

## **The Birth of a Red Nation: Memory of WWII and Patriotic Rethoric in the Communist Propaganda in Italy and France**

El nacimiento de una “Nación Roja”: Memoria de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y patriotismo en la propaganda comunista en Italia y Francia

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**Abstract:** During the WWII, the Italian and French communist parties (PCI and PCF) adopted a public language in which social revolution and national identity coexisted. This language aimed to justify the building of post-WWII “Red Nations”, i.e. States where democratic institutions were formally respected but socialism was the final goal according to the model of “popular democracies” on the Iron Curtain eastern side. After 1945, the communist memory of war and Resistance was fixed in a stereotyped narration aiming to metamorphose history into a sort of myth, thus legitimizing the right to power PCI and PCF claimed for themselves.

**Keywords:** *Italian communist party (PCI); French communist party (PCF); memory of WWII; political propaganda; Cold War.*

**Resumen:** Durante la Segunda guerra mundial, los partidos comunistas de Italia y Francia (PCI y PCF) adoptaron un lenguaje público en el cual la revolución social y identidad nacional coexistían. Ese lenguaje apuntaba a legitimar la construcción de “Naciones Rojas” en el posguerra, es decir Estados en los cuales las instituciones demócratas fueran formalmente respetadas mientras que el socialismo representaba el verdadero objetivo final, en línea con el modelo de las “democracias populares” surgiendo en el Este de la Cortina de Hierro. Después de 1945, la memoria comunista de la guerra y de la Resistencia fue fijada en una narración convencional aspirando a transformar la historia en una especie de mito, que servía al PCI y al PCF para legitimar sus reivindicaciones por el gobierno.

**Palabras clave:** *Partido comunista italiano (PCI), Partido comunista francés (PCF), memoria de la Segunda guerra mundial, propaganda política, Guerra fría.*

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## Introduction.

After the Second World War the Italian and French communist parties (PCI and PCF)<sup>1</sup> adopted a public language in which both social revolution and national identity were involved. It was not an original invention, but the “local” adaptation of a wider strategy set up by the USSR after the Nazi military aggression in June 1941. This strategy sought to create antifascist, national fronts in the USSR and wherever communist parties existed. Actually communists were meant to establish alliances with the other parties aiming to liberate their countries from Nazi-fascist occupation. At the ideological level, the communist strategy for creating antifascist Fronts –called “Frontism”– came from the 7<sup>th</sup> Communist International congress held in Moscow in summer 1935 and was launched in order to stimulate a reaction to the rising of fascism in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

This strategic line was suddenly interrupted by the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement in August 1939, officially known as Non-Aggression Pact.<sup>3</sup> Although justified by the Soviet authorities as an unavoidable measure to shelter the USSR from the risk of a Nazi attack, the Non-Aggression Pact contradicted communist Frontism and further damaged the image of communism within liberal democracies. While both the PCI and PCF’s elites had to tackle militants’ protest against the Pact, the PCF was the only one to face legislative consequences. Being already illegal because of the fascist regime in Italy, the PCI did not have to justify to the public opinion its support to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, hence the political debate on this topic within the PCI was very limited. Instead, the PCF was a Third Republic’s legal party and was declared a public enemy by the socialist premier Édouard Daladier after the beginning of the war, in September 1939.<sup>4</sup> The signature of the Pact was traumatic for the PCF, representing one of the deepest crises in its history in terms of militant identity and defections.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than antifascist resistance, the Non-Aggression Pact induced communist parties to emphasize neutrality between contenders, the instauration of proletarian governments to pursue socioeconomic radical reforms, fight against the war as an “imperialist” mean to

<sup>1</sup> The PCI and PCF’s official names between 1921 and 1943 were respectively *Partito Comunista d’Italia (sezione della Internazionale Comunista)* and *Parti Communiste - SFIC (Section française de l’Internationale communiste)*.

<sup>2</sup> Stéphane COURTOIS, Marc LAZAR, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, Paris, PUF, 1995, pp. 117-165; Paolo SPRIANO, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, vol. III, *I fronti popolari, Stalin, la guerra*, Torino, Einaudi, 1970, pp. 18-39, 68-112.

<sup>3</sup> Yves SANTAMARIA: *1939, le pacte germano-soviétique*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Gaetano QUAGLIARIELLO: “Il PCI, il PCF e le conseguenze del patto Molotov-Ribbentrop”, in Marina CATTARUZZA (ed.), *La Nazione in rosso. Socialismo, comunismo e “questione nazionale”, 1889-1953*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2005, pp. 241-296.

<sup>5</sup> Michel DREYFUS: *Le PCF, Crises et dissidences. De 1920 à nos jours*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1990, pp. 69-92.

enrich bourgeoisie and oppress proletariat. The Nazi invasion of France in June 1940 led the French communists to include national liberation and anti-Vichy opposition within their propaganda, while a national front was founded by communists in April 1941.<sup>6</sup> Starting from June 1941, when Germany invaded USSR, the PCI and the PCF as well as the other Communist International's parties officially began their fight against Nazi-fascism. They proclaimed to continue an unrelenting battle against Fascism, which had begun in the 1920s; actually they were mainly defending USSR by contrasting its number one enemies. The frontist language made its comeback as a major communication tool. It allowed communists to conciliate the defense of their ideological Nation –the USSR– with the defense of their institutional Nation –Italy, France, Greece, Poland, etc.– by opposing the Allies' common enemy in Europe: Nazi-fascism.<sup>7</sup>

National-patriotic themes started being the communist propaganda topics. As far as their number, commitment and organizational roles are concerned, communists were eventually the most influential and active actors in the European Resistance movements and national liberation Fronts. Amongst Italian and French political parties, the PCI and the PCF were the ones losing the highest number of militants in battle. Thanks to this effort, they remarkably increased their public charisma in terms of political credibility and consensus. Once the war was ended, Italian and French communist party dramatically increased the number of adherents: between 1946 and 1947, the PCF reached its acme with nearly one million militants,<sup>8</sup> while the PCI exceeded 2 million in 1947.<sup>9</sup>

Differently than their eastern homologues, western communists had to legitimate their patriotism in a political context in which they were an anti-system minority. The memory of the fight against Nazis, Fascists and the Vichy government was the base of this strategy. The PCI and PCF's leaders, Palmiro Togliatti and Maurice Thorez, received detailed instructions by Stalin himself before they went back to Italy and France from the USSR, where they lived during the war years until 1944. Stalin told them not to provoke a revolution in their respec-

<sup>6</sup> Stéphane COURTOIS: *Le PCF dans la guerre. De Gaulle, la Résistance, Staline*, Paris, Ramsay, 1980, pp. 185-202, pp. 554-565; Id.: *Le Front National*, in Jean-Pierre AZEMA, François BEDARIDA, *La France des années noires*, t. 2, Paris, Le Seuil, 2000, pp. 107-120; Roger BOURDERON: *Le PCF à l'épreuve de la guerre, 1940-1943. De la guerre impérialiste à la lutte armée*, Paris, Syllepse, 2012, pp. 95-119. Michail NARINSKY: "Le Komintern et le Parti communiste français, 1939-1941", *Communisme*, 32-34 (1993), pp. 11-27. Concerning the PCF from the Munich Agreement in 1938 until 1941, see Jean-Pierre RIOUX, Antoine PROST and Jean-Pierre AZEMA (eds.): *Les communistes français de Munich à Châteaubriant (1938-1941)*, Paris, PFNSP, 1987; and Id. (eds.): *Le Parti communiste français des années sombres, 1938-1941*, Paris, Seuil, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> Henri MICHEL: *La guerre de l'ombre. La Résistance en Europe*, Paris, Grasset, 1970, pp. 312-334.

