

University of Strathclyde
School of Humanities
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**Red Screens:
The Cinematographic Production of the Italian
Communist Party
(1946 – 1979)**

By
Gianluca Fantoni

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degree of
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ABSTRACT

The thesis concerns the production of propaganda films and documentaries by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) between 1946 and 1979. The thesis addresses this topic from various perspectives. Firstly, it offers an overview of the production history of Communist cinema in Italy, and especially of Unitelefilm, the film production company established by the PCI in 1964. Secondly, it chronicles the history of the PCI in the post-war period as reflected in the films produced by party itself. Thirdly, it analyses the principal issues of Communist propaganda between 1946 and 1979 by showing what political messages were conveyed through cinematic propaganda by the cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* (the propaganda division of the party).

The thesis accounts for how these political messages were conveyed by focusing on the use of symbols, the construction of historical myths and the cinematic representation of rituals. The thesis also discusses the evolution of PCI films with respect to narrative structure, shooting style and editing techniques by highlighting the influence of contemporary cinema and television on PCI cinematography. Additionally, the analysis of the cinematic texts produced by the PCI sheds light on a range of issues widely addressed by the historiography of the PCI, such as the relationship between the party and Italian intellectuals, the Stalinist imprint of the Italian Communist Party and the historical significance of the Salerno Turn (*Svolta di Salerno*).

The complexity of historical and cultural phenomena and the consequent need for a multi-faceted approach to research inform this investigation throughout. The ultimate purpose of the thesis is to integrate historical and film studies and to develop an original approach to understanding cinematic texts in the context of cultural studies.

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Introduction

The thesis concerns the cinematographic production of the Italian Communist Party (PCI – Partito comunista italiano), between 1946 and 1979. I undertook this research for two reasons: one personal and the other historiographical. The former is my passion for cinema, documentary filmmaking in particular, a passion which grew while working as a filmmaker in Italy. In this respect, this research project provided me with a unique opportunity to combine my interest in the history of the PCI and my competence in the language of images and film grammar. The second reason, a historiographical one, stems from the observation that the PCI's cinematographic production had been rather neglected by historians. Yet, the role of cinema in Communist post-war communication strategies was anything but insignificant. The PCI was the first Italian political party to establish a film division, in 1946, and it was the only party that owned a film production company, Unitelefilm (UTF), between 1964 and 1979. During these years the party produced a very respectable number of films, propaganda shorts, newsreels, documentaries. In all, there are approximately four hundred.

In 1985, the film critic Mino Argentieri, who had been personally involved in Communist cinematographic productions in the 1970s, published a valuable article in the magazine *Cinemasessanta* analysing the most significant films of the early PCI production (Argentieri 1985). This article was subsequently translated into English and included in *The Art of Persuasion*, a book edited by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza and concerning propaganda in post-war Italy (Argentieri 2001). The Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico (AAMOD) of Rome, which preserves the largest collection of films produced by the Italian Communist Party,

published two *Annali* devoted to the issue of the PCI and cinema. The first of these, *Il PCI e il cinema tra cultura e propaganda*, is a collection of documents and interviews with some of those involved in the production of Communist propaganda during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the activities of Unitelefilm (Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani 2002). The other *Annale*, never properly published but simply printed by the AAMOD, contains other interviews and a few essays, including a paper by Argentieri focusing on the cinematographic production of the PCI and the DC (Democrazia Cristiana / Christian Democrats) in the run up to the national elections of 18 April 1948 (Taviani 2011). Films produced by both the PCI and the DC in 1948 were also the subject of another book, *Il 48 in Italia*, edited by Nicola Tranfaglia in 1991, with useful and informative essays by Pierre Sorlin, David W. Ellwood, Guido Crainz, Nicola Gallerano, Carlo Lizzani and others (Tranfaglia 1991). Finally, a group of researchers and scholars of the University of Bologna studied a selection of films produced by the Bolognese *federazione* of the party, along with a few films produced by the PCI at national level during the 1960s and 1970s, and stored in the Cineteca of Bologna, Fondo Istituto Gramsci dell'Emilia-Romagna. That research led to a collection of essays titled *La Vita in Rosso* (Nicoletti 2009).

Not only is the corpus of studies devoted to the cinematographic production of the Italian Communist party quite modest, but the above-mentioned studies are also invariably engaged with a small number of films over a limited period of time. The thesis is, therefore, designed to fill a gap in the studies concerning the history of the PCI, offering the first comprehensive analysis of the role of cinema in the PCI's communication strategy. The thesis will analyse the entire period in which the party

had a systematic and organised cinematographic production set-up from the early experiments in 1946 to the closure of Unitelefilm, at the end of the 1970s. In this respect, the thesis also includes the first history of Unitelefilm ever written.

From a historiographical perspective, this work belongs to a new era of research, developed from the 1990s onwards, addressing social and cultural issues of the history of the Italian Communist Party, such as the motivation behind Communist militancy,¹ the economic, social and cultural reasons for the impressive and longstanding electoral success of the PCI in the so-called *regioni rosse* (red regions),² and, as is the subject of this thesis, the PCI's propaganda and cultural production.³ These new trends introduced some novelty into a historiographical tradition which had always privileged the ideological and political dimension of PCI history, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴

A crucial decision one must undertake when studying a collection of cinematic texts concerns the structure of the research. One can either choose a thematic organisational pattern, as is the case, for example, in *La vita in Rosso*, or one can adopt a chronological approach. In my opinion, the former option is inadequate for the purposes of studying the films produced by the Italian Communist Party, as it leads to a comparison of films produced years apart from each other, as artistic creations that can be evaluated independently from the political and historical context. I believe, instead, that the films produced by the PCI must be considered,

¹ An interesting analysis of the characteristics of Communist militancy in the late 1940s and early 1950s can be found in Marino (1991). A book which investigates the social dimension of the PCI is Bellassai (2000).

² An attempt to initiate a new season of research about the PCI at local level is Battini (2001). See also Forlenza (2010) and Fantoni (2011).

³ On PCI propaganda, see Novelli (2000). As far as Communist culture is concerned, authors have focused particularly on the relation between the PCI and Italian intellectuals, see, for example, Ajello (1979) and Ajello (1997) - and on how Communist culture evolved in response to the modernisation and industrialisation of the country (Gundle 1995a).

⁴ See Agosti 2008 (103 – 113).

first and foremost, as propaganda films, and that they were aimed at translating issues related to the evolving political struggle into cinematic form.⁵ Therefore, the thesis adopts a chronological approach, which facilitates the historical contextualisation of the films analysed. In order to frame each of them within the appropriate historical and political context, I relied on both the existing literature and on the party press, especially *l'Unità*, the official party newspaper. *Rinascita*, the political and cultural magazine of the party, has also been consulted, from April 1962, when it turned into a weekly magazine, until the end of 1979.⁶ *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, a handbook for propaganda issued from 1946 to 1958, proved a valuable resource for understanding the management of propaganda films at grass-roots level.⁷

To say that PCI cinematographic production was principally driven by a political agenda does not mean that Communist films had no artistic value, or that all of the films produced by the party were designed to be deployed as propaganda films. On the contrary, some of the films produced by the PCI are remarkable pieces of cinema, and a few films produced in the 1960s and 1970s were specifically designed to be distributed as documentaries. Nonetheless, the content of every film produced by the PCI, whether propaganda film or documentary, was to be in perfect alignment with the political position of the party, otherwise it would not be

⁵ I adopt the definition of propaganda given by Richard Taylor, that is 'the attempt to influence the public opinion of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values', see R. Taylor (1998, 15).

⁶ *Rinascita* was edited by the leader of the PCI Palmiro Togliatti until his death in August 1964. On the founding of *Rinascita*, in 1944, see Ajello (1979, 23).

⁷ The first issue of *Il Quaderno del propagandista* (this was the original name until September 1946) was released in February 1946. The first series consisted of four numbers appearing on a monthly basis from September to December 1946. The second series consists of six numbers (5-11) that came out monthly or bi-monthly until October 1947, plus three supplements. The third series consists of nine numbers ranging from February 1948 to January 1949, plus frequent special issues. The last series was published on a monthly basis from October 1949. In 1958, only two numbers were released, and the newspaper ceased publication in March of that year. On *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, see Flores (1976).

distributed. The films produced by the Italian Communist Party can thus be completely understood only by bearing in mind the guidelines established, and regularly updated, by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* of the PCI, that is, the propaganda division of the party, which, in turn, mirrored the political lines established by the *Segreteria politica*. Therefore, I decided to carry out, along with an analysis of the films stored at the AAMOD an investigation in the Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano (APCI) at the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, in Rome, looking at archival documents from the PCI, especially, but not exclusively, those issued by the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* of the party.

During my stay in Rome, I conducted a few interviews with some of the protagonists of Communist cinematographic production such as Carlo Lizzani, Ansano Giannarelli, and Mino Argentieri. These were intended to gather ideas, advice and suggestions about how to proceed in my investigation. I should point out that the involvement of major artists, critics, writers and professional filmmakers in the production of films for the Italian Communist Party is one of the most remarkable aspects of this topic. These distinguished cultural figures included, along with those already mentioned above, Gillo Pontecorvo, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Ettore Scola, Bernardo Bertolucci, Ugo Gregoretti, and many others. This involvement raised new questions about the relationship between the PCI and Italian intellectuals: how did these nascent, and soon to be famous, artists reconcile the need to preserve their artistic freedom with the stringent requirements posed by a cinematographic production which was principally propaganda-driven? What was their contribution to the aesthetic and formal development of Communist cinematography?

While watching the films produced by the PCI, I came to realise that they represent a forgotten mine of information on a variety of aspects of the history of the Italian Communist Party, and that they could be used to do much more than simply illustrate the principal motifs of Communist propaganda in post-war Italy. Many films offer interesting and original insights into several issues of the domestic and international policies of the party, especially if analysed in parallel with different types of documents. Furthermore, the power and the directness of the filmic images provided invaluable information for an investigation of the role of rituals and symbols in Communist militancy. In particular, I will discuss how cinema was deliberately and efficiently used in the construction of the party leaders' image through a highly ritualized filmic documentation of the most important moments of their political activity. For example, the thesis will look at cinematic representations of speeches given at electoral meetings, participation in party congresses, and, in the case of the most important leaders, even funerals. Other questions the thesis addresses are: what led the PCI to embark on cinematographic propaganda in the first place? What did the party intend to achieve through cinematographic propaganda?

As mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the PCI produced a relatively high number of films in the period covered by this research, and especially in the years when Unitelefilm was operating. I had, therefore, to make some difficult choices. I excluded from the investigation unedited footage, as well as films which were simply pre-edited and never completed, in order to exclusively consider films which were fully edited and distributed. Within this group, I selected the films to be analysed according to a number of considerations. Some have been chosen because they exemplified a recurring theme of Communist propaganda better than others (as

it emerged from the investigation of the archival documents and the party press). Others illustrated perfectly the party *Weltanschauung*. Some were by famous directors; others seemed to me significant from an artistic perspective. In many cases, it was a combination of the above.

Antonio Gramsci argued that to write the story of a political party means nothing else than to write the history of a country ‘da un punto di vista monografico’, that is from a particular perspective. This kind of investigation inevitably brings to the fore cultural, social and political features of the country in which the political party developed and operated.⁸ Furthermore, it seems that cinema can be compared to blotting paper, absorbing ideas, cultural influences and controversies belonging to the world in which it was produced. Therefore, the thesis will engage with many different topics related to Italian society and politics, and it can be ultimately regarded as a history of post-war Italy from a particular point of view.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first deals with early PCI cinematographic production, which went into a decline at the beginning of the 1950s. Part II accounts for the revival of Communist cinematography at the end of the decade. Part III concerns the history of Unitefilm and cinematographic production from 1964 to 1979. Each part is divided into various chapters, discussing the development of PCI film production against the background of the history of the party and of the country. The first section, however, concerns methodological issues.

⁸ Gramsci (1975, 1630).

A Few Notes on Methodology

Although the use of film in historical research is not as much a rarity as it used to be, and is no longer viewed with suspicion by scholars, historians basing their research principally on cinematic texts feels like they are somehow going against a long tradition which has always privileged written texts over visual evidence as primary sources for historical research. Hence, the need to account for the methodology adopted. It is worth noting that a universally accepted, coherent and comprehensive methodology for studying film as a source for historical analysis has not yet been formulated. What we do have is a corpus of methods, findings and suggestions, which together provide a reasonably reliable theoretical base. The methodology adopted in the present research is grounded in such a corpus.

The issue is as old as cinema itself. As early as 1898, the Polish cameraman and employee of the Lumière Company, Bolesław Matuszewski, argued for the establishment of a ‘Cinematographic Museum or Depository’ where footage documenting historical events could be stored on behalf of scholars and students of the future.⁹ The use of the filmic image as historical documentation was a fairly intuitive idea: if history’s most sacred duty was to avoid that ‘what has come to be from man in time might become faded’, to quote Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the first western historian, what could be better than that tiny band of celluloid which constituted, in the words of Matuszewski, ‘not only a proof of history but a fragment of history itself’? Nonetheless, Matuszewski’s call fell on deaf ears: film archives

⁹ The article *Une nouvelle source de l’histoire: création d’un dépôt de cinématographie historique*, published in *Le Figaro* on 25 March 1898, has been subsequently translated by Julia Bloch Frey (1974, 219 - 222). It can be found at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/classics/clasjul/mat.html>. On Matuszewski, see Aldgate (1979, 2 – 3).

were not instituted before the 1930s, and, for many years, historians did not give any serious thought to the use of film as a historical source. Even when the Annales School led to a broadening of the field of interest of historians, and legitimized the use of a wider range of evidence in historical research, scholars generally remained suspicious of film. On one hand, a certain intellectual snobbery towards a medium regarded, for many years, as nothing more than a form of entertainment for lower class people certainly played a part in this respect. On the other hand, historians' diffidence towards film was not entirely unreasonable. The use of cinematic texts as historical sources presents difficult theoretical and methodological problems with respect to their selection, use and methods of analysis. Historian Paul Smith provides a succinct summary:

[film] can quite easily be faked, or put together in such a way as to distort reality, give a tendentious picture, and practice among the emotion of the spectator. Moreover, it is often a relatively trivial and superficial record, capturing only the external appearance of its subjects and offering few insights into the processes and relationships, causes and motives which are the historian's concern.¹⁰

If there is a book that can be considered as a watershed for the study of cinema and history, it is *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, by German historian Siegfried Kracauer, first published in 1947 (Kracauer 1974). Clearly influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud, Kracauer's study was aimed at accounting for the mass acceptance enjoyed by Nazism in the Germany of 1930s by investigating the 'psychological dispositions' of the German people as they

¹⁰ Smith (1976, 5).

emerged from the films produced in the years of the Weimar Republic. To infer the psychology of an entire population from the production of a national film industry appears, nowadays, quite an adventurous approach to film studies. Nonetheless, Kracauer's book remains fascinating as far as the issue of film and history is concerned, in that it reminds us that film, fiction or factual, does not exclusively appeal to the viewer's rationality. In order to be appealing and successful they have to satisfy the audience's existing desires and psychological needs. Kracauer also added to his book a final chapter dealing with Nazi cinematography, in which he claimed that all of the films produced in Germany during the Nazi regime - newsreels, documentaries, or apparently escapist feature films - were to be regarded as propaganda films.¹¹

There was, at the time, a growing awareness among scholars in this respect: many historians realised that, when it came to cinematic texts, one could hardly speak of objectivity, given that every film, feature film or documentary conveyed an author's point of view.¹² This certainly did not help to overcome historians' scepticism over the use of film in historical research. As a consequence, studies on film and history did not flourish in the following years.¹³

¹¹See Kracauer (1974, 275). The chapter on Nazi cinematography was a reprint of the pamphlet titled *Propaganda and the Nazi war film*, issued, in 1942, by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library of New York. Nazi cinematography has been, ever since, investigated thoroughly. See, for example, Hull (1969), Taylor (1998) and Welch (2001).

¹² Kracauer elaborated on this in a later book, see Kracauer (1971 – firstly published in 1960, 160 – 3). About objectivity in documentary filmmaking, Eric Barnouw claims that: 'The documentarist, like any communicator in any medium, makes endless choices. He selects topics, people, vistas, angles, lenses, juxtapositions, sounds, words. Each selection is an expression of his point of view, whether he is aware of it or not. [...] Even behind the first step, selection of a topic, there is a motive' (1974, 287 – 8).

¹³ Kracauer's book, however, inspired a line of research based on what could be defined as 'the psychological paradigm'. See, for example, Wolfenstein and Leites (1950). A critique of the psychological paradigm is in Sklar (1990, 121- 3).

History documentaries and newsreels were the object of a conference held at the University College of London in 1968 and titled *Film and Historians*.¹⁴ That conference focused especially on the use of films for didactic purposes. Quite significantly, scholars debated whether ‘raw material’, that is, unedited footage, was the best source for the teaching of history, being the only type of cinematic text (almost) free from manipulation. This approach shows how historians generally admitted only a narrow use of the cinematic text, which was based on a sort of ‘criterion of truth’: the historian dealing with filmic documents had to primarily perform a philological operation aimed at detecting every kind of manipulation. Only the remaining true information could thus be safely deployed.¹⁵ Several authors shared this approach.¹⁶

The conference at UCL stimulated British scholars to investigate the potential uses of cinema in historical research. In 1976, *Historian and Film*, edited by Paul Smith, took stock of the progress made in this field. In the introduction, the editor advocated ‘the full integration of film into the range of resources at the historian’s disposal’ (1976, 3). Historian and film studies lecturer William Hughes listed a number of possible uses of cinematic texts in historical research (1976, 49 – 79). For example, unedited footage could be employed as a partial record of events and personalities. Films produced and distributed on regular bases (such as newsreels) might be useful for audience research purposes. Sponsored films could provide insights into the motives of sponsoring institutions like governments and political parties (showing what they did want, and did not want, people to see). Finally,

¹⁴ British University Council (1968).

¹⁵ On this point, see Ortoleva (1994, 299 – 332).

¹⁶ See, for example, Mura (1964).

feature films could be taken as an indicator of the moral values, prejudices, ideas, political and social tensions running through a society at a given time.

Of all the potential applications of film to history suggested by Hughes, it was especially the last one that seemed to arouse the interest of scholars in the middle of the 1970s. According to Michael Wood, author of *America in the Movies*, Hollywood films mirrored myths and concerns of the American people, while the racism of American society was analysed by Daniel J. Leab through American cinema in *From Sambo to Superspade*.¹⁷

In the same period, studies concerning cinema and propaganda also began to appear, probably because the emergence, during the 1960s, of political and militant cinema in various countries had awakened historians' interests in this particular use of the cinematographic medium.¹⁸ Meanwhile, a major methodological breakthrough was about to come from France, thanks to the work of Pierre Sorlin and Marc Ferro, who, in 1977, published two important books, *Sociologie du Cinema* and *Cinema et Histoire*, respectively.¹⁹ The former, the subtitle of which reads *Ouverture pour l'Histoire de deman* (Prelude for the history of tomorrow), was the first systematic attempt to draft a method of reading cinematic texts for historians taking into account a variety of aesthetic, linguistic, technical and economic factors. Sorlin solely considered feature films and illustrated his findings exclusively with examples taken from post-war Italian cinema. The book interpreted and investigated film as language - and here a clear influence is Christian Metz's semiotics of cinema, which was quite

¹⁷ Wood (1975); Leab (1975). Interesting investigations on feature films as a reflection of mentality can be also found in Rollins (1983). On the same line of research, but more concerned with the political background of the films, and not exclusively devoted to America, are the essays contained in Short (1981).

¹⁸ Studies concerning cinema and propaganda are, for example, Furhammar and Isaksson (1971), Manvell (1974), Argentieri (1979), Short (1983), Aldgate and Richards (1985), Gili (1985) and Fyne (1994).

¹⁹ See Sorlin (1977); Ferro (1977).

fashionable at the time²⁰ - as a cultural product; as a political and ideological vehicle. Most notable is Sorlin's call to appreciate and valorize the specificity of the filmic fact (*fait filmique*), namely the invitation made to historians to not merely utilize cinematic material as written text, but investigate the effect of what Sorlin calls *effet cinéma* (cinema impact) on the viewers.

This suggestion seems particularly important for historians studying cinematographic propaganda. An analysis of a propaganda film exclusively concerned with the investigation of values and political lines inferable from the voice-over commentary or the dialogues, or solely interested in detecting censorship and repression by the authorities supervising the production of the film, would probably add little to what historians already know in this respect thanks to other, non-cinematic, documents. A more fruitful approach to cinematographic propaganda is instead to look at the film not only from the perspective of the issuer, the producer, but also from the point of view of the audience the propaganda film was designed to address. In fact, like any other film, but possibly to a greater extent, a propaganda film conveys its message through a series of artistic, cinematographic, cultural and political codes that its target audience is capable of understanding thanks to a cultural and political background which is common to both the authors of the film and the spectators. This has become, over time, a widespread awareness among scholars of film studies and historians.²¹ However, in order to do that, the historian must be equipped with cultural references and symbols shared by a given group of people constituting the presumed audience of the cinematic text(s) under analysis. To come back to the present thesis, the cinematographic propaganda of the Italian Communist

²⁰ See Metz (1974a) and Metz (1974b).

²¹ On this point see, for example, Nichols (2001, 35 – 41).

Party can be properly studied only by possessing a deep knowledge of the history and the culture of the Italian Communist Party, and, in particular, of those sets of symbols and cultural codes that the party leadership shared with Communist militants and cadres.

Much more influential than *Sociologie du Cinéma*, because more widely translated, was the collection of essays by Marc Ferro, published in 1977 and titled *Cinema et Histoire*. This book officially granted cinematic texts citizenship among the evidence admitted in the courtroom of historical research.²² In fact, the French historian gave a decisive contribution to the overcoming of the residual distrust of historians towards the reliability of films. He showed that cinematic texts are useful tools for the historian precisely because they are unreliable - they do not picture reality but an interpretation of reality, and they are very often hidden or not-so-hidden propaganda, intentional or unintentional - as films tell us a great deal about the people who produced them than the events they portray. In this respect, Ferro argued that films provide historians with what he called ‘a counter-analysis of society’; that is, the possibility of unearthing hidden aspects of society. According to Ferro, the historian must therefore look for everything that can be spotted beyond the intentions of the authors of the cinematic text. In this sense, a film, rather than showing, reveals.

This is exactly the way cinematic texts have been utilized in the present research: the propaganda films produced by the Italian Communist Party are investigated primarily in order to provide a counter analysis of the history of the

²² A discussion on the theoretical contribution by Marc Ferro to the studies concerning film and history can be found in Guynn (2006, 7 – 9).

party itself, rather than simply undertaking an analysis of what propaganda issues the PCI was deploying at a given moment in post-war history.

Marc Ferro also made several suggestions concerning the methodology to be used in the analysis of film, including, famously, the recommendation to study both the visible and the non-visible, namely to focus on the production background and to seek as much information as possible about the material circumstances in which the cinematic text has been produced and distributed.²³ This suggestion has also been taken on board in this thesis. For example, I extensively searched the AAMOD paper-based archive, which stores many documents related to the films produced by the PCI (including screenplays, film reviews from newspapers, production documents and internal correspondence of Unitelefilm Co). With respect to early PCI production, I have devoted several sections to state film censorship that so severely hampered Communist film production and distribution in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I shall point out, in this respect, how deeply film censorship can affect historical research. For example, no copies of the banned films were printed as it would have been a senseless waste of money and, therefore, they have been lost. Sometimes it has been possible to find the original screenplays in the AAMOD archive. For other films, the only available information was in the party press and, rather paradoxically, in the letters of rejection compiled by the censor board (name of the film, footage length, and synopsis). Virtually all the films produced in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including those eventually authorized for projection, underwent some kind of cutting. These cuts, which were duly listed in the documents

²³ See Ferro (1988, 30).

compiled by the board of censors, affected in various ways the original political message of the film, typically resulting in its dilution.

Ferro's *Cinema et Histoire* was translated into English only several years later, in 1988. Its publication may have inspired the *The American Historical Review* to assemble a special issue on cinema and history, with articles by John E. O'Connor, Robert A. Rosenstone and others.²⁴ Rosenstone focused on the relationship between history and cinematographic representation, posing the question whether history could be effectively turned into visual history through the production of documentaries or feature films, without losing the rigour and scientific qualities of written history.²⁵ O'Connor, in his essay *History in Images/Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past*, announced instead the forthcoming elaboration of 'a coherent and comprehensive historical methodology that has been lacking until now' for analysing films as historical artefacts (O'Connor Dec. 1988, 1200 – 1209).

Two years later, in fulfilment of his promise, O'Connor edited *Image as Artifact. The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (O'Connor 1990). The American historian suggested that there should be two stages to the historical analysis of what he defined as a 'moving image document'. In the first stage, the historian would gather as much information as possible with respect to content, production and reception of the moving image document, as he would do with any other document. In the second stage, the historian would undertake an enquiry according to four frameworks: the moving image as a representation of history, as evidence for a social and cultural history of the period in which it has been produced,

²⁴ *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No 5, (Dec. 1988).

²⁵ See Rosenstone (December 1988, 1173 – 1185). Rosenstone would develop his investigation in Rosenstone (2006).

as evidence for historical facts, and as part of the history of film industry and arts. Quite apart from this scheme, which is perhaps too rigid to be profitably adopted, O'Connor's book contains several useful conclusions and suggestions, such as the basic idea that content analysis requires repeated viewing of the cinematic text under examination, and the more technical specification that a proper interpretation of visual contents depends upon a specific knowledge of visual language with respect to both elements of shot (such as camera angle, camera movement, lighting) and editing technique. For this reason, I believe my professional experience as videomaker has been especially important in carrying out the present research. Also important is the idea that every cinematic text represents a valuable source of historical information as far as customs and habits of the past are concerned, including the way people used to dress or style their hair, the houses they lived in, and the way they spoke.²⁶ It could be said that in such an ethnographical approach, as proposed by O'Connor, the cinematic text retrieves the historical function originally envisioned by Matuszewski.

²⁶ On this point, see also Sorlin (1980, 24 – 25).

Part I – Early Production (1944 – 1956)

Chapter 1. Togliatti's *Partito nuovo* and the *Intellettuali organici* .

The Italian Communist Party which emerged from the cataclysm of World War II was very different from the group of Leninists who had polemically left the Seventeenth Congress of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), on 21 January 1921, disappointed by the blatant incapacity of the socialist elite to lead the Italian proletariat to revolution. It was also much different from the small party of professional revolutionaries of the 1930s, which had been barely surviving in hiding, while its major leaders were in Paris and Moscow, or in jail, as was the case with Antonio Gramsci, the co-founder of the party and principal Italian Marxist theorist¹. Compared to its earlier manifestations, the post-war Italian Communist Party was an entirely different entity, even in name.² It was a large mass-based political party, which had expanded from the 5000 members in July 1943 to 1,700.000 by the end of 1945 (this figure would soon become more than two million). It was not only legal, but also enjoyed great prestige and credibility.

These achievements were primarily due to three factors. Firstly, the role of the Communist party in the *Resistenza*, the military Resistance against Nazi occupation and the RSI (Repubblica Sociale Italiana - the Fascist government) in the years between 1943 and 1945, which had contributed in no small measure to PCI's popularity. Secondly, the so-called *Svolta di Salerno* (Salerno turn) policy of April 1944, namely the acceptance by Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the party from 1930 to 1934, and again from 1938, of the conservative and pro-monarchy Badoglio government, in the name of the common struggle against the Nazi-Fascist forces

¹ On the history of the PCI over the years 1921 – 1944, see the five volumes of the *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, by Paolo Spriano, published by Einaudi, from 1967 to 1976.

² Initially named the PCd'I (Partito Comunista d'Italia), it became the Partito Comunista Italiano after the dissolution of the third international in May 1943, see Galli (1977, 235).

which were still occupying the centre and the north of the country. This act had provided the PCI with a seat in the coalition governments and with the opportunity to cast itself as a national and even patriotic political party. Thirdly, the impressive growth in membership of the PCI was a consequence of the adoption of a specific party model by the party leadership, and particularly by Togliatti who strongly endorsed such a model: the so-called *partito nuovo*. No longer a platoon of professional revolutionaries, according to the Leninist model of the vanguard party, the *partito nuovo* was rather a mass-based party, designed to encourage people's participation in the political life of a fledgling democracy.³ The *partito nuovo* model certainly represented a novelty within the Communist tradition, although it was not so much in relation to the political tradition of the Italian Socialist Party (and, for that matter, of the PNF – the Fascist National Party).⁴ It was met with some resistance, at both national and local level, from the cadres formed in the political and cultural climate of the Third International, who feared a dilution of the party's ideological purity (Sassoon 1980, 48).

While presenting such important novelties, the PCI also presented features which revealed political and ideological continuity with what the party had been over the previous twenty-four years. From the period of exile, in particular, the PCI had retained an unmistakable Stalinist imprint, which especially characterized the party leadership, beginning with Palmiro Togliatti himself, who had spent 18 years of exile in Moscow. Staunch Stalinists were also the most prominent members of the party's 'old guard', including Giorgio Amendola, Mauro Scoccimarro, Celeste Negarville,

³ Many are the analysis of the characteristics of the *partito nuovo* from a political, social and electoral point of view. For a general analysis see Martinelli (1995), this is the continuation of the work by Paolo Spriano. For a discussion concerning the different historiographical interpretation on the *partito nuovo* see Gozzini (2007, 277 – 305).

⁴ On this point, see Lanaro (1993, 47).

Girolamo Li Causi, Giancarlo Pajetta and Pietro Secchia. Stalinism was particularly evident in the inflexible defense PCI leaders made of the interests of the Soviet Union, with whom they associated the cause of the international Communist movement and the international proletariat.

According to left-wing historiography, the Stalinist legacy, or to use an expression by political scientist and historian Giorgio Galli, the *legame di ferro* (iron link), which irrevocably bonded the Italian Communist Party to its elder brothers, the PCUS and the Soviet Union, quashed the possibility of a socialist revolution in Italy.⁵ From 1944, Togliatti and the PCI leadership were in fact committed to a relentless effort to contain, moderate and eventually halt Italian workers' revolutionary spirit in order to please Stalin's wishes of not jeopardizing relations with the US. Right-wing historiography has come to very similar conclusions as far as the Communist leadership's subjection to the Soviets is concerned, although this historiography tends to depict the PCI as a sort of fifth column within the democratic citadel.⁶ The majority of those historians politically leaning towards the Italian Communist Party, on the other hand, credited Togliatti and the Communist leadership with a genuine attempt to establish a democratic system that would especially safeguard the interests of the working class. For the first time in Italian history, this would allow workers to participate, through the mediation of the PCI, in the government of the country – what Togliatti called *Democrazia progressiva* – while realistically renouncing the

⁵The first of many editions of Giorgio Galli's *Storia del PCI* was published by Schwarz in 1953 and the most recent by Kaos Edizioni (1993). Further examples of left-wing historiography widely sharing Galli's view are Peregalli (1991) and Gallerano and Flores (1992).

⁶The forefather of the right-wing reading of PCI history is Bertelli (1980). Right-wing interpretations especially flourished after the dissolution of the PCI in 1991. For a discussion of the PCI leadership's subjection to the Soviets, see, for example, Aga Rossi and Zaslavsky (1996), Aga Rossi and Quagliariello (1997) and Aga Rossi and Zaslavsky (1997). The image of the PCI as a threat to democracy can be found in Pellizzaro (1997), Bertelli and Bigazzi (2001), Donno (2001) and Turi (2004).

possibility of a revolution which was judged as unfeasible due to both domestic and international factors.⁷ These included the presence of allied military troops on the national soil and the location of Italy in the western sphere of influence, as decided by the powers at the Yalta Conference as well as the insufficient level of political awareness of the Italian population.

This historiographical tradition also regarded Togliatti's post-war policy as a political translation of Antonio Gramsci's thought. This reading was based on specific interpretations of some of the ideas contained in the so-called *Prison Notebooks*, namely the 3000 pages of history and political analysis written by Gramsci during the years of his imprisonment, from 1926 until his death in 1937. Gramsci's famous theory of hegemony, in particular, seemed to endorse the adoption of a gradualist political strategy as the best course of action in order to establish a socialist regime in Italy. The theory of hegemony was said to suggest that the seizure of power by the working class in a western country had to be preceded by a period in which the party of the working class would manage to impose its vision and ideas on the society, making them become hegemonic.⁸ To use Gramsci's words, the working class had to become 'dirigente', before becoming 'dominante' (1975, 41).

Other scholarly interpretations, however, have come to different conclusions on the issue of hegemony. Gramsci's theory of hegemony should be primarily analysed against the background of the developments of the Russian Revolution, from which Gramsci drew inspiration. In this respect, Gramsci saw the pursuit of cultural hegemony as complementary, rather than preparatory, to political leadership, that is the dictatorship of proletariat. In other words, Gramsci theorized that the

⁷ This interpretation is shared, though to varying extents, by several authors such as Sassoon (1980), Spriano (1983), Urban (1986), Agosti (1996), Guerra (2005), Gualtieri (2006), Ventrone (2007).

⁸ This interpretation is contained, for example, in Rossi and Vacca (2007, 123 – 31).

working class would firmly establish itself as a ruling class *also* through the construction of cultural hegemony rather than just exerting sheer political domination.⁹

Whatever the correct interpretation of Gramscian hegemony, Palmiro Togliatti used Gramsci's writings to provide a theoretical justification of the PCI's policy of collaboration with the bourgeois governments and the King (the *Svolta di Salerno* policy).¹⁰ Togliatti personally supervised the first edition of the *Prison Notebooks*, published by the Einaudi publishing house, from 1947 to 1951, partially adapting the text according to the political needs of the party.¹¹ In Communist propaganda, Gramsci became the guarantor of the *politica nazionale* of the PCI, namely of the Communist commitment to Italian national interests. He was presented to Italian public opinion as a patriot and a martyr. According to party mythology, he had prophetically told the Fascist judge who had just sentenced him to prison: 'Verrà il giorno in cui voi porterete l'Italia alla catastrofe e allora toccherà a noi comunisti salvare il nostro paese'.¹² The meeting of minds between Gramsci and Stalin and the unshakable political and personal bond with Togliatti completed the portrait of Gramsci touted by the party leadership after the war. This was a restricted, to say the least, account of Gramsci's opinions. In fact, from 1926 onwards, Gramsci had expressed strong disagreement with both the leadership of Stalin and the political

⁹ An example of this interpretation is in Thomas (2010, 159 – 241).

¹⁰ An analysis of the vast literature on Togliatti's elaboration, or rather exploitation, of Gramsci's thought is beyond the scope of the present research, see Gundle (1995b). On the so-called *operazione Gramsci*, see also the detailed reconstruction by Gozzini and Martinelli (1998, 490 – 504).

¹¹ See Vacca (1991). According to Aldo Agosti, the effect of Togliatti's intervention on Gramsci's writings should not be overestimated, as it did not 'notably pervert Gramsci's thought', Agosti (2008b, 181). Similar conclusions are in Daniele (2005).

¹² See *Il Partito comunista e la Patria. Intervista con Celeste Carlo Negarville della Direzione del P.C.I.*, in *l'Unità*, 18/2/1945, p. 2.

outcome of the Russian Revolution, and this had caused serious friction between him and the PCI leadership.¹³

Among the numerous striking characteristics of the PCI of the post-war years, there is its ambiguity, which has been very often labelled as *doppiezza*.¹⁴ This makes it difficult to determine if Togliatti was just Stalin's henchman, as claimed by both far-left and right-wing historiography or, more plausibly, he enjoyed a relative degree of autonomy from Moscow in developing the political strategy of the *Svolta di Salerno* and PCI policy during the years between 1944 and 1947. It is, however, beyond dispute that during the *Governi di unità antifascista*, when the PCI held power along with the other anti-Fascist political parties, from April 1944 to May 1947, the party avoided stressing its international links and presented itself as open to a plurality of opinions. For example, Article two of the party statute approved at the Fifth Congress of the PCI (Rome, 29 December 1945 – 5 January 1946), contemplated the possibility of joining the Communist party without a formal acceptance of Marxist–Leninist doctrine. Simple acceptance of the party political program, regardless of personal religious or philosophical beliefs, was sufficient (Vittoria 2007, 60 – 1).

¹³ A detailed reconstruction of the relationship between Gramsci and the party leadership from 1926 to 1937 is in Rossi and Vacca (2007).

¹⁴ The term *doppiezza* has been used by scholars to describe a variety of different features ascribed to the PCI, such as the Soviet influence over PCI policy in opposition to its pursuit of autonomy (Martinelli 1995, 257 - 8), the double nature of Togliatti's PCI: at the same time a mass-based party and a party of cadres (Gallerano and Flores 1992, 92 - 3), its double identity as a national and international party (Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky 1997, 236), the Communist attitude toward bourgeois democracy: supported in political praxis but refused on the ideological plane (Andreucci 2005, 51 – 4); or supported formally but undermined secretly (Guiso 2006, 561). The expression *doppiezza* is Palmiro Togliatti's, who employed it in a speech given in 1956. In that context, the term was used to refer to the tendency of many cadres and militants to believe that the PCI's struggle for democracy was only a veil hiding the real aim of the party's activity, which was the preparation of the Communist revolution. During that speech, Togliatti invited once and for all the party to get rid of 'una certa atmosfera di doppiezza'. For more information see Di Loreto (1991, 7).

The PCI also cast itself as the ‘party of reconstruction’, repeatedly inviting workers to produce more, and to moderate their union demands. During those years, the Italian Communist Party did achieve some important political victories, including the abolition of the Monarchy and the establishment of the Republic, following the referendum of 2 June 1946, and the writing of a quite advanced constitution contemplating the possibility for workers to take part in the management of factories. It could not, however, implement *Democrazia progressiva*. The concrete results of PCI policy were poor, especially with regard to the economy: the reconstruction was instead exclusively guided by the capitalist bourgeoisie and geared towards its interests.¹⁵ In all likelihood, the main political objective of the PCI in this period was to prolong, as much as possible, the phase of coalition governments, in order to reinforce its political position and its image as a national party.

The Left-wing parties’ permanence in government, however, proved to be impossible in the long run, due to the outbreak of the Cold War. Political pressure by the US government and the Catholic Church led to the expulsion of both the PCI and the PSI in May 1947. In September 1947, the involvement of the European Communist parties in the Cold War was formalized at the Conference at Szklarska Poręba, in southwest Poland, where the Communist information office (Kominform) was established. During that conference, Andrei A. Zhdanov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, read a report in which he embraced the theory of the irreversible division of the world into two opposing camps, originally formulated by Winston Churchill at the Fulton speech of March 1946, and he imposed on the European Communist Parties, and particularly on the

¹⁵ On Italy’s economic reconstruction, see Daneo (1975) and Zamagni (2000, 45 – 49).

PCI and the PCF (French Communist Party), a political agenda focused on the defence of the Socialist bloc. Following Szklarska Poręba, the PCI became more markedly Stalinist and more suspicious of dissidence within its ranks. At the Sixth Congress of the party, in January 1948, Article two of the party statute was repealed and Pietro Secchia, who was a supporter of the hard-line tendency in the party leadership, was appointed deputy secretary of the party along with Pietro Longo (Vittoria 2007, 66 – 67).

These developments mirrored the struggle for power in the Communist leadership, opposing a revolutionary wing and a moderate establishment headed by Togliatti, with both sides looking to the Soviets for legitimacy. A tight political relationship with the Soviet leadership, and above all Stalin, was paramount in this respect, as it represented the real source of legitimisation of the PCI and of its leadership in the eyes of Italian workers. Although Stalin's support seemed in those years to oscillate between the opposing factions, depending on the phases of Soviet foreign policy, it is safe to claim that Togliatti's leadership was never in serious jeopardy, as none of the other PCI leaders enjoyed the prestige and credibility of Togliatti in the Communist world or knew the byzantinism of Communist political practices under Stalin's rule better than him. While using the Soviet myth to reinforce the party's ascendancy on the Italian workers, Togliatti tended to free himself from Stalin's tutelage by establishing his undisputed leadership over the party. In 1951, Togliatti was eventually strong enough to refuse, against Stalin's wishes, the leadership of the Cominform, and implicitly questioned the political line of the Soviet dictator (Pons 2007a).

In preparation for the first national elections scheduled for 18 April 1948, the PCI and PSI formed an alliance, the *Fronte Democratico Popolare*. The electoral results were disappointing for the left-wing parties, which altogether gained only 31% of the votes, while the DC won an emphatic 48.5% which assured, for the Catholic party, the near complete control over the future governments and the state bureaucratic apparatus.

The election of 18 April 1948 marked the beginning of the most difficult period for the PCI and the Communist militants. Over the following years, the party suffered huge political setbacks, such as the adherence of Italy to both the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Pact, which the PCI opposed vehemently, while the working class core, on which the party based a great part of its electoral and organisational strength, faced devastating union defeats which often resulted in mass redundancies that neither the party, nor the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro - the Communist-Socialist Trade Union) could successfully oppose (Daneo 1975, 279 – 292). Communist militants were persecuted inside and outside the factories, and even excommunicated en masse by the Catholic Church in July 1949 (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 74 – 9).

Nonetheless, the PCI survived, thanks to its political and social entrenchment among the northern working class as well as in the so-called *Regioni Rosse* of central Italy, Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna in particular.¹⁶ In 1953, left-wing parties successfully countered the attempt by the DC and its allies to obtain 50% of the votes at the national election, which would have automatically guaranteed the winning coalition two thirds of MPs thanks to a law approved in March 1953, and

¹⁶ On the political and social entrenchment of the PCI in the red regions, see Battini (2001), Forlenza (2010) and Fantoni (May 2011).

immediately dubbed the *Legge truffa* by the opposition.¹⁷ The DC lost more than 8% at that election, while the PCI won 22.6% of the vote, becoming by far the second largest political party of Italy (the PSI, which was the third best, gained 12.7%). The PCI electoral success was largely due to the vitality of the myth of the USSR, and its leader Stalin, among Italian workers, a myth wisely used by the PCI as well as the Communists' capacity to mobilize the masses on political issues of general interest such as the issue of peace.¹⁸ Also fundamental in the construction of the Communist electoral success was the impressive organisational structure established by the PCI cadres and militants at grass-roots level, under the guidance of Pietro Secchia, who was head of organisation until 1954.¹⁹

Among the political accomplishments of the PCI between 1944 and 1956, the successful attempt to establish an alliance with Italian intellectuals, resolutely pursued by Togliatti, was certainly one of the most impressive. From 1945, the party co-opted young intellectuals into the party's political orbit and promoted them to the highest ranks of the party's cultural enterprises, as well as to positions of responsibility within the party's political structure. This was, to quote Stephen Gundle, 'a well-directed strategy aimed at achieving a hegemonic position within national thought and culture [...]' (2000, 12). By creating a welcoming atmosphere to the offspring of the Italian intelligentsia, Togliatti sought to reintroduce Marxism into the Italian cultural debate, after twenty years of virtual absence, in order to culturally legitimize the presence of PCI in the Italian post-war political panorama

¹⁷ An analysis of the new electoral law (31 March 1953, n. 148) promulgated by the De Gasperi VII Cabinet can be found in Sassoon (1990, 90 – 95). A discussion on the catchphrase *Legge truffa* is in Mariuzzo (2009, 115 – 17 and 154 – 59).

¹⁸ On the campaigns for peace promoted by the PCI in the post-war years, see Giacomini (1984); Guiso (2006) and Mariuzzo (2010, 209 – 226).

¹⁹ On the organisational structure of the PCI, see Martinelli (1995, 177 – 196) and Marino (1991, 25 – 31). For a portrait of Pietro Secchia, see Mafai (1984).

(Agosti 2008, 158). Besides, by appointing a group of keen, but politically inexperienced, young intellectuals to strategic positions within the party's organisational structure, Togliatti formed a new generation of cadres who were devoutly faithful to his leadership while balancing the political influence of the party's old guard (Bertelli 1980, 232 – 3; Gundle 1995a, 26).

The new generation of intellectuals, who were, at the same time, authoritative members of the party would be defined *intellettuali organici* following a famous page of the *Prison Notebooks*.²⁰ They played an important role in the Italian post-war cultural panorama for many years and actively contributed to the cultural and political campaigns of the PCI. This was the case with the film critics Antonello Trombadori and Ugo Casiraghi, and the journalists Maurizio Ferrara and Felice Chilanti. Many others also worked outside of the PCI's cultural enterprises but maintained a *relazione speciale*, to use the expression of Marcello Flores (Flores 1997, 103), with the Party: the painter Renato Guttuso, the musician Luigi Nono, the writers Italo Calvino and Gianni Rodari and, in cinema, Gillo Pontecorvo, Gianni Puccini, Sergio Grieco, Aldo Vergano, Glauco Pellegrini and Massimo Mida, are just some intellectuals and artists involved in various ways with the PCI's cinematographic production. Many of these young intellectuals had their cultural formation in the Fascist organisations such as the *Cineguf*, the cinema section of the

²⁰ The expression *intellettuali organici* is improperly used. In fact, Antonio Gramsci called *intellettuali organici* a new type of intellectuals emerging organically from a given social class in the process of achieving political and economic supremacy. These are entrusted with the establishment of a new cultural framework justifying the political power of the new leading class. What Togliatti attempted, and partially accomplished, was rather the co-option of what Gramsci would have defined *intellettuali tradizionali*, namely the class of intellectuals linked to the pre-existing bourgeois regime. Gramsci's notebook concerning the difference between *intellettuali organici* and *intellettuali tradizionali* is number 12, titled *Appunti e note sparse per un gruppo di saggi sulla storia degli intellettuali*, in Gramsci (1975, 1513 – 1551).

Guf (Gruppi Universitari Fascisti), the Fascist University Students' Unions, and they subsequently moved to the Communist party during the war or immediately after.

Several members of the PCI, including filmmakers, have described in their memoirs the relative freedom of opinion and the anti-establishment atmosphere which permeated the cultural life of the *Guf*. Their experience in this organisation appears like a sort of apprenticeship in anti-Fascism, almost a preparatory phase of their future Communist militancy.²¹ This reading of the historic role of the *Guf* has been challenged on an historiographical plane (Duranti, 2008), while the juvenile adherence to Fascism of many left-wing politicians and intellectuals has often nourished polemical attacks by those who have regarded the representation of the *Guf* as culturally nonconformist, as well as memories of personal 'dissimulated dissidences', as mere *ex-post* justifications for a membership subsequently perceived as shameful (Serri 2005; Battista 2007). In this respect, historians Aurelio Lepre and Renzo Martinelli have both spoken of *cattiva coscienza* (Lepre 1993, 97; Martinelli 1995, 289). According to these authors, to join the Italian Communist Party represented for many intellectuals a sort of catharsis, a way to square accounts with their past as well as a concrete sign of their intention to break with their middle-class background in order to share the working classes' aspirations and values.

Many of the protagonists of the post-war cinematographic production of the PCI shared the experience of the *Guf*, including Marcello Bollero, head of the first *Sezione Cinematografica* (Film Division) of the Italian Communist party, and

²¹ See Lizzani (2007, 31 – 44) and Ingrao (2006, 36 – 46). In many respects, the prototype of this sort of self-exculpatory literature is Ruggero Zangrandi's *Il lungo viaggio attraverso il fascismo*, first published in 1947. This contains a complete list of the participants in the *Littoriali della cultura*, the most important national cultural contest organized by the Fascist Regime in the 1930s (Zangrandi 1998, 641 - 713). Many of them, including Zangrandi, subsequently joined the Italian Communist Party.

director Carlo Lizzani. Along with the *Guf*, another breeding ground of future Communist cinematographers, and politicians, had been the Milanese magazine *Cinema*, directed, from 1938, by Vittorio Mussolini, son of the *Duce* (Caldiron 2002). In the case of this second circle of intellectuals, a certain unorthodox attitude, if not quite an open opposition to the regime, seems proved by the collaboration of a group of magazine contributors to the screenplay of *Ossessione*, the first film by the soon-to-be Communist director Luchino Visconti (Forgacs 1993, 140 – 143). This group included Mario Alicata, later head of the *Commissione Culturale*, the Cultural Commission of the PCI, and Giuseppe De Santis, an important Communist film director in the post-war years. *Ossessione* was released in 1943 and provoked outrage from the Church and the Fascist authorities for its nonconformist content as well as for the torrid affair between the protagonists of the film (Argentieri 1974, 57 – 59).

Along with moral nourishment and, for Italy, a relatively new compelling ideology, the PCI's appeal to intellectuals was largely based on the tangible possibilities of a career that the Party was able to offer to those who decided to join. For example, journalists and writers could find employment in one of the numerous periodicals, which constituted what Cyrille Guiat, in a perhaps loaded expression, has defined as the PCI's 'publishing empire' (Guiat 2003, 73). Along with the four editions of *l'Unità*, the official newspaper of the Party, and several *giornali fiancheggiatori* (supporting newspapers) such as *Paese Sera*, founded in January 1948, the PCI promoted a vast range of magazines in the post-war period. Some were designed to specifically address the intellectual and middle-class strata of the population, first of all *Rinascita*, launched in June 1944 (Ajello 1979, 23). Others were dedicated to the workers and less-educated people, such as *Vie Nuove*, *Il*

Calendario del Popolo and *Noi Donne*. Finally, the PCI owned two publishing houses, eventually merged into the illustrious Editori Riuniti in 1953 (Martinelli 1995, 281). Therefore, the PCI could grant not only a job, but also an alluring thing for every artist and intellectual: a large and growing audience composed of militants, sympathizers and voters. As far as cinema is concerned, the collaboration with the PCI provided valuable working experience to many young filmmakers and it represented for several of them the early stage of a successful career in the Italian cinema industry.

The golden age of the relationship between the Italian Communist Party and the intellectuals ran between 1945 and 1953, a period which has been defined as 'l'età delle tranquille certezze' (Valentini 1997, 82). This was a period when, for the Communist militants and cadres, 'faith in Communist values was unquestioned and belief in the ultimate triumph of good over evil total' (Gundle 2000, 43). The period can be roughly divided into two phases. From 1945 to 1947, when the PCI was in power in the *Governi di unità antifascista*, the Party welcomed a variety of different cultural tendencies and philosophical positions to its press and, in spite of a few episodes that clearly marked the limits of Communist tolerance towards heterodoxy, as was the case with the well-known polemic between Togliatti and Vittorini (Ajello 1979, 113 – 133), it showed genuine open-mindedness. Subsequently, however, the flaring of Cold War tensions progressively led to a diminishing of the freedom of expression granted to Communist intellectuals.

The turning point in this respect was the sixth congress of the Party, in January 1948. In the opening speech of that congress, Palmiro Togliatti illustrated the ancillary function the Party assigned to culture in the battle for political hegemony,

and clarified the margin of independence the PCI leadership intended to leave to the Communist intellectuals from that moment onwards:

Per noi comunisti, rottura e distacco tra cultura e politica non possono esistere, perché lo sviluppo delle nostre posizioni ideali non può essere separato mai dalla nostra attività pratica. [...] Come si possono separare dai problemi della politica quelli della cultura, proprio nel momento in cui la classe operaia, diventando classe dirigente, afferma la sua egemonia in tutti i campi dell'attività umana?²²

The illustrious Latinist and authoritative member of the party Concetto Marchesi, in his intervention specifically dedicated to culture, drafted the archetype of the Communist artist wholeheartedly devoted to the cause of communism:

Noi domandiamo all'artista comunista una sola cosa: che egli sia profondamente comunista, che egli sia necessariamente, per l'esigenza della sua vita, comunista e poi che si esprima come vuole, come può e come sa.²³

Such a trenchant statement of the binding necessity for Communist artists to a strict ideological alignment with the party are evidence of how Zhdanovism influenced the Italian Communist Party in that period.

Zhdanovism, named after Andrei A. Zhdanov, was the political doctrine informing the cultural policy in the Soviet Union in the post-war years and until the death of Stalin.²⁴ Along with a rigorous political and ideological control over culture, Zhdanovism entailed the condemnation of formalism and a revival of so-called

²² See Bertolissi and Sestan (1985, 337).

²³ See Bertolissi and Sestan (1985, 375).

²⁴ On Andrei Zhdanov and his doctrine see Boterbloem (2004).

Socialist realism in arts. During the Sixth Congress, the appointment of Emilio Sereni, a fervent supporter of Zhdanov's doctrine, to the head of the newly created *Commissione Culturale* of the Party, tangibly demonstrated the adoption of Zhdanovism by the PCI.²⁵ Zhdanovism had a profound impact on the way Communist artists and intellectuals looked at their activities: to endorse the political line established by the party leadership became for many Communist artists, journalists, writers and film critics a precise duty towards the party, a duty they performed willingly, even enthusiastically.²⁶

This is certainly the case with the artists and intellectuals involved in early PCI cinema production. As the matter of fact, the films produced in this period are, as far as content is concerned, mere cinematic transpositions of the party political slogans, and thus blatant pro-PCI and pro-Soviet propaganda. The aesthetic tastes and cinematographic influences of the young filmmakers who worked on these productions are, nonetheless, visible, and they contribute to making some of these films artistically valuable.

Following the death of Stalin, in March 1953, the struggle for power in the Soviet Union, culminated in the execution of the deputy Premiere Lavrentiy Beria, undermined the myth of the harmonious unity of the Soviet leadership. A few years later, the Twentieth Congress of the PCUS and the subsequent denunciation of Stalin's crimes, along with the repression of the Hungarian uprising by the Soviet

²⁵ A portrait of Emilio Sereni can be found in Ajello (1979, 147 – 151). His leadership lasted until April 1951 when Carlo Salinari took over (295 – 96).

²⁶ A large collection of heavily ideologized statements about cultural issues, including cinema, which appeared in the Communist press from 1944 to 1964, can be found in Guarini and Saltini (1978). This book was polemically published during the period of *Solidarietà Nazionale* (see part II, chapter 13) in order to impugn the PCI for its Stalinist past during an historical phase in which party aspired to a partnership in the national government.

army in November 1956, provoked dismay at grass-roots level and disenchantment in many intellectuals (Ajello 1979, 429 - 452).

After this overview of the history of the PCI during the years 1944 - 1956, it is time to focus particularly on the issue tackled by the thesis, namely on the use of cinema in the communication strategy of the PCI.

Chapter 2. The PCI and Cinema During the *Governni di Unità Antifascista* Years.

During the years of the *Governni di unità antifascista*, the PCI, while appreciating the potential of cinematic propaganda, developed an approach to the problems of national cinema which implied a risky (and rather surprisingly for a Marxist party), underestimation of the industrial dimension of cinema. As pointed out by Angelo Ventrone, the PCI seemed to focus exclusively on what could be defined, using Marxist terminology, as a superstructure of cinema, namely its ideological aspect, and paid little attention to its substructure (the film market and film distribution).²⁷ The Italian Communist Party also showed a lack of interest in the legislative aspects of cinema.

This is particularly evident in the failed revision of film censorship regulations inherited from the Fascist regime. According to the Regio Decreto n. 3287 of 24 September 1923, every film had to be authorized for projection by a board of censors, which was a part of the *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*. The *Regio Decreto* provided a variety of reasons for banning a film, including the presence of scenes that could suggest an incitement to class hatred or were likely to provoke *turbamento dell'ordine pubblico*. The 1923 law also entrusted wide discretion to the censor board.

The PCI did not attempt to reform the film censorship law while in the government. Yet, the potentially negative impact of censorship on Communist propaganda cinema must have been clear to the PCI leadership, since at least May

²⁷See, Ventrone (2008, 237). An apt example of Communist disregard for the industrial aspects of cinema is the fact that the PCI, while being in government, allowed Eitel Monaco, former *Direttore Generale della cinematografia* during the final years of the Fascist dictatorship, to be elected to the presidency of the newly created ANICA, the association of film producers and distributors (Argentieri 1974, 68 – 69).

1946, when one of the films produced for the elections of June 1946, *Giudicherà il popolo*, was rejected by the board of censors with the following justification:

Data la violenza polemica e il tono del commento verbale, la proiezione di tale cortometraggio nelle pubbliche sale potrebbe con facilità dare luogo a violente manifestazioni pro o contro la monarchia, con conseguente turbamento dell'ordine pubblico [...].²⁸

Because it was exclusively focused on the political centrality of Parliament, the PCI leadership underestimated the potential damage that could result for the left-wing parties from the activity of bureaucrats appointed during the Fascist regime (Ginsborg 1989, 119 – 121; Martinelli 1995, 44). In this respect, an initial attempt to carry out a purge of bureaucratic personnel soon met insurmountable obstacles and was eventually shelved following the promulgation, in June 1946, of the amnesty for political crimes drafted by Togliatti, Minister of Justice in the first De Gasperi government (Franzinelli 2006).

