

4 Cultural, Social and Political Context of the Event of Political Violence

4.1 *The Rhetoric of Sacrifice During the Risorgimento and the Resistenza*

The previous chapter demonstrated that the rise of both the ideology of nationalism and of modern nation-states is intrinsically linked with the emergence of the state martyr figure and the rhetoric of sacrifice for the nation. The chapter exposed the long process of re-signification by which the martyr figure ceased to be part of a discourse of rebellion that delegitimizes any kind of established political authority and became part of the modern discourse of sovereignty. Now I will turn to the specific case of political violence on which this study focuses: the kidnapping, imprisonment and murder of Aldo Moro. This chapter will first describe the presence and function of the rhetoric of sacrifice and the martyr figure in two key moments of Italy's modern political history: Italian unification or the *Risorgimento*, namely the political and social movement that consolidated the different states on the Italian peninsula into the single State of the Kingdom of Italy in the nineteenth century; and the *Resistenza* against Fascism before and during World War II. Understanding the consolidation of the idea of sacrifice and of the state martyr figure within these two key moments of Italy's modern history is fundamental, since the memory of both—but especially of the *Resistenza*,—profoundly determined the Italian political imaginary and the identity of the Italian people after World War II. Moreover, the *Resistenza*, both as a myth and as a historical movement, is ubiquitous in the discursive and cultural practices that refer to the kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination of Aldo Moro.

Nationalism profoundly shaped the actions of peoples and states in the nineteenth century. As Hans Kohn points out in his book *The Idea of Nationalism*, nationalism encompasses the oldest feelings of man, such as the predisposition to love one's place of birth or childhood, the predilection for one's mother tongue and domestic customs, and, finally, the tendency to be proud of one's own way of life and to look down on other ways of life or face them with mistrust.¹ It was only at the turn of the nineteenth

1 See Kohn 1944.

century, however, that politicization of broader sections of the population within individual states was so advanced that the national feeling, which heretofore was rather spontaneous, became ideologically substantiated.

The age of absolutism had a great significance for the formation of nationalism, because during this period the princes created the modern state, and thus the vessel of modern nationalism was prepared. Without the concentration of power in the hands of the sovereign, and without the leveling of older social structures as a result, the essential prerequisites for the enforcement of nationalism would have been lacking. The centralization of political power in the state, both internally and externally, had already been accompanied by nationalist sentiments in the seventeenth century, particularly in the confrontation of Europe with Louis XIV. The decisive intellectual work for the formation of national understanding was conducted in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially by the East Prussian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). Herder thought he could recognize the character of peoples in folk songs; they appeared to him as an expression of their heart and soul. He claimed that all manifestations of life of a people were emanations of their specific life principles. For Herder, the peoples were unities who developed organically, and were thus creatures of God, which differed from other unities in their own destiny and tasks.

Modern nationalism fully developed with the French Revolution. The conception of the Third Estate as a nation was conceived above all as a weapon against antiquated social stratification, but was also quickly used against external «enemies». During the external struggles of the revolutionary period, the loyalty of the French strongly focused on their nation. It was not just a question of defending the rights of the nation against the resistance of European monarchies, but it was argued that, through its recent history, France had enacted a world-historical event and thus had the right to claim leadership in Europe.

One of the most influential thinkers of Italian nationalism and republicanism was Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872). In his publications and correspondence, he repeatedly argued that Italy played a world-historical role. Just as Italy had already strongly influenced the culture and institutions of Europe in antiquity and again in the Renaissance, its task now was to open up the age of nations through their rebirth and thereby take over spiritual leadership. Mazzini was convinced that only democracy could lift the peoples. His belief that freedom, equality, and fraternity were only guaranteed in the Republic defined him as a Republican. He idolized the people in a similar way to romantic French nationalism. Mazzini was, with Giuseppe

Garibaldi, one of the most prominent Carbonari revolutionaries because of his actions during the unification of Italy or *Risorgimento* and his spearheading of the Italian revolutionary movement.²

Another leading exponent of the *Risorgimento* was the Italian clergyman, philosopher and first President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–1852). In one of his most important writings, *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, he maintained that the Italians always exceeded all nations in art and science; they were the most «universal» of all nations and the center of Christianity. According to Gioberti, Italy sunk from its greatness by turning away from Catholicism to political thought, similarly to France. For this reason, he encouraged a return and renewal of Catholic thought. Catholicism and the papacy thus gained high importance. Gioberti did not regard the papacy as an obstacle, but rather as conducive to Italian unification.³

According to Maurizio Viroli, republican political writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wanted to resurrect a religion that he describes as «civic Christianity», which appealed to Italian people in defending republican liberty and serving the common good.⁴ Viroli distinguishes between three different ways of appealing for the «resurrection of religion»: some writers wanted to renew the Christian religion and make it compatible with liberal values; others, though with less success, tried to model civic religion on Rousseau's *religion civile*; and others wanted to develop a religion of duty and liberty compatible with, but not identical to, Christian religion. All of them, however, were united by the conviction that religious sentiment was necessary to unite the Italian people.⁵

As Viroli highlights, in the discursive practices of the *Risorgimento*, cultural studies identify the conception of the nation understood as a

community of combatants united in a sacred commitment to uphold the quasi-metaphysical entity of the *patria/nazione* (fatherland/nation), whose distinctive features are kinship (*parentela*), love/honor/virtue (*amore/onore/virtù*), and sacrifice (*sacrificio*), with its grim complements of pain, death, and mourning. [...] The nation was imagined as a «community of progeny» (*comunità di discendenza*) that reaches back to great figures of the past who belong «by nature» to the community they have illuminated with their deeds. [...] The biological nexus between gener-

2 See Fenske 2003, 476–477.

3 See Fenske 2003, 476–477.

4 Viroli 2012, xv.

5 See Viroli 2012, xv.

ations and individuals, summarized in the word «blood», was regarded as a fundamental feature of the nation. In addition, the religious connotation of the Risorgimento's nationalism clearly emerges from the relentless use of religious words like «regeneration», «apostolate», «faith», «resurrection», «holy war», and «crusade».⁶

The protagonists of the Risorgimento, Viroli claims, «drove action, to the point of self-sacrifice.»⁷ He offers the example of Luigi Settembrini, who «embodied a model of religiosity that inspired generous actions for one's country» and promoted «a religion of virtue and liberty that his father taught him, with reference to classical and Christian examples.»⁸ Settembrini, who was affected by the wave of liberalism that spread throughout Italy at that time, and who soon after his marriage began to conspire against the Bourbon government, was arrested in 1839, imprisoned in Naples, and liberated three years later. After being arrested, Settembrini awaited the court's verdict and, fearing a death sentence, wrote to his wife declaring his willingness to accept martyrdom:

If I am sentenced to death, I can promise on our love, and on the love we have for our children, that your Luigi will not betray his principles; I will die with the certainty that my blood will bear good to my country; I will die with the serene courage of the martyrs.⁹

The willingness to become a martyr during the *Risorgimento* is also exemplified, Viroli claims, by the «martyrs of Belfiore», who were put to death by the Austrian government between 1851 and 1855. The priest and organizer of the anti-Austrian insurrection plan, Enrico Tazzoli, stressed the duty of Catholic priests—three of the sentenced were clergymen—to be willing to engage in self-sacrifice for the fatherland. Similarly, Father Luigi Martini exalted the Christian faith of the sentenced, arguing that their love of the fatherland coincided with the Christian message. Martini glorified Tito Spoori, the most famous among the pro-independence fighters sentenced to death in the valley of Belfiore, as someone who approached capital punishment in the spirit of a Christian martyr. He wrote that Spoori found great consolation in reading the Gospel, strived to conciliate God and the people and both religion and the fatherland, and maintained that

6 Viroli 2012, xvi–xvii; see also Mario Banti/Ginsborg 2007; Mario Banti 2000.

7 Viroli 2012, 140.

8 Viroli 2012, 141.

9 Settembrini 1934, 239 (trans. Viroli 2012, 141).

only the religious spirit could afford the nation's *Risorgimento* with the necessary strength.

According to Viroli, this and other examples «illustrate the difference between the new religion of liberty and Rousseau's old idea that liberty requires the repudiation of Christianity.»¹⁰ The Italian *Risorgimento*, he argues,

was an experience of political emancipation made possible by a twofold process: a departure from the republican religion introduced by the Jacobins, and the rediscovery, in the great riverbed of Christianity, of a religious conception that pointed to moral and political liberty as the supreme duty, and therefore openly opposed the doctrine and practice of the church—although the Catholics who became witnesses and apostles of the new faith were neither few nor unimportant.¹¹

I am quite skeptical about the heuristic value of this distinction between the French republican religion and an Italian «new religion of liberty», since, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Christian language and narratives were secularized, iterated and used in the context of the French Revolution and during the formation of the French First Republic, though in a less explicit way than in Italy. Finally, martyrological representations had, from a strictly political point of view, the same function in both countries, namely to frame national identity and to construct a mythology of the republican state. However, Viroli's excellent and inspiring study demonstrates how the figure of the republican martyr, also a state martyr figure, in the Italian pragmatic and hermeneutic context of the nineteenth century was able to emerge and be consolidated in a more effective, explicit and lasting way than in France. This is most likely due to the fact, as Jenny Ponzio observes, «that Italian «civil religion» tends to manifest itself in—and to identify itself with—a syncretic set of practices combining institutional, ideological, Catholic, and sub-Christian elements.»¹²

Also in the context of the *Resistenza* against Fascism, the rhetoric and language of martyrdom was diffuse. As Viroli points out, the stories of two radical liberal intellectuals, journalist Piero Gobetti (1901–1926) and politician Giovanni Amendola (1882–1926), «two of the most prominent early martyrs of antifascism», reveal the great importance of religious sentiment

10 Viroli 2012, 144.

11 Viroli 2012, 153.

12 Ponzio 2017, 142.

and language in the early Resistance.¹³ The former advocated «a more spiritual religiosity, a heroic morality that guides the life and action of man and peoples»,¹⁴ while the latter approached the Gospel «with a soul free from apostolic ends, and only yearning after reproaching the pure expression of humanity.»¹⁵ Although the Vatican had an ambiguous relationship with Fascism, opposing it with little or no resistance and often even openly helping the regime, there were undoubtedly many Catholics who opposed the regime. Many leftist Catholics in particular understood and described resistance to Fascism as a Christian duty. Priest Giovanni Minzoni, killed by Fascists on August 23, 1923, wrote in the same year:

Today I realize that a much harsher battle is waiting for me. We are tenaciously preparing for the fight, and with weapons that for us are sacred and divine, those of the first Christians: prayer and goodness. Retreating would entail renouncing a sacred mission. With an open heart, and the prayer for my persecutors that I hope will never die from my lips, I am waiting for the storm, persecution, and perhaps death for the triumph of the cause of Christ.¹⁶

Similarly, Catholic journalist and politician Igino Giordani (1894–1980), in *Rivolta Cattolica*, published in 1925, openly exhorted Catholics to revolt in the name of their faith and insisted on the anti-Christian and anti-Catholic character of nationalism. Don Luigi Sturzo was of the same opinion, arguing that Fascism erected a Leviathan «that absorbs every force and becomes the expression of an impending political pantheism»;¹⁷ according to him, Fascism, like all forms of totalitarianism, had a deeply anti-Christian character, since «idolatry [...] is the totem of primitive societies, the symbol of the clan, the tribe, the race, the nation.»¹⁸ Another Catholic, the editor of the party newspaper *Il Popolo* Giuseppe Donati (1889–1931), highlighted the importance of religious values in the commitment to democracy by referring to Mazzini:

All politics is inspired by spiritual principles and is oriented to spiritual purposes [...]. This is why we call ourselves, besides democrats, Christian as well. The movement of the Christian Democrats is con-

13 Viroli 2012, 185.

14 Gobetti 1969, 75 (trans. Viroli 2012, 181).

15 Amendola 1953, 143 (trans. Viroli 2012, 183).

16 Quoted in Palumbi 2003, 24 (trans. Viroli 2012, 187).

17 Sturzo 1965, 258 (trans. Viroli 2012, 189).

18 Sturzo 1967, 286 (trans. Viroli 2012, 190.).

nected with the purest traditions of our Risorgimento. Mazzini said that «either democracy will be religious, or it will not exist». And for us, as for Giuseppe Mazzini, religiosity is nothing other than the spirit of duty that drives us to sacrifice and complete commitment to the triumph of an ideal. These spiritual values are expressed in the purest form of Christianity, which is a law of love, freedom, justice and charity especially for our fellow human beings.¹⁹

In some cases, the Catholic opposition to Fascism was expressed by referring explicitly to Christian eschatological language. This is the case of philosopher Piero Martinetti (1872–1943), who in *Gesù Cristo e il cristianesimo*, published in 1934, argued that the official Catholic Church was too distant from the Church of Christ, which was «a persecuted sect of the poor and the humble». He also affirmed that, though the Kingdom of God could never be realized in history,

no obstacle whatsoever can obstruct the renewal of that pure Christian tradition that rises above the history of the churches like the celestial Jerusalem, which in the Apocalypse rises from the ruins of heaven and earth. In all times, there have been men who, inspired by the sacred traditions of the gospel of Jesus Christ, have raised themselves to the eternal gospel written in the depth of the human spirit; they have not built kingdoms, nor have they founded churches, but have conserved among men the tradition of truth.²⁰

Martinetti's language and eschatological narrative were not related to the concepts of nation and fatherland. He iterated and recontextualized the radical rejection of violence against and exploitation of the «poor and humble» by political authorities, which he found originally expressed in the Gospel and especially in Paul's letters. He, in other words, recalled the narrative of rebellion against established political power without mixing and linking it with the narrative of sovereignty, which, as we saw, in modernity is always related to the mythicization of the nation-state.

The situation is different with regard to historian Adolfo Omedeo (1889–1946), who cultivated the idea of bringing together the traditions of the *Risorgimento* and ancient Christianity. His political ideas are a perfect example of the interaction between the discourse of rebellion and the discourse of sovereignty identified by Foucault. For Omedeo, the man of the

19 Donati 1971, 139–140 (trans. Viroli 2012, 190–191).

20 Martinetti 1923, 170 (trans. Viroli 2012, 202).

Risorgimento «lived a new faith» and embodied the nation «just as the seven thousand Israelites who at the time of Elija had knelt down before Baal embodied the true Israel»,²¹ because «they were aware that they were working and suffering for Italy and a universally human ideal, which pertained to all men.»²² Through the mechanism of prefiguration, Omodeo represents Italy here as the Promised Land. As Viroli points out, he understood the resurrection of Italy as the revelation of divine assistance to the people. However, confronted with the «fanatical fury of nationalism and iron dictatorship», a sort of Christian cosmopolitanism matured in him. Recalling the spiritual condition that oriented his studies, in 1946 he wrote that

without repudiating my country, I felt a broader fatherland was arising, which comprises everything that all the peoples have acquired (also within the worship of their own countries) according to universal values.²³

This reproduces the same kind of ambiguity that, as we saw in the previous chapter, characterizes the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and which creates a constitutive paradox of modern political thought: the contemporaneity of particularism and universalism, a universalistic idea of ethics and a particularistic conception of the mission and tasks of a nation or, as Omodeo expresses it by referring to Mazzini, of a civilization:

The whole history of mankind is the gradual revelation of divine providence. [...] Once the task of Christianity has been resolved in the new religion of progress, and once an era has ended rather than begun with the French Revolution, one must usher in a new era that is at once social and religious. To Italy, which should rise again as if it had «to show the miracle» of the forces that can restore faith, falls «the initiative» that will give to the world a third Italian civilization, and not with the force of arms, or with a theocratic dominion, but with the association of free peoples, who have to proceed together toward the divine end. [...] This faith endowed many with the courage to take action and, instead of dismaying them in the objective calculation of the facts, exalted them to the point of martyrdom.²⁴

21 Omodeo 1951, 444–445 (trans. Viroli 2012, 203).

22 Omodeo 1946, xviii (trans. Viroli 2012, 206).

23 Omodeo 1970, 5 (trans. Viroli 2012, 209).

24 Omodeo 1946, 304, 308 (trans. Viroli 2012, 207).

Now, these examples demonstrate that both in the context of Italian unification and in the context of resistance against Fascism, the discourse of rebellion expressed through the rhetoric and language of sacrifice and martyrdom was diffuse, helping to invite people to resist and fight against established political authority. In the context of the *Risorgimento*, the idea of martyrdom was intrinsically bound with national identity, the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the fatherland. During the *Resistenza*, the discourse of rebellion could be articulated, in some cases, without reference to the nation. Nonetheless, many promoters and fighters of the Resistance used patriotic and national rhetoric to frame and give meaning to their actions. The myths of the nation and the fatherland, inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were simply too widely disseminated and embedded in culture and political consciousness.

According to Viroli, it is a mistake to confuse the «universalistic ideal of the patria» with the «particularistic idea of nation», since, «in the first case, we have a civil religion centered on the political and moral value of liberty, which sustains liberal and republican institutions» while, in the second case, «we find a political religion centered on the principles of cultural and or ethnic homogeneity and uniqueness, designed to uphold domestic political and social discrimination or aggressive foreign policy.»²⁵ Here I disagree with Viroli for the simple reason that «patria» and «universality» are two mutually exclusive concepts or ideas. Since the term «patria» (the Latin term for «fatherland») frames peoples metaphorically as families, the attribution of «universality» to it makes sense only on the condition of describing humanity as a family and earth as the «fatherland» of humanity.

However, it is important to emphasize that within the discourses and narratives produced in the context of the *Resistenza*, the rhetoric and language of sacrifice and martyrdom were not only used to appeal to a patriotic defense of the nation and to frame national identity. The line of continuity traced by Viroli between *Risorgimento* and *Resistenza*, and the attribution of a new «religion of liberty» to men and women who fought in both contexts of struggle, is questionable. In fact, as Norberto Bobbio and Claudio Pavone indicate, the Resistance, unlike the *Risorgimento*, was characterized by the overlapping of three wars: patriotic war, civil war, and class war.²⁶ In other words, the *Resistenza* was not a «second *Risorgimento*», as argued by a certain Italian historiography for some time.²⁷

25 Viroli 2012, xvii.

26 See Bobbio 2015; Pavone 2006.

27 See Bidussa 2015, ix.

Like in other European countries occupied by the German army, the Resistance was a national liberation struggle against the imposition of the Nazi regime. As such, the idea of the patria played a fundamental role. But on a second level, it was not only a movement seeking to liberate the nation from foreigners, but also from a regime that had established a regime of dictatorship and abolished all constitutional liberties. Most resistance movements in other countries were exclusively patriotic warfare movements, while in Italy the Resistance was both a patriotic and an antifascist movement against the external and the internal enemy. Thus, the Resistance held the dual significance of a national (against Germans) and political liberation struggle (against Fascist dictatorship) for the regaining of national independence and political and civil freedom. Finally, as Bobbio argues, it was «a movement of social emancipation [...], the only great popular movement in the history of modern Italy.»²⁸ Therefore, «there were those who fought the Resistance exclusively as patriotic warfare; those who fought it also and above all as an antifascist war; finally those who adhered to it with the impetus and hopes of social renewal.»²⁹

The rhetoric and language of sacrifice and martyrdom were implemented by all political fronts in this three-sided war. In fact, Fascist propaganda had its own martyrological representations and rhetoric of self-sacrifice for the fatherland's glory. The philosopher Giovanni Gentile, one of the most famous ideologues of the regime, wrote for example that «Fascism is a religion, political and civil, because it has its own conception of the state and an original way of conceiving life. [...] Christian martyrs and the young heroes of the Fascist revolution have confirmed, through the ages, a bright reality: only a religion can negate and undo the attachment to mundane life.»³⁰ As there was widespread use of the rhetoric of sacrifice and martyrdom on the popular Catholic front faced with Italian Fascism, there was also a use of such rhetoric, though to a lesser extent, by Communist and Socialist partisans.³¹ In general, the importance of the figure of the martyr during the *Resistenza*, and even more in its memorialization after the end of the war, is demonstrated by the name given to so many antifascist brigades, such as the *Brigata Martiri della Grappa*, *Brigata Garibaldi Martiri di Lovere*, *Brigata Martiri della Val Leogra*, *Brigata Garibaldi Martiri di Alessandria*, to name a few. The same can be said about the toponymy of

28 Bobbio 2015, 7.

29 Bobbio 2015, 8.

30 Quoted in Gentile 1993, 117.

31 See Perona 2000; Spriano 1975.

public places: *piazza Martiri della libertà*, *piazza Tre Martiri*, *Cava dei Martiri*, *Casa del Martirio*, and so on.³²

In conclusion, the figure of the martyr and the rhetoric of sacrifice were used on all fronts of the patriotic, civil and class wars. As Pavone observes, in the civil war between Fascists and antifascists, the two sides contended for the recent past of the nation, especially the *Risorgimento*; while the Fascists' appeal to the *Risorgimento* was primarily national and patriotic, antifascists appealed to the *Risorgimento* as a historical affirmation of the general principles of freedom, justice and brotherhood.³³ Both fronts resumed and iterated the sacrificial and martyrological language and rhetoric that, as we have seen, were extensively diffused in the discursive practices of the *Risorgimento*. For the Fascists, death in battle was equivalent to martyrdom for the glory of the nation, understood as the unity of the Italian race. On the opposite front, martyrdom and self-sacrifice could take on different meanings. Some understood and represented it as martyrdom for the establishment of a democratic and liberal Republic, while others saw sacrifice as the price in the fight for social justice, the victory of the proletariat and the formation of a socialist society without class differences.

Post-war Italians were the «children of the *Resistenza*», which was at the same time a war against foreign invaders, internal Fascism and for the radical transformation of society.³⁴ After the end of the conflict, Italian people generally agreed that both foreign invaders and Fascists were defeated. On these first two levels, the *Resistenza* was regarded as successful, but those who held out revolutionary hope in the liberation war claimed that the Resistance had failed and that the dead had died in vain. On the opposite side, there were those who represented the Resistance as a second *Risorgimento*, as if a new Italy had been born; but, as Bobbio says, «truth, as always, lies in the middle: the Resistance was a rescue, not a revolution; a wake from a bad sleep filled with nightmares, not a complete metamorphosis.»³⁵

32 See Collotti/Sandri/Sessi 2001.

33 See Pavone 2015, 35.

34 Bobbio 2015, 15.

35 Bobbio 2015, 12.

4.2 1948–1978: Thirty Years of Italian Political History

The great achievement of the antifascist *Resistenza* was the drafting of the Constitution, which came into force on 1 January, 1948, and was written by a ruling class formed by the elites of antifascist parties present in the National Liberation Committee. The Constitution resulted from a compromise achieved democratically between the two new political forces born or reborn after the collapse of Fascism: the worker movement, divided between the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), which in the first elections of 1946 obtained together about 40 percent of the vote, and the Catholic movement, whose party, the Christian Democracy (DC), had solely 35 percent of the vote in the same elections.³⁶ In the struggle against the regime, they had developed a common language and progressively created a project that excluded both the pure and simple restoration of pre-emptive liberalism and the revolutionary programs of Jacobinism or Bolshevism. Among the results obtained with the Constitution, the following should be remembered: Republic instead of monarchy; a second house, the Senate of the Republic, also democratically elected and no longer appointed from above; suffrage extended to women; recognition of political parties; the assertion of broader social rights alongside the reaffirmation of traditional rights of liberty; the establishment of a Constitutional Court called to safeguard the constitutional rights of citizens, even against Parliament.³⁷

There are two major problems that the political elite was unable to resolve. On the one hand, democratic culture did not penetrate the whole country and antifascism found great resistance in vast territorial spheres and in large social strata. In fact, vast social strata, which were refractory and essentially indifferent to democracy, did not intimately accept the Constitution and in 1946 massively voted in favor of the monarchy. Francesco Biscione defines this set of substantially anti-democratic forces as the «submerged of the Republic», which influenced (and still influences) the political, civil and institutional life of the country.³⁸ These submerged, anti-democratic forces with authoritarian tendencies determined the evolution of the Italian political landscape by inducing Alcide De Gasperi, leader of the DC, to change strongly, between 1946 and 1947, the face and attitude of his party, which in 1947 excluded Socialists and Com-

36 See Ginsborg 1990, 98–112.

37 See Bobbio 2015, 13.

38 See Biscione 2003; Biscione 2012, 35–40.

munists from the cabinet. However, the exclusion of the PCI and PSI from the cabinet in 1947 must also be understood as directly connected with the incipient Cold War and De Gasperi's ambition to place Italy on the path delineated by the Truman doctrine, which would soon lead to the Marshall Plan.

The second problem in the Italian political landscape lay precisely in the failure to recognize the full political legitimacy of the leftist parties and, in particular, of what would soon be the largest Communist party in the Western bloc. The exclusion of leftist parties from the government converged with the formation of the Western bloc and corresponded to the US' political needs and goals. The PCI, which became the second Italian party after it had split from the PSI in 1947, placed the DC within the impossibility of acknowledging the Communists' legitimacy; the PCI was a democratically legitimized national force, yet ideologically and politically bound with the Soviet Union and the nascent Communist bloc. The DC thus assumed political and electoral primacy, which lasted for over forty years. It remained antifascist, especially at the summit, yet also represented anti-democratic and authoritarian social forces.

The DC was founded in 1943 as the successor to the Italian People's Party. After the war, the DC, with major US backing, was able to gain power by demonizing socialist or communist inspired revolutions. The DC was a mass party with a heterogeneous but predominantly bourgeoisie mass base, which appealed to people by focusing on the rhetoric of national security. Internationally, the DC gained the support of the US and NATO. Moreover, a NATO stay-behind organization called *Gladio* was established during the Cold War in Italy with the purpose of counteracting a possible attack on the Warsaw Pact's forces in Western European countries and combating communism with forms of psychological warfare and the use of false flag techniques.³⁹ Antisocialist and anticommunist propaganda was also strongly supported by the Catholic Church. The institutional church repeatedly expressed itself with antisocialist and anticommunist vehemence in papal encyclicals and other pronouncements, as in a famous 1949 decree: the faithful who professed the doctrine of materialist and anti-Christian communism «will be treated as apostates to the Catholic faith,

39 Haberman, Clyde, «Evolution in Europe; Italy Discloses Its Web Of Cold War Guerrillas», *New York Times*, 16.11.1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/16/world/evolution-in-europe-italy-discloses-its-web-of-cold-war-guerrillas.html> (accessed August 22, 2017).

in the excommunication procedure especially reserved to the Holy See.»⁴⁰ After World War II, papal diplomacy had emerged as a key player in shaping the post-fascist future of Italy:

Following the abolition of the monarchy by popular referendum in June 1946, and given the effective absence of the organized anti-fascist parties and trade unions during the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church with its network of 24,000 parishes throughout the peninsula was now the major surviving National Italian institution. It is therefore not surprising that Catholicism, in various institutional forms, played a powerful and central role in the post-war reconstruction of Italy, social, economic, political and international.⁴¹

In Italy, as in most of Western Europe, there was a resurgence of Christian sentiment due to the fact that the Church as an organization had overcome the war as well as because of the need for a vision of the world that was not compromised by Fascism. Moreover, after the fall of Fascism people still wanted a political ideology that incorporated all aspects of life as Fascism had done.⁴² There was still a demand for political activity that could be integrated with life, and the DC, with the support of the Catholic Church, made this identification possible by offering a holistic view of life. In Italy, the decisive influence came from a school developed in France that renewed Christian thought. The DC found its ideal of Christian society, the idea that Christian virtues should be used for the construction of society, in the writings of Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. By combining the old liberal ideas of representative government and political and economic freedom with the Christian personalism and humanism theorized by Mounier and Maritain, an ideology that allowed the transition from Fascism to a democratic society with a parliamentary regime was developed, keeping intact, at least initially, the possibility of integrating politics into everyday life. Many Christian Democrats believed Italian democracy could be expanded under their continued leadership. This belief, embodied by Alcide De Gasperi and later carried on by Aldo Moro, shaped the very strategy of the DC, which aimed to be a centrist party *che guarda a sinistra*—which looked to the left.

40 Decretum, 1.7.1949, Actae Apostolicae Sedis, 1949 (quoted in Pombeni 1977, 300); see also Drake 2008, 450–451.

41 Pollard 2008, 109.

42 See Mosse 2015, 5–13.

Ever since January 21, 1927, when Amedeo Bordiga, together with fifteen other ex-Socialist party members (including Antonio Gramsci) founded the PCI, Communists have had a significant political presence in Italy. During World War II, many Communist and Socialist partisans believed the Resistance could and would have a revolutionary outcome and that they would be able to sweep away not only the residues of fascism but also the capitalist bourgeois state, an expectation encouraged by the success of Tito in Yugoslavia and the continuing Communist struggle in the Greek Civil War. When the Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti returned to Italy in 1944, he sought to dispel the idea of revolution by explaining to his comrades that, as Stalin had decided, revolution could not occur in Italy since it had fallen into the Western sphere of influence according to the terms of the Yalta agreement. Nevertheless, some Communists did not abandon their revolutionary dreams or hand over their arms to the Allied forces in May 1945: many simply buried them in their backyards to keep their hopes of a real proletarian revolution in Italy alive.

Although Communists had actively participated in the drafting of the Constitution, after May 1947 the PCI was excluded from all governing coalitions up to 1976.⁴³ After the elections of 1946, the PCI's legitimacy and effectiveness was nearly decimated by the results of the 1948 national elections. As Wagner-Pacifici observes, «these elections, distinguished from the 1946 elections by the serious anti-Communist campaign of the DC, overtly and adamantly guided by Washington, effectively denied the PCI any formal participation in any national government, at least for the foreseeable future.»⁴⁴ The election played a decisive role in changing the party's ideology and strategy, which gradually distanced itself from the Soviet bloc and the idea of a proletarian revolution by means of political violence. During the Resistance, Italian Communists—especially thanks to the patient political work of Palmiro Togliatti as well as to Antonio Gramsci's writings—had already become internationally known for their efforts to develop a specific Italian form of communism. Togliatti pursued a parliamentary route to socialism committed to working with the other «popular» and «progressive» forces in a government of Resistance Unity. This

43 Despite not being represented in the executive, the PCI constructed an entrenched and powerful political organization, which represented the interests and aspirations of several sectors of Italian society and was thus able to govern regions like the Red Belt of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, the Marches, and Umbria, and several important cities, such as Bologna and Florence, as well as Rome and Turin from 1975 to 1985.

44 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 25.

form of communism, which was known as *la terza via* (the third way), asserted a commitment to democracy and a gradually increasing refusal of the Soviet model. Togliatti strived to convince his comrades that Fascism was not essentially an elite regime, but rather a reactionary regime with mass characteristics and that, given the ability of reactionary parties to attract a heterogeneous mass of voters, the PCI had to appeal to people beyond traditional working-class voters, to the middle classes, in order to avoid the re-emergence of a reactionary movement.⁴⁵

The PCI's break with the Soviet Union gradually unfolded. In 1956, following the invasion of Hungary by Soviet troops, there was enough dissent within the PCI to justify a break with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 was another step in the direction of a definitive rupture. The definitive break took place after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries. In 1969, Enrico Berlinguer, participated in the international conference of Communist parties in Moscow, where he challenged the CPSU's leadership and told Leonid Brezhnev that the invasion of Czechoslovakia clarified the insurmountable differences within the Communist movement on questions concerning national sovereignty, socialist democracy and the freedom of culture. One of the most important aspects of this rupturing process concerned the rhetoric of violent revolution. The majority of the PCI's leadership as well as its party newspaper *L'Unità* represented violence as a political instrument used by reactionary forces and was thus illegitimate in the fight for social justice and emancipation. Despite the *Resistenza* being remembered as a legitimate armed fight against Fascism, the party leadership began to say that the Resistance had not been a revolutionary movement.⁴⁶

In 1973, Berlinguer wrote an article in the PCI weekly magazine *La Rinascita*, entitled *Riflessioni sull'Italia dopo i fatti del Cile* («Reflections On Italy After the Facts Of Chile»), in which he launched the project of a *compromesso storico* («Historic Compromise»), namely the project of a political alliance and accommodation between the DC and the PCI. According to Berlinguer, who explicitly referred to the «ever-impending menaces of reactionary adventures», the overthrow of the democratically elected Allende Government in Chile by General Augusto Pinochet with the help of the US administration of President Richard Nixon proved that the left could not aspire to govern in democratic countries without establishing compro-

45 See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 26.

46 See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 26.

mises with moderate forces.⁴⁷ Berlinguer's fears about the possibility of a *coup d'état* in Italy were not completely unfounded. In fact, an envisaged plot—the so-called *Piano Solo*—for an Italian coup had been requested by the then President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni, and was prepared by the commander of the Carabinieri Giovanni de Lorenzo in 1964. Neo-fascist groups allegedly planned another failed coup d'état, which was named after Junio Valerio Borghese, an Italian World War II Fascist commander, in 1970. Berlinguer's most important ally in attempting to create an alliance between the DC and PCI was Aldo Moro. Aldo Moro was the central figure in Italian politics in the sixties and seventies. He was the most important DC strategist and the greatest interpreter of the role of the Catholic party in Italian society as an element of stability and progress.⁴⁸

Born on September 23, 1926, in Maglie, Moro grew up in a middle-class home. At the age of twenty-one, Moro pursued a degree in law at the University of Bari and subsequently obtained an assistant professorship in the Philosophy of Law, History, and Politics. Moro arrived at the University of Bari with a deep attachment to the Church and a predisposition toward progressive Catholic thought. In 1939, he was elected president of the *Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana* (FUCI). The traditions of reactionary Catholicism never tempted Moro, who early on became convinced that the crisis of modern culture could only be overcome by a new understanding of Christianity, not by a return to the outmoded and discredited past. From 1946 to 1948, Moro edited one of the most prestigious Catholic periodicals, *Studium*, an important vehicle for progressive Catholic thought: «In passionate and eloquent editorials inspired by the Church's tradition of social justice, from *Rerum nouerum* to Pius XII's wartime appeals for Christian mercy, Moro called upon the Italians to be tolerant, loving, and charitable. [...] Moro's *Studium* editorials chronicled his performance as a Christian Democratic delegate to the Constituent Assembly of the Republic, where he actively defended the cause of a strongly antifascist pluralist state. Working on the Commission of Seventy-Five, which helped to prepare the agenda for the plenary assembly, Moro expressed his concern for social issues. He called for an interventionist state, one that would actively fight poverty and injustice, and not simply create ideal conditions for the enrichment of some millionaires.»⁴⁹

47 See Berlinguer, 1975.

48 See Biscione 2012, 14.

49 Drake 1995, 6–7.

Actively pursuing his academic career at the University of Bari, Moro published his first book in 1939, and in the decade that followed became a heavily published legal scholar. Moro's first important work was *Lezioni di filosofia del diritto*, a compilation of lectures he gave for two courses at the University of Bari on the law (1944–1945) and on the state (1946–1947). Moro's humanistic moral premise was founded on the idea that life is guided not only by mechanical laws, but moves toward spiritual goals of self-realization through the agency of love: «He defined love as the fully conscious energy of God creating man, and of man seeking God. Love in this most exalted sense is the real motor of history. From that moral premise, Moro drew the principles of his Catholic activist political philosophy. He identified himself unreservedly with the fundamental revolution articulated by Christ: all human beings, regardless of background or circumstances, are perfectly equal in the sight of God. Moro held that this was the single most revolutionary assertion in history. For two thousand years the world had struggled in vain to understand it. All other revolutionary programs, he believed, were of trifling significance.»⁵⁰ Moro criticized both liberalism and socialism as

two unilateral opposing and false theses of a liberally oriented State, where liberty does not correspond to ethical freedom but to selfish caprice, and of a State oriented in a social sense, where society is not yet equal to ethical society, where people live together free and in loving solidarity, but to a hard and objective *quid*, which, despite being made up of men, has no human substance since their true humanity has been denied.⁵¹

Moro argued that individual liberty and social welfare were entirely dependent upon each other: «an ideal completely coherent to its nature belongs to the State, which is liberal and social at the same time and is precisely liberal because it is social and is social because it is liberal.»⁵² According to

50 Drake 1995, 8–9.

51 Moro 2006, 129; it.: «[...] due opposte tesi unilaterali e false di uno Stato orientato in senso liberale, dove libertà non è uguale a libertà etica, ma a capriccio egoistico, e di uno Stato orientato in senso sociale dove ancora società non è uguale a società etica, come libera e amorosa solidarietà delle persone, ma a un *quid* duro e oggettivo, che, costituito di uomini, non abbia tuttavia, per essere stati questi negati nella loro vera umanità, sostanza umana.»

52 Moro 2006, 128; it.: «[...] appartiene allo Stato una idealità del tutto coerente alla sua natura, che è liberale e sociale ad un tempo e precisamente liberale perché sociale e sociale perché liberale.»

him, the state must promote the ethically inspired liberty of all, not liberty in the materialistic sense of simply creating a zone of free movement for acquisitive egotists. Moreover, he stressed that man does not exist solely for social ends, which is one of the reasons why limits had to be imposed on the state's power to control the individual. According to Moro, the state exists exclusively as a tool of man, to help him realize his full humanity.

Moro was also a fervid proponent of an ethical understanding of the law, according to which positive law is lawful until it responds to the profound demands of justice for which the legal order is destined:

Natural law cannot but be positive in some measure; it resolves itself, far from abstraction, in the very concrete actions that take place in a certain social experience, inspired by the universal and irreducible demands of human consciousness.⁵³

As Norberto Bobbio rightly points out, once natural law is recognized as a condition of the validity of positive law, the violent rupture of the constituted order—that is, revolution—becomes legitimate in cases in which there is an unbearable gap between natural law and the law in force.⁵⁴ In other words, from the point of view of natural law or, more precisely, of the natural law in force assumed by Moro, revolution is undoubtedly a right in the full sense of the term. Without entering into the debate on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the revolution in post-war Italy, it should be emphasized here that for Moro the ultimate foundation of legal systems had to be Christian ethics, in particular the Christian understanding of individual human life as something absolute, sacred, and thus inviolable. According to Moro, if a given law proves to be, in its concrete application, contrary to that value, it is the duty of each individual to oppose it.

Aldo Moro implicitly opposed the concept of the «ethical state», which became, through Giovanni Gentile, the official formula for defining the fascist state. In *The Value of the State*, the contrast between the conception of the «ethical state of absolute idealism»—developed by the Right Hegelians and appropriated by the fascist regime—and what Bobbio defines as Moro's «spiritual conception» of the state is clearly stated:

53 Moro 2006, 298–299; it.: «Il diritto naturale non può non essere in qualche misura positivo; esso si risolve infatti, ben lungi dal perdersi in una astrazione, nelle concretissime azioni che si svolgono in una determinata esperienza sociale, ispirate alle esigenze universali ed irriducibili della coscienza umana.»

54 Bobbio 1980, 13.

We are now able to evaluate the meaning and intrinsic validity of recurring expressions in doctrines that qualify the State as the universal, the God on earth, the absolute value, completely ethical. [...] In these terms, there is, in our view, both a profound insight into the truth and a serious misunderstanding. [...] The possible misunderstanding that leads to considering the State [...] as an autonomous reality, the only reality in which human values can be said to be realized, must be fractured. This position swings between considering the totalitarian experience of the State as the only valid form of ethical experience and the rejection of the same human content of the State, which leads to conceiving the value of [the State] as a different and autonomous criterion of ethics and religiosity. Instead, it must be reaffirmed that if the State is, of course, ethical, it is because it welcomes and compounds in harmony the values developed by individuals and by the smaller social aggregates of which it is composed and without which it would not be. So it is clear that no myth can substitute for the only ethic that has meaning in human life and thus no religiousness other than that of men. The State does not have its own autonomous religious experience, although it is ethical and religious in the sense that we have specified.⁵⁵

Moro was not the only progressive Catholic intellectual and politician «looking to the left». He aimed to interpret Catholicism in the most progressive way possible, but there was nothing unprecedented about that. In fact, similar efforts throughout Italy, especially in the north, characterized the culture of Italian Catholicism after World War II. Another important

55 Moro 2006, 126.; it.: «Siamo in grado ormai di valutare il significato e la intrinseca validità delle espressioni ricorrenti nelle dottrine che lo Stato qualificano come l'universale, il Dio in terra, l'assoluto valore, in tutto etico. [...] In tali espressioni c'è, a nostro avviso, una profonda intuizione della verità e insieme un equivoco grave. [...] Va fugato il possibile equivoco che induca a vedere lo Stato [...] come un'autonoma realtà, nella quale soltanto possa dirsi realizzato il valore umano. Posizione la quale oscilla tra l'intendere la totalitaria esperienza dello Stato come la sola valida forma di esperienza etica e il rigettare lo stesso umano contenuto dello Stato, fino a concepire il valore di questo alla stregua di un diverso ed autonomo criterio di eticità e di religiosità. Ed invece bisogna riaffermare che, se lo Stato è, com'è certamente, etico, lo è in quanto in sé accoglie e compone in armonia i valori sviluppati dai singoli e dagli aggregati sociali minori dei quali si compone e senza dei quali non sarebbe. Dunque è chiaro che nessun mito può sostituirsi all'unica eticità, che abbia significato nella vita umana e così nessuna religiosità diversa da quella degli uomini. Lo Stato non ha una sua autonoma esperienza religiosa, anche se è etico e religioso nel senso che abbiamo precisato.»

exponent of leftist Catholicism was jurist and politician Giuseppe Dossetti, who became Vice Secretary of the DC in 1946. Like Moro, he was influenced by Jacques Maritain's *Humanisme integral* (1936). Maritain, though regretting Marx's atheism and acceptance of violence as a legitimate means in the proletarian struggle, professed there was a large element of sincerity in Marxism and socialism in general. He shared the Marxist aversion to the destructive capitalist cult of individual enrichment, which he denounced as the ineluctable consequence of the anthropocentric humanism that he wanted to replace with integral or theocentric humanism. Maritain's ideas were useful to the Catholic left in Italy as a point of departure in the search for an exit from Fascism. The *Dossettiani*, including Giuseppe Lazzati, Giorgio La Pira and Amintore Fanfani, stood in the vanguard of these searchers. As Richard Drake indicates, «when Moro joined forces with the group, he seconded strongly Maritain's ideas about the necessary connection between political and social democracy and about the fundamental importance of tolerance in political dealings with all adversaries. At the same time, by stressing the necessarily laic nature of politics in a pluralistic democracy, Moro distanced himself from some of the more exalted interpretations of Maritain, particularly that of Dossetti.»⁵⁶

However, Moro's encounter with Dossetti reinforced many of his own independently formulated ideas about politics and morality. Moro joined Civitas Humana, a Catholic association of intellectuals. In *Cronache sociali*, first published in May 1947 and which eventually became the journal of this group, the *Dossettiani* criticized the centrist liberalism of De Gasperi, arguing that under his leadership the DC became more than an anticommunist force representing US policy interests in Italy: «De Gasperi became a problem [for the *Dossettiani*] primarily because the party secretary and government leader did not envisage fundamental changes in Italy's internal power relations; he sought to improve existing capitalist structures not to replace them with anything more ethically advanced.»⁵⁷

At the end of the forties, Dossetti abandoned politics to campaign for the cultural change that would prepare Italy to accept a Christian political program. By this time, Moro had joined the *Iniziativa Democratica*, a progressive political group within the DC that many former *Dossettiani* also joined. Amintore Fanfani, who profited from the party crisis of 1953, was the leader of this group. In 1947, De Gasperi made him minister of labor. Fanfani remained a steadfast ally of Dossetti during the Constituent As-

⁵⁶ Drake 1995, 11.

⁵⁷ Drake 1995, 14.

sembly, but after 1947 he rapidly assumed a moderate position on many fundamental issues of foreign policy and reforms, and soon it became difficult to distinguish his stance from that of De Gasperi. After becoming party secretary in 1954, Fanfani controlled the party until 1959, continuing to praise idealism while accomplishing few of the agricultural, fiscal and bureaucratic reforms he had intended. During Fanfani's years as party secretary, political instability worsened: from 1953 to 1958 six governments fell. By attempting to emulate his predecessor by centralizing party power under his control, Fanfani antagonized a coalition of Christian Democrats called the *Dorotei* (because they plotted against him at the convent of the Sisters of Santa Dorotea in Rome). In 1959 he was deposed and Aldo Moro became the new party secretary. Before entering into this office, it had already held the posts of minister of justice (1955) and minister of education (1957). Moro was chosen by DC hierarchs because of his «unthreatening presence, his image as a reverse Fanfani [...]. They assumed that in this position Moro, unlike his predecessor, would defer to them.»⁵⁸

At the beginning of his secretarial office, Moro could not disappoint the expectations of the party hierarchy. Moro experienced the breakdown of Fanfani's position as secretary and took no initiative that might disturb the *status quo*. He moved from the left to the center in an attempt to mediate the disputes between the party's progressive and conservative factions; in fact, it was the center-right Christian Democrats who had supported him against Fanfani. However, Moro began to develop a more courageous political program, which aimed to realize the «opening to the left» and the alliance with the Socialists that was much desired by the *Dossettiani*. The so-called third generation of Christian Democratic leaders formed a new left within the DC and began to pressure the party leadership for a political understanding with Socialists. Giovanni Galloni, who in 1953 formed the *Sinistre di Base*, emerged as an important political force after the elections on 7 June of that year; but what pushed Moro to become the most important interpreter of the political project first developed by the *Dossettiani* and then relaunched by *Sinistre di Base*, was the ongoing social revolution in Italy. The Marshall Plan had made an economic miracle possible, which in less than a generation had transformed the largely agricultural Italy of 1945 into an industrial society. The industrial cities of the north underwent violent expansion as millions of peasants left the land in the north and south.⁵⁹ This process led to what poet and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pa-

58 Drake 1995, 18.

59 See Zampagni 2000.

solini described as an «anthropological mutation» of the Italian people.⁶⁰ More than nine million Italians migrated between regions from 1955 to 1977, but the period of greatest movement overall came in the years 1958 to 1963, precisely when Moro became party secretary. Paul Ginsborg describes these years as «the beginning of a social revolution» during which «Italy ceased to be a peasant country and became one of the major industrial nations of the West.»⁶¹ During this period, labor disturbances in the industrial triangle of Milan, Turin and Genoa grew more numerous and violent. At the DC's Eighth Congress in 1962, Moro spoke for six hours on the theme of Italy's need for a «cautious union» between the PSI and the DC.⁶² His language and rhetoric were all but simple, but his main argument was clear: the only alternative to an alliance with Socialists was an alliance with the historically discredited right, but, he argued, a frightened form of conservatism would have been the worst possible choice for the Christian Democrats. The Tambroni government had tried this strategy in 1959 with disastrous outcomes, including violent demonstrations and strikes all over Italy that left ten people dead and dozens injured.

In 1963, Moro assumed the Prime Minister's office for the first time—he would become Prime Minister four more times: 1964, 1966, 1974, 1976—, while Mariano Rumor became the DC's secretary. In the elections of the same year, Communists gained votes while the DC lost votes; for more than a decade conservatives blamed Moro for the growing «Communist threat». Moro was not only confronted with the growth of the PCI, which was still considered an illegitimate party, and with criticism within his party, but was also particularly worried about the close ties between the far right and military circles. He knew about the *Piano Solo* scheme of General Giovanni de Lorenzo and other reactionaries, and their attempted coup of 1964. As Drake observes, «after becoming aware of De Lorenzo's scheme, Moro always had a weather eye out for right-wing plotters; they, in his judgment, posed the greatest danger of all to the ship of state, precisely because they were on board and in charge of its security and navigation.»⁶³

From here on, Moro became extremely cautious. He became famous for his legendary stalling tactics and obfuscating rhetoric, becoming the undisputed master of the so-called *strategia di logoramento*, the DC's notorious ability to prolong debate and hold off legislative action for which he be-

60 See Battista 1999.

61 Ginsborg 1990, 212.

62 See Drake 1995, 21.

63 Drake 1995, 22.

came a sort of archetype. Meanwhile, Communists continued to make steady gains at the polls. After the elections of 1968, from which the Socialists emerged as the principal losers, Moro's government fell from power. What Paul Ginsborg calls the «Era of Collective Action» began: «From 1968 onwards paralysis of above gave way to movement of below. There followed a most extraordinary period of social ferment, the high season of collective action in the history of the Republic.»⁶⁴ In November 1967, large student strikes and occupations had already erupted at Milan's Catholic University, and for months afterwards similar developments became regular occurrences in different parts of Italy. By the *autunno caldo* («hot autumn») of 1969, student leaders had joined forces with militant factory workers, emulating the French experience of the March 1968 protests in Paris.⁶⁵ Confronted with the country's labor unrest, student protests and political violence, Moro decided to adopt and promote the so-called *strategia dell'attenzione* («strategy of attention»). On June 29, 1969, he spoke before the Eleventh Congress of the DC arguing that it had become necessary to legitimize the PCI as an integral part of Italy's democracy. Moro understood the inclusion of the PCI in the majority as the only way to eliminate the «anomaly» in Italian democracy (with respect to the other European democracies), which was the lack of alternation between different blocs in the government.⁶⁶

On December 12, 1969, there was also the Piazza Fontana bombing, which was initially attributed to anarchists but, as was fully ascertained by the courts, was the work of the right-wing group *Ordine Nuovo* and is considered by many as the starting point of the *anni di piombo* («years of lead») and the *strategia della tensione* («strategy of tension»). It has largely been proven that there were acts of obstruction implemented by state apparatuses aiming to hide the real perpetrators and probably the true masterminds of the terrorist attack.⁶⁷ In the draft report by the *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi*, published in 2000, US intelligence was accused of being responsible for inspiring the «strategy of tension» in which the indiscriminate bombing of the public and the threat of a right-wing coup were used to stabilize center-right political control of the country:

64 Ginsborg 1990, 298.

65 See Drake 1999, 71.

66 See Wagner-Pacifci 1986, 37.

67 See Bull Cento/Cooke 2013; Galli 2004, 7; Ginsborg 1990, 333–335; Formigoni 2016, 252.

«those massacres, those bombs, those military actions had been organized or promoted or supported by men inside Italian state institutions and, as has been discovered, by men linked to the structures of United States intelligence.»⁶⁸ As Biscione observes, «the strategy of tension appears as the result of different strategies and components [...]; there are several forces that interact with each other [...] with a common goal: to contrast the PCI strategy.»⁶⁹ As Aldo Moro himself wrote during the 55 days he was held prisoner by the Red Brigades (BR): «With regard to the strategy of tension, which for years caused bloodshed in Italy, even without achieving its political goals, one cannot but point out that, alongside responsibilities that lie outside Italy, there were indulgences and connivances by organs of the state and by some sectors of the Christian Democracy.»⁷⁰

The historical periodization of the *anni di piombo*—the formulation derives from the Italian title given to Margarethe von Trotta's movie *DIE BLEIERNE ZEIT* (Germany, 1981)—spans approximately from 1968 to 1983, which has been described as the «crucible» of many of the political, social, ideological and cultural problems accumulated in Italy since the end of the World War II.⁷¹ Scholars generally indicate the bombing of a bank in Piazza Fontana in Milan as the beginning of this period. This event was the beginning of a long cycle of political violence: between 1969 and 1983 there were more than 14,000 incidents of politically motivated violence, resulting in 374 deaths and more than 1170 injuries.⁷² In the 1970s, no fewer than 597 terrorist groups (of both the left and right) were counted in Italy.⁷³ Between 1969 and 1975, mainly right-wing groups committed assassinations and political acts of violence (95 percent of the assassinations between 1969 and 1973, 85 percent in 1974 and 78 percent in 1975).⁷⁴ The extreme left intensified its terrorist activities only later: almost 80 percent of the deadly assassinations that occurred in the period between 1978 and

68 Quoted in Willan, Philip, «US «supported by anti-left terror in Italy». Reports Claim Washington Used a Strategy of Tension in the Cold War to Stabilize the Centre-Right», *The Guardian*, 24.7.2000, 19.

69 Biscione 2012, 137.

70 Moro 1997a, 227; it.: «Per quanto riguarda la strategia della tensione, che per anni ha insanguinato l'Italia, pur senza conseguire i suoi obiettivi politici, non possono non rilevarsi, accanto a responsabilità che si collocano fuori dell'Italia, indulgenze e connivenze di organi dello Stato e della Democrazia Cristiana in alcuni suoi settori.»

71 Antonello/O'Leary, 2009, 1.

72 See Jamieson 1989, 19–21.

73 See Townshend 2002, 68.

74 See Della Porta/Rossi, 1984, 25.

1982 were attributed to the extreme left or the extreme left claimed responsibility for them.⁷⁵ As has been rightly observed, this period had an enormous impact «upon so many aspects of Italian cultural life, tinting everyday language, media communication, categories of historical understanding and artistic representations of all kind.»⁷⁶

Moro took the problem of terrorism with the utmost seriousness, since he largely shared the left's increasing concern about the danger posed by neo-fascist intriguers. He tried to oppose both the right-wing and left-wing terrorism of the seventies by working to deprive them of support in society. The extremists frightened Moro so much that he vigorously renewed his opening to Berlinguer, who, as we saw, was concerned about growing signs of mass support for the far right as well as by the violent overthrow of Salvador Allende's left-wing government in Chile. Moreover, popular support for the PCI was growing: it won 25.3 percent of the vote in 1963, 26.9 percent in 1968, 27.2 percent in 1972, 33 percent in the 1975 regional and local elections and 34.4 percent in 1976.⁷⁷ While Moro's strategy was initially criticized by many leaders of the DC, as well as by the United States and other NATO member countries, after the 1975 and 1976 elections, with the PCI on the verge of becoming the leading party in the land, many other of his party colleagues began to agree with him. Joined by Fanfani and Andreotti, Moro implemented the 1976 historic compromise with Enrico Berlinguer from the PCI.

In an attempt to realize the historic compromise, Moro and Berlinguer faced a number of obstacles. Many continued to oppose his political strategy both in Italy and abroad. The United States in particular implacably opposed Moro's strategy: «Even during the Jimmy Carter years the answer was still «no» to the idea of compromising with the Communists. Democratic president or Republican, a most rigid orthodoxy prevailed in Washington on the subject of Italy's Communist party.»⁷⁸ In Italy, there were those associated with the right wing of the DC who called Moro a «Marxist» and accused him of wanting to give the country to the Communists.⁷⁹ In reality, Moro certainly was not auguring real structural change in Italian politics, since he was, after all, a Christian Democrat. The DC had been involved in every one of Italy's major scandals since the end of the war—the

75 See Rossi 1993, 96.

76 Antonello/O'Leary 2009, 1.

77 See Ginsborg 1990.

78 Drake 1995, 30.

79 See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 37.

Fiumicino Airport scandal, the Lockheed scandal, the Petrolio scandal, the Propaganda 2 (P2) secret Masonic lodge scandal—and Moro always stoutly defended his party against the charge that it was nothing but an engine of corruption in Italian life.

On August 11, 1976, a new government under the leadership of Giulio Andreotti gained the approval of the Chamber of Deputies. This government was called *governo di non-sfiducia* (not no-confidence), because it was based on the abstention of the opposition parties. The Communists and Socialists were not part of the government, but they agreed not to cause its downfall. In turn, the DC consulted them fully on its political program. Andreotti's government survived in this fashion until January 1978. Andreotti was certainly not the kind of politician that Berlinguer and more generally the PCI appreciated. He was a conservative Catholic and a pupil of De Gasperi, who since the birth of the First Republic had held practically every ministerial post. As Ginsborg highlights, Andreotti «had been Minister of Defense for many years, at a time when the secret services were being infiltrated by the extreme right wing. [...] Well-liked in the Vatican, Andreotti was subtle and cynical; for the DC he was the ideal man for a slow «logoramento» («wearing down») of the Communists.»⁸⁰

In contrast to Andreotti—who in the last four decades has been accused, among other things, of being the *éminence grise* behind the P2 Masonic lodge, and was tried (and absolved) for mafia association and for complicity in the assassination of journalist Mino Pecorelli—Moro truly believed in the feasibility and necessity of the Historic Compromise. The *grande tessitore* (master weaver), as Italian political commentators often called him, believed it possible to gradually perform the same operation on the PCI that he had performed on the PSI in the sixties: he hoped to eventually bring the Communists into the government without challenging the DC's state system. He knew that his policy involved some risks, but an even greater risk would result from a do-nothing strategy. On February 28, 1978, Moro addressed the Assembly of the Christian Democratic Senators and Deputies, where he spoke about the party's need for an understanding with the PCI that would respond to a real social, economic and political emergency.⁸¹

On March 16, 1978, just as he was going to the Chamber of Deputies to discuss the confidence of the new government of Andreotti with the PCI in the majority, Aldo Moro was kidnapped by the BR. Fifty-five days later

80 Ginsborg 1990, 378.

81 See Moro 1979, 374–391.

he was found dead in the trunk of a car in the center of Rome. It is hard to say if Moro's political project would have had a certain success; what one can say for sure is that with the death of Moro the entire Italian political landscape underwent a radical transformation. Above all, for those who had seen with their own eyes the advent and fall of Fascism, Moro's assassination marked the end of an era of hope. As the liberal historian Arturo Carlo Jemolo comments: «When I recall the many who shared with me the great hopes of 1945 and the following years, I think that those who closed their eyes in time to not see Italy in 1978 have been loved by God.»⁸²

4.3 Emancipation and Political Violence in the «Years of Lead»

In 1969, publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli published a pamphlet entitled *Estate 1969*, which can be considered the first enunciation of the inevitability of the armed struggle for the «socialist revolution» in the post-war Italian context.⁸³ This prophecy was implemented by the myth of the *Resistenza tradita* («betrayed Resistance»), the revival of the *Gruppi di azione partigiana* («partisan action groups») and the experiences of Vietnam, Cuba and other minor guerrillas. The massacre at Piazza Fontana, interpreted by Feltrinelli in another essay as the confirmation that *Persiste la minaccia di un colpo di stato in Italia!* («The Threat Of a Coup In Italy Persists!»), strongly influenced the idea that in Italy there was a need for a return to arms to form a more just and egalitarian society and to contrast capitalism and imperialism.⁸⁴

The 1950s in Italy were characterized by economic development, patronage and anti-communism. The «patronization» of the state economy led to the appointment of Christian Democrats to key positions in the growing number of organizations entrusted with industrial and commercial development, including state banks, welfare agencies, holding companies—such as the *Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale* (IRI) and the *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (ENI)—and economic reform agencies. Where the Christian Democrats were unable to use the patronage system to obtain support, particularly in northern urban areas, repression was employed to limit the extent of political opposition. This was particularly visible in their harassment of the working-class movement. Although the ban on free trade

82 Jemolo 1978, 301.

83 See Galli 2004, 8.

84 Feltrinelli, 2012.

unions had ended after the end of Fascism, the government continued to restrain their activities, which were seen as obstructive to economic progress. As has rightly been noted, this repressive policy was part of a «broader anti-Left strategy affecting the rights and livelihood of whole sectors of the population within the exercise of an «informal dictatorship». This was in part a consequence of Italy's strategic position as a member country of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bordering along the Soviet bloc.»⁸⁵ As I already mentioned, the Catholic Church also played a significant role in limiting the influence of the left in Italian society in return for the state's support of its moral positions.

In spite of this repressive policy, the quality of life for most Italians improved markedly during the post-war years. The number of occupied houses increased by 50 percent between 1951 and 1971. At the start of the fifties less than 8 percent of houses contained electricity, running water and washing facilities; this nearly quadrupled to 30 percent a decade later.⁸⁶ Many Italians were able to buy such household appliances as washing machines and fridges; cars became affordable mass commodities. Undoubtedly, the arrival of modern goods reflected the ability of many Italians to live comfortably for the first time, but the initial beneficiaries were the middle classes, while many working-class families did not benefit from modernization until the sixties. The radical change in daily life in Italy was also determined by the great migration from the countryside to Italian cities. Many immigrants, especially from the south, experienced a sense of alienation as they abandoned their home communities and were forced to live in far from ideal conditions. Even within the family, women continued to maintain a subordinate position, although, to some extent, the restrictions on the lives of women continued to be eroded by the spread of mass education and increasing literacy. Moreover, a higher number of Italians than ever before were able to enjoy various forms of cultural entertainment (including theatrical and cinema performances, concerts and spectator sports).

The arrival of modern forms of cultural consumption revealed serious tensions within Italian society between tradition and innovation. The ruling classes and ecclesiastical hierarchy, while supportive of economic progress, were fearful of the emancipating effects of the social and cultural transformation that accompanied the boom. As Dunnage highlights, «during the fifties Fascist legislation continued to be used to censor cinema

85 Dunnage 2002, 157.

86 See Dunnage 2002, 158.

films, theatrical productions and newspaper publications. The state also attempted to enforce rigid moral standards by prohibiting kissing in public and waging war on the bikini. Likewise, the Christian Democrats saw the new medium of television as a means of enforcing traditional mores and anti-Communism, as the RAI (*Radio Audizioni Italia*) state broadcasting company was regulated with a powerful system of internal censorship. The Catholic Church backed the government in its cultural policy, capitalizing on television for the purpose of transmitting religious programs, though this was not without serious contradictions.»⁸⁷

Following the repression of the fifties, there was greater institutional tolerance of civil rights and modern social and cultural practices in the early sixties. There are several reasons for this evolution. First, the modernizing reform from within the Catholic Church after the death of Pope Pius XII moved in the direction of ending its interference in people's electoral preferences. Moreover, not only did important Catholic intellectuals begin to publicly criticize the free play of market forces in society and to call for greater social justice, but so did representatives of the Vatican's hierarchy. Second, the formation of a center left government, accommodating the PSI, in 1963 facilitated the introduction of some social reforms including, among other things, the introduction of a national social insurance and health system, regional devolution and greater state economic planning in order to overcome the north-south divide.

This change at the institutional level was also a response to pressure from below, in particular to a growing sense of public intolerance towards a corrupt government and repression. The press strongly contributed to the development and diffusion of a critical attitude towards the political class and it began to publish important investigations into political corruption as well as to address the negative social phenomena produced by the economic boom. A growing movement toward change, which culminated in the mass civil rights and union action towards the end of the sixties, began as a reaction to Fernando Tambroni's formation of a Christian Democrat government with the support of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) and the Monarchists in the spring of 1960. The movement was formed not only by those of the older generation defending the memory of the Resistance but also by a large number of young people. Despite the demand for greater political and social emancipation during the early sixties, tension remained. The institutions were unable to follow the pace of economic development and social transformation to which much of Italian

87 Dunnage 2002, 166.

society aspired. Furthermore, the center left governing coalition failed to implement most of the reforms it set out to achieve. This is in part attributable to the attitude of the PSI, which failed to stand up to the Christian Democrats and began to imitate the clientelistic strategies of its main coalition partner.

The educational reforms of the sixties strongly contributed to the explosion of protests in Italian universities. Although it allowed hundreds of thousands of children of the middle and working classes to have access to education, it had grave inadequacies, in particular its failure to create social equality. Access to upper secondary and higher education was facilitated as a result of the reforms, but working-class students remained disadvantaged. Many poor students were forced to work rather than attend university classes due to limited financial assistance. Furthermore, the universities failed to move away from their traditional elitism and were not restructured in order to handle higher numbers of staff members and the greater demand for teaching space.⁸⁸ Police brutality in suppressing riots and student demonstrations also contributed to increasing tensions. Although protest policing was generally less repressive in the sixties than in previous decades, the number of deaths and injuries from police charges, bullets and tear gas during student demonstrations, industrial strikes and land occupations escalated from the end of 1968.⁸⁹

As already mentioned, in 1969 an alliance between students and workers came into being. The industrial action of 1968 and 1969 was marked by an increase in the number of participants. The scale and success of the industrial strikes can be attributed to several factors: the worsening of working conditions in the factories; the availability of cheap labor supplies, which dried up in the mid-sixties with full employment, giving the working-class greater leverage in its confrontation with the bosses than before; greater educational opportunities which led to a more literate working-class; and the negative social effects of urbanization and mass migration.⁹⁰ Although the mass of new workers had little experience with union action, the impetus for revolt initially coming from highly politicized skilled workers quickly spread to unskilled non-union sectors of labor. The protests demanded better pay, greater democracy within factories, the organization of work and the reduction of health hazards and better social conditions. During the early seventies the union battles spread beyond the initial sec-

88 See Ginsborg 1990, 298–304.

89 See Dunnage 2002, 173.

90 See Dunnage 2002, 175.

tors of conflict, involving an increasing number of Catholic workers as their union, the *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori* (CISL), began to accept the new confrontational model of industrial relations.

The improvement of the working conditions in the factories and the recognition of certain workers' rights were undoubtedly the direct result of the industrial action of the late sixties and early seventies: «In addition to improvements in wages and work conditions and some protection against arbitrary authority, the workers had reasserted the right to organize themselves as a collective body.»⁹¹ Legislation ratified Article 39 of the Constitution, which guaranteed workers the right to form trade unions and enter into collective labor contracts. Moreover, the *Statuto dei Lavoratori* (Workers' Rights Statute) of 1970 secured a union presence at the company level and allowed unions to take employers to court. However, the «hot autumn» did not benefit all workers, since the smaller factories and companies were largely unaffected, and their employees were not covered by the *Statuto*, and neither were large numbers of women homeworkers. After the international oil crisis of 1974, which set off severe inflation, the protest movements began to concentrate on broader social concerns, transposing the direct action strategies to the community at large (including the organization of squatting to overcome housing problems and forms of *autoriduzione* to overcome rising prices, such as the non-payment of bus tickets and electricity bills).⁹²

In the second half of the seventies, the initiatives of the social movements were gradually absorbed by the official left and taken up at higher levels of union representation as part of the overall strategy of the institutionalization of protest. During the years of the *compromesso storico*, the union confederations supported a policy of wage restraint and fiscal austerity in respect of Berlinguer's belief that in return for its «sacrifices» the working-class would achieve hegemony in Italian society. As Dunnage notes, «though the unions gained institutional status as a result of this, the grass roots clearly lost out as a result of the government's failure to prevent redundancies and control inflation.»⁹³

A direct consequence of the demands of the worker and student movements was the reformation of the cultural and media landscape. The years of the «economic miracle» saw the nationalization of mass culture, particularly with the advent of state-controlled national television. In the climate

91 Barkan 1984, 76.

92 Dunnage 2002, 178.

93 Dunnage 2002, 179.

of the seventies, the state monopoly over the media was brought into question and an anti-authoritarian shift allowed greater freedom of expression. In 1975, a new regulatory law reduced government control over RAI. The influence of the DC was not totally removed but rather shared out first with the PSI, which assumed control over the second state channel (RAI 2), and then with the PCI, which was granted control over RAI 3 when it was introduced in 1979.

Specific issues that engendered the student movement were subsumed in a general critique of the capitalist order. The cultural climate of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, as well as of the peace movement founded in Italy in 1967 in protest against the Vietnam War, influenced many young Italians. Students expressed a desire for an alternative lifestyle, which they tried to put into practice by occupying universities and turning them into revolutionary communes. Extra-parliamentary left weekly newspapers such as *Lotta Continua* and *Il Manifesto*, both founded in 1969, began to challenge the national press over their representation of worldwide events. Not only did Marxists play a central role in the movement, but so did radical left-wing Catholics. In 1968, the extra-parliamentary intellectual journal *Nuovo Impegno* noted that even the Catholic segment of the student movement had become identified with illegal methods of opposing the academic status quo, accepting «the forms of struggle that the university Marxist left had proposed.»⁹⁴ While many members of the Roman Catholic lay association *Azione Cattolica* deserted to the youth movements, several dissident Catholic organizations denounced the Church as an ally of the rich and privileged. The radical priest Don Lorenzo Milani, who soon became a reference figure of the movement of 1968, began to comment publicly on the anti-Christian character of the socioeconomic system that exploited the poor. As Drake observes, «his radical ideas did not originate in Marxist theory, but from the message of the Gospel about the evil consequences for mankind of cupidity.»⁹⁵

Many of the so-called ultra-left groups grew largely in the northern industrial cities of Torino, Milano and Genova. These groups did not feel represented by the PCI, which they considered merely a reformist party that, seeking alliance with the DC, had betrayed the revolutionary cause. Their early activities consisted of school occupations, the promotion of political strikes, the occupation of vacant houses and the purveyance of *controinformazione* (counter-information). Groups like *Lotta Continua* and *Au-*

94 Quoted in Drake 2008, 454.

95 Drake 2008, 456.

tonomia Operaia wanted to provide an alternative and subversive view of factories, schools, the police, facts and events of international politics, and of the worker and student movements provided by the established mass media: «they sought to renovate political discourse by rejecting the bureaucratic jargon of the established media presentation of politics.»⁹⁶

In the mid-seventies, violent action escalated as demonstrations ultimately developed into armed combat with police. The question of violence was also prominently debated in books, magazines, pamphlets and newspapers. As we saw, some parts of state apparatuses and right-wing groups promoted a strategy in order to create a tense climate. Thus, the question of violence was already present in the Italian political consciousness and imaginary, which is why «the ultraleft cannot be blamed for having *introduced* violence into Italian society.»⁹⁷ Moreover, it is highly probable that one of the main goals of the «strategy of tension» was precisely to produce a violent reaction within the worker and student movements for the purpose of promoting public demand for law and order. For this reason, one of the central questions that ultra-left groups debated in their ranks and in their publications was: how could and should we oppose the violence primarily used as a political instrument by right-wing groups and state apparatuses?

As Wagner-Pacifici indicates, discussions on violence followed two distinct and opposed lines of reasoning. The first declared that violence produces irretrievable destruction and never social emancipation, brotherhood, justice and equality. Nevertheless, a distinction was made between legitimate and illegitimate violence in relation to the antifascist struggle. For example, Lidia Menapace, in a preface to a collection titled *On Violence. Politics and Terrorism: A Debate Within the Left*, argued that while Fascist violence was deliberately used as a means of exercising power and glorified by Fascist propaganda, Resistance violence was the expression of a situation of necessity, a means to survive and to oppose the regime.⁹⁸ The historian Claudio Pavone makes a similar distinction by saying that Resistance fighters did not give «violence a value, especially to bloody violence, a liberating value as such», did not have «the aesthetic pleasure of killing»,

96 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 44.

97 Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 45.

98 See Wagner-Pacifici 1986, 46.

but acted out of necessity, responding to a moral duty.⁹⁹ Moreover, writing about the killing of Aldo Moro, Pavone claims that the BR were related to a culture of violence as a value and identity—«I shoot therefore I am»—which recalled the Fascist culture of death opposed by the Resistance.¹⁰⁰

The second line of reasoning saw violence as an appropriate method of struggle only if it was an expression of the will of the masses. Criticizing the anti-violence front of the PCI–DC alliance, one *Lotta Continua* group from Torino wrote in 1977:

It is necessary to specify that this «anti-violence front» has, as its primary goal, the political expropriation of the masses and is, from this perspective, allied to the class enemy who proposes the same object. We, instead, must be ready to develop the capacity of the movement to strike the enemy even with avant-garde action when these actions have a real mass reference. And it is on the mass representativeness, on the capacity and opportunity to develop politically and to develop the revolutionary process that we judge violence and the determinate use of offensive weapons.¹⁰¹

As Drake points out, this discursive legitimization of violence refers both to Catholic and Marxist traditions. The already mentioned journal *Nuovo Impegno*, for example, represented the Colombian priest and predecessor of liberation theology Camilo Torres, who was killed in 1966 in a guerrilla attack, as the «incarnation [...] of the revolutionary priest/martyr who had given soaring expression to the cause of uniting Catholicism and Marxism against the capitalist oppressor of mankind.»¹⁰² The history of *Lotta Continua* reveals that there was a mutual influence between leftist Catholicism and Marxism on both a theoretical and a practical level. A large component of Catholics, with long experience as leaders in the student movement, joined the leader Adriano Sofri in launching the autonomist movement.

The real dilemma for ultra-left groups was how to evaluate the violence of the BR. In the early seventies, various groups showed sympathy and expressed support for the BR and their actions. In defending the BR's kid-

99 Pavone, Claudio, *La Resistenza*, 28.4.1980, paper delivered in the first cycle of the seminar *Etica e Politica* of the Centro Studi Piero Gobetti, typewritten script, 7; quoted in Bidussa 2015, xviii.

100 See Pavone, Claudio, «Sparo, dunque sono. Il nodo della violenza», *Il Manifesto*, 6.5.1982, 7.

101 Quoted in Wagner-Pacifi 1986, 46.

102 Drake 2008, 463.

napping of business executive Idalgo Macchiarini on March 3, 1972, *Lotta Continua* declared: «We hold that this action belongs properly to the generalized desire of the masses to conduct the class struggle on the terrain of violence and illegality.»¹⁰³ However, *Lotta Continua* would thereafter oppose most Red Brigades actions and, gradually abandoning the discourse of legitimization of proletarian violence, focalized on the social questions of the day: divorce, abortion, homosexual rights, school reform and aid for the south.

The widespread justification of «revolutionary» violence by ultra-left groups during the *autunno caldo* undoubtedly provided a framework within which terrorism could develop. However, it must be highlighted that the «strategy of tension» and right-wing terrorism played a key role in radicalizing the conflict and in provoking a violent reaction by the worker and student movements. Between 1969 and 1980, extreme right-wing groups were responsible for the majority of deaths and injuries caused by terrorist attacks. Besides the Piazza Fontana massacre of December 1969, the right-wing terrorist campaign included numerous train bombings, the most serious of which happened in 1974 and 1984 on the Bologna–Florence railway line, and the bombing in August 1980 of Bologna station, which caused the deaths of 85 people. Moreover, there are fundamental differences between the broad movement and the terrorist bands: «For all their faults, the revolutionary groups realized that any transformation of Italian society had to derive from action in civil society, from the building of a mass movement, of changing popular consciousness. Success or failure was to be measured in these terms alone. The terrorists, by contrast, by choosing to work clandestinely and to use exemplary violent action, cut themselves off from reality and put in its place their own invented world. Their arid communiqués were the supreme example of abstract ideology replacing social analysis.»¹⁰⁴ The idea of a nascent revolution put forward by these movements was thus extremely simplified and mythicized by the terrorists. The terrorist groups developed, in line with structural changes within the social movements, an intensification of violence among a minority of actors only: «the fundamentally open-minded and pluralistic nature of the protest movements was replaced by an anti-democratic and totalitarian vision of how to solve problems.»¹⁰⁵ The increasing violence that characterized BR

103 *Lotta Continua*, «Comunicato di Lotta Continua: Il sequestro di Macchiarini, dirigente alla Sit Siemens», 9.5.1972.

104 Ginsborg 1990, 362.

105 Dunnage 2002, 188.

actions from the mid-seventies onwards, as well as their decision to go underground, isolated the terrorists from working-class members of society, though the attitude of the latter towards terrorism remained ambivalent.

The BR were undoubtedly the most active left-wing terrorist group in Italy from the beginning of the seventies. Though representing only a minority of protest activists, the founder members of the BR played an important role in the mobilizations of 1968 and 1969 and began to organize the *lotta armata*, the armed fight, between 1969 and 1970. The founders of the BR came from diverse social and ideological backgrounds: Renato Curcio and his wife Margherita Cagol were students at Trento university and members of Maoist groups, while Alberto Franceschini was active in the FGCI (the Communist youth movement) in Reggio Emilia. Many of the first members had a strong Catholic background in common and were from working-class or lower-middle-class families. Franceschini's father was a worker and antifascist, who was deported to Auschwitz, and his grandmother was a leader of the peasant leagues.¹⁰⁶

The first leaflet of the BR signed in the singular (*Brigata Rossa*) appeared in Milan in April 1970. In October of the same year, the journal *Sinistra Operaia* announced the creation of the BR as the avant-garde of the proletarian struggle against capitalism. The early actions of the BR, from 1972 onwards, were no more than armed propaganda concentrated in Milan and then Turin. In their first actions, BR members «only» beat and humiliated rightwing trade unionists, managers and foremen, principally in the two Milanese factories of Pirelli and Sit Siemens; sometimes, they set their cars on fire. In March 1972 they kidnapped, though only for 20 minutes, the manager of Sit Siemens Idalgo Macchiarini. In early 1974, they announced an attack on «the heart of the state» for the first time.¹⁰⁷ On 18 April they kidnapped the judge Mario Sossi, whom they viewed as a fanatical persecutor of the working-class and student movement, and held him prisoner for 35 days. Submitted to a «trial», Sossi was sentenced to death. The BR, however, offered the state an option, that is, they demanded the release of members of the organization *XXII Ottobre*, who would have obtained a safe conduct in Cuba, North Korea or Algeria, in exchange for his release. Paolo Emilio Taviani, Minister of the Interior, rejected the blackmail; the court of Genoa offered to review the position of the detainees, exploiting the possibilities offered by procedural rules, but prosecutor Francesco Coco reiterated his «no» to any form of blackmail. The BR de-

106 See Franceschini/Bufa/Giustolisi 1988.

107 See Galli 2004, 61.

cided to release Sossi without receiving anything in return. The magistrate was released in Milan on May 23, 1974. Although they did not get what they demanded, the action enabled the BR to achieve national notoriety.

Until the Sossi kidnapping, the BR had not killed anyone yet. The first two murders claimed by the BR were committed on June 17, 1974, when two members of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), Giuseppe Mazzola and Graziano Giralucci, were killed during a raid on the MSI headquarters in Padua. In October of the same year, one of the members of the BR group who had attacked the MSI headquarters in Padua, Roberto Og-nibene, killed Marshal Felice Maritano while trying to escape from the Carabinieri. When, in June 1975, Margherita Cagol was killed in a skirmish with the police, the number of violent activities increased. This also marked the moment of the dissolution of the first BR generation and the formation of the second. As Wagner-Pacifici observes, «while the first generation had begun with pamphleting, burning cars, kneecapping that resulted in the eventual return of the hostage and only toward the end became involved in violent police skirmishes that resulted in deaths, the second wave of BR members often shot to kill. Thus one of the first noted differences was an increased level of violence and a military efficiency to go with it.»¹⁰⁸

Under the leadership of Mario Moretti, though he was a member of the first generation, the BR started killing their targets and legitimized their actions by representing their victims as *absolute* enemies of the working-class. In June 1976, the BR killed the general public prosecutor of Genoa, Francesco Coco, and two of his bodyguards in order to prevent the trial of the founders of the organization, who had been arrested. The intensification of violence coincided with declining levels of protest within society at large, which enhanced a loss of faith in legal forms of collective behavior. This led to the increasing bureaucratization and militarization of the BR, which then began to assume the characteristics of a clandestine group: «The organization is puritanical and sacrificial and the BR of Moretti tend to regard clandestinity as a form of religious, ascetic practice. [...] A monastic organization is being recreated in paramilitary teams, obeying the need [...] to sacralize death and blood, not the death of the believer but of the militant.»¹⁰⁹

108 Wagner-Pacifici, Robin Erica, *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 52.

109 Bocca 1985, 138, 181; it.: «L'organizzazione è puritana e sacrificale e il brigatista morettiano tende a considerare la clandestinità come una forma di vita religiosa,

Towards the end of the decade, the BR reached their most violent phase. They first understood themselves as the vanguard of the worker movement, then turned to believing that, in the context of the Historic Compromise, the «bourgeois» state had assigned the task of controlling the working-class to the trade unions. Trade union leaders promoting the Historic Compromise strategy within both the PCI and the DC became their main targets. After the assassination of Aldo Moro, the actions of the BR continued with regularity until February 1982. The killing continued and increased throughout 1979 and 1980. However, they became more and more isolated, and defections from their ranks grew. Moreover, General Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa—who was assassinated by the mafia in Palermo in 1982 under circumstances not yet fully clarified—was at last appointed to coordinate the anti-terrorist offensive. In fewer than three years, the group was detected and dispersed by Italian investigators with the aid of several leaders under arrest, who decided to collaborate with the judicial system. After the mass arrests, which took place in the late eighties, the group faded into insignificance.¹¹⁰

In its final years, the BR became increasingly isolated from the rest of society. In fact, the killing of Aldo Moro can be seen as the action by which the BR marked their own end, or more generally, the decline of terrorism in Italy. As we saw in the first chapter and will deepen in the next two, the BR, after Moro's abduction, demanded the liberation of imprisoned terrorists in exchange for the liberation of the Christian Democrat politician; but the government, the PCI and the DC, as well as most of the established media, immediately assumed an intransigent position. Ginsborg—whose negative opinion about Moro becomes manifest when he writes that he «wrote a series of anguished letters [...], *begging* them to try to secure his release»—supports the decision of no negotiation: «had Moro not been killed but exchanged for one or more imprisoned terrorist, the BR would have appeared both invulnerable and willing to compromise, with the result that their appeal would almost certainly have widened.»¹¹¹

This statement by Ginsborg, who is undoubtedly one of the major and more qualified scholars of modern and contemporary Italy, is to be rejected for at least two reasons. First, the argument that the liberation of Moro

ascetica. [...] Si ricrea una organizzazione monastica nelle squadre paramilitari obbedendo al bisogno di [...] sacralizzare la morte e il sangue, non più la morte del credente ma del militante.»

110 See Galli 2004.

111 Ginsborg 1990, 385 (emphasis added).

would have had the negative effect of legitimizing terrorism cannot be verified as it moves in the sphere of hypothetical history. Secondly, if one really wants to reason in hypothetical terms, it would seem correct to argue that the liberation of Moro could also have had the positive effect not only of de-mythologizing and de-escalating the social conflict and political struggle, but also of allowing the emergence of a different image, a different conception of state apparatuses and their functions. In fact, hypothetical engagement for the liberation of Moro could also have been perceived through a certain media representation strategy as the demonstration that the state and the major political parties were committed to the ultimate goal of safeguarding individual human life. Assuming a position of intransigence, the state, major political parties and the established media reproduced a certain image of the state and its functions, according to which in exceptional situations a single life can be sacrificed for the security of society. The position taken by Ginsborg, which at first sight might appear to be a sort of ethical utilitarianism according to which Moro's life had to be sacrificed in order to save the lives of other citizens from future terrorist attacks, is based on the assumption that the exchange of prisoners would have *necessarily* endangered the safety of many Italians. The fact is that many citizens were killed in spite of the government's and the parties' decision not to negotiate; we will never know what would have happened if history had gone differently. However, what we can say with certainty is that the thesis according to which negotiations for Moro's liberation would inevitably have had negative repercussions on Italian society and its institutions is highly questionable.

There is a third reason for rejecting Ginsborg's statement, which regards the negative effects of Moro's death. Aldo Moro's assassination determined not only the end of the popular support on which the BR and the project of violent revolution still counted, but also the annihilation of the emancipatory movement with strong political participation that had developed since the 1960s. The idea of an egalitarian and just society seemed contaminated, definitively delegitimized by the actions of groups such as the BR. In the end, the process that led to the atomization of Italian society, senseless consumerism and growing individualism and the fetishization of commodities—a process that began with the economic boom—was able to continue without obstacles. Moreover, Moro's death marked the end of that policy of solidarity inaugurated by the Christian politician. It does not seem exaggerated to say that without Moro—and without Berlinguer, who died in 1984—the concrete possibility of achieving the so-called third way to form a democratic political model not subject to the unique thought of

capitalism had become impossible. In the second half of the eighties, the ideology called Craxism—from the name of Bettino Craxi, leader of the PSI from 1976 to 1993 and Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987—was established and supported privatization and liberalization, moving the PSI from left-wing to center-left. Under Craxi, the PSI formed a coalition with the DC and other moderate parties called *Pentapartito*, which for a while ensured them a stable majority with which to govern. When, after nationwide judicial investigations, the deep system of corruption at the base of this coalition emerged, there was nothing left to stop the rise of Silvio Berlusconi to power.

4.4 *The Moro Case: History and Conspiracy*

Almost four decades after the attack in via Fani on March 16, 1978, where the BR killed the five bodyguards of Aldo Moro and then the Christian Democrat politician 55 days later, there is not yet a definitive version, or a generally recognized interpretation of what «really» happened. As written by political scientist Giorgio Galli,

the kidnapping [of Aldo Moro] is a unique case not only in their [of the BR] history, but in the entire history of guerrilla warfare in the West [...]. Interpretations of what happened include a wide range that goes from «everything is clarified» [...], with the BR as sole protagonists, to the idea of a conspiracy hatched by the CIA and managed by the Italian P2, through to the appeal on the front page of the «Corriere della Sera», in which Franceschini argues that Moretti is in fact an undercover CIA agent.¹¹²

It is practically impossible to mention, and even less so to summarize all the inquiries on the circumstances of the kidnapping and murder of the Christian Democrat politician. There is a permanently growing number of different interpretations of documents and testimonies collected in the five trials that were held at the *Corte d'Assise* of Rome, in the parliamentary committees of inquiry that dealt with the affair and of other testimonies and documents that have not been collected (and verified) in the trials or commissions. The amount of evidence, testimonies, police reports, com-

112 Galli 2004, 106; Franceschini was one the historical leaders and founders of the BR; Moretti was one of the BR leaders in the late 70s and one of the kidnappers of Aldo Moro; P2 was a clandestine (after 1976) Masonic lodge.

mission reports, photographs and ballistic analyses produced, collected, cataloged and interpreted in four decades is enormous. In the court proceedings alone more or less 460,000 pages were produced.¹¹³ Even larger is the amount of documents in the archive of the second parliamentary commission of inquiry—the *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi*, established in 1988 and worked on until 2001—which amounts to a total of about 1,500,000 pages. In addition to this mass of documents, there is a comprehensive collection of 130 volumes of documents attached to the final reports of the first commission—the *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulla strage di via Fani, sul sequestro e l'assassinio di Aldo Moro e sul terrorismo in Italia*—, which was established in 1979 and concluded its work in 1983.¹¹⁴ It can be assumed that the third commission, which is called *Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul rapimento e sulla morte di Aldo Moro* and officially began to work in May 2014, will also produce a considerable amount of documents.

The reconstruction of the circumstances of Moro's kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination emerged in the five court proceedings, according to which the *Operazione Fritz*—as the BR called the kidnapping—was conceived, executed and completed only by the BR, is rejected by many journalists, historians and politicians. The theses and hypotheses expressed by the various authors dealing with the Moro case are located between two opposing poles: while some believe that there was a conspiracy hatched by state institutions, organizations such as the Masonic lodge P2 and/or secret services (either Italian or from other countries), others are convinced that the BR acted without outside interference and without taking orders from anyone. Over the years, an extensive number of hypotheses—more or less plausible, imaginative and creative—emerged. A wide range of individuals and groups has, from time to time, been accused of involvement in the kidnapping, imprisonment and assassination.¹¹⁵

113 See Lofoco 2015, 9.

114 See Satta 2003, xix.

115 Various entities were accused of having helped—materially, logistically—or even of being the real masterminds and instigators of the BR in the preparation and execution of the operation: the Masonic lodge «Propaganda 2» (P2); the Italian intelligence services Military Intelligence and Security Service (SISMI), Intelligence and Democratic Security Service (SISDE), Executive Committee for Intelligence and Security Services (CESIS); the Italian clandestine NATO «Stay Behind» organization called «Gladio»; the United States of America and specifically the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); the USSR and specifically the Russian

Hypotheses about an international conspiracy were already formulated in 1978. In a parliamentary debate about the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, which took place on May 19, 1978, the Communist deputy Ugo Spagnoli raised the question of a possible conspiracy. Christian Democrat Vittorio Cervone repeated Spagnoli's claim in another debate on the Moro kidnapping four days later in the Italian Senate.¹¹⁶ In October 1978, Leonardo Sciascia, who at that time was member of the Parliament for the Radical Party, published a book entitled *L'affaire Moro*, in which he questions the official version. However, as we will see in chapter seven, he does not argue that there was an international conspiracy to prevent Moro from continuing his political project. Rather, he argues that part of the ruling class and the state apparatuses took the opportunity to dismiss Moro. In other words: he argues that there were no masterminds who directed the BR, who instead acted according to their own will, but once they had kidnapped Moro, several social actors worked to ensure that he would never come out alive from the «people's prison». Ultimately, Sciascia was first to take the accusations Moro put forward in his letters seriously and assigned the ultimate responsibility for Moro's death to the government and the major political parties. However, many of Sciascia's fellow party members, such as Emma Bonino, took a more radical position, underlining the thesis of the Sicilian intellectual and accusing the United States, the CIA or other NATO members of masterminding the kidnapping.¹¹⁷ There is, however, a big difference between saying that national or international actors ordered the kidnapping and assassination of Moro and saying that certain social actors acted, when Moro had already been kidnapped, in order to prevent his possible release.

The first publication in the English language—Robert Katz's *Days of Wrath* (1980)—despite being characterized by an analytical accuracy absent in Italian publications until then, replicated the investigative attempts al-

Committee for State Security (KGB); the German Red Army Faction (RAF); the State of Israel and specifically its Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations (Mossad), and the criminal syndicate called 'Ndràngheta that was based in Calabria. Very often, the conspiracy theories also point to a Machiavellian mind, to a *grande vecchio*, which would have masterminded everything; among the most often nominated individuals we find: the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; the former Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga, the former president of the Council of Ministers Giulio Andreotti; and the former Venerable Master of the clandestine lodge P2 Licio Gelli. See Hof 2013.

116 See Hof 2013, 238.

117 See Hof 2013, 238.

ready widespread in Italy at that time to reconstruct the chronology of and identify the main protagonists (and their responsibilities) in the Moro affair. Katz excludes the possibility that there were foreign powers interfering in the political management of the Moro case and claims that all decisions «were made exclusively in Rome, determined rather less by the spirit of democracy than the passing exigencies of domestic power politics». He also adds that «interests of powers far bigger than Italy was hot breath on Rome's neck. At no time were the men in the via delle Botteghe Oscure [the site of the headquarters of the PCI] unaware that Eurocommunism was on trial both in Moscow and Washington, and not for a moment did Christian Democracy forget the United States and Germany.»¹¹⁸

Politician and member of the first parliamentary commission of inquiry Sergio Flamigni, who also dedicated many studies to the topic, vehemently argued that Aldo Moro was killed because of his policy of openness towards the PCI, since it was strenuously opposed by the US' administration, the Soviet nomenclature, NATO, the German, French and Israeli governments, and in Italy by the Masonic lodge P2 and the right wing of the DC.¹¹⁹ In his first book, published in 1988, he advocates that Moro was betrayed by his former colleagues and by state officials. Also, as a member of the *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulla strage di via Fani, sul sequestro e l'assassinio di Aldo Moro e sul terrorismo in Italia*, he was one of the most prominent people who suspected that the «mistakes» in the search for Moro did not occur accidentally.¹²⁰ In his latest book, Flamigni writes about a *patto di omertà* (pact of silence) made by terrorists with areas of apparatuses of the Italian State and members of the right wing of the DC aimed at covering the accomplices in and the instigators of the crime.¹²¹

The former magistrate, and Moro's brother Alfredo Carlo Moro, is skeptical of the thesis that the BR planned, organized and executed Moro's abduction without help and indicates more than twenty issues that remain unexplained. Ultimately, he concludes that the BR were given direct or indirect help at many stages and that the full range of motives and responsibilities has yet to be determined.¹²² In 1998, then President of the Republic, Luigi Scalfaro, supported this view, expressing his doubts in Parliament that the real masterminds of the kidnapping had all been identified. In

118 Katz 1980, 315.

119 See Flamigni 1998, 178.

120 See Flamigni 1988.

121 See Flamigni 2015.

122 See Moro 1998.

1998, historian Francesco Biscione proposed an interpretive scheme of the Moro crime based on the hypothesis of the «double crime», according to which the murder of the politicians was the result of a convergence of heterogeneous forces and that both international and national right-wing groups, which wanted to defeat Moro's political project, had contributed to the elimination of the hostage.¹²³

In 2000, Giovanni Pellegrino, who presided over the *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi* from 1994 to 2001, published a book in cooperation with journalists Giovanni Fasanella and Claudio Sestieri, which focuses on the thesis of the «double hostage». According to him, several Italian and foreign secret services contacted the BR to obtain from the terrorists all the secrets Moro had supposedly told his kidnappers.¹²⁴ There was not a double crime, Pellegrino argued, but rather a double hostage inasmuch as the BR had not one but two sources of blackmail: the prisoner's life and his writings.

Ferdinando Imposimato who, as public prosecutor, investigated the Moro case, argues that Moro «had to die» because of his policy of openness towards the PCI. In accordance with Cold War logic, Moro was a *persona non grata* in the Italian political class and had to be eliminated in order to preserve Italy's position within NATO. In his latest book, Imposimato even claims that the then Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti and Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga knew where Aldo Moro was imprisoned—via Montalcini in Rome—from the first days after the kidnapping. This thesis is based largely on statements made by Giovanni Ladu, a Sardinian officer of the *Guardia di Finanza*, who in 2009 said to Imposimato that he was a member of a group of soldiers that oversaw the prison of via Montalcini from April 24, 1978, onwards. In 2012, another «witness» wrote a series of emails to Imposimato maintaining that he was also a part of the soldier's group that controlled the prison. However, there are many inconsistencies in Ladu's statements and good reasons to believe that the one who wrote the emails to Imposimato in 2012 was none other than Ladu himself, pretending to be another person. In November 2013, the prosecutor Luca Palamara began to investigate Giovanni Ladu, accusing him of slander.¹²⁵

Other authors are critical of these theses, arguing that the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro is only and exclusively attributable to the BR.

123 Biscione 1998, 125–139.

124 Fasanella/Sestieri/Pellegrino 2000.

125 See Lofoco 2015, 139–142.

Unlike those who are convinced of the existence of a conspiracy, a secret international network or a «grand old man» who pulls the strings of history, this second category of authors works in a less speculative and hypothetical way, basing their theories on documents and testimonies whose reliability is examined on the basis of factual evidence. Vladimiro Satta, the archivist of the second Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, is convinced that there are no bigger mysteries to unravel concerning the Moro affair.¹²⁶ In his dense and meticulous analysis of documents and records in the archive of the Commission, he identifies only four minor questions that remain unanswered; questions, however, which according to him cannot overturn the verdict reached by the five trials dedicated to the events.

Similarly, the already mentioned Giorgio Galli argues that there was not a conspiracy and that the BR operated without the help of anyone. However, Galli also identifies five «dark spots never clarified».¹²⁷ He supports the thesis that the Italian intelligence services infiltrated the BR and monitored their activities, but categorically denies that they were aware or even the masterminds of the «Fritz operation». According to Galli, the reasons for the kidnapping and killing of Moro cannot be found in international political interests linked to the Cold War, but in the interests of the BR, who kidnapped Moro in order to obtain political recognition. The BR were not directed or helped by anyone, but rather acted according to their own revolutionary plan, believing that kidnapping Aldo Moro was equivalent to an attack on the «heart of the state», as they wrote in their *Risoluzione della Direzione Strategica delle Brigate Rosse*, a sort of programmatic manifest written and distributed in February 1978. In this document, the BR identified the SIM—*Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali*—as the common enemy of the proletarian class, which can only be destroyed by the means of revolutionary violence:

In this historical phase, at this point in the crisis, the practice of revolutionary violence is the only policy which has a real opportunity to address and resolve the antagonist contradiction that opposes the metropolitan proletariat to the imperialist bourgeoisie. At this stage, the class struggle takes on, on the initiative of the revolutionary vanguard, the shape of war.¹²⁸

126 See Satta, 2003.

127 Galli 2004, 107.

128 Brigate Rosse, 1878f, 66; it.: «In questa fase storica, a questo punto della crisi, la pratica della violenza rivoluzionaria è l'unica politica che abbia una possibilità reale di affrontare e risolvere la contraddizione antagonista che oppone prole-

All BR members who directly or indirectly participated in the action and who talked about the goals pursued by Moro's abduction in the proceedings have repeatedly reiterated this position: Moro was merely a symbol of Democratic Christian power, an exponent, among others, of the so-called «Imperialist State of the Multinationals» and was among the most vulnerable. According to their declarations, Moro was chosen after a series of assignments and checks that led to the discarding of other targets.

However, as historian Guido Formigoni observes, the hypothesis of more sophisticated political intent behind the decision to abduct Moro and not, for example, Francesco Cossiga or Giulio Andreotti, cannot be discarded. In symbolic terms, the abduction was linked to the political process of convergence between the DC and PCI: «Moro was the weaver of a political operation which, paving the way for the dialogue between the DC and the major component of the Italian left, aimed at stabilizing politics. [...] Moro was basically among the very few Christian Democrats [...] (and perhaps the only one) capable of deeply linking strategy and tactics, national and international dimension.»¹²⁹ The BR's goal was therefore not only to block and contain the convergence process between the DC and the PCI, but also to prevent its realization. According to Formigoni, they believed that raising the level of the conflict in military terms would have led the system to collapse from the inside, thus favoring a revolutionary situation with the idea of driving the proletarian masses to support the armed struggle.

Moreover, Moro certainly had many enemies within his own party, state apparatuses and international circles. In fact, «many of the secret service leaders entrusted with the task of coordinating Moro's rescue operation were members of P2, which has been associated with the overall terrorist «strategy of tension» characterizing the seventies and eighties.»¹³⁰ As also Formigoni argues, the doubt remains that terrorist environments may not be so isolated and autonomous in their determination: «Somehow their choice and their behavior might have also been moved by some external influence or force.»¹³¹ Formigoni also highlights that the parliamentary commissions of inquiry and the trials of the BR have brought to light a series of conspicuous omissions, incomprehensible acts, inefficiencies, actual

tariato metropolitano e borghesia imperialistica. In questa fase la lotta di classe assume, per iniziativa delle avanguardie rivoluzionarie, la forma della guerra.»

129 Formigoni 2016, 339.

130 Dunnage 2002, 189.

131 Formigoni 2016, 339.

deviations in the investigation and strange coincidences, which definitely helped the terrorists and prevented police forces from finding out where Moro was imprisoned. The historian argues that a definitive judgment cannot be given because of a lack of evidence, but that undoubtedly the Italian State did not do everything it could to save Moro through the collaborative work of the police, military and intelligence services.¹³²

Other «mysteries» in the Moro case concern texts written by Aldo Moro during his 55 days of captivity. In a recent study, Miguel Gotor examines the letters of Aldo Moro using a sophisticated historical, philological and cultural approach. Gotor criticizes the «interpretive shortcuts» taken by most of the authors who have dealt with the Moro case. According to him, it is simplistic to believe that Moro's death was solely due to the actions of a gang of criminals; but it is equally reductive to consider the kidnapping and murder of the politician as the result of the actions of secret services or occult power groups that operated according to a logic linked to the geopolitical period of the Cold War. Gotor believes that, in order to understand «why Italy was the only country in the world in which the student movement of 1968 [...] was gradually transformed into a violent conflict with armed vanguards right and left», one has to insert the «Moro affair» into the political, social and cultural context of post-war Italy.¹³³ Gotor's enquiry tries to reconstruct this context and understand how the BR, the government, Moro's family and the collaborators acted by analyzing the documents they produced.

The historian, who is also a member of the *Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul rapimento e sulla morte di Aldo Moro* and a Senator of the Democratic Party (PD), follows the same analytical process in the study *Il memoriale della Repubblica*, which examines a series of texts Aldo Moro wrote during his kidnapping to answer the interrogations of the BR.¹³⁴ While the first study sought to reconstruct the strategies, intentions and actions of the main protagonists of the 1978 events, the writings of Moro in this publication are the reference point for a broader historical reconstruction that aims to shed light on the power struggles, interests and policy choices that determined the «crisis of the seventies».¹³⁵ In particular, the goal of this second study is to reconstruct the complicated and strange history of the discovery of Moro's writings. In the so-called «people's prison»,

132 See Formigoni 2016, 345.

133 Gotor, 2008a, xvi.

134 Gotor 2011.

135 Gotor 2011, 548.

the politician not only wrote many letters, a part of which became public during his imprisonment, but also a large series of texts and notes generally referred to as Moro's *Memoriale*. He almost certainly wrote a part of these texts in response to the BR's interrogation, while another part seems to be the fruit of free autobiographical reflections or descriptions of his own vision of recent Italian political history. It is not entirely clear why the BR—the leader of the BR group that kidnapped and assassinated Moro, Mario Moretti, claims that none of them realized the possible «political» use of Moro's papers¹³⁶—did not disclose these materials during or in the immediate aftermath of the sequestration, since they contain critical judgments on the DC's connection with the «strategy of tension». Moreover, in these texts, Moro also illustrated quite clearly the goals and methods of this strategy, mentioned implicitly the activity of the NATO stay-behind organization *Gladio*, and addressed the relations between international political-military environments and internal political problems in Italy.

Gotor's reconstruction also clearly demonstrates the existence of two secret negotiations during Moro's captivity. On the one hand, there was an attempt by the Vatican, among whose protagonists were the priests Cesare Curioni, Pasquale Macchi and Antonello Mennini, to negotiate with the BR. On the other hand, there was an attempted negotiation involving the Socialists Bettino Craxi, Claudio Signorile and Antonio Landolfi, the member of *Autonomia Operaia* Franco Piperno, the journalist Lanfranco Pace, and two members of the BR, Valerio Morucci and Adriana Faranda.¹³⁷ Gotor believes that the actual holders of political authority during Moro's imprisonment—that is, Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti and Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga—were most likely aware of the two secret negotiations. Moreover, Gotor feels Pellegrino's hypothesis is plausible, according to which the Italian government was betrayed at the last moment by an «unfaithful agent», the one who was entrusted with the task of recovering Moro's papers in a dual secret negotiation also involving the release of the prisoner:

In that circumstance, the intermediary may have not acted according to Italy's national interests [...] but to a supranational dimension linked to the «Cold War», to a different level of loyalty imposed by the logic of the opposing blocs. [...] A logic that heavily influenced not only the relations between the Soviet and Atlantic bloc, but also those

136 See Moretti 2000, 158–159.

137 See Gotor 2008, 260–273.

between the north and south of the Mediterranean basin where Italy was a hinge between two worlds, but also [...] a giant geographic, political, military, commercial, and espionage pier, and a transit passage for so much legal and illegal traffic that linked the Middle East's troubles to the geometries of Atlantic Europe.

However, Gotor believes that the thesis of a «dual state»—that is, the idea of a parallel state that would have plotted to kill Moro—is not sustainable since in Italy state authority was always weak, stratified and polycentric, and thus unable to organize a secret complot. In fact, he adds,

public firmness and secret negotiation are the only possible condition of the exercise of power in an emergency situation when the central authority is fragile, without mutual trust and the place of an endemic struggle between factions.¹³⁸

As evidenced by this incomplete list of hypotheses and interpretations of what happened in the spring of 1978, the Moro case remains the subject of debate and its clarification is far from over. It is not possible and not even the task of this study to defend a certain hypothesis or model of interpretation, since this would require a specific investigation of all the evidence, clues and testimonies that have emerged in the last four decades. However, one cannot but notice that there are studies of undoubted seriousness and scientific rigor, such as those of Galli and Gotor, only to mention two, which highlight a series of unclear points, omissions and deliberately planted false leads which, for good reason, have led to the belief that even today there are facts and information that are not in the public domain. It is equally clear that the various assumptions of conspiracy or of dark or missing elements were often used for certain political purposes and to legitimize or delegitimize, and to accuse or to absolve institutions, political groups, parties and individuals.¹³⁹ That being said, it cannot be excluded that members of state apparatuses, foreign and national intelligence services and, more generally, social actors who did not belong to the BR, pursued their goals, acting in a planned manner to determine the outcome of the Moro case. The problem is that as long as no unmistakable evidence emerges—if such evidence really exists—all that remains very hypothetical.

However, as I will show in the next two chapters, there is at least something that is not hypothetical and which can be demonstrated: during the

138 Gotor 2008, 273.

139 See Hof 2013, 232–256.

55 days of Moro's imprisonment, different social actors acted in concert, giving shape to political and media campaigns in which the choice of not negotiating with the BR to obtain Moro's release was represented as necessary for national security and, more generally, for the salvation of the state. Moreover, I will prove that, although Moro categorically criticized the «line of firmness» in his letters and refused to assume the role of a state martyr, he was repeatedly represented as such. Further, in the next chapters I will argue that the rhetoric of public firmness and the martyrological representation of Aldo Moro were related to a state mythology in which the conflict between state and terrorism assumed the connotation of a meta-physical fight between good and evil. If Moro, as I believe, was not killed with the direct—logistical, material—help or complicity of state apparatuses, the intelligence services or occult political groups, it is certain that during his imprisonment most representatives of the government, major parties and the established media produced a hegemonic discourse and worked according to a strategy of representation, whose function was to make Aldo Moro's death morally and politically acceptable for public opinion.