

to and trust in the partisan movement. Even a sympathetic liberal reformist like H. Stuart Hughes was not able to play as effective an interlocutory role as he would have liked. In his partial encounter with the partisans themselves, his rather rose-tinted vision of the Resistance, and his more recent acknowledgment of a more complex historical and moral reality, Hughes is representative of other American observers of the movement. It is a testament to Hughes that through the ensuing half-century he continued so ably to deepen his understanding of modern Italian democracy, with all of its problems and its promise.

Notes

- 1 H. Stuart Hughes, 'Remembering the Resistance', *Perspectives on Italy. Essays in Honor of Michael R. Campo*, special issue of the *Cesare Barbieri Courier* (Hartford: Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture, 1992): 113–20.
- 2 Hughes singles out another, more recent work on Italy, *Prisoners of Hope: the Silver Age of the Italian Jews, 1924–1974* (1983) as his own favorite among his many writings. See 'Doing Italian history: pleasure and politics', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1(1) (1995): 100.
- 3 US Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, 'The reform of Italian education' (Washington, DC, 1943), pp. 3, 8–9, 15–17, cited in Steven F. White, *Progressive Renaissance: America and the Reconstruction of Italian Education, 1943–1962* (New York: Garland, 1991), p. 51.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Salvemini had been at Harvard already for three years when Hughes arrived in 1937. The Italian exile's status in the department was rather marginal, as he was a part-time visiting professor whose lectures were confined to undergraduates.
- 6 Hughes, 'Remembering the Resistance', p. 113.
- 7 *Gentleman Rebel: the Memoirs of H. Stuart Hughes* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990), pp. 137, 161.
- 8 *ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
- 9 Hughes mentions Max Salvadori as one of this elite group ('Remembering the Resistance', p. 113). See also *Gentleman Rebel*, p. 144.
- 10 Hughes, 'Doing Italian history', p. 97.

Resistance Mythology

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For almost fifty years, the Resistance in Italy served as a very important myth for the Communist Party (PCI), which successfully inculcated the idea of the Resistance not only as necessary for the reestablishment of Italian democracy but as the sole fount of the country's democracy. But mythologies inevitably distort historical fact and are pernicious for that reason. In the case of the

Resistance, its appropriation by the Communists made that movement an inevitable target for criticism, some of it unfair, as time went by. In fact, the Italian Resistance stands by itself and never needed 'mythologizing', a process which hurt the country, just as debate is likely to do in the future. The remarks that follow, therefore, are a criticism not of the Resistance but of the Resistance myth as propagated by the PCI and its sympathizers.

The myth goes something like this.

The Fascist regime imposed a dictatorship on the Italian people and maintained it for almost twenty years through the use of force. Ever since the beginning of Fascism, the Communists were the major group to offer resistance to the regime. This resistance increased during World War II, with the Communists leading a popular movement against the Fascists and the Nazis, and, eventually, the Salò republic; the Italian Communists succeeded in overthrowing the regime with some help from the Allies. The Resistance was a revolution that gave birth to a new state, a republic based on anti-Fascist principles that are embodied in the Italian constitution. The Communist role in defeating the regime entitled them to rule, but – motivated by ignorant anti-Communism and capitalism – the western powers, in cahoots with their Italian lackeys, unfairly deprived the PCI of its birthright.

We can examine some of these premises. First, is the idea that the other political forces played no substantial role in resisting Fascism accurate?

This idea holds no water once it is examined closely. It is true that the Communists opposed Fascism, even had perhaps the most important military role, but we must remember that the Communists, being Leninists, were more oriented to underground activities than other political forces; they were trained for it and therefore better at it.

I can touch on the activities of the Socialists. When the Socialist leaders went into exile, they debated how Fascism should be fought. The historic leaders were old by this time, and, favoring democratic action, utilized their connections to attempt to persuade Europeans that Fascism represented a general threat that all Europe should combat; they suggested moral condemnation and economic boycotts to bring the regime to its knees. The Europeans, however, proved unwilling to act, preferring to believe that Fascism was a strictly Italian phenomenon.