The Democrazia Cristiana had an opposite approach to matters of state legislation on cinema and the role of bureaucracy. In fact, the Catholic party showed, from the years of the *Governi di unità antifascista*, a clear appreciation of the importance of these critical aspects. Catholic organisations' long experience in the use of cinema as a tool to influence popular culture certainly helped the DC to

²⁸ *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. Servizi per lo spettacolo. Appunti per il sottosegretario*, 6 May 1946. In AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*. The anonymous officer of the *Ufficio Spettacolo* pointed out how the projection of 'cortometraggi destinati alla propaganda elettorale di un singolo partito, potrebbe dare adito ad un successivo moltiplicarsi di iniziative del genere e trascinare, quindi, la polemica politica ed istituzionale nelle pubbliche sale di spettacolo con conseguenze di disordini facilmente prevedibili'. This statement reveals the conservative mentality of the officers of the *Ufficio Spettacolo* who interpreted a political debate in a public venue, whether lively or otherwise, as a problem of public order rather than the norm in a democratic system.

develop a much more effective understanding of this matter than the PCI.²⁹ However, the principle reason for the Christian Democrats' estimation of the legislative and industrial aspects of cinema was that the DC looked at the post-war period from an opposing political perspective than the PCI's.

Togliatti's post-war tactical design hinged on the indefinite permanence of the *Governi di unità antifascista*. In Togliatti's vision, the concomitant participation in the government of the political parties representing the whole of the Italian working class would promote, rather automatically, a democratic ethos and foster a national culture which matched the cultural and political values endorsed by the PCI. Conversely, the leader of the Democrazia Cristiana, Alcide De Gasperi, was aware that the experiment of the *Governi di unità antifascista* was not going to last for very long, given that both the US government and the Catholic Church campaigned for the end of this political formula as soon as possible. Therefore, the DC leadership worked to create a situation whereby the party would challenge the PCI in the near future. This confrontation would also involve the occupation of strategic positions that would assure control over the propaganda system inherited from the Fascist regime. Not by chance, the DC politician Mario Scelba was entrusted, from the time of the first De Gasperi government, with the *Ministero delle poste e comunicazioni*, which controlled the RAI, the public broadcasting service founded during the Fascist regime (and initially called EIAR).³⁰

²⁹ An experience dating back to pre-Fascist Italy. See Forgacs (1993, 75).

³⁰ The first complaint by the PCI for the factious and pro-government tone of the news broadcast by the RAI occurred in February 1948 when Togliatti sent a letter to the director of RAI news service, Antonio Picconi Stella. Togliatti reminded the journalist that the *giornaleradio* was: 'un giornale fatto coi soldi dello stato, cioè coi soldi di tutti'. In IG, APCI, MF 185, p. 1112, Rettifiche alla Rai, 6 February 1948. Other letters followed – see, for example, IG, APCI, MF 185, p. 1115, Rettifiche alla Rai, 23 August 1948, and IG, APCI, MF 185, p. 1118, Rettifiche alla Rai, 25 August 1948. The last two were written when Togliatti was still convalescent after the assassination attempt on 14 July 1948.

The PCI would pay a high price for the mistakes made during the years of the *Governi di unità antifascista*. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the failed revision of the law governing film censorship, in particular, would have major consequences on both Italian cinema and PCI cinematographic production.

Such a disregard for the industrial and legislative aspects of cinema, mentioned above, was consistent with the PCI leadership's apparent indifference to cinema as a cultural factor. During the *Governi di unità antifascista*, cinema seems to have been beyond the cultural horizon of the Communist leadership: *Rinascita* did not publish a single article concerning cinema before 1949.³¹ This happened in spite of the fact that movie-going was probably the most popular cultural activity in post-war Italy, and undoubtedly linked to the dramatic increase of cinemas throughout the country since the end of the conflict.³²

How can we explain why a political party which had made a virtue of the cultural struggle chose to disregard cinema? A cultural prejudice against cinema in the party old guard, and perhaps originating in Togliatti himself, might have played a part in this respect: true intellectuals should not give serious thought to films, which were primarily a form of entertainment. Films were credited with an unquestionable propaganda value, and, in this sense, cinema was the domain of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*. We shall point out that this partially changed following the foundation of the *Commissione Culturale*, in January 1948, and to a greater extent after the elections of 18 April 1948 (as discussed in Part 1 Chapter 6). The cultural and propaganda aspects of cinema, however, should always be kept separate, as shown by the rigid division of responsibilities between the *Commissione Culturale*, which

³¹ See Virgilio Tosi, *Sguardi sull'attuale produzione cinematografica*, in *Rinascita*, anno V, n. 1, 32.

³² See Forgacs and Gundle (2007, 207).

took care of the cultural and legislative problems of national cinema, and the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, which was entrusted with the supervision of the party's cinematographic production. This was the situation until PCI cinematographic production ended in 1979.

Communist lack of interest in cinema during the years of the *Governi di unità antifascista* might have also been due to the fact that the PCI leadership believed its cultural influence over Italian national cinema to be a given. Several factors might have contributed to shaping such a illusion. The results achieved by the PCI in recruiting intellectuals had ensured, at least initially, a Communist hegemony on film critics (Ajello 1979, 211). The rise of the cinematographic movement known as *neorealismo*³³ might have created the impression that Italian cinema was spontaneously developing along thematic lines which broadly matched the Italian Communist Party's policy. *Neorealismo* had suddenly granted international fame to Italian cinema and had revived the national film industry which was virtually in collapse by the end of the war.³⁴ Some of the most illustrious neorealist directors, such as Luchino Visconti and Giuseppe De Santis, were admittedly *compagni di strada* (fellow travellers) of the PCI, others, including the founder of the movement Roberto Rossellini, were instead Christian Democrat sympathizers. Nonetheless, virtually all neorealist films presented issues that could be easily associated with Communist propaganda: the centrality of the lower classes, the portrayal of social

³³ As pointed out by several authors, the term *neorealismo* came into use at the beginning of the 1950s. Before, *cinema neorealista* was often referred to as *verismo cinematografico* or *neoverismo* (Sorlin 1996, 90). For a discussion on the evolution of the meaning attributed to the term *neorealismo* by left-wing film critics and intellectuals, see Forgacs (1989, 51 - 66).

³⁴ In his autobiography, Carlo Lizzani offers a concise and telling description of the situation of Italian cinema after the liberation of Rome by the Allies: 'Visconti e Blasetti si danno al teatro, Cinecittà diventa un rifugio per sfollati, la Cineteca del Centro Sperimentale è stata saccheggata dai nazisti, nelle sale dominano pellicole americane, francesi, inglesi' (Lizzani 2007, 54).

injustices and the implicit aspiration for a different and fairer society.³⁵ In this context, the only actions taken in cinema by the PCI were of an unofficial nature. The party just tried to politically influence the directors of the new Italian cinema through those personal relationships that a few *intellettuali organici* had established with emerging film directors. One the protagonists of this brief cultural and political season was Antonello Trombadori, whose friendship with figures such as Luchino Visconti and Roberto Rossellini undoubtedly contributed significantly to certain artistic choices made by these important film directors.³⁶ If Communists underestimated the cultural relevance of films, they appreciated their propaganda value.

Having spent seventeen of its twenty-four year existence as a small and clandestine political organisation, the Italian Communist Party could not claim, unlike its French counterpart,³⁷ a well-established tradition of cinematographic production and distribution at the end of World War II. Nonetheless, the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* of the PCI, under the leadership of Giancarlo Pajetta,³⁸ showed an early interest in the potential of cinematic propaganda.

³⁵ At a closer look, however, the approach to social issues displayed in most of the neorealist films was anything but Marxist, and it seems to have been rather the product of a sort of humanism of clear Christian derivation. The most trenchant statement in this respect is by Carlo Lizzani who was, for many years, an *intellettuale organico* par excellence. He claims that no neorealist film, not even Luchino Visconti's *La Terra Trema*, can be defined as a Marxist film, see (Lizzani 1991, 97).

³⁶ On this point, see Ajello (1979, 210). Carlo Lizzani's autobiography is also quite revealing. Lizzani obtained, thanks to the intervention of Trombadori, the position of assistant director in Rossellini's film *Germania anno zero*: '[Trombadori] m'incoraggiò dicendomi che stando vicino a Rossellini avrei potuto non tanto influenzarlo politicamente (come è riportato in modo un po' frettoloso in una delle tante interviste che si riferiscono alla mia attività di quegli anni, e ai propositi di egemonia di Trombadori e del PCI sui cineasti italiani), ma piuttosto aiutarlo, con ricerche, documentazioni, testimonianze, a realizzare la "Roma città aperta" della Germania' (Lizzani 2007, 70). In spite of Lizzani's claims, it is difficult to envisage how a young and largely inexperienced assistant director (Lizzani was 26 in 1948) could have helped the author of *Rome open city* to create another masterwork. An attempt at political influence is more plausible. Trombadori also may have wanted to provide a young and promising Communist filmmaker with valuable professional experience.

³⁷ See Perron (1998).

³⁸ Biographical information on Giancarlo Pajetta can be found in Pajetta (1983) and Pajetta (1986).

Communist cadres had probably learned the lessons taught, in this respect, by both the Italian Fascist and the Soviet regimes in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁹

In February 1946, the PCI established a film division, and a party bulletin invited the local propaganda commissions to produce films ‘dovunque esistono le condizioni e i mezzi’.⁴⁰ Even a film as short as one hundred metres (around five minutes in 16mm format) was said to be a useful tool for an electoral meeting in a cinema as well as outdoors. Since, in those years, the recording of sound was one of the most technically challenging and expensive aspects of film production, the bulletin suggested that the voice-over commentary could be separately read by a militant while the images were running.

The national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* produced three short films of around five minutes each in preparation for the referendum on 2 June 1946: the anti-monarchy *Il Popolo giudicherà*, a film called *Dal popolo per il popolo*, about the Fifth Congress of the Party (Rome, 29 December 1945 - 6 January 1946), and *Una donna come tante*.⁴¹ These are all missing, as well as their screenplays. This is a very unfortunate circumstance, as it would be very interesting to analyse them, for a variety of reasons. *Dal popolo per il popolo* is the first example of a film concerning the party’s congresses, a sort of ‘classic’ genre in Communist cinematography. Such films are especially important for an understanding of symbolic rituals on occasions

³⁹ According to Mussolini, cinema was Fascism’s most powerful weapon (La cinematografia è l’arma più forte), as a banner famously read at the opening of Cinecittà, the film studio built by the regime in 1937. Fascist propaganda was especially present in the newsreels produced by the state-run Istituto Luce film company, whereas the Italian cinema industry mostly produced escapist films, which, while avoiding controversial political and social issues, were not just blatant propaganda. As far as the use of propaganda films in the Soviet Union was concerned, Lenin had famously said: ‘Of all the arts, cinema is the most important’ (Taylor 1998, 28). On the Italian cinema of the Fascist period, see Gili (1985), Hay (1987) and Garofalo and Reich (2002). On the Istituto Luce and the role of its newsreels in supporting the Fascist regime, see Argentieri (1979), Laura (2000) and Iaccio (2000, 60 – 100). On Soviet propaganda cinema see Taylor (1998), Reeves (1999, 34 – 77), Kenez (2001).

⁴⁰ IG, APCI, Direzione, MF 110, p. 545, 2 February 1946.

⁴¹ IG, APCI, Direzione, MF 110, p. 545, 2 February 1946.

of solemn and public display of the party and the Fifth Congress, the first after the war, established a liturgical model in this respect (Martinelli 1995, 41- 42). As far as *Una donna come tante* is concerned, it must have been an interesting cinematic text in order to understand what the archetypal Italian woman of the time was in the Communists' view.

In the run up to the 1946 elections, the PCI deployed, along with its own propaganda films, the so-called *film democratici*. This was an expression which the Communist press used to label those Italian films whose content could be easily associated with Communist propaganda issues. *Roma città aperta* (1945), by Roberto Rossellini, was especially suitable in this respect: the party equipped three vans with cinema-projectors and a copy of the film. Arguably, Communist cadres valued *Roma città aperta* because it pictured the Resistance to Nazi-Fascism as a collective effort by both Communists and Catholics, providing a moral and historical justification to the *Governi di unità antifascista*, the permanence of which was essential to Togliatti's post-war strategic design. According to the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, it was especially important to show the film 'nei paesi di provincia, specie nel sud dove il film non è molto conosciuto'.⁴² In 1947, the PCI created its first film distribution company, Libertas Film, led by Alfredo Guarini until 1949, and subsequently by Communist Senator Egisto Cappellini, which soon specialized in the distribution of Soviet films as well as of the documentaries produced by the PCI in the late 1940s (Argentieri 1985, 27).

⁴² See *Piano di propaganda per la Costituente*, in IG, APCI, MF 110, p. 566, *Stampa e Propaganda*, serie 1946. The document does not indicate a date. A hand written note specifies that the plan had been approved 'in linea di massima' during a meeting held on 19 April 1946.

Chapter 3. The Elections of 18 April 1948.

If Communist interest in cinematic propaganda was prompt, as shown in the previous chapter, it also was rather generic. Communist cadres valued propaganda films especially because they looked ‘modern’; ‘Per una propaganda più moderna’, for example, was the title of the first article concerning the use of cinema in propaganda published in *Il Quaderno dell’attivista*, in the May – June issue in 1947, shortly after the end of the De Gasperi III Cabinet and the exclusion of both the PCI and the PSI from the coalition government.⁴³ Besides, propaganda films were not valued for their own sake, but considered as a very useful means of attracting people in order to gather an audience that could be subsequently addressed with other and more traditional forms of propaganda: ‘prendendo spunto dal film si deve immediatamente fare un breve comizio’ intoned *Il Quaderno dell’attivista*, ‘e si distribuirà materiale del partito legato al tema del film’.⁴⁴ Films were especially suitable for fund-raising activities, as people would more willingly give money in exchange for a cinematographic show. A discussion concerning the features that a cinematic text should possess in order to be an effective propaganda tool was virtually absent, however, both in *Il Quaderno dell’attivista* and in the *Circolari* of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*.

Film critic and historian Mino Argentieri points out how the early Communist propaganda films ‘did not inform, and documented little. Their discourse [...] was simple, declarative and lacking in argumentation’ (Argentieri 2001, 75). The apparent lack of efficacy of Communist cinematic propaganda over this period is explained by the type of audience the PCI films were designed to address: the

⁴³ *Per una propaganda più moderna: il cinema*, in *Quaderno dell’attivista*, May - June 1947, 228.

⁴⁴ See *Quaderno dell’attivista*, special issue for the 1948 electoral campaign, 21.

Communist militants. Technically speaking, PCI propaganda cinema was a ‘response reinforcing’ form of persuasion, according to the classification of propaganda forms by Jowett and O’Donnell (2006, 31 – 33). In other words, Communist propaganda films were, so to speak, preaching to the converted. They were not produced with the aim of enlarging the party’s constituency, but rather of illustrating to the militants, in a simple fashion, the party political line. Above all, Communist films were supposed to fortify the rank and file’s reliance on the party leadership.

There were, however, exceptions. *Chi dorme non piglia pesci*, the only Communist film produced for the electoral campaign of 1948, clearly addressed the non-Communist lower middle class voters. Produced in 1947 by Libertas Film, *Chi dorme non piglia pesci* was around twelve minutes long and stands out for being the first fiction film ever produced by the Italian Communist Party. It was directed by the professional filmmaker Aldo Vergano, who had just made one of the first films about the Italian Resistance *Il sole sorge ancora* (1946).⁴⁵ The leading role was taken by the emerging actor Carlo Mazarella.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this film is missing because it was banned by the censor in November 1947. It has been possible, however, to find the screenplay and it is worth discussing its interesting plot.⁴⁷

In an unspecified Italian town, a young Communist activist selling the party’s subscription coupons enters a barbershop. While the barber willingly gives his contribution, the client Antonio, referred to as *il ragioniere* (the accountant), refuses

⁴⁵ Aldo Vergano began his career during the Fascist regime, directing *Pietro Micca*, in 1938. He died in 1957 (Rondolino 1969, 393 – 4).

⁴⁶ Subsequently, Carlo Mazarella became a character actor and played in *Riso Amaro* (1949) and other films until he moved to the public broadcasting service where he worked as a TV reporter (Rondolino 1969, 227).

⁴⁷ In AAMOD Archive, non catalogato, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*.

to buy the coupons claiming that the policy of the Italian Communist Party is not for people like him. The young militant replies:

Ah, ho capito! Lei è uno di quelli che s'è scordato di quello che abbiamo passato e crede che ormai, finito il brutto sogno... beh, immagini se, da qui a sei mesi, non ci fosse più il partito comunista, e poi mi sa dire se sottoscriverebbe al prestito...ci pensi bene!

The young militant leaves the shop and the client, while having his shave, falls asleep. Suddenly, Antonio is plunged into a nightmare: the Fascists are back! The Black shirts march along the town streets, a Jewish citizen is unceremoniously expelled from a public office, and a group of workers is remorselessly exploited by a landlord who mockingly invites them to look for help at the Fascist trade union. Eventually, Antonio himself is humiliated by a *gerarca* who forces him to take his hat off. Antonio wakes up dripping with sweat and he realises that he has just had a bad dream. Once in the street, Antonio sees with relief a joyful march of young Communist militants, and to an army colonel who is grumbling his disapproval, he emphatically replies: 'Bello spettacolo, eh?'.

Chi dorme non piglia pesci, whose narrative structure very much recalls Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as well as Frank Capra's film *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), was a clear-cut attempt to gain the electoral support of the *petit bourgeoisie*, embodied in the film by the character of *il ragioniere*, a profession that in Italy is stereotypically associated with a lower-middle class social condition. Middle class voters were reminded that the Italian Communist Party was the real and only barrier against the return of Fascism. This is exactly the reason why the film by Vergano was *all'unanimità* banned by the board of censors: it made the Communist

party appear as the guarantor of the Italian democratic regime, a function which, according to the members of the censor board, was to be presented as the exclusive competence of the democratic State.⁴⁸

In view of the elections of 18 April 1948, the PCI also made use of Soviet films, and especially of Mikhail Chiaureli's *Kljatva* (*The Vow*). This is a perfect example of pure Stalinist cinematic propaganda, picturing the Soviet dictator as a great statesman and beloved leader.⁴⁹ The national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* of the PCI made strenuous efforts to promote the film, titled in the Italian edition *Il Giuramento*. A four-page brochure was distributed with a detailed summary of the plot and a full-page picture of Mikhail Ghelovani, a Georgian actor regularly cast to portray Joseph Stalin in Soviet realist films.⁵⁰

From the perspective of a modern viewer, it is rather surprising that a film like *Il Giuramento* could have been considered as an effective propaganda tool by the Italian Communist Party, as its content is so explicitly propaganda-driven that its showing would appear counterproductive. However, this was not the case, as explained by the director of *Kljatva* himself, during a press conference following the presentation of the film at the Venice Film Festival in 1946. Answering a provocative question by an Italian journalist about the presence of propaganda in Soviet feature films, Mikhail Chiaureli claimed that while every film was to be considered as propaganda, as every film, regardless of its nationality, endorsed an ideological vision of reality, the viewer whose ideology entirely matched the one of

⁴⁸ In AAMOD Archive, non catalogato, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*.

⁴⁹ On *The Vow*, see Leyda (1960, 392 – 4); for complete cast and crew, see Leyda (1960, 452 - 3).

⁵⁰ AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*.

the film would not perceive it as such.⁵¹ Soviet films of the Stalin era were regarded as an effective propaganda tool by the Italian Communist leadership because they were employed in order to address Communist militants, as was generally the case with PCI cinematographic production.

⁵¹ See Umberto Barbaro's *Il Regista Sovietico Ciaureli parla ai critici del Festival*, *l'Unità*, 4/9/1946, p. 2. Film critic and fervent Communist Umberto Barbaro praised *Il Giuramento* in a manner that could be termed as excessive, to say the least: 'Non si è mai vista un'opera in cui, come in questa, un ritmo amplissimo sbocca in così perfetta armonia, quanto mai difficile e lirica, trepida, epica e satirica, nata in una fantasia creatrice come quella del grande regista Ciaureli, umanissima e affettuosa', see U. Barbaro *Forza, fate del cinema!*, in *l'Unità*, 18/9/1946, 2.

Chapter 4. The Films of Pride: *14 luglio* and *Togliatti è ritornato*.

In the summer of 1948 the PCI produced two important films, *14 luglio* and *Togliatti è ritornato*. Both could be defined as ‘films of pride’. Their principal purpose was to restore Communist militants’ confidence in the party’s strength and in the final victory of the Communist ideal. Such confidence had been seriously shaken by both the severe electoral defeat on 18 April 1948 and the disastrous outcome of the turmoil following the attempt on Togliatti’s life on 14 July 1948.

14 luglio, which has a running time of 30 minutes,⁵² was produced by the film division of the PCI and directed by twenty-nine year old Glauco Pellegrini, subsequently an important documentary filmmaker. The script and the voice-over commentary were by the Communist writer and journalist Felice Chilanti. Both had culturally, and professionally, matured during the Fascist regime.⁵³ The film credits include a young Rodolfo Sonogo, subsequently one of the most important screenplay writers of post-war Italy, and Roberto Natale, who would have a career as a writer of B-movies such as *Cinque tombe per un medium* (Terror-creatures from the Grave) and *L’isola delle svedesi*, in the 1960s and 1970s. Both are listed as collaborators.

According to a statement by Glauco Pellegrini,⁵⁴ *14 luglio* was produced by order of Giancarlo Pajetta. Pajetta had urged Pellegrini to release the film in time for

⁵² Nicola Tranfaglia’s *Il 1948 in Italia* (1991) included a VHS with a five-minutes version of *14 luglio*. That was the only version known at the time (having been retraced in a Romanian archive). It had Romanian subtitles and was of a very poor quality. In 1997, a full length and good quality negative print of *14 luglio* was discovered in the Cineteca Nazionale of Rome and it can now be viewed (in its positive print) at the AAMOD archive.

⁵³ Glauco Pellegrini had initiated his cinema industry career in the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, writing the screenplay for *La buona fortuna* by Ferdinando Cerchio (Chiti and Lancia, 420). Felice Chilanti, born in 1914, had been co-founder along with Vasco Pratolini of *Domani* one of the so-called *riviste di fronda*, namely journals edited by young intellectuals and expressing a moderate (and tolerated) political opposition within the cultural and political framework of the Fascist regime (Zangrandi 1998, 485). He was also a participant at the *Littoriali della cultura* of 1935 in the section *Dottrina Fascista* (Zangrandi 1998, 658).

⁵⁴ See the obituary of Glauco Pellegrini in *l’Unità* 23/7/1991, 21.

the first National *Festa dell'Unità*, held in Rome on 26 September 1948. *Togliatti è ritornato* was shot that very day, while the PCI was celebrating the return of Togliatti to public life after convalescence. Both films can be regarded as cinematographic expressions of the Stalinist-style cult of personality that arose around Togliatti in the late 1940s (Andreucci 2005, 183 - 86). The *attentato* itself contributed in no small measure to forming the cult of Togliatti's personality and ultimately reinforced its leadership (Gundle 1995a, 93 - 94; Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 67 - 71).

The news that the leader of the Italian Communist Party had been shot in the centre of Rome spread across the country instantly. Many Communist workers and groups of former partisans believed the shooting marked the outbreak of a civil war and acted accordingly. Historians have debated whether the turmoil that occurred between 14 and 16 July 1948 proved the existence of a predetermined Communist insurrectional plan, something blocked by the PCI leadership immediately after its initial deployment. Since no conclusive proof corroborating such an hypothesis has ever been found, it is reasonable to regard the serious clashes of those days as the outcome of the repressed frustration of many Communist militants for the electoral defeat of 18 April as well as an unequivocal sign of the revolutionary aspirations of the Communist rank and files rather than of the party's leadership (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 22 - 44).

At the time, however, the government and the conservative press gave a different interpretation of what had happened. They claimed that the turmoil provided evidence of a Communist plot to overthrow democracy, the so-called 'Piano K'. No measures were taken against the PCI, but thousands of Communist workers were arrested over the following days and faced various criminal charges.

Further, the national directorate of the CGIL endorsed the demonstrations taking place throughout the country, by proclaiming a general strike. This provoked a polemical split between the social-Communist and the Christian component of the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro), a split which weakened the Italian Workers Movement for many years (Turone 1973, 182 – 9).

14 luglio constituted the PCI's official interpretation of the facts following the assassination attempt on Togliatti. It had two points to make. Firstly, the general strike was a spontaneous outburst which the well-timed intervention by the PCI national directorate turned into a disciplined and pacific demonstration. Secondly, the general strike resulted in a great victory for the Italian Communist Party as the Italian working class, thanks to the PCI leadership's wise management, showed a sense of responsibility and political maturity which impressed both the political adversaries and the whole world. The film also offered a comforting explanation of the reasons for the electoral defeat on 18 April by focusing on the tone of the propaganda campaign set up by the *Democrazia Cristiana*. Finally, Communist viewers were reassured about the consensus in the party leadership as the film, in a memorable finale, showed that the facts following 14 July did not provoke disagreement among party leaders. Rather, the PCI was united as never before under the leadership of Palmiro Togliatti.

14 luglio is a sort of docufiction skilfully blending archival footage and fiction. The screenplay and the editing aim at communicating precise political messages. The director makes extensive use of symbolic scenes which an audience, supposedly composed by Communist militants, could have easily decoded. *14 luglio* is clearly inspired by *Il Giuramento* (see Part 1, Chapter 3). The two films pivot around a

message that must be delivered to the leader of the party in order to bring to his attention a hideous injustice being perpetrated against workers by the class enemy. Both films offer avuncular images of Communist leaders, Togliatti and Stalin specifically, and suggest that even the humblest member of the party can easily meet them personally.

In *14 luglio*, the bearers of the message are three peasants from a village of Sicily: two men, Armando and Giovanni, and a young woman called Franca. They arrive in Rome at dawn of a sunny day in summer. It is 14 of July 1948, the day of the attempt on Palmiro Togliatti's life, but the protagonists are not aware of this yet. In a still waking city, a newsagent sells the newspaper of the Italian Communist party, *l'Unità*: 'il solo giornale che i clienti della prima mattina gli richiedono', says the voice-over. The peasants offer some bread and cheese to 'un impiegato senza lavoro che porta indosso l'ultimo vestito'. Afterwards, they look for the headquarters of the Italian Communist Party in *Via della Botteghe oscure*. Once in the PCI headquarters, a doorman gently greets them:

Buon giorno compagni, io vi conosco, so che venite da molto lontano e che volete parlare col compagno Togliatti. Nessuna novità, tutti i giorni arrivano lavoratori che vogliono parlare con lui.

Franca replies that their case is especially urgent and begins illustrating the dramatic situation of their fellow agricultural day-labourers in Sicily. Through a flashback, the film shows the backward agricultural landscape of the *Mezzogiorno d'Italia* and the poor village the three peasants come from. We see crumbling houses lacking a water supply, women veiled in black, and dirt roads. Day-labourers are oppressed by the

mazzieri and the *gabellotti* (middlemen in the semi-feudal Sicilian estate system). They are depicted as gangsters: wearing sunglasses, sitting in cafes, drinking beer and playing cards. Noticeably, the words *mafia* and *mafiosi* are not mentioned in the voice-over commentary, although such terms were commonly used by the Communist press at least since the *Portella della Ginestra* massacre, occurring on 1 May 1947.⁵⁵

These exploiters have recently created the ‘*sindacato dei crumiri*’, which is dividing and weakening the workers. Franca says:

L’hanno chiamato “libero” quel falso sindacato, per metterci gli uni contro gli altri e per restituirci tutti all’antica schiavitù agraria.

This harsh remark openly alludes to the Libera CGIL (Free CGIL) (the early denomination of the autonomous trade union established after the abandonment of the CGIL by the Christian minority), which would soon be renamed the CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori) (Turone 1973, 205 - 9). Franca’s claim is blatantly incongruous: Franca cannot know about the separation of the Christian minority from the CGIL, since this occurred after 14 July 1948, and not before.

According to the voice-over, this new trade union, while severely weakening the day-labourers’ movement, did not have as serious a consequence as the outcome of the elections held on 18 April 1948. In those elections, explains the voice-over, the peasants had been deceived by the electoral posters of the Democrazia Cristiana showing ‘teschi e scheletri e pugnali e terrore’ and many ended up voting ‘contro se

⁵⁵ See the headlines of the article published in *l’Unità* on 2/5/1947, the day following the massacre: ‘Gli uomini della mafia sono stati gli esecutori materiali’. On the *Strage di Portella della Ginestra* see Casarrubea (1997); Santino (1997).

stessi' - that is, for the DC.⁵⁶ As a result, the important union gains obtained when the Communists were in government were dashed and the exploiters had once again a free hand in imposing unfair contractual terms on the workers. The peasants' last hope is Togliatti's help and this is why Armando, Giovanni and Franca have decided to go to Rome.

The door attendant reassures the three visitors that they will have the opportunity to speak with Togliatti, but not immediately as the leader of the party is currently in parliament. In the meantime, they are offered a tour of the premises of *l'Unità*. Once there, another doorman shows them old issues of the newspaper and explains how the history of the party, and of the Italian Workers Movement, can be traced through the pages of *l'Unità*:

Qui c'è la storia del partito, la storia della lotta dei lavoratori per la democrazia, c'è anche la vostra storia, compagni, la parte migliore di voi stessi, scritta nelle pagine del nostro giornale.

A five-minute digression follows presenting the history of the Italian Communist Party. This section contains an example of one of the characteristics typically attributed to the Communist leader in relation to the 'cult of personality': the ability to predict the future. Such a prophetic gift is due to the capacity of the Communist leader to interpret historical events correctly. For example, the voice-over quotes the famous prophecy made by Antonio Gramsci to his persecutors - 'Verrà il giorno in cui voi porterete l'Italia alla catastrofe e allora toccherà a noi comunisti salvare il paese' - and claims that this prediction punctually came true during the Resistance when Italy was saved 'dai lavoratori, dagli intellettuali, dai giovani, da tutti quelli

⁵⁶ A large selection of the posters printed by the Democrazia Cristiana for the election of 18 April 1948 is in Romano and Scabello (1975) and Novelli (2008). On the use of political posters by the various parties in post-war Italy see Cheles (2001, 124 – 179).

che vivono del proprio lavoro'. Similarly, in 1946, Togliatti warned that the anti-Communist attitude of the ruling class was inevitably going to provoke the enslavement of the country to a foreign power. The recent Italian adherence to the Marshall plan, which Togliatti had vehemently countered in a speech given at the Parliament only four days before, on 10 July 1948,⁵⁷ seems to confirm the Communist leader's foresight.

The three peasants have just finishing browsing the pages of *l'Unità* when a telephone rings, abruptly interrupting the background music of the historical digression, the Italian national anthem. There are a few seconds of suspense; the camera lingers in a close shot of the ringing phone and the audience is led to wait anxiously for somebody to pick the receiver up. Eventually, a journalist answers the phone:

Fuoco su Palmiro Togliatti' [the voice-over claims] 'quattro colpi hanno sparato su di lui! Il primo colpo per uccidere Togliatti, il secondo contro la pace dei popoli, il terzo contro la nostra libertà, il quarto doveva colpirci al cuore, doveva colpire il nostro Partito comunista italiano.

Meanwhile, we see five portraits: Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Gramsci and Togliatti. The symbolism of this scene is explicit: following the vile attempt on his life, Palmiro Togliatti has found his place in the wall of fame of the international Communist movement.

Subsequently, the film introduces the viewers to 'il grande sciopero generale voluto dal popolo che nessuno potrà mai più dimenticare', through a cross-cutting editing which alternates the titles of the special editions of *l'Unità*, archival footage

⁵⁷ See Gozzini (1998, 29 - 31).

of demonstrations, and footage of empty streets in Italian cities – empty, however, because filmed at dawn, as proved by the three-quarter light, rather than because of the strike (the footage is certainly shot days after the event). Everything seems to have taken place in good order and in absolute calm. It does not even look like a strike but rather an expression of sorrow and dismay on a national scale. The clashes which occurred in several areas of the country, claiming sixteen victims and causing over 200 casualties, are completely glossed over.⁵⁸ Noticeably, the role of the CGIL in proclaiming the general strike is also neglected. Arguably, such omissions are meant to reinforce one of the central ideas of the film: the PCI, and the PCI alone, maintains firm and undisputed control over a working class which identified itself completely with the Communist party (and therefore with its leader Palmiro Togliatti).

In no other film more than *14 luglio* is it evident how the PCI production of this period was especially geared towards Communist militants and how its principle purpose was to reinforce comrades' confidence in both the strength of the party and the final victory of the Communist cause. In this respect, the film shows how the three peasants, returning home without having met Togliatti but with the satisfaction of having lived through an historical event, find that everything has changed in the village thanks to the general strike. Day-labourers have regained momentum and placed the party's red flag on the Communist section's facade, while the *mazzieri* and *gabellotti*, perceiving that the political climate has shifted, are left with no choice but to flee.

⁵⁸The best account of the events over 14, 15 and 16 July 1948 can be found in Tobagi (1978).

A final scene follows, which is particularly important with respect to the film's political purposes. It is an apt example of what could be defined a 'fictional documentary'. The viewer is introduced to the serene atmosphere of a beautiful garden in the sunlight – that is, the garden of the PCI's political school for cadres called *Le Frattocchie* located in the outskirts of Rome⁵⁹ – while Vivaldi's *Primavera* plays as background music. There, completely recovered and impeccably dressed Palmiro Togliatti receives a visit from three leaders of the party: Luigi Longo, Pietro Secchia, and Edoardo D'Onofrio. 'Sono forse venuti a discutere il Piano K questi tre pericolosi sovversivi?' the voice-over asks ironically. They do not. They play chess instead and talk in a friendly and relaxed way. Over a close-up shot of Secchia lighting his tobacco pipe, the speaker comments:

Vi è una grande certezza in questi uomini, essi hanno la coscienza serena.

Guardate Pietro Secchia come è tranquillo!

The symbolism of this final scene is rather clear: the party's leadership is united and serene. Overall, it aims at easing the disappointment of those many militants and cadres who felt that the general strike following the attempt on Togliatti's life had been the best, and most likely the last, chance to seize the power through a revolutionary uprising. In this respect, the last scene suggests that nothing has actually changed given the party's continuing objective to struggle for the final triumph of the Communist cause. In order to make this point as clear as possible, the voice-over quotes Secchia himself, the powerful deputy leader of the party and fugleman for the pro-insurrectional, hard-line tendency within the party leadership. He says:

⁵⁹ Argentieri (2001, 83).

Lo sciopero generale ha segnato l'inizio e non la fine di una grande battaglia. Esso ha dimostrato che le forze della democrazia sono possenti nel nostro paese.

The final scene also creates a positive frame in order to present to the militants the 'parole di ammonimento e di amore', to quote the voice-over commentary, which Stalin had addressed to the PCI. The Soviet dictator had lambasted the PCI leadership for having shown itself incapable of protecting Togliatti.⁶⁰ Stalin's message is faithfully quoted (his words could not be censored) but, at the same time, the scene shows that his remarks have been taken rather well by the party leadership. The film ends with the words of Togliatti assuring everybody about his forthcoming return to political life, while the voice-over stresses how, for Togliatti, 'guarire è un dovere di partito'.

14 luglio is as rich in pictorial and cinematographic quotations as it is in political messages. Although produced when Zhdanovism was already the official cultural doctrine of the party, it owes a cinematographical debt to the Russian avant-garde, rather than Socialist realism, as proved by the extensive use of symbolic shots: for example, the fountain that ceases pouring water when Togliatti is injured but it spills again when the leader is declared out of danger, or the workers synchronically folding their arms to symbolize the beginning of the strike. The director even evokes a scene in Sergei Eisenstein's *October* where a crowd of peasants holds sickles against the sky. Other shots are quite clearly reminiscent of images which were part of the iconographic tradition of the Italian Workers Movement. These include Pelizza da Volpedo's painting *Il quarto stato* or the famous, and already iconic,

⁶⁰ See Stalin's telegram in *l'Unità* 16/7/1948, front page.

picture of factory workers of the north of Italy, armes crossed, during the strike of March 1943.

As was the case with other PCI films of the early period, the crowd is the film's co-protagonist along with the leader. It is a crowd of factory workers and peasants, but the voice-over commentary constantly reminds the viewers that two other categories are an integral part of it: intellectuals and young people. Communist people are pictured as living in a symbiotic relationship with the leader: when Togliatti is shot, they inevitably get into a state of unrest; when Togliatti gives a statement reassuring people about his physical conditions from the bed of the clinic in which he is hospitalized, they regain their emotional balance.

14 luglio was shot in different locations – the Piazza della Repubblica and Via delle Botteghe Oscure, in Rome, the garden of *Le Frattocchie*, the Sicilian village, a few interiors - and therefore must have been a difficult production effort. Evidently, the production team did not have a synchronized audio recording system at their disposal, and this explains why the dialogues between the protagonists are dubbed by the voice-over. The only exception is the interview with Togliatti at the hospital, which was not recorded by Glauco Pellegrini but is a clip shot by the cine operators of the *Incom* and first included in the issue of 30 July 1948, n. 176, of the *Settimana Incom* newsreel.⁶¹ The *Incom* (Industria Cortometraggi) was a private company whose newsreels, the *Settimana Incom*, dominated the market thanks to the rather blatant support of the government.⁶² The hospital scene of *14 luglio* proves

⁶¹ Giannarelli (1991, 50).

⁶² Law n. 379 of 16/5/1947, *Ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica nazionale*, established the compulsory projection of one newsreel before every film show and guaranteed 3% of the gross income as a contribution for the production of newsreels. The *Incom* established an alliance with the *Consorzio Esercenti* and acquired a dominant position in the market. See Quaglietti (1980, 136 – 37). For an analysis of the *Settimana Incom* newsreels, see Bernagozzi (1979b) and Sainati (2001). In

how PCI cinematographic production was, at the time, in a condition of technical inferiority compared to a private company like *Incom*.

The second film produced by the PCI in summer 1948, *Togliatti è ritornato*, is a chronicle of the great party organised by the PCI in Rome, on 26 September 1948, to celebrate the healing of Togliatti and his return to political life. That day also saw the first edition of the national *Festa dell'Unità*, in Rome, namely the festival organised by the PCI in order to raise funds for the party press.⁶³ The film, which has a running time of thirty-six minutes, is divided into two parts approximately equal in length. The first shows the preparation of the festival site and the impressive parade which took place in the centre of Rome with the participation of delegates and groups coming from every Communist *federazione*.⁶⁴ The second one is entirely dedicated to the speech given by Togliatti at the Stadio dei Marmi, in the Foro Italico, after the conclusion of the parade. Carlo Lizzani and Basilio Franchina, two young directors who would go on to have a long and fruitful career

order to counter the insidious pro-government propaganda of the *Incom*, PCI even attempted to produce its own newsreels, the *Cinegiornali del Popolo*. In 1949, two bulletins of the *Cinegiornali del Popolo* were produced for the Communist film network, but they had trouble with censorship and the experiment was not prolonged further. Both the issues of the *Cinegiornale del Popolo* were about ten minutes long (290 metres in 35 mm format) and presented to the censorship commission on the same day: 14 May 1949. The censorship commission required the cutting of two episodes titled *Le donne Italiane per la pace* and *Manifestazioni popolari contro il patto Atlantico*. It did, however, authorize the episode called *Notizie Sovietiche*, concerning life in the USSR. See the *Domande di revisione* of the two *Cinegiornali del Popolo* in AAMOD Archive, non catalogato, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*. In the meantime, *Il Quaderno dell'attivista* invited militants to disturb the projection of the *Incom* newsreels in cinemas by making loud cries from the parterre, in order to 'far sentire l'indignata protesta dei cittadini democratici contro le menzogne calunniose della Settimana Incom'. See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, March 1949, 31.

⁶³The first local *Festa dell'Unità* had taken place in September 1945 and was based on the model of the *Feste de L'Humanité* of the PCF. It soon spread to many cities and towns and very quickly became one of the most awaited annual appointments for Communist militants and sympathizers. For a history of the *Feste dell'Unità*, see Bernieri (1977). A selection of posters printed for the various *Feste dell'Unità* in the 1940s can be found in Novelli (2000, 52 – 67). The film by Carlo Lizzani took its name after the poster designed for the *Festa Nazionale dell'Unità* reproducing Palmiro Togliatti lighting his tobacco pipe (Novelli 2000, 62).

⁶⁴ According to the rather triumphant chronicle by *l'Unità* five-hundred thousand people had gathered in Rome that day, see Gianni Rodari *Oltre mezzo milione di italiani in festa attorno a Togliatti e all'Unità*, in *l'Unità* 28/9/1948, Edizione piemontese, with articles by Gianni Rodari and Italo Calvino.

in the cinema industry, directed the film. The editing was done by Mario Serandrei and the voice-over commentary by Felice Chilanti. The board of censors imposed the cutting of a few lines of the commentary and some footage.⁶⁵

From an historical point of view, *Togliatti è ritornato* is a rather unique visual documentation of the initial stage of the construction of a set of rituals which were going to constitute an important part of the PCI's appeal at grass-roots level, during the post-war period. Interesting, in this respect, is the film's opening scene showing the preparation for the *Festa nazionale dell'Unità*, in which we see many of the features that would become customary of this social event: platoons of militants working on the construction of the stands, red flags and cardboard cut-out hammer and sickle symbols in every corner, kiosks selling *porchetta* and *cocomero*, and numerous posters inviting party sympathizers to subscribe to *l'Unità*. The *Feste dell'Unità* would assume paramount importance in the life of the party, in that it was especially during the *Feste dell'Unità* that Communists expressed their camaraderie and mutual trust.

The long section of the film dedicated to the parade documents how, over a brief period following the end of the war, the PCI had become a sort of receptor of the Italian local community traditions. At the same time, the *popolo comunista* had

⁶⁵ The complete list of the cuts requested by the board of censors reads as follows:

a) vanno soppressi i seguenti passi delle didascalie:

1) tutto un popolo che ha deciso di dimenticare l'altro stato, quello dei Questori e della Celere e di vivere tutte queste [...] il suo stato, quello della libertà;

2) vi si annidano social - traditori e democristiani, giornali e agenti vari dell'imperialismo straniero;

3) gli accenni ai pretesi martiri di persecuzione poliziesca in Sicilia.

b) vanno soppresses le seguenti scene di repertorio estranee al documentario ed intercalate nel discorso dell'On.le Togliatti:

1) camionette della Celere che disperdono la folla;

2) le figure del Presidente del Consiglio e del Ministro dell'Interno;

3) la testata di tutti i quotidiani riportanti i titoli: Guerra - Il patto atlantico è concluso - Piombo per i comunisti - la bomba atomica su Mosca - l'Italia non può restare neutrale - Guerra"

Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. Direzione generale spettacolo, 12 January 1949, in Archivio AAMOD, faldone T, fascicolo *Togliatti è ritornato*.

autonomously developed a political rituality which merged variegated Italian folklore with scenography elements borrowed from Soviet public displays of the Stalin era. The result is curious: the concurrent procession of groups of cyclists, girls in traditional outfits, community bands, allegorical floats, gymnastics teams, *pazzarielli* of Naples, *sbandieratori* and *balestrieri* from the Tuscan towns and large-scale portraits of Togliatti, Stalin and Zhdanov make the Communist march appear as something between a parade in Moscow Red Square and a town festival. Even the background music underlines this sort of cultural fusion: traditional Italian music alternates with songs belonging to the historical repertoire of the International Communist Movement and, noticeably, with boogie-woogie themes, evidently considered as belonging to Italian folk custom.

In spite of this, the voice-over commentary, introducing the delegates of Livorno, takes the opportunity to pronounce a philippic against the American cultural influence on Italian youths⁶⁶:

Livorno ha mandato la sua gioventù, la gioventù che fu insidiata a lungo dal dopoguerra americano, che ha trovato nel comunismo la forza di salvarsi, di riprendere contatto con la società umana, col lavoro, con la vita dopo la devastazione della guerra fascista.

It was the great parade, more than Togliatti's speech, that remained impressed on the memory of those who attended that day. Pietro Ingrao, who was at the time director of *l'Unità*, claims:

⁶⁶ On the anti-americanism of the PCI and on Communist aversion to American popular culture regarded as corruptor of Italian moral values, see Gundle (1995a, 74 – 75), and Andreucci (2005, 188 – 190).

E nella capitale vedemmo scorrere fiumane di popolo [...] Si avvertiva un soggetto [the Communist people] che voleva esprimere la sua vocazione di un mutamento sociale e insieme il suo testardo radicamento nel paese: persino nell'uso forse esagerato del folclore.⁶⁷

The principal reasons why *Togliatti è ritornato* was produced, however, was to record a speech by Togliatti for those many militants who have never had the opportunity to listen to the Communist leader live, as pointed out by *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*.⁶⁸ Therefore, the most important part of the film was probably the second one, that is Togliatti's speech at the *Stadio del Marmi*. Togliatti's speech was recorded live but separately from the shooting, due to the already mentioned lack of a synchronized audio-video recording system. In all likelihood, the consequent lack of synchronicity between images and audio did not constitute a big problem for an audience of the late 1940s.

As was the case with *14 luglio*, *Togliatti è ritornato* has two protagonists: Togliatti and the crowd. The people attending Togliatti's speech fill the stadium to its very capacity, and many spectators cling to the top of the white statues encircling the arena. The camera frames the people almost always from a higher position so that they appear as a compact, and rather indistinct, mass: as a solid block of Communist workers. A few single people are shown but, in these cases, they are framed from below in order to turn them into archetypes: a worker wearing his working overall, an intellectual wearing a V-neck sweater and horn-rimmed glasses, a smiling girl

⁶⁷ See Ingraio (2006, 193 – 194).

⁶⁸ *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, October – November 1948, 22.

with the young pioneers' red neckerchief. A certain number of children are, of course, shown too.

The mass claps almost relentlessly, while Togliatti speaks calmly and serenely. Like a prophet, he addresses his followers and speaks in parables:⁶⁹

Quando la scure è posta alla radice dell'albero, ogni albero che non fa buon frutto deve essere gettato nel fuoco. Oggi [ovation from the audience] l'albero che non fa buon frutto è il regime dello sfruttamento dei lavoratori.

He then promises paradise to believers:

[...] noi lottiamo con la profonda certezza [of the final victory] perché da venti, da trenta e più anni, seguiamo quello che accade nel mondo e abbiamo visto un grande paese comprendente una terza parte del globo staccarsi da questo sistema dello sfruttamento, iniziare la edificazione di un mondo nuovo e procedere avanti in questa costruzione sommando successo a successo, vittoria a vittoria, per sé, per tutti noi, per i lavoratori di tutto il mondo.

And, finally, he blesses the assembly:

Portate il mio saluto dappertutto in Italia, portatelo agli operai e ai disoccupati delle officine di Milano, di Torino di Genova, di tutte le nostre capitali industriali, portate il mio saluto ai forti mezzadri e braccianti della pianura del Po, ai contadini dell'Italia meridionale, portatelo ai professionisti e agli impiegati [...]. Portate loro un saluto il quale li riconforti, nella lotta che essi

⁶⁹ Carlo Felice Casula used the expression 'Papa rosso' in order to describe the image of Togliatti pictured in *Togliatti è ritornato* (1991, 134).

debbono affrontare, il quale dica loro ancora una volta che in Italia, è forza, vive una forza invincibile, la forza del partito comunista.

Togliatti è ritornato certainly provides the historian who studies the Italian Communist Party insights into the function played by Stalinism in the construction of Communist appeal in the post-war years.⁷⁰ At the beginning of the 1990s, on the eve of a historiographical season characterized by a proliferation of studies dedicated to the Stalinist character of the PCI, some of which were not entirely free from political motives,⁷¹ Maurizio Bertolotti had suggested to look at the Stalinism of the PCI with an anthropological approach; to study it as a ‘un rilevante fenomeno culturale, in cui entrarono in gioco i modi di pensiero di milioni di contadini e di operai’ rather than as a personal tendency of a few political leaders (Bortolotti 1991, XV). An analysis of *Togliatti è ritornato* certainly confirms the validity of such an approach. As early as the late 1940s, symbols, cultural elements and values borrowed from Stalinism, after having been culturally processed at grass-roots level, became part of the personality of many Communist workers. They reinforced the local communities’ ties, especially in the areas of the country politically hegemonized by the PCI. In many respects, the function played by Stalinism in the Communist subculture was not much different than the one traditionally played by religion in Italian local communities: a faith which gives hope and acts as a binding force.⁷² *Togliatti è ritornato* offers visual proof in this respect: Stalin, whose face appears for a few

⁷⁰ About the ‘Soviet myth’ in post-war Italy and its exploitation by the PCI leadership, see D’Attorre (1991) and Galante (1991, 11-75). Paolo Spriano, who lived through that period and, just like the majority of Communist intellectuals, was fascinated by Stalin, describes the feeling of militants and cadres towards the Soviet dictator as a form of filial love. See Spriano (1986, 149 – 162).

⁷¹ See, for example, Bertelli and Bigazzi (2001).

⁷² On this point see Marino (1991) who stresses how the PCI partially shaped the fundamental values of Communist militancy according to the Catholic cultural tradition of the Italian population.

seconds while Togliatti is speaking, is presented as a sort of tutelary divinity, while the USSR, evoked through archival footage depicting content Soviet workers, seems to play an eschatological function, not unlike heaven's role in Christianity.

Before analysing the other films produced by the PCI in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the thesis now accounts for the evolution of PCI policy on cinema after the elections of 18 April 1948.

Chapter 5. PCI Policy on Cinema after the Elections of 18 April 1948.

While acting promptly in regard to cinematic propaganda, the Italian Communist Party neglected mainstream cinema between the years of the *Governi di unità antifascista* and the elections of 18 April 1948 (see Chapter 2). Cinema may not have been at the core of the PCI's cultural struggle after 18 April 1948, but Communist intellectuals certainly became more attentive to feature films' cultural and political influence on society and, from 1949, the PCI went on a cinema offensive.

The relentless distribution of American films in Italian cinemas was troubling Communist film critics and intellectuals, who realised how even escapist films could convey propaganda messages.⁷³ In August 1948, Antonello Trombadori, in an article published in the *Il Quaderno dell'attivista* and significantly titled *Colpire l'avversario anche nel campo del cinema*, alerted readers to the dangerous propaganda contained in American movies, defined as 'il nuovo oppio dei popoli'.⁷⁴ However, the only antidote Communist intellectuals seemed to be proposing in order to neutralize 'i velenosi film americani'⁷⁵ was a heightened use of Soviet cinematography which, apparently, was anything but appealing even to Communist militants. On this point, Trombadori invited the readers to a collective *autocritica*⁷⁶:

⁷³ A few figures can illustrate the extent of the American cinematographic invasion: 296 American films distributed in Italy in 1946, 515 in 1948 and 406 in 1949 (Brunetta 1979, 67).

⁷⁴ See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, August 1948, 29 – 30.

⁷⁵ See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, March 1949, 31.

⁷⁶ The so-called *autocritica* (self-criticism / auto-critique) was one of the pillars of the PCI organizational culture in that period. It was especially important to regulate the mutual relationships in the party's sections. Every militant and cadre was required to be ready to make an *autocritica* every time his public or private behaviour aroused criticism by a party's higher rank. The *autocritica* consisted in an admission of guilt and a prompt exposure of the reasons for the misdeed. The *autocritica* was one of purest expression of the rather fideistic aptitude that every good Communist was required to have towards the Party. For more on the *autocritica* see the interesting considerations by Marino (1991, 96 - 100) and Bellasai (2000, 83).

Quanto spende in media ognuno di noi per andare a vedere i crimini illustrati dei gangster del signor Truman? O i bugiardi amori e le corrotte e cretine storielle delle pin-up-girls di New York o Copacabana? Ma talvolta, vittime della propaganda del nemico di classe storciamo il muso e siamo persino capaci di affermare che, in fin dei conti, il film sovietico è bello, sì, ma è “pesante”, è “noioso”, è “difficile”.⁷⁷

Nonetheless, the PCI spared no effort in popularizing Soviet realist films. One of the most important endeavours in this respect was the successful attempt to control the movement of the *Circoli del cinema*. These were associations of *cinephiles* established in many cities at the end of the war and aimed at promoting a wider knowledge of international cinema after the years of cultural censorship by the Fascist authority. They subsequently reunited in a national association called the *Federazione Italiana Circoli del Cinema* (FICC).⁷⁸ Left-wing members were the majority in many clubs, and the first president of the FICC, the film critic and soon to be film director Antonio Pietrangeli, was a candidate for the *Fronte Democratico Popolare* at the national elections of 18 April 1948.

From 1949, however, Communist militants were engaged in a systematic attempt to influence and control as many cineclubs as possible. *Il Quaderno dell'attivista* began to provide its readers with practical guidance on how to win their local cineclub elections, how to create cineclubs where they did not yet exist and, above all, recommended devoting as many evenings as possible to the projection of both new and classic Soviet films.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, August 1948, 29 – 30.

⁷⁸ For a history of the Italian Federation of the Cine Clubs, see Tosi (1979) and Tosi (1999).

⁷⁹ See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, July 1949, 11 – 12.

In July 1949, a report by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* expressed satisfaction with the results achieved with respect to the *Circoli del cinema*⁸⁰:

La Federazione circoli del cinema è influenzata in buona parte da noi, alla direzione e alla base. Esistono ventuno *Circoli del cinema*, direttamente nostri o controllati, su una cinquantina, dei quali pochi sono quelli reazionari.

As was customary with internal documents in the party, the authors of the report also pointed out the faults:

E' nostra intenzione, in questo settore, di combattere l'impostazione culturale ristretta e piccolo-borghese, che molti circoli tendono ad assumere e a dare a questo movimento di cultura popolare un'apertura sempre maggiore verso le masse operaie e contadine.

This statement, in Communist lexicon, meant that some cineclubs did not project enough Soviet films. Finally, the report stressed how cineclubs were established especially in order to develop political connections with the intellectuals and the middle-class strata of the population. Quite soon, the marked left-wing political orientation of many cineclubs caused the hostility of the government, which tried to prevent these organisations from functioning through bureaucratic obstacles. Eventually, the political and cultural polarisation induced by the Cold War led to a split in the FICC with the creation of the apolitical UICC (Unione Italiana Circoli del Cinema), in 1951 (Forgacs 1993, 188 - 90, Tosi 1999, 154 - 169).

⁸⁰ *Dati sull'attività propagandistica – Riservato ai membri del Comitato Centrale*, IG, APCI, MF 300, pp. 358 – 59, Stampa e Propaganda, July 1949.

Communist film critics and intellectuals promoted other initiatives aimed at propagandizing both Soviet films and *film democratici*, such as the *Amici del cinema* association. In the words of Mino Argentieri, who compiled on behalf of the PCI a sort of handbook for propaganda titled *Guida per le proiezioni cinematografiche popolari* (1954),⁸¹ this new organisation was intended to promote the distribution of *cinema democratico* to a wider public of workers and lower class people, whereas the *Circoli del cinema* were going to maintain a ‘funzione di avanguardia’, principally addressing intellectuals. Both the *Circoli del cinema* and the *Amici del cinema* had, as a common endeavour, to counter the alleged boycott of Soviet films by Italian film distribution companies and cinema owners. In this respect, the *Guida* advertised a long list of Soviet films distributed by Libertas Film, including Sergei Gerasimov’s *La Giovane Guardia* (*Molodaya Gvardiya*) (1949), Ivan Pyryev’s *La Canzone della Terra Siberiana* (*Skazanie e Zemle Siberskoj*) (1947), and Grigori Aleksandrov’s *Primavera* (*Vesna*) (1947). The *Guida* claimed that cinema could contribute significantly ‘a propagandare una parola di pace, di verità e di distensione’, and that, in particular, Soviet films represented:

l’avanguardia di una cinematografia che crede in un’umanità nuova, in un mondo pacifico in cui siano scomparsi per sempre lo sfruttamento dell’uomo sull’uomo, il cui l’arte, il cinema e la cultura possano essere un mezzo per la liberazione dell’uomo dal bisogno, dall’ignoranza, dalla superstizione.

The *Associazione Italia-Urss* also played an important role in the distribution of Soviet cinema. Founded in December 1944 and very soon turned into an

⁸¹ The *Guida per le proiezioni cinematografiche popolari* is included as an appendix in Taviani (2008).

associazione fiancheggiatrice (flank organisation) of the PCI, the *Italia-Urss* organised several events involving the projection of Soviet films, including a Festival of the Soviet cinema, in October 1948.⁸²

Despite the effort lavished on distributing Soviet films, the Italian Communist Party was never able to counter the overwhelming power of the American film industry. Soviet cinematography only found a niche audience of left-wing intellectuals and film critics and, at grass-roots level, its distribution remained confined to specific areas of the country politically hegemonized by the PCI.

However, the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* implemented other propaganda techniques such as the use of film actors as testimonials. For example, a poster for the *Mese della stampa comunista* (the annual fund raising campaign for the Communist press) showed the smiling Lamberto Maggiorani - who had played Antonio Ricci in Vittorio de Sica's celebrated *Ladri di Biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves) (1949) - reading a copy of *l'Unità* with his family. The slogan played with the Italian language, suggesting a direct correlation between family harmony, the political campaigns of the Italian Communist Party and the Party's newspaper purchasing: 'Per difendere la pace d'Italia, *l'Unità* in ogni famiglia' (to defend peace in Italy, *l'Unità* (unity) in each family).⁸³

⁸² On the Associazione Italia – Urss, see Pisu, Stefano (2008) 61 – 75. The film shown during the *Festival del cinema Sovietico* all belonged to the post-war realist cinematography of the Stalin era, including Michajl Romm's *Russkij vopros* (La questione russa – the Russian Question) (1948). This was the first openly anti-American film produced in Soviet Union (Leyda 1960, 399). The thesis of the film was that the American press was ostensibly free but, in fact, influenced by the US government political agenda. *La questione russa* was subsequently banned by the Italian board of censors in May 1949 with the following motivation: 'il film, presentando aspetti non veritieri della vita politica americana, la fa apparire ispirata a concetti contrari alla libertà e quindi può turbare i buoni rapporti internazionali'. However, the board of censors allowed projections 'in forma privata'. Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Revisione cinematografica definitiva, 4 May 1949. In AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*.

⁸³ See *Quaderno dell'attivista* 15/9/1950, 2.

From 1949, the PCI began protesting against censorship,⁸⁴ while trying to cast itself as a champion of the national cinema industry. The difficult situation of the Italian film industry offered the PCI a good opportunity in this respect, and the party launched a political campaign called *Per la difesa del cinema Italiano*.⁸⁵ The crisis of the Italian cinema industry had both financial and political reasons. It originated in 1945, when the legislative protection of the Italian cinema industry established by the Fascist regime in the late 1930s was abolished. This was due to the pressures of the Allied Military government, which was distributing hundreds of films produced by American film studios for both commercial and political purposes.⁸⁶

However, because Italian producers could not match the prices offered by the American distributors and, consequently, Italian films were striving to find their way to cinemas, the so-called *programmazione obbligatoria*, the obligation for cinema owners to reserve a certain number of days to the projection of Italian films, was subsequently established by the last *Governo di Unità Antifascista*.⁸⁷ This law, however, was largely disregarded by cinema owners, and the government, ruled by the *Democrazia Cristiana*, made little effort to enforce it. As a result, the Italian cinema industry soon came to the verge of failure.

In this context, the PCI sought a cultural alliance with filmmakers and film producers, championing the independence of national culture against foreign colonisation by American cinematography, and the interests of Italian cinema

⁸⁴ See Argentieri (1974, 121 - 127) and Bernagozzi (1979a, 40 - 41). The head of the *Sezione Culturale* of the PCI, Emilio Sereni, gave a speech concerning film censorship in the *Senato della Repubblica*, on 25/5/1949. See it in Sereni (1949).

⁸⁵ See *Rinascita* n. 3, 1949, 137 - 143 with contributors such as directors Alessandro Blasetti, Luchino Visconti and Luigi Zampa, the actor Gino Cervi, and the screenplay writer Cesare Zavattini.

⁸⁶ For a discussion concerning the Allied Military government policy towards the Italian cinema industry, see (Wagstaff 1995, 92 - 94).

⁸⁷ Law n. 379 of 16/5/1947, *Ordinamento dell'industria cinematografica nazionale*.

workers. A rally was jointly organised in the streets of Rome on 20 February 1949.⁸⁸ That campaign had a certain success and contributed in no small measure to building the image of the Italian Communist Party as a protector of culture and patron of the arts (Gundle 1995a, 121 – 122). Under the pressure of political campaigning, a new law on cinema establishing a series of economic measures to sustain the national film industry was eventually declared in December 1949.⁸⁹

The Democrazia Cristiana, however, was able to master the legislative intervention to its own advantage. The concession of any benefit was, in fact, to be decided by a government bureau (Quaglietti 1980, 50). Such legislation granted the government a tremendous power of pressure and control over a cinema industry desperately in need of financial aid. The DC deliberately used such a power to discourage producers from financing projects presenting features that could suggest left-wing political orientation. The hostility against films addressing social or political issues reached an almost grotesque level at the beginning of the 1950s, with the exacerbation of Cold War tensions, due to the Korean War, and thanks to the indefatigable action of Giulio Andreotti, *sottosegretario allo spettacolo*, from June 1947 until August 1953 (Quaglietti 1980, 54).

The most illustrious victim of this cultural and political climate was neorealist cinema. Neorealist cinematography indeed aroused the hostility of both the government and the Church, who orchestrated a polemical campaign targeting neorealist films for their alleged left-wing political content. Specifically emblematic, in this respect, was the open letter by Giulio Andreotti, written in February 1952,

⁸⁸ See the chronicle by Luciano Quaglietti *La "gente del cinema" non è più il mito dei quartieri di lusso*, in *l'Unità*, 22/2/1949, 3. Noticeably, the French Communist Party too had launched a political campaign in defence of the French cinema and against the invasion of American films, in 1947. See Marie (2005, 69 – 76).

⁸⁹ Law 29/12/1949 n. 958. *Disposizioni per la cinematografia*.

commenting on one of the masterpieces of neorealist cinema: Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D* (Quaglietti 1980, 84).

The neorealist movement was, however, already in crisis by this stage, and it had virtually died a few years later, strangled by the political and cultural climate of the mid-1950s. Indissolubly linked to the moral tension of the period in which it was born - the years between 1945 and 1947 which were characterized by a widespread desire for moral and political renewal - *neorealismo* had little more to offer in the mid-1950s. This was a phase in which Catholic conformism, endorsed by the DC, was challenged by an equally conformist approach to art and culture by the PCI, which had become increasingly intolerant of political and cultural dissidence in its ranks.

There were also commercial reasons behind the eclipse of politically engaged films. Purely entertaining films had always been more popular with the public than the iconic works of neorealism, which were only a part of all Italian cinematographic production (Miccichè 1974, 22 - 23). At the beginning of the 1950s, the biggest box office hits had been the melodramatic films by Raffaello Matarazzo and those belonging to the so-called *neorealismo rosa* sub-genre. The subsequent success of Italian-style comedy drove the Italian cinema industry towards the production of escapist films. In order to bypass a private film industry which was less and less willing to finance films addressing social and political issues, the PCI took a tentative step to enter mainstream cinema production through the creation of the *Cooperativa Cinematografica Spettatori Produttori*: a cooperative of cinema goers who produced films. However, the complete control over the pervasive State apparatus inherited from the Fascist regime made it easy for the DC to frustrate this

experiment and the *Cooperativa* was forced to shut down due to bureaucratic obstacles. They did, nonetheless, produce two feature films - *Achtung! Banditi!* (*Attention! Bandits!*) (1951) and *Cronache di Poveri amanti* (*Chronicles of Poor Lovers*) (1954), both directed by Carlo Lizzani (Petricelli 2004, 153 – 170; Lizzani 2007, 103 – 105).

The PCI thus lost the battle for cultural hegemony in cinema, a battle that the party had commenced rather late and had fought with limited resources. In the following years, the *Commissione Cultura* of the party would continue to defend Italian cinema and to demand new legislation for the protection of the national cinema industry. Communist film critics would keep recommending left-wing films to their readers and lambast what they regarded as low-brow cinema (that is to say Hollywood and Italian popular cinema). A systematic attempt to enter the film business, however, or to promote the distribution of a certain type of fictional film, would not take place.

Chapter 6. The PCI and the Southern Question: *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato.*

In the second half of 1949, major protest cycle took the southern countryside by storm. In Puglia, Sicily and Calabria, masses of impoverished day-labourers occupied large estates. On several occasions, police opened fire and many workers died or were injured. These events brought to the fore the so-called ‘southern question’ (*la questione meridionale*), the issue of the uneven geographical development of the Italian economy which divided the country between a richer north and a poorer south.

This accounts for the decision by the PCI to produce a documentary offering the Communist point of view on the matter. One of the aims of *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*, filmed at the end of 1949 by Carlo Lizzani, was to show to the workers of the north, and the centre of Italy the living conditions of the southern people and to explain the reasons for the endurance of the *questione meridionale* in the democratic regime. This was not the film’s only purpose, however. *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* was also part of a series of initiatives aimed at regaining hegemony over a protest movement which had gone beyond the party’s political control. The PCI leadership was indeed afraid of the extension and radical aims of the day-labourers’ movement (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 96 – 99).

The PCI’s southern sections had initially promoted the occupations as part of a political campaign aimed at obtaining the implementation of land reform. In the PCI’s plan, however, land occupations were symbolic actions and would be temporary. Communist strategy concerning agricultural workers hinged, in fact, on the enlargement of the social base of the land-reform movement through a political

and social alliance between day-labourers and small landholders. The latter were potentially frightened of a method of struggle showing no consideration for land property rights. Day-labourers believed, instead, that the moment had finally come for a long-awaited shift in the ownership of lands and tried to make these occupations permanent. By doing so they implicitly questioned the strategy of the Italian Communist Party (Ginsborg 1989, 165 - 67). *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* was therefore designed to address, along with the workers of the north, the southern day-labourers who had participated to the 1949 struggles. In this respect, the film suggested that only by embracing the PCI's political strategy southern day-labourers could hope for an improvement in their economic and social conditions.

The production of the film developed parallel to the PCI's endeavour to regain political control over the day-labourers' movement. In this respect, the party sent some of its best cadres to the south, such as the new *segretario regionale* of the Calabria region Mario Alicata, and it organised the *Assisi per la Rinascita del Mezzogiorno*, a series of conferences concerning the problems of the south. The *Assisi* were held in Bari, Salerno, Crotone and Matera, over the 3 and 4 December 1949 (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 99 - 100). The PCI also sought the involvement of intellectuals and artists, including those working in the cinema industry. At the *Assisi* held in Salerno, Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* was projected and a meeting of film directors was organised with the participation of Blasetti, Visconti, Lizzani and De Santis.⁹⁰ It was probably during this meeting that Carlo Lizzani shot the footage of the film's opening scene. *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* begins, in fact, by presenting the *Assisi* in Salerno and focusing on the conference

⁹⁰ See *Solenne apertura delle Assise per la rinascita del Mezzogiorno*, in *l'Unità* 3/12/1949, front page.

speakers. These included Leonida Rèpaci, the artist Renato Guttuso and the writer Emilio Lussu. Also highlighted is the presence of Communist politicians, including the head of the *Commissione Meridionale* Giorgio Amendola, Fausto Gullo,⁹¹ and Emilio Sereni, who was regarded as an expert of agricultural policy, since the publication of his two books concerning the problems of Italian agriculture: *La questione agraria nella rinascita nazionale italiana* (1946) and *Il capitalismo nelle campagne* (1947).

The voice-over commentary claims that, although the participation of artists and politicians in the *Assisi* is important, it is especially thanks to the presence of the ‘delegati del popolo meridionale’ that the country has become aware of the reality of southern Italy:

Il mezzogiorno svela il suo vero volto, è un volto di lavoro, è il volto di un’Italia sconosciuta ancora a tanti italiani e agli stranieri.

Subsequently, the film begins a journey to the south investigating the economic and social roots of the ‘southern question’. According to the voice-over commentary, by Mario Alicata, the social and economic backwardness of the south is essentially due to the lack of industries and to the unfair land ownership historically characterizing the *Mezzogiorno d’Italia*. How can these problems be solved? There is but one way says Alicata: southern workers must establish an alliance with the more politically advanced northern working class under the political leadership of the Italian Communist Party.

⁹¹ Fausto Gullo was Ministro dell’Agricoltura in the second Badoglio government. In October 1944, he declared his famous *decreti*, which, according to Paul Ginsborg, were the only serious attempt undertaken during the period of the *Governi di unità antifascista* to reform the semi-feudal model of estates ownership and tenure of southern Italy. See Ginsborg (1989, 77 – 80).

This political strategy was consistent with Gramsci's reading of the 'southern question' (GriAUDI 1996, 81 – 82). The voice-over commentary is virtually a summary of Gramsci's principal theoretical work on this issue, *Alcuni temi della quistione meridionale* (1926)⁹². The voice-over commentary even quotes Gramsci, stressing how the alliance of the northern and the southern workers theorized by the Communist thinker is finally possible under the new democratic regime and thanks to the presence of the Italian Communist Party. This is the 'change' the title of the film refers to:

Il grande insegnamento di Antonio Gramsci che indicava le esigenze di una profonda unità tra le forze popolari del sud e del nord d'Italia è diventato oggi una realtà vivente.

Both the voice-over commentary and the images of *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* show how Communists had a vision of southern Italy which was essentially based on the idea of backwardness. This was certainly coherent with the afore-mentioned strategy assigning the leadership of the alliance to the most advanced northern workers, but it was also the result of cultural biases. The film advertises the idea of the south as entirely underdeveloped, especially through explicit omissions of certain aspects that could have suggested a different reading of the southern reality. For example, the editing deliberately avoid showing tourist sites or city centres inhabited by the southern bourgeoisie. It indulges, instead, in the depiction of slums, poor villages and the '*tragico sasso di Matera*', to quote the voice-over commentary. As a consequence, watching *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* one may think that, at the end of the 1940s, the only inhabitants of southern

⁹² See Gramsci (2007). This essay had been published for the first time in the journal *Lo Stato operaio, Rassegna di politica proletaria*, Anno IV – n. 1, Bureau d'Éditions, Paris, January 1930.

Italy were barefoot children, women wearing tattered clothing, and veiled grannies. The only example of ‘quasi-modernity’ is the steelworks plant of Bagnoli, near Naples. It is noteworthy that the film devotes far more time to describing the struggles undertaken by southern industrial workers than to the occupations of the estates carried out by the peasants.⁹³ As far as the former are concerned, the voice-over commentary praises the ‘doti nuove di disciplina e di capacità organizzativa’, shown by the steelworkers of Bagnoli. The voice-over commentary also suggests that southern workers had been learning ‘discipline and organisation’ from their colleagues of the north, adding to these their innate ‘spirito di sacrificio’.

From an aesthetic point of view, this is the only film of the PCI’s early production which seems influenced by neorealism: the film is entirely shot on location and it presents itself as an objective recording of factual events and real subjects. The choice to adopt a neorealist aesthetic was probably due to the model set by the first post-war film dealing with the problems of southern workers, Luchino Visconti’s *La terra trema*, which the Communist press had celebrated as an extraordinary cinematographic achievement.⁹⁴ In the case of *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*, however, one could speak of a sort of iconographic, or symbolic, neorealism, in that every visual element pictured in the film is functional to the political message contained in the voice-over commentary.

⁹³ It is impossible to properly evaluate the political significance originally attributed in the film to the land occupation movement, given that the censorship commission imposed the cutting of some of the scenes showing the occupation of the landlord’s estates. See Presidenza dal consiglio dei Ministri, Servizi per la cinematografia, nulla osta del film *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*. In Archivio AAMOD, Faldone M, fascicolo *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Ugo Casiraghi *Una giuria di parte ignora un grande film*, in *l’Unità*, 7/9/1948, 3. For a production history of *La terra trema* see Semprebene (2009).

Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato may appear a mannered film to modern viewers,⁹⁵ but then it struck the audience for the graphic scenes of poverty it pictured. The film made such a profound impression on writer Carlo Levi that he offered Lizzani the opportunity to make a cinematographic version of his novel *Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli* (1945) which had revealed the rather disturbing reality of the social and economic backwardness of certain areas of southern Italy to Italian intellectuals.⁹⁶ In this respect, *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* contributed to what could be defined as ‘the discovery of the south’ by the left-wing intelligentsia of the north and centre of Italy (Ajello 1979, 230 - 32).

⁹⁵ It is worth stressing how the historian analysing archival cinematic texts cannot have the same visual experience than early spectators had when viewing the same cinematic text at the time in which it was produced. In fact, as modern viewers, we have a different perception of film, due to the evolution in cinematographic techniques, narrative styles and taste which has taken place ever since. This inevitably affects the analysis, for example making a cinematic texts appear obsolete and rhetoric, whereas contemporary viewers had not such impression. On this point see Pintus (1982, 168 – 170).

⁹⁶ Intervista a Carlo Lizzani - 25 maggio 2006, in AAMOD Archive, codice identificativo IL8700022141, A/BETA/1319. Lizzani was too young to embark in such a project and declined the offer. A dramatized version of Levi’s book would be made by Francesco Rosi thirty years later.

Chapter 7. *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa* and the Production of 1950.

Produced in 1949 by Libertas Film and directed by Carlo Lizzani, *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa* was made in order to counter the polemical campaign mounted by the conservative press against former Communist partisans. They were accused of having indiscriminately murdered hundreds of Fascists, and Fascist sympathizers, in the months following the end of the war.⁹⁷ Modena was at the centre of the so-called '*triangolo della morte*', namely the area of the Emilia-Romagna region between the cities of Bologna, Reggio Emilia and Ferrara which saw significant numbers of executions of real, or alleged, Fascists.

The political message of this twenty-eight minute film was that Modena was not a land without law - 'il Messico d'Italia', to quote the definition by the voice-over commentary written by Gianni Rodari⁹⁸ - but a city inhabited by 'brava gente, cordiale e attiva' who had always been at the forefront of the struggle for freedom. In this respect, the film established a parallel between the nineteenth century fight for national independence and the anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi military Resistance during WWII. The monument to the *Risorgimento* hero Ciriaco De Mita, a Modena native, is shown along with one dedicated to the *Resistenza*, defined as a 'secondo Risorgimento' by the voice-over commentary.

Modena città dell'Emilia rossa was the first of a series of films glorifying the social, political and, especially, economic achievements of the cities of the Emilia-Romagna governed by the PCI. It can therefore be considered as the first visual

⁹⁷ See *Il Quaderno dell'attivista*, 1/11950, 24. On the trials to former partisans taking place in 1949, see Cooke (2011, 40).

⁹⁸ Member of the resistance and subsequently journalist in *l'Unità* and *Paese Sera*, Gianni Rodari achieved a great notoriety as a children's author in the 1960s and 1970s.

representation of one of the most enduring leitmotifs of the PCI propaganda: the so-called *buongoverno* of the Italian Communists at the local level. In this respect, the film argues that the enviable wealth of the city is not only a merit of the mayor Carcassori, ‘un valoroso combattente per la libertà’, who, ‘pur dovendo applicare leggi sorpassate’, has managed to create jobs and stimulate the economy, but is also the natural consequence of the presence of a politically aware working class:

Entrando in fabbrica l’operaio modenese non rinuncia alla sua dignità personale, non si considera un servo, ha una profonda coscienza sindacale.

Those parts of the film praising the achievements of the municipal administration of Modena are patterned on the Soviet propaganda’s magnification of socialism’s accomplishments. Therefore, the film offers a collection of clichés of Soviet propaganda in the Stalinist era.⁹⁹ These include communism as a synonym of modernity and efficiency (from the ‘Filobus splendenti di modernità’ to the new *autodromo*), the construction of socialism through a titanic struggle against nature (the platoons of day-labourers turning waste lands into fertile soil in the outskirts of the city), the well-advanced infant care policy of the socialist systems (the children of the workers of Modena enjoying holidays at public seaside summer camps) and the projection towards the future (as the voice-over says: Modena is marching towards ‘un domani che canta’).¹⁰⁰

The most visually powerful scenes of the film are those drawing a comparison between the working conditions in the new, rational and modern municipal gas plant built by the Communist administration and those experienced by less fortunate

⁹⁹ On this point, see Andreucci (2005, 135 – 150).

¹⁰⁰ The expression ‘un domani che canta’ was probably suggested by the title of a film produced in 1946 by the PCF, Luis Daquin’s *Les lendemains qui chantent* (Feigelson 2005, 200).

workers employed in capitalist factories. The latter seem to be living the nightmare pictured in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*: dressed in greasy overalls, they operate outdated machinery and are poisoned by toxic fumes. By contrast, the workers of the municipal gas plant of Modena are living the Bolshevik technological dream: clean and modern machines, efficient working systems, and the rational dominion of man over machine. The voice-over commentary stresses how the man-machine relationship denounced by Marx for alienating the worker in capitalist societies has been overturned in the factory built and run by Communists. The machine is now at the service of the workers:¹⁰¹

L'operaio serviva prima macchine brute, ora è padrone di congegni perfetti e agevolmente manovrabili.

This is the quintessence of what we might call the scientific mystique of Soviet communism, in which modernity, rationality and automation were essential conditions for the realization of communism and, at the same time, its ultimate goal. Towards the end of the film the voice-over suggests that the whole of Italy could be like Modena, 'proiettata verso il futuro', provided a radical change in the political direction of the country took place:

Lunghe lotte ancora ci dividono da esso [the socialist future] ma sempre più folte decise e combattive sono le schiere che a Modena, come in tutta Italia, lottano per conquistarlo.

¹⁰¹ See what Carl Marx wrote in *The Grundrisse*: 'The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself' (Marx 1973, 693).

Modena città dell'Emilia rossa must have been the most expensive cinematographic production undertaken by the PCI in this period: there is an extensive use of camera dollies and even aerial shooting of the city. Probably, the film was a co-production involving the city municipality or the wealthy *federazioni* of the Emilia – Romagna. Aesthetically, *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa* is as far from neorealism as filmmaking style can get, given its inspiration from Soviet realist cinema: the direction faithfully illustrates the concepts expressed by the voice-over commentary, and each shot is iconic, monumental, and exemplary. The censorship imposed some minor cuts on the voice-over commentary.¹⁰²

Shortly after completing *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa*, Lizzani went back to Modena to shoot another film, *I fatti di Modena*, about the massacre which occurred on 9 January 1950. During a demonstration of workers of the *Fonderie Riunite* in a protest against the decision of the steelworks' management to dismiss many of the employees, the police opened fire on the crowd, killing six workers and wounding many others. The massacre made a profound impression on public opinion and both the socialist and Communist parties resolutely protested against the government, even asking the Secretary for the Home Department, Mario Scelba, to resign (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 79 – 80).

Unfortunately, *I fatti di Modena* was greatly censored and what is left is its ending scene: five minutes chronicling the six workers' funerals, 'dalla parte che inizia con l'uscita delle salme dall'ospedale alla fine del discorso di Togliatti' as specified in

¹⁰² The censor board asked to cut the following sentences: 'i braccianti senza terre spinti dalla miseria occupano le riserve di caccia. Sotto i loro colpi vigorosi cedono i privilegi che sono di ostacolo alla produzione' and 'sebbene privo di autonomia comunale'. See *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Servizi per la cinematografia, Revisione cinematografica definitiva del 5 giugno 1950*, in AAMOD Archive, faldone M, fascicolo *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa*.

the *nulla-osta* by the censorship board.¹⁰³ According to a statement by Carlo Lizzani¹⁰⁴, the missing part contained a detailed reconstruction of the events occurring on 9 January and proved how, given the position of the workers on the scene, the police could not have perceived any threat of being encircled (a fact reiterated in the official government report). Overall, the film endorsed the account published in *l'Unità* the day after the killing – namely, that the massacre was totally unjustified and, perhaps, premeditated.¹⁰⁵

In 1950, the PCI produced, along with *I fatti di Modena*, five other films. Gillo Pontecorvo shot a ten-minute documentary titled *Il XII Congresso della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana*, about the first congress held by the FGCI after the war (29 March - 2 April 1950). The congress took place at the Teatro Goldoni in Livorno. This was the same venue which saw the 1921 split of the PSI leading to the foundation of the PCI. No copies of this film are stored at the AAMOD. A reading of the voice-over commentary, which is attached to the *domanda di revisione* presented by Libertas Film to the censor board on 5 December 1950,¹⁰⁶ reveals that the film devoted a great deal of space to the leader of the FGCI, Enrico Berlinguer. The future leader of the PCI personally receives the flag of the FGCI from Togliatti, during a ceremony aimed at symbolizing the entrustment of the ideals the older generation had been fighting for to the new generation of Communists.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Servizi per la cinematografia, Revisione cinematografica definitiva del 6 marzo 1950*, in AAMOD Archive, faldone F, fascicolo *I fatti di Modena*.

¹⁰⁴ Intervista a Carlo Lizzani - 30 December 1999, in AAMOD Archive, codice identificativo IL8700005776, A/BETA/288.

¹⁰⁵ See Pietro Ingrao *Premeditazione*, in *l'Unità*, 10/1/1950, front page.

¹⁰⁶ In AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in catalogo*.

¹⁰⁷ On the Twelfth Congress of the FGCI, see Fiori (1989, 79 – 81). The soon-to-be acclaimed filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo was, at the time, a cadre of the FGCI, director of the FGCI magazine *Pattuglia* and Enrico Berlinguer's roommate in Milan. This is where the future leader of the PCI had been sent by the party to organize the *Fronte della Gioventù*, the early youth Communist organisation, (Fiori 1989, 61).

The second film the PCI made in 1950 was *Milioni di lettori, centomila diffusori* (10 minutes). It was produced by the *Associazione Nazionale Amici de l'Unità*, a Communist flank organisation, and concerned the official newspaper of the party. The film was edited using archival footage taken from *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* and *W l'Unità*, a short documentary (6 minutes and 30 seconds) directed by Carlo Lizzani in July 1949. This is stored at the AAMOD.¹⁰⁸ The last three films were banned by the censorship and, unfortunately, they are lost. These were: *424 milioni per l'Unità*,¹⁰⁹ a thirty-minute propaganda documentary about the PCI-ruled towns of the *Emilia Romagna* titled *I comuni del popolo*,¹¹⁰ and *I fatti di Celano*, a ten-minute film concerning the story of two day-labourers killed in the *Piana del Fucino* by private guards of a local landlord on 30 April 1950.

The rejection of PCI films by the board of censors were a consequence of the political polarisation induced by the Cold War rather than a coincidence. From 1950 onwards, censorship began to systematically target PCI productions. A reading of the censorship reports proves that, at least in some cases, government officials

¹⁰⁸ Codice identificativo IL8300001608, A/BETA/471.

¹⁰⁹ This film was produced by Libertas Film and made by Giorgio Merli, Spartaco Maggi and Giorgio Orsini. In the *Descrizione del soggetto* contained in the *Domanda di revisione* presented on 4/1/1950, we learn that the film 'Tratta delle manifestazioni per le feste dell'Unità. In particolare si diffonde sulla festa di Firenze'. The film was revised in 9/1/1950 and rejected 'ai sensi dell'art. 3 Regio decreto 24/9/1923 n. 3287, presentando il film scene che possono incitare all'odio di classe e sovvertire l'ordine pubblico'. In AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in catalogo*.

¹¹⁰ *I comuni del popolo* was produced by Libertas Film and directed by Basilio Franchina. The *Domanda di revisione* was presented on 18/4/1950. The film was revised on 24/6/1950: 'Revisionato il film si esprime parere favorevole alla programmazione in pubblico a condizione che 1) Sia mutato il titolo del documentario; 2) siano eliminati i fotogrammi in cui sono presentati dati comparativi relativi alle elezioni; 3) sia eliminato il confronto con il preteso abbandono di un comune soggetto ad amministrazione di altro partito; 4) siano eliminati quei fotogrammi riproducenti la frase scritta sui muri offensiva per il Presidente dei Ministri, per la ragione che quanto sopra potrebbe dar luogo a commenti durissimi atti a turbare l'ordine pubblico'. The folder contains a letter of complaint by Libertas Film which reads: 'Ritenendo che i tagli imposti dalla commissione di primo grado sono di una gravità tale da annullare il valore del documentario stesso [Libertas Film] chiede l'appello alla commissione di secondo grado.' However, the judgement by the *Commissione di primo grado* was confirmed and thus the PCI probably decided not to distribute the documentary. All the documents by the censorship commissions, and the screenplay of *I comuni del popolo*, can be found in AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in catalogo*.

influenced the decisions taken by the board of censors. For example, this is what an anonymous functionary of the board of censors writes on 26 June 1950 with respect to *I fatti di Celano*:

In merito al documentario “I fatti di Celano” di produzione Libertas, revisionato dalla Commissione di Revisione di I° grado il 28 corrente, si fa presente quanto segue: il documentario riguarda la ripresa cinematografica dei funerali delle due vittime dei dolorosi incidenti di Celano e sia nelle scene che nelle didascalie non vi sono elementi che possano giustificare la sua non approvazione. Il Rappresentante del Ministero dell’Interno ha però insistito che il documentario stesso fosse respinto per il fatto che la semplice rievocazione dei fatti può essere un motivo tale da provocare disordini. Trattandosi di un motivo di puro ordine pubblico per la cui valutazione il detto Rappresentante è l’unico qualificato, la Commissione si è associata alla sua richiesta respingendo il documentario stesso.¹¹¹

Censorship would eventually make Communist propaganda films fruitless in that they could not even be shown to the public. A discussion on this point is in the next chapter, along with an analysis of the films produced in 1951.

¹¹¹ In AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Nulla osta film del PCI non in Archivio*.

Chapter 8. The Party Presents Itself: *La via della libertà* and *Pace, lavoro e libertà*.

In 1951, the PCI produced two documentaries dealing with the historical and political identity of the party: *La via della libertà* and *Pace, lavoro e libertà*. The latter concerns the Seventh Congress of the PCI. *La via della libertà* is instead the first historical documentary produced by the PCI. This twenty-two minute film was written and directed by Sergio Grieco¹¹² and produced by the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* as part of a series of cultural initiatives undertaken to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the party's foundation.¹¹³

The importance of history in the construction of the PCI's identity has been pointed out by several historians.¹¹⁴ In the post-war years, the PCI was, in many respects, a party in search of political legitimacy. The connection with the USSR provided the PCI with a powerful ideological reference point and undoubtedly assured its popularity with the Italian working class. A political identity exclusively based on the international dimension, however, could not be enough for the *partito nuovo*. The PCI needed to cast itself as a national party in order to counter the allegation of being a foreign body in the Italian political panorama, an emissary of the USSR with no connections to the political and cultural traditions of Italy. Such legitimization could only be found in history. Hence, the necessity of endorsing a specific reading of Italian history and of promoting it, as Togliatti had pointed out

¹¹² Sergio Grieco had initiated his career as an assistant director during the Fascist period and would write and direct many B-movies in the following decades, under the pseudonym of Terence Hathaway. Some of the films he wrote, like *Quel maledetto treno blindato* (*Inglorious bastards*), are nowadays regarded as cult movies.

¹¹³ See, for example, the special issue of the *Quaderni di Rinascita* titled *Trent'anni di vita e di lotte del PCI* and edited by Palmiro Togliatti.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Ballone (1994, 134).

since 1945, particularly among those militants and cadres who had only recently joined the party (Vacca 2007, 4).

La via della libertà is therefore a compendium of modern Italian history according to the PCI and includes many historical myths defining the PCI's identity. The first of these is the myth of origins. The split that occurred at the Congress of Livorno, in January 1921, is presented as a pivotal event marking the definitive surpassing of the defeatist attitude that characterized the Italian Socialist Party.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the PCI is presented as the heir of PSI's respected moral and political traditions. When the socialist party, paralyzed by the action of the *riformisti*, had become incapable of leading the working class, the PCI had simply taken over in the best interests of the Italian people and the international proletariat. According to Roberto Bonchio's voice-over commentary:¹¹⁶

Per la prima volta il proletariato italiano ha un partito consapevole dei problemi che gli sono d'innanzi.

The great event that changed the course of human history was, however, the October Revolution, the myth par excellence. The film establishes a parallelism between the PCI and the PCUS, Togliatti being to Gramsci what Stalin was to Lenin: a comrade, friend and a faithful continuator of his work. The image of the two Communist leaders working together harmoniously was one of the *topoi* of Communist mythology.¹¹⁷ Communist militants are said to be the only ones countering the rise of

¹¹⁵ On this point, see Andreucci (2005, 26 - 7).

¹¹⁶ Roberto Bonchio was an intellectual and a writer. He was the founder and the director of Editori Riuniti, the PCI's publishing house for many years. See his obituary in *l'Unità* 16 /4/2010, 41.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, the article celebrating both the 20th anniversary of the death of Lenin and the 23rd anniversary of the foundation of the PCI, published in *l'Unità*, southern edition, in 21/1/1944. A section of it reads: 'La storia della classe operai è ricca di episodi di collaborazione tra capi. Marx ed

Fascism in Italy and, subsequently, the PCI's opposition to the regime is presented as uncompromising and highly effective thanks to the party's working class roots. In this respect, the film deliberately overlooks the almost total destruction of the party's underground network by Fascist political police in the 1930s, which caused a dramatic decline of the Communist influence on the Italian working class (Galli 1977, 168 – 170).

The voice-over commentary also claims that PCI policy had always been aimed at achieving unity among the anti-Fascist political parties during the years of the Fascist regime. Rather than just promulgating a myth, this narrative is simply a fabrication. The truth is that the PCd'I accepted, from 1928 up until mid-1930s, the so-called 'social fascism theory', namely the doctrine establishing equivalence between social democracy and fascism, which was formulated by the Communist parties at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. This was probably the most improvident decision taken by the Third International, in that, by splitting the anti-fascist forces, it eased the diffusion of fascism in Europe. Noticeably, in dealing with the Resistance period, the film omits to quote the political episode on which subsequent left-wing historiography was going to build the image of the PCI as a national party and solid pillar of Italian democracy: the *Svolta di Salerno* (see Part I, Chapter 1). It can be argued that the *Svolta di Salerno* did not constitute an especially alluring argument for the Communist rank and files, who were rather eager to see episodes affirming the party's revolutionary spirit.

Engels e, su un altro piano, Luxemburg and Liebknecht in Germania, Gramsci ed Ercoli [Palmiro Togliatti's nom de guerre] in Italia, Thorez and Duclos in Francia, hanno costituito o costituiscono dei formidabili «tandem» di lavoro nei quali le esperienze e le energie dell'uno elevano e potenziano le esperienze e le energie dell'altro. Ma mai, forse, tale collaborazione è stata così intima e profonda, benchè poco appariscente, come nel caso di Lenin e Stalin'. The article is by Paolo Tedeschi, pseudonym of the director of the Neapolitanian edition of *l'Unità*, Velio Spano.

In April 1951, the PCI held its Seventh Congress at the Teatro Adriano in Rome. Another film was shot on that occasion: *Pace, lavoro e libertà*, a twenty-seven minute documentary chronicling the five days of the congress. Gillo Pontecorvo directed the film and the cinematographers were Carlo Carlini and Giuseppe Rotunno. Both would subsequently shoot the photography for several of Fellini's masterworks.

The Seventh Congress is especially noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, Togliatti made some significant statements about the necessity to undertake a struggle for the full implementation of the Constitution, anticipating a political line which would be more precisely defined in the following Eighth Congress in December 1956 (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 226 – 28). Secondly, the congress was largely devoted to the party's organisational problems and Pietro Secchia made a clear-cut attempt to reshape, at least partially, the PCI according to the Leninist model of the party of cadres (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 228 – 235). However, these issues are completely neglected in the film by Pontecorvo and the political aspects of the congress are reduced to a single, easily understandable concept, as claimed by the voice-over commentary:

Dal Congresso sono uscite le linee di una politica di pace in pieno sviluppo.

Even the speech by Palmiro Togliatti is presented as solely focused on the problem of peace. This certainly was a central issue of PCI policy at the time.¹¹⁸ However, the

¹¹⁸ The so-called *Campagna per la pace* was a political mobilisation on national scale aimed at defending the Soviet Union against putative military attacks from capitalist countries. This possibility seemed to have become more realistic following the establishment of the Atlantic Pact in April 1949. On the *Campagna per la pace* and the so-called *Partigiani della Pace* movement see Giacomini (1984) and Gozzini and Martinelli (1998, 145 – 151). On the *Campagna per la pace*, the PCI made a seven-minute documentary titled *Gioventù in marcia*, about the march organized in Rome by the

choice to avoid an exhaustive political analysis of the political aspects of the congress is especially due to the purposes the film was designed for. As is the case with other PCI productions on the party's congresses, the aim of *Pace, lavoro e libertà* is not so much to illustrate the political line established during the congress as to consolidate a certain idea of the PCI in Communist viewers. Besides, the film served the purpose of showing the rituals which constituted the Communist congressional mystique to the Communist audience.

As pointed out by David Kertzer, rituals had a paramount role in the life of the Italian Communist Party as they bound militants both to the party and to others, thus providing individuals with group identity (Kertzer 1996, 125 – 26). Party congresses were 'the holiest of the rites of the PCI' (Kertzer 2001, 104). It is exactly for this reason that these kind of films are valuable for the historian investigating the role of rituality in the construction of Communist identity.

First, the film presents the party leaders. These are shot in close up, one by one, for a time that is directly proportional to their importance while delegates clap enthusiastically and sing the *Inno di Mameli*. The symbolic message is that Communist people are solidly united behind their leaders and the PCI is, by all means, a national party. The audience warmly welcomes the leader of the PSI, Pietro Nenni, who takes his place next to Palmiro Togliatti, symbolizing the ideological and political proximity of the two parties. Pietro Secchia, in the opening speech, talks about the previous six congresses of the Party. This reminds the audience that the

Alleanza Giovanile, an organisation promoted by the PCI, on 10 July 1949. On the *Alleanza giovanile* and the July march, see Guiso (2006, 157 – 161).

PCI has a long historical tradition, something Togliatti had famously alluded to in a speech given at the *Assemblea Costituente*: ‘Noi veniamo da lontano [...]’.¹¹⁹

Another fundamental moment follows: the procession of delegates offering gifts to the podium. This ritual very much recalls that portion of the Christian Eucharistic service called the offertory, when bread and wine are brought to the altar. Workers from Terni donate a portrait of Luigi Trastulli, killed by the police while protesting against the Italian adherence to the Atlantic pact, on 17 March 1949.¹²⁰ Trastulli represents the Communist martyr who, like Christ, spilled his blood for the sake of his brothers. The workers of the Officine Meccaniche of Reggio Emilia offer a small-scale model of the *R. 60* farm tractor that they had themselves designed and produced during the occupation of the factory. This had lasted over a year and was still underway while the congress was taking place.¹²¹ This gift symbolized the roots the party had firmly established in the factories of the country. The agricultural labourers of the South are represented too by the widow of the union organizer Epifanio Li Puma, ‘caduto durante le lotte eroiche dei contadini meridionali’.

The film reaches its climax when a fellow inmate of Antonio Gramsci brings to the podium a few objects that belonged to the great Communist thinker. ‘Un fremito di commozione percorre la sala’, the voice-over says, while Togliatti personally receives the gift and holds these quasi-relics (a bowl and a spoon) in front of an audience that claps enthusiastically. Subsequently, the congress turns into a sort of *kermesse* of the Communist sub-culture: *mondine* (female day-labourers working

¹¹⁹ *Per la sfiducia al IV Governo De Gasperi*, Assemblea Costituente, 26 settembre 1947, in *Discorsi parlamentari: 1946-1951*, Camera dei Deputati, 1984. See the speech by Togliatti published in *l'Unità*, 27/9/1947, front page and page 3.

¹²⁰ On the death of Luigi Trastulli see Portelli (1991, 1 – 26).

¹²¹ On the occupation of the Officine Meccaniche see the documentary produced by the Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico, *I giorni dell'R60*, in AAMOD Archive, codice identificativo IL8700012065, A/BETA/580.

in the paddy fields) singing traditional songs, *pionieri* dancing,¹²² members of the Resistance and veterans of the Spanish civil war alternating at the lectern on the stage for brief greetings.

The interventions of the foreign Communist parties' delegates, hierarchically starting from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, symbolize the PCI's affiliation to the expansive international Communist movement. This scene seems especially aimed at comforting the party's rank and files, reminding them that, even in such a difficult time, they are not alone. This is stressed by the voice-over commentary:

I congressisti hanno accolto con commosso entusiasmo queste testimonianze della fraternità e della solidarietà che lega oggi i lavoratori e i democratici di ogni paese nella lotta per la difesa della pace e della libertà contro coloro che minacciano il mondo di una nuova catastrofe.

The film ends showing a speech given by Togliatti at the Piazza San Giovanni in Rome a few days after the congress. Togliatti addresses the immense crowd in front of him saying:

Ecco la parola più grande, la parola nuova che è uscita dal nostro congresso e che io ho voluto portare a voi cittadini di Roma: la parola Pace.

This ending also has a symbolic meaning: it is now time to turn the political line established at the congress into concrete political action and speak to the entirety of the Italian people.

¹²² The *Pionieri* were the members of the PCI youth organisation *Associazione Pionieri d'Italia*, inspired by the Scouts and Soviet Pioneer movement, See Negrello (2000, 99 – 105). The association had its own magazine, *Il Pioniere* (Franchini 2006).

With *Pace, lavoro e libertà*, the first phase of PCI cinematographic production ended. From 1952 to 1957, only one film was produced, a sixteen-minute documentary called *Omaggio a Cesare Manetti* (1953). This is about Togliatti's commemoration of Cesare Manetti, a Communist cadre of the clandestine period who died during the Resistance.¹²³ Cinematic propaganda would play no role in the 1953 electoral campaign.

The decision by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* to renounce the production of propaganda films was due to various reasons. The most important of these was, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the hardening of the censorship against Communist cinematography due to the crescendo of Cold War tensions at the beginning of the 1950s.¹²⁴ Another was that Communist film production had intrinsic weaknesses, especially a lack of proper avenues for film distribution. The party could count on a certain number of venues able to project the so-called *passo ridotto*, namely rooms equipped with 16mm cine - projectors located in the *Case del Popolo*, *Camere del lavoro* (the territorial branches of the CGIL) and in the A.N.P.I (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia) sections, but only on a few cinemas equipped with 35mm cine – projectors (the so-called *passo normale*).

In July 1949, the annual report by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, frankly admitted the scarcity of the Communist-controlled *circuito di distribuzione a passo normale*:

¹²³ See AAMOD, Unitefilm Archive, Codice identificativo: IL8000000013, M/Ppos/988.

¹²⁴ See, for example, *Verbale di decisioni della riunione del 26/4/1951 della Commissione Elettorale*: ‘Si sospende utilizzazione autocinema fin quando non sarà ottenuta regolare autorizzazione. Si decide di sollecitare le Federazioni ad utilizzare pellicole di propaganda con l’ausilio di mezzi locali e indipendentemente dagli autocinema. La spesa prevista per l’uso degli autocinema verrà eventualmente destinata ad altre forme di propaganda’, in IG, APCI, MF 332, pp. 678 – 679, *Stampa e propaganda*, 30 April 1951.

Disponiamo di una rete numericamente esigua di sale già organizzate a circuito sul piano provinciale e regionale, sia come *circuito di programmazione* (società che curano soltanto la distribuzione di film a sale non da loro gestite), sia come *circuito di gestione*: il *C.R.E.C.* a Bologna, *L'AgerFilm* a Reggio Emilia, la *Cine Parvo* a Firenze, *L'Emac* a Milano, società da noi controllate, dispongono in tutto per conto del nostro partito di circa 200 sale.¹²⁵

The PCI's achievements in film distribution were no match to what the organisations linked to the Catholic Church had previously achieved in this field. For example, in 1949, the A.C.E.C (Associazione Cattolica Esercenti Cinema) controlled over three thousand cinemas.¹²⁶ Furthermore, even the distribution network for *a passo ridotto* films, while being well developed in certain areas of the *regioni rosse*, and especially in Emilia Romagna, was virtually absent in other areas of the country, particularly southern Italy.

The figures concerning the distribution of *14 luglio* and *Togliatti è ritornato*, which were the two most successful films between 1946 and 1956, prove that Communist films had a rather limited distribution. Only 28 copies were distributed in 35 mm, and 19 in 16mm, of *14 Luglio*, within one year from its release, while foreign Communist parties purchased nine copies. As far as *Togliatti è ritornato* is concerned, the *Stampa e Propaganda* distributed 20 copies in 35 mm and 23 in 16mm to the various *federazioni*, while the so-called *partiti comunisti fratelli*, that is to say the foreign Communist parties, purchased 8 copies in 35 mm.¹²⁷ Such figures

¹²⁵ *Dati sull'attività propagandistica – Riservato ai membri del comitato centrale*, in IG, APCI, MF 300, p. 358, *Stampa e Propaganda*, July 1949.

¹²⁶ See Brunetta (1979, 311).

¹²⁷ *Dati sull'attività propagandistica – Riservato ai membri del comitato centrale*, in IG, APCI, MF 300, p. 358, *Stampa e Propaganda*, July 1949.

certainly discouraged the party's leadership from investing in a form of propaganda which was scarcely successful in terms of audience and that could not be uniformly used throughout the country. To some extent, distribution represented a problem during the years of incorporation of Unitelefilm too, and it can therefore be considered as the Achilles' heel of PCI cinematographic production.

Another serious problem that the cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* had to deal with was the high cost of film production. The remuneration of Communist films was essentially based on selling copies to the party's *federazioni* which, in turn, were supposed to cover the considerable cost of each purchase through subscription among the militants. This system proved to be hardly sustainable as many federations were reluctant to invest their meagre financial resources in this expensive form of propaganda.¹²⁸

According to Carlo Lizzani, the interruption of PCI cinematographic production was also due to a generation gap: at the beginning of the 1950s, Lizzani and his colleagues became professional filmmakers without having formed a new generation of Communist cinematographers that could take their place (Lizzani 1991, 100).

Once the cinematographic production was dropped, the *Stampa e Propaganda* decided to invest in the production of so-called *filmine* (film-strips), namely slides with drawings and written text, designed to be projected onto a screen using a slide projector. The *filmine* were much less expensive to produce and,

¹²⁸ See the harsh reprimands published in *Il Quaderno dell'attivista* stigmatizing those *federazioni* which had failed to buy the documentaries produced by the party. One, for example, can be found in the issue of March 1949: 'Che sia forse più efficace la loro inerzia della censura di Andreotti?', 30.

importantly, could not be censored as the 1923 law did not foresee such a form of visual propaganda.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ On the *filmine*, see Mignemi (1995). A selection of *filmine* produced in the 1950s can be found at the Archivio AAMOD: *Come l'uomo divenne gigante* (1953), *La Dc contro la gioventù* (1953), *La grande truffa (Legge elettorale della DC)* (1953), *Il mezzogiorno alla riscossa* (1953), *La C.E.D. contro l'indipendenza dell'Italia* (1953?); Codice identificativo IL8300021263, A/BETA/1280.

Part II. A New Beginning (1956 – 1964)

Chapter 1. From One Crisis to Another.

The years between 1956 - 1964 represented, in many respects, a period of crisis for the Italian Communist Party. The shock provoked by the publication of Nikita Khrushchev's secret report, in June 1956, imposed a partial reassessment of the party's objectives and, consequently, of its political strategy.¹ Furthermore, the end of the political alliance with the Italian Socialist Party, following the repression of the Hungarian uprising by the troops of the Warsaw Pact, signified the collapse of one of the pillars of the PCI's political strategy. From then onwards, the PCI had to cope with the peril that the political rapprochement between the PSI and the PSDI and the putative participation of the PSI in a government coalition with the *Democrazia Cristiana*, the so-called *centrosinistra*, would have as a consequence the political isolation of the Communists.

On the other hand, the PCI proved to be firmly and deeply rooted in Italian society and it was able to compensate for the loss of prestige and credibility suffered by the international Communist movement through a strengthening of its national character. The Eighth Congress of the party (Rome, 8 – 14 December 1956) was decisive in this respect. The Congress solemnly embraced the so-called *Via italiana al socialismo* (The Italian road to socialism), a strategy which entailed a peaceful and gradual transition to socialism through *riforme di struttura* (reforms of the political and economic structure of the country) within a democratic political framework. From that moment onward, any residual aspiration to insurrection was put aside, and the party leadership was committed to eradicating palingenetic expectations among

¹ On the ideological and political consequences produced in the PCI by de-Stalinization and by the Hungarian uprising, see Righi (1996).

the rank and files for a revolution to be delivered by the Red Army (Di Loreto 1991, 7).

The Eighth Congress has been traditionally presented as a turning point in the history of the PCI. Certainly, the novelties it introduced cannot be underestimated, especially with respect to the generational change which occurred in the party leadership (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 628 – 29). In other respects, however, continuity prevailed. Quite apart from the permanence of ‘Bolshevik’ features in the internal organisation of the party, such as democratic centralism and self-criticism, the principal element of continuity from a political point of view was the permanence of a strict ideological and political connection with the Soviet Union (Gozzini and Martinelli 1998, 635 – 36). Even the political line of ‘the Italian road to socialism’ was a direct consequence of the fact that the Twentieth Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union had explicitly accepted the possibility of different roads to socialism (Sassoon 1981, 98).

From an electoral point of view, the party held its position in the 1958 elections, and was even able to increase its share by over one million votes in the following election of April 1963.² Between these two elections, the political crisis of *luglio '60* unequivocally demonstrated how any hypothesis of stabilisation of the power of the Democrazia Cristiana through a solution strengthening the conservative and authoritarian character of the government was to be regarded as unfeasible.³

² The results of the 1958 and 1963 national elections are in Ghini (1968), 148 – 192 and 193 – 268 respectively.

³ The so-called *luglio '60* was a series of dramatic confrontations between demonstrators and police that occurred in several Italian cities in July 1960. The *casus belli* was the decision of the government led by Mr Tambroni, a DC politician, to allow the post-Fascist MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) to hold its congress in Genoa, a city with strong anti-Fascist traditions. To increase the political tension there was also the fact that the Tambroni government was in power only thanks to the votes of the MSI's MPs. The police used excessive force to quell the first demonstrations, causing an escalation of violence. In Genoa, demonstrations nearly turned into an uprising. Police killed a few

Overall, *luglio '60* proved that, in spite of the difficult political context of the Cold War, the pedagogical action of the Communist Party had borne some fruits: anti-Fascism, in particular, had become one of the moral pillars of the Italian Republic (Ginsborg 1989, 348).

By 1962, after a long period of political negotiation, the *centrosinistra* finally came into being.⁴ Meanwhile, the PCI had managed to recover from the ideological crisis of 1956 and, thanks to its electoral standing, was once again able to successfully cast itself as a protagonist of the Italian political panorama, maintaining some space for political manoeuvre.

However, this period ended with another crisis of a much different nature. On 21 August 1964, Palmiro Togliatti died during a visit to the Crimea, leaving the Italian Communists bereft of the leader who had not only engineered the political strategy of the PCI for many years, but who also embodied the authoritativeness and prestige of the party in the eyes of millions of militants and voters.

The years investigated by this chapter are also crucial from an economic standpoint. It is during this period, and more precisely between 1958 and 1963, that the country experienced the so-called *boom*, the peak of the post-war Italian economic development (Crainz 2005; Castronovo 2010). The Italian economic

protesters and injured many. Eventually, the government stepped back, prohibiting the Congress of the MSI. Mr Tambroni resigned shortly after. On *luglio '60* see Cooke (2000). No PCI films are specifically devoted to the events of *luglio '60*. The only film dealing briefly with this issue is *La Via Sicura* (1964), produced by the Milanese Federation of the party. Unedited video material concerning *luglio '60* is stored in the AAMOD Archive, Archivio Unitelefilm: eight minutes of silent footage on the funerals of Ovidio Franchi, Lauro Farioli, Emilio Reverberi, Marino Serri and Afro Tondelli, killed by the police in Reggio Emilia, on 7 July 1960 (codice identificativo: IL8300002297), and one minute of silent footage about the clashes in Genoa (30 June) and Rome (6 July) (codice identificativo: IL8000001303).

⁴ The first *centrosinistra organico*, that is the direct participation of the PSI to a government coalition with the DC, occurred only in December 1963. From 1962, however, the Fanfani government enjoyed the benevolent abstention of the Socialist Party. For more information, see Ginsborg (1989, 362 – 70).

performance was so phenomenal and unexpected that it appeared to many a sort of miracle: a *miracolo economico*, as it was defined. It was, however, not as much of a miracle as first thought. The ground had actually been prepared during the post-war years by numerous factors, not the least of which was the availability of a large stock of cheap labour from the southern regions. One of the most striking aspects of the Italian economic development was therefore the massive emigration of male workers first, and of entire families shortly after, from the South to the industrial districts of the north of Italy, a phenomenon which had profound consequences for the social structure of entire communities, as graphically demonstrated in Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960).⁵

At the beginning, the PCI was in denial of the actual existence of the economic miracle. The Italian economic performance was in conflict with the Communist ideological vision of a capitalist system incapable of producing any important and long-lasting economic growth. Besides, according to the PCI leadership, Italy was, from an industrial point of view, Europe's weakest link. Until the implementation of a socialist transformation of the economic structure of the country, Italy was doomed to remain an agriculture-based economy with a few industrial areas. When the rate of economic growth made it impossible to deny the existence of the *miracolo economico*, the PCI chose to focus on its negative aspects: the unevenly distributed benefits of the economic growth, its short-term nature, and the social and personal dramas provoked by emigrations. These were recurrent issues of the PCI cinematic propaganda over this period.

⁵ An analysis of internal migration over the years of the *boom* is in Arru and Ramella (2003, 229 – 369).

The spectacular and relatively sudden transformation from an agricultural to an industrial-based economy dramatically affected the shape of families, gender roles, and the habits of virtually every Italian citizen. The economic modernisation of the country also led to an unprecedented development of the cultural industry. This was probably one of the most challenging issues the Italian Communist Party had to deal with in those years.

The PCI had always had difficulties in comparing itself positively with modern mass culture, and especially with the cultural products of capitalist society. Communist intellectuals interpreted the rising youth culture as a degeneration of real, popular Italian culture, or even a tool of American propaganda (Forgacs 1990, 105). Such hostility was not completely unjustified. Modern mass culture involved the diffusion of consumerism which, with its emphasis on the satisfaction of private needs and desires, was likely to undermine PCI policy at its very roots. This was, in fact, oriented towards the fulfilment of collective necessities. Around the years of the economic boom, the PCI became aware that the rise of the cultural industry could not be effectively countered and that nobody, not even the Communist militants, were immune from its influence. The party tried, thus, to adapt its cultural policy to the new situation.

A significant document, jointly compiled by the members of the national Cultural and Propaganda commissions in 1961 is rather revealing in this respect.⁶ It is probably the first time that the expression '*industria culturale*' – albeit in inverted commas - was deployed in an official party document. The document acknowledged how:

⁶ IG, APCI, MF 477, pp. 2636 – 47, Sez. Culturale, serie 1961.

Nel corso di questi ultimi anni si sono verificate profonde trasformazioni nella vita intellettuale e morale delle masse popolari italiane. Nuove esigenze e nuovi bisogni si sono manifestati nei confronti dei problemi della cultura, del costume della vita associativa, della ricreazione, dello sport.⁷

Although such changes were attributed to the promotion of a ‘solida coscienza democratica’ carried out by the PCI, the document also admitted that the increasing diffusion of the modern media, such as radio, television, cinema and, overall, ‘la loro trasformazione in una vera “industria culturale” collegata all’espansione monopolistica della economia italiana’, had played a relevant part. The report stressed how the party had to prepare in order to fight what was to be, by all means, a tough political and ideological struggle against the subtle activity of ideological corruption carried out by the leading classes and monopolist groups. At the same time, the document also criticized the left-wing intellectuals for their aristocratic attitude towards popular culture. It condemned the use of the expression ‘massificazione della cultura’ as suggesting the incomprehension of people’s cultural needs, and hailed the crisis of the cultural dichotomy traditionally characterizing Italy - one reserved to the lower class and another to the leading class - as a positive development.⁷ Such a statement represented a major change in the Communist approach to the issue of popular culture. Party cultural policy precisely required cultural initiatives addressed to intellectuals to differ from those aimed at a wider audience, and both were designed as an appendage of propaganda.⁸ The documents

⁷ On the crisis of hegemonic function of traditional intellectual during the *boom*, see Gundle (2000, 82).

⁸ See Gundle (1995a, 129).

ended claiming that the long-term objective of the PCI was the foundation of a new popular culture grounded in Marxism and aimed at being ‘la coscienza critica’ of the Italian masses. Short term goals were instead a resumption of a political campaign against censorship and a struggle for the *democratizzazione* of the RAI TV, namely a campaign to obtain political pluralism in public television broadcasting.

It is quite meaningful that the PCI mentioned public television broadcasting in its documents. Television was, in fact, the great novelty of this period. Within a few years from the beginning of the regular television service, on 3 January 1954, television became a central factor in the cultural life of the nation. It also represented a powerful propaganda tool firmly controlled by the government, and therefore by the Democrazia Cristiana (Monteleone 1992, 211 – 215; Ortoleva 2008, 101 – 102). The next section shows how the great success of television led the PCI to gradually reshape its propaganda by taking the influential role played by television into consideration. In this respect, television affected PCI cinematographic production, especially the thematic and aesthetic features of Communist films, and eventually persuaded the party leadership to harness visual propaganda through the establishment of a film production company called Unitelefilm.

Chapter 2. The PCI at the Dawn of the Television Age

Several authors have argued that the Communists' approach to television denoted a fundamental misunderstanding of the cultural potential of the medium. The purely political optic adopted in judging the content of the television shows prevented the PCI from appreciating how television represented, in spite of its rather conservative tone, a powerful vehicle for cultural and social emancipation.⁹

This judgement is true in some respects. For the Italian Communist Party, the RAI TV was, to quote one bulletin issued by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* 'il grande nemico', which Communist militants had to fight in all possible ways.¹⁰ In other respects, however, many intellectuals and leaders of the PCI understood quite clearly the potential of television and the novelty it represented. It is not infrequent to find, in the Communist press of the period, statements and opinions which reveal awareness of the cultural changes produced by the new medium, for example in regard to the power of television to demystify the liturgy of the Church (Bellassai 2000, 130). Besides, while harshly criticizing the RAI for the bias of its news service and the clerical influence on the TV shows, the PCI understood perfectly the propaganda potential of television.

The polemical campaign waged against television did not prevent the cadres working at the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* from negotiating with the RAI directors in order to gain visibility whenever possible. In this respect, the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* obtained, 'dopo una serie di incontri e discussioni', the news coverage of the Ninth Congress of the Party (Rome, 30 January – 4 February 1960).

⁹ See Crapis (2002, 40), Gundle (2000a, 93) and Monteleone (1992, 240).

¹⁰ IG, APCI, MF 468, pp. 1475 – 1482, *Stampa e Propaganda. Alle Segreterie delle federazioni*, 1 June 1960.

The RAI also agreed to broadcast six interviews, each of two minutes length, with the Communist leaders Terracini, Longo, Gian Carlo Pajetta, Novella, Scoccimarro and Togliatti.¹¹

Shortly after, on 6 July 1960, the Corte Costituzionale, the Italian Constitutional Court, which passes judgements on the constitutionality of laws, declared that the state monopoly on television broadcasting could only be considered as legitimate providing that the RAI grant a plurality of political opinions to be expressed (Monteleone 1992, 329 – 330). In compliance with the Court's sentence, the RAI designed one of its most enduring television programmes, *Tribuna Elettorale*, a television news conference in which journalists of different political orientations interviewed politicians of the various parties. The first historical appearance of Palmiro Togliatti in *Tribuna Elettorale* was scheduled for 14 October 1960, in the view of the local elections being held on 7 November 1960.

The PCI dealt with Togliatti's presence on TV as a long-awaited opportunity to talk to millions of Italian voters at once. Detailed instructions on how to prepare this event were compiled by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* and issued to the local *federazioni*. It is worthwhile to report them at length:¹²

Tutte le federazioni e i circoli che hanno un televisore invitino largamente il pubblico, anche mediante striscioni e volantini, a venire ad assistere nei nostri locali alla conferenza stampa di Togliatti.

Tutti i compagni che possiedono il televisore o la radio invitino i vicini ad ascoltare la conferenza stampa nella loro casa;

¹¹ IG, APCI, MF 468, pp. 1431 – 1432, Stampa e Propaganda, serie 1960.

¹² IG, APCI, MF 468, pp. 1544 – 1548, Stampa e Propaganda, *A tutte le Segreterie, a tutti i responsabili propaganda delle Federazioni*, 10/10/1960.

Le sezioni procurino, compatibilmente con le disposizioni vigenti, di diffondere la conferenza stampa all'esterno mediante altoparlanti, e i compagni che hanno la radio o il televisore in casa collochino l'apparecchio vicino alla finestra aperta in modo che la trasmissione possa essere ascoltata nei cortili.

Le Federazioni procurino di registrare su nastro il sonoro della conferenza stampa, per utilizzarlo nei giorni successivi attraverso gli altoparlanti mobili e nei comizi rionali.

Nei locali pubblici, (e non solo in quelli centrali) nostri propagandisti qualificati siano presenti per intervenire attivamente nelle discussioni e nei capannelli che si formeranno dopo la conferenza stampa.

As far as the appearance of the other parties' politicians were concerned, the *propagandisti* were also required to be present in bars and public venues, but this time in order to 'intervenire con interruzioni polemiche durante la trasmissione'. By coincidence, the above-mentioned constitutional court's sentence imposing pluralism on the RAI was issued while the country was shaken by the turmoil of *luglio '60*. The 6 July was the day in which a cavalry squad of Italian police charged protesters at Porta San Paolo, in Rome (Cooke 2000, 95 – 100). Palmiro Togliatti exploited this circumstance with consummate ability, claiming, during his conference, that his presence at the national television was due to the fierce struggle for democracy undertaken in the previous summer, and it was visible proof of the victory obtained by the 'grande movimento antifascista e democratico'.¹³

¹³ See Togliatti's speech on *l'Unità*, 15/10/1960, front page and page 8.

The party also made a great effort to adequately prepare the last appearance of Togliatti on national television, broadcast on 25 April 1963, in advance of the national political election to be held three days after. Mario Benocci, who would be the first director of Unitelefilm, prepared a detailed memorandum for Palmiro Togliatti with precise instructions on how to behave and what to say in the course of his twelve minutes *appello agli elettori*. The memorandum was compiled on the basis of suggestions coming from ‘i compagni che lavorano in RAI’:¹⁴

La prima raccomandazione fattaci è che tu parli in prima persona dando all’esposizione carattere discorsivo. In questo senso ti si chiede di rivolgerti agli ascoltatori direttamente con frequenza (“vedete”, “anche voi considererete”, ecc.) [...] Quanto alla intelaiatura del discorso si ritiene utile che vengano posti un numero limitato di problemi insistendo, ripetendo, semplificando. I compagni della TV affermano che la maggior efficacia viene raggiunta da discorsi ben articolati, sezionati in parti e che si reggono anche a se stanti, pur risultando da essi un quadro generale.

The memorandum also recommended showing a letter mailed to Togliatti in order to imply that the leader of the Communist party received correspondence from ordinary citizens. It appears that the communication strategy of the Italian Communist Party was slowly but increasingly adapting to the new medium: even *l’Unità*, the most important source of information for every Communist militant, informed its readers about Togliatti’s presence on TV, and it published his speech entirely the day after.¹⁵

¹⁴ IG, APCI MF 489, pp. 1698 – 1699, *Nota per il compagno Togliatti*, 22 April 1963.

¹⁵ See *l’Unità*, 26/4/1963, front page and page 12.

Togliatti conformed rather faithfully to the instruction contained in the memorandum.¹⁶ He addressed the viewers in rather informal terms, trying to look directly at the camera as much as possible and showing a relaxed manner. His speech was quite emotional, being based on sentiments rather than rational arguments. For example, he described how the fatigue of his intense electoral tour had been eased by the sympathy shown to him by the Italian people:

Per chi è stato come me, costretto, per quasi venti anni, dalla odiosa tirannide fascista, a vivere in esilio, lontano dalla patria, questo contatto [with the Italian people] è sempre cosa che profondamente commuove, rivedere la città di Torino, dove conobbi Antonio Gramsci e ci legammo al movimento degli operai.

Finally, he showed a letter, as suggested in the memorandum, even spending a few moments to describe the tragic situation of the sender, the wife of a worker fired ‘dopo una vita di lavoro’ due to incurable illness.

The Communist awareness of the importance of television constantly grew over the decade. In a document from May 1967, the new head of propaganda, Achille Occhetto, claimed that PCI propaganda had to be based on the issues daily addressed by television:

Dobbiamo partire dal presupposto che la televisione non è solo un nemico che ci attacca, no, la televisione è anche uno strumento fondamentale su cui noi dobbiamo lavorare e con cui noi lavoriamo, perché la Tv unifica a livello nazionale l’informazione, [emphasis in the original], una propaganda che prescinde da questo è una propaganda inutile. Noi partiamo da questo dato

¹⁶ The twelve minutes of *Appello agli elettori di Palmiro Togliatti* broadcast on 25 April 1963, is stored at the AAMOD, Archivio Unitefilm, codice indentificativo: IL8210002232.

nuovo: che alla sera sappiamo cosa milioni e milioni di italiani sanno e che quindi sulla base di quello che sanno milioni di italiani noi dobbiamo impostare la nostra iniziativa, la nostra risposta e la nostra propaganda.¹⁷

Parallel to the awareness of the pivotal role of television in influencing public opinion, the PCI's frustration grew over its exclusion from the RAI TV. The few minutes in which Communist politicians could speak to Italians, thanks to the *tribune elettorali* or the *tribune politiche* (another famous politics show broadcast on regular basis during the year), could not compensate for a daily programming which was shaped according to the policy, mentality and religious beliefs of the ruling parties and, in particular, of the Christian Democrats, especially as far as TV news bulletins were concerned.

In order to address this problem, the PCI would launch its most ambitious project in 1968, the so-called Terzo Canale. This aimed at being an alternative television station; a Communist channel countering the distorted information by the government-controlled RAI news service through the production of newsreels to be shown on a regular basis in the PCI-controlled circuit. The Terzo Canale experiment, which will be discussed in the third part of the thesis, proves how the PCI's exclusion from the RAI was regarded as the most serious problem with respect to propaganda activity.

¹⁷ IG, APCI, MF 539, pp. 1169 – 1180, *Relazione del Compagno Achille Occhetto alla riunione nazionale dei responsabili provinciali di Propaganda*, Stampa e Propaganda, 26 May 1967.

Chapter 3. The Evolution of PCI Cinematographic Production.

For many years to come, Communist access to television would remain rather limited. The only way to compensate for such a disadvantage in visual propaganda was to re-launch film production. The new Communist films present many differences to the earlier productions. First of all, they are proper propaganda films addressing the entire electorate rather than just Communist militants. Secondly, while early PCI production appeared occasionally - being very often the extemporary response to a dramatic event or a sort of additional effort aimed at valorising an especially important party initiative - the cinematographic production of these years was planned accordingly to a communicative strategy previously established by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*.

The films of this period show a better understanding of the medium by the cadres of the *Stampa e Propaganda*. Films are usually shorter and they communicate, and reinforce, a few precise and simple messages rather than being political manifestos in cinematographic form (as was generally the case with the previous productions). Because of this, they are arguably less enjoyable from a cinematographic point of view but more effective as propaganda films and, as far as historical investigation is concerned, they are useful in order to analyse the issues of the Communist propaganda of the time. Finally, they present a more differentiated range of linguistic registers, and especially noteworthy is the use of irony.

A salient example of irony in the Communist cinematography of this period is *I Campionissimi*, a ten-minute propaganda film, edited with archival footage and produced for the national elections held on 25 May 1958. Irony had appeared in Communist propaganda since 1953, with the so-called *Forchettoni* campaign, a

series of posters in which DC politicians, represented as caricatures, were shown brandishing gigantic forks (*forchette* in Italian) with which they ate the national revenue.¹⁸ *I Campionissimi*, ‘the super-champions’, was clearly inspired by the *Forchettoni* campaign but it was based on a sporting metaphor. The most famous Italian athletes were said to be no match for the DC and right wing politicians, true champions of sports such as ‘one hundred tape-cutting ceremonies’ (Giuseppe Togni, Ministro dei lavori Pubblici), ‘tax rising per second’ (Giulio Andreotti, Ministro delle Finanze since 1955) and ‘plunging a city into debts’ (Achille Lauro, Mayor of Naples). *I Campionissimi* also features a part lampooning the Vatican influence on the *Democrazia Cristiana*, through the depiction of a rather ridiculous dystopia: a future Italy completely dominated by the Church. As a consequence, all the MPs are priests, nuns go around armed, Father Lombardi, the famous ‘Microfono di Dio’ of the 1948 elections, teaches a course titled ‘Concetto dell’esonero di tasse per nipoti di alti prelati’ at the University, and the only permitted form of entertainment is a puppet show for children called ‘Pancotto e Maraméo’.

It is noteworthy that this last part was authorised for projection following an official complaint by the PCI, after having initially been cut by the board of censors because it was judged as likely to disturb public order.¹⁹ This seems to indicate that, by the end of the 1950s, censorship was becoming less rigid.

The stylistic evolution of Communist cinematography was consistent with a general improvement of Communist propaganda in those years. The *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* experimented with new forms of communication such as the

¹⁸ See Novelli (2000, 84 - 6).

¹⁹ *Nulla Osta per il film ‘I Campionissimi’*, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone ‘C’, fascicolo ‘I Campionissimi’.

production of *fotoromanzi*²⁰ (photonovels) and put more effort into the production of propaganda specifically designed for the administrative election (Bellassai 2000, 135). This was also the case with cinematic propaganda: the first films geared to specific areas of the country were produced in this period.

The most noticeable example of this kind of production is *Sicilia all'addritta* (1958). This eighteen-minute film is worthy of mention for other reasons too. It was the first engagement of Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, two young and talented brothers who would subsequently become internationally acclaimed filmmakers, as directors of a film for the PCI.²¹ It is also the first Communist documentary without a voice-over commentary: the narration is, in fact, entrusted to a character that appears on the screen, Ignazio Buttitta, a so-called *cantastorie*, that is, a performer telling stories while gesturing to a series of images drawn on a large board. The target audience of the film, the people of Sicily, is therefore clearly defined by the adoption of a theatrical form typical of the Sicilian tradition. Furthermore, Buttitta speaks Sicilian dialect throughout the film, and even the title is in Sicilian: *Sicilia all'addritta* means 'Sicily on its feet'.

The film in question is a unique cinematographic account of the PCI's alliance with the Unione Siciliana Cristiano Sociale (Social Christian Sicilian Union), a political movement born in Sicily, at the end of the 1950s, as a result of a split which occurred within the Sicilian Democrazia Cristiana. The leader of the Unione Siciliana Cristiano Sociale was Silvio Milazzo, a former DC politician and champion of the so-called *Sicilianismo*, advocating the defence of the interests of the

²⁰ See, for example, *Diritto di Amare*, produced by the Sezione Nazionale Stampa e Propaganda in October 1964.

²¹ See De Santis (1988).

Sicilian people against the abuses perpetrated by the mainland state. Milazzo managed not only to split the Democrazia Cristiana, but also became President of the Sicilian Region, thanks to a rather atypical alliance which included the post-fascist MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano), the Monarchist, and the Italian Communist Party.²² Milazzo's rule lasted two years, from 1958 to 1960, a phase of Sicilian political history known, after his name, as *Milazzismo*. The endorsement of *Milazzismo* by the national directorate of the PCI was principally instrumental, being essentially aimed at exerting some pressure on the DC at national level in order to discourage the formation of centre-left government coalitions. If threatened with political isolation, the PCI was ready to pay the DC back by giving the green light to daring alliances at local level which would exclude the Catholic party.

Sicilia all'addritta is an interesting piece of propaganda in that it merges the traditional anti-capitalist motifs of Communist propaganda with the issue of the *sicilianismo*. The premise of the film is that Sicilian natural resources never benefited the local population, as the big companies of northern Italy robbed them for years through the complicity of the national government and the local Democrazia Cristiana. In the board of the *cantastorie* Buttitta, the drawing of the great capitalist (*lu monopolista*) is placed next to the other traditional oppressors of the Sicilian people: *lu baruni* (the aristocracy owning large estates), *lu patruni* (the landlord), *lu mafiusu* (the *Mafioso*). All of them are harshly addressed by the *cantastorie*:

Baciatevi! Che della stessa razza siete! Figli di uno stesso cane! Ne nasce uno di questi, cianciunu [piangono] cento poviri [poveri].

²² See Battaglia, D'Angelo and Santi Fedele (1979), Menighetti and Nicastro (2000). An account of the *Milazzo* affair from the perspective of a Sicilian Communist leader can be found in Macaluso (1970).

The pillaging of Sicilian natural resources, above all oil, by the *monopolisti* of the mainland is presented as perpetuating the poverty of the great majority of the Sicilian people originally created by the landlords and the mafia: ‘camminiamo sopra l’oro e abbiamo le scarpe bucate’, says Buttitta.

From a cinematographic point of view, *Sicilia all’addritta* stands out for the original narrative devices deployed by the Taviani brothers. Alongside the use of a narrator on scene, the film features a re-enactment of the death of the socialist union organiser Salvatore Carnevale, killed by the Mafia on 16 May 1955. We see a man, presumably a great landlord, handing out some money to two *mafiosi* through a car window. In the following scene, the *mafiosi* kill Carnevale by treachery, and then escape riding their horses. This brief piece of fiction is scored by *Lamentu pi la morti di Turiddu Carnivali*, a moving ballad dedicated to Salvatore Carnevale, written by Ignazio Buttitta and performed by the Sicilian folk singer Ciccio Busacca. It is noteworthy that the life and death of Salvatore Carnevale would be the subject of the first feature film by the Taviani brothers, *Un uomo da bruciare* (1962).²³

²³ See De Santis (1988, 43 – 49). On the reception of *Un uomo da bruciare* by the PCI leadership, see the interesting statements by the Taviani Brothers in *MicroMega*, n. 6, September 2012, which illustrate the purely political approach to cinema of the cadres of the PCI, at the beginning of the 1960s: ‘Una volta terminato il film [Un uomo da bruciare], lo proiettammo alla direzione del Pci. All’epoca usava che i registi comunisti presentassero le loro opere al partito. Finisce il film: silenzio. Non c’era Togliatti, ma Alicata, direttore dell’*Unità*. E c’era Antonello Trombadori, un amico, che accennò a un applauso, ma capì subito che non era il caso. A un certo punto si alza Alicata, col dito puntato, e dice: «Voi avete infangato la memoria di un uomo della classe contadina e operaia. Vergognatevi!». Disse ciò che era giusto dire dal punto di vista di una concezione ideologica che noi rifiutavamo. Casiraghi, il critico dell’*Unità*, aveva visto il film e gli era piaciuto moltissimo. Ma quando la pellicola andò a Venezia, ed ebbe un grande successo, *l’Unità* non pubblicò la sua recensione. A Venezia c’era anche Amendola, a cui il film era piaciuto. Allora decidemmo di andargli a dire ciò che era successo con il giornale. Lo incontrammo al Lido mentre usciva dall’acqua. E lui disse: «Io non sono d’accordo con questo comportamento, ma voi commettete un errore: considerate *l’Unità* un giornale indipendente. Non lo è. È un giornale di partito. Se la Commissione Culturale ha deciso una certa linea, la linea è quella». In realtà poi andò a Roma, si incazzò e scoppiò un casino. Questo era il clima dell’epoca.’ <http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/cinema-in-rivolta-intervista-a-paolo-e-vittorio-taviani/>

Sicilia all'addritta proves how the improvement of the PCI cinematic propaganda, between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, was also a consequence of the work of a new generation of young filmmakers, like the Taviani brothers, who renewed PCI cinematographic production from a stylistic point of view. Especially noticeable is, in this respect, a scene which is presented as factual but is, in fact, a thinly disguised fiction depicting Sicilian day-labourers standing at dawn in front of a great landlord's villa and waiting to be selected for work.²⁴ It seems likely that day-labourers were meant to appear miserable; the problem was that, given that they knew they were going to appear in a film, they all wore their best suits and a tie, thus clashing with the dramatic nature of the scene.

It is instructive to compare *Sicilia all'addritta* with another film designed for the administrative elections, produced shortly after and concerning the city of Milan: *Milano '59*. From a cinematographic point of view, this thirty-seven minute film is much more orthodox than *Sicilia all'addritta* and it could be taken as a paradigm of expository documentary - that is, a documentary making a strong case, principally through the use of the voice-over commentary, according to the classification of the modes of documentary by Bill Nichols (2001, 32 – 33). The voice-over commentary, in plain Italian, takes the viewer on a journey through the 'gallery of horrors' of ten years of Christian democratic and Social democratic administration of the metropolis of the north: a shortage of low-rent houses, chaotic traffic, a lack of public sport and recreational facilities, unchallenged speculation on the prices of essential goods. The approach is rather scientific and every statement is supported by facts and figures often expressed in tables and charts. While *Sicilia all'addritta* scores folk music, the

²⁴ Buttitta stresses how this happened in spite of the 'Legge per il collocamento', obtained in 1944 thanks to the PCI's participation in the National government, which expressly prohibited employers from hiring workers bypassing employment agencies. On this point, see Ginsborg (1989, 78 – 79).

Milano '59 soundtrack is jazz, a style of music often associated with the city in Communist cinematography. What is common, however, to the two films is the anti-capitalist motif. If, in *Sicilia all'addritta*, the arrogance of the *monopolisti* is symbolized by the oil-drilling towers punctuating the Sicilian countryside, in *Milano '59*, they are the skyscrapers appearing in the city centre. Over footage depicting what would become the most iconic of Milan skyscrapers, the Grattacielo Pirelli (ironically renamed *Pirellone* by Milanese citizens but still under construction at the time) the speaker invites the *milanesi* not to be deceived by such ostentatious optimism in the economic future of the country:

Non lasciamo che i monopoli colpiscano la nostra immaginazione. Questa loro ostentazione di sicurezza nell'avvenire è mal fondata nella realtà sociale del nostro tempo.

Half of the documentary is devoted to the problem of housing. The real estate speculation, blatantly encouraged by the administration, has, as a direct consequence, a lack of affordable housing, particularly rental housing. For this reason, the voice-over commentary claims that:

Anche nel problema della casa noi comunisti ravvisiamo i termini di un aspro conflitto sociale e di classe.

The solution to this problem lies, as suggested by the voice-over, in the development of worker-controlled building cooperatives, like the few already operating in the outskirts of the city (and which were generally controlled by the PCI and the PSI).

Another propaganda film produced in the same period for the administrative election, and directed by the Taviani Bros, was *Carosello Elettorale*. This film proves how the great popularity of some of the shows of those early years in

television broadcasting inspired the Communist cinematographic production of the period. *Carosello Elettorale* was in fact a parody of *Carosello*, a very successful advertising show, broadcast on RAI between 1957 and 1977 (Lanaro 1992, 256 – 58; Dorflès 2007). It presented four fake commercials of about two-and-a-half-minutes each (the standard running time of a commercial of *Carosello*), parodying characters and situations of the original show. For example, a recurring character of *Carosello* was *Ispettore Rock*, a police detective advertising the *brillantina* Linetti, a popular brand of hair jelly. Inspector Rock solved mysterious crimes and concluded every sketch showing his bald head and claiming that the only mistake he had made during his life was not to use *Linetti* hair jelly. In the parody version, ‘l’Ispettore Tok’, after having found evidence of a theft committed by a DC politician, claimed that his big mistake was to vote once for the Democrazia Cristiana, and, in doing so, he had become completely bald.

While propaganda films produced for the local elections especially focused on DC’s wrong deeds, the cinematic propaganda for the national election of 1958 principally addressed the issue of peace, as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Peace and Sputnik

In September 1957, the *Sezione Nazionale Stampa e Propaganda* held a meeting in preparation for the national election to be held the following May. The proceedings of that meeting are an important document given that a large part of the Communist propaganda cinema of this period seems to have been designed in accordance with the political and historical interpretation offered by Pietro Ingrao in his opening speech concerning the ‘restaurazione capitalistica’ occurring in Italy from the end of WWII onwards.²⁵ According to Ingrao, such a restoration had been based on an alliance between the ‘grandi gruppi capitalistici’ and the Catholic Church which had formed a ‘block of power’:

Sappiamo ciò che i grandi gruppi capitalistici hanno dato e ciò che hanno chiesto per questa alleanza; hanno dato la rinuncia alla laicità dello stato e alle libertà ad esso connesse; l’appoggio economico e politico alle grandi organizzazioni clericali, sia religiose che laiche, non solo cioè al partito DC, ma ai sindacati bianchi scissionisti, alle organizzazioni di massa e settoriali clericali, sul tipo della bonomiana, alle ACLI; l’appoggio al controllo, da parte del personale politico clericale, dei grandi enti economici, della scuola e di altri settori importanti della vita pubblica italiana. Hanno avuto, in cambio l’appoggio alla restaurazione capitalistica e, in particolare, alla resurrezione dei grandi gruppi monopolistici.

Ingrao argued that the vote on 7 June 1953 was a decisive victory as it had impeded the consolidation of this block of power formed by the capitalists and the Church,

²⁵ *Verbale riunione della Sezione Nazionale Stampa e Propaganda*, in IG, APCI, MF 448, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 5 September 1957. The speech by Ingrao occurs between pp. 1600 – 36 and the discussion between pp. 1637 – 63.

saving the Constitution and allowing concrete perspectives of political change. However, the end of the alliance between the PCI and the PSI, following the repression of the Hungarian uprising, had once again offered the ‘gruppi monopolistici’ a chance to establish undisputed political domination over the country. According to Ingrao, there was but one strategy to adopt in order to avoid such a danger and this was to return to a renewed form of *frontismo*, that is a new alliance with the PSI aimed at countering the ‘monopolio clericale e il blocco clericale – padronale’. Any hypothesis of political collaboration of the PSI with the DC, as well as any ‘concessione alla socialdemocrazia’ by the socialists, had to be regarded as nothing less than a betrayal of the Italian working class. In this respect, the testing ground was represented by the anti-Communist stance of the PSI. A negative judgement against the PCI motivated by its Leninist roots, as well as by its ‘solidarietà con l’URSS’ - two non-negotiable PCI features - was to be regarded as an unequivocal sign of anti-communism, and thus a sign of the intention to break working-class solidarity, and it had therefore to be countered with energy. Consequently, the propaganda of the PCI had to focus on the ‘ripudio dell’anticomunismo’. Accordingly, the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* was committed to rebuilding a positive image of the USSR, the homeland of communism.

Two of the films produced for the election of May 1958, *Gli uomini vogliono la pace* and *Gli uomini vogliono vivere* had exactly this purpose.²⁶ In these films, the USSR is presented as the champion of peace. To paraphrase the voice-over commentary, in response to Khrushchev’s proposals aimed at promoting a new

²⁶ The two films, lasting twenty and eight minutes respectively, were both produced by the national Sezione Stampa e Propaganda. They are entirely made of archival footage and with a voice-over commentary illustrating the images. No directors are credited. AAMOD Archive, codici identificativi: IL8300001139 and IL8300001167.

political climate of international *détente*, the western powers have installed atomic missiles in minor allied countries with the complicity of their leaders, as was the case with Italy, or with military intervention against former colonies, as was the case with the attack against Egypt jointly led by French, British and Israeli forces (this is the so-called ‘Suez Crisis’, which occurred in October – November 1956). Due to the West’s aggressive attitude, the world now faces the concrete danger of a nuclear holocaust: as few as twelve bombs could wipe Italy from the map. Fortunately, the leadership of the USSR is not alone in its effort to safeguard peace; there is a party, in Italy, which also stands for peace, and this is the Italian Communist Party. The voice-over commentary reminds the viewers that the PCI is promoting a campaign to ban nuclear weapons, reiterating a policy dating back to the late 1940s:

Ancora una volta è il partito comunista che indica la via con le parole di Palmiro Togliatti: si stanziavano miliardi per la guerra tra gli uomini, noi vogliamo invece la guerra alla miseria.

Images of poverty follow the commentary. These were meant to graphically prove how miserable the living condition of many Italians still were, at the end of the 1950s. On closer inspection, however, one could see that they are mostly archival footage taken from *Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* (1949). Therefore, they prove nothing with respect to 1958, since they are outdated by ten years.

The film ends on a note of hope: Italy and the world are not doomed, nuclear holocaust can be avoided if the nations follow the example set by the USSR. Because it is a socialist country, the USSR places technology at the service of the people rather than war and gears science towards the progress of humankind, as proven by a great achievement in the field of space exploration, the launch of Sputnik 1 (4

October 1957). The voice-over commentary proudly announces the conquest of the moon by the USSR, within a few years. The image of the USSR as a champion of peace was developed further in other films produced after the election of 1958. In films like *Gronchi nell'URSS* (1960) and *Cinegiornale della Pace* (1963), the problem of peace is always treated in relation to the principles and interests of Soviet foreign policy, especially with respect to the problem of West Berlin.

The legal status of West Berlin was the principal and still unresolved issue threatening peace in Europe. The USSR, which had unsuccessfully opposed the establishment of a sovereign and remilitarized Federal Republic of Germany, sought to end the allied military occupation of West Berlin in order to reunify the two parts of the city and stop the embarrassing flow of refugees from East Berlin to the Western sector of the city (Dockrill and Hopkins 2006, 71). In November 1958, Nikita Khrushchev threatened to entrust the German Democratic Republic (DDR) with the control of access routes to Berlin, a city located deep in the territory of the DDR, if the allied troops would not leave West Berlin within six months. This would have forced the western powers to deal with a nation, the DDR, which they had promised the chancellor of West Germany Konrad Adenauer never to recognise. Between Khrushchev's statement of 1958 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, which virtually resolved the problem of Berlin permanently separating the city into two parts, an intricate diplomatic manoeuvring took place through European diplomacy.

In this context, the President of the Italian Republic Giovanni Gronchi, seeking a more active role for Italy on the international stage, accepted Khrushchev's

invitation to pay an official visit to the USSR, from 6 to 12 February 1960.²⁷ Gronchi's trip was harshly opposed by some sectors of the Catholic Church and the Italian conservative press as it appeared as a sign of appeasement towards communism. For the same reason, the PCI publicly commended Gronchi's initiative in the final *Tesi* of the Ninth Congress of the party held in Rome a few days before the beginning of the official visit (30 January – 4 February 1960) (Benvenuti 1985, 269).

Gronchi's trip to the USSR was a diplomatic fiasco: the Soviets did not take a single step backwards on the Berlin question. Furthermore, the visit ended with a public, and rather embarrassing, altercation between Gronchi and Khrushchev which occurred during a party at the Italian Embassy. This was apparently due to the notoriously boorish and overbearing personality of the Soviet leader (Bagnato 2003, 242 – 245).

However, from the PCI's perspective, Gronchi's diplomatic mission was a huge success, in that it advertised a positive image of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Italian Communist Party decided to produce a ten-minute film to celebrate the event, *Gronchi nell'URSS*, edited with archival footage presumably provided by the Soviets. Most of the film is devoted to non-political and rather folkloristic aspects of Gronchi's trip. The tour in Moscow, a city described as 'grandiosa, imponente, immensa' by the voice-over commentary, turns into an occasion to celebrate the achievement of Communist Russia: the famous underground, and especially the *Arbatskaya* station, pride of the citizens of Moscow, Moscow University and the

²⁷ A detailed account of Gronchi's stay in the USSR can be found in Bagnato (2003, 234 – 253)

Bolshoi theatre. As for the unremarkable diplomatic results of Gronchi's visit, the film explains how:

I vincoli del governo italiano con quello di Bonn e la sua completa adesione alle tesi oltranziste del cancelliere Adenauer hanno impedito alle trattative di estendersi ai maggiori problemi europei.

Konrad Adenauer was one of the favourite polemical targets of Communist propaganda in those years.²⁸ The polemic against Adenauer was, in the first place, an endorsement of Soviet foreign policy, which feared a strong Germany at the western border of the Socialist bloc. Besides, it served very well the purpose of blaming the Italian government for its political alignment with NATO: waving the spectre of a once again well-armed and aggressive Germany was highly effective in a country like Italy in which memories of Nazi occupation were still fresh.

Another European political figure harshly criticized by the Communist propaganda in this period was Charles De Gaulle, President of the French Republic since June 1958. The ending of the parliamentary government characterizing the French Fourth Republic, following the referendum of September 1958, was regarded as an anti-democratic coup led by fascist forces. On 2 October 1958, the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* issued a document to the local *federazioni* establishing the political line of the PCI about the French events and the founding of the so-called Fifth Republic. According to Pietro Ingrao, who signed the document, the new semi-presidential system, or, to use the expression of Ingrao, 'il collasso delle istituzioni democratiche francesi', had to be principally ascribed to the reactionary policies of the colonialist bourgeoisie. The French social democratic

²⁸ See, for example, *Adenauer giuoca la carta del ricatto nucleare*, in *Rinascita*, 2/3/1963, 11.

leaders were responsible too, as they had betrayed the class solidarity with the PCF and openly campaigned for the ‘*sì alla dittatura*’.²⁹ De Gaulle’s foreign policy was also harshly criticized by the PCI. The Italian Communist Party fiercely opposed, in particular, the *Élysée* Treaty, signed by De Gaulle and Adenauer in January 1963. This was essentially seen as a restoration on a new basis of European capitalism, not unlike any other attempt at European integration within the Western Block.³⁰

A few days after the conclusion of the treaty, the *Direzione* of the PCI expressed a trenchant judgement:

La politica di De Gaulle e di Adenauer mira a trasformare l’Europa occidentale in una roccaforte della guerra fredda e dell’antidemocrazia, minacciando, direttamente, anche la sovranità del nostro paese.³¹

If, in *Tre anni di Storia* (1960), De Gaulle is blamed only for the French nuclear tests, the polemic against the French President and the German Chancellor Adenauer became uncompromising in the following *Cinegiornale delle Pace* (1963). This is a rather original film in terms of PCI production. It was made following a personal initiative of the screenplay writer Cesare Zavattini, who published a plea in *Rinascita* encouraging collaborative work involving the readers in the production of newsreels supporting world peace.³² However, due to the technical difficulties of amateur filmmaking at the time, only a few, and very poor quality, films were eventually

²⁹ IG, APCI, MF 453, pp. 984 – 989, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 2 October 1958. See also *Dichiarazioni di Togliatti sulla situazione francese*, in *l’Unità*, 1/10/1958, front page.

³⁰ See Agosti (2008, 249). Mauro Maggiorani characterizes Togliatti as more doubtful and not prejudicially hostile to European economic integration, (1998, 169 – 82). In my opinion, his book does not sufficiently take into account the PCI’s uncompromising endorsement of Soviet Union’s foreign interests during the years of Togliatti’s leadership. This can be seen from an analysis of the PCI propaganda films.

³¹ IG, APCI, MF 489, p. 58, *Direzione*, 2 February 1963. The *Risoluzione* by the *Direzione* of the PCI was also published on *l’Unità*, 3/2/ 1963.

³² *Rinascita* 9/6/ 1962, 32

mailed to *Rinascita*.³³ As a consequence, the editorial board of the magazine decided to take the project into its own hands and entrusted the edition of the first and only *Cinegiornale della Pace* ever produced to a group of intellectuals and professionals, either members or sympathizers of the PCI. These included Mino Argentieri, Maurizio Ferrara, Antonello Trombadori, the former director of *Vie Nuove* Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, and the film directors Luigi Di Gianni, Ansano Giannarelli, Massimo Mida and Luciano Viazzi. The final product was a one-hour film divided into ten episodes with an introduction by Mario Soldati.³⁴

The film presents itself as politically neutral and solely motivated by a genuine concern for the danger of a nuclear holocaust which threatened humankind (especially after the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962). Some parts of the film show a rather naive attitude towards the problem of peace. For example, Mario Soldati makes a very reasonable, but rather banal, speech about the consequences of a nuclear war using expressions which romanticise the idea of peace:

Credo che questa sia la prima volta nella storia del mondo che un uomo, sono io, invita solennemente i suoi simili ad avere paura. [...] Il nostro nemico non è la malvagità degli uomini, il nostro nemico è l'imbecillità degli uomini [...] L'umanità prenda coscienza di questo pericolo!

Other parts, however, are clearly set up in order to engage, sometimes polemically, in a range of issues related to Italian political and cultural debate rather than peace, and suggest that the *Cinegiornale della Pace* is, essentially, a propaganda movie.

³³ Interview with Mino Argentieri, Rome, 16/6/2011.

³⁴ A DVD of the *Cinegiornale della Pace* has been released by the AAMOD in 2005. About the writer and film director Mario Soldati see Malavasi (2006) and Morreale (2006).

Zavattini himself privately expressed discontent for the tendentious tone assumed by the film in its final cut (Bertozzi 2008, 192).

The first two sections are devoted to a violent attack on the *Elysée* treaty, which is presented as a military alliance between two authoritarian governments likely to endanger peace in Europe. The biggest threat to humankind comes from the ‘Asse Parigi – Bonn’, which Jean Paul Sartre, during an interview that is part of the first section, compares to the Rome-Berlin Axis and concludes that the French Resistance has been betrayed by De Gaulle.³⁵ Conrad Adenauer is depicted as an opportunist and a Nazi sympathizer willing to rearm West Germany and to point ‘atomic guns’ at both Germany’s eastern and western borders. From a cinematographic point of view, this is probably the clumsiest section: it is made up almost entirely of archival photos and the articulation of the message is solely entrusted to the voice-over. It is also deceiving because it mixes up pictures taken in Germany during the Nazi period with others taken in more recent times.

The cinematographic style varies a lot from chapter to chapter and the length of the film allows the authors to deal with a wide range of issues. The chapter called *Marzabotto vent’anni dopo*, by Luigi Di Gianni, is solely composed of moving interviews with survivors of the massacre perpetrated by the Nazis in the mountainous area south of Bologna, between 29 September and 5 October 1944. Although less concerned with ideological and political issues, the function of this chapter is to remind the viewers of the threat represented by a powerful and aggressive Germany, and does so in an aesthetic fashion. Another section, devoted to the history of torture, blames the Roman Catholic Inquisition as well as the racial

³⁵ The expression ‘Asse Parigi – Bonn’ became a topos for Communist press, see for example M.A. Macciocchi *E’ nata l’Asse Parigi – Bonn*, in *l’Unità* 23/1/1963, front page. On this point, see also Maggiorani (1998, 181).

violence of the Ku Klux Klan. But there is no mention of Stalin and the gulags. The Communist painter Renato Guttuso, presented as an 'artista militante di un partito progressista', claims that the tendency of contemporary art to separate artistic expression and political commitment is an objective threat to peace. Sometimes the political message is hidden or barely suggested, such as when the American independent filmmaker Lionel Rogosin says that he found a great desire for peace in Eastern people. On the whole, *Cinegiornale della Pace* is a unique example of a cinematic text: half authorial documentary, half hackneyed, Soviet-style propaganda film.

The issue of peace offered the PCI the opportunity to exert its political influence over a range of social and political forces not normally reached by Communist propaganda as well as to attempt the establishment of unprecedented alliances. The PCI tried to exploit such a circumstance at the beginning of the 1960s, often at the cost of renouncing the usual partisan tones, as proved by another film produced in that period: *La Marcia per la pace*. This is a ten-minute film directed by Glauco Pellegrini and devoted to the first *Marcia per la Pace Perugia - Assisi* organised by the philosopher and Catholic activist Aldo Capitini, on 24 September 1961. This film is quite different from the other films on the issue of peace produced by the PCI in this period. The voice-over commentary, by Gianni Rodari, is intentionally apolitical - neither the two superpowers nor political parties are mentioned - and focuses on issues such as the universal brotherhood of man which must be pursued by the 'uomini di buona volontà' following the moral lesson of Francesco d'Assisi: 'il più umile e il più grande figlio dell'Umbria'. Through films like *La marcia per la pace*, the PCI was evidently trying to enlarge the mass-based

character of the campaign for peace through the involvement of non-Communist groups. Capitini himself was a representative sample of those non-politically affiliated people autonomously developing a political discourse on the issue of peace at the beginning of the 1960s.³⁶

One last aspect of the debate about peace must be taken into consideration in order to fully understand the Communist approach to this issue. This is related to the progressive deterioration of the Russian – Chinese relationship. The leadership of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) had not accepted the so-called peaceful coexistence theory - that is to say, the possibility for socialism and capitalism to compete peacefully without a final military confrontation - launched by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. There were both ideological and political reasons behind the CCP's stance. On one hand, the peaceful coexistence was regarded by the Chinese as a capitulation in the face of the US and a betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggles of the colonial countries. On the other hand, it was likely to frustrate the Chinese aspiration to rise to the rank of great power, by stabilizing a bi-polar system on a global scale (Benvenuti 1985, LVII – LVIII).

The Chinese polemic had very serious implications for the Italian Communists as it could have endangered the internal cohesion of the Party. We have a clue about that in a statement made by Palmiro Togliatti in the 'Yalta memorandum', the confidential document prepared for Khrushchev by the PCI leader shortly before he died. The section titled 'Sul modo migliore di combattere le posizioni dei cinesi' reads:

³⁶ On Aldo Capitini, see Martelli (1993).

Abbiamo nel partito, e ai suoi margini, qualche gruppetto di compagni e simpatizzanti che inclinano verso le posizioni cinesi e le difendono. Qualche membro del partito ha dovuto essere cacciato dalle nostre file perché responsabile di atti di frazionismo e di indisciplina.³⁷

It is important to highlight how the peaceful coexistence policy was an essential part of the PCI's political strategy, as it represented the necessary international frame for its national policy of the *Via italiana al socialismo* and had therefore turned into one of the pillars of the Italian Communist policy.

During the Tenth Congress of the PCI (Rome, 2 - 8 December 1962), the tensions which ran through the international Communist movement boiled over. The Chinese delegate, countering some remarks made by Togliatti in his opening speech, openly criticised the peaceful coexistence policy.³⁸ This was just the prelude to what happened a few days later, when Palmiro Togliatti came under fierce ideological attack from the Chinese Communist Party on the issue of peaceful coexistence. On 31 December 1962, the PCC issued a pamphlet titled *Le divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi* in which Togliatti was criticized for having given up the Leninist theory of war, the so-called 'teoria della guerra giusta' or 'guerra necessaria', namely the war fought in order to defeat capitalism and to promote the socialist revolution. It concluded that Togliatti had betrayed Lenin's thought.³⁹ Although the PCI leadership had made every effort to avoid polemical engagement with the Chinese, especially in order not to publicise the painful and disorientating news of a split within the

³⁷ The Yalta Memorandum can be found in Spagnolo (2007).

³⁸ The opening speech and the conclusions pronounced by Palmiro Togliatti at the Tenth Congress of the PCI are in Benvenuti (1985, 315 – 470).

³⁹ See it at http://www.bibliotecamarxista.org/Mao/libro_19/div_comp_togl.pdf . In February 1963 the PCC published another document with a quite similar title: *Ancora sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi*, see it in http://www.bibliotecamarxista.org/Mao/libro_19/anc_div_comp_togl1.pdf

international Communist movement, it was impossible to keep the lid on an attack of such magnitude.

As a consequence, the film dedicated to the Tenth Congress of the PCI was forced to address the Chinese critique with the rather obsessive attention to the narrative and visual details typical of the PCI's cinematographic production of the party's congresses. This eighteen-minute film directed by the photographer Mario Carbone was principally aimed at countering the Chinese positions by presenting them as isolated in the international Communist movement. The film begins by showing the delegates representing the Communist parties of thirty-six countries arriving at the airport of Rome. Such an exceptional attendance demonstrates the support to PCI policy by the vast majority of the Communist parties worldwide. The first part of the film is centred on the intervention of the Chinese delegate, which, through the editing, is framed in a narrative context that makes it appear erroneous and even preposterous. Before showing the Chinese delegate, the voice-over commentary introduced Frol Kozlov, the Soviet representative, welcomed by a frantically clapping audience:

In lui i comunisti italiani salutano l'Unione Sovietica, il primo paese che ha creato il socialismo e che oggi instancabilmente lavora per edificare il comunismo e lotta per la pace nel mondo intero.

Kozlov stigmatizes the 'errori del dogmatismo', and the editing reveals the Chinese delegate. Kozlov speaks about peace, and the other Communist delegates clap. A hostile silence falls instead when it comes to the turn of the Chinese representative. The voice-over commentary dismisses his intervention with the following words:

Col suo discorso il delegato esprime le posizioni del Partito comunista cinese su una serie di problemi. La questione della coesistenza pacifica e il problema della pace vengono riproposti nei termini dogmatici già criticati da Togliatti nel suo intervento introduttivo.

After this, the celebration of the strength and the unity of the party typical of the PCI films of the party's congresses follows undisturbed.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Tenth Congress, the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* began preparing the electoral campaign in view of the approaching elections held on 28 April 1963. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 5. The Electoral Campaign of 1963.

For the electoral campaign of 1963, the PCI planned to invest 5 million lire in the production and distribution of films. This was only a fraction of the total budget of 142 million lire.⁴⁰ Communist propaganda was still largely based on printed material such as posters, leaflets and banners, as well as on electoral meetings: more than 60.000 *comizi* were held in the run up to the election of 28 – 29 April 1963.⁴¹

The Communist cinematographic campaign of 1963 was principally centred on two issues: the exposure of the dark side of the *miracolo economico*, and the critique of the centre-left government formula. In films like *L'altra faccia del miracolo*, *Il prezzo del miracolo* and *Il viaggio della speranza*, the eternally miserable south of Italy fulfils once again the function of the conscience of the nation. The symbol of the failures of the DC governments of the 1940s and 1950s, the South is now the living, or rather dying proof, that the economic miracle is nothing more than an empty expression in vast areas of the country. As the voice-over commentary of *L'altra faccia del miracolo* claims:

Le espressioni automazione, progresso tecnico, benessere, hanno un suono astratto, offensivo pronunciate qui!

L'altra faccia del miracolo is probably the most artistic of this group of films from a cinematographic point of view. Sergio Spina, who had worked at RAI TV, directed this fourteen-minute documentary. This accounts for the style of the film, which is clearly inspired by the first *Inchieste televisive* produced by the RAI, such as *Meridionali a Torino* (1961), by Ugo Zatterin and Brando Giordani.

⁴⁰ IG, APCI MF 489, pp. 1700 – 1711, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 1963. However, according to a document compiled after the election, the actual cost of the 1963 electoral campaign amounted to 230 million lire, in IG, APCI, MF 489, pp. 1735 – 1746, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 31 May 1963.

⁴¹ IG, APCI MF 489, pp. 1735 – 1746, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 31 May 1963.

In *L'altra faccia del miracolo* we see a *capolega* of a day-labourers' union explaining how emigration has been the last of the illusions for southern workers: the departure of thousands of workers did not produce any increase in employment opportunities and wage levels. *L'altra faccia del miracolo* also offers interesting interviews with a group of southern workers, shot in the train that is bringing them to Munich. Visually interesting are also the 'slice of life' scenes accompanying the interviews, such as the scene of the emigrants eating their packed lunches on the train, and the arrival at Munich station on a cold and dark winter day which emphasizes the nostalgic mood of the protagonists. These scenes are filmed in a sober journalistic style. The voice-over commentary of the film is, instead, rather baroque and biased:

Si parte per l'estero, una misera valigia gonfia di tante speranze e di poveri pacchi è sempre al centro di una cerimonia che si ripete da generazioni e generazioni, tutto l'avvenire è in gioco, racchiuso nel gesto di una partenza ingrata, triste, quasi una fuga da un nemico che assedia la povera casa...addio!
Torna presto! E' il grido muto di due milioni di donne del meridione.

We can therefore consider *L'altra faccia del miracolo* as a product in which two cinematographic sensibilities coexist. On the one hand, this film presents the rather rhetorical and old-fashioned narrative structure which had previously characterized PCI production, on the other, we see a modern shooting style borrowed from television which would be more frequently adopted by the directors working at *Unitelefilm*. Quite powerful, from a cinematographic point of view, is the beginning of *Il viaggio della speranza*, directed by Gianfranco Bertacco, who also provides the

voice-over commentary. We see a train running along the coast, while *Lungo treno del sud* is sung by Tuscan singer and songwriter Piero Ciampi:

Lungo treno del sud
che a mezzogiorno passi accanto al mio campo
distruggendo il silenzio
lungo treno del sud
dove hai portato
quella dolce fanciulla
che tanto amai
ti prego quando tu la vedrai
dille che l'aspetto quaggiù
lungo treno del sud
[...]

The combination of images and music communicates soft melancholy emotion. This vanishes, however, as soon as the train enters the Turin station, when jazz music takes over, the editing gets faster, and the viewer is overwhelmed by images depicting 'l'artificiosa euforia del miracolo economico': traffic jams, neon signs of the venues attended by the urban middle class shopping in the city centre. By contrast, the editing shows the miserable suburbs inhabited by the immigrants.

Il prezzo del miracolo (The Cost of the Miracle), whose subtitle reads 'documentario sul problema dell'immigrazione a Milano', was produced by the Milanese federation of the party, and it has a running time of 14 minutes. The film depicts the difficult living conditions of the southern immigrants in Milan, and it argues that the cost of the economic miracle is too high in terms of human suffering

due to the social injustice upon which Italian society is grounded. This is defined by the voice-over commentary as 'società matrigna e capitalista'. The initial scene of the film, picturing three southern immigrants arriving at Milan central station, is fictional. We see the three southerners carry the stereotypical cardboard suitcase held together with strings, while clumsily trying to cross a busy street. As soon as they leave the station, they stop to admire the Pirelli skyscraper, which is no longer under construction as it was in the previous PCI film *Milano '59. The Pirellone*, rising just in front of the central station, aims at being the business card of a city that wants to look modern, rich, and magnificent, 'la città del miracolo', as the voice-over defines Milan. According to the voice-over commentary, however, immigrants have no place among the 'templi di cristallo della società capitalistica' and the new modern residential neighbourhoods. The ruthless northern city will reserve them makeshift shelters in construction sites, where they will work 12 hours a day for an unfair wage paid by some 'caporale' (labour exploiters), and, eventually, find an accommodation in the famous *Coree*, that is shanty towns built by the immigrants in the periphery of Turin and Milan. The voice-over says that the *Coree* lack roads, sewers, schools and kindergartens. In this respect, the editing shows quite graphic images of children playing next to piles of garbage and climbing high-voltage pylons in a very dangerous fashion. What is worse, in the *Coree*, the southern worker lives physically detached from the rest of the city and thus from the community of Milanese workers.

Other Southern immigrants, however, are luckier: they find a job in one of the great factories surrounding Milan. There, they inevitably meet industrial workers, who have a more developed social and political awareness. In the factories, southern immigrants learn first-hand the basics of politics, the meaning of class struggle, and

class solidarity. The voice-over commentary defines the next step, which is to join the PCI, as ‘piuttosto naturale’. The party membership is the culmination of the journey leading the southern worker to political maturity, and it represents the only positive side effect of emigration. The voice-over commentary concludes that the paradoxical result of DC policy, which aimed at favouring large corporations supplying them with a cheap labour force, has been to create the historical conditions allowing the fulfilment of Antonio Gramsci’s ‘parole profetiche’ describing the alliance among workers of the north and peasants of the south as the key to overthrowing the political block consisting of feudal and capitalist forces.

Another PCI production for the 1963 election, which was clearly inspired by television formats, was a two-part film polemically addressing the *centrosinistra*. In the first part of the film, titled *Appello agli elettori di Palmiro Togliatti*, the Communist leader certifies the failure of the *centrosinistra* and claims that it is imperative to ‘spingere indietro la DC’ in order to move forward on the path of reform. In this respect, he proposes a land reform, a partially state-planned economy countering the arrogance of the *monopoli*, and the ‘applicazione integrale della Costituzione’. In the next part, titled *Intervista con Carlo Levi candidato indipendente nelle liste del PCI*, the painter, writer and former *azionista*, explains how:

Il cosiddetto centrosinistra, così come teorizzato e inteso dai suoi massimi responsabili, è l’affermazione politica più moderna del neo-capitalismo e ha i suoi stessi caratteri paternalistici, tecnocratici e alienanti.⁴²

⁴² The issue of neo-capitalism had come to left-wing intellectuals and politicians’ attention after the conference *Tendenze del capitalismo italiano*, organized by the Istituto Gramsci, in May 1962. See the conference proceeding published by Editori Riuniti (Istituto Gramsci 1962). On *neocapitalismo* see also Magri (2009, 187 – 190).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the PCI increased its share by over one million votes in the election of April 1963. In May 1963, the *Direzione* of the party pointed out how the electoral results represented a Communist propaganda success all along the line. In particular, anti-communism has been defeated and the vote of the Italian workers had clearly reaffirmed the value of the unity of the working class against the *centrosinistra*.⁴³

The electoral campaign of 1963 gave a decisive impetus to the establishment of Unitelefilm, as the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* was convinced that the 182 copies of films distributed had contributed in no small measure to the Communist electoral success:

Laddove le federazioni hanno deciso un largo impiego delle proiezioni, i risultati sono stati ottimi. Mentre la propaganda della DC e del PLI, sia nelle sale normali che all'aperto, non ha incontrato molto successo, le 182 copie di films che abbiamo messo in circolazione in una quarantina di federazioni, hanno talvolta ottenuto una presenza di massa.

The *Stampa e Propaganda* concluded:

Possibilità larghissime sono ora emerse che devono spingere ad una vera e propria svolta nell'organizzazione di questa attività e nella diffusione più larga di proiettori.

On the other hand, the local *federazioni* had requested the National *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* to produce more films from 1960 onwards.⁴⁴ The rebirth of Communist cinematography was also helped by the attenuation of the Cold War political climate

⁴³ IG, APCI, MF 489, pp. 75 – 81, Direzione, 10 May 1963.

⁴⁴ *Relazione sui convegni regionali di Stampa e Propaganda tenutisi dal 2 al 10 maggio 1960*, in IG, APCI, MF 468, pp. 1461 – 1464, Stampa e Propaganda, 19 May 1960. On the foundation of Unitelefilm see also the interview with Alessandro Curzi in Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 154 - 55) in which is highlighted the decisive contribution given by Luciano Romagnoli (Giasi 2007).

at the end of the 1950s and, above all, by the new law on censorship promulgated in 1962⁴⁵. The new law, whose enactment was one of the first visible effects of the participation of the Italian Socialist Party in government, reformed the composition of censorship boards. Besides, it was much less restrictive than the 1923 law, as far as the discretion entrusted to the members of the censor boards was concerned, and, above all, established that films could be censored only when offensive to public morality (Argentieri 1974, 195 – 200).

⁴⁵ Law 161 of 21 April 1962. *Revisione dei film e dei lavori teatrali*.

Part III. Unitefilm (1964 – 1979)

Chapter 1. The First Years of Unitelefilm.

The PCI established Unitelefilm (UTF) in 1964 with the aim of achieving two different and rather incompatible objectives. On one hand, the party wanted a propaganda film production centre. Unitelefilm was therefore *organica* to the PCI - that is to say, it was a branch of the party, financed by the party and subject to the political control of the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*. On the other hand, the PCI aimed at making UTF profitable in financial terms. Experience had shown how such an objective could hardly be reached by selling film copies to the *federazioni*. As a consequence, Unitelefilm would compete in the market. This explains why Unitelefilm had the legal status of a private company, and more precisely of a Srl (*Società a Responsabilità Limitata* - Limited Liability Company).

Finding a core business proved to be difficult for UTF. From the start, UTF was entrusted with the release and distribution in Italy of documentaries produced in socialist countries. Another source of revenue was the production of short edited films with separate audio tracks documenting the principal events concerning the Italian Communist Party and the Italian workers movement. These were called *attualità* and designed to be included in newsreels and sold to Eastern European countries. In this respect, UTF had an important role in the party's cultural exchanges with the socialist bloc. Revenues from these two activities, however, were never very substantial - they were certainly not sufficient to keep a film production company in activity. A third, potentially more profitable, source of income was represented by the *premi di qualità* (quality awards) for documentaries established by Law n. 1213, promulgated in November 1965. The law guaranteed not only a monetary prize, but

also the so-called *programmazione obbligatoria*, namely the compulsory projection of the awarded documentaries in cinemas over a certain number of days.¹

However, the PCI was always reluctant to invest in the production of documentaries for the quality awards, since UTF was supposed to be principally devoted to the production of propaganda films for the party. Besides, Unitelefilm was, in the eyes of most of the PCI's leaders, not qualified to take initiatives in the cultural field, because it was dependent on the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*. For example, in spite of the periodic solicitations by the various directors of Unitelefilm, the members of the *Sezione Culturale* never showed much interest in the cinematographic projects of the Communist film production company. In order to produce a consistent number of documentaries to present to the quality awards annually, Unitelefilm's crew had to resort to expedients such as the so-called *film di recupero*, that is, documentaries edited with footage shot for propaganda films fully funded by the party.

Born in the wake of the good results of cinematographic propaganda for the 1963 election, Unitelefilm strived to find a well-defined role in years in which elections were not scheduled and faced financial uncertainty throughout its history. The *Catalogo generale* published by Unitelefilm in 1979 lists 211 films, of which 163 are Unitelefilm productions.² The others are Italian editions of foreign documentaries and feature films, mostly produced in socialist countries. However, the films produced by Unitelefilm over the period of its existence (August 1964 - December 1979) were many more, as propaganda films commissioned by the PCI

¹ For a discussion of law n. 1213, 12/11/1965 *Nuovo ordinamento dei provvedimenti a favore della cinematografia* see De Bernardis (2002). The *programmazione obbligatoria*, however, was largely disregarded by cinema owners.

² Unitelefilm S.r.L. *Catalogo Generale*, Roma, 1979.

were not included in the company's commercial catalogue, nor were the *attualità*. The AAMOD archive stores a total of 340 films produced by Unitelefilm, plus 890 films classified as 'non finiti', also including the *attualità*.³

The first film produced and distributed by Unitelefilm was *L'Italia con Togliatti*, a forty-minute documentary chronicling Togliatti's funeral. This is an extraordinary cinematic text for a number of reasons. First of all, *L'Italia con Togliatti* stands out for its cinematographic value: many of the most important professionals of Italian cinema of the 1960s were involved in the project.⁴ According to Mino Argentieri, the idea of the film was Luciano Malaspina's, Argentieri himself, and the first director of Unitelefilm Mario Benocci. Glauco Pellegrini coordinated the project. Here, Mino Argentieri recalls the genesis of the film:

Contattammo i registi. Mettemmo in piedi questa troupe in due o tre giorni, l'arrivo della salma di Togliatti fu filmato dalla terrazza dall'aeroporto, ognuno poi si prese una postazione per poter seguire tutto il percorso e tutta la cerimonia, fino alla tumulazione che la fece Zurlini. Fu una prova straordinaria di mobilitazione e poi lì avemmo un'ottima idea, e cioè di dare la firma del film al montatore, Mario Serandrei, che poi fu il vero autore del film.⁵

Being a faithful recording of the last tribute to Togliatti, the film is also a valuable visual documentation of one of the most important Communist rites: the funeral of the leader. According to the historian Franco Andreucci, Togliatti's funeral was a sort of theatrical representation, a 'sforzo simbolico rivolto a consolidare l'immagine

³ Thanks go to the staff of the AAMOD that, on my request, ran a query into the AAMOD database to determine, for the first time, the exact number of films produced by Unitelefilm.

⁴ Including the directors Carlo Lizzani, Elio Petri, Francesco Maselli, Valerio Zurlini, Paolo e Vittorio Taviani, Libero Bizzarri, and the cinematographers Carlo Di Palma, Tonino Delli Colli and Mario Bernardo.

⁵ Interview with Mino Argentieri, Rome, 16/6/2011.

che del PCI Togliatti aveva voluto affermare: un colosso ordinato e rispettoso delle norme, mosso dal sentimento e dominato dalla ragione' (Andreucci 2005, 253). An analysis of the film substantially confirms such a judgement. After an introduction showing Togliatti's remains honoured by the youths of Artek camp for Young Pioneers, in Crimea, where Togliatti had suddenly died, the film moves to Rome, where the funeral took place, on 25 August 1964. In an emotional and rather religious atmosphere, thousands of shattered militants and citizens are shown paying their respects to Togliatti. They either give the clenched fist salute or make the sign of the cross. Many also kiss the closed coffin placed on a catafalque in the hall of *Botteghe Oscure*. Major leaders of the party, representatives of the PSI, delegates of the foreign Communist parties, militants, delegations of workers and intellectuals, alternate in the guard of honour's office over the three days of mourning. Noticeably, the Soviet delegation, hierarchically shown first, is led by Leonid Brezhnev, who would become General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and thus leader *de facto* of the USSR a few months later. The burial procession, defined as a 'corteo immenso', is led by the flag of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party which represents 'una volontà ferrea, decenni di lotte durissime, secoli di carcere, migliaia di caduti', as stressed by the voice-over commentary written by Maurizio Ferrara. On the sides of the streets, thousands of people attend the procession. Ferrara claims that these people represent a part of Italy:

L'Italia delle grandi battaglie contro il fascismo, per la Repubblica,
l'Italia del '53, del luglio '60, del 28 aprile' [the day of the 1963 election]
delle grandi ore storiche e della fatica quotidiana.

The painting *I Funerali di Togliatti*, by Renato Guttuso, represents effectively, and with a chromatic vivacity that the black and white film cannot entirely render, the visual element of the burial procession: militants clinging on top of road signs and window ledges, thousands of clinched fists, and a forest of red flags. The burial at the Verano cemetery is shown as taking place in a rather unreal silence and, immediately after, the portrait of Togliatti is next to the one of his old comrade Gramsci, while the new leader Luigi Longo reaffirms, in front of the Central Committee, the unshakable determination to march along the *Via italiana al socialismo*.

A comparison between *L'Italia con Togliatti*, and *L'addio a Enrico Berlinguer*, one of the last films produced by the PCI and devoted to the funeral of Enrico Berlinguer (Rome, 13 June 1984) proves how the set of rituals characterising such a pivotal moment in the life of the party remained unaltered twenty years later. Quite apart from the evolution in shooting and narrative technique, such as the use of colour film and the street interviews, *L'Addio a Enrico Berlinguer* presents the same symbolic elements of *L'Italia con Togliatti*: the never-ending procession of mourning citizens, the foreign delegations, the *gonfaloni* of the municipalities ruled by the PCI and the final meeting in Piazza San Giovanni attended by a massive red-tinged crowd.⁶

One final consideration is the symbolic relevance of Togliatti's funeral in the history of Italian cinema. Images taken from *L'Italia con Togliatti* became part of two films released a few years later, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966) and Paolo e Vittorio Taviani's *Sovversivi* (1967). According to Lino Micciché, both films belong to a group that could be defined as 'film del

⁶ An evocative account of the funeral of Enrico Berlinguer can be found in Gundle (2000b, 193 – 96).

ripensamento ideologico' or 'film della crisi', that is to say films dealing with the ideological disenchantment of left-wing intellectuals at the middle of the 1960s (Micciché 1995, 98 – 99). In the words of Pasolini, the death of Togliatti symbolized an epochal change:

A historical epoch, the epoch of the Resistance, of great hopes for communism, of the class struggle, has finished. What we have now is the economic boom, the welfare state, and industrialisation which is using the South as a reserve of cheap manpower and even beginning to industrialize it as well. There has been a real change which coincided more or less with Togliatti's death. It was a pure coincidence chronologically, but it worked symbolically (Pasolini in Stack 1969, 103 – 104).

In *Sovversivi*, the funeral of the great Communist leader becomes the rite of passage for a generation of intellectuals: 'Addio Togliatti, giovinezza nostra addio' reads one of the protagonists' diary entries, as the burial procession passes in front of her house. Arriving at adulthood is both the definitive renunciation of romantic ideas of revolution and the ineluctable choice of the more quiet, and prosaic, everyday political activity in a reformist framework. The final scene of the film, where the Venezuelan character decides to leave his beautiful Italian fiancé and comfortable life in Rome to go back home and join a revolutionary group, seems to suggest that no space for revolution was left in Europe and that major political changes could only take place in third world countries.

This disenchantment may appear surprising, and certainly lacking prescience, considering that, just a few months after *Sovversivi* was released, a new generation

would take upon itself the task of promoting a radical change during the phase of political mobilization known as the *Contestazione* (see Chapter 8). This, however, would be an entirely different social group, with little or no link to the generation of intellectuals the Taviani and Pasolini belonged to. The former would be very young students, without direct experience of Fascism, who grew up in the years of the economic boom. As a consequence, they would have a much different, and far less mythical, image of the PCI to which they would not owe neither their successful careers, nor a core set of myths, cultural values or political ideas their personality was built on. For these reasons, they would dare to believe a revolution to be possible even without the support of the Italian Communist Party, a hypothesis regarded at least as very unlikely, if not preposterous, by those who were just a few years older. *L'Italia con Togliatti* was by far the greatest commercial success of the first years of Unitelefilm: it sold 135 copies in 16 mm and 91 copies in 35 mm, in Italy and abroad.⁷

In the same period, Unitelefilm also produced *Essere Donne*, the first PCI film specifically devoted to gender issues. According to a statement by the director Cecilia Mangini, the idea of the film came from the party, and precisely from Luciana Castellina, who wanted to produce a film dealing with the problems of working women.⁸ Castellina granted Mangini, who was an independent filmmaker working for the party for the first time, complete freedom with respect to content and style, and only asked the text of the voice-over commentary to be entrusted to Felice Chilanti. Giuliana dal Pozzo, one of the pioneers of the Italian Feminist Movement, was also involved as project consultant and collaborated in the writing of the voice-

⁷ *Produzione dall'agosto 1964 a fine 1964 e nella prima parte del 1965*, in Medici (2001, 203 – 207).

⁸ See Gabriella Gallozzi's «*Essere donne*»: un film, una bandiera. Diretto da Cecilia Mangini, per anni è stato parte del rito dell'8 marzo. È stato restaurato, in *l'Unità*, 5/2/2002, 22.

over commentary. Although it was not meant to be used as a propaganda film - in fact, it was presented at the quality awards - *Essere Donne* contains traditional issues of the Communist propaganda of the period: the illusory nature of the economic miracle, the deficiencies of the *centrosinistra* governments with respect to social care and the capitalist exploitation within the factories.

Essere donne begins showing images taken from fashion magazines, which portray what an ideal woman was expected to be in the early 1960s, while Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Alabama song* plays. The women in the magazines are sophisticated and fashionable, clearly belonging to the upper middle class. 'Chi può riconoscersi in queste immagini?' the voice-over commentary asks rhetorically. Certainly not ordinary Italian women; not the six million women at work, every day, in the country. Subsequently, the film undertakes a journey to discover the real women behind the image pictured in the magazines; the smokescreen that hides 'le contraddizioni e le violenze della nostra società'. We see a 15 year-old girl working ten hours a day in a *pastificio* in Puglia, and girls assigned to work precision machinery in a Philips industrial plant in the north of Italy. Both are exploited, and both endure different, but equally hard, conditions while at work. The documentary, however, does not demonise factory work. In fact, the voice-over commentary claims that the modern world begins just beyond the gates of a factory, as factory work provides better wages and social dignity and is the only chance of emancipation for thousands of girls, especially in the south. In this respect, we see a young peasant girl watching the *Superga* shoe factory from afar, placed in the middle of a large estate on which hundreds of women are working as day-labourers. Life is hard for peasants and factory workers alike, but at least women working in factories can look forward

to an improvement, also by means of legislative intervention. In order to ease the life of working women, as claimed by a woman working in factory in the north, the government should build kindergartens and grant to workers the 'settimana corta', namely Saturdays off:

Certo se ci fosse la settimana corta, sarebbe un'altra cosa. Almeno avremmo un giorno di riposo. Ora non ce l'abbiamo, perché la domenica fai la casa a fondo e il bucato.

At no point, however, does the film mention the possibility of a fair division of domestic chores between couples as part of the solution of the problem. This was consistent with how the PCI and the UDI (Unione Donne Italiane), the Communist organisation for women, had set the whole matter of the 'woman question' since 1945.⁹ Having focused exclusively on the problem of the 'emancipazione della donna', namely the social and economic emancipation of female population to be achieved through their gradual entry into labour, the problems of women were seen by Communists as essentially political, and very rarely tackled as cultural issues (Lilli and Valentini 1979, 42 – 3). Consequently, women's only counterpart was the government, which had to enforce women's right to work through legislative measures. Overall, Communists seemed to imply that class struggle was integral to the struggle against patriarchy and they did not acknowledge the existence of the oppression of women in the working class.

In *Essere donne*, the voice-over commentary repeatedly stresses that the problems of the women highlighted in the documentary are fundamentally of a

⁹ A story of UDI can be found in Rodano (2010). Interesting considerations on the PCI – UDI relationship can be found in Beckwith (1985).

political nature. For example, in describing the condition of the women day labourers in Puglia, the voice-over commentary claims:

Si avviano verso lunghe ore di zappa. La loro fatica sarà vanificata dalle leggi del profitto, che i centri direzionali dei monopoli, al Nord, impongono anche nel più lontano paese del meridione.

In other parts, however, the voice-over commentary seems to acknowledge that, along with economic exploitation, common to both male and female workers, women suffer additional injustices due to the cultural and social structure of Italian society:

Così braccianti e operaie anche per questa giornata riceveranno una paga ingiusta. Come gli uomini. Ma sulla donna cade ancora il peso di subordinazioni antiche, tradizionali.

Further on these injustices are mentioned again:

In ogni campo della produzione è presente la donna che lavora. Troppo spesso, anche oggi, le vengono riservati i lavori più ingrati, monotoni, quelli che l'uomo non sa fare o preferisce non fare.

Such remarks, probably ascribable to Giuliana dal Pozzo, show a sensibility towards the issues of patriarchy and the cultural subordination of women. The outbreak of the feminist movement at the beginning of the 1970s, would force the party and the UDI to dramatically reconsider many long-standing assumptions (see Part III, Chapter 12).

Essere Donne also tackles the issue of abortion, through the off-screen statement by a woman who had two abortions (this was a crime at the time in Italy) because she could not afford to leave her job to take care of one more baby. The last scene of the film sends a message of hope for the future. We see a young woman

resolutely climbing up a set of long stairs while the voice-over commentary stresses the prominent role played by women within the workers' movement and hints at the future socialist society where the emancipation of women will be finally complete:

[la donna] insieme agli operai difende le fabbriche. Si batte insieme ai braccianti per liquidare l'arretratezza del meridione. Ha pagato di persona ovunque si lotta per il potere di decidere. E ancora dove si manifesta contro i pericoli di guerra; sa che la sua liberazione non può attenderla che da sé stessa. In una società nuova, dove il libero sviluppo di ciascuno sia condizione per il libero sviluppo di tutti.

The film is visually arresting and manages to communicate, rather efficaciously, the sense of alienation experienced by factory workers. This is due to Mangini's direction, which focuses on details such as eyes, glimpses and hands, and the film's rapid editing which underlines the rhythms of production imposed on the workers by the assembly line. In this respect, the most remarkable scene is the one shot at the Philips factory, showing a timekeeper circling above the workers, mostly young girls, while a new piece is delivered in front of them every three or four seconds. To obtain the authorisation to film in the factory, Mangini passed herself off as a director working for the RAI.

Essere Donne was the first film presented by Unitelefilm at the quality awards, and it was excluded. The Communist press protested sternly, speaking of 'censura ideologica'.¹⁰ It was, in fact, unthinkable that *Essere Donne* could have been rejected due to lack of the 'minimi requisiti tecnici and artistici', according to the provisions of Law n. 1213, as the documentary had just been awarded a prize at the Leipzig

¹⁰ *La Censura c'è e si vede*, in *l'Unità*, 5/5/1965, 7. *L'A.R.C.I. protesta per la censura a «Essere Donne»*, in *l'Unità* 8/5/1965, 9.

Festival for Documentary by a jury which included masters of documentary filmmaking such as Ioris Ivens and John Grierson.¹¹ Quite apart from the loss of prize money, the exclusion from the *programmazione obbligatoria*, which was granted to fifty documentaries each trimester, greatly limited the possibility for the documentary to be seen throughout the country. Besides, this affair provided polemical ammunition to be deployed against the PSI: as the *Ministro del Turismo e dello Spettacolo* of the II Moro governments (July 1964 – January 1966) was the socialist Achille Corona, the Communist press could present the exclusion of *Essere donne* as proof of the PSI's betrayal of left-wing values following its participation in the *centrosinistra* governments.¹² According to journalist Bruna Bellonzi, who published a long article with an interview with Cecilia Mangini in the UDI magazine *Noi Donne*, the exclusion of *Essere Donne* was due to cultural rather than political reasons:

In un mondo dove la femminilità è una mistica; dove il destino delle donne viene presentato come una fortuna; dove il sacrificio, la rinuncia, la sottomissione vengono decantati come attributi invidiabili della sposa e della madre; un discorso franco di quanto vi è di sbagliato, di assurdo, di inaccettabile, di ingiusto nella condizione femminile è stato trovato poco spettacolare.¹³

A total of 43 copies of *Essere Donne* were distributed to the *Federazioni* of the PCI, and one was sold in Leipzig.¹⁴

¹¹ «*Essere Donne*». *Tema tabù per la supercensura*, in *l'Unità* 4/5/1965, 7.

¹² See the complaints by the PSI for the Communist allegations in the article *A proposito di "Essere Donne"*, in *Avanti!* 6/5/1965, in Archivio AAMOD, Faldone 'E', fascicolo 'Essere donne'.

¹³ Bruna Bellonzi *E' difficile essere donne*, in *Noi Donne*, 22/5/1965, in Archivio AAMOD, Faldone 'E', fascicolo 'Essere donne'.

¹⁴ Archivio AAMOD, Faldone 'E', fascicolo 'Essere donne'.

Along with *L'Italia con Togliatti* and *Essere Donne*, Unitelefilm produced, between 1964 and 1965, a few *film di recupero*, including *Vivere qui* (15 minutes, *film di recupero* of the 43-minute propaganda film *Sardegna, il futuro si chiama rinascita*); *Torino dopo il miracolo* (28 minutes, *film di recupero* of *Una città da salvare*, 18 minutes) and *Deserto di uomini* (12 minutes, from the 37 – minute propaganda film *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne*). *Deserto di uomini*, which concerned the problem of the depopulation of the southern countryside due to emigration, was the first Unitelefilm film to win the quality award (seven million lire).

Meanwhile, the Communist film production company had been selling the old productions of the PCI, including *Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*, *Togliatti è ritornato*, and *La Marcia della pace* and distributing the Italian edition of a Polish documentary about the Cuban revolution (*Patria o Muerte*, by Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Scorzewski, 1962, 48 minutes). It also sold fifty *attualità* for a total of 120 copies to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria.¹⁵ The UTF's engagement in a large production of propaganda films for the party is the focus of the next chapter.

¹⁵ *Produzione dall'agosto 1964 a fine 1964 e nella prima parte del 1965*, in Medici (2001, 203 – 207).

Chapter 2. A Party Without Togliatti

After the death of Togliatti, the PCI underwent a period of political and ideological tensions. On the one hand, it was subjected to violent ideological attacks from radical left-wing groups. On the other, it was shook by the first split within the party leadership since 1930.¹⁶ As far as the former are concerned, criticism of the groups of the so-called *nuova sinistra* had challenged the PCI leadership at the beginning of the decade. The *nuova sinistra*, an expression encompassing a few small but combative fringes of young intellectuals gathered around journals such as *Quaderni Rossi* and *Quaderni Piacentini*, openly accused the PCI of being a hindrance rather than a help in advancing the workers' cause. According to an historical interpretation that began to enjoy some popularity, the PCI had deliberately restricted the social and political aspirations of Italian workers since the end of WWII, turning progressively into a pillar of the bourgeois political system.¹⁷

From 1964, a new political threat came in the shape of Maoist fringes, inside and outside the party, which aimed either at replacing the party leadership, accused of having betrayed Leninism, or at eroding the PCI consensus at grass-roots level in view of the foundation of a new Communist party. These Maoist groups funded a newspaper, polemically called *Nuova Unità*, and began to issue an anonymous pamphlet, the so-called *Lettera ai compagni*, which welcomed the removal of Khrushchev (ironically defined as 'l'uomo del gulasc'), which occurred in October

¹⁶ For more information on the expulsion of the so-called 'gruppo dei tre', namely Pietro Tresso, Alfonso Leonetti, Paolo Ravazzoli, see (Galli 1977, 149 – 160).

¹⁷ An analysis of the various groups of the *nuova sinistra* in *Materiali per una nuova sinistra* (1988), and Lumley (1990, 33 – 41). A list of magazines and journals of the *nuova sinistra* is in Mangano (1979). A discussion concerning the work of Renato Panzieri, founder of the *Quaderni Rossi*, is in Santarelli (1997, 143 – 46). A selection of articles from *Quaderni Piacentini* can be found in Fofi and Giacomini (1998). On the PCI reaction to these new magazines see Ajello (1997, 37 – 41).

1964, and described the PCI's party leadership as *revisionista* and *riformista*.¹⁸ In October 1966, Maoists founded a new Communist party, the Partito comunista d'Italia (Panvini 2009, 19).

The most serious menace to the PCI's cohesion came, however, from the disagreement between two major leaders of the party, Giorgio Amendola and Pietro Ingrao, with respect to the interpretation of the political significance of the *centrosinistra* (Höbel 2010, 129 – 158). Giorgio Amendola, along with the new *Segretario* Luigi Longo and the majority of the party leadership, believed that the coalition between the DC and the PSI had failed its objectives, as it had achieved poor results with respect to the reforms it had promised to the electorate. Pietro Ingrao, backed by the FGCI and a few intellectuals such as Rossana Rossanda and Luigi Pintor, claimed instead that, thanks to the *centrosinistra*, the DC and the ruling classes were about to reach their major objective. This was the political and social integration of part of the Italian working class, and the PSI, in a social-democratic framework (Magri 2009, 190 – 94). These divergent interpretations called for opposite strategies. Whereas Amendola, in continuity with Togliatti's policy, endorsed a *politica unitaria*, namely the pursuit of a wide inter-classist alliance aimed at gradually reinforcing the electoral base of the party for a long-term 'war of position', Ingrao proposed to focus on the working class and to counter the *centrosinistra* through the promotion of a new wave of struggles in the factories.

It was not the first time that different political visions clashed at the top of the party. Thanks to Togliatti's unquestioned authority, however, disputes had always been promptly settled and party leaders had regained political cohesion. As a result,

¹⁸ A collection of the *lettere ai compagni* issued in 1965 is in IG, APCI, MF 526, pp. 3055 – 3225, Partiti Politici, Gruppi di sinistra extraparlamentare, serie 1965.

never before had militants and cadres perceived signs of disagreement within the party leadership. This time to find common ground proved to be more difficult and differences clearly emerged during the Eleventh Congress of the party (Rome 25 – 31 January 1966). What is more, when Pietro Ingrao and his supporters, the so-called *sinistra*, were defeated in the congressional debate, he refused to align himself with the majority, claiming that the minority had the right to disagree. By saying that, Ingrao was taking a stance that, as far as the Communist tradition was concerned, was nothing less than heresy.¹⁹ Although Ingrao's personal prestige saved him from major consequences, his followers did not escape punishment. Rossana Rossanda, for example, lost the leadership of the *Commissione Culturale*. Three years later, Rossanda and Pintor were expelled from the party, along with others, for having set up an independent Communist magazine, *Il Manifesto*, which expressed a left-wing critique of the Party's policy (Ajello 1997, 94 – 9; Magri 2009, 252 – 58).

Unitelefilm produced a 25-minute film about the Eleventh Congress, *I comunisti e il paese*, directed by Andrea Frezza. As is the case with all previous films devoted to party congresses, *I comunisti e il paese* is principally aimed at presenting the PCI as a strong political party led by a leadership unanimously behind the secretary. Given that the Eleventh Congress was the first without Togliatti, it was especially important to reinforce such a positive message in order to reassure the militants about the health of the party and the stability of the new leadership of Luigi Longo. This explains why the film does not mention the contrasts between the

¹⁹ A detailed account of the debate at the Ninth Congress can be found in Höbel (2010, 209 – 220). See also Magri (2009, 195 – 7).

amendoliani and the *ingraiani*. After a tribute to Palmiro Togliatti, *I comunisti e il paese* deals with the Maoist groups' critique of the political line of the party.²⁰

It is interesting to analyse how the film tackles such a thorny issue: the existence of the Maoist groups and of their criticisms is at no point explicitly stated. If not acquainted with the problem, therefore, the viewer cannot fully grasp the meaning of some claims made by the voice-over commentary. In this way, the director, and the watchful cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, achieve a double purpose: the issue is addressed on behalf of those militants aware of its significance, while the less informed viewers, arguably the majority, are kept in the dark. Besides, in order to rebuff Maoist remarks, the film employs a sort of rhetorical technique: whereas the Maoists considered the peaceful coexistence theory and the commitment against American imperialism to be mutually exclusive, the voice-over commentary suggests that the two policies do not contradict each other, being rather two sides of the same coin:

Di contro a questo [the threat to world peace by American imperialism] c'è la giusta politica dell'Unione Sovietica e del movimento operaio internazionale. Una politica che si basa sulla coesistenza pacifica e sulla solidarietà con i paesi aggrediti dall'imperialismo.²¹

Although scarcely informative in terms of the congressional debate, *I comunisti e il paese* is a worthwhile cinematic text as it summarizes PCI policy and the motifs informing Communist propaganda at the time. The issue of the dialogue with the Church and the Catholic voters stands out as a central element of the strategy which

²⁰ Luigi Longo's opening speech can be found in Pugliese and Pugliese (1985, 12 – 56).

²¹ On the issues of peaceful coexistence and imperialism, see the official position of the party in an article written by Enrico Berlinguer and published on *Rinascita* a few days before the Congress, *La coesistenza pacifica (tre lettere e una risposta)*, 1, 1/1/1966, 5.

had emerged victorious at the Congress: the strategy of the *politica unitaria* endorsed by Amendola. The film shows Luigi Longo quoting Paolo VI, who had invited the Catholics to join ‘tutti gli uomini sinceramente amanti della pace’ in a common effort to free mankind from the curse of war. The voice-over commentary takes a step further, claiming that the dialogue between Communists and Catholics, ‘dialogo sugli obiettivi immediati e anche sulle prospettive generali della società’, is essential to the democratic development of the country.

Such remarks must be regarded as the Communist answer to the process of renewal undertaken by the Catholic Church since the election of Pope John XXIII in 1958. Several acts and public statements by the new Pope, especially the promulgation of the *Pacem in terris* (1963) – the first encyclical addressing not only followers but also ‘people of good will’, had nourished the PCI leadership’s hopes of a possible attenuation of the anti-Communist stance characterizing the papacy of Pope John’s predecessor Pius XII.²² In particular, the Communist Party had followed the Second Vatican Council with great interest. This opened under Pope John XXIII on 11 October 1962, and closed under Pope Paul VI on 8 December 1965.²³

After the conclusion of the Council, a report issued to Longo by Siro Lombardini, a former member of the *Sinistra Cristiana* in the CLN of Lombardia,²⁴ stressed that the Second Vatican had openly criticised the ‘principio dell’unità politica dei cattolici’ and urged the PCI to create a welcoming environment for those:

gruppi significativi (anche se numericamente non molto forti credo) di cattolici italiani che guardano con vera e propria “passione” al nostro

²² For a discussion of the political impact of Pope John papacy, see Lanaro (1992, 365 – 376).

²³ See the articles published in *Rinascita* by Libero Pierantozzi, who followed the Second Vatican Council for the party, for example *I cattolici italiani dopo il Vaticano II*, 18/12/1965, 50 and *Responsabilità dei cattolici*, 25/12/1965, 51.

²⁴ See Lombardini (2005).

partito e sentono che nel PCI è la loro collocazione politica giusta
(emphasis in the original).²⁵

The PCI thus foresaw the possibility of establishing an alliance at grass-roots level with fringes of left-wing Catholics, eventually enlarging its constituency. This explains the frequent hints at the dialogue between Communists and Catholics contained in *I comunisti e il paese*, as well as in other films produced by the PCI in that period. The political and ideological link with the Soviet Union remained, however, a central element of Communist identity, and *I comunisti e il paese* took on the task of reminding this point to the militants, showing the chief of the Soviet delegation, Mikhail Suslov, gifting Longo with a bust of Lenin.

Alongside the dialogue with Catholics, the *politica unitaria* attempted to restore an alliance with the Socialist party in order to safeguard the political unity of the working class. This was particularly urgent in 1966, as the PSI and the PSDI (Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano), after a long political rapprochement, were about to merge in the – albeit short lived - unified PSU (Partito Socialista Unificato). PCI propaganda was thus committed to countering the increasing detachment between socialists and Communists, and Unitelefilm contributed to the endeavour by producing *A Paolo Rossi nostro compagno*, a fifteen-minute documentary directed by Ennio Lorenzini.

The film concerns the killing of the socialist student Paolo Rossi by Fascist-sympathizers at the University *La Sapienza* of Rome, on 27 April 1966.²⁶ This dramatic event was important with respect to the political scope outlined above as it

²⁵ *Appunti per il compagno Luigi Longo*, in IG, APCI, MF 527, pp. 835 – 841, Chiesa e movimenti cattolici, serie 1965.

²⁶ On the death of Paolo Rossi, and its consequences on the Italian political climate, see Panvini (2009, 10 – 17).

provided an opportunity to bring together the historical parties of the Italian left in the common cause of anti-Fascism. Although *A Paolo Rossi nostro compagno* exploits, rather blatantly, the death of the young socialist student for political purposes, it does not lack genuine emotion. The opening scene concerning Rossi's funeral, in particular, is rather moving. We see the mother and the sister of Rossi, the never-ending stream of people and funeral wreaths, while *We shall overcome*, the anthem of the African-American Civil Rights Movement is played. The voice-over commentary claims that the sacrifice of Rossi has unified the sincere democrats, regardless of social class and political creed:

Colleghi, professori, uomini di cultura, operai, parlamentari, uomini di Governo, con fiori e con bandiere. Oggi ci siamo tutti a ricordare Paolo Rossi e ad ammonire tutti i colpevoli della sua morte.

Subsequently, the film offers a unique visual documentation of the occupation of the faculty of *Lettere e Filosofia* which followed the funeral of Paolo Rossi. According to the voice-over commentary, which in some parts voices the students' alleged point of view, the occupation had proven how fundamental anti-fascist values are in comparison to current political divisions:

Anche se divisi su tanti argomenti ci si trovava uniti nell'antifascismo, nella difesa dei valori della democrazia, e allora non restava altra risposta: occupare la facoltà.

The occupation of *Lettere e Filosofia* was politically relevant, as proven by the visits paid to the University by major political leaders such as Ferruccio Parri, Luigi Longo and Pietro Ingrao and whose presence among the students is duly highlighted in the film. The occupiers targeted the *Magnifico Rettore* of *La Sapienza* Giuseppe

Ugo Papi for his alleged tolerance of fascist violence within the campus, and Papi's eventual resignation was hailed by *l'Unità* as the *Prima grande vittoria dell'unità antifascista all'Università di Roma*.²⁷ It is worth noting that the document issued by the students in the last day of the occupation, while expressing satisfaction at Papi's resignation, also pointed out how the departure of the *Rettore*, far from representing the objective of the struggle, was rather to be regarded as the first step of a long-term commitment aimed at getting rid of 'una università faraonica, feudale, scientificamente e moralmente decrepita'. In hindsight, this statement is particularly revealing, as it recalls the slogans shouted in Italian universities during the *contestazione* - in 1968 and after.

Also revealing is the fact that, while initially present in the screenplay, this statement was eventually cut in the final edition of the film. The cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* probably regarded it as superfluous with respect to the aims of the documentary.²⁸ This seems to suggest that the PCI was not particularly interested in the students' long-term demands, being rather eager to exploit the turmoil at the university in order to strengthen the *politica unitaria* of the party. As it turned out, the PCI was caught by surprise by the outbreak of the student revolt two years later.

One final consideration is worth making with respect to the historical value of the images of *A Paolo Rossi nostro compagno*. As already mentioned the mode of confrontation and the requests formulated by the students acted as a harbinger for the 1968 wave of protests. A difference, however, stands out between the students

²⁷ See *l'Unità*, 3/5/1966, front-page.

²⁸ The screenplay of the film can be found in the AAMOD Archive, Faldone P, Fascicolo *A Paolo Rossi nostro compagno*. In the same folder, the *Visto di censura* authorizing the projection of the film without any cuts can be found.

depicted in this film and those who would revolt two years later. The former have short hair and dress in a rather conventional fashion, while the latter would develop an entirely new and rather provocative style, characterized by long hair and scruffy clothes. A comparative analysis of cinematic texts allows for an appreciation of the evolution occurring in young people's construction of personal identity over a short period.²⁹

Along with anti-Fascism, the Vietnam War was another issue through which the PCI foresaw the possibility of empowering the *politica unitaria*, developing cooperation with a wide range of political forces. The Vietnam War was, in many respects, the perfect propaganda issue. On one hand, it provided the opportunity to revitalize the campaign for peace as well as anti-Americanism, two issues traditionally associated in Communist propaganda. On the other hand, it effectively served to counter the allegation of the Maoist groups and the *nuova sinistra* concerning PCI acquiescence towards American imperialism by proving that the PCI was committed to countering imperialism. Besides, people's emotional response to that conflict was rather intense, especially as far as young left-wingers and Catholics were concerned. The Vietnam War was to shape the political identity of an entire generation of Italians, the so-called 'generazione del Vietnam', as the secretary of the FGCI, Claudio Petruccioli, defined it in an article published on *Rinascita*.³⁰ This was a global phenomenon due to the massive media coverage of that war and which, for the first time, did not spare the audience the graphic details of modern warfare (Hallin, 1989).

²⁹ On this point, see Lumley (1998, 85).

³⁰ *La generazione del Vietnam*, in *Rinascita*, 28, 9/7/1966, 2, Aldo Tortorella *Una politica per la "generazione del Vietnam"*, in *Rinascita*, 48, 6/12/1968, 13. On this point, see Crainz (2005, 130 – 33).

From January 1965, the party urged the *federazioni* to organize demonstrations and other initiatives aimed at stressing ‘le responsabilità della maggioranza imperialista dell’ONU’.³¹ These turned out to be very successful in terms of participation, encouraging the party to focus its propaganda on the issue of the Vietnam War.³² For example, local sections of the party organised many protest marches and the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* produced several posters illustrating the atrocities perpetrated by US soldiers.³³ In May 1965, the PCI claimed to have fundraised 100 million lire in record time for a field hospital to be shipped to the Vietnamese.³⁴ At the same time, Unitelefilm released *Vietnam chiama*, the first PCI propaganda film devoted to the Vietnam War. According to *l’Unità* this was ‘un film che tutti devono vedere’.³⁵

Vietnam chiama, which has a running time of twenty-four minutes, was directed by Luciano Malaspina, who had previously directed *Rivoluzione a Cuba*, one of the first Italian documentaries devoted to the Cuban revolution (Poppi 2002, 259 – 60). *Vietnam chiama* is exclusively edited using archive pictures and footage. Some of these are rather graphic and clearly aimed at causing revulsion amongst audiences for the crimes committed by both the US Army and the various US puppet dictators taking turns in power in South Vietnam. The historical discussion surrounding the causes of the war is entrusted to the voice-over commentary written by Luciano Ledda, and played by Riccardo Cucciolla. This conveys a few

³¹ *A tutte le Federazioni*. Bulletin issued by the Stampa e Propaganda, in IG, APCI, MF 523, p. 165, Stampa e Propaganda, 11 January 1965.

³² According to the report to the *Segreteria* made by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* ‘in alcune zone del paese il movimento ha forza ed estensione tali da poter essere paragonato ad analoghi movimenti sviluppatisi in Italia negli anni 1949 – 50, e cioè ad un movimento che vide la massima mobilitazione delle forze democratiche e operaie sul problema della lotta per la pace’. In IG, APCI, MF 523, p. 192, Stampa e Propaganda, 21 April 1965.

³³ These can be found in Novelli (2000, 178 – 187).

³⁴ See *Raggiunti i cento milioni per il Vietnam*, in *l’Unità*, 23/5/1965, front page and page 15.

³⁵ *Un crudo racconto della sporca Guerra nel Viet*, in *l’Unità*, 21/5/1965, 7.

straightforward messages addressing both the party militants and the wider public. Firstly, the US government must be regarded as uniquely responsible for the military escalation in Vietnam. Secondly, the USSR is actively supporting North Vietnam both politically and militarily. This point aims at countering the allegations by the Maoist fringes, by stressing how the USSR had not given up its commitment to fight against imperialism. Thirdly, the PCI is entirely fulfilling its fraternal duty to the Communist party of North Vietnam. In this respect, the voice-over commentary mentions the official visit to North Vietnam by the delegation of the PCI, which, quite significantly, gifted the Vietnamese comrades with the combat flag of a partisan *Brigata Garibaldi*.³⁶ This symbolic gesture established a parallelism between the Italian partisans and the People Army of Vietnam. This would become a recurrent motif of Communist propaganda.³⁷ The film ends by making such a parallelism explicit and calling for action to support Vietnam:

Il Vietnam chiama. E' un appello antico e sempre nuovo. E' l'appello della Spagna, di Cuba, dell'Algeria, del Congo, e di S. Domingo. E' l'appello di un popolo che si batte per gli stessi ideali che animarono la nostra Resistenza, e che vuole conquistare la libert , la pace, il socialismo.

Over 27 and 28 November 1965, the PCI organised, along with the PSI, a two-day national demonstration in solidarity with the Vietnamese people, which culminated

³⁶ On the official visit to Vietnam by a delegation of the PCI led by Giancarlo Pajetta in April – May 1965 see *Ho Chi Min riceve a colloquio la delegazione del PCI*, in *l'Unit *, 1/5/1965, front-page. See also IG, APCI, MF 528, pp. 774 – 775, Estero, Vietnam, serie 1965. Another diplomatic mission to North Vietnam, led by Enrico Berlinguer, was organized the following year; see IG, APCI, MF 528, pp. 774 – 775, Estero, Vietnam, serie 1966.

³⁷ See (Cooke 2011, 97). In the period of the electoral campaign of 1968, for example, the Sunday edition of *l'Unit * published a comic concerning the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese, significantly titled *Partigiani nella Giungla* and written by the future director of *Unitefilm*, Dario Natoli, between 28 January and 21 April 1968.

with a vigil at the *Teatro Adriano* in Rome.³⁸ This initiative was quite successful, enjoying the support of many illustrious personalities of the Italian cultural panorama and even of well-known Catholic political leaders such as Giorgio La Pira. Unitefilm produced two films concerning that event, *Vietnam test* (21 minutes) and *Interviste a Milano sul Vietnam* (18 minutes). Antonio Bertini directed the former, which concerns the event taking place in Rome. The title of the film suggests that the two-day initiative was testing the Italian support for the North Vietnam cause. The film features statements of solidarity with the Vietnamese people recorded at the *Teatro Adriano*, including those by Laura Betti, Gian Maria Volonté, Valentino Orsini, Lamberto Maggiorani, Pino Zac, Cesare Zavattini and Renato Guttuso.

Interviste a Milano sul Vietnam was filmed in Milan days before the vigil at the *Teatro Adriano*. It is divided into two parts, the first of which features a selection of street interviews. This section has a certain historical value as it documents the awareness of Italian public opinion on the issue of the Vietnam War at the time. The interviewer asks very simple and straightforward questions such as ‘Cosa ne pensa della guerra del Vietnam’, and, quite commendably, the editing does not conceal the fact that many respondents lack well-defined opinions. The second part shows statements by famous people that could not attend the meeting at the *Teatro Adriano* but wanted, nonetheless, to express their support for the initiative. These are Corrado Pani, Ernesto Treccani, Franco Parenti, Eduardo De Filippo and Dario Fo. The film also includes a theatrical sketch against war played by Franca Rame, and taken from a play by Dario Fo.

³⁸ See *Per due giorni e una notte un grido: Pace nel Vietnam!*, in *l'Unità*, 29/11/1965, p. 6. See also a document by the *Stampa e Propaganda* concerning the ‘veglia’ to be organized in Rome, in IG, APCI, MF 523, pp. 244 – 246, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 9/11/1965.

Unitefilm also produced an eighteen-minute documentary about Vietnam, which was successfully presented to the quality awards, *Il Vietnam è qui*, by Giuseppe Ferrara. This film was edited using the same stock footage of the previous *Vietnam Chiama*, but with a different and less trenchantly anti-American voice-over commentary. Overall, *Il Vietnam è qui* is aimed at pointing out that US government policy does not mirror the opinion of the whole American people, a significant part of which actually opposed the military escalation.

Unitefilm products concerning the Vietnam War generally had good commercial success. For example, the PCI film production company sold 70 copies of the Italian edition of *La Ciel, la Terre* (*Il Cielo, la Terra*) the first documentary devoted to the Vietnam War by the great Dutch documentary filmmaker Ioris Ivens. As far as the political results were concerned, a report by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* issued at the end of 1966 claimed that the Vietnam campaign had achieved its principal objectives, which were ‘l’avvicinamento dei gruppi cattolici’ and ‘una forte presa sui giovani’.³⁹ UTF had given an important contribution to these achievements: their films concerning the Vietnam War had been screened more than 2300 times, in various cities, with an estimated 500.000 spectators.

The subject of the Vietnam War was relentlessly exploited by Communist cinematography over the following years. In view of the 1968 election, for example, Unitefilm released the Italian edition of another documentary on the Vietnam War

³⁹ IG, APCI, MF 537, pp. 938 – 942, Estero, Vietnam, serie 1966. On the use of the Vietnam campaign to establish a dialogue with left-wing Catholic fringes, see also MF 537, pp. 949 – 960, Estero, Vietnam, serie 1966: ‘Ultimamente, come è noto, le nuove prese di posizione di Papa Paolo VI hanno oggettivamente sensibilizzato l’opinione pubblica cattolica sulla gravità della situazione internazionale, permettendo alle nostre organizzazioni di svolgere un’azione più penetrante e più efficace, in senso antimperialistico, in direzione della grandi masse dei cattolici’ (p. 949) ‘In occasione della giornata dei cattolici per la pace (4 ottobre) indetta dal Papa sono state diffuse oltre 500.000 copie di una lettera dei comunisti ai cattolici, mentre numerose federazioni affiggevano manifesti e diffondevano volantini rivolti ai cattolici’ (p. 952).

by Ioris Ivens, *17° Parellelo* (Le 17ème Parallèle), and produced *L'offensiva del Tet*, concerning the 'Tet offensive', which was launched by the forces of the People's Army of Vietnam in January 1968 (Schmitz 2005). This twenty-eight minute film was edited using footage provided by the filmmakers of the People's Army of Vietnam, which was largely employing cinematographic propaganda as a political weapon in that conflict (Barnouwn 1974, 268). *L'offensiva del Tet*, a piece of explicit pro-Vietnamese propaganda, is striking for its lack of compassion with respect to the human cost of that long and bloody battle. The pacifism previously associated with the subject of the Vietnam War has completely vanished in *L'offensiva del Tet*. The military aspect is the only one taken into consideration and the voice-over commentary, intoned in a rather triumphant manner by Gian Maria Volontè, expresses his satisfaction at the alleged, and actually greatly exaggerated, loss suffered by the US army. This is completed with indulgent images showing the arrests of collaborationists (in actual fact, executions) occurring in the cities temporarily occupied by the People's Army of Vietnam. The final statement by the voice-over commentary highlights the relevance that the Vietnam War has assumed for an entire generation:

Questa lotta che chiama ancora ogni uomo, da qualunque parte del mondo, che chiede a tutti una presenza, perché per tutti c'è stato il Vietnam ed è ormai indissolubilmente anche nostro il suo destino.

Chapter 3. The *Buongoverno* of the PCI and the *Malgoverno* of the DC.

Another propaganda issue largely exploited by Communist cinematographic propaganda in the 1960s was the so-called *buongoverno delle sinistre*, an expression that became rather proverbial. According to the PCI propaganda, it referred to the self-evident excellence of the Communist local administrators, especially when compared to the morally questionable, and rather inefficient, establishment expressed by the *centrosinistra* at local level. Communists called this the *malgoverno* of the DC.

An apt example of this kind of propaganda is *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne*, a thirty-five minute documentary directed by Franco Brogi Taviani for Unitelefilm, in 1964. The film draws a comparison between the backward agriculture of the south of Italy and the modern and efficient agricultural system of Emilia Romagna. To paraphrase the voice-over commentary, whereas the political control exerted by the Democrazia Cristiana on the *Federconsorzi* and the *Enti di Riforma* resulted in a general impoverishment of the southern countryside, the dairy industry now flourishes in Emilia-Romagna, under the wise management of the numerous cooperatives established in the region. These are effectively supported by local left-wing administrations. Southern peasants, including those few who were lucky enough to have a small parcel of land assigned by the land reform, still employ rudimentary techniques and suffer for the lack of efficient irrigation supplies. In contrast, the venues that produce the famous *Grana* appear state-of-the-art. Whereas southern small farmers are powerless and thus remorselessly exploited by wholesale merchants, northern farmers associated in cooperatives can afford to have

veterinarians on the payroll. How can the rest of the country achieve the results of the farmers of Emilia Romagna? The voice-over commentary provides an answer:

Tutto ciò si può ottenere se gli operai e i contadini porteranno avanti la lotta unitaria, già tante volte vittoriosa nel passato, se si formerà una nuova maggioranza nel parlamento e nel paese che unisca tutte le forze del lavoro.

Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne is a valuable cinematic text in offering interesting insights into Italian farmers' conditions in the mid-1960s. It is also an enjoyable film. For example, one amusing scene concerns the members of the *cooperative emiliane* proudly taking the interviewer on a tour of their advanced cheese-production plants, while their old-fashion clothes, plebeian appearance, and overall strong Emilian accent belong to a previous, non-technological era. They recall the extras of *La Riffa*, an episode of the anthology film *Boccaccio '70* directed by Vittorio De Sica and starring Sofia Loren, and set in the farming town of Lugo. The peasants of the South, on the other hand, although troubled, convey a strong sense of pride and faith in the future.

Another interesting part of the film is devoted to the abandonment of Tuscan farms, the so-called *poderi*, by the families of sharecroppers (*mezzadri*) who had cultivated those holdings for generations. This phenomenon, which began to manifest itself visibly by the end of the 1950s, changed the look of the Tuscan countryside forever, as well as the structure of the Tuscan society. *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne* depicts the depopulation of the Tuscan countryside as a calamity. We see abandoned fields, beautiful Tuscan farmhouses (the so-called *case coloniche*) in ruins, empty stables and olive trees covered in weeds. The voice-over commentary

blames the greedy landlords and the government: the former have been exploiting the sharecroppers for years, while the latter chose to let Tuscan agriculture die rather than to affect what the voice-over ironically calls ‘i sacri diritti di proprietà’ of the landlords. Consequently, thousands of sharecroppers have recently moved to the city with their families.⁴⁰

Although motivated by economic reasons, as pointed out by the voice-over commentary, the migration of Tuscan sharecroppers was especially due to psychological factors and, above all, to the aspiration of sharecroppers for a change of social status. By its very nature, the sharecropping contract prevented the *mezzadri* from saving enough money to buy *podere* and finally become owner of the land they worked on. This was no longer acceptable to most of the sharecroppers, not in a society that, in the wake of the economic boom, seemed to promise better life chances to everybody. The sharecroppers’ struggle promoted by the PCI in the 1940s, while achieving some partial success, could not achieve its principal objective: the conversion of the sharecropping contract into a lease agreement (Ginsborg 1989, 142 – 45). Therefore, the frustration with the outcome of the struggles of the late 1940s was the ultimate cause of the exodus of Tuscan sharecroppers in the 1950s.

Besides, those struggles promoted the emancipation of women and young people, who had played a pivotal role during the long phase of political mobilization. This undermined the authority of the so-called *capoccia*, the household’s oldest man, and shattered the traditional patriarchal family model. As a consequence, once that cycle of struggle was over, many young people felt that the time had come to decide

⁴⁰ For detailed figures concerning the depopulation of Tuscan countryside in the 1960s, see Barbieri (1966, 67 – 70).

their future for themselves, regardless of the needs of the family. In this respect, *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne* features an interview with a young Tuscan *mezzadro* wearing jeans and slicked-back hair who says that he does no longer want to live on the *podere* as the landlord does not take care of the *casa colonica* and only thinks of pocketing the money of the crop. The departure of young people was likely to compromise the family production ability, and this could determine, after a short time, the decision by other family members to abandon the *podere*. Filmically, *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne* deploys innovative narrative devices, inspired by television techniques, such as a concealed camera car, which the author deploys in order to capture the scene of a rapacious wholesale merchant swindling a southern small farmer. To a modern viewer, however, this alleged journalistic scoop immediately reveals itself as what it is: a fictional scene played by two actors.

It is instructive to compare *Vecchio e nuovo nelle campagne* to *Bologna – Roma, due città, due volti*, produced by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* and directed by Carlo di Carlo in 1968. The film discusses the differences between Bologna and Roma, two cities ruled, since 1945, by a left-wing government and the Democrazia Cristiana respectively. The voice-over commentary, by Sergio Soglia and Sandro Natoli, sets the tone of the documentary from the opening scene:

Bologna: Dozza e Fanti, due sindaci comunisti.

Roma: cinque sindaci democristiani, l'ultimo in galera.

Bologna: la tangenziale.

Roma: lo scandalo di Fiumicino.

Bologna: oltre diecimila bambini alle scuole comunali.

Roma: mancano tremila aule.

Bologna: il polmone verde della città.

Roma: un muro di cemento.

Bologna: il quartiere consiglia il Comune

Roma: il Cardinale consiglia il Sindaco.

The first part of the film is devoted to Bologna, very much recalling *Modena città dell'Emilia Rossa* (see Part 1, Chapter 7). In particular, both films claim that the economic and social achievements of the cities ruled by the *giunte rosse* are due to the participation of the workers in the management of the city. As far as Bologna is concerned, the *Quartieri* system, whereby municipal districts possessed a certain degree of financial autonomy, led to a greater democratic participation.

A difference, however, stands out between the 1949 film by Carlo Lizzani and *Bologna – Roma, due città, due volti*. The latter ascribes the wealth of the city also to the fruitful ‘incontro tra le due massime espressioni della comunità: società civile e chiesa bolognese’. In particular, the voice-over explains how frank and constructive talks between the Mayor and the Archbishop have opened a new era of collaboration between the civil authority and the local Church:

Gli incontri [between the Mayor and Archbishop] hanno segnato la fine di diffidenze e contrapposizioni e aperto un'epoca nuova fondata sul concorde riconoscimento della necessaria collaborazione, pure nella distinzione e autonomia dei rispettivi ordini, per il raggiungimento dei fini che sono comuni, in quanto indispensabili a tutta la comunità cittadina.

The film depicts this collaborative climate through footage taken during the ceremony for honorary citizenship awarded to the Archbishop of Bologna, Giacomo

Lercaro. However, if the clergy is seen to change greatly at local level, the Roman Papal Curia has not mutated. In fact, it is still backing the corrupt mayors of the *Democrazia Cristiana* and even takes part in the *speculazione edilizia* (speculative overbuilding) turning Rome into ‘la più brutta e irrazionale città del mondo’. The eternal city is a ‘paradiso degli speculatori e degli evasori fiscali’, and a living hell for workers who are pushed inexorably towards the suburbs by the unaffordable rent prices in the city centre. Overall, the municipal administration of Rome ‘è ancora espressione di un regime accentratore e autoritario’ and, unlike the municipal administration of Bologna, is not capable of stimulating citizens’ participation in the management of the city. *Bologna – Roma, due città, due volti* is not particularly innovative from a cinematographic point of view, being essentially a collection of shots punctually illustrating the case made by the voice-over commentary. It offers, however, rare views of Rome in the 1960s and, in particular, of the now-forgotten slums surrounding the city - the sets of masterworks of Italian cinema such as *Lo scopone scientifico* (1972) and *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi* (1976).

The issue of the unchecked building speculation plaguing Italian cities was a significant one, particularly because the first *centrosinistra* government had failed to approve the Urban Reform Law project proposed by the DC politician Fiorentino Sullo in 1962 (Ginsborg 1989, 368 – 9; Crainz 2005, 136 – 7). Sullo’s proposal would probably have spared Italian cities the perpetuation of the ferocious assault by speculators graphically shown in Francesco Rosi’s *Le mani sulla città* (1963), but it was vehemently opposed by the land owners and financial groups, as well as by many smallholders and sectors of the *Democrazia Cristiana*. The defence of Italian cities from speculation became one of the favourite topics of Communist cinematic

propaganda in view of the local elections of 1966. Unitelefilm produced, for example, the 19-minute *L'India in Italia*, a film depicting the landslide that severely affected the Sicilian city of Agrigento, an event that became notoriously emblematic of the shameless *speculazione edilizia* ruining Italian cities (Crainz 2005, 69 – 73).

Genova città al bivio, a thirty-three minute documentary directed by the Taviani Bros and commissioned by the *Federazione del PCI* of Genova, is another interesting film devoted to this problem. Although produced in the run up to the local election of 1966, *Genova città al bivio* is more than a propaganda film: the creativity of the two directors makes a compelling case-study of the social and ecological disasters produced by the unplanned urban development of Italian cities in the post-war years. A section of the film, for example, retraces the odyssey that an average worker living in the suburbs is forced to undertake every morning simply to get to work. Our hero can either bravely face 'traffico snervante' or struggle with crowded commuter trains, buses stuck in traffic and uneven sidewalks. In any case, he must get out of bed at dawn if he wants to get to work on time. According to the voice-over commentary, this is the outcome of a policy which had exclusively safeguarded the economic interests of building speculators. The last section of the film explains how, once in power, the Communist administration will promote a new kind of development based on state intervention, and will build new neighbourhoods which, judging from the projects shown in the film, seem inspired by the work of Le Corbusier. The citizens of Genoa, and those of other Italian cities, are therefore at a crossroads: it's time to choose between two entirely different models of development inspired by opposing economic and social conceptions. Similar to *Sicilia all'addritta* (see Part 2, Chapter 3), the Taviani brothers blend fiction and non-fiction. *Genova*

città al bivio features street interviews (filmed with a hand-held camera) along with fictional scenes, such as a car accident and the consequent argument between the drivers. This is caused by the fact that the administration had built narrow streets to make more room for towering apartment blocks

Genova città al bivio was not the only film produced by Unitelefilm for the local elections of 1966. Others were Giuseppe Ferrara's *Spoletto, un voto per la rinascita* (18 minutes), Lionello Massobrio's *Ravenna, città dal cuore antico* (41 minutes) and *Trieste: 8 ottobre 1966*, (17 minutes), and *Una provincia Italiana* (20 minutes) by Eriprando Visconti (nephew of the more famous Luchino).⁴¹ After such large-scale production of films for the elections of 1966, the first director of Unitelefilm Mario Benocci tried to keep the momentum going. The party leadership, however, had different ideas, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴¹ See, *Nota sulla Unitelefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 535, pp. 1243 -1259, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 19 December 1966.

Chapter 4: Unitefilm from 1966 to 1968.

In December 1966, the first director of Unitefilm, Mario Benocci pointed out in his annual report that the company could achieve a balanced budget only if it focused on the production of documentaries for the quality awards. He also stressed how any further quantitative and qualitative improvement of Unitefilm production hinged on a guaranteed annual funding allocation allowing for long-term production planning.⁴² He therefore asked for new equipment, including a synchronized sound-recording system for interviews, a new and more spacious base, an increase in personnel and 45 million lire for the following year. In the original document, next to Bellocchi's requests, a hand-written note, probably by the head of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* Emanuele Macaluso or by one of the cadres of the *Sezione di amministrazione* (finance office), reads a quite unequivocal 'no' (emphasis in the original). Given that only a few local elections were scheduled in 1967, there was no reason to increase film production expenditure.

Such a factor underpins why Unitefilm produced just a few films in 1967.⁴³ The PCI film production company made instead Italian editions of a few classics of Soviet cinematography in order to celebrate worthily the fiftieth anniversary of the October revolution - an event that had paramount symbolic importance for the party.⁴⁴ It is notable that, while in the 1940s and 1950s, the PCI had encouraged

⁴² *Nota sulla Unitefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 535, pp. 1243 - 1259, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitefilm, 19 December 1966.

⁴³ These included a couple of propaganda films, *Sinistra unita*, *Sicilia nuova* (25 minutes) and *Un voto per Crotona* (27 minutes) as well as four documentaries, three of which received awards: *Rivoluzione, parole e immagini* (13 minutes) about avant-garde Russian art, the remarkable *Radiografia della miseria* (16 minutes, film di recupero of Pietro Nelli's *Sinistra unita*, *Sicilia nuova*) with the voice-over commentary by the Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia and *A settentrione* (16 minutes). Giovanni Vento's *Marvellous gun* (15 minutes), a satire of the American society, was instead rejected

⁴⁴ These were *La caduta della dinastia Romanov* (*Padenie Dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927), *La fine di San Pietroburgo* (*Konec Sankt-Peterburga*, 1927), *Sciopero* (*Stachka*, 1925) by Eisenstein, as well as

militants to attend the projections of the rather bombastic films of post-war Soviet realist cinematography, in the mid-1960s, the films belonging to the pre-war Russian avant-garde were those offered to the *federazioni*. This was certainly a side effect of the de-Stalinization following the XX Congress of the PCUS in 1956, as well as of the debate sparked among left-wing film critics and intellectuals following the publication in the magazine *Cinema Nuovo* of an article by Renzo Renzi, significantly titled *Sciolti dal 'Giuramento'* (Free of 'The Vow'), which led to rejection of the Soviet cinematography of the Stalin era (Aristarco 1981).

Furthermore, the films of the Russian avant-garde were enjoying a revival in that period, due largely to film critics' appreciation of their experimental features, and they had commercial success.⁴⁵ The Soviet films of the 1920s even became synonymous with art films, and no intellectual could afford to ignore films like Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, (*La Corrazzata Potemkin*), or *October* (*Ottobre*). Soviet experimental films eventually turned into symbols of Italian intellectuals' cultural conformism, inspiring an unforgettable scene in Lucio Salce's *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi* (1976). The protagonist of the film, the accountant Ugo Fantozzi, archetype of the lower middle-class white-collar worker, yells 'La corrazzata Kotiomkin è una cagata pazzesca!' (Luciano Salce changed the title of the film as a sign of respect for Eisenstein), a line that became, ever since, popular as an expression of the ordinary citizen's rebellion against intellectuals' cultural dictates.

In 1967, Unitefilm also planned a non-fictional television series, *Primo Piano (close up)*, to be composed of interviews with important figures of the Italian

Dziga Vertov's experimental documentaries *Cineverità su Lenin* (*Leninskaja Kino – Pravda*, 1925) and *Tre canti su Lenin* (*Tri Pesni o Lenine*, 1934).

⁴⁵ *Bilancio Unitefilm al 31/12/1969*, in IG, APCI, MF 70, pp. 276 – 318, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitefilm, serie 1970.

cultural panorama (including Leonardo Sciascia, Bernardo Bertolucci, Danilo Dolci, Bruno Zevi, Dario Fo, Giorgio Strehler and Don Lorenzo Milani). The series was designed with the aim of increasing sales in socialist countries.⁴⁶ However, only the first episode was eventually released: a twenty-minute interview with Pier Paolo Pasolini shot by Carlo di Carlo (Pasolini's assistant director in *Mamma Roma*), and edited with footage depicting those *ragazzi di vita*, namely young male street prostitutes of the Roman shanty towns described in several novels and films by the Italian poet, writer and filmmaker.

During the second half of 1967, Unitelefilm was fully committed to the preparation for the electoral campaign for the national election on 19 May 1968. Thanks to the enthusiastic endorsement of cinematic propaganda by the new head of the *Stampa e Propaganda* Achille Occhetto, this was the first Communist electoral campaign in which films had a prominent role. In May 1967, Occhetto pointed out how this time Unitelefilm had to produce 'qualcosa di più dei soliti documentari':

'Dobbiamo avere una specie di TV dei comunisti (emphasis in the original). Cioè pezzi che intervengano nella situazione, in cui in cinque minuti parlano i dirigenti del partito, interviste legate a fatti e avvenimenti, in modo da avere una produzione rapida in tutti gli angoli d'Italia su cose immediate.'⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See the cover letter of the television programme, in Archivio AAMOD, Faldone P, fascicolo 'Primo Piano', 23/3/1967.

⁴⁷ *Relazione del compagno Achille Occhetto alla riunione nazionale dei responsabili provinciali di propaganda*, in IG, APCI, MF 539, pp. 1169 – 1180, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 26 May 1967.

The idea took shape over the following months and turned into a project called ‘Terzo Canale (quello che la TV non fa vedere)’.⁴⁸ This is the topic of the next chapter.

⁴⁸ *Note sul lavoro di propaganda per le elezioni*, in IG, APCI, MF 547, pp. 2229 – 41, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 12 January 1968. On Terzo Canale see Novelli (2006, 89).

Chapter 5. The Electoral Campaign of 1968.

The Terzo Canale project entailed the production of fortnightly 20 – 25 minute newsreels from January to May 1968. To support the production of Terzo Canale, Unitelefilm obtained from the party what Mario Benocci had been refused the previous year: money and equipment. This included a 40 million lire recording studio made in Czechoslovakia and sent by the Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party along with three technicians to install it.⁴⁹ A few cadres were trained to use the new equipment, including Sergio Zaccagnini, who had previously worked in the Prague based, semi-clandestine PCI radio station *Oggi in Italia* (Cooke, 2007). Quite apart from funds and equipment, other problems had to be solved in order to make the Terzo Canale project work effectively.

The most serious of these was film distribution. In this respect, the *Stampa e Propaganda* took the opportunity presented by Terzo Canale to attempt, once and for all, the creation of a well-developed Communist film distribution network. They were to profit from the recent introduction of the most successful film format in the history of amateur filmmaking: Super 8, launched by Eastman Kodak in 1965 (Monaco 1981, 505). Super 8 films presented similar characteristics to 16mm films, but were considerably less expensive to print. In view of the election, the *Stampa e Propaganda* purchased 1000 Super 8 projectors to be distributed to the *federazioni* (Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani 2001, 152). The *federazioni* were supposed to pay the full price for the projectors, but they would receive the Terzo Canale production for free until the end of the electoral campaign.⁵⁰ The *Stampa e Propaganda* also

⁴⁹ IG, APCI, MF 547, p. 2243, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 13 January 1968, document signed by Occhetto.

⁵⁰ IG, APCI, MF 547, p. 2290, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 4 February 1968.

organised a three-day seminar aimed at training cadres from the various *federazioni* in the use of films for propaganda in December 1967.⁵¹

Seven instalments of Terzo Canale were eventually produced before the elections. Each of them typically presented a report on international policy, two or three reports concerning domestic policy, and one final section lampooning political adversaries. A good example of the latter is ‘Johnson parade’ (Terzo Canale n. 2), an animated clip with a marching song score and showing a cardboard cut out of US president Lyndon B. Johnson turning into Adolf Hitler, into a tiger, a skull, a vampire and other characters.⁵²

Each Terzo Canale newsreel was devoted to a specific issue. The first Terzo Canale, for example, waves the spectre of authoritarianism throughout. The first report is titled ‘Atene: il dollaro sulla Grecia’ and concerns the Greek Regime of the Colonels. In the report, the US government is accused of having inspired the coup d’état of 21 April 1967, which had led to a brutal dictatorship now backed by American corporations as well as by the Orthodox Church hierarchy. The second report offers an interview with the authoritative leader of the Italian Resistance, Ferruccio Parri, who issues a plea for the left-wing political parties’ unity in order to safeguard democracy against the peril of right-wing dictatorship. The third report graphically describes the coup d’état that could have happened in Italy in summer 1964 if General Giovanni De Lorenzo had managed to execute the so-called *Piano*

⁵¹ IG, APCI, MF 539, pp. 1237, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 13 November 1967. A report about the seminar, which was held at the *Frattocchie* and attended by 28 people coming from 16 *federazioni*, can be found in IG, APCI, MF 547, pp. 2229 – 41, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 12 January 1968.

⁵² Frames of the ‘Johnson parade’ were published in *l’Unità* in order to illustrate the article presenting *Terzo Canale*. See Dario Natoli’s *La sfida del Terzo Canale. Una dimostrazione di quello che la Rai-Tv potrebbe fare. L’esperienza dei cinegiornali realizzati dal PCI – I temi che la televisione non tratta. Una larga partecipazione nella fase della produzione e della distribuzione*, in *l’Unità*, 14/4/1968, 8.

Solo as revealed by a scoop in the weekly magazine *l'Espresso*, in May 1967 (Ginsborg 1989, 373 – 78).

Carabinieri are shown breaking into private houses at night and deporting citizens to the Asinara Prison in Sardinia. The film clarifies who were supposed to be the principal targets of this political persecution by showing one of the victims, abruptly awoken by the night raid, grasping at his glasses placed on a nightstand and on top of a copy of the Communist weekly magazine *Vie Nuove*. Subsequently, the voice-over commentary summarizes the career of General De Lorenzo for the viewers, stressing his close political connections with major DC leaders, especially the Minister of defence Giulio Andreotti. The section ends reminding the 'gente comune che paga le tasse' that the existence of the *Piano Solo* proves how the so-called *controindicati*, (how the *Piano Solo* plan defined left-wing political parties' leaders and trade unions organizers) are the true champions of democracy.

Achille Occhetto, during a meeting with the cadres of the *Stampa e Propaganda* held in January 1968, recommended tackling the issue of the *Scandalo Sifar* – the name by which the press referred to the *Piano solo* affair - as it worked very well to counter the accusation often made by the DC against the Communist Party of pursuing a 'doppia linea'.⁵³ With the expression 'doppia linea', Occhetto was clearly referring to an issue better known in the historiography of the PCI as *doppiezza* (duplicity), namely the hypothesis that the PCI's struggle for democracy was only a veil hiding the real aim of the party's activity, which was the preparation for a Communist revolution.⁵⁴ If properly presented, the *Scandalo Sifar* would prove that

⁵³ *Relazione del compagno Achille Occhetto nell'attivo nazionale di Propaganda sulla campagna elettorale 1968*, in IG, APCI, MF 547, pp. 2248 – 2285, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 26 – 27 January 1968.

⁵⁴ See Part 1, Chapter 1, note 14.

it was actually the DC which was ‘duplicitous’, given its entertainment of anti – democratic options. In Occhetto’s words:

La DC si muove su due binari, su quello del terreno democratico, a cui è costretta dalla nostra forza e dalla nostra iniziativa, e su quello dell’avventura, del salto nel buio, del sovvertimento delle basi costituzionali su cui si regge lo stato italiano.

Unitelefilm printed and distributed 780 copies in Super 8 format and 205 in 16mm of the first bulletin of Terzo Canale. The following instalments enjoyed an even larger distribution: on average, the PCI film production company printed 850 copies in Super 8 format of each Terzo Canale newsreel. The exceptions were Terzo Canale five and six - monothematic newsreels devoted to the ‘southern question’ and the condition of factory workers in Turin respectively – which were printed on a smaller scale.

An analysis of these two monothematic numbers of Terzo Canale, which are effectively documentaries, allow us to appreciate the stylistic evolution of Communist cinematography since the foundation of Unitelefilm. In this later production, the voice-over commentary is deployed to connect the various parts of the documentaries rather than to communicate the authors’ point of view. The political message is principally entrusted to the numerous interviews with workers and peasants, filmed with a hand-held camera. The interviewer is directly involved in the interviews, which unfold before the viewer’s eyes as a dialogue. This communicates a feeling of real life, reinforced by scenes which reproduce the interviewees’ *tranches de vie*: a walk along the seashore while smoking a cigarette, an appointment with the company doctor or the distribution of leaflets at a factory

entrance. These stylistic features were borrowed by two very influential documentary genres which, in many respects, shared similar aesthetics: direct cinema and *cinéma vérité*, developed in the late 1950s – early 1960s in the US and France respectively (Barnouw 1974, 236 – 38, Barsam 1992, 300 – 10).

PCI cinematography of this period seems to have been particularly inspired by the latter, as proved by the presence of the interviewer on screen, whereas direct cinema filmmakers tried to minimize the interaction between members of the troupe and the subjects of the documentary in order to capture ‘the reality of life’ (Ellis and McLane 2009, 217). Communist filmmakers’ adherence to the principles of *cinéma vérité*, however, was purely formal. Their work shows little evidence of the ethical concerns expressed by Jean Rouch – one of the founders of *cinéma vérité* – such as authors’ self-exposition as a way to declare openly the conditioning influence of the medium on the interviewed subjects. The interviewers’ self-exposition in Communist films is rather aimed at making these PCI documentaries look like journalistic reports. This allows propaganda messages to acquire a veneer of truth.

Terzo Canale n. 5, *Speciale Sud*, begins with a close-up of the PCI leader Luigi Longo who, talking to an interviewer, announces his candidacy in a *collegio elettorale* in Calabria. Longo explains that his decision is aimed at putting the problems of the Southern of Italy at the top of the national political agenda:

E’ vero, sono un piemontese, ma in primo luogo sono italiano e sono un comunista, e per un comunista il mezzogiorno e la Calabria rappresentano una prima linea nella battaglia per il rinnovo della nostra società.

Subsequently, the film offers an interview with the father of Francesco Nigro and the brother of Angelina Mauro, both killed by the police in the village of Melissa,

Calabria, on 29 October 1949. The voice-over commentary explains how the harsh struggles promoted by the PCI at the end of the 1940s bore fruits for the *calabresi*. The *Legge Sila*, for example, had implemented, at least partially, land reform.

For thousands of small farmers, however, the dream of a better life faded soon as DC politicians managed to nullify the positive effects of the *Legge Sila*. Day labourers were assigned marginal lands and left to fend for themselves. After all – claims the voice-over commentary – DC policy has always tended to create a mass of unemployed workers in order to supply the *monopolisti* of the north of Italy with a cheap labour force, as graphically proved by the abandoned farms throughout the Calabrian countryside.

A few street interviews with southern workers follow. Interviewees complain about the lack of jobs, infrastructure and public care. Like in *Nel mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*, the south is presented as poor, desolate, and waiting for redemption. These southern workers, however, do not look as miserable as those depicted in *Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato*. In fact, they wear good clothes and have fashionable haircuts. Even the voice-over commentary cannot help but admit that ‘qualcosa è cambiato’ and that, after all, some kind of economic development has taken place since the late 1940s. For example, a few large industrial complexes have been built in some areas in the south of Italy – like the car manufacturing plant recently established by Alfa-Romeo, a firm controlled by the government-owned IRI Corporation, in Pomigliano, near Naples.

According to the voice-over commentary, however, industrial development initiatives launched by the government have not turned into something truly beneficial for local communities. In fact, they are rather ‘*isole industriali, staccate dal*

loro retroterra, che danno lavoro a ristretti nuclei operai'. Therefore, after five years of *centrosinistra*, the only option for the great majority of southern workers is still emigration to the north of Italy or abroad, as it was during the years of *centrismo*. The film ends with a declaration of faith in the contemporary relevance of the Gramscian reading of the 'southern question'. This is, however, slightly updated. Instead of the northern working class, it is now 'la giovane classe operaia meridionale', the natural ally of the southern peasantry against the 'blocco industriale agrario che da un secolo opprime il mezzogiorno'. Ultimately, Terzo Canale n. 5 shows how the PCI strived to jettison outdated readings and preconceptions concerning the social and economic reality of the south of Italy, in spite of the fact that even its own film directors were documenting a rapidly evolving economic and social situation.

Terzo Canale number 6, *La fabbrica parla*, is an enquiry into the condition of the industrial workers of the north of Italy, particularly those of the FIAT, 'in the age of *neocapitalismo*', as the voice-over defines the late 1960s. The film begins with an aerial view of the largest among the FIAT plants: *Mirafiori*, in Turin. We see workers marching towards the factory gates, and the voice-over describes the scene as follows:

Questi sono gli operai della FIAT, i protagonisti del primo e del secondo miracolo economico, sono gli operai privilegiati di una favola moderna, lavorano alle macchine più progredite, sono gli operai che producono di più, i meglio pagati d'Italia, quelli che nel lavoro hanno raggiunto il massimo livello di dignità umana e civile. Prima o poi, tutti gli operai italiani vivranno come loro, promette la favola ottimista dei padroni.

The film is aimed at questioning the desirability of such a goal through the exposition of its dark side. The message is that, in spite of the more modern organisation of labour it had adopted, namely the automatising of production processes, the essence of capitalism has not mutated, even in the biggest Italian factory. The immutable features of capitalism are still the exploitation of workers through the endless repetition of alienating tasks, occupational diseases, and industrial accidents. *Neocapitalismo* and its rational organisation of the productive process are likely to harden the workers' lives rather than making it easier. Witnessing a series of interviews, the viewer is put in front of the harsh reality of a working class forced to struggle daily with exploitation and injustice. Noticeably, virtually all of the workers interviewed have a southern accent, and this gives a hint of the dramatic changes which occurred in the social composition of the northern working class over the previous decade.⁵⁵

Far from being confined to the working environment, the oppression exerted by the capitalist system affects the quality of life of the workers even outside the factory's gates and in a rather imperceptible fashion:

Quando una fabbrica è in crisi, quando un padrone si rifiuta di pagare i salari e getta sul lastrico gli operai, tutto diventa più chiaro, la dinamica dello sfruttamento appare in tutta la sua insopportabile ingiustizia. Quando si è presi nell'ingranaggio di tutti i giorni è difficile rendersi conto che è un ingranaggio che stritola.

⁵⁵ These southern workers constituted the bulk of a new social group, the so-called 'mass workers', (*gli operai massa*). A discussion of the sociological interpretations of the mass workers is in Foot (2001, 27 - 8).

The effects of exploitation are, nonetheless, visible in the epidemic diffusion of modern day diseases such as psychosis and neurosis.⁵⁶

Terzo Canale n. 6, the first PCI film entirely devoted to the working conditions of factory workers, is a remarkable cinematic text in offering a picture of the northern working class at the dawn of the great cycle of union protests known as the *autunno caldo*. This period is characterized by a massive series of strikes which would take place from autumn 1969 (see next Chapter). Quite prophetically, the voice-over commentary claims that the anger and frustration provoked by the exploitation in the factories will eventually erupt. In this respect, the editing pictures one of the first *scioperi unitari*, namely a strike called together by the three major trade unions, in front of the gates of *Mirafiori*. The workers seem confrontational and look unafraid of the police. According to the voice-over, the struggle's ultimate objective is to 'portare la democrazia in fabbrica'.

One pivotal event which occurred during the electoral campaign of 1968 was the so-called 'Prague spring', the process of political and economic reforms of the socialist regime of Czechoslovakia undertaken by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Alexander Dubček. The PCI endorsed this attempt to democratise the Czechoslovakian regime and to create 'socialism with a human face', to quote Dubček's famous slogan, although not to the point of questioning the Communist bloc's unity and Soviet hegemony (Bracke 2007, 178 - 182). The 'Prague Spring' was also a prime topic for PCI propaganda in view of the 1968 elections, as it proved that socialism and democracy could go hand in hand. As such, Unitefilm devoted a report to the 'Prague spring' titled *Socialismo: la via*

⁵⁶ A film famously dealing with the issue of the psychological condition of the northern working class is Elio Petri's *La classe operaia va in Paradiso* (1971), which features a memorable performance by Gian Maria Volontè.

cecoslovacca, included in Terzo Canale n. 7. This shows crowded meetings of young people demanding political reforms as well as the proclamation of Ludvik Svoboda as President of the Republic, on 30 March 1968. The voice-over commentary hails the ‘nuova primavera del socialismo’, while a young East German student explains to a rather pleased Unitefilm interviewer that the socialist world is undergoing an epochal transformation:

E’ finita una fase della storia del socialismo, la fase della concentrazione dei poteri, ne è cominciata un’altra, la fase della democratizzazione socialista.

The Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia would put a dramatic ending to that reform experiment in August 1968. This produced profound dismay within the party.⁵⁷ On the cinematographic plane, this took the shape of a sort of Freudian repression: Czechoslovakia was never again mentioned in a PCI film and an existing project for a film about the ‘Prague spring’ was quickly shelved, in spite of the fact that director Gianni Toti had already shot most of the footage.⁵⁸

Along with Terzo Canale newsreels, the PCI commissioned Unitefilm to undertake a few documentaries addressing the topical political issues of the country. The most important of these was the so-called *contestazione*, namely the student revolts spreading in universities and secondary schools (Ginsborg 1989, 404 – 19; Lepre 1992, 223 – 249).

The outbreak of student protests came as a surprise to the PCI. On the one hand, the students’ struggle against the stiff and outdated Italian education system could

⁵⁷ See the rather astonished bulletin of the *Ufficio Politico* condemning the invasion published in *Rinascita* n. 33, 23/8/1968. *Rinascita* also re-published, after four years, the Yalta Memorandum, defined as: ‘un esempio di lucida analisi e di coraggio politico nell’affrontare la problematica che si poneva in quel momento a tutto il movimento operaio e comunista internazionale, e la cui validità viene drammaticamente ribadita dagli avvenimenti di oggi’. See also Ajello (1997, 85 – 9).

⁵⁸ See the screenplay of the film, containing the transcription of several interviews with students and citizens of Prague, in Archivio AAMOD, Faldone Proposte (Cic – E), fascicolo *Chi ha paura della Cecoslovacchia*.

have potentially resulted in a political gain for the Italian Communist Party which had proposed, since 1965, reformist measures that broadly matched the students' requests (Höbel 2004, 420). On the other hand, since the beginning of the protest in autumn 1967, the PCI was appalled by a student movement that, while explicitly referring to the Marxist – Leninist doctrine, seemed to include traditional left-wing parties in an uncompromising criticism towards the whole of Italian society (Gundle 2000, 131 – 32; Valentini 1997, 141 – 2). Fringes of the student movement, influenced by the *nuova sinistra*, severely criticised PCI policy for its lack of revolutionary perspective, and endorsed the South American guerrilla movements - a powerful symbol of which became the Argentinean *guerrillero heroico* Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, killed in action in October 1967 (Crainz 2005, 144 – 152). Besides, the Chinese Cultural Revolution – 'a civil war in disguise' in Carlo Pinzani's pointed definition⁵⁹ – inspired criticism of the PCI bureaucratic apparatus, which students perceived as an obstacle toward socialism.

The head of *Stampa e Propaganda* Achille Occhetto, planning the electoral campaign during a meeting held in January 1968, claimed that, in order to appeal to the students, the PCI had to present itself as the 'partito della protesta':⁶⁰

Il punto di partenza di tutta la nostra propaganda deve essere improntato a una forte carica di protesta, di denuncia e di condanna. E' essenziale, per creare il clima della campagna elettorale, partire fin d'ora da una campagna che raccolga il malcontento delle masse, perché non dobbiamo avere paura di presentarci come il partito della protesta.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Crainz (2005, 141). An analysis of the influence of the Cultural Revolution on Italian left-wing groups is in Niccolai (1998) and Lepre (1993, 230 – 1).

⁶⁰ *Relazione del compagno Achille Occhetto nell'attivo nazionale di Propaganda sulla campagna elettorale 1968*, in IG, APCI, MF 547, pp. 2248 – 2285, *Stampa e Propaganda*, 26 – 27 January 1968.

Occhetto argued that the student protests stemmed from the lack of perspectives of a generation betrayed by the poor results of the *miracolo economico* and the reformist season of the *centrosinistra*. He regarded the student movement as a short-lived phenomenon which had little or nothing to do with the long-term objectives of the working class given its association with a petit bourgeois environment. Nonetheless, the PCI had to seek the vote of the youths through ‘una propaganda giovane’, and this was one of the reasons why the party had decided to invest in the production of films.

As far as the contents were concerned, Occhetto claimed that PCI propaganda had to be different from that of the other political parties. Whereas these would predictably patronize the students, the PCI would warn them that significant changes could take place only in the long run and that they required a lifelong commitment to the PCI, the party that embodied the very idea of protest:

‘Ai giovani diciamo: badate bene, la nostra è una protesta seria, una protesta che impegna tutta una vita, è la protesta che coinvolge tutto il sistema, è una protesta che presuppone mutamenti radicali’.

One of the films produced for the electoral campaign, *Comunisti*, directed by Gianni Vento, conveys this message in forceful terms.

The film in question, which has a running time of 23 minutes, is an unconventional piece of cinematic propaganda. It is neither a documentary nor a feature film, but rather a collection of archival footage, clips and pictures which, along with the lyrical voice-over commentary by the poet Alfonso Gatto, creates an evocative and poignant narrative. Nonetheless, the film contains a straightforward political message. This is that young people should join the PCI, in that it embodies

the myths currently inspiring the new generation and is therefore the only political party able to fulfil young people's need for change. *Comunisti* is designed to be appealing, as proved by the film's opening theme song *A Whiter Shade of Pale*, a very popular song released in the previous year by the British rock band Procol Harum. While the background music plays, we see apparently random clips of young people walking down the streets, laughing and talking. Maurizio Vandelli, front man of the Italian pop band Equipe 84 is among them. The voice-over commentary begins with a poetic tribute to the new generation:

L'avvenire è già cominciato. Ragazzi e ragazze di ogni età, a scorcio del proprio sguardo, del proprio riso, nel salutarsi, "a domani!", con la luce negli occhi. E botteghe, fiori, i giornali, le mode, le proteste, il non-sapere per sperare, il saper troppo per temere, e il vivere per vivere, l'essere per divenire che sono nell'aria.

The film then shows a collection of the student movement's political icons: Ho Chi Min and the legendary female soldiers of the People's Army of Vietnam, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro among the *barbudos*, Mao's red guards, Patrice Lumumba and a young Lenin. These are mixed with images depicting historical events which belong more specifically to PCI mythology, such as pictures of the volunteers of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War or the Red Army soldiers celebrating their victory in Berlin. According to the voice-over commentary, all these characters, and the causes they stood for, could be resumed in a single concept: the party. In fact, the party can present itself in various forms, and, according to the historical moment, can be:

il partito dell'esilio, della clandestinità, della Resistenza; il partito dei protagonisti, dei capi che guidarono la lotta armata, il partito moderno dell'organizzazione.

By stressing that 'il partito dell'organizzazione' is anything but the modern form of the same party which fought against Fascism, the voice-over commentary aims at countering the allegation of bureaucratization made by sectors of the student movement.

Subsequently, the film resumes the PCI history, or, more precisely, undertakes the construction of a historical narrative of epic dimensions, using elegiac tones and employing religious metaphors. First comes Gramsci, 'la vittima che ha vinto', who had to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to change the course of the history of the Italian people: 'In lui e con lui il popolo entra nella storia.' Togliatti follows, prophetically announcing a new era of hope. This is the *Svolta di Salerno* policy:

Togliatti portava un messaggio di collaborazione e di moderazione, collaborazione tra tutti i partiti antifascisti, moderazione per dare all'Italia distrutta e annientata un governo di unità nazionale che ne interpretasse le aspirazioni e i bisogni.

The voice-over claims that the party's commitment to democracy has been proved many times, especially in *luglio '60* - of which the editing shows archival footage - when the party thwarted the attempt to establish a fascist dictatorship undertaken by a 'Democrazia Cristiana senza popolo e senza Cristo'. Lyricism reaches its highest point when the voice-over claims that whoever fights for justice, 'Di Vittorio comunista o il cristiano Papa Giovanni', shall not fear 'l'imprudenza della verità, la

passione del vangelo operaio' but only 'la prudenza dei bugiardi e l'ipocrita freddezza del loro calcolo'.

The film ends reinforcing its fundamental political message:

Di Vittorio, Che Guevara, Giap, questi giovani che chiedono libertà, questi Vietcong che combattono per l'indipendenza, i negri, i bambini col fiore della pace, oggi, nel mondo, sono immagini di una stessa parola: comunismo.

Shortly after the meeting of the national *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, during which Occhetto defined the guidelines for the electoral campaign, the PCI leadership became more attentive towards the student movement. This was especially due to the so-called *Battaglia di Valle Giulia*, namely clashes that occurred between students and the police in front of the faculty of architecture of *La Sapienza*, on 1 March 1968 (Crainz 2005, 144 – 152). The stern intervention of the police, and, to a greater extent, the assaults at the University by fascist groups in the following days, invoked the solidarity of the PCI with the students (Höbel 2010, 453 – 454). Besides, several leaders of the FGCI, such as Oreste Scalzone, were personally involved in the movement and this posed a problem of internal cohesion to the PCI. Furthermore, the elections were approaching and the secretary of the party, Luigi Longo, backed by a few major leaders such as Pietro Ingrao, did not want to miss the chance of a political rapprochement with the students. A meeting was organised at the 'Istituto Gramsci' between Longo and some of the leaders of the movement, including Scalzone, in April 1968. A few days later, Longo published a long article in *Rinascita*, establishing the official position of the party with regard to the student movement. Longo claimed that the political debate in the *movimento studentesco* represented an

important contribution to the common endeavour aimed at making the PCI the ‘intellettuale collettivo del movimento operaio e popolare di cui parlava Gramsci’. He expressed self-criticism for the PCI’s poor analysis of paramount historical events such as the Cultural Revolution and the Cuban Revolution. Finally, he admitted that this was partially due to:

una certa lentezza burocratica, un certo tran-tran delle nostre organizzazioni di partito, al centro e alla periferia, che spesso impedisce di avvertire, a tempo, e di comprendere nella nostra attività di studio, di propaganda e di lavoro, il nuovo che via via si viene creando nella realtà.

However, he also confirmed the validity of the *politica unitaria*, which was a fundamental part of the *Via italiana al socialismo* strategy:

Questa è la nostra strategia: attraverso un vasto e profondo movimento rivendicativo unitario, attraverso vaste lotte operaie e popolari, riuscire a realizzare trasformazioni economiche e sociali di fondo, che limitino il potere dei grandi gruppi capitalistici, facciano conquistare ai lavoratori migliori condizioni di vita e nuove e maggiori posizioni di lotta, da cui poter avanzare con più sicurezza e con più forza verso la trasformazione socialista della società italiana.

In this respect, Longo claimed that, although the PCI was committed to political and social reforms, its policy could not be labelled as reformism, for the party never lost sight of the revolutionary objectives such reforms were devised for.

The collaborative approach taken by the leader of the PCI was mirrored by another film produced in 1968: *Della Conoscenza*. This film is a unique piece of cinematic text within Unitelefilm production as it was written and directed by

representatives of the student movement of Rome relying on Unitelefilm's technical assistance. Therefore, it is not a PCI propaganda film, but rather an experimental documentary aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and trust between the student movement and the Communist Party.

The film in question, which has a running time of 30 minutes, was directed by Alessandra Bocchetti. She would become one of the leading figures of the Italian feminist movement. Bocchetti collaborated with a group of soon-to-be illustrious architects: Massimiliano Fuksas, Franco Purini, Sergio Petruccioli, Pierpaolo Balbo. Oreste Scalzone and Paolo Liguori were also involved in the production of the film. The latter would be a militant of the left-wing radical group *Lotta Continua* and, later on, a famous journalist and fervent Berlusconi supporter. It is not simple to describe the contents of *Della Conoscenza* given its collection of statements, interviews, archival footage and symbolic scenes aimed at communicating the students' point of view on a variety of issues, such as revolution, the relationship between culture and politics, the role of school in bourgeois society, the problem of violence, and the Vietnam War.

The historical value of the film resides in the fact that it is a faithful portrayal of that broad, and sometimes rather confused, set of ideas, cultural references and beliefs inspiring the *contestazione*. The voice-over commentary is a melange of quotations taken from the films of Jean-Luc Godard ('rifiutiamo di riconoscersi nei figli di Marx e della Coca-Cola'),⁶¹ from *Lettera ad una professoressa*, a book which, when published in 1967, became one of the sacred texts of the *contestazione* ('noi a scuola impariamo un sacco di nozioni inutili, impariamo tutte le accezioni del

⁶¹ 'Les enfants de Marx et de Coca-Cola, comprenne qui voudra', is one of the intertitles between the chapters of Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculine Feminine* (1966).

francese, senza saperlo parlare'),⁶² the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* ('i proletari non hanno nulla da perdere se non le loro catene'); suggestive but ultimately insubstantial statements such as 'non ci conoscerete attraverso modelli, noi siamo un nuovo modo di essere tutto ciò che è vitale e la negazione di tutto ciò che è morto' or 'il problema non lo si risolve, lo si cambia', and flashes of honest introspection: 'la coerenza per noi non è una preoccupazione costante'. The film is striking for the rather nonchalant depiction of violence it contains.⁶³ In one scene, for example, Oreste Scalzone claims 'Noi non abbiamo una posizione che rifiuta gli stimoli culturali anche eterogenei [we see a bottle of Coca-Cola], l'importante è assumere un atteggiamento critico omogeneo nei confronti di questi stimoli [the bottle turns into a Molotov cocktail]'. In another scene, a hand draws a gun and fires on a portrait of Lyndon Johnson.

Arguably, the most interesting part of the film is the one depicting a meeting between factory workers and university students held at the university. This scene effectively shows how difficult it was, at the time, to create the debate, or even to begin a dialogue among people belonging to different social classes. The class ridden Italian society had been keeping bourgeois students and proletarian workers socially and culturally separated and, as a consequence, they lacked a common parlance. In this respect, the voice-over commentary concludes:

⁶² Don Milani and the School of Barbiana (1967, 23 - 4). *Lettera ad una professoressa* was written by the Catholic priest Don Lorenzo Milani, along with the students of the private and free school he had established to educate the sons of the peasants in the *Appennino Toscano* (Lancisi 2007). Following its publication, Don Milani became an icon of the left-wing counterculture and his book inspired many groups of the *nuova sinistra*. See, for example, Don Milani's obituary by Franco Fortini, Elvio Fachinelli and Giovanni Giudici, in *Quaderni Piacentini*, 30, July 1967, in which *Lettera ad una professoressa* is defined as a 'testo cinese', because collectively compiled by the schoolboys of Barbiana. Don Milani's obituary is in Fofi and Giacomini (1998, 80).

⁶³ On violence as a central element in the construction of the collective identity of the Italian students in 1968, see Lumley (1990, 68 – 70).

La società di classe ha reso diversi i nostri linguaggi. Non è attraverso di essi che ci incontreremo, il nostro punto di incontro è la lotta.

According to a statement by Alessandra Bocchetti, the party greeted the film quite coolly.⁶⁴ For example, during a preview held at the *Botteghe oscure*, a representative of the FGCI complained that the scene in which a student throws a pile of books in the air seemed to suggest that young people were refusing culture, which, for a Communist, was rather inconceivable. Nonetheless, Unitelefilm presented *Della Conoscenza* at the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival (in the Federal Republic of Germany) and it received a prize.

In view of the election of 1968, Communist cinematographic propaganda targeted Catholics voters along with the students. This was consistent with the political courting of the Catholics the PCI had undertaken since the Eleventh Congress (see Part III, Chapter 2). Furthermore, the Church, under the papacy of Paul VI, was embracing greater openness than ever before with respect to social issues, as proved by the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, published in 1967, which was welcomed rather enthusiastically by the Communist press.⁶⁵ Therefore, the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* decided that the time had come to explicitly ask left-wing Catholics to vote for the Italian Communist party:

Noi vogliamo costruire nel paese una nuova unità delle sinistre, laiche e cattoliche. Deve essere chiaro però che noi invitiamo gli elettori cattolici

⁶⁴ See *Il Manifesto* 1/3/2008, 10.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Alberto Chiesa *L'ispirazione ideale della nuova enciclica di Paolo VI. Imputato il profitto*, in *l'Unità*, 2/4/1967, 3, Giuseppe Chiarante *Il significato culturale della Populorum Progressio. Sconfitta la destra cattolica*, in *l'Unità*, 5/4/1967, 3, Giuseppe Chiarante *Da Roncalli a Montini*, in *l'Unità*, 7/4/1967, 3, Luca Pavolini *Lo shock dell'Enciclica*, in *Rinascita*, 11, 7/7/1967, 1-2.

di sinistra a non votare la DC, e che al corpo elettorale chiediamo quindi di dare la maggioranza ai partiti che si collocano a sinistra della DC.⁶⁶

As a consequence, one of the films commissioned from Unitelefilm by the PCI in the run up to the election of 1968 concerned the commitment of young Catholics to political and social life.

The film in question is *Secondo Coscienza. Inchiesta sui cattolici nella politica italiana dopo il Concilio*, a twelve-minute documentary directed by Alberto Severi and containing voice-over commentary by the ‘vaticanista’ of *l’Unità* Alceste Santini.⁶⁷ *Secondo Coscienza* demonstrates that the Catholic Church no longer endorses the principle of political unity. In order to make its case, the film features a series of interviews with left-wing catholic militants and politicians. One is the leader of the ACLI (Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani) of Lombardy, who claims that:

‘l’impegno dei cattolici nella vita politica e nella vita sociale deve avvenire con piena libertà di coscienza, con piena consapevolezza, e responsabilità personale’.

According to the voice-over commentary, thanks to the Second Vatican Council and the *Populorum Progressio*:

‘i cattolici del dissenso non sono più gruppi sotto la minaccia dell’eresia, ma un movimento in espansione sotto la spinta dei nuovi orientamenti della chiesa, alla ricerca di un partito che non sia la Democrazia Cristiana’.

⁶⁶ *Sviluppo delle campagna contro il governo. Problemi da affrontare nella prospettiva delle elezioni politiche*, in IG, APCI, MF 539, pp. 1114 – 1129, Stampa e Propaganda, serie 1967.

⁶⁷ See his obituary in *l’Unità*, 28/6/2010, 17.

Nothing could be more telling of the new attitude of young Catholics than the occupation of the *Università Sacro Cuore*, a Catholic and rather conservative University of Milan, by its own students. This is therefore the time of unity beyond religious barriers, as shown in the last scene of the film showing a demonstration in favour of the people of Vietnam attended by the socialist Riccardo Lombardi, the Communist Giorgio Amendola, and Corrado Corghi, former leader of the *Democrazia Cristiana* of Reggio Emilia who had just left the DC after twenty-five years of militancy in the Catholic party.

Another propaganda film produced for the 1968 election was *Sabato, domenica, lunedì*, produced by the *Sezione Femminile* of the PCI and directed by Ansano Giannarelli. This twenty-five minute documentary concerns the condition of working women and is, in many respects, a continuation of *Essere donne* (see Part III, Chapter 1), from which it largely borrows archival footage. The film is presented as a realistic 'slice of life' tale of three women, Caterina, Savina and Maria, over the three days of Saturday, Sunday, Monday: 'Tre giorni qualunque di tre donne qualunque. Tre giorni come tanti in un anno. Tre donne come tante in città', as reads the opening line of the voice-over commentary by Communist journalist Miriam Mafai. The political message of the film is entrusted both to the voice-over, which comments on some of the images and provides data and statistics illustrating the exploitation of working women, and to scenes without commentary capturing moments of the three women's life. These include the meeting of the *Commissione Interna* in Maria's factory or the Sunday lunch at Caterina's house. The film also features a few street interviews with working women recorded in front of the gates of Milanese factories.

Not unlike *Essere donne, Sabato, domenica, lunedì* addresses perennial issues of Communist propaganda such as the government's disregard for workers' needs, the unbearable cost of living and the inadequacy of the public transport in great Italian cities, the incidence of professional diseases due to a dehumanizing production system. As in *Essere donne*, the problems of women are ultimately considered as part of the more general problem of the emancipation of the working class. However, just like in *Essere donne*, the voice-over commentary also claims that the condition of working women is especially difficult. Women suffer discrimination at work ('le donne sono pagate meno, sono sfruttate di più, sono licenziate prima') and bear the burden of household chores ('la domenica è una giornata come le altre, il riposo è fare un altro lavoro'). The film highlights the effects of such discrimination by delving into the psychological state of its characters: Caterina, Savina and Maria are constantly troubled by worries, anxiety and fears, such as 'la paura di restare incinta, la paura di essere licenziata, la paura di non farcela'.

Sabato, domenica, lunedì is, however, a Communist propaganda film, and, therefore, it is ultimately aimed at sending a positive message with respect to the workers' determination to fight for a better future. The last scene of the film thus shows Sabina going to Rome in order to attend a demonstration asking for a new law for the establishment of public kindergartens, and Maria joining a pro-Vietnam rally. Together with the three women, *Sabato, domenica, lunedì* has a fourth protagonist: the city of Milan. This is presented as a city built by the ruling class and for the ruling class. The city's visual identity seems to be exclusively defined by the symbols of the bourgeoisie's power, which are also the characteristic features of the

modern metropolis: skyscrapers, escalators, shop windows displaying luxury goods and supermarkets. This is the natural environment of upper middle-class ladies wearing furs and of the ‘capitani di industria che trattano con i giganti di Wall Street’.

Taking a forceful stand against consumerism, the voice-over commentary claims that Milan embodies ‘l’esibizione dello sperpero e la mancanza del necessario’. For all these reasons, Milan is unfriendly to workers, who can only dream of the costly articles sold by the shops in the city centre and, instead, are forced to live in the badly connected suburbs. The hostility of Milan seems to be mirrored by the city’s unpleasant weather: ‘Milano umida e grigia’ is immersed in what appears to be a never-ending, cold and dark winter.

According to Mario Benocci, who wrote the final report on the cinematographic production for the 1968 electoral campaign, the PCI cinematographic effort achieved some success. In particular, Terzo Canale had proved to be an effective propaganda tool.⁶⁸ In some *federazioni*, the widespread use of cinema by local activists had greatly contributed to the political mobilisation of citizens previously untouched by Communist propaganda, especially young people. Films had also determined a positive evolution of the party’s propaganda methods at grass-roots level:

‘Intorno ad ogni singolo proiettore si sono formate, spesso spontaneamente, equipe di 2, 3, 4 e più attivisti (come è il caso di Torino e Genova), le quali hanno svolto una azione metodica di propaganda capillare, con distribuzione di

⁶⁸ *Nascita e compiti della Unitelefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 551, pp. 1356 – 1383, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 7 July 1968, by Mario Benocci.

opuscoli e volantini durante e dopo le proiezioni, e dato vita a dibattiti sui temi trattati nei film'⁶⁹

For the first time, in some *federazioni*, film projections had largely outnumbered electoral meetings. This was the case with Genoa (1,900 projections against 907 *comizi*), Turin (1,800 – 1,200), Lecce (850 – 450) and Naples (700 – 500). Besides, local militants had effectively exploited the relative lightness of the Super 8 projection system in finding new and ingenious ways to use cinematic propaganda. For example, propaganda films had been screened in front of the factories, on behalf of those workers who had just finished their shift, or near public schools while parents were waiting to collect their children. Finally, cinema had been largely deployed among the Italian workers abroad, and the Terzo Canale experiment had even aroused the interest of the PCF.

Benocci's report was clearly aimed at emphasizing the positive aspects of Terzo Canale as well as of the use of cinema in propaganda. Reading between the lines, however, the report also contained some causes for concern. First of all, Benocci's report was based on data provided by those *federazioni* in which films had been actually projected, and these were only thirteen, of which just three in the South of Italy: Bari, Lecce and Naples. Other *federazioni* had made little or no use of cinema during the electoral campaign. For example, not a single Super 8 projector had been shipped to Sicily or Sardinia. While being quite effective in attracting audiences at grass-roots level, propaganda films did not seem to make the difference in electoral terms: the increase of Communist votes had been rather modest, and the DC had gained too. Finally, Benocci's report proved that the *federazioni* could not,

⁶⁹ *Nascita e compiti della Unitelefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 551, pp. 1356 – 1383, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 7 July 1968, by Mario Benocci.

or did not want, to purchase propaganda films: Terzo Canale had been successful because film copies were free, and several *federazioni* had clearly stated that they would not pay for the purchase of future productions.

The PCI had invested over 170 million lire in the production of the seven bulletins of Terzo Canale, the documentaries, and their distribution to the *federazioni*.⁷⁰ It could not bear entirely the future expenses of large-scale and regular production of films. The history of Unitelefilm over the following ten years chronicles the attempts to escape such a vicious circle. One possible solution could have been, as argued by Benocci, to focus primarily on cinematographic propaganda and divert a large part of the annual allowance of the *Stampa e Propaganda* budget towards film production and distribution. At the same time, Unitelefilm had to produce 10–12 films for the quality awards annually, in order to cover its own operating expenses with the money from the prizes. As far as the financial involvement of the *federazioni* was concerned, Benocci proposed to divide them into three groups: thirty-five *federazioni* paying full price, sixty *federazioni* paying half price, while the others, mostly from the south of Italy, would receive the films for free. No decisions, however, were taken by the party's leadership with respect to Bellocchi's proposals: the end of the electoral campaign caused, once again, a loss of interest in Unitelefilm. This consequently caused the crisis of the PCI film production company, as shown further in Chapter 7.

As far as Terzo Canale is concerned, the *Stampa e Propaganda* commissioned Unitelefilm to produce more newsreels in order to keep exploiting the

⁷⁰ *Nascita e compiti della Unitelefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 551, pp. 1356 – 1383, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 7 July 1968, by Mario Benocci.

established Communist film circuit.⁷¹ The rate of production, however, fell: fourteen more bulletins were produced up to May 1974, and the *federazioni* were required to pay the price of the films in full. As a consequence, the new bulletins of the Communist newsreels had a more limited distribution compared to the first seven. The production of Terzo Canale was not the only cinematic experiment in which the Communist film production company was engaged in the years to follow, as shown in the next chapter.

⁷¹ IG, APCI, MF 547, pp. 2384 – 88, Stampa e Propaganda, 24 giugno 1968.

Chapter 6. The Season of *Cinema militante*

Over the years 1968 – 1971, Unitelefilm was involved in what was termed *Cinema militante*. The groups devoted to *Cinema militante* aimed at producing films promoting political and social change. *Cinema militante* was not exclusively Italian. It was, in fact, a global phenomenon, and its roots can be traced to avant-garde filmmaking movements such as the New American Cinema Group. Since the beginning of the decade, this group had been theorizing about the liberation of cinema from the shackles of the cinema industry in order to realise the social and political relevance of the medium (Lewis 1998, 283 – 84).

The years 1967 – 1970 witnessed a proliferation of manifestos by radical groups calling upon the political renovation of Western societies through the use of cinema (Moscati 1997, 119 – 26). Especially influential was the work of the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, who made several politically engaged and rather experimental films with the Dziga Vertov Group, the Marxist film collective he had founded (Hayward 2005, 238). The rise of *Cinema militante* in Italy was due to the Centri Universitari Cinematografici (CUC) established in a few universities in northern Italy, especially in the CUC of Turin. There, in May 1967, a group of students and intellectuals founded *Ombre Rosse* a film magazine which soon became the point of reference for the *Cinema militante* movement (Della Casa 2002, 358 – 59).

While virtually all the groups devoted to politically engaged filmmaking assumed a marked left-wing political character, some of them, such as the *Collettivi del Cinema militante*, opposed the policies of the traditional left-wing parties, and especially the PCI's. These groups drew political inspiration from the *nuova sinistra*

(see Part III, Chapter 2). The political connection between *Cinema militante* and the *nuova sinistra* was reinforced by figures like Goffredo Fofi, who was, at the same time, one of the founders of *Ombre Rosse* and member of the editorial board of *Quaderni Piacentini*.

As soon as *Cinema militante* began to develop, Unitelefilm tried to take part in it. This was consistent with PCI policy which tended to become involved with, or rather to hegemonize, every political and cultural initiative rising on the left of the political spectrum. The publication in *Rinascita* of a plea by Cesare Zavattini, on 25 August 1967, offered Unitelefilm a good opportunity in this respect. Zavattini's plea called for the outbreak of a 'guerra di guerriglia' to be waged through films produced at amateur level. This was an elaboration of the previous idea inspiring the *Cinegiornale della Pace* (see Part II, Chapter 4). In the charged political climate of the time, Zavattini's call was enthusiastically answered by many left-wing filmmakers and intellectuals, as well as by Unitelefilm's crew. The director of Unitelefilm, Mario Benocci, and Unitelefilm administrator, Ventura Valentini, even joined the Direttivo Nazionale dei Cinegiornali Liberi, a national committee established by Zavattini with the aim of coordinating initiatives which were taking place in various cities under the common label of Cinegiornali liberi (Masoni and Vecchi 2000, 131). In spite of the fact that the *Cinema militante* movement was pervaded with far-left political views, the Communist film production company managed to become a protagonist of this brief season of political mobilization, one characterized by overwhelming expectations in the revolutionary power of cinema. From 1968 to 1970, five Cinegiornali liberi were produced with the decisive artistic and technical support of Unitelefilm: *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* (1969,

Cinegiornale libero di Roma n. 2), *Battipaglia* (1969, Cinegiornale libero n. 5), *Battipaglia: autoanalisi di una rivolta* (1970), *Sicilia: terremoto anno uno* (1970) and *Vajont: 2000 condanne* (1970).⁷²

The Cinegiornali liberi offered the Unitelefilm crew the opportunity to experiment more freely from a thematic and stylistic point of view than they could when producing propaganda films for the Italian Communist Party. This is especially evident in *Sicilia: terremoto anno uno*, a 26-minute documentary directed by Giuseppe Scavuzzo and dealing with the Terremoto del Belice, a disastrous earthquake that hit the western part of Sicily in January 1968. The film in question does not present any voice-over commentary and some parts are rather mute: no interviews, no music, and only ambient audio. Nonetheless, the film manages to perfectly communicate its political message - that the government has shown blatant disorganisation in rescuing the population of Belice - through the dramatic images of destruction the film depicts. These do not need words to communicate the sense of hopeless abandonment experienced by the local population. The protest of the people of Belice is entrusted to the graffiti scratched on the walls of the ruined houses, to brief interviews spoken in a strict and barely understandable Sicilian dialect and to the iconic final scene in which an old man shows his anger and frustration by gesticulating at the camera, while his voice is inaudible, due to The Beatles' *Because* (1969) being played. Although perfectly in line with the PCI from a political point of view, this film would not have been accepted as a propaganda film by the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* as its message was complex and, therefore, open to

⁷² See Masoni and Vecchi (2000, 133 – 142). This list is compiled on the base of the Cinegiornali liberi which are stored at the AAMOD archive. According to Faliero Rosati, an other three Cinegiornali liberi should be ascribed to Unitelefilm: *Isolotto, quartiere liberato*; *Se questo resta com'è...(siete perduti)*, and *Anatomia di un quartiere malato* (1973, 12 – 13).

interpretation. Indeed, the control exerted by the PCI on propaganda films produced by Unitelefilm, and especially on the text of the voice-over commentary, was normally quite strict.⁷³

The most interesting, and by far the most successful, among the *Cinegiornali liberi* was *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata*, a 67-minute film shot in 16 mm and directed by Ugo Gregoretti. Sergio Boldini, Giulietto Chiesa, Diego Fiumani, Ferruccio Castronuovo, Valerio Veltroni (brother of the more famous Walter) were collaborators and participated with the workers of the occupation committee of the Apollon, a printing company in the outskirts of Rome. The film chronicles the long struggle by the workers of the Apollon to save their factory from closure and culminates in the occupation of the plant, which lasted thirteen months between summer 1968 and summer 1969. In a city like Rome, which lacked large industrial plants, the occupation of a medium-size factory like the Apollon by its five hundred workers immediately became a centre of attention for left-wing students, intellectuals and aspiring revolutionaries of the capital. Many regarded 1968 as the dawn of revolution and were looking for their chance to see the class struggle first hand.

A group of filmmakers, funded by Unitelefilm and led by Ugo Gregoretti, a PCI sympathizer who had previously been working as director for the RAI and mainstream cinema, also joined the workers who were occupying the factory. Instead of making a documentary, the troupe decided to take the opportunity to make an experimental film which perfectly embodied the spirit of *Cinema militante*: the style and the structure of the film would be decided in agreement with the workers of the Apollon (Gregoretti 2000, 213). The experiment resulted in a rather atypical but

⁷³ On this point see the statement by Paola Scarnati, who worked at Unitelefilm from 1965 to 1979, in Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 190 - 91).

extremely fascinating film, a sort of docudrama. The most striking characteristic of this was that the workers of the Apollon played themselves, re-enacting the events they had been living through during the long struggle preceding the occupation of the factory. Senior members of the PCI were cast for the roles of the factory owners. The shoot lasted eight days and used the factory as its location (Gregoretti 2000, 213). Despite its experimental character, the film presents many features of Unitelefilm productions, such as the voice-over commentary, played by Gian Maria Volontè, which is used to link the various scenes, and which explicitly states the authors' point of view, by making political remarks as the plot unfolds.

The workers of the Apollon probably just wanted to tell their story and that the film would turn out to be a valuable tool for fundraising (this was the purpose the film would be subsequently deployed for and gained remarkable results).⁷⁴ However, the editing, and the rather didactic tone of the voice-over commentary, turned it into a sort of handbook for trade union organizers. By all appearances, *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* is aimed at depicting an exemplary industrial dispute which could serve as a model for class warfare. The film shows how the workers of the Apollon, former peasants who were scarcely unionized, slowly become politically aware during the first half of the 1960s thanks to the indefatigable action of a few colleagues. These were active members of the Italian Communist Party like Morelli, or belonged to the 'sinistra socialista' like Scucchia, 'un vecchio antifascista, compagno di carcere di Gramsci'. The workers learn to become aware of the injustices perpetrated by the 'padrone-padre' of the factory, despite the veil of obfuscating hypocrisy created by a paternalistic management style. Morelli and

⁷⁴ According to Ugo Gregoretti *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* made sixty million lire through voluntary contribution during the thousands of projections held in the venues of the *circuito alternativo* of the PCI (Sircana 2010, 85).

Scucchia succeed in organising the first strike, and this is a decisive step on the road to political emancipation:

Scucchia ha sconfitto il boom, il paternalismo, la paura dei contadini di ieri. Gli operai, come lui, Morelli e qualche altro hanno sognato da parecchio tempo, finalmente sono usciti dai reparti e si sono fermati nel cortile, sotto gli occhi del padrone.

Subsequently, the film shows how the *Commissione Interna* of the factory, led by Morelli, finds out that the owner has systematically defrauded the workers of part of their social security contributions. All the workers agree to sue him. They also decide to start up a factory-consumer cooperative:

La fondazione della cooperativa di consumo [...] apre una nuova prospettiva all'azione politica. La cooperativa infatti vuol dire molte cose: generi alimentari a buon mercato, ma anche formazione di quadri operai, vita di assemblea, scuola di organizzazione. Una cooperativa [...] è una piccola testa di ponte del potere operaio nel cuore del recinto padronale

As the years pass by, the workers of the Apollon become spearheads in Rome's union circles. The factory is sold to another entrepreneur, Borgognoni, who initiates a systematic sabotage of the production.

The members of the *Commissione Interna* decide to hire a private eye, defined by the voice-over as a 'tipica figura del sottobosco neocapitalistico', to investigate the owner's intentions, and they find out that he is secretly planning to shut down the plant in order to build a residence in the industrial area of the Apollon. A battle of nerves begins between Borgognoni and the *Commissione Interna* of the Apollon, with the owner delaying the payment of the wages and trying to sabotage

the cooperative, while Morelli and Scucchia urge the workers not to react to the provocations from the management in order to avoid the intervention of the police. Eventually, Borgognoni discloses his intention, but the workers, informed in advance about his plans, quickly occupy the factory in order to avoid the dismantling of machinery. The heat is now on; the workers of the Apollon are determined to resist 'un minuto più del padrone'. Over the following months, the occupiers enjoy material solidarity from the workers of Rome, as well as other areas of Italy, thanks to the efficient organisation of the PCI which has promptly supported their struggle. Many artists, intellectuals, and students also take side with the occupiers although, judging by what one sees in the film, their support appears purely moral. The venues of the cooperative and the factory courtyard serve as stages for debates, meetings, artistic performances, and even to celebrate mass.

In picturing the occupation, the film offers a rare visual documentation of the use of *Cinema militante*: a group of students are shown projecting a film about the May 1968 protests in France on behalf of the occupiers. We hear one student declaiming the Italian dubbing of the French voice-over commentary. *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* ends by showing footage of the workers of the Apollon spending New Year's Eve 1968 in front of the *Ministero dell'Industria* in the fashionable Via Veneto, a street celebrated in Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960).

Apollon, una fabbrica occupata enjoyed the largest distribution among the films of *Cinema militante*, especially thanks to its promotion by the PCI and by ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana) a Communist flank organisation. Forty-one copies were printed and it was projected more than 1000 times with an estimated total of 240.000 spectators. It was also presented in West Germany,

Switzerland, the United States and sold to the public broadcasting services of Sweden and Finland (Rosati 1973, 9). In this respect, *Apollon una fabbrica occupata* represented a sound investment for Unitelefilm: it cost three million, and grossed twelve million lire⁷⁵

The film had, however, many negative reviews. While the film critic Adriano Aprà lambasted *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* from a cinematographic point of view by questioning the choice to re-enact the story of the Apollon *a posteriori*⁷⁶, harsh criticism of a political nature was articulated in some sectors of the *Cinema militante* movement. *Ombre Rosse*, for example, did not mince its words about *Apollon una fabbrica occupata*: to Goffredo Fofi the film was ‘un brutto tiro consumato alle spalle della classe operaia’, and, far from promoting the development of the class struggle in Italy, seemed to appease the social and political tension shaking the country. According to Fofi, this was coherent with the tradition of the PCI, defined as an ‘affossatore della lotta di classe’.⁷⁷ In particular, *Ombre Rosse* claimed that the film misrepresented reality, omitting many of the tensions and contradictions that rose among the workers of the Apollon themselves during the long struggle. Those who wanted to raise the level of confrontation inside and outside the factory, as suggested by the *movimento studentesco*, had been deliberately ignored by the film, or labelled as ‘provocatori pagati dal padrone’. *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata* was therefore nothing less than a reactionary film

⁷⁵ IG, APCI, MF 161, pp. 615 – 638, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, serie 1971.

⁷⁶ ‘L’operazione di ricostruzione a posteriori non è dichiarata e quindi tutto il film si muove sull’equivoco (neorealistico!) di una finzione vergognosa di esserlo. Ma quanto più efficace sarebbe stato, per esempio, il disordine di un film inchiesta che facesse “vivere” questi operai, e le loro famiglie, invece di farli “recitare”’, Adriano Aprà, in *Cinema e Film*, 9, 1969, quoted in Bertozzi (2008, 195).

⁷⁷ *I pidocchi e la balena*, in *Ombre Rosse*, 8, December 1969, 70 – 71. For a review from the PCI’s perspective, see *Gli operai dell’Apollon salgono sullo schermo* in *Rinascita*, 7, 1969, 22.

depicting an oversimplified dialectic between students and workers, one ‘tollerata e permessa dall’apparato del PCI’.⁷⁸

The modern viewer could be understandably struck by the inflammatory statements contained in the voice-over commentary of *Apollon* and regard this judgement by *Ombre Rosse* as motivated by pure political prejudice. However, this is arguably without foundation, as the directors of the film felt the need to clarify, albeit obliquely, the kind of relationship which had developed between students and workers over the period of the Apollon occupation:

Operai e studenti sfilano insieme per le strade, discutendo sui modelli di lotta
ma non certo sulle parole d’ordine che sono e non possono che essere le stesse:
no allo stato di classe, no allo stato borghese, no allo stato dei padroni.

If we read between the lines, *Apollon una fabbrica occupata* sheds light on the rather complex dialectics between the workers’ movement, the PCI and the student movement between the late 1960s and early 1970s. The film accurately reflects how the PCI generally succeeded in maintaining political hegemony over the workers’ movement and how, along with the trade unions, it managed to keep the impressive cycle of union struggles that developed over those years within legal boundaries. The

⁷⁸ Two years later Goffredo Fofi confirmed the negative judgement expressed by *Ombre Rosse* on *Apollon, una fabbrica occupata*. According to Fofi, the film had been ‘rigidamente controllato da PCI e sindacati’ and this had led to a series of omissions and distortions: ‘La lotta vi è castrata in tutte le contraddizioni che aveva, la presenza degli studenti infilata in un cantuccio di solidarietà o liquidata con un bel “provocatori pagati dai fascisti” [...]; l’unità assoluta degli operai coi sindacati, loro legittimi, unici, eterni e fedeli rappresentanti, mai messa in dubbio, e il legame tra quella lotta e la situazione generale trascurato e dimenticato, secondo le migliori prospettive del partito’, *Il cinema italiano: servi e padroni*, quoted in Carotti (1992, 65, note 21). See also Pio Baldelli: ‘Apollon, una fabbrica occupata costituisce il caso esemplare negativo di un tentativo di utilizzare nella lotta politica gli strumenti della comunicazione di massa. [...] Il regista sta tra il carosello pubblicitario elettorale-anticlericale (la macchietta del prete) e la politica delle alleanze (il prete che benedice gli operai raccolti per la messa)’, in *Cinema e lotta di liberazione*, published in 1970 by Samonà e Savelli (one of the publishing house backing the *nuova sinistra*), 16.

student movement, however, urged the workers to turn their protests into open rebellion against the political system.

In many respects, *Apollon una fabbrica occupata* is an endorsement of the *politica unitaria* of the PCI: the workers of the Apollon manage to foil the plans of the class enemy through an alliance with a wide range of political and social forces under the leadership of the Italian Communist Party. *Apollon una fabbrica occupata* also provides vivid descriptions of the various phases of a union action, offering an aperçu on workers' conditions at the end of the 1960s. This is rather significant in that several authors stress that very few films in Italian cinema feature factory workers as protagonists.⁷⁹

The success of *Apollon* led to the production of another impressive film, *Contratto*, commissioned by the three major engineering workers unions (FIOM, FIM, UILM) and directed by Ugo Gregoretti. Unitefilm co-produced the film investing ten million lire. Although *Contratto* cannot be properly considered neither a PCI film nor a production belonging to the *Cinema militante* movement, it is worth analysing because of its extraordinary visual documentation of the *autunno caldo*, namely the struggle undertaken by the *metalmeccanici* in order to renew the national engineering employment contract between September and December 1969. That was the first *vertenza sindacale unitaria*, namely a union action jointly led by the three principal unions, and it resulted in one of the greatest victories in the history of the Italian workers' movement. The merit of the film by Gregoretti is to single out the principal reason for that success: the presence in the factories of a new, young working class determined to refuse the authoritarian hierarchies characterizing the

⁷⁹ Micciché (1995, 100), Manera (2002, 64 – 65) and Lizzani (2007, 105).

factory system. These young workers, in the words of the voice-over commentary, are ‘La meno integrabile classe operaia che la storia del nostro paese abbia forse mai conosciuto’. Their difficult integration into the factory system was due the generation gap separating them from their older colleagues. This new generation of workers belonged to that *prima generazione* analysed by Simonetta Piccone Stella (1993): as teenagers during the *boom*, they refused to live and to work like their fathers had been doing for two decades and pretended to fulfil the promises made by the media in the optimistic years of the *miracolo economico*.

These young workers look physically different from their fathers: they have long hair and scraggy beards and, in the factory trade union meetings, they stand out from the veterans of the *anni duri*.⁸⁰ The mere presence of these young workers suggests that the working condition in Italian factories, social hierarchies, and even trade union ritualism are irreparably outdated in comparison to the society outside the factory gates. Furthermore, they do not just attend meetings as passive spectators. In fact, they grab the microphone and, rather brazenly, vigorously express their somewhat radical political opinions: ‘una nuova leva di sindacalisti giovanissimi si è venuta plasmando a caldo nel fuoco dello scontro’, claims the positively surprised voice-over commentary. They have also changed the mood of the union demonstrations, which are now pervaded by a bright and rather bustling creativity: improvised drum sets, musical instruments, songs, irreverent protest signs, and new slogans such as ‘La fabbrica sarà il nostro Vietnam!’

Cinematographically, *Contratto* is a vibrant and even frenetic film, driving the audience through much action and communicating the unique atmosphere of

⁸⁰ See Garavini and Pugno’s *Anni duri* (1974).

participation and solidarity which characterized that long struggle. Mino Argentieri, reviewing the film in *Rinascita*, pointed out how its only shortcoming was that the author did not bother to provide viewers with any factual information. As a consequence, the film could be claimed to be preaching to the converted:

Quanto guadagna un metalmeccanico? Dove abita? Come campa? [...] Epica e impressionismo distolgono gli autori dal tracciare un panorama più dettagliato di ciò che è all'origine del conflitto descritto. E' questo è un difetto, poiché il film tende più a confermare, sul piano emotivo, convinzioni preesistenti che a convincere allineando argomenti, pezze d'appoggio, dati schiacciati.⁸¹

In spite of this flaw, *Contratto* can be considered as the most complete cinematographic account of an extraordinary and optimistic phase of democratic development in both the factories and the country. This phase was dramatically short-lived, however. Rather significantly, in this respect, is the fact that the film ends by quoting the *Strage di Piazza Fontana*, the terrorist attack in Milan, on 12 December 1969, when a bomb exploded at the headquarters of *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* in Piazza Fontana, killing 17 people and wounding 88. This event is deemed to have marked the beginning of the long season of harsh and violent political confrontation known as the *anni di piombo*.⁸² The identities of the real culprits and perpetrators of that massacre are still unknown. Rather evident, however, was the connection between that bombing and the engineering workers' union action. The voice-over commentary of *Contratto* shows no doubts in interpreting the Piazza Fontana bombing as a response to the workers' victorious struggle, claiming that this

⁸¹ *L'autunno sindacale nel "Contratto". Un affresco che riordina le tappe di una grande lotta*, in *Rinascita*, 30, 24/7/1970, 18.

⁸² On the Piazza Fontana bombing see Franzinelli (2008, 50 – 81).

act of violence strengthened, rather than weakened, the determination of the Italian working class.

One of the most controversial affairs linked to Piazza Fontana was the death of Giuseppe Pinelli, a Milanese anarchist who died while held in custody by the police under suspicion of involvement in the terrorist attack. The never-clarified circumstances of Pinelli's death fuelled harsh polemics over the coming years, especially by radical left-wing groups such as *Lotta Continua*.⁸³ They also provided inspiration for several creative works, including a famous play by Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo titled *Morte accidentale di un anarchico*. In 1970, Unitelefilm produced two films about the death of Pinelli in collaboration with the *Comitato cineasti contro la repressione: Giuseppe Pinelli* (by Nello Risi, 50 minutes) and *Ipotesi sulla morte di Giuseppe Pinelli* (by Elio Petri, 12 minutes). These films represented a further involvement of Unitelefilm in the *Cinema militante*. The former is structured according to the model of the *inchiesta televisiva*, featuring interviews with Pinelli's comrades of the *Circolo anarchico della Ghisolfa* of Milan and with Pinelli's wife and colleagues. It is aimed at demonstrating that Pinelli did not commit suicide and his death must therefore be ascribed to the personnel of the Milan *Questura's Ufficio Politico*. The film's score is *Lamento per la morte di Giuseppe Pinelli*, a ballad by the Sicilian *cantastorie* Franco Trincale. *Ipotesi sulla morte di Giuseppe Pinelli* is more experimental from a cinematographic point of view in being a sort of black comedy sketch in which a self-defined group of '*lavoratori dello spettacolo*', including Gian Maria Volontè, Renzo Montagnani and Luigi

⁸³ See, for example, *12 Dicembre*, a 100-minute film produced by *Lotta Continua* over a two year period, 1970 – 1972, which is, partially, an inquiry on Piazza Fontana and the death of Pinelli. In AAMOD Archive, Codice indentificativo: IL8700004276. On the controversy concerning the death of Pinelli over the following years, see Foot (2009, 183 – 195). For a history of *Lotta Continua*, see Bobbio (1979) and Cazzullo (1998).

Dilberti, reenact the sequence of events that occurred in the police interrogation room where Pinelli was questioned, and where he died, according to three different, and rather contradictory, reports issued by the *Questura* of Milan in the days following the incident.

Chapter 7. The Unitefilm Crisis of 1970

The years between 1968 and 1969 had been, in many respects, quite positive for Unitefilm. They had produced the largest number of films ever in their history, especially due to Terzo Canale. Its productive capacity had grown exponentially: twelve people were stably employed in a structure that was equipped with three moviola, one 35 mm and three 16 mm movie cameras, a recording studio, a small cinema and a rich video archive.⁸⁴ Finally, Unitefilm had also achieved some fame in the left-wing cultural and political panorama thanks to its involvement in the *Cinema militante*.

However, not everything had turned out well. The production of documentaries for the quality awards had been neglected and, as a result, the five films presented in 1968 had been all rejected.⁸⁵ Furthermore, some of the films produced in that period had been complete disasters from a financial point of view. This was the case, for example, of Luigi Perelli's *Emigrazione '68* which cost six million lire while grossing just 650,000.⁸⁶ Things had gone better in 1969, with seven films awarded out of twelve presented, Unitefilm nonetheless had a serious budget deficit by the end of the year. In the same period, the increasing level of television

⁸⁴ IG, APCI, MF 70, pp. 321 – 323, Istituti e Organismi vari, 25 September 1970. A complete list of the workers of Unitefilm reads as follow: Mario Benocci, director; Venturo Valentini, administrator; Gianni Toti, 'collaboratore fisso per problemi artistici e culturali'; Paola Ledda, archivist; Franco Cianci, accountant; Luciano Vanni, producer; Sergio Zaccagnini, press agent, Edda Quaglierini, secretary, Alfio Franchi, warehouse-keeper, Anna Gioffredi, editing assistant, Raimondo Crociani, video editor, Leonardo Nadelli, delivery man, in *Bilancio Unitefilm al 31/12/1969*, in APCI, MF 70; pp. 276 – 318, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitefilm, serie 1970.

⁸⁵ These were Franco Taviani's *Dal nord al sud per il Vietnam* (22 minutes), Vittorio Togliatti's *F come fiume come fango come Firenze* (12 minutes, Vittorio Togliatti was the nephew of Palmiro Togliatti), Massimo Mida's *Nuovo impegno* (12 minutes), Mario Carbone's *Monte Gaina* (11 minutes) and Ennio Lorenzini's *Non dirò il mio numero di matricola* (15 minutes). In IG, APCI, MF 161, pp. 615 – 638, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitefilm, serie 1971.

⁸⁶ *Emigrazione '68* (32 minutes) is cinematographically one of the best films produced by Unitefilm on the issue of emigration. It has an anthropological, rather than a political, approach and depicts the sense of cultural displacement experienced by the Italians working in the coal basin of the Ruhr, in Belgium and Switzerland, with rare efficacy. The voice over commentary is by Dacia Maraini.

broadcasting across Europe caused a decline of newsreel production. This involved Eastern European countries too. As a consequence, the selling of *attualità* beyond the iron curtain ceased completely, with dire consequences for Unitelefilm's financial health.

For this reason, Unitelefilm administrator Venturo Valentini proposed the implementation of drastic measures in a confidential report issued to the *Stampa e Propaganda* in December 1969.⁸⁷ According to Valentini, the company had to be shut down, especially for tax reasons, and Unitelefilm turned into an 'associazione degli amici del cinema'. This cultural association would make the valuable Unitelefilm equipment available for those directors and artists willing to produce politically engaged films and documentaries. This would allow the production of films for both the *Cinema militante* circuit and the quality awards with little or no investment from the PCI:

Al partito conviene più spendere due milioni perché si realizzi l'”Apollon”, che la produzione che commissiona all'Unitelefilm, perché oltre ai due milioni per un documentario, spende altre somme di contributi per tenere in piedi la società, ottenendo un risultato e un prodotto più scadenti.

As far as the propaganda films were concerned, the PCI could entrust their production to single directors on a project-by-project basis.

Valentini's report also questioned Benocci's leadership, stressing how the director had been systematically disregarding the recommendations of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*. The tensions which ran through Unitelefilm management inevitably reverberated at a lower level. On 25 September 1970, the self-defined

⁸⁷ *Relazione di Valentini su situazione Unitelefilm*, in IG, APCI, MF 307, pp. 2522 – 31, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, Roma, December 1969.

‘Collettivo di lavoro della Unitelefilm e i compagni collaboratori esterni’, namely a committee of Unitelefilm workers, issued a letter to the *Ufficio Politico*, the *Ufficio Finanze*, and the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* of the party demanding a U-turn with respect to the aims and the management philosophy of the PCI film production company.⁸⁸ The *collettivo* claimed that Unitelefilm was in crisis because it had never been what it should have been, that is a production facility in the service of the party and the Italian workers’ movement. Furthermore, daily quarrels between Benocci and Valentini had negatively affected the working environment. The party, on the other hand, was not entirely blameless as it had been drip-feeding its financial support to Unitelefilm since the beginning and had shown a puzzling lack of interest in its own film production company. The tone of the letter reveals how this *collettivo* was pervaded by a sort of *assemblearismo*, namely the tendency to entrust even the slightest decision to the group, particularly emblematic of the historical period. This typically prevented the *collettivo* from finding solutions to the problems it had outlined. In fact, the letter did not contain any practical suggestions and ended with a set of questions:

Che cosa è l’Unitelefilm? Che cosa non è l’Unitelefilm? Che cosa deve e non deve essere l’Unitelefilm?’ (emphasis in the original).

Mario Benocci regarded this letter, which had been sent behind his back, as a negative criticism of his leadership from Unitelefilm’s employees. He resigned immediately.⁸⁹ This led to the subsequent reorganisation of Unitelefilm, which is looked at in the next chapter.

⁸⁸ IG, APCI, MF 70, pp. 321 – 23, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 1970, 25 September 1970.

⁸⁹ Benocci was rather disappointed and spoke of a ‘clima di slealtà’, See *Lettera di Benocci*, in IG, APCI, MF 70, p. 324, Istituti e organismi vari, 29 September 1970.

Chapter 8. Gregoretti's Management of Unitelefilm (1971 – 1973).

The PCI attempted a re-launch of Unitelefilm through changes in the company's management. Ugo Gregoretti, who had finally joined the party, accepted the role of artistic director.⁹⁰ The appointment of Maurizio Ferrara and Pietro Notarianni, both already belonging to the party apparatus, underpinned the PCI's intention to exert a closer political control over Unitelefilm. The former, in particular, was member of the PCI's *Ufficio cinema* and his presence in Unitelefilm may have been aimed at improving the collaboration between the *Commissione Culturale* and the PCI film production company. Finally, Luciana Finzi was appointed as Unitelefilm's new administrator, replacing Ventura Valentini.

The new management prepared a detailed production plan outlining the political and financial objectives of Unitelefilm over the years to come.⁹¹ The first point concerned film trade with socialist countries which Unitelefilm, backed by Gian Carlo Pajetta, wanted to develop for both political and economic reasons.⁹² In this respect, Gregoretti and Finzi undertook a sort of promotional tour in Eastern European countries, achieving, however, poor results.⁹³

The second point proposed a focus on the production of two strands of films (*filoni* in the original). The first should target what the production plan defined as 'il

⁹⁰ Interview with Ugo Gregoretti in Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 166).

⁹¹ IG, APCI, MF 161, pp. 615 – 638, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 30 November 1971, riservato, in lettura a Berlinguer.

⁹² On this point, see the interview with Ugo Gregoretti in Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 170).

⁹³ Ugo Gregoretti gives a rather humorous account of Unitelefilm's mission to the Soviet Union: '[...] fummo ricevuti dal compagno Lapin, che era presidente del comitato dei ministri per la radio e la televisione, un'autorità sterminata. Uno che aveva fatto fare un mese di anticamera al direttore della Rai Bernabei, e che ci ricevette fulmineamente. Gli proponemmo di acquistare i nostri prodotti, film come *Morte sul lavoro*, *Emigrati italiani a Basilea*, *L'acqua negata* (sulla crisi idrica in Puglia): non gliene importava niente. Ci chiese invece se non avessimo portato qualcosa con Celentano. [...] Si fece anche una riunione con con cineasti e documentaristi, nella Casa dei documentaristi sovietici dove portammo alcuni dei nostri film. A metà dell'*Apollon* dissero basta.' In Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 170 - 71).

nostro pubblico', that is to say party militants and sympathisers, with the aim of improving their knowledge of the party's political line and history. The second group of films, to be produced in collaboration with trade unions, associations, as well as regional, provincial and municipal councils, had instead to be designed for those categories of people that could potentially be involved in a political alliance with the PCI aimed at 'una radicale trasformazione della società in senso democratico'. These included:

militanti ed elettori di altri partiti della sinistra democratica, democristiani di sinistra, cattolici senza partito, antifascisti che non vedono una collocazione nell'attuale arco delle forze politiche, la grande massa dei qualunquisti, momento decisivo della cosiddetta opinione pubblica, i giovani che si affacciano alla vita politica e molto spesso vengono catturati dal sinistrismo piccolo borghese (i.e. by the groups of the *nuova sinistra*) o, peggio ancora, cadono nella rete del teppismo fascista.

Four projects exemplifying the kind of films Unitelefilm management had in mind were attached to the production plan. These included a film concerning neofascism in Lombardy, a documentary investigating how economic conditioning affected the press in capitalist societies, a film on the 'southern question', and a history of Italian political cinema. The four films proposed were supposed to have the running time of a standard feature film, and expected to be considerably more expensive than previous Unitelefilm productions.

Two considerations can be made with respect to the production plan submitted by Unitelefilm's new management. Firstly, Gregoretti and his colleagues were elaborating an autonomous political strategy to be implemented through

cinematographic production. Secondly, they aimed at making Unitelefilm achieve economic self-sufficiency by distributing films beyond the *circuito alternativo* of the party. Both objectives, however, could only be accomplished through initial funding from the PCI. Therefore, Luciana Finzi asked for 250 million lire, in a further report addressed to the *Segreteria politica* of the party.⁹⁴ Finzi also claimed that Unitelefilm would be able to reimburse the entire amount within three years, thanks to ‘un’attività commerciale rigorosa ed oculata’, and vigorously stressed how past and present difficulties of the PCI film production company had to be especially ascribed to the party:

Il partito ha sempre visto la UTF come una semplice appendice passiva della Stampa e Propaganda e, peggio ancora, come uno strumento subalterno buono per tutti gli usi.

Rather predictably, the party ignored Unitelefilm’s requests: the financing was never granted and the PCI kept commissioning films from Unitelefilm on a project-by-project basis.

As proved by a confidential report issued to the *Segreteria politica* by Maurizio Ferrara in January 1972, however, there was far from unanimity within Unitelefilm management itself with respect to the aims and scopes of the company.⁹⁵ Ferrara claimed that most of his energy had hitherto been invested in eradicating ‘un assurdo concetto di gestione (e persino di produzione) a carattere confusamente assembleare’ inherited from the old management, and he reassured the *Segreteria* that, in his view, Unitelefilm must especially meet the party’s needs rather than those of the ‘collettivi

⁹⁴ *Appunti per l’Ufficio di Segreteria. A Napolitano e Galluzzi, con preghiera di urgente parere.* In IG, APCI, MF 52, pp. 1291 – 1293, Istituti e Organismi Vari, Unitelefilm, serie 1972.

⁹⁵ *Relazione di Maurizio Ferrara. Al compagno Carlo Galluzzi e, per conoscenza, ai compagni Armando Cossutta e Giorgio Napolitano.* In IG, APCI, MF 52, pp. 1286 – 1289, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 22 January 1972. Riservato.

di cineasti di sinistra'. As far as the issue of "autonomia" (punctuation marks in the original) was concerned, this had to be encouraged but within the 'sfera di direzione politica del partito'. Ferrara also claimed that Gregoretti, while cooperating with him in countering the *assemblearismo*, seemed to excessively treasure Unitelefilm autonomy:

Il compagno Gregoretti [...] sottolinea molto il carattere autonomo che, a suo giudizio, l'Unitelefilm dovrebbe possedere, strutturalmente, e tende quindi a respingere, come interferenze pericolose per lo sviluppo autonomo e creativo della produzione, gli interventi e le "censure" dall'esterno.

Ferrara suggested assigning Unitelefilm a full-time director based in the *Commissione Culturale* or the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* in order to exert a stricter political control over the structure.

Following Ferrara's suggestion, the PCI decided to appoint the head of the *Commissione Culturale*, Giorgio Napolitano – subsequently President of the Italian Republic – as president of a directorate formed by Finzi and Gregoretti. In March 1973, Finzi issued another, quite pessimistic, report in which she also proposed a radical reorganisation of the structure.⁹⁶ She stressed how Unitelefilm was too large and expensive as a propaganda film office and completely undersized as a film production company. She also admitted that the production plan presented in the previous year had not proved to be realistic as far as the commercial perspectives of Unitelefilm were concerned:

Il discorso con i paesi socialisti è certamente difficile (sappiamo bene la loro necessità di valuta pregiata) e in ogni caso a lungo termine; la Rai-tv si è

⁹⁶ *Lettera di Luciana Finzi alla Sez. Amministrazione, alla Segreteria, a Pajetta e Giorgio Napolitano.* In IG, APCI, MF 42, pp. 1560 – 1563, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 16 March 1973.

confermata come un interlocutore e un acquirente non facile; il circuito commerciale non è conquistabile se non con un certo tipo di prodotti i cui costi commerciali sono palesemente superiori alle possibilità di bilancio dell'Unitelefilm, e infine le stesse commissioni fatte in passato dal partito si sono rarefatte riducendo alcune entrate per altro insufficienti (ad esempio i premi di stato)

Overall, Finzi pointed out that Italian cinema had dramatically changed over the period between 1968 and 1973:

‘Se due anni fa un film come Apollon poteva conseguire un successo eccezionale (anche sotto il profilo commerciale) oggi certi temi politici e sociali sono entrati nel cinema corrente e persino nella TV, con prodotti confezionati ad un tale livello da porre nuovi problemi a tutta una produzione “minore” - anche se più rigorosa e impegnata – su temi analoghi’

Finzi was clearly referring to the new wave of so-called *cinema civile* which had flourished since 1970, something that, in the words of Lino Micciché, represented ‘il volto pubblico e spettacolare’ and, one could add, the commercial outcome of the season of *Cinema militante* (Micciché 1995, 348). Not much differently from what Ventura Valentini had proposed in 1969, Finzi suggested to turn Unitelefilm into a ‘gruppo di lavoro’ of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, and to carry out the propaganda production for the party by hiring professional filmmakers in view of the elections.

Once again, no decisions were taken in this respect by the party leadership. Quite commendably, Unitelefilm’s directorate tried its best to improve film sales by proposing, for example, a quite innovative project – too innovative in fact – to

Editori Riuniti which entailed the selling of videotapes.⁹⁷ Such attempts, however, could not solve the fundamental problems of Unitelefilm, which resided in a lack of a firm awareness by the party leadership of the reasons for the very existence of the PCI film production company. Even the new management soon showed signs of impatience with this untenable situation. For example, in the summer of 1973, Giorgio Napolitano threatened his resignation:

Per quanto mi riguarda mi sono convinto di aver accettato troppo ingenuamente un incarico assurdo, l'incarico cioè di presiedere all'attività di un' "azienda" [punctuation marks in the original] di cui non si sapeva, e non si sa, e si continua a non decidere, che cosa debba essere, quale posto debba avere nei nostri programmi di attività propagandistico – culturale e nei nostri impegni finanziari. Mi riservo di trarre da ciò le ovvie conseguenze.

Eventually, the tensions between Unitelefilm management and the party leadership boiled over during a rather troubled meeting held in November 1973 where Ugo Gregoretti resigned.⁹⁸

Although prevented from implementing the initial production plan – the four projects presented in 1971 never came into fruition – Unitelefilm managed to produce a few films in that period defined as 'a carattere spettacolare', namely films aimed beyond the PCI's film circuit.⁹⁹ The most interesting of these was *Trevico – Torino*,

⁹⁷ IG, APCI, MF 45, pp. 1720 – 1727, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, serie 1973.

⁹⁸ See the letter by Ugo Gregoretti to Giorgio Napolitano, in IG, APCI, MF 65, pp. 433 – 35, Istituti e organismi vari, Unitelefilm, 22 November 1973. Gregoretti complained rather bitterly at the treatment he had received by the party leadership, following his commitment to Unitelefilm: 'Ne è seguita una diminuzione complessiva del credito, della fiducia, della considerazione e del riguardo dell'ambiente del partito da me un tempo goduti'. Napolitano forwarded the letter to Gian Carlo Pajetta, adding a hand-written note in which he stressed that, in his opinion, Gregoretti's decision was partially due to Pajetta's 'ingiuste battute verso di lui [Gregoretti] nella riunione di martedì'.

⁹⁹ This definition is contained in a Unitelefilm document signed by Ugo Gregoretti, Luciana Finzi and Mino Argentieri (who was a member of the *Commissione cinema* of the party), in IG, APCI, MF 45, pp. 1720 – 1727, Istituti e Organismi vari, Unitelefilm, serie 1973.

also known as *Trevico – Torino, viaggio nel Fiat-nam*, directed by Ettore Scola and produced by Unitelefilm in 1972. This is the only feature film ever produced by Unitelefilm. The genesis of the film was quite different with respect to Unitelefilm's usual productions: it was neither commissioned by the party nor proposed to the party by Unitelefilm. It was, in fact, a personal project by director Ettore Scola, who wanted to shoot an independent feature film outside of mainstream cinema. Scola had just finished shooting film footage when he ran out of money. The PCI agreed to help by shouldering the costs of editing and post production (which were entrusted to Unitelefilm). It is worth noting that Ettore Scola was politically close to the party and, in return for PCI support, agreed to direct a documentary for Unitelefilm concerning the *Festival Nazionale dell'Unità* taking place in Rome between 23 September and 1 October 1972.¹⁰⁰ What made *Trevico – Torino* an attractive project to the PCI was also the fact that Scola had written the film along with Diego Novelli, who was a member of the party and journalist of *l'Unità* (and soon-to-be mayor of Turin following the election of 1975).

The film, which has a running time of one hour and thirty-five minutes, was shot in 16 mm colour film - a semi-professional format widely used at the time by independent filmmakers - with hand-held camera and live audio. The director also made use of archival footage. Because of these features, *Trevico-Torino* looks like something between a feature film and a documentary, a 'documentario drammatizzato', as Roberto Alemanno defined it in *l'Unità*.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The film is called *Festival nazionale dell'Unità 1972*, and is stored at the AAMOD Archive, Archivio Unitelefilm, codice identificativo: IL8600001412. See the program of the Festival in *l'Unità* 17/09/1972, 7.

¹⁰¹ See Roberto Alemanno, *Un cinema al servizio del Movimento Operaio. La produzione 1972 della Unitelefilm*, in *l'Unità* 12/10/1972, 7.

The plot revolves around a southern Italian man in his early twenties called Fortunato Santospirito, played by Paolo Turco, and his life as an immigrant in Turin. The script contains autobiographical elements: like Ettore Scola, Fortunato comes from Trevico, a small village in inner Campania. However, unlike Scola, who grew up in Roma and began his career as screenplay writer, Fortunato moves to Turin because he is chasing a dream job at the FIAT Company.

The impact with the great industrial city of the north is a sort of cultural shock for the southern boy: the city is cold, noisy, grey, and Fortunato can barely understand what local people say due to the unfamiliar dialect. He befriends the waiter of a bar, his first guide in the unknown city, who helps him to find a place for the night. When night falls, Fortunato acknowledges that his provisional shelter, a dirty and miserable coal cellar, lacks a bed and he ends up sleeping at the Central station among the homeless, prostitutes, lunatics and drunks. Fortunato realises that if he does not manage to pass FIAT's aptitude test he will soon become one of them. Given his auspicious name – *fortunato* means lucky in Italian – he is able to make it: he now finds himself a factory worker in the largest of Italian companies, whose neon sign dominates the city as a powerful and distant divinity. Fortunato contemplates this with mixed feelings of admiration, desire and fear.¹⁰² Because he will not be paid for a few weeks, Fortunato is forced to look for shelter at the Caritas, a Catholic charity. There, he meets a left-wing priest who not only offers him a bed but also gives him valuable suggestions and even political lessons:

Siamo una società che sa progredire molto bene dal punto di vista tecnico ma non sa risolvere i problemi umani [...] non manchi di partecipare con i suoi

¹⁰² Noticeably, *Trevico-Torino* does not contain any scene shot in the *Mirafiori* plant as the FIAT management did not concede the authorisation. See the article *Applausi e tante domande per «Trevico – Torino»*, in *l'Unità*, 14/9/1972, 7.

compagni, son proprio io prete che glielo dico, a tutte quelle proteste che se è il caso di protestare, che oggi nella fabbrica si fanno per ottenere migliori condizioni di lavoro.

Fortunato experiences how difficult it is to establish personal relationships in a big city. He looks for the waiter, his only friend, but he finds out that he has been fired from the bar he used to work at: he will never see him again.

Suffering terribly from loneliness, Fortunato begins spending his Sundays at the Porta Palazzo market, the meeting point of southern immigrants, looking for people of his village. There, he befriends Prospero Cerabona, a southern man and secretary of a local section of the PCI. Cerabona, using quite convoluted syntax, explains to Fortunato that, while affecting relationships with family and friends who have been left behind, emigration can result in personal improvement in the long term, especially thanks to trade unions and the Communist party, which nurture immigrants' class consciousness:

Invece poi ti accorgi, man mano che prendi coscienza e conosci te stesso, ti conosci anche nella nuova coscienza operaia, secondo me grazie alla CGIL, al partito comunista, che ha fuso tutto uno certi valori nazionali della classe operaia, richiamandoci a stò grande nome di Di Vittorio, di Alicata, di Li Causi, di Amendola, di Togliatti, e perché no anche Ingrao, perchè no.

During a demonstration, Fortunato meets Vicky, a young and pretty girl and a militant of the *sinistra extraparlamentare*. These were groups aligning themselves with radical left-wing politics and competing against the PCI in order to gain workers' trust. The character of Vicky is played by Vittoria Franzinetti, who was an actual militant of *Lotta Continua*, the largest among the group of the *sinistra*

extraparlamentare, and niece of the Communist senator and former secretary of the PCI of Piedmont Ugo Pecchioli (Cazzullo 1998, 22). Vicky is from Turin and quite clearly belongs to the upper-middle class. The girl seems to know a lot of things, especially concerning political issues, and she shows a confidence that fascinates the shy boy from the South. Fortunato begins accompanying Vicky in her propaganda tours of the immigrants' neighbourhoods – what Vicky calls *lavoro di quartiere* – and their relationship soon develops into something more than a friendship, although nothing strictly romantic happens between them.

Vicky is the last of the mentors helping Fortunato in his voyage through the big city of the north. She is a sort of Dante's Beatrice who, however, will not be able to guide the protagonist to Paradise. In fact, Fortunato gradually realises how the social gap dividing him from Vicky cannot be bridged. Furthermore, he sees how Vicky's endless talks, while apparently meaningful, are in fact utterly abstract and rather useless in order to address the concrete problems of the workers. The most insightful scene in this respect is the one in which Vicky questions Fortunato's choice to attend the *scuole serali*, the evening schools for workers.¹⁰³ It is worthwhile to report the conversation between Fortunato and Vicky which reveals the social and cultural distance between Fortunato, the lower-class boy who wants to improve his conditions, and Vicky, who embodies the radical chic girl who can afford to despise what she takes for granted. The conversation takes place in the rather suggestive set of an abandoned compound which had hosted the *Esposizione Internazionale del*

¹⁰³ The implementation of the right to education for workers, originally described by Article 34 of the Constitution, was one of the most characteristic aims of the Italian workers movement in the 1970s. Law 300 of 20/5/1970, *Statuto dei lavoratori*, established that workers had to be facilitated by the company they worked for if they wished to attend evening courses. In 1974, Unitefilm made a 55-minute documentary on this issue, *Le 150 ore*, directed by Vladimir Tchertkoff and produced in collaboration with Ufficio Formazione of the Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanici. It can be found in AAMOD Archive, Archivio Unitefilm, codice identificativo: IL8600001490. On the '150 ore', see Lauria (2011).

Lavoro, which took place in Turin, in 1961, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the unification of Italy.

Vicky: A scuola? A già tu sei quello che va a scuola. Che cosa credi di imparare alla scuola serale?

Fortunato: Imparo le stesse cose che avete imparato voi.

Vicky: Ma tu, per esempio, che cosa studi adesso?

Fortunato: Il duca di Orleans

Vicky: Ma lo sai chi è e che cosa faceva? Sai qualcosa?

Fortunato: Non mi ricordo bene perché dormivo.

Vicky: Un letto un po' caro, trecento mila lire per tutto un anno.

Fortunato: Ma prendo il diploma.

Vicky: Ma quando hai anche il diploma, lo sai quanto vale la scuola serale?

Fortunato: Tu non vuoi prendere la laurea?

Vicky: A me non importa nulla perché io ho intenzione di combattere quella scuola, non di prendere una laurea, un diploma da gallina selezionata.

Fortunato: Però voi studiate, avete studiato, sennò come fate a dire che i libri sono bugiardi? Ma io questo lo voglio capire, e poi potrò criticare, ma dopo e non soltanto perché me lo dite voi.

Vicky: Ma Fortunato, cerca di capire, non sono i libri che ci hanno insegnato queste cose, siete voi, sono le lotte che avete fatto voi, sono le cose che sono successe. La scuola serve per farti dimenticare queste cose, credi forse che la scuola ti insegnerà a spiegarti, non so, come ti sfrutta Agnelli [the FIAT owner]? Questa scuola di merda va distrutta, non può essere cambiata. E' stata

creata dai padroni a loro uso e consumo per creare della gente che obbedisca e dell'altra gente che comandi.

Fortunato: Sì, va buò, distruggiamola, ma io voglio che ci sia qualcosa per mio figlio, perchè io non ho potuto studiare e voglio che mio figlio può studiare.

Vicky's words echo *Lettera ad una professoressa* (see Part III, Chapter 5.), but with a fundamental difference. Whereas Vicky seems to refuse *in toto* the school as a institution of capitalist society (*questa scuola di merda*), Don Milani and the schoolboys of Barbiana, while advocating the reform of the class-based Italian educational system, famously claim that, in any case, '*la scuola sarà sempre meglio della merda*' (Scuola di Barbiana 1967, 13). Fortunato seems to agree very much with the latter opinion. Eventually, Fortunato puts an end to his friendship with Vicky and he goes back to his comrades, finally ready to undertake the struggle for the political and social emancipation of the working class.

In the last scene of the film, we see Fortunato running through a street alongside the *Mirafiori* plant. He falls down, curses the factory, but then stands up again and keeps walking. This may be an allegory of the working class condition, which the film depicts as a difficult one. At the same time, it seems to symbolize the Italian workers' determination to walk along the road leading to social and political emancipation. Alternatively, the final scene could be read as an endorsement of PCI policy and a criticism of the *sinistra extraparlamentare*, in that it might suggest that workers can achieve emancipation only gradually, step by step (the way the PCI had always led them), while every attempt to speed up the process, to run towards revolution (as suggested by the *sinistra extraparlamentare*) could potentially give rise to painful setbacks.

Initially, *Trevico – Torino* did not find a distributor. In particular, it was rejected on two occasions by Italnoleggio, the public film distribution company which, by statute, was supposed to support the distribution of non-commercial Italian films.¹⁰⁴ The PCI exploited this circumstance by turning *Trevico – Torino* into a symbol of the party's commitment towards independent Italian cinema. The film was in fact presented in various *Festival dell'Unità* and, in particular, the projection held at the *Festival dell'Unità* of Turin was attended by 2000 spectators.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, at the Venice Film Festival, where the film was presented in the *Giornate del cinema Italiano* section, Giorgio Napolitano claimed that the PCI was fully committed to backing Italian authors in their struggle 'per la liberazione del cinema dalle leggi del profitto'.¹⁰⁶ Eventually, Nuova Comunicazione, a cooperative of the ARCI, distributed *Trevico-Torino*. Nuova Comunicazione guaranteed 150 projections.¹⁰⁷ *Trevico - Torino* also enjoyed a degree of television distribution: it was sold to Hungarian television for 2000 dollars in 1973 and subsequently to the RAI, for 12 million lire. It was broadcast by the second channel of the Italian public broadcasting service on 3 January 1978.¹⁰⁸

Another film distributed by Unitelefilm was *Il Bagno*, originally a play by Vladimir Mayakovski staged by the *Granteatro* theatre company, directed by Carlo

¹⁰⁴ See the article *Presentato il film bocciato dall'Ente Statale del cinema in l'Unità*, 28/9/1972, 6. Argentieri claimed that, in his opinion, *Trevico-Torino* had not been rejected because of its subject: 'ma per la forma, per il linguaggio, che non concede nulla, ma proprio nulla alle cosiddette «leggi» dello spettacolo e al «gusto» del pubblico'. On the Italnoleggio, funded in 1966, see Torri (2002).

¹⁰⁵ See *Applausi e tante domande per «Trevico – Torino»*, in *l'Unità*, 14/9/1972, 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Presentato il film bocciato dall'Ente Statale del cinema*, in *l'Unità*, 28/9/1972, 6.

¹⁰⁷ AAMOD Archive, faldone T (Tri – Tut), fascicolo *Trevico – Torino*.

¹⁰⁸ See the comment published in *l'Unità*, 3/1/1978, 9: 'Va in onda finalmente *Trevico-Torino*, di Ettore Scola, più volte rimandato, che chiude il ciclo «cinema contro». Raro esempio di «film militante», rigoroso fin nelle ristrettezze economiche in cui venne realizzato, *Trevico-Torino* è un luminoso modello di un «cinema contro» che sfiora l'impossibilità di esistere. Infatti *Trevico-Torino* è stato drasticamente emarginato, come messo al bando dalla censura del mercato, aberrante risvolto della logica del profitto. [...]'

Checci, and filmed by Ugo Gregoretti. The film was designed to be projected on the occasion of ‘serate e manifestazioni culturali’, as the *Scheda di presentazione* attached to the film reads.¹⁰⁹ Unitelefilm also produced an 18-minute documentary directed by Luigi Perelli, *Mayakovskij e il suo tempo*, concerning the life and times of the Soviet poet and playwright. This was supposed to serve as an introduction to the main film. The documentary by Perelli focuses above all on the contemporary relevance of Mayakovski’s play, which is a satire of Soviet bureaucracy in the Stalin era. In this respect, the voice-over commentary, written by Aggeo Savioli, claims:

‘*Il Bagno* torna quindi a sferzare, a criticare, ad ammonire, dalle scene di tutti i paesi socialisti, e di quelli che ancora socialisti non sono ma che da questa realistica favola hanno ugualmente da imparare già adesso’.

According to a statement by Gregoretti, this rather improvident remark prevented the RAI television from buying the two films.¹¹⁰

In 1971, Unitelefilm also collaborated with Bernardo Bertolucci who directed, on behalf of the PCI film production company, a documentary for the quality awards titled *La salute è malata* (33 minutes) addressing the problems of the Italian healthcare system. The film is presented as a TV inquiry, featuring interviews with health sector workers and inhabitants of the shanty towns surrounding Rome. The production of *La salute è malata* suggests that Unitelefilm management was trying to make Communist films more marketable through collaborations with well-known filmmakers. This was quite a favourable moment for such experiments, as several famous authors seemed eager to prove their revolutionary credentials by

¹⁰⁹ This can be found in the AAMOD Archive, faldone B, fascicolo *Il Bagno*.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Ugo Gregoretti in Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani (2001, 168).

working in the production of films for *Cinema militante* for little or no remuneration (Miccichè 1995, 348 – 49).

La salute è malata won a prize at the quality awards (6,300,000 lire). This, however, was only paid only seven years later, in February 1978, due to the fact that the *Commissioni Ministeriali* entrusted with the evaluation of the films had dramatically fallen behind schedule.¹¹¹ Such a circumstance certainly did not help Unitefilm in solving its serious budget issues. Using the footage shot for *La salute è malata*, Unitefilm edited a propaganda film for the party, *I poveri muoiono prima* (40 minutes), signed by Bernardo, Giuseppe Bertolucci and Marlisa Trombetta. This was presented at the Seventh Moscow Film Festival.¹¹²

During the year of Gregoretti's management (1971 – 1973), along with films aimed beyond the PCI's film circuit, Unitefilm was committed to the production of propaganda films for the party. Particularly important were, in this respect, the elections of 1972, which are discussed in the following chapter.

¹¹¹ See, AAMOD Archive, Faldone S, fascicolo *La Salute è malata*.

¹¹² See, *l'Unità*, 21/7/1971, 7.

Chapter 9. The Election of 1972 and the *Compromesso Storico*.

The 1960s had ended in the worst possible way: the Piazza Fontana bombing inaugurated what was defined, as a ‘strategy of tension’ (*strategia della tensione*) (Cento Bull 2007, 65 – 66). This long period was characterized by increasing political tension and an unprecedented series of terrorist attacks led by neofascist groups. In this context, the post-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), led by Giorgio Almirante, nurtured the resurgence of the *squadrismo* in order to both counter the left-wing parties which seemed to have the upper hand following the *autunno caldo*, and to push the so-called ‘maggioranza silenziosa’, namely moderate public opinion, to the right through the exacerbation of the political climate (Ruzza and Fella 2005, 14 – 15).

One of the most remarkable outcomes of this strategy was the Reggio revolt, from July 1970 to February 1971, where the MSI managed to harness a spontaneous burst of outrage by the citizens of Reggio Calabria against the government’s decision to make Catanzaro, and not Reggio, the regional capital of Calabria (Canosa 1995, 117 – 125; Crainz 2003, 473 – 480). The PCI was rather concerned about MSI policy. Communists believed that the MSI was trying to create the political conditions for an authoritarian solution. Furthermore, they assumed that such a plan was probably backed by right-wing sectors of the Democrazia Cristiana, the state apparatus and, at least to some extent, by the US administration.¹¹³ In March 1971,

¹¹³ For a PCI interpretation of the *squadrismo*, see Paolo Bufalini’s *Una svolta politica che spezzi le trame reazionarie* in *l’Unità*, 6/2/1971, front page and page 4 and *Una lotta di massa popolare contro lo squadrismo. Stroncarlo alle radici*, interview with Enrico Belinguer in *Rinascita*, 7, 12/2/1971, 3 – 5. Pietro Secchia wrote a book establishing a parallelism between what had happened in 1921 – 22 and the current fascist attack on democratic institutions (Secchia 1973). A Communist analysis on the Reggio revolt can be found in Alfredo Reichlin *Il nemico è nel Mezzogiorno*, in *Rinascita*, 8, 19/2/1971, 3 – 4 and Gherardo Chiaromonte *Riflessione sui fatti dell’Aquila e di Reggio*, in *Rinascita*, 11, 12/3/1971, 3 – 4. On the possible involvement of the US secret service in anti-Communist plots,

revelations made by newspaper *Paese Sera* about the *Golpe Borghese*, the failed coup d'état attempted by the former military officer of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, seemed to confirm the PCI leadership's worst fears (Arcuri 2004).

Meanwhile, Almirante's strategy seemed to pay off: at the local election held in June 1971, the MSI made a dramatic advance, especially in southern cities (Panvini 2009, 184 – 5). Subsequently, Almirante promoted the creation of a right-wing coalition, called *Destra Nazionale*, merging the Monarchist National Party and the MSI, with the hope of achieving an even greater electoral success at the forthcoming national elections of 1972 (Ruzza and Fella 2005, 16). This explains why most of the Communist cinematographic propaganda for the 1972 elections dealt with the issues of the alleged fascist plot against democracy.

In *La trama nera*, a 17-minute film directed by Luigi Perelli, the *strategia della tensione* was presented as a plot by the *Democrazia Cristiana* aimed at perpetuating its power and countering the inexorable advance of the Italian working class through the use of 'picchiatori and teppisti fascisti'. The film depicts Fascism as a virus which, if not contained, can easily spread and destroy freedom and democracy. The outbreak of fascist violence is especially ascribed to the *Democrazia Cristiana*, which is playing a dangerous game in allowing fascist violence to grow, in order to cast itself as the party defending democracy from both left-wing and right-wing violence. The voice-over commentary claims that there is nothing new under the sun. In fact, this is just the implementation of the old DC propaganda refrain:

see *Relazione di Sergio Segre alla riunione della prima commissione del Comitato Centrale*, in IG, APCI, MF 158, pp. 661 – 63, 4 May 1971; See also Barbagallo (2006, 128).

opposti estremismi.¹¹⁴ The *Golpe Borghese* proved that the DC's strategy could have serious and unexpected consequences.

La trama nera also exposes the connections between Italian fascists and the Greek regime of the colonels and hints at the possible US government complicity with Italian anti-democratic forces: 'E la CIA? E' proprio estranea alla trama nera?', the voice-over commentary asks rhetorically. Finally, the film addresses moderate public opinion by claiming that the only threat to public order comes from the right, as proved by the innumerable acts of violence perpetrated by fascist groups during the last three years, while the PCI and the workers' movement are guarantors of peace and democracy:

Le masse popolari, i lavoratori, gli operai, i contadini, gli studenti, gli impiegati, le loro lotte: ecco la democrazia, il presidio più sicuro della Repubblica, la garanzia della libertà.

A similar message is present in another propaganda film produced in 1972, significantly titled *L'ordine non viene da destra* (16 minutes). Both films were edited using exclusively stock footage. This was probably due to the fact that the 1972 elections were the first 'elezioni anticipate' (elections held before schedule) of the history of the Republic, and Unitelefilm did not have time for new shooting plans.¹¹⁵

The results of the 1972 elections marked a victory for the MSI - it doubled its votes compared to the previous national elections of 1968, reaching nearly 9%, while

¹¹⁴ On the DC theory of the *opposti estremismi*, see Panvini (2009, 192 – 199).

¹¹⁵ In 1972, the ARCI produced another film on Fascism, Giuseppe Farrara's *La pista nera*. This is a 47-minute documentary undertaking an historical analysis of the fascist phenomenon. It can be found in AAMOD Archive, Codice Identificativo IL8010001888.

both the PCI and the *Democrazia Cristiana* remained stable.¹¹⁶ What was even more alarming for the PCI was that the *strategia della tensione* proceeded relentlessly after the election of 1972, reaching its climax in 1974. On 28 May, a bomb targeted an anti-fascist protest in Piazza della Loggia, in Brescia, killing eight and wounding over 100 people. In 4 August, another bomb exploded on the *Italicus*, a night train of the Italian national railways, killing 12 and wounding 48.¹¹⁷ The Regione Emilia Romagna devoted a film on the latter attack,¹¹⁸ while Unitefilm produced a 25-minute documentary on the former, titled *I giorni di Brescia* and directed by Luigi Perelli.

This is one of the most poignant films produced by the PCI, effectively depicting the widespread feelings of sorrow and anger that massacre triggered in the country. The first part of the film, about seven minutes long, features the original audio track of the speech given by the CISL Union organizer Franco Castrezzati in Piazza della Loggia, which was abruptly interrupted by the bomb blast. We hear people screaming ‘una bomba, una bomba, aiuto!’, while the speaker urges the crowd not to panic: ‘Fermi, state fermi, compagni e amici state fermi, calma compagni e amici state fermi’. This part features archival footage illustrating previous violence by fascists, beginning with Piazza Fontana and, from the moment of the explosion onward, rather graphic pictures of injured people taken in Piazza della Loggia immediately after the attack. Subsequently, *I giorni di Brescia* shows spontaneous demonstrations taking place in the city the very day of the bombing. These seem to

¹¹⁶ An analysis of the 1972 electoral results can be found in Caciagli (2003, 146 - 47).

¹¹⁷ On the *Strage di Brescia*, see Franzinelli (2008, 284 – 325).

¹¹⁸ Giampaolo Bernagozzi, Pierluigi Buganè, Vittorio Zamboni’s 15-minute *Italicus* can be found in AAMOD Archive, Codice Identificativo IL8600001478.

be pervaded by anger rather than grief: protesters shout belligerent slogans such as ‘Almirante boia’ and ‘A morte, a morte, fascisti assassini’.

A few days later, on 1 June 1974, citizens of Brescia protested against the presence of members of the government at the funeral for the victims of the bombing by whistling at the President of the Republic Giovanni Leone and shouting ‘Via! Via!’.¹¹⁹ The Communist Party refrained from publicizing this incident despite it being a tempting opportunity to vilify one of the prominent DC leaders. The film by Perelli, for example, does not show people protesting against President Leone.¹²⁰ How can this choice be explained? Unlike the propaganda film produced in 1972, *I giorni di Brescia* was not aimed at attributing moral and political responsibility for fascist violence to the Democrazia Cristiana and the government, but rather at strengthening the anti-fascist front. This was consistent with *Compromesso storico* policy, launched by the new leader of the PCI Enrico Berlinguer, between September and October 1973 (Vittoria 2006, 123 – 128).

The *Compromesso storico* policy called upon an alliance of the ‘forze democratiche e popolari’ and it included the Democrazia Cristiana. This alliance was aimed at both avoiding a possible destabilisation of the democratic regime, as had happened in Chile in September 1973, and at creating a broad front supporting political and social reforms (Barbagallo 2006, 262). The common adherence to the values of the Resistance was supposed to cement such an alliance. In this respect, it

¹¹⁹ Cinematic evidence of the protest against President Leone is in Silvano Agosti’s 18-minute *Brescia 1974*. The *Strage di Brescia* was the subject of several documentaries produced in that period, including Gianpaolo Bernagozzi and Pierluigi Buganè’s 12-minute *28 maggio ore 10:12. Brescia*, produced by the Deputazione dell’Emilia Romagna per la storia della Resistenza; Titti Secchi, Pasquale Mantini and Lidia Zorat’s 24 minutes *Città di Brescia*, produced by the Circolo del Cinema of Brescia; Achille Rizzi’s 15-minute *I funerali di Piazza della Loggia*, produced by Enaip (Ente Nazionale ACLI Istruzione Professionale). The scenplays of these films can be found in Bernagozzi (1979a).

¹²⁰ This was the same choice *l’Unità* made in its reportage of the funeral, see *L’estremo omaggio di Brescia e dell’Italia alle sei vittime del terrorismo fascista*, in *l’Unità*, 2/6/1974, p. 3.

is worth pointing out that, since the 1960s, the Resistance had been progressively accepted by most of the Italian political parties, including the DC, as the moral foundation of the Italian democratic system.¹²¹ For example, shortly after the Brescia bombing on 2 June 1974, the DC government allowed, for the first time, former partisans to march along the army in the traditional military parade celebrating the *Festa della Repubblica* day in Rome.¹²² The symbolic significance of the day cannot be overemphasised. The Republic officially recognized partisans, including Communists ones, as veterans of World War II.

The massacre of Brescia also assumed powerful symbolic significance. This appeared as an allegory of the *Compromesso storico* in that the victims included four members of the CGIL (the Communist-socialist trade union), the wife of an *assessore* of the Democrazia Cristiana, and a former partisan. Significantly, *I giorni di Brescia* shows the leader of the CGIL, Luciano Lama, stressing the symbolic relevance of the *Strage di Piazza della Loggia*, in the speech given on the day of the funeral:

Se la storia ci chiede oggi un impegno di unità, dimostriamo di essere ancora capaci di assolverlo, di fronte al nemico di allora che è lo stesso di oggi.¹²³

The voice-over commentary reinforces this message by pointing out that the presence of many ‘vecchi partigiani’ next to the coffins is:

¹²¹ See Cooke (2011, 86 – 93).

¹²² See *Il 28° anniversario della Repubblica celebrato nel nome della Resistenza. L'esigenza dell'unità democratica e antifascista riaffermata nelle manifestazioni del 2 giugno*, in *l'Unità*, 3/6/1974, front page.

¹²³ This sentence recalls, perhaps intentionally, a line from a famous song written by Fausto Amodei and devoted to the fallen of the *luglio '60* turmoil, ‘*Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*’: ‘Il solo vero amico che abbiamo al fianco adesso/ e` sempre quello stesso che fu con noi in montagna/ Ed il nemico attuale e` sempre ancora eguale/a quel che combattemmo sui nostri monti e in Spagna’. See the lyrics of *Per i Morti di Reggio Emilia* at <http://www.ildeposito.org/archivio/canti/canto.php?id=88>.

segno di una continuità ideale, di una lotta che non ha pause, di un impegno che nasce da un passato che ha riscattato l'Italia dalla vergogna del fascismo.

Mino Argentieri, reviewing the film in *Rinascita*, claimed that *I giorni di Brescia* was 'un esempio di ottimo giornalismo cinematografico', but lamented the lack of 'una approfondita inchiesta cinematografica sul neofascismo', which was, in his opinion, much needed.¹²⁴

The PCI had already taken on this task by entrusting Unitelefilm with the production of a documentary about Neofascism, *Bianco e Nero* (1975). This 85-minute film was written and directed by Paolo Pietrangeli – the son of the film director Antonio Pietrangeli and a song writer who had composed two of the most famous anthems of the *contestazione*: *Valle Giulia* and *Contessa*. The voice-over commentary is provided by the journalist Paolo Gambescia and the music by singer and song writer Giovanna Marini. Actor Stefano Satta Flores and dubbing artist Giorgio Bandiera were cast as speakers. *Bianco e Nero* investigates the social and political causes of Neofascism and its historical roots. In spite of its documentary-like qualities and structure, *Bianco e Nero* is a propaganda film in that it does not conceal its underlying thesis, starting from the title. The thesis is that the return of the black (Fascism) was favoured by the white (namely by the Democrazia Cristiana). Such a political stand certainly contradicted *Compromesso storico* policy. However, elections were scheduled that year and propaganda took precedence over political coherence.

¹²⁴ Mino Argentieri *Le giornate di Brescia rivissute in un film*, in *Rinascita*, 32, 9/8/1974, 23.

One of the most interesting features of *Bianco e Nero* is the use of interviews under false pretenses. These included interviews with major MSI and DC politicians made by journalists and cameramen of Unitelefilm pretending to be a French television crew. Thanks to this stratagem, Pietrangeli recorded quite frank, and in some cases rather shocking, statements made by the interviewees. The first interview is with Almirante who claims to have always been, purely and simply, a fascist. Prince Junio Valerio Borghese says that, given the chance, he would very happily exterminate all Italian Communists. The latter interview was recorded in Spain, the country Borghese took refuge in after his plot against democracy was unveiled. Pino Rauti, a leading figure of the MSI, speaks positively of the 'valori spirituali' of German National Socialism. Finally, the former *Ministro dell'Interno* Mario Scelba smugly explains how he had managed to expel thousands of former partisans from the police force, in that he regarded them as a threat to democracy, during the years of *centrismo*.

The voice-over commentary counters Scelba's statements by reasserting the 'Communist truth': Communist partisans gave a decisive contribution to the struggle against Fascism and loyally supported the newly born democratic regime. Unfortunately, reactionary forces, backed by the US government, managed to break the 'unità antifascista' and this plunged the country into the 'anni bui del centrismo, della repressione antioperaia, gli anni di Scelba e della celere'. In order to consolidate its power, the Democrazia Cristiana had no shame in accepting fascist votes: in the 1950s, up to twenty-eight local councils of town and cities, including Rome, maintained power thanks to fascist votes.

This is the criticism that *Bianco e Nero* makes of the DC: it had politically legitimated Fascism, by preferring an alliance with the MSI over an alliance with democratic and anti-fascist political forces.

The voice-over commentary explains that a turning point in this respect was *luglio '60*:

Nelle piazze di Genova, di Reggio Emilia, di Catania, di Palermo, di Roma, è tutto il disegno di stabilizzazione conservatrice della società italiana, d'isolamento della classe operaia, che viene definitivamente sepolto.

Following *luglio '60*, the road was finally open for a new government formula: the *centrosinistra*. From that moment onwards, however, reactionary forces tried to destabilize the democratic system, weaving the *trama nera*, of which the *strategia della tensione* was an integral part. This section, chronicling Italian politics over the 1950s and 1960s, is probably the weakest of the film, in that it offers an oversimplified and blatantly partisan reading of Italian post-war history. As far as the *autunno caldo* and the *contestazione* are concerned, film critic Pietro Pintus rightly notes how *Bianco e Nero*'s analysis of these important historical moments is rather superficial and almost perfunctory, probably because they are not relevant to the case the film is aimed at making (Pintus 1980, 163).

Interesting is instead the part devoted to the massive demonstration that northern workers held in the city of Reggio Calabria on 22 October 1972.¹²⁵ This

¹²⁵ The part concerning Reggio Calabria was the first to be filmed by Pietrangeli and his troupe. Using footage and the interviews taken during the demonstration of October 1972, *Unitelefilm* edited a 31-minute documentary titled *Nostalgia del dinosauro*. It was presented at the quality awards for the IV trimester 1973 and awarded with a prize of 4,455,000 lire. AAMOD Archive, Faldone N, fascicolo *Nostalgia del Dinosaurio*.

march, celebrated by Giovanna Marini's famous ballad *I treni per Reggio Calabria*, was organised by the trade unions with the aim of expressing solidarity with the unemployed workers of the south. It also aimed to break, once and for all, the pro-fascist and undemocratic climate that had reigned in the city since the beginning of the uprising two years before. The voice-over claims that the Reggio revolt was due to the backwardness and hopelessness of southern Italy and especially to the lack of industry. According to the voice-over commentary, where the workers' movement is strong there is no room for fascist provocations. Conversely, where social life is affected by mass emigration and widespread poverty, and the labour market is dominated by patronage and controlled by the Mafia – as in the case of Reggio Calabria – Fascism may develop into a mass-based movement. As the film approaches 1975, the voice-over becomes less intrusive and the documentary relies primarily on archival footage and original audio tracks. Bombs explode one after another and the country is broken and shocked, but people react and hold the government accountable for its inertia in fighting fascist criminals. The last scene of the documentary, filmed at the funeral for the victims of the Italicus massacre and providing an exchange of words between President Giovanni Leone and an elderly woman, is rather telling in this respect:

Woman: 'Signor Presidente, quanto dovremo durare in questo modo, in questa bella democrazia? Ce lo dica per cortesia, ce lo dica.'

President Leone: 'Ha ragione.'

Woman: 'No, non ho ragione, ho mille ragioni. Che cos'è che fate per liberarci da questi delinquenti, cos'è che fate?'

President Leone: 'Facciamo il possibile.'

Woman 'Mi sembra di no, non lo fa signor Presidente'.

Bianco e Nero is one of the few films produced by the PCI which was distributed in cinemas, by Nuova Comunicazione. From March 1975 to April 1980, it was shown fairly uniformly throughout the country grossing 52,338,797 lire.¹²⁶ The film also participated in various film festivals, including Krakow, Grenoble, Leipzig, Moscow and Volgograd, and it was projected in various Italian high schools, particularly in Rome. This caused complaints from the conservative press. For example, *Il Popolo*, the official newspaper of the Democrazia Cristiana, denounced 'l'infame tentativo di presentare la Dc come la prosecuzione del fascismo',¹²⁷ while *Il Giornale d'Italia* quoted Shakespeare to lambast the simplistic reading of Italian history offered by the film: 'Ci sono più cose tra cielo e terra di quante ne prevede la loro ideologia'.¹²⁸

Bianco e nero was not the only film produced in the approach to the 1975 elections. The propaganda films made in that year are analysed in Chapter 11. In the next chapter the thesis discusses the reorganisation of Unitelefilm under Dario Natoli's management and the production of documentaries between 1974 and 1977.

¹²⁶ AAMOD Archive, Faldone B, fascicolo *Bianco e Nero*.

¹²⁷ *Il Popolo*, 1/6/1975, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone B, fascicolo *Bianco e Nero*.

¹²⁸ *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 6/4/1975, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone B, fascicolo *Bianco e Nero*.

Chapter 10. Dario Natoli's Management of Unitelefilm (1974 – 1977)

Following the resignation of Ugo Gregoretti (see Part III, Chapter 8) Unitelefilm was entirely reorganised in spring 1974. The party decided to separate the administration board and the management of the company. The former was directed by Dario Valori and composed of Gino Galli (from the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*), Luciana Finzi, Ugo Gregoretti and Enzo Roscagni. The latter was entrusted to Dario Natoli, a member of the party who had been working as film and television critic in *Paese Sera* and *l'Unità* (Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani 2001, 174 – 75).

The party also established a *Comitato Direttivo* supervising Unitelefilm from a political standpoint. The members of this *comitato* included *Rinascita's* film critic Mino Argentieri, and representatives from the party's regional levels. Finally, in order to minimise expenses, the number of Unitelefilm personnel was reduced to six.¹²⁹ It was decided that the party would exclusively bear the expenses for personnel and commission propaganda films from Unitelefilm on a project-by-project basis. The PCI film production company would independently raise money to produce documentaries.

This new work organisation proved to be effective as Unitelefilm sought to seek economic partnerships as well as to design films that could be distributed beyond the Communist film circuit. The AAMOD archive stores a wide range of projects written during these years, many of which were proposed to the RAI, trade unions, the *Enti locali* and to the party itself. Even though most of these did not materialize, a few of the films eventually produced in this period enjoyed the largest

¹²⁹ Along with Dario Natoli, this included Franco Cianci as accountant, Romeo Balsamo as technician; Luciano Vanni as producer and organizer and 'una segretaria', presumably Paola Ledda *Proposte per la Unitelefilm*. In IG, APCI, MF 75, pp. 648 – 652, Note alla segreteria, II bimestre 1974.

circulation in the history of Unitelefilm. One such film, for example, is *Fortezze vuote* (1975), a 100-minute colour documentary directed by Gianni Serra and financed by the *Regione Umbria* and the *Provincia di Perugia*, both ruled by a *giunta rossa* composed of the PCI and the PSI.¹³⁰

The film concerns the reformation of the mental health service undertaken by the *Regione Umbria*. Since the mid-1960s, the new therapeutic approach adopted by the psychiatrist Franco Basaglia in the mental institution of Gorizia had opened the door to wide debate concerning the social causes of mental illness. It had also questioned the efficacy, and the ethical legitimacy, of traditional therapies which had previously been used in treating mental disorders (Colucci and Di Vittorio 2001). Unitelefilm, however, had already tackled this problem in 1971, producing a 19-minute documentary titled *I poveri sono matti?*. This film contains a brief interview with Franco Basaglia who advocates the reform of what he defines as ‘manicomio – carcere’ as well as the definitive closure of mental hospitals in the long term (a measure eventually taken in Italy following the so – called *Legge 180* in 1978). *I poveri sono matti?*, which won a quality award, was in turn a *film di recupero* of a much more polemical propaganda film, titled *La pena immensa* (25 minutes) and produced on behalf of the Federazione romana del PCI. The film in question was aimed against the private psychiatric clinics of Rome, which were, in many cases, politically linked to the Catholic Church and under the management of doctors who were also prominent figures of the Roman Democrazia Cristiana.

La pena immensa accused such institutions of exploiting patients’ suffering for their own gain and receiving a large amount of public funding in return for a very

¹³⁰ See “*Lo scandalo del manicomio*”, an article by Gianni Serra concerning the production of *Fortezze Vuote*, in *Rinascita*, n. 49, 12 /12/1975, pp. 32 – 3.

poor service. It especially targeted the Santa Maria della Pietà hospital which had then hit the headlines for the mistreatment inflicted on its patients. As claimed by the voice-over commentary:

I manicomi della provincia di Roma costituiscono dei veri e propri centri di potere attraverso i quali passa quella rete di favoritismi e clientele che in Italia collega l'amministrazione pubblica alla speculazione privata, e che ha precise ramificazioni nel sottogoverno e nella politica della Democrazia Cristiana e dei Socialdemocratici, sempre più incapaci di risolvere i problemi sociali.

It is important to stress how the issue of mental illness had a relevance for the PCI which went beyond the occasional polemic against local DC politicians. Basaglia's new therapeutic approach seemed, in fact, to be inspired by a vision which was very much political and rather left-wing. This was particularly the case after the foundation of Psichiatria Democratica by a group of psychiatrists, led by Basaglia, in October 1973. The Psichiatria Democratica programme adopted Marxist terminology and advocated the use of psychiatry as a tool to fight social exclusion 'by analysing and rejecting its source in the social structure (the social relations of production) and in the superstructure (norms and values) of our society'.¹³¹

The PCI made every effort to sustain Psichiatria Democratica, as proved by a *circolare* issued to the *federazioni* urging the local sections of the PCI to exert pressure on party-sympathizer psychiatrists and nurses to attend the first national meeting of the new organisation to be held in Gorizia over 22 and 23 June 1974.¹³² The persistent interest of the PCI in the question is shown by the production of *Fortezze vuote*. While offering a less polemical approach to the issue of mental

¹³¹ The Programme of *Psichiatria Democratica* in Donnelly (2005, 119 – 122).

¹³² *Circolare* issued by the Gruppo Sicurezza Sociale of the party to the *federazioni*, in IG, APCI, MF 77, p. 991, Circolari, 10 June 1974.

illness than *La pena immensa*, it shares with the two films produced in 1971 the assumption that mental disorders are a consequence of social injustices and, ultimately, a side-effect of the alienation caused by capitalist development. In particular, the thesis of *Fortezze vuote* is that the dramatic end of the traditional rural way of life, following the unchecked massive migration towards cities that occurred during the 1960s and the consequent cultural and social displacement of many former peasants, is one of the principal reasons for the proliferation of mental illness.

The shooting of *Fortezze vuote* provided the opportunity for a collaborative project involving the psychiatrists, patients, ordinary citizens, mayors and *assessori* of the municipalities included in the reformation of the mental health service. Such people discussed the documentary's structure and content during a series of conferences chaired by the actor Bruno Pomicino. A selection of the footage taken during these conferences, more than 5,000 metres of film in total, served as the introduction of the documentary.¹³³ The film also features several interviews with doctors and patients concerning the CIM (Centri di Igiene Mentale), the new mental health facilities established by the Regione Umbria to support the social reintegration of mentally ill people. The old mental hospitals, which, like prisons, were arguably aimed at segregating patients from the rest of the society, are now definitively closed and thus turned into 'empty fortresses'. *Fortezze vuote* was presented at the 35^o Venice Film Festival, mostly receiving positive reviews.¹³⁴ It was distributed in both

¹³³ *Scheda di presentazione* of *Fortezze vuote*, in AAMOD Archive, faldone F, fascicolo *Fortezze vuote*.

¹³⁴ See, for example, *La Stampa*, 31/8/1975: 'Inutile sottolineare l'importanza civile dell'assunto, che Serra e i suoi collaboratori (tra cui l'attore Bruno Cirino non nuovo alla materia) hanno svolto senz'ombra di estetismo in perfetta armonia con le migliori esigenze di un cinema dal vivo o di un cinema - verità'. The *Corriere della Sera* expressed some criticism with respect to the thesis proposed by the film: 'E' un po' difficile credere che chi vuol tenere chiuso a chiave un pazzo furioso sia sempre un reazionario. Far discendere dalle ideologie progressiste tutti i meriti di una nuova metodologia sanitaria, e sostenere senza meno che i malati di mente sono sempre il prodotto delle

35 mm and 16 mm by Nuova Comunicazione and the Italnoleggio, and subsequently sold to Portuguese television and to the RAI.

Another documentary concerning social issues produced in that period by Unitelefilm, along with the Federazione del PCI of Turin, was *Perché Droga*, directed by Daniele Segre and Franco Barbero in 1976. The film deals with the problem of drug addiction. The first part chronicles a debate about such an issue held in an *assemblea di quartiere* of Mirafiori sud, a Turin suburban neighbourhood largely inhabited by FIAT workers' families. Subsequently, the film offers a few interviews with young addicts and workers of FIAT.

The thesis of *Perché Droga* is that drug addiction is a consequence of social exclusion experienced by young people living in suburban areas. In an interview published in 1976 director Daniele Segre claimed:

La droga (come il furto, la prostituzione) costituisce in certe zone emarginate della città la risposta personale asociale, ad un problema che è, invece, collettivo.¹³⁵

This matches perfectly with the PCI's rather simplistic reading of every social problem affecting Italian society, which was always explained as a side effect of unbalanced and dehumanizing capitalist development. Consequently, the solution to every social problem invariably laid in the promotion of a communitarian lifestyle. In

ingiustizie sociali (quasi che tra i ricchi non vi fossero matti) è piuttosto rischioso come è un tantino demagogico far pensare che durante certi attacchi basti tener fermo un matto con un braccio anziché domarlo con la camicia di forza o un'iniezione', 7/6/1976. The film critic of *l'Unità*, Ugo Casiraghi, praised the film by Serra, but honestly claims that it was not as good as *Nessuno o tutti*, aka *Matti da slegare*, a film concerning the same issue and made in the same year of *Fortezze vuote* by Silvano Agosti, Stefano Rulli, Sandro Petraglia and Marco Bellocchio. See *l'Unità*, 31/8/1975, 8. A selection of the reviews about *Fortezze vuote* can be found in AAMOD Archive, faldone F, fascicolo *Fortezze vuote*.

¹³⁵ See the interview with Daniele Segre in *Novella 2000*, 11/6/1976, in Archivio AAMOD, Faldone P (Pe -Pir), fascicolo *Perchè droga*. See also *Dibattito su un film sulla droga nella periferia di Torino*, *l'Unità*, 29/4/1976, 11.

this respect, the film advocates the construction of cultural centres, cinemas and public gardens in order to turn the peripheral Mirafiori sud, defined as a *quartiere - ghetto*, into an environment fostering social relationships and encouraging political participation.

One year later, Unitelefilm produced another film on the issue of drug addiction in collaboration with the *Assessorato alla Sanità* of the city of Florence. The film in question is *Droga*, also known as *Droga, risposta suicida a problemi reali* (22 minutes), which was directed by Claudio Busato, Paolo Crocellà and Roberto De Santis. In all likelihood, the documentary was shot independently in Florence, as proved by the poor quality of the footage, and subsequently edited by Unitelefilm. Apart from its technical quality, the film has many similarities with *Perché Droga*: it is edited without a voice-over commentary and the message is solely entrusted to moving interviews with the father of a boy who died from an overdose and young drug users. At the same time, it seems to be less concerned with political issues than the film by Segre and Barbero and it is ultimately more effective in unearthing the personal drama of drug abuse and illustrating the squalid existence of drug addicts. Powerful, in this respect, is the scene shot at the addiction centre of Florence showing a couple arguing with a doctor about the quantity of methadone they are entitled to.

A particular kind of production which characterized Unitelefilm in the 1970s, and especially during the years of Dario Natoli's management, was that of documentaries magnifying the social and economic achievements of Communist regimes both long and recently established. For example, Unitelefilm edited four films devoted to North Korea using archival footage provide by the North Korean

government. The first of these, *La Nuova Corea* (18 minutes), was produced in 1970 and the other three in 1974: *A nord del 38° parallelo* (20 minutes), *Il nuovo re è l'infanzia* (16 minutes) and *Un paese in trasformazione* (18 minutes). A troupe led by Luigi Perelli visited Bulgaria in summer 1975,¹³⁶ and shot two documentaries, *Parvenez vuol dire primavera* (60 minutes – 1976) and *L'infanzia in Bulgaria* (12 minutes – 1977), concerning the alleged efficiency of the Bulgarian agricultural and educational systems respectively. Finally, Elena Bodei made two short films about the policies of the post-colonialist socialist government of Mozambique: *Maputo: Una città che rinasce* and *L'Organizzazione di una comune agricola*, in 1977.

Such cinematographic production might appear incongruent with the contemporary PCI reading of the political and social situation of the Communist world. This had become progressively more critical following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by armed forces aligned with the Warsaw Pact (Pons 2007b, 122). In order to understand the reasons for the cinematographic revival of the socialist myth in the middle of the 1970s, we have to take into account both commercial and ideological factors. Firstly, this kind of production was not too expensive for Unitefilm thanks to co-production agreements established since the beginning of the 1970s.¹³⁷ Secondly, a large part of the PCI's constituency was far from disillusioned with the socialist countries and would keep a rather unshakable faith in the superiority of the socialist system until the fall of the Berlin Wall (Ignazi 1992). That meant that films presenting socialist countries in a positive light found a large audience in die-hard militants. Finally, the perception of socialist societies was never utterly negative by the party leadership either. Enrico Berlinguer himself, while

¹³⁶ See *l'Unità*, 3/7/1975, 9.

¹³⁷ See, for example, the *Accordo di produzione e scambio* with Bulgaria signed by Ugo Gregoretti in 1972, in *l'Unità*, 14/ 12/ 1972, 7.

questioning a few specific aspects of the historical experience of ‘really existing socialism’, was still committed to surpassing capitalism and turning Italy into a socialist society. In this respect, the dramatic economic crisis experienced by western countries, and especially by Italy, in the middle of the decade contributed in no small measure to reinforcing the party’s impression that capitalism was doomed in the long term. For the PCI socialism represented the only possible solution to the problems of the world economy. As Berlinguer claimed from the podium of the Fourteenth Congress of the PCI (Rome, 18 - 23 March 1975): ‘E’ un fatto: nel mondo capitalistico c’è la crisi, nel mondo socialista no’.¹³⁸

Even when we take all these factors into account, the rather uncritical tone of these films about socialist countries is quite surprising. For example, in *A nord del 38° parallelo*, the editing shows unmistakable evidence of the personality cult created around President Kim Il Sung. Yet, the voice-over commentary omits to mention the existence of a cult of personality and it explains the construction of gigantic statues of Sung as evidence of the persistence of ‘una componente del confucianesimo’ in North Korean popular culture. Equally, in *Parvenez vuol dire primavera*, the speaker ascribes the queuing of Bulgarian citizens in front of the shops to the local people’s passion for freshly baked bread.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, several projects written in these years never materialized. It is worth mentioning two of them for their historical and cinematographic relevance. The first of these was a project of co-production with Mosfilm, the Soviet Union State Film Company, for a feature film to be directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. The AAMOD archive stores a fifteen-page film treatment by the

¹³⁸ Quoted in Barbagallo (2006, 224). Berlinguer also claimed: ‘In questi paesi [the socialist countries] esiste un clima morale superiore, mentre le società capitalistiche sono sempre più colpite da un decadimento di idealità e valori etici e da processi sempre più ampi di corruzione e di disgregazione’.

renowned Soviet filmmaker, translated from Russian and dated 1 December 1977.¹³⁹ The film was supposed to chronicle the tour of a Russian intellectual, an alter ego of Tarkovsky himself, through Italy. The protagonist of the film, a nameless and mysterious voyager speaking little or no Italian and travelling alone from city to city, gets to know Italy through brief, and rather surreal, encounters with local people. Although clearly aimed at being an art film, the project was not entirely free from political concerns. Particularly revealing, in this respect, is the part of the script concerning Bologna, which also shows how the myth of the superior skills of Italian Communist administrators transcended national borders:

Vorremmo raccontare qualcosa anche di Bologna. Di come i comunisti amministrano la città, di come guidino la vita di Bologna con tanto successo e in modo così interessante che vengono a studiare il loro modo di amministrare e a prendere esempio da loro persino dall'America e dagli altri paesi. Sappiamo che l'esempio di Bologna ha un colossale valore propagandistico per i comunisti italiani. Vogliamo vedere sullo schermo il sindaco della città, Zangheri, avere con lui una conversazione per farlo parlare della città, del suo comune, dei principi sui quali si basa il suo lavoro.

In all likelihood, the treatment became the base for the screenplay of *Nostalghia*, directed by Tarkovsky and released in 1983.

Un 1977, Unitelefilm also prepared a rather ambitious project proposal for a documentary concerning Antonio Gramsci's thought, aimed at celebrating the 40th anniversary of the death of the Communist thinker and politician.¹⁴⁰ The film was supposed to be divided into three parts, each entrusted to a team formed by a film

¹³⁹ AAMOD Archive Faldone *Progetti non realizzati*.

¹⁴⁰ See the folder concerning the project in AAMOD Archive, Faldone *Progetti non realizzati*, fascicolo *Einaudi – 3 doc. Su Gramsci*.

director and an illustrious scholar. Ansano Giannarelli and the historian Franco De Felice were entrusted with the section concerning Taylorism and Fordism, Riccardo Napolitano (brother of Giorgio Napolitano) and Pasquale Villani were supposed to deal with Gramsci's reading of the 'southern question', while Carlo Lizzani and Corrado Vivanti would tackle the issue of the Gramscian reading of the *Risorgimento*. Francesco Maselli, Ettore Scola and Ugo Gregoretti were also involved as consultants. The project obtained the financial support of the prestigious Einaudi publishing house, which had recently printed the critical edition of the *Quaderni del carcere* edited by Valentino Gerratana.¹⁴¹

In spite of such promising premises, the project failed because any attempt to give cinematic form to the abstract concepts contained in the preliminary scripts compiled by the three scholars proved to be hopeless. In this respect, Ansano Giannarelli spoke of a 'grado di astrazione concettuale elevatissimo', which made it virtually impossible to write a screenplay.

1977 marked the height of Gramsci's popularity, and the widest diffusion of his thought and writings.¹⁴² During the 1980s, the fame of Gramsci and Communist cultural influence on Italian society faded, while the global crisis of Communist ideology became increasingly acute. With the benefit of hindsight, the fact that the PCI wanted to produce this film, and that the project failed, both appear symbolic events.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ See the special issue of *Il Contemporaneo* entirely devoted to the critical edition of the *Quaderni del Carcere* in *Rinascita*, 30, 25/7/1975, 11 – 28. It contains articles by Valentino Gerratana, Eric Hobsbawm, Paolo Spriano, Leonardo Paggi and Giuseppe Vacca among others.

¹⁴² See Lussana (2001).

¹⁴³ Eventually, Unitefilm produced three films devoted to Gramsci in 1977, although considerably less ambitious than the original project. These were *Sette pittori per Gramsci* (11 minutes), *Piazza ad uso collettivo: Per Gramsci, Ales 1977* (12 minutes), and *Gramsci, passato e presente* (28 minutes). Directed by Massimo Mida, these films chronicle the initiatives held in Sardinia, Gramsci's birth place, and commemorate the anniversary of his death. Such celebrations included the inauguration of

The crisis of the PCI, however, was yet to come in the mid-1970s. In fact, these were the years of the PCI's political and electoral triumphs, as shown in the following chapter.

a new square named after Gramsci (designed by the sculptor Joe Pomodoro) a speech given in Sassari by Enrico Berlinguer, and an art exhibition by painters Ernesto Treccani, Gabriele Mucchi, Giuseppe Migneco, Tono Zancanaro, Ugo Caruso, Aligi Sassu and Piero Leddi.

Chapter 11. The Years of ‘Hegemony’ (1974 – 76)

In the years 1974 – 76, the PCI reached the peak of its electoral popularity, breathing down the neck of Democrazia Cristiana. It also increased its membership to the level of 1961, after years of decline (Galli 1993, 265). These circumstances, along with factors such as the victory in the divorce referendum in May 1974 and the PCI’s definitive legitimization as a democratic force through the recognition of the Resistance as a fundamental value of the Republican Regime, seemed to indicate that the Italian Communist party was about to achieve the ‘hegemony’ that Antonio Gramsci had imagined. The PCI’s electoral and political fortune was also a consequence of the ‘epoca dell’azione collettiva’, Paul Ginsborg’s definition of the years spanning from 1969 to 1973 (1989, 404 – 68). On the one hand, this extraordinary period of political mobilization contributed to making certain left-wing values such as anti-Fascism and anti-authoritarianism almost unanimously accepted. On the other, the rise of radical political groups to the left of the PCI, the *sinistra extraparlamentare*, allowed the Communist Party to present itself to moderate public opinion as a non-extremist, reassuring and law-abiding political party, a party which embodied ‘un modo blando e non allarmante di essere progressisti’ (Ajello 1997, 109).

As mentioned above, the victory of the pro-divorce coalition at the referendum on divorce law held on 12 May 1974 contributed in no small measure to enhancing PCI popularity. The PCI seemed to enjoy that political victory in spite of itself. In fact, Italian Communists had never really championed the right to divorce, in that they regarded it as a bourgeois issue. The PCI had become cautiously favourable towards legislation enforcing the right to divorce only in the 1950s,

following the example of the Soviet Union (Bellassai 2000, 158 – 164). Yet, the Communist leadership was afraid that the referendum would deepen the Italian people's ideological and religious differences, shattering the anti-fascist front irremediably and jeopardizing the *Compromesso storico* policy (Galli 1993, 253 - 54). For this reason, the PCI made every effort to prevent a popular vote on such a delicate matter, proposing, for example, amendments to the law which had introduced divorce (the *legge Fortuna – Baslini* of 1 December 1970, n. 898). Such amendments sought to reach a compromise with the Catholic groups which had promoted the referendum before any voting took place.¹⁴⁴ However, after all efforts proved futile, the party threw itself wholeheartedly into the electoral battle.

Luciano Cheles claims that the referendum campaign was undoubtedly one of the most 'graphic' since those of 1948 and 1953 given its extensive use of posters.¹⁴⁵ It certainly was one of the most cinematographic, at least as far as the PCI was concerned. Instead of documentaries, the party entrusted Unitelefilm with the production of five brief electoral advertisements of two-and-a-half-minutes each. These were designed to be projected in cinemas and therefore aimed at addressing an audience which far exceeded mere Communist voters. Showing some familiarity with the laws of marketing, Unitelefilm cast famous artists in order to appeal to a wide range of people. These testimonials were singer and actor Gianni Morandi,

¹⁴⁴ See *Divorzio. E' possibile evitare il referendum. Le conclusioni di Bufalini al seminario del PCI*, in *l'Unità*, 29/9/1971, 2, Carlo Galluzzi *La polemica sul divorzio*, in *Rinascita*, 48, 3/12/1971, 3. See also *Appunti su divorzio e referendum*, in IG, APCI, MF 66, pp. 897 – 907, *Divorzio e referendum*, 1 December 1973. This is a classified document resuming the PCI policy on the issue of the referendum. It reads: 'la ricerca di un accordo tra tutti i partiti dell'arco costituzionale è stata sempre ispirata – e in tal senso esplicitamente motivata – a una esigenza politica democratica e unitaria, e cioè all'esigenza di superare contrapposizioni e sanare lacerazioni, in seno alle masse popolari, e alle forze democratiche, non necessarie e dannose'. In conclusion, according to the anonymous writer, the referendum on divorce 'favorirebbe l'azione di forze anti-democratiche'.

¹⁴⁵ See Cheles (2001, 145). A selection of posters concerning divorce printed by the PCI is in Novelli (2000, 226 – 29).

actor Gigi Proietti, comedian Pino Caruso, and actor Nino Manfredi. The five adverts reveal the Communists' attempt to strip the vote of any ideological and religious character and focus the viewer's attention exclusively on the practical questions related to the divorce law. The 'NO' vote for the abrogation of the law allowing for divorce is presented as being the most reasonable choice.

The only exceptions to this communication strategy are some jokes in the script voiced by Nino Manfredi, who, answering an interviewer's question concerning the abolition of divorce, lashes out at the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, which, while championing the abolition of civil divorce, contemplated the dissolution of religious marriage at the discretion of the Roman Rota (the highest appellate tribunal of the Roman Catholic Church):

Conosco due amici che hanno ottenuto l'annullamento del matrimonio dalla Sacra Rota, hanno pagato qualche milioncino, ma lui è uno che sta bene, e ha ottenuto l'annullamento per *impotentia coeundi*, c'ha avuto quattro figli! Come impotente mi pare abbastanza prolifico! Ma qui entriamo nel campo della fede, dei miracoli. La moglie non ha beccato una lira, perché l'annullamento ecclesiastico non prevede alimenti. Difesa morale e materiale dei figli? E che difendi? Nun ce so'! [...] Però magnano!

The advert starring the actor, author and TV-personality Pino Caruso is also based on humour and satire, and supports the thesis that the issue of divorce is exclusively a matter of freedom of choice:

E' proibito andare in Francia? No! Ma nemmeno è obbligatorio! Chi vuole va e chi non vuole non va. A me, per esempio, di andare in Francia

non mi va, e allora se fossi prepotente direi: siccome non ci vado io non ci deve andare nessuno! E allora che facciamo? Abrogliamo i passaporti?

The most reassuring, and arguably ‘bourgeois’, of these Communist adverts for the referendum stars Gianni Morandi and his wife, the actress Laura Efrikian. Set in the Morandis’ comfortable living room, the film presents what appears to be, by all standards, a perfect couple: young, beautiful, famous and with two beautiful children. Gianni Morandi confirms the viewers’ first impression: ‘Non è un luogo comune se dico che la nostra è una famiglia felice’. Nonetheless, the happy couple is resolutely in favour of divorce, in order to help those couples who are not as lucky as they are:

Perché dobbiamo chiudere gli occhi di fronte a certe tragedie? Perché dobbiamo fingere che in certe famiglie lacerate e divise i figli siano felici e i coniugi debbano restare uniti per tutta la vita?

Curiously enough, Gianni Morandi and Laura Efrikian would divorce a few years later.

Quite experimental from a cinematographic point of view is the electoral advertisement directed by Ugo Gregoretti and starring Gigi Proietti. The film shows the actor watering plants on a terrace while he keeps saying ‘No’ to the camera with different facial expressions and tones of voice. Consequentially, the final slogan is ‘Al referendum rispondi No, No, No’. According to Gregoretti, this advert had a great success in cinemas, especially due to Proietti’s popularity. It was, however, received coolly by the PCI leadership. For example, Gian Carlo Pajetta commented sarcastically, ‘Mi convince molto l’analisi politica!’ (Medici, Mordibelli and Taviani 2001, 172).

Another of the PCI's adverts harnessed child actors. In a primary school, a teacher explains the importance of family as one of the fundamental pillars of society. Because of this, one of the schoolboys is remorselessly mocked by his classmates because his parents are not married and he does not bear his father's name. 'Come mai tuo padre e tua madre non si sono potuti sposare?' the sympathetic teacher asks. 'Papà sta a aspettà il divorzio. Mò dice che lo levano....' replies the uncomfortable child. 'Non lo leveranno vedrai, perché il divorzio è fatto anche per aiutare una famiglia come la vostra, unita più di tante altre', explains the teacher. This leads the little boy to smile again.

Along with the five electoral advertisements, the party produced *Diario di un No*, a thirty-nine minute film directed by Gianni Serra. *Diario di un No* was inspired by a very popular *sceneggiato televisivo* directed by Vittorio De Seta and broadcast by the RAI in the previous year: *Diario di un maestro*. This tells the story of a young, non-conformist teacher who develops innovative teaching methods for his class of disadvantaged and troubled kids. *Diario di un No* cast many of the protagonists of the television show, including the boys and girls of the Tiburtino III, a suburban area of Rome, and the actor Bruno Cirino, who played the teacher.

Diario di un No shows Cirino and the children planning an awareness campaign about the referendum. They draw posters and leaflets and prepare a questionnaire. According to the results of the questionnaire, many citizens do not exactly know what the issue at stake is and are confused with regard to 'Si' and 'No'. Subsequently, Cirino and the kids go around the neighbourhood recording interviews with several citizens, including a recently married couple and a woman abandoned by her husband. They finally organize a public meeting to discuss the issue of

divorce. On an interpretative level, the film denounces the lack of information regarding the referendum due to the censorship of public television and pro-government media.

Eventually, referendum results proved that Italian citizens were informed well enough, and that, overall, irreversible changes had taken place in the country with respect to moral values: Italy had turned into a secular society. Pier Paolo Pasolini was arguably right when he claimed that this was especially due to the ‘ideologia edonistica’ produced by consumerism which was, at the time, sweeping away Catholic values. In the long run, this would also undermine the collectivist values upon which left-wing thought was grounded.¹⁴⁶ In the short run, however, the victory of the ‘NO’ at the referendum put wind in the PCI’s sails.

At the following local elections of June 1975, Communist votes increased dramatically, reaching a total of eleven million. The PCI took pivotal Italian cities like Milan and Naples while increasing its historical advantage in the ‘red regions’ and becoming the first party in many other small and medium size cities.¹⁴⁷ The PCI leadership interpreted the result as a powerful popular endorsement of *Compromesso storico* policy and the recognition of the honesty and superior skills of Communist local administrators.¹⁴⁸

The most intriguing film produced by the PCI in the approach to local elections of June 1975 is Ettore Scola’s *Confronto, Partecipazione Unità* (25 minutes). The film stands out for its cinematographic values, which are above

¹⁴⁶ See Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Gli italiani non sono più quelli*, published in *Corriere della sera* on 10/6/1974. See it in Pasolini (2006, 39 – 44).

¹⁴⁷ All the results of the 1975 local elections can be found in the special issue of *Rinascita*, triumphantly titled *Un voto su tre è comunista*, 25, 20/6/1975. At the following local election of June 1976, the PCI won in Rome too. See the results in *l’Unità*, 23/6/1976.

¹⁴⁸ See *Dichiarazione di Berlinguer* analysing the vote of June 1975 in *l’Unità*, 17/06/1975, 1, 8 and 9.

average for a PCI propaganda film. It is also very interesting from an historical perspective as it addresses all the issues informing the Communist campaign in the run up to the elections. These include the PCI's endorsement of the *Compromesso storico* policy (presented as the only solution for the historical problems of the country) the problem of violence and the rise of terrorism, the alleged superior skills of Communist administrators and the reform of the public broadcasting service.

The first part of the film, around nine minutes long, features street interviews conducted by a journalist and concerns the 'questione comunista', namely the PCI's offer to collaborate with the DC through the *Compromesso storico*. The interviewer asks questions such as 'Lei pensa che i comunisti potrebbero aiutarci a risolvere i problemi del paese?' and 'Cosa ne pensa del Compromesso storico?'. Interviewees' opinions vary but, overall, they seem to agree that some form of cooperation between the DC and the PCI must take place either because they believe the country would benefit from that ('uniti possiamo raggiungere un determinato obiettivo') or because they are convinced that there are no alternatives ('altrimenti qui degenera tutto').

Subsequently, the film takes an unexpected turn by introducing a fictional section through an ingenious narrative device: we see the interviewer trying to ask a question to two women who refuse to answer as they are hurrying go to school to pick up their children. Instead of carrying on with the interviews, the camera follows the two women and 'spies' on their conversation. The two women embody two types of voters: one represents the well-informed, emancipated, left-wing female voter, whereas the other is a scarcely educated, politically indifferent woman strongly influenced by her husband's conservative opinions.

The conversation begins with the latter making some commonplace remarks about politicians being all the same and not caring for people's problems. The banality of such comments provokes the reaction of the former, who makes her acquaintance notice that the opposition cannot be held accountable for the problems of the country. These should rather be ascribed to those DC politicians who have been in power for thirty years. Even the politically apathetic woman cannot help but concurring with this view: since childhood she remembers DC politicians promising schools, hospitals and houses for workers but they have not kept many of these promises so far. However, she points out that the most serious problem is, in her opinion, the rise of criminality and violence. The outbreak of a diffuse and violent criminality at the beginning of the 1970s represented, to some extent, a sort of novelty for a country like Italy. This was triggering people's imagination, as proved by the emergence of a new cinematographic sub-genre, *poliziottesco*, a sort of hyper-violent crime fiction (Brunetta 1995, 379). The left-wing woman replies by stressing that criminality must be considered as a consequence of a lack of social policies. As far as political violence is concerned, government collusion with fascist terrorists can hardly be denied. 'E le Brigate Rosse, dove me le mette?' replies the other woman. This is an important moment in the film as it is the first time that the Red Brigades, the most ruthless and best organised of the left-wing terrorist groups which would wreak havoc in the second half of the 1970s,¹⁴⁹ are mentioned in a PCI production. The answer of the character that represents the politically-aware voter deserves closer analysis:

¹⁴⁹ On the Red Brigades see Lumley (1998, 255 – 272), Bianconi (2003) and Clementi (2007).

Intanto è proprio sicura che siano rosse? E poi, pure quelle a chi fanno comodo? Il loro capo è stato a spasso per anni, chi lo ha lasciato in giro così? E quando lo hanno messo in galera, chi è che lo ha fatto scappare?¹⁵⁰ Guarda caso, subito dopo la dichiarazione che ha fatto il senatore Fanfani sugli opposti estremismi [...].

This statement reflects faithfully what was, since 1971 and well-beyond the Moro kidnapping, the PCI's judgment on the *sedicenti Brigate Rosse* - to use an expression commonly deployed by the Communist press - considered a group of provocateurs manipulated by reactionary forces.¹⁵¹ It is worth stressing how the presence of terrorist groups drawing inspiration from Marxist – Leninist doctrine was extremely embarrassing for the PCI. It seemed to suggest that political violence was not exclusively to be ascribed to fascist ideology, thus questioning what Communist propaganda had been claiming for years. This risked alienating the sympathy of moderate public opinion. This circumstance explains why the PCI was, for a long time, in a kind of stubborn denial about the left-wing political orientation of the Red Brigades, and why the issue of left-wing terrorism was scarcely addressed in Communist cinematography.

¹⁵⁰ The script refers at this point to Renato Curcio's escape from Casale Monferrato prison, following a raid organized by a commando of the Red Brigades led by Curcio's wife Mara Cagol on 18 February 1975. See Zavoli (1992, 201 – 2).

¹⁵¹ See the first, short articles published in *l'Unità* reporting the first actions by this new and unknown terrorist group, *Due gravi provocazioni, un unico disegno*, *l'Unità*, 7/1/1971, 2, and *Provocazione all'ATAC*, *l'Unità*, 18/4/1971, 10. As far as 1975 is concerned, see *Debellare il terrorismo e la violenza Fascista* which is a statement by the PCI's *Direzione* in which left-wing terrorism is not even mentioned – the *Direzione* speaks of 'tendenze, presenti nei gruppi estremisti, alla ricerca dello scontro fisico, alle ritorsioni violente, all'avventurismo' - and the government's inability to fight terrorism and fascist crimes is presented as a consequence 'della rottura a suo tempo verificatasi nell'unità delle forze antifasciste, dall'assunzione dell'anticomunismo e dalla divisione delle forze popolari a criterio ispiratore della politica di governo della DC, dalla ricorrente tentazione integralista e del permanente calcolo elettorale e di potere che hanno caratterizzato il modo di governare della DC'. See article in *l'Unità*, 24/4/1975, 1 and 14. See also Emanuele Macaluso's replay to the famous article by Rossana Rossanda about the *Album di famiglia, Qualche risposta ai garantisti e a Galloni*, in *l'Unità*, 1/4/1978, 1 and 14.

Four years would pass from *Confronto, Partecipazione, Unità* before the PCI would tackle the issue of terrorism in a film again. The film in question is *Guido Rossa*, a twenty-two minute documentary directed by Ansano Giannarelli in 1979. The film was produced because the murder of the Communist trade unionist Guido Rossa by the Red Brigades on 24 January 1979 provided the PCI with a martyr in the struggle against terrorism. The assassination of Rossa also proved that the members of the Brigate Rosse, although casting themselves as Communists, were actually fascists given that they killed Communist workers. There is no better example of this view, which was widely shared by grass-roots militants, than what a Communist worker and colleague of Guido Rossa claims in one of the interviews featured in the film:

Ci sono voluti dieci anni da Piazza Fontana per convincere quelli che sembravano più scettici. Noi sono dieci anni che diciamo da dove viene l'esecuzione, sono dieci anni che subivamo. Adesso credo che anche quelli che fino a ieri ci hanno attaccato, anche quelli che da certi organismi di stampa erano piuttosto scettici perché c'era quella tinta di rosso, quell'infamia, perché le Brigate Rosse noi le ricordiamo durante la Resistenza, per quello che hanno fatto per liberare il paese; adesso hanno infangato quel nome, bhe ancora una volta credo che non ci sarà più dubbio, credo che tutto il paese ormai sa benissimo da dove viene questo terrorismo e da chi è finanziato.

In *Guido Rossa*, the voice-over commentary, which normally represents the official position of the party, recognises for the first time the existence of the *terrorismo rosso*, but it also keeps expressing doubts with respect to the political

background of left-wing terrorism, arguing that this is ultimately rooted in capitalist society:

Dopo il 1970, accanto al quello nero si sviluppa in Italia un altro tipo di terrorismo, che si presenta come rosso. Nelle sigle delle loro 300 organizzazioni ricorrono spesso parole come 'rosse', 'comunismo', 'proletari', 'operai'. E ci sono coloro [...] che utilizzano questo elemento per insinuare che il terrorismo cosiddetto rosso nasce dal pensiero, dalla tradizione, dalla storia del Partito Comunista, quando invece esso è figlio dei valori della società capitalista.

After the parenthesis concerning terrorism, the dialogue between the two women depicted in *Confronto, Partecipazione, Unità* focuses on another issue informing Communist propaganda in the run up to 1975 elections: the *buongoverno* of the PCI at local level. Repeating the pattern that caused the beginning of the conversation, the politically indifferent woman makes another banal remark, provoking the prompt and witty reply of the politically-aware woman:

Amministrare un paese non è mica facile. Un paese come l'Italia poi'.

Guardi che Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Perugia, Grosseto, non sono mica sulla luna, ci si va in macchina, mica in astronave. Bologna la rossa è la città meglio amministrata d'Italia, e lo sa perchè? Perché l'amministrazione è retta dai comunisti che fanno funzionare quello che deve funzionare. Guardi invece cosa succede a Roma, a Napoli, a Palermo...

The PCI produced seven films concerning local administrations in 1975. These included *Discutere sull'Emilia* (34 minutes), directed by Riccardo Napolitano

(brother of Giorgio Napolitano), and Wladimir Tchertkoff's *Modena. Per un nuovo modo di governare con i cittadini* (42 minutes). These praised the achievements of the left-wing local administrations and advocated citizens' participation in public decision making. *Discutere sull'Emilia*, in particular, dealt with one of the most powerful and long-lasting Communist propaganda myths: the kindergartens of Emilia Romagna, allegedly 'I migliori asili del mondo', as director Nanni Moretti was still defining them in 1998, in an unforgettable scene in *Aprile* set in Hyde Park's speakers' corner.¹⁵² Other productions of that year, such as Enzo Dell'Aquila's *Lazio, un voto per cambiare* (30 minutes), and Luigi Perelli's *Campania, si può cambiare* (31 minutes) were instead aimed at lambasting the *malgoverno* of the DC.

After the exchange of remarks concerning local administration, the conversation between the two women moves toward a conclusion which addresses that portion of conservative voters who, by voting 'No' at the referendum held in the previous year, had chosen to retain the law on divorce. The film invites such voters to maintain a consistent behaviour on occasion of the forthcoming election, that is to say, vote for the PCI:

Bé, secondo lei basta che votiamo PCI e siamo a posto!'

Basta voler cambiare le cose, e dare il voto al PCI è un modo di dire di no a chi vuole che la società torni indietro [...] del resto scusi, lei come ha votato al referendum sul divorzio?'

Io ho votato no...

¹⁵² *Aprile*, by Nanni Moretti, 1998.

Ecco, brava signora, allora continui. Continui a dire no, ma dica no a tutti, insista, dica no ai profittatori, agli imbrogliatori, ai Fascisti, ai Fanfani!

The last part of the *Confronto, Partecipazione, Unità*, addresses another contentious issue of the electoral campaign: the reform of RAI TV. This was a political battle the PCI had been fighting since the beginning of the decade in order to free the public broadcasting service from government control and make it more open to the opposition's political views.¹⁵³ The results of the divorce referendum had contributed in no small measure to the crisis of legitimacy of state television: having shamelessly campaigned for the 'Yes' vote, the RAI had shown itself to be a mere government propaganda tool and, even worse for a public broadcasting service, had grossly misjudged the public mood (Ortoleva 1995, 67 - 8). *Confronto, Partecipazione, Unità* features Bruno Cirino, in an editing room, denouncing the DC's firm grip on TV news service, particularly that of DC leader Amintore Fanfani:

Pensiamo che nelle nostre case il Telegiornale entra Quattro, cinque volte al giorno e non ci dà a tutti gli elementi della realtà. Non ci dice in realtà le cose come stanno, ma ci dice quello, diciamolo chiaramente, che Fanfani vuole, perché il Telegiornale è un feudo di Fanfani.

Through the use of Unitelefilm archival footage, Cirino shows examples of events occurring over the previous months which had been misrepresented by the *telegiornale*, or not reported at all. These included the *richiesta di autorizzazione a procedere* for Mafia-related charges issued against the Member of Parliament, and

¹⁵³ See *Informazione e potere nella società Italiana*, the special issue of *Il Contemporaneo* devoted to the Communist struggle for the *Riforma della Rai*. It includes articles by PCI television experts Carlo Galluzzi, Ivano Cipriani and Dario Natoli, in *Rinascita*, 18, 30/4/1971, 15 - 22; Carlo Galluzzi *La questione della Rai TV, una linea da controriforma*, in *Rinascita* n. 50, 22/12/1973. On this point, see also Partito Comunista Italiano (1973), (Gundle 2000, 152), Crapis (2000, 92 - 6).

former DC mayor of Palermo, Salvo Lima. Bruno Cirino, brother of the DC politician Paolo Cirino Pomicino, was just one of the many actors and intellectuals who had expressed their support to the PCI on the eve of the 1975 local elections. This was striking proof of the PCI's renewed appeal to intellectuals and artists in the mid-1970s (Ajello 1997, 110).

The reform of the RAI was finally approved in April 1975, shortly before the election. According to several authors, the 1975 reform opened the road to *lottizzazione* rather than to the democratisation of RAI TV. The PCI was to receive its share of power and offices, albeit smaller than those of the DC and PSI (Monteleone 1992, 396 – 389; Ortoleva 2008, 132 – 4; Gundle 2000, 152 – 153). The most caustic cinematographic depictions of the political parties' pervasive influence on the public broadcasting service after the 1975 reform are probably the scenes in which Serge Reggiani plays 'il Dottor Stiller', a left-wing intellectual working at the RAI, in Ettore Scola's *La terrazza* (1980).

The PCI celebrated the victory at the 1975 election by producing two films: Antonio Bertini's 31-minute *Per un'Italia diversa*, and *Oltre 11 milioni* (16 minutes), edited with footage shot by various filmmakers. *Per un'Italia diversa* begins by showing the headlines of the most influential European newspapers reporting the PCI victory. Immediately after, the film features the final part of Togliatti's speech taken from *Togliatti è ritornato* (see Part I, Chapter 4). The message is clear: Togliatti's vision has finally come to fruition; the hegemony of the Communist Party is a reality. Subsequently, the film features interviews with newly elected Communist administrators, including the *Presidente della Giunta Regionale* of Emilia Romagna Guido Fanti, the mayor of Bologna Renato Zangheri, the *Presidente della Giunta*

Regionale of Lazio Maurizio Ferrara, and the mayor of Turin Diego Novelli. The film also features an interview with the PCI treasurer Guido Cappelloni who issues a plea to militants and sympathizers to subscribe to the PCI - a party that, according to Cappelloni, is financed exclusively through membership cards, subscriptions to *l'Unità*, contributions levied on MPs and local administrators' wages. Concluding the interview, Cappelloni claims: 'queste sono le nostre entrate e non vogliamo che ce ne siano altre'. Although it might seem out of context with respect to the argument of the film, the interview with Cappelloni was consistent with the PCI propaganda which had relentlessly assumed the Communists' moral superiority. In this respect, the party had coined a new slogan: 'Il partito dalle mani pulite'. This was an expression aimed at marking the difference between the PCI and other political parties as far as honesty and integrity was concerned (Galli 1993, 261; Ginsborg 1989, 501). In hindsight, Cappelloni was omitting to mention, for understandable reasons, one of the most important sources of income for the party: Soviet funding.¹⁵⁴

The other film produced after the election and celebrating the PCI victory, *Oltre 11 milioni*, is a chronicle of the parties which took place in Rome, Genova, Turin and Milan following the announcement of the election results. The film, which is in colour, shows Communist militants and sympathizers gathering in front of *Botteghe Oscure* while waiting for news concerning the election results on Monday 16 June 1975. Endorsing what could be defined as a deterministic reading of PCI history, the voice-over explains that people were driven to the PCI's headquarters by:

¹⁵⁴ See Cervetti (1993). Gianni Cervetti, a member of the party who graduated in Economics at Moscow University, was entrusted by Enrico Berlinguer to put an end to Soviet funding. It ceased completely in 1981. The existence of such financing was revealed by Cervetti himself in 1991 (see Vittorio Ragone *Enrico mi disse: basta con quei soldi*, in *l'Unità*, 16/10/1991, 5). This issue was polemically exhumed years later with the aim of demonstrating the strict dependence of the PCI on the USSR during the Berlinguer era (see Bigazzi and Riva 1999).

l'ansia di conoscere la nuova tappa di quel cammino che Togliatti aveva così bene espresso in poche parole: noi veniamo da lontano e andiamo lontano.

As dusk approaches, the crowd begins to rhythmically call the name of the PCI leader: 'Ber-lin-guer! Ber-lin-guer!'. They also sing *Bandiera rossa* and *l'Internazionale*. According to the voice-over commentary, this is:

la Roma autentica e popolare, quella di Porta San Paolo, dei partigiani del '44, quella di Don Morosini, fucilato dai tedeschi nel nome della libertà, del progresso, della pace tra gli uomini.¹⁵⁵

It is night when Enrico Berlinguer, welcomed by the cheering crowd, finally appears on the balcony of *Botteghe oscure*. This is one of the few times that the leader of the PCI appears in a PCI film. It is worth noting, in this respect, that the PCI rarely deployed cinematic propaganda in order to construct of a positive image of Berlinguer. Therefore, the great popularity enjoyed by Berlinguer at the mid-1970s was especially due to television, to feature films such as *Berlinguer ti voglio bene* (1977), and to a few left-wing, but not Communist, newspapers such as *La Repubblica* (Ajello 1997, 101 – 6 and 118 - 9). Berlinguer's personality also played a relevant part, as it seemed to work perfectly in the media arena. Whereas Togliatti had built a reputation for his incisive, but rather cold, intellectual rigour, it was especially Berlinguer's human qualities, such as his modesty and mild manners which endeared him to a contemporary audience.

The final part of *Oltre 11 milioni* shows the demonstrations occurring in various cities the day after the electoral results. Pietro Ingrao is in Genoa and

¹⁵⁵ Father Giuseppe Morosini had inspired the character of Don Pietro, played by Aldo Fabrizi, in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta*.

Giancarlo Pajetta in Turin, while Enrico Berlinguer delivers an inspiring speech explaining the reasons for the Communist success to an immense crowd gathered in Piazza San Giovanni in Rome:

Il Partito comunista avanza per tre ragioni precise. Prima di tutto, perché è il partito più legato alle esigenze e ai sentimenti del popolo lavoratore, ne difende gli interessi, ne interpreta le esigenze più profonde. In secondo luogo perché la sua linea politica generale è una linea chiara e giusta. La terza ragione dell'avanzata del PCI sta nel fatto che gli italiani sono diventati, attraverso tante esperienze, più maturi e più coscienti. Per queste ragioni l'avanzata del Partito comunista italiano può far paura soltanto ai corrotti e ai prepotenti che vivono nel nostro paese.

At the end of the film, the concert by the famous flute player Severino Gazzelloni, to which almost one minute is devoted, reminds the viewer that the PCI has the cultural elevation of the Italian workers among its objectives.¹⁵⁶

As mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter, the process of nearly unanimous recognition of the *Resistenza* as a moral pillar of the Republican Regime, initiated in the 1960s and accomplished at the mid-1970s,¹⁵⁷ played a decisive role in strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the PCI. It made more acceptable to the moderate public opinion a putative participation of the Communist Party in the government. The Resistance and its history was, therefore, of paramount importance for the PCI. Besides, the history and the memory of the Resistance had to be safeguarded against the danger of appropriation by the Red Brigades. Members of this organisation tended indeed to present themselves as successors of the *partigiani*

¹⁵⁶ A chronicle of the Piazza San Giovanni celebrations can be found in Fiori (1989, 261 – 2). See also the chronicle by *l'Unità*, 18/6/1975, 2: *Ha vinto la linea dell'unità delle forze popolari*.

¹⁵⁷ See Bermani (1997, 49) and Santarelli (1996, 179).

and claimed to be carrying out that social and political revolution that the partisans were unable to complete due to the PCI's betrayal (Cooke 2011, 118 – 125). Additionally, the year 1975 marked the 30th anniversary of the end of WWII. For all these reasons, the PCI entrusted Unitelefilm with the production of an historical documentary on the Resistance. The production took more time than expected, however, because of the historical research required by such a complex and rather controversial issue. The film was eventually released in 1976, and titled *Resistenza, una nazione che risorge*.

The film is divided into five parts with a total running time of 3 hours and 45 minutes. The first part covers the period of time from the defeat of the Nazi army in Stalingrad (February 1943) to the armistice between Italy and Allied armed forces, declared on 8 September 1943. The second part concerns the beginning of the Italian Resistance movement, from September 1943 to January 1944, including the *Quattro giornate di Napoli* of September 1943. The third part deals with the development of the Resistance movement until the liberation of Florence in August 1944. The fourth part concerns the hardest period of the Resistance: the 'second winter' (October 1944 – March 1945). Finally, the last episode chronicles the insurrection of 25 April 1945. *Resistenza una nazione che risorge* features footage from national and international archives, such as the Imperial War Museum of London, the RDT State Film Archive, the Istituto Luce, the A.N.P.I Archive of Turin, the Istituto Gramsci and the Unitelefilm archive itself, and presents interviews with former leaders of the Resistance belonging to the parties of the C.L.N. (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale / National Liberation Committee).¹⁵⁸ The editing, by Carlo Schellino and Carla

¹⁵⁸ These are: Giorgio Amendola (PCI), Giustino Arpesani (Partito Liberale Italiano), Giuseppe Brusasca (DC), Arturo Colombi (PCI), Enzo Enriquez Agnoletti (Partito d'Azione); Ugo La Malfa

Simoncelli, largely used footage taken from feature films such as Gianni Puccini's *I sette fratelli Cervi* (1968) and *Achtung! Banditi!* (1951). Ansano Giannarelli directed the film, while Mino Argentieri took care of the screenplay (written along with Paolo Spriano). Seven actors gave the voice-over commentary, including Stefano Satta Flores and Gigi Proietti.

According to Argentieri, the style of the film was inspired by Sergio Zavoli's *Nascita di una dittatura*, a television show broadcast by the RAI in 1972 concerning the rise of Fascist dictatorship,¹⁵⁹ and by Marcel Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (1969) (Argentieri 2012, 17). Argentieri describes how he and director Ansano Giannarelli wanