338</sup>.

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<sup>336</sup> P. Craveri, *op. cit.*, pp. 635-636.

<sup>337</sup> A. Agosti, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>338</sup> D. Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

## Conclusions

The transition from the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) to the creation of the Western European Union (WEU) marked the abandonment of the idea of supranational European integration in favour of a military perspective based on traditional alliances. The British government, in particular through Foreign Secretary Eden, promoted an alternative solution to the EDC. This British project aimed at the rapid rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany at the national level and to its inclusion in NATO, a solution that the Americans welcomed as satisfactory, as it still contributed to the stabilization of the conventional power balance in Europe<sup>339</sup>. The architecture of this new defensive system took shape through two international conferences. First, the meeting in London in early October led to the formal acceptance of Eden's plan by the delegations present. Then, at the end of October, a new meeting in Paris led to the signing of three historic agreements: the accession of the FRG to NATO, the recognition of the full sovereignty of the FRG on its territory, with the exception of West Berlin, and the establishment of the WEU with the amendment of the Brussels Treaty of 1948<sup>340</sup>.

The minutes of the meetings of the Party Leadership found in the archives of the Italian Communist Party show that the Left attempted a shy opposition, but the effort was limited. After years of Communist efforts against the EDC and with the right wing appeased as the Trieste question was being solved, the opposition to Eden's solution failed: the Treaty was adopted in a matter of months, crystalizing the situation and virtually killing the question of a shared European defence until the 1990s.

Severino Galante, former Communist deputy and professor of History of Political Parties, in his analysis of the Communist stance towards European integration throughout the latter half of the 20th century states that, while the main drive behind the opposition to the process was internationalism and anti-Americanism, the Italian effort was also led by Togliatti's attempt to retain a margin of autonomy from Stalin's diktats. Galante claims that, despite its close subordination to Moscow in the early years of the Cold War, the Italian Communist leadership felt that its ties to the Soviet model were increasingly burdensome and potentially crippling to its political strategy. The "national road to socialism," which survived in a latent form even during

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<sup>339</sup> A. Varsori, "Stati Uniti e Gran Bretagna: la questione della difesa europea dopo lo scoppio della guerra di Corea", in P. L. Ballini (ed.), *La Comunità europea di difesa*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2009, p. 33.

<sup>340</sup> A. Vasori, *Dalla rinascita al declino*, cit., p. 183.

the darkest years of the bipolar confrontation, required avoiding external constraints that could stifle the party's specificity. This tension emerged in Stalin's attempt in 1951 to remove Togliatti from the Italian scene by offering him the Secretariat of the Cominform, a maneuver that the Italian leader had to evade in order not to see the party's national roots severed. Consequently, refuge in the national dimension became a necessary choice in order to resist a double pressure: the obvious one of Western supranational integration and the more subtle but equally binding one of Soviet-centric internationalism<sup>341</sup>.

This sort of “Italian exceptionalism” finds a contrast in recent developments, which showed just how closely the Italian Communist leadership followed Moscow’s directives<sup>342</sup>; without prejudice to the specificities the Party and Togliatti himself held in other fields, the research carried out for this thesis highlighted a full compliance in both language and tactics to the actions of the Soviet leadership as far as the opposition to the EDC was concerned.

The success of Communist mobilisation should not, therefore, be attributed to any real ideological originality in its foreign policy. On the contrary, its effectiveness stemmed largely from the organisational skills of the Party apparatus and from the specific conditions of the Italian political system. The multiple and overlapping social and political divisions that characterised post-war Italy, combined with the still vivid trauma of the conflict and Nazi occupation, created an exceptionally fertile ground in which communist propaganda against the rearmament of West Germany could flourish. The party's skill lay in tuning Moscow's rigid geopolitical needs to the deep fears of Italian civil society, transforming an international positioning battle into a cross-party struggle for the defence of national sovereignty and constitutional peace.

### *Historia magistra vitae?*

The author of this thesis does not believe in the predictive potential of history: choices, and especially political choices, are always contingent on the infinitely complex set of

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<sup>341</sup> Cfr. S. Galante, “La conversione del PCI all’ europeismo comunitario: dalla “via nazionale” alla “via europea” al socialismo”, in V. Grementieri and A. Papisca (eds.), *Europa 1992: le sfide per la ricerca e l’università*, Giuffrè Editore, Milano, 1989, pp. 263-279.

<sup>342</sup> E. Aga-Rossi, V. Zaslavskij, *Togliatti e Stalin, Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007, p. 293.

circumstances they take place in. Nevertheless, one would be remiss to tackle the issue of European defence without at least mentioning the recent developments.

The ECD's failure is but the first step in the larger arc of the integration of the European defence system. By taking a look at the evolution of the issue over the last 76 years, it is possible to outline three models. The first is the supranational one, discussed throughout this work, which aimed to create a truly integrated army; much like De Gasperi had predicted, the lack of a larger political design around the joint army led to the downfall of the project. The second is the traditional alliance: the WEU was in force from 1955 to 2011, and, while not as revolutionary as the EDC, it was ultimately absorbed into the European Union. The dissolution of the WEU in 2011 left a vacuum within the European Union as far as defence goes. This vacuum was temporarily filled by NATO, but the recent crisis of the Western Alliance highlighted the transitory nature of that solution. The modern answer of the European institution is in line with the habit of the Commission to use the power of the purse: rather than intruding into the Member State's jealously guarded *domaine réservé*, the Commission is acting as a facilitator, providing financial resources for rearmament and standardization in the defence industry.

While Italian public opinion, and the Left especially, holds onto its traditional skepticism in most matters pertaining to military issues, organized opposition to the Commission's effort to ramp up rearmament is virtually absent. The Commission's approach also circumvents a key issue, namely that of democratic legitimacy as regards control over the armed forces. Only time will tell if this solution is going to be enough to steer Europe through the unstable international phase or if the question of a deeper defence integration is going to be brought up again, this time within a more complex, if still intergovernmental, political framework.

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# Ringraziamenti

Prego<sup>343</sup>.

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