<sup>8</sup> Roger MARTELLI: *Prendere sa carte, 1920-2009. Données nouvelles sur les effectifs du PCF*, Pantin, Fondation National Gabriel Péri, 2010, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> See the database of the Fondazione Istituto Cattaneo, Bologna: <http://www.cattaneo.org/archivi/adele/iscritti.xls> (last accessed April 16th, 2016)

tive countries, but to support antifascist Fronts and to formally accept liberal democracy while maintaining secret arsenals for counterattacking.<sup>10</sup>

Italian and French people's democracies were respectively called "democrazia progressiva" (progressive democracy) and "démocratie nouvelle" (new democracy). The "democrazia progressiva" and the "démocratie nouvelle" were not explicitly supposed to be conceived on the model of eastern people's democracies but they eventually appear as local versions of this particular way to real socialism, which was implemented by national communist parties under Moscow's control. As it was the case for all people's democracies, the Italian and French ones also had to symbolically embrace national historical traditions in order to show the compatibility between communism –which was accused to be antinational and revolutionary– and autochthonous, historical values. Hence, communists celebrated the Resistance as the final achievement of a deterministic process dating back from the 19th century.

With regard to the PCI, the use of Risorgimento as an iconic source came early: for instance, communist partisan groups were called "brigate Garibaldi", taking their name from the Italian Risorgimento hero Giuseppe Garibaldi. The ideal continuum between Risorgimento and Resistance was not only a communist trope, but also a topic of the official State narrative about antifascism. Resistance was also called "Secondo Risorgimento" (Second Risorgimento), to stress its continuity with the process that led to national unification.<sup>11</sup> Yet the communist memory of Risorgimento was more targeted than the official one, since it aimed to point out the link between communism and the progressive democratic side of Risorgimento. That is why one can find just a few names of Risorgimento exponents in the PCI official language, as an overview of some of the main postwar speeches by Palmiro Togliatti can eloquently show: Giuseppe Garibaldi; Giuseppe Mazzini, the "apostle" of Nations; Carlo Cattaneo, who was a theoretician of democracy and federalism; the Bandiera brothers, who were executed by Neapolitan Bourbons in 1844, thus becoming a symbol for antifascist partisans.<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the PCF, the Resistance renewed the tradition of the French Revolution.<sup>13</sup> The PCF, as well as the PCI did with Risorgimento, stressed its proximity with the

<sup>10</sup> Michail NARINSKY: "Togliatti, Stalin e la svolta di Salerno", *Studi storici*, 3 (1994), pp. 657-666; Philippe BUTON: "L'entretien entre Maurice Thorez et Joseph Staline du 19 novembre 1944. Méthodologie et historiographie de la stratégie à la Libération", *Communisme*, 45-46 (1996), pp. 7-29; Elena AGA-ROSSI and Victor ZASLAVSKY: *Togliatti e Stalin. Il Pci e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> *Il Secondo Risorgimento. Nel decennale della Resistenza e del ritorno alla democrazia, 1945-1955*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1955; *Il Secondo Risorgimento d'Italia. Nel decennale della Resistenza*, Centro editoriale d'iniziativa, s.l., 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Palmiro TOGLIATTI: *Opere*, vol. V, 1944-1955, a cura di Luciano GRUPPI, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1984, pp. 14-15; p. 205; p. 315; p. 413. For an example of commemorative event devoted to the Bandiera brothers: Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero dell'Interno (MI)-Pubblica Sicurezza (PS), 1944-1946, box 181, 1945.

<sup>13</sup> Marc LAZAR: *Le Communisme, une passion française*, Paris, Perrin, 2002, pp. 74-76.

French Revolution putting into evidence some specific elements, in particular the Jacobin tradition. The communist propaganda major benchmarks were the First Republic –since its foundation in 1792 until Robespierre’s fall in 1794– and the revolutionary army’s victories, mostly Valmy (September 20<sup>th</sup> 1792).<sup>14</sup> The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was also celebrated by the PCF as the first step of a gradual path to the “real democracy”, i.e. socialism. The link between Resistance and Revolution was particularly evident within the movement of the *Comités Départementaux de Libération* (CDL). The CDL were political-administrative unities created by the leader of the *Comité Français de Libération Nationale* (CFLN)<sup>15</sup> Charles De Gaulle as local entities for organizing Resistance’s political and civil aspects. Due to the strength of communist Resistance, the PCF had the majority in many CDLs, which it used as a platform for trying to control the whole metropolitan French Resistance –so-called *mouvement des CDL*. The CDLs started to organize a great meeting in order to glorify the Resistance, to celebrate the memory of French Revolution and to present a governmental platform tailored on the PCF’s principles. During some months, the CDLs worked at redacting the “cahiers de la Renaissance”, which were reform proposals suggested by militants and citizens.<sup>16</sup> On Bastille Day of 1945 a great meeting was held in Paris, called *États généraux de la Renaissance française* (French Renaissance’s Estates-General). The event’s title reused the prerevolutionary French Parliament’s name –*États généraux*– since the Revolution had begun in 1789 during the parliamentary séance inaugurated in May in Versailles.<sup>17</sup>

The Resistance did not modify the communist ideological pattern, which was based on a solid theoretical tradition.<sup>18</sup> In spite of this, it deeply influenced the public language of communist parties, following some major paths one can reduce it to three thematic categories: the narrative –propaganda, historic literature edited by the party, leaders’ public speech, etc.–; the celebration –Resistance heroes-martyrs for the PCF, and the Republic and the Constitution for the PCI–; the conflict –marginalization of former partisans during last Stalin years,

<sup>14</sup> For instance, “détachement Valmy” was the name of the PCF special brigade devoted to sabotages and similar activities as well as to suppress communist militants considered as traitors. See Jean-Marc BERLIÈRE: Franck LIAIGRE, *Liquider les traîtres. La face cachée du PCF, 1941-1943*, Paris, Laffont, 2015 [2007].

<sup>15</sup> CFLN stands for Comité Français de Libération Nationale. In June 1944 the CFLN officially became the provisional government of France: Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française (GPRF).

<sup>16</sup> “Cahiers de la Renaissance” was an adaptation from “cahiers de doléances” (list of grievances), which were written by the three Estates of the realm right before the French Revolution began. The PCF political bureau stated to change the concerned name in order to make it more similar to that of the meeting taking place in July 1945: Archives du Parti communiste français, séance of the Bureau politique, 23 November 1944.

<sup>17</sup> Roberto COLOZZA: *Repubbliche rosse. I simboli nazionali del Pci e del Pcf (1944-1953)*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2009, pp. 41-48.