Spurred by their younger generation and by the *Giustizia e Libertà* movement, the Socialists decided on clandestine action in Italy at a party congress in Paris on 19 and 20 July 1930, following ideological preparation for it by Giuseppe Saragat. In November 1931, Socialist leaders Rodolfo Morandi, Lelio Basso and Lucio Luzzato met secretly with a Communist delegate, Giorgio Amendola, to explore possible cooperation with Communists and Republicans. By 1933, a secret Socialist network was operating in Milan with branches in the major northern and some smaller southern cities. This was the *Centro interno socialista* or CIS.

Under the code name of 'Joseph', Giuseppe Faravelli directed Italian Socialist

clandestine activities from Lugano, Switzerland, maintaining links with the Socialist Party Directorate in Paris. Ironically, Morandi, who later became a Communist sympathizer, accused the Communists of bad faith and of initiating a slander campaign against the Socialist clandestine organization. Under Faravelli and Morandi, the Socialists worked at creating Socialist cadres so as to enable the party to reenter the Italian political scene once the Fascist regime ended; in fact, in the elections for the Constituent Assembly in 1946, the Socialist Party received the second largest number of votes, ahead of the Communists. In April 1937, the police decimated the CIS, arresting 250 persons in Milan alone, including Morandi. Brought before the Special Tribunal, these people wound up with long jail sentences or in internal exile. The Socialists painfully reconstructed their organization, learning from their mistakes, and successfully reestablished their network by 1938. Socialist labor and political groups had a major role in the massive general strike of March 1944, which paralyzed war production throughout northern Italy for eight days – the only strike of its kind to take place in German-occupied Europe. The armed struggle was directed by a military junta that included Socialist Sandro Pertini, future Italian president, and Socialist fighting units contributed to the final Nazi-Fascist defeat in northern Italy.

This is just one non-Communist force intimately involved in the Resistance. The Communist effort to downgrade meaningful participation by other groups in the Resistance is inaccurate and wrong, and has had deleterious effects.

Recently there has been a debate about whether the Resistance was a mass popular movement. This thesis was supported by Communist observers; after all, such interpretations form part of their mythology and they lent a certain 'legitimacy' to their claim to lead the country. The view of the Resistance as a mass movement was challenged by the late historian Renzo De Felice, especially in a little book of interviews called *Rosso e Nero*.

I think that the problem has been badly framed. In terms of numbers, I believe that De Felice is probably correct, but a different point must be made. Under the circumstances of a brutal war conducted by a brutal enemy, it would not be surprising if most people tried to stay alive. But this is true of all countries. The question is not how many people participated in the Resistance in the abstract, but what proportion of Italians participated in relation to the proportion of people in other countries in similar circumstances, and what actions they took; after all, there were many ways of participating in the Resistance besides military action. If research is done from this vantage point, I think that the Italians come off pretty well, but it is an impression. In my opinion, however, in terms of 'mass movements', De Felice is certainly correct.

If we are being 'democratic' here and looking at numbers, the Communist claim in this case does not seem to hold water. Even if it is true that the Resistance was a mass popular movement, it does not follow that this mass movement was inspired by or supported the Communists; indeed, judging by the 1946 elections, the case is rather the contrary.

Let's look now at the claim that the Resistance was a 'revolution'. Certainly those who participated in it wanted drastic changes in the country's makeup, even though they had different opinions about just how this would be done. Clearly, however, the Resistance was not a revolution and the republic more or less reestablished a parliamentary regime of the kind that had existed before Fascism. This is what many people wanted, but unfortunately the defects of the pre-war regime were not on the whole remedied. Other unforeseen aspects that came about as a result of the Cold War we can leave to one side.

The important question here is why. Certainly neither the Americans nor the British wanted a Marxist revolution, but the Americans at least were not opposed to reforms. Why was Italy not thoroughly reformed?

I think the record on this is very clear: the Communists did not want to rock the boat. Here are a few examples.

In January 1944, the Socialists, along with Communists and Actionists, proposed the monarchy's abolition but encountered predictable resistance from the Christian Democrats and other conservative parties. The Socialists nonetheless initiated a vigorous campaign against the monarchy. But on 14 March 1944, the Soviet Union recognized the Badoglio government. Ten days later, Communist head Palmiro Togliatti returned from Russian exile and astonished his Leftist allies by reversing Communist Party policy. He announced 'postponement' of the 'institutional problem' and advocated a Badoglio-led national unity cabinet to drive the Germans out of Italy. Togliatti also downplayed the PCI's revolutionary image and set the stage for the so-called 'new party', willing to compromise and to come to power gradually within a democratic context.

Whether this was Togliatti's idea or Stalin's is a matter of intense debate, but the point is that this *svolta di Salerno* represented backtracking by the Communists on the issue of revolution and infuriated the anti-monarchists. Communist historians argued, and continue to maintain, that this was a 'realistic' policy, given that the Allies occupied Italy, but any claim that the Americans especially would try to save the monarchy if the Italians did not want it is just mistaken – after all, they did allow the referendum that abolished it; that campaign, by the way, was fought harder by the Socialists than the Communists and if the monarchy did disappear it was due in large measure to Catholic votes.

At any rate, this conservative, not to say reactionary, policy fits in with general Communist politics during this era. For example, Togliatti asked for and received the Justice Ministry which was to conduct a purge of Fascists in the bureaucracy – and then watered down the purge so that it became meaningless and granted an amnesty. When the time came to discuss whether the Lateran Accords of 1929 should be inserted into the Italian constitution – an unheard-of proposition – the proposal passed with the votes of the Communists against Socialist objections.

The Communists also moved on the cultural front to establish a dialogue with ex-Fascist intellectuals who were willing to come over to their side. Many

former Fascists ended up in the PCI in an operation that included three groups. The first was composed of people who had been Fascist until 1938 or 1939 and who joined the PCI during the late 1930s and the 1940s; these included such prominent personalities as Pietro Ingrao and Mario Alicata. Intellectuals who followed Mussolini up to the fall of his regime such as Davide Lajolo and Ruggiero Zangrandi made up the second group; Zangrandi, a friend of Vittorio Mussolini, wrote a book on his experiences published by Einaudi, but Alicata made certain that there would be only a very limited print run and that the book would hardly be circulated. The reason was probably that Alicata did not wish it to be widely known that along with Zangrandi in 1936 he had founded the Istituto per la propaganda dell'universalità del fascismo, whose honorary president was Vittorio Mussolini. Zangrandi's book was only reissued by Feltrinelli under the title *Il lungo viaggio attraverso il fascismo* in 1962.

The third wave of 'red Fascists' welcomed by the PCI were those who had served with the Salò republic, and even some who had joined with Junio Valerio Borghese's Decima Mas.

The Communists began their dialogue with the Fascists in Paris in August 1936 when the PCI's political office declared: 'We accept the [Fascist] program of 1919, which is a democratic program.' This was the 'fratelli in camicia nera' campaign. Among the Fascists, the interlocutors were Ugo Spirito and Giuseppe Bottai, who in 1934 had encouraged publication in Italy of Stalin's *Bolshevism and Capitalism*. The dialogue continued even during the height of the Resistance and the civil war, in 1943 and 1944. To cite just one example, Mussolini entrusted former Fascist labor leader Francesco Grossi with the mission of contacting Communist leaders for the purpose of working out a truce in the partisan war, and maybe some sort of collaboration.

These talks failed, but the discourse continued, even with Mussolini. The Socialist journalist Carlo Silvestri, with Mussolini's blessing, attempted to reach agreement with Salò leaders in the name of Leftist ideals supposedly embodied in the Italian Social Republic. (On the interpretation of Salò and Mussolini's rationale, consult De Felice's *Rosso e Nero*.) Mussolini also sanctioned the Raggruppamento nazionale socialista repubblicano which caused Socialist leaders Sandro Pertini and Corrado Bonfantini some embarrassment when it attempted to negotiate conciliation between Fascists and Leftists.

During this particular phase, the Socialists, especially one with impeccable anti-Fascist credentials, Ignazio Silone, led the attempt at reconciliation. In an article in *Avanti!* of 27 October 1945 Silone wrote that it was necessary to cut the link binding Italian life to 'the negative attitude of anti-Fascism'. The ensuing uproar caused Silone to resign as editor of the newspaper, but with Pietro Nenni's sanction he facilitated foundation of a journal, *Rosso e Nero*, born of close collaboration between a Socialist and a hardly repentant ex-Fascist journalist, including talks with a former secretary of the Fascist Party, Augusto Turati.

Silone and the Socialist faction favoring these contacts represented the pro-Communist element of the Socialist Party, and dialogue continued strongly

with the Communists and fellow-travelers. *Vie Nuove* published an article in December 1946 that opened up to former Fascists, a group of whom responded that they greatly appreciated the Communist overture and attempt to make peace. Communist Resistance leader Luigi Longo and Catholic Communist intellectual Franco Rodano followed with conciliatory articles; ex-Fascist leaders responded with the request that the Left make it possible for them to collaborate in an 'honorable' manner – that is, in such a way that they would not have to recant their past, or at least not totally. In 1947, a Togliatti interview lauded 'the originality of some Fascist positions'. Giancarlo Pajetta followed with similar themes in *L'Unità* and Communist publications hosted articles by ex-*repubblichini*.

From that time on, the gates to the PCI opened for the ex-Fascists of Salò. Leaders such as Alvisi Gigante, Giampaolo Testa, Spartaco Cilento and Luca Scaffardi, members of Borghese's Decima Mas, crossed over to the Communists, participated in the disorders following the attempted assassination of Togliatti, and called for revolution. This cohort gathered around the journal *Il Pensiero Nazionale* that served as a kind of way station for former Fascists on their trek into the PCI's orbit. This journal, run by Stanis Ruinas, received Communist subsidies and lasted until 1977. The barber shop of Benedetto Avincola, near via Margutta, served as a meeting place for Communists and ex-Fascists, and the via Margutta PCI section elected a secretary who was an ex-Fascist. In November of 1948, future PCI Secretary Enrico Berlinguer invited the ex-*repubblichino* Luca Scaffardi to the Naples congress of Alleanza giovanile; received at first with reserve, he finally won warm applause from the delegates, Berlinguer's compliments, and an article dedicated to him in *Vie Nuove*, written by Italo Calvino. A PCI report put the number of ex-*repubblichini* who joined the party at 34,000.

I think it is clear why Togliatti took the positions he did. The Communists gave as their justification for voting the Concordat into the constitution that a majority of Italians were Catholic and that they had to work with the Catholics in the future. The same was true of Fascists, especially when it came to young people. Over the twenty years the regime had been in power, the great majority of the country had relations with the regime and had not openly opposed it. If the Communists wished to work with them in the new postwar situation and to gain their confidence, they had to signal their willingness not only to do so but to gloss over the past: hence no purge and acceptance of ex-Fascists by the PCI with few questions asked.

This policy was nothing if not realistic, and maybe Togliatti should be complimented for it. Unfortunately, on the Resistance and postwar Italy, as on other subjects, the PCI tried to have it both ways – the so-called 'double track' policy – setting itself up as the implacable opponent of Fascism yet making room in its ranks for ex-Fascists. Hopefully, as some of these issues continue to be fleshed out, historians and the general public will discover that the history of the Resistance and the immediate postwar years is not black and white – rather red and black.