<sup>18</sup> Relating to the PCF – but the analysis is also applicable to the PCI – see Philippe BUTON: “Le PCF et la Résistance sous la IV<sup>e</sup> République”, in Bernard LACHAISE (ed.), *Résistance et politique sous la IV<sup>e</sup> République*, Bordeaux, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2004, pp. 97-110. For a comparative study of postwar Italian and French communism, see Marc LAZAR: *Maisons rouges. Les partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours*, Paris, Aubier, 1992.

battle of memory between former partisans and elite's members who did not take part in the Resistance, trials against former partisans in Italy, the fight for peace and against the atomic bomb as a new Resistance.

### **Narrative.**

Communist public language was particularly rich in historical data, which were supposed to justify the party's strategic choices. The Italian and French communist parties confirmed this tendency. The memories of Resistance and World War II particularly stimulated this kind of auto-representation. Most of the PCF's historical after war publications focused on the years between 1939 and 1945;<sup>19</sup> beside Fascism, the history of the Second World War and Resistance was the main topic of the PCI's historical literature.<sup>20</sup>

The communist memory of war and Resistance was fixed in a stereotyped narrative aiming to metamorphose history into myth. Official propaganda described Resistance as a "mass movement" mostly involving the working class, peasants and young people; the Liberation was achieved thanks to the proletariat, whereas allied forces took an hostile attitude against civilians; Italian and French working classes were betrayed by Fascism, the Third Republic and Vichy, but they conserved their political unity and civil cleanliness. Hence, the working class embodied the best Nation's values as it morally opposed the corruption of bourgeois and fascist governments. This implied that the working class party, the communist one, had the right to rule postwar Republics due to the fact that it represented Nation's best part. This sort of logical-semantic circle marked the communist public language, deeply influencing the militants' identity. The Resistance was a point of reference for communist militants as it appeared as an accomplished synthesis of the revolutionary "new man's" main principles: heroism, desire for equality and justice, spirit of self-sacrifice –in French "don de soi".<sup>21</sup> The image of the Resistance stood stable and coherent over time, representing a paradigm for communist must-be.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Stéphane COURTOIS: "Luttes politiques et élaboration d'une histoire: le PCF historien du PCF dans la Deuxième guerre mondiale", *Communisme*, 4 (1983), pp. 5-27. According to Maurice Agulhon, «les gens qui n'ont pas vécu cette époque ne peuvent pas imaginer l'ampleur, l'insistance, l'omniprésence, la force et, osons le dire, l'impudeur de la propagande communiste sur le thème de la Résistance [...]. Le parti était le gardien farouche de la pureté patriotique»: Maurice AGULHON: "Vu des coulisses", in Pierre NORA (ed.), *Essais d'ego-histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> On the PCI, see Andrea GUIZO: *Il Pci e la sua storia. Come cambiano i paradigmi*, in Gerardo NICOLOSI (ed.), *I partiti nell'Italia repubblicana*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2006, pp. 135-194; Sergio BERTELLI: "Il Pci e il suo passato. Storici a confronto", *Nuova storia contemporanea. Bimestrale di studi storici e politici sull'età contemporanea*, 4 (2004), pp. 87-136. Relating to the PCI's female association, see Patrizia GABRIELLI: *La pace e la mimosa. L'UDI e la costituzione politica della memoria (1944-1955)*, Roma, Donzelli, 2005. In a comparative perspective: Andrea GUIZO: *La Seconda guerra mondiale nella memoria storica del Pci e del Pcf*, in Piero CRAVERI y Gaetano QUAGLIARIELLO (eds.), *La memoria della seconda guerra mondiale in Europa*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2005, pp. 529-565

<sup>21</sup> Marc LAZAR: "Le parti et le don de soi", *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 60 (1998), pp. 35-42.

<sup>22</sup> Marie-Claire LAVABRE: *Le fil rouge. Sociologie de la mémoire communiste*, Paris, PNFNSP, 1994, pp. 207-212.

The militant narrative passed through a series of communication vehicles, such as press articles, public speeches, propaganda material and also books. The PCF used to present itself as the *Parti des 75000 fusillés*<sup>23</sup> or, more frequently and less hyperbolically, *Parti des fusillés*.<sup>24</sup> Historical episodes not fitting in the apologetic framework of such an image were minimized or expelled from the narrative tradition. This happened, for instance, with respect to the negotiations that took place right after Nazi occupation of Paris between PCF's high delegates and German authorities in the French capital, communist exponents trying to get from their interlocutors the permission to publish their press, namely the daily newspapers "l'Humanité" and "Ce soir".<sup>25</sup>

The typical narrative of Resistance is well synthesized by the descriptions of the liberation of Paris in August 1944. The role of the PCF within Paris's liberation was actually important thanks to the involvement of communist militants in organizing and carrying out the insurrection. The Parisian events played a major role within party's propaganda, which was carried out via periodicals as well as pamphlets and leaflets. Accordingly to these descriptions of the "perfect Resistance", Paris was the source of the liberation movement;<sup>26</sup> the Parisian population was involved without exceptions in the insurrection; communist partisans, the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français* (FTP) were the movement's avant-garde.<sup>27</sup> Right after Paris was liberated, the PCF published a celebrative brochure.<sup>28</sup> Jacques Duclos, who was the PCF's vice secretary, outlined further guidelines of the event: Paris liberated itself without external aid but thanks to the PCF leadership; fearing the working class, Gaullist Resistance did not give weapons to Parisian population to avoid helping communists.<sup>29</sup>

The relationship between De Gaulle and PCF was quite turbulent during the war, mostly because of the communist extremist attitude in contrasting the Nazi, which caused violent reactions by the occupants. After war, the rivalry between the *Général* and the party moved from a strategic to a memorial level. The two antagonists both needed to represent

<sup>23</sup> The slogan was probably used for the first time by Aragon's wife, the communist writer Elsa Triolet, in her novel *Les amants d'Avignon*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1943, as suggested in James STEEL: "Les sanglots de la victoire. Auto-représentation du résistant dans la littérature de 1944-1946", in Christiane FRANCK (ed.), *La France de 1945. Résistances, Retours, Renaissances*, Caen, Presses Universitaires de Caen, p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Pierre BESSE y Thomas POUTY: *Les fusillés. Répression et exécutions pendant l'Occupation (1940-1944)*, Paris, Editions de l'Atelier, 2006, pp. 29-32.

<sup>25</sup> Jean Pierre BESSE y Claude PENNETIER: *Juin 1940. La négociation secrète*, Paris, Editions de l'Atelier, 2006; Roger Bourderon, *La négociation. Été 1940*, Paris, Syllepse, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Georges COGNIOT: "Parti de la France. Parti de la République", *l'Humanité*, 13-14 May 1945.

<sup>27</sup> On the FTP see the autobiographical witness by Charles Tillon, who was the group's chief as well as the director of the related postwar memorial association. Id.: *Les FTP*, Paris, Julliard, 1963. The FTP took their name from the volunteer soldiers of the French Revolution and from those of the war against Prussia in 1870.

<sup>28</sup> *L'insurrection parisienne, 19 août-26 août 1944*, Paris, PCF, 1944. This pamphlet was defined a must-read ("indispensable") in a writing by Charles Tillon dating back to the first post-WWII years and conserved in Archives du Centre d'Histoire de Sciences Po, fund Charles Tillon, box 8, file 2.

<sup>29</sup> Preface to *L'insurrection parisienne...*

themselves as the principal exponents of the French Resistance, for they both founded their political legitimacy on their fight against Nazi and Vichy. While De Gaulle had an eventual primacy in inaugurating Resistance and in shaping its institutional framework, the PCF could not boast such credits. That is why it tried to belittle De Gaulle's merits and to exalt its own heroism. De Gaulle was particularly well known for having launched the French Resistance by its appeal on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1940 and having guided the CFLN, but he spent most of wartime in the UK and not in France. Thus, the PCF accused De Gaulle of not having fought for his country but for "selling" it to its ancient enemy, England. Instead, communists were deeply rooted in French national territory –used to sustain the PCF– where they had remained during the war defending it from invaders and betrayers –the *collabos*. Furthermore, the PCF, namely Jacques Duclos, created a document dated from July 10<sup>th</sup> 1940, which was supposed to show the early communist engagement within the Resistance. In reality this document was an excerpt from a leaflet aiming to stop the imperialist war after the signature of the armistice between Germany and France. It did not incite fighting against Nazi-fascism, since at that time Nazi-fascism and bourgeoisie were equally enemies for communists.<sup>30</sup>

The PCI's narrative of Resistance did not differ from the PCF's as far as thematic contents were concerned. Yet the PCI's memory of partisan fight was tightly linked to the whole history of antifascism and to the institutional transition from monarchy to republic (1945-1948). In fact the PCI had fought Fascism since its own foundation in 1921. After Benito Mussolini's rise of power in 1922, Italian communists continued their opposition, although they were persecuted, jailed, exiled or obliged to move to small villages and islands –this was called *confino*. For Italian communists, the Resistance was only the last chapter of a long and rough commitment. In an article published on the PCI's weekly journal and celebrating the sixth anniversary of national liberation (April 25<sup>th</sup> 1945), one can read: «Italian Resistance cannot be studied from its beginning (September 8<sup>th</sup> 1943) but as a whole [...]. It dates back to the origins of fascism, and to the origins of PCI».<sup>31</sup>

Differently than the French one, the Italian Resistance could not represent the entire national territory, since it mostly spread in country's central and northern regions. Although Southern regions could boast some iconic examples of popular insurrections against the Nazis, such as Naples's *Quattro giornate* (four days) in September 1943, a deeply rooted partisan network did not develop there since Southern Italy was soon liberated by allied troops, which landed in Sicily in the summer of 1943. Furthermore the Italian Resistance did not have a city of reference like Paris was for the French Resistance. Italian Resistance polycentrism reflected Italy's centuries-old political division: there were two national liberation committees and many regional, provincial, urban and local entities in which territorial identities

<sup>30</sup> Nicole RACINE-FURLAUD: "18 juin 1940 ou 10 juillet 1940, batailles de mémoires", in Stéphane COURTOIS and Marc LAZAR (eds.), *50 ans d'une passion française. De Gaulle et les communistes*, Paris, Balland, 1991, pp. 197-215.

<sup>31</sup> Paolo ROBOTTI y Giovanni GERMANETTO: "La guerra di liberazione conseguenza storica della resistenza operaia", *Vie Nuove*, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1951.

interwove with political, ideological divides.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the Italian Resistance lasted less than the French one and its exponents could not redact a programmatic document as it was done in France in March 1944 with the *Charte du Conseil National de la Résistance* (Chart of the National Council of Resistance).<sup>33</sup> For all these reasons, the PCI, which mostly needed a national, unifying symbol, could not limit its patriotic propaganda to the celebration of Resistance.

The PCI's elite was aware of how important the institutional transition from monarchy to Republic could be. Thanks to Antonio Gramsci's reflection on the Constituent Assembly's potential revolutionary role,<sup>34</sup> Togliatti understood that the PCI had to participate to the building of a new Italy. Communists notably contributed to the Constituent's debate: they particularly intervened on the aspects concerning social and civil rights, economic guarantees for workers, and institutional organizations.<sup>35</sup> The electoral weight of the PCI, which was relatively lower than that of the PCF's,<sup>36</sup> contributed to put Italian communists to have a more prudent and inclusive attitude during the séances. The Italian Constitution was shaped by the three main antifascist parties: Democrazia Cristiana (DC), Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria (PSIUP)<sup>37</sup> and PCI –the *tripartito*. Trying to eternize antifascism as the republican democracy's essence, the PCI aimed to mythicize antifascist Frontism. That is why the PCI celebrated the Constitution as the symbol of antifascist unity. It would have allowed the PCI to permanently use the language of war, exalting its role as prominent fighter in the battle against Nazi-Fascism and preparing the birth of a red Nation: the Italian people's democracy.<sup>38</sup>

In particular, the PCI indicated the Constituent's programmatic first articles (1-54) as the synthesis of its conception of progressive democracy –“democrazia progressiva”– being the first step to socialism. Similarly, the PCF used to represent itself as the sole real heir of values in the *Charte du Conseil National de la Résistance*. The Italian Constitution's program-

<sup>32</sup> Santo PELI: *Storia della Resistenza in Italia*, Torino, Einaudi, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> See Claire ANDRIEU: *Le programme commun de la Résistance*, Paris, Les Editions de l'Erudit, 1984.

<sup>34</sup> Antonio GRAMSCI: *I quaderni del carcere*, vol. II, a cura di Valentino GERRATANA, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, pp. 989-1001, pp. 1166-1167; Paolo SPRIANO: *Gramsci in carcere e il partito*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1977, pp. 102-111. Unedited sources illustrating the strategy of the PCI in the Constituent Assembly are conserved in the party archives in Rome (APCI): séances of the central committee, 17-19 September 1946, 18-19 September 1946, 27-29 April 1946, 27-28 February 1947, 1-4 July 1947; séances of the PCI group at the Constituent Assembly, 5 February 1947, 27-28 February 1947; séances of the PCI parliamentary group direction committee, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1947.

<sup>35</sup> In a PCI-PCF comparative perspective, see Sandro GUERRIERI: “Le idee costituzionali del PCI e del PCF all'indomani della Liberazione”, in Claudia FRANCESCHINI, Sandro GUERRIERI y Giancarlo MONINA (eds.), *Le idee costituzionali della Resistenza*, Roma, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri-Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria, 1997, pp. 360-379.

<sup>36</sup> In 1946 the PCI was voted by more than 4.3 million people (nearly 19%) while the PCF got more than 5 million votes in 1945 (beyond 26%).

<sup>37</sup> Since January 1947, the PSIUP changed its name in Partito socialista italiano (PSI, Italian socialist party), after losing its social-reformist wing called Partito socialista dei lavoratori italiani (PSLI, Socialist party of Italian workers) and then Partito socialista democratico italiano (PSDI, Italian social-democratic party).

<sup>38</sup> Roberto COLOZZA: *Repubbliche rosse...*, p. 48-70.

matic articles and the *Charte du Conseil National de la Résistance* were the textual points of reference for the PCI and the PCF and for their national-patriotic postwar militant historiographies. While the PCI was the sole communist party to stress the revolutionary meaning of the postwar Constitution, the manifestos of Resistance were normally used by communists as frontist symbols. As far as the Iron Curtain's eastern side is concerned, the case of the Polish Workers' Party and that of the National Front of Czechoslovakia are particularly eloquent. In order to back its way to "démocratie nouvelle", the PCF celebrated the Polish and Czechoslovak manifestos of Resistance and patronized formally independent organizations to support Polish and Czechoslovak communists in France.<sup>39</sup>

### Celebration.

Although they were excluded from governments since 1947 for geopolitical reasons, the PCI and the PCF claimed political power since, they said, they had been the major actors in liberating their respective countries. Demanding their right to be in power, the PCI and the PCF described frontist national coalition as the accomplished governmental typology, and the spirit of Resistance as the ethic source of the postwar Republics. The two communist parties chose different political symbols in order to proof the truthfulness of their propaganda on the frontist "golden age". Celebration of slain heroes-martyrs was the main memorial point of reference for the PCF; the birth of the Republic, the Constituent assembly and the Constitution were the PCI's national-patriotic pillars.

The PCF worked on a "martyrology" of its militants killed by the Nazi and Vichy repressions, which was intensified as a response to the beginning of communist active Resistance during the summer of 1941. Communist Resistance was inaugurated by Pierre Georges – later called *Colonel Fabien* – who shot and killed a German official at the Parisian metro station Barbès in August 1941. In reprisal for this and other attacks in the weeks later, 98 hostages were fusilladed. Among them 27 were fusilladed on 22th October 1941 in Châteaubriant, near Nantes. They were all communists and they soon became the PCF's memorial pantheon pillar, which was supposed to demonstrate the Nazi and Vichy repressive violence and to prove communist patriotism. The remembrance ritual for Châteaubriant heroes-martyrs was set up during the war, consisting of a series of annual attempted commemorations, which were actually forbidden by French and German authorities.<sup>40</sup> Also after war, this event stood as the most important PCF's memorial ceremony relative to the Resistance.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Archival evidences of these links are in Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (La Courneuve), Division Affaires Politiques (MAE), Z Europe 1944-1949, Tchecoslovaquie, z-441-2-39, 3, 56-104, 202-205, 328-9, EU-30-8-4, 23; MAE, Z Europe 1944-1949, Pologne, z 342-3, 140-147, 150, 161-163, 232, 233, 243-244; MAE, Z Europe 1949-1955, Pologne, EU-23-18-3, 80-81, EU-23-8-4, 175, EU-23-18-3, 16. On the relationship between the PCF and the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, see Richard SACKER: *A radiant future. The French Communist Party and Eastern Europe, 1944-1956*, Bern, Peter Lang, 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP), series BA, box 2088, file " Commémoration de l'anniversaire de la mort des militants fusillés le 22 octobre 1941" (commemoration of the anniversary of militants fusil-

Yet Châteaubriant heroes-martyrs were not the communist pantheon's only protagonists. The most important categories of militancy were represented, thus creating a synthesis of the PCF's social and ideal values. Gabriel Péri was fusilladed on 15th December 1941 at the *Mont-Valérien*, a hill near Paris where a fortress is located in which more than one thousand prisoners were killed by the Nazis between 1941 and 1944. Péri, who was a member of the Third Republic Parliament and editor at "l'Humanité", became the symbol of the communist institutional representatives betrayed by the French bourgeoisie that was surrendered to Nazis instead of fight and resist.<sup>42</sup> Pierre Semard, fusilladed by the Nazis on 7th March 1942, was the symbol of railway workers, since he was the national secretary of the related trade union between 1924 and 1928.<sup>43</sup> Danielle Casanova, who died in Auschwitz in 1943, was celebrated as the new Joan of Arc, being a model for the French woman as conceived by the PCF: patriotic, brave and, most of all, communist. One among Châteaubriant heroes-martyrs was also celebrated as an individual emblem: he was Guy Môquet, who was fusilladed at the age of 17 and thus became a symbol for the PCF's youth movement.<sup>44</sup> As well as for the victims of the Châteaubriant massacre, the cult of the other heroes-martyrs started before the end of the war and continued to be carried on in the postwar period as well.<sup>45</sup>

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laded in October 22th 1941), 1942, 1943, 1944 ; APP, BA, 2071, commemoration of Châteaubriant anniversary, 1945. On the moral, esthetic and political role of the death in the communist imagery, see Jean-Pierre A. BERNARD: "La liturgie funèbre des communistes (1924-1983)", *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 9 (1986), pp. 37-52. Concerning the massacre of Châteaubriant see Guy HAUDEBOURG: *Nantes 1943. Fusillés pour l'exemple*, La Crèche, Geste éditions, 2014; Franck LIAIGRE y Jean Marc BERLIÈRE: *Le sang des communistes. Les Bataillons de la jeunesse dans la lutte armée, automne 1941*, Paris, Fayard, 2004. For an overview of the commemorative strategy of the PCF during the WWII in Paris, see Roberto COLOZZA: "Il partito comunista francese, Parigi e la 'Banlieue rouge': spazi urbani e riti collettivi di resistenza civile (1940-1944)", *Ricerche di storia politica*, 2 (2013), pp. 135-159.

<sup>41</sup> Due to the fact communist militants executed in Châteaubriant had been jailed *before* June 1941, when communist Resistance officially began, their status of "résistants" is discussed among historians in the framework of a long-lasting dispute with occasional repercussions in the public debate. For an example of this debate see below, footnote n° 43.

<sup>42</sup> Alexandre COURBAN: *Gabriel Péri. Un homme politique, un député, un journaliste*, Paris, La Dispute, 2011. On the memorial handling of Péri, see pp. 173-195.

<sup>43</sup> Serge WOLIKOW (ed.): *Pierre Semard. Engagements, discipline et fidélité*, Paris, le Cherche Midi, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> The memorial heritage of Guy Môquet has been source of a rough debate in 2007 as the French President of Republic and leader of the rightist party Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP, Union for a Popular Movement) Nicolas Sarkozy celebrated the communist young hero-martyr as symbol of the national Resistance, thus reactivating the dispute on the communist attitude between August 1939 and June 1941. The most accomplished example of the "revisionist" historical literature on this subject is Jean-Marc BERLIÈRE y Franck LIAIGRE: *L'affaire Guy Môquet. Enquête sur une mystification officielle*, Paris, Larousse, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> See the police reports: APP, series BA, box 2088, file on December 15th 1943, second anniversary of the execution of Gabriel Péri; box 2070, commemorative ceremony for Pierre Semard, March 7th 1944; APP, BA, 2070, anniversary of the execution of Gabriel Péri and Lucien Sampaix, December 1944; APP, BA, 2071, commemorative ceremony for Pierre Semard, 7 March 1945; APP, BA, 1821, ceremony for Pierre Semard at the Palais de Chaillot, 7 March 1946; APP, BA, 2072, fifth anniversary of the execution of Gabriel Péri, December 1946.

The geographical center of the PCF's celebrations was Paris, even for events that did not take place in the capital. This happened not only because Paris was by far the most important French city, but also because it represented an international, symbolic place for social and civil progress. Aiming to inherit the XIX century revolutionary tradition –1830, 1848 and 1871, apart from the Revolution of 1789-1793– the PCF intended to virtually occupy the urban spaces where these events took place, i.e. the Parisian squares, boulevards and monumental sites.<sup>46</sup> The most notable example of this choreographic strategy was the Père-Lachaise 97<sup>th</sup> division setup. The monumental cemetery of Père-Lachaise includes an area where the *Mur des Fédérés* is located, the wall in front of which the communards were killed in May 1871. Since the Thirties, PCF's prominent personalities started to be buried there, such as the intellectuals Henry Barbusse and Paul Vaillant-Couturier.<sup>47</sup> After the war, several former partisans as well as party leaders were buried in the 97<sup>th</sup> division thus creating a pantheon, which is still currently one of the most visited Père-Lachaise sites.<sup>48</sup>

More than any other Italian party, the PCI celebrated the republican Constitution in which it saw the source of its political legitimacy within the postwar democracy.<sup>49</sup> By trying to isolate the PCI and its ally the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI), centrist moderate governments unintentionally favored communist strategy. Once the Constitution entered into effect (1st January 1948), governments should have enforced it. Instead, the beginning of the Cold War suggested it would have been more prudent to “freeze” (*congelare*) the Constitution. The PCI and the PSI large majority were pro-USSR and they threatened the stability of centrist governments,<sup>50</sup> which started ruling Italy since the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1948 general elections onwards. To prevent pro-Soviet parties from extending their influence on institutions, society and the economy, many constitutional institutes were not implemented: the Constitutional Court, ordinary statute Regions, the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the National Council for Economics and Labour,<sup>51</sup> etc. The PCI, supported by the PSI, carried on a campaign for these institutes to be created, thus putting itself in a quite paradoxical situation: while it formally appeared as a defender of constitutional liberal-democratic norms, it was actually marginalized by pro-NATO governments since it was an ideological and geopolitical enemy. Stalin's

<sup>46</sup> The PCF was very active in proposing to rebaptize urban sites with the name of its heroes-martyrs, such as the *Colonel Fabien*: APP, GA, L15, ceremony of inauguration of various urban sites, 1945.

<sup>47</sup> APP, BA, 2070, commemorative ceremony for Paul Vaillant-Couturier and Henri Barbusse, 10 October 1944.

<sup>48</sup> See for example the ceremony for the burial of Louis Thorez, the brother of the PCF general secretary Maurice, and René Mourre, both executed in 1942 by the Nazis: APP, BA, 1821, 5 February 1946. On the role played by the Père-Lachaise in the history of contemporary Paris, see Danielle TARTAKOWSKY: *Nous irons chanter sur vos tombes. Le Père-Lachaise, XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Aubier, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> For an example of this campaign, see Roberto COLOZZA: “Il Pci e le associazioni per la tutela della Costituzione (1950-1955)”, *Ricerche di storia politica*, 2 (2011), pp. 163-189.

<sup>50</sup> On the postwar PSI, see Paolo Mattera: *Il partito inquieto. Organizzazioni, passioni e politica dei socialisti italiani dalla Resistenza al miracolo italiano*, Roma, Carocci, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> The original names of these institutes are: Corte costituzionale, Regioni a statuto ordinario, Consiglio superiore della magistratura, Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro.

death in March 1953 opened the way to a less critical coexistence between pro-US and pro-Soviet parties and the Constitution kept being gradually implemented.<sup>52</sup>

As far as commemorations are concerned, the PCI was more linked to the institutional calendar than the PCF. Choosing not to create a real pantheon of heroes-martyrs, the PCI focused on two dates which had national meaning: April 25<sup>th</sup>, when Italy was finally liberated from Nazi-Fascism in 1945, and June 2<sup>th</sup>, when the referendum took place by which Italy became a Republic in 1946. Communist members of government and of parliament contributed to make both April 25<sup>th</sup> and June 2<sup>th</sup> national holidays.<sup>53</sup> During the Cold War, the PCI organized large commemorative rallies in parallel with official, institutional ceremonies set up by state authorities.<sup>54</sup> Differently than the PCF, the PCI was able to harmonize its revolutionary and institutional profiles. While it was building a counter-society made of anti-capitalism, the PCI was an antagonist of public authorities in celebrating national symbols. Although instrumentally, this familiarized communist militants with the “bourgeois” institutions and made them more prepared to face anticommunism. Moreover, thanks to its skills in recruiting and valorize intellectuals, the PCI could appear, to some non-communist progressive milieu, to be gradually accepting pluralist liberal democracy. Even if it was incompatible with government responsibilities due to geopolitical constraints, the PCI was frequently appreciated and backed by non-communists who thought its socio-political campaigns were right and legitimate.<sup>55</sup>

### Conflict.

The beginning of the Cold War in 1947 provoked a recrudescence in Stalin’s leadership on international communism. The creation of the Cominform was the response to NATO and, at the same time, a tool to better control people’s democracies as well as western communist parties.<sup>56</sup> Communism’s ideological unity was reinforced. Those who were accused not to fit into the doctrine and orthodoxy standards were either put on trial or marginalized, depending on their hierarchical positions, on their “faults”, and on their geographical location with re-

<sup>52</sup> Ugo DE SIERVO, Sandro GUERRIERI y Antonio VARSORI (eds.): *La prima legislatura. Continuità e discontinuità nell’azione delle istituzioni*, Roma, Carocci, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> While April 25<sup>th</sup> was declared national festivity by the government in 1946, the national commemoration of June 2<sup>th</sup> was decided in December 1947 by the Constituent assembly. See *La Costituzione della Repubblica nei lavori preparatori della Assemblea Costituente*, vol. V, *Sedute dal 6 novembre 1947 al 22 dicembre 1947*, Roma, Camera dei Deputati- Segretariato Generale, 1970, p. 4577.

<sup>54</sup> See for example ACS, MI-PS, 1944-1946, box 181, commemoration of 25 April 1946; see also the documental material on the conference “Resistance and culture” held in the Palazzo Ducale, Venice: APCI, cultural activities, 1950.

<sup>55</sup> This is case of “Unità Popolare”, which was a non-Communist progressive intellectual club coming from the antifascist milieu of the movement “Justice and Freedom” (Giustizia e Libertà) and the Action Party (Partito d’Azione): Roberto COLOZZA: *Partigiani in borghese. Unità Popolare nell’Italia del dopoguerra*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Giuliano PROCACCI *et al.* (eds.): “The Cominform. Minutes of the Three Conferences, 1947/1948/1949”, *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1994.

spect to the Iron Curtain. The French and Italian communist parties as well started to hit militants who were suspected to be part of a group working against the leadership. Among them there were various *gauchistes* –Trotskyists, Titoists, etc.– as well as Spanish civil war volunteers, and former partisans. Due to this ideological status quo, the memorial heritage of war was ambivalently used during the Fifties. On the one hand, the Cominform condemned the capitalistic imperialism and started calling for a “new Resistance” against the “new Nazis”: the US. On the other hand, Stalinists persecuted former partisans who were accused of destroying ideological homogeneity of international communism by celebrating their “sectarian” experience.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the Resistance continued to be celebrated in the same years their living exponents were politically persecuted. The Resistance was reemployed as a source of inspiration to carry on the pacifist campaigns against the US and NATO, which were accused of being the Nazi-fascists’ heirs. A worldwide movement was created called “The Partisans of peace”, in order to link the current battle against “imperialist” war with the recent partisan fight against Nazi-fascism. The PCI and the PCF organized national sections of “The Partisans of peace”, fighting against the atomic bomb and the American (alleged) bacteriological war in Korea. The Korean War (1950-1953) dramatically increased the collective fear of the atomic bomb and of a possible destructive third global war, and allowed the communist pacifist propaganda to gain a broad consensus all over the world. The “new Resistance” against the capitalist West was supposed to purify the geopolitical scene from the “enemies” of real democracy –the socialist one– and to establish an order in which the spirit of Resistance would have guaranteed equality and justice.<sup>57</sup>

The heroes-martyrs of the “new Resistance” as André Houillier, killed in December 1948 by the police while attacking political posters on public walls, and those of the “old” one were celebrated by the PCF as victims of a unique war against Nazi-fascism.<sup>58</sup> Despite this, marginalization of former partisans was particularly intense within the PCF due to the problem of managing the memory of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. In fact, many PCF elite exponents did not take part in the Resistance. Maurice Thorez, for instance, was in the USSR during the war and was declared a deserter. To stress the pretended continuity between the Popular Front and the fight for Liberation, the PCF had to omit or manipulate the 1939-1941 parenthesis and to prevent former partisans from becoming an independent group within the

<sup>57</sup> See for the PCI Andrea GUIISO: *La colomba e la spada. “Lotta per la pace” e antiamericanismo nella politica del Partito comunista italiano (1949-1954)*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2007 and Giulio PIETRANGELI: “I Partigiani della Pace in Italia, 1948-1953”, *Italia contemporanea*, 17 (1999), pp. 667-692. For the PCF see Yves SANTAMARIA: *Le parti de l’ennemi ? Le Parti communiste français dans la lutte pour la paix, 1947-1958*, Paris, Colin, 2006; Olivier LE COUR GRANDMAISON: “Le Mouvement de la paix pendant la guerre froide : le cas français (1948-1952)”, *Communisme*, 18-19, (1988), pp. 120-138; Philippe BUTON: “Le mouvement des partisans de la paix”, in Saki DOCKRILL (ed.), *L’Europe de l’Est et de l’Ouest dans la guerre froide*, Paris, Presses de la Sorbonne, 2002, pp. 227-239.

<sup>58</sup> APP, BA, 2073, report on the commemoration for André Houillier and the seventh anniversary of the execution of Gabriel Péri and Lucien Sampaix, 1948; APP, GA L 15, “Libération de Paris”, anniversary of the massacre of Châteaubriant, October 1951.

party. The PCF's elite also wanted to shelter itself from a possible reversal of the traditional hierarchy in favor of new generation militants who joined the party during WWII.

The result of such a conservative strategy was an internal battle of memory in which some of the most important leaders of the *maquis*, as Resistance fight was called in France, were involved. André Marty, Charles Tillon and André Guingouin were the main victims: they were either obliged to abandon the party or reduced to a non-influential role. A similar severe treatment was reserved to the FTPF's publisher, *France d'Abord*, whose budget was sensibly cut; some editorial projects were unexpectedly interrupted in order to talk down the voice of partisans. This memorial civil war lasted as long as the prewar party establishment was in power. In particular, the times changed after Thorez's death in 1964. Since the mid-Sixties communist publications on Resistance made a comeback, following the same narrative scheme outlined above. In 1967 the party published a book that is actually the main militant reference text on Resistance as seen by communists.<sup>59</sup> These editorial achievements were also useful to contrast the Gaullist vision of Resistance, which became dominant during the Fifth Republic, in particular between 1958 and 1969 –when the De Gaulle resigned from the presidency. Several further publications followed, also thanks to the prominent position the PCF occupied in the national political scene: since the early Seventies, the PCF was allied to the new Socialist party (PS) that was treading its path to power.

During the Cold War, the PCI did face a governmental strategy to limit communist and socialist intervention on national commemorative celebrations. For instance, in 1948 it was forbidden to wear partisan uniforms in public before and after April 25<sup>th</sup>. This temporary prohibition was publicly justified as a measure to maintain public order, all the more so as legislative elections were scheduled on April 18<sup>th</sup>; in fact, the governmental ban was also aimed at avoiding that ceremonies for the third Liberation anniversary could be influenced by leftist partisan associations.<sup>60</sup> The result of the general elections of April 18<sup>th</sup> 1948, with the victory of the pro-NATO coalition led by the Christian Democracy, made this event the watershed of Italian postwar history. For the PCI, it was the very end of the antifascist “golden age” and the beginning of its own political isolation: “the end of Resistance was the anticommunist block of April 18<sup>th</sup>”, said Togliatti in a party internal meeting.<sup>61</sup>

This memorial fight was not limited to commemorative events but it also included judicial battles, which are one of the most peculiar aspects of postwar Italy. After legislative elections in 1948 and the attack on the PCI's general secretary Palmiro Togliatti on July 14<sup>th</sup>, the socio-political Italian scene became deeply tense. Following the instructions of Mario

<sup>59</sup> Institut Maurice Thorez: *Le Parti communiste français dans la Résistance*, Paris, Éditions sociales, 1967.

<sup>60</sup> See the instructions given by the ANPI (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia), the association of former partisans close to the PCI, to face these measures: APCI, fund “Mosca”, direction bodies, 1948/CL/1. More broadly on the celebration of 25th April and the Resistance: Filippo FOCARDI: *La guerra della memoria. La Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 a oggi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2005; Cristina CENCI: “Rituale e memoria: le celebrazioni del 25 aprile”, in Leonardo PAGGI (ed.), *Le memorie della Repubblica*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1999, pp. 354-355.

<sup>61</sup> APCI, proceedings of the central committee, 12-14 April 1950.

Scelba, the Minister of the Interior, police forces kept repressing the social turmoil by imposing strict public order. Many socialist or communist militants were arrested during strikes or rallies, and were put on trial. Among them, there were several former partisans who were accused of violent acts committed during Resistance guerrilla. This repressive attitude was amplified by the conservative imprinting of Italian magistrates, who were formed under Fascism and mostly kept the reactionary mentality coming from the dictatorship conception of public order.<sup>62</sup>

The “processo alla Resistenza” (Resistance on trial) was motivated by Cold War ideological conflicts, which were to some extent the result of the civil war between Fascists and anti-Fascists during and right after Resistance, as for example in Emilia-Romagna.<sup>63</sup> Many PCI militants kept weapons that were used during the Resistance and the PCI had a sort of secret army ready to publicly intervene in case of socio-political emergency.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the USSR massively financed the PCI as well as the PSI’s leftist wing, which headed the Italian socialist party since 1949 until the end of the Fifties.<sup>65</sup> Right after the July 14<sup>th</sup> 1948 assault, Togliatti, still recovering in his hospital bed, gave his comrades instructions to stop violent protest demonstrations by communist militants in order to avoid that a new civil war could begin.<sup>66</sup>

In order to defend their militants put on trial the PCI and the PSI created two politico-juridical organizations: the Italian Association of Democratic Jurists (IADJ) and the Committee for Democratic Solidarity (CDS)<sup>67</sup>. The first one was the Italian branch of an international organism founded in France in 1946: the *Association internationale des juristes démocrates* (AIJD). Formally inspired by the UN Chart, the AIJD actually operated as a USSR fellow traveler organization. While the IADJ was mostly a representational entity gathering communist and socialist lawyers, the CDS was an operative organism specifically created to shelter militants put on trial and their families. To underline its “legalistic” profile, the CDS was headed by the communist Umberto Terracini, who was the former Constituent assembly’s president.<sup>68</sup> The PCI and PSI’s lawyers defending former partisans sought to demonstrate that the guerrilla actions were exclusively motivated by Resistance strategic

<sup>62</sup> Guido NEPPI MODONA: “La magistratura dalla Liberazione agli anni Cinquanta. Il difficile cammino verso l’indipendenza”, in Francesco BARBAGALLO *et al.* (eds.), *Storia dell’Italia repubblicana*, vol. III, *L’Italia nella crisi mondiale. L’ultimo ventennio*, 2, *Istituzioni, politiche, culture*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997, pp. 81-137.

<sup>63</sup> Mirco DONDI: *La lunga liberazione. Giustizia e violenza nel dopoguerra italiano*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Gianni DONNO: *La Gladio rossa del PCI, 1945-1967*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2001; Rocco TURI: *Gladio rossa. Una catena di complotti e delitti dal dopoguerra al caso Moro*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Valerio RIVA (with Francesco BIGAZZI): *Oro da Mosca. I finanziamenti sovietici al PCI dalla rivoluzione d’ottobre al crollo dell’URSS*, Milano, Mondadori, 1999.

<sup>66</sup> Massimo CAPRARA: *L’attentato a Togliatti, 14 luglio 1948. Il PCI tra insurrezione e programma democratico*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1978.

<sup>67</sup> The original names were Associazione Italiana dei Giuristi Democratici e Comitato di Solidarietà democratica.

<sup>68</sup> Michela PONZANI: “I processi ai partigiani nell’Italia repubblicana. L’attività di Solidarietà democratica, 1945-1959”, in *Italia contemporanea*, 237 (2004), pp. 611-632.

reasons. In fact, the April 12<sup>th</sup> 1945 DLL (*decreto legge luogotenenziale*) n. 194 stated that partisans' acts of violence were to be considered as war actions, hence they were justified in the name of their final aims. This law allowed most of former partisans to be acquitted. By defending its former partisans, the PCI reinforced the identity link between itself and Resistance. During the Sixties, the memory of Resistance became a common heritage of Italian political identity and its main unifying myth. The PCI could then exploit its memorial effort to identify itself with Resistance, thus gaining a significant amount of consensus within both political institutions and civil society.

### **Conclusion.**

After the end of the Second World War, the PCI and the PCF looked for republican references that could support their aspirations to power in postwar societies by legitimating their national-patriotic profile. This mainly communicational goal was pursued through the valorization of a symbolic imagery coming from the WWII, antifascist commitment, and, more specifically, Resistance. Resistance had represented an all-encompassing context for European communism, including some common strategic and organizational features: taking part in large alliances with no ideological boundaries, carrying out an unrelenting battle against Nazi-fascism, celebrating patriotic values and reducing references to social revolution and working class. Once the war was ended and Nazi-fascism defeated, the Resistance was exalted and used as prove of the right communists had to lead postwar Republics, which were meant to become "red Nations". This goal was coherent with the larger perspective of the international communist movement, whose main result was the creation of several "people's democracies" on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain.

In this homogeneous context, specificities are detectable with regard to the two case-studies we have dealt with. The PCF tried to exploit the institutional organisms of the French Resistance to build up a sort of counter-power valorizing the communist role in antifascist fight and postwar France. Once the Resistance was reabsorbed by General Charles De Gaulle in the framework of the "légalté républicaine", the PCF sought, with no success, to impose its constitutional "Jacobin" model to the newborn Fourth Republic. Differently than the PCF, the PCI did not aspire to give the Resistance a genuinely institutional value. On the contrary, it underlined its symbolic sense by trying to transpose it into the Republican Constitution, which was elaborated by the Constituent Assembly between 1946 and 1948. This strategy was due to one major factor: the importance the Italian Constituent Assembly embodied in the transition from Fascism and monarchy to post-Fascist democracy and Republic. Moreover, the minor electoral weight of the PCI with respect to the PCF prevented the former from adopting the more "aggressive" attitude of the latter in the framework of the respective Constituent Assemblies.

This is the reason why the two concerned parties tended to employ different national-patriotic symbols in their postwar propaganda: the PCF particularly emphasized the importance of the *Charte du Conseil National de la Résistance*, while the PCI used to depict the programmatic introductory chapter of the Republican Constitution as the very synthesis of antifascist Resistance. These divergent approaches were mirrored into the memory of Resistance the PCI and the PCF shaped during the Cold War. While the PCI privileged the institutional anniversaries related to antifascism and the birth of the Republic, the French party founded an ideal pantheon of heroes-martyrs, called itself the “Parti des fusillés” and established a rich calendar of memorial events underlining the fighting dimension of its commitment during the WWII. Despite these peculiarities, both parties tried to represent themselves as the most coherent heirs of the best democratic and progressive traditions of their respective countries.

After 1947, when Italian and French communist ministers were expelled from national governmental coalitions, the growing isolation of the PCI and the PCF obliged these parties to readapt their political and communicational line. The Italian party faced the “Resistance on trial” and, more broadly, a general hostility of authorities towards a phenomenon, the Resistance, which was now mainly associated to the Left and the working class. Accusations against the betrayal of Resistance by moderate governments became a leitmotiv of the PCI’s propaganda, which was more and more focused on the implementation of the Constitution and the values of Resistance. The memory of Resistance carried out by the PCF was strongly antagonized by Charles De Gaulle, during and after his mandate as governmental leader. In the same years, contrasts within the PCF were ongoing between those who did not take part in the *maquis* and those, an important minority, who were keen to exalt their experiences as partisans.

Despite the marginalization of former partisans was a common reality in Stalinist communism—even the PCI was hit by this wave of ideological recrudescence—the Resistance continued to play a crucial role in shaping the language and the identity of communist people. This was due to the fact that the epic dimension of Resistance could be easily transposed into the new “battlefield” of the Cold War. In particular, the PCI and the PCF took part in the worldwide campaign for peace and against the atomic bomb which was launched by the USSR through an apparently an-ideological organism such as the Partisans of Peace. Communist opposition to the West German rearmament as well made part of this “new Resistance” in which the US and their European allies were the new Nazi, and communists depicted themselves as the most coherent fighters for peace and freedom.

Under the Fifth Republic (from 1958 onwards) the Gaullist rhetoric overwhelmed the PCF’s memorial system, thus isolating communists and frustrating their patriotic propaganda. In the early Seventies, the PCF established an alliance with the new PS and took part in the governments led by socialists from the electoral victory of 1981 until 1984. Although the PCF could experience this long-lasting participation in governmental institutions, its

propaganda on the war years could not acquire the characteristics of that of its Italian homologue, whose memorial strategy kept being strongly correlated to values and symbols of the Italian Republic. This attitude was substantially maintained over the decades, with a particularly emphasis during the Seventies. Starting from 1972, the PCI, under Enrico Berlinguer leadership, sought to make its comeback to national governments by proposing a strategy called “*compromesso storico*” (historical compromise). This label underlined the necessity to rebuild the antifascist alliance of 1943-1947 including the three major Italian parties (DC, PSI and the PCI) in order to create a front that was meant to shelter the Republic from the danger of rightist terrorism –so-called “*strategia della tensione*” (strategy of tension).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Mirco DONDI: *L'eco del boato. Storia della strategia della tensione, 1965-1974*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2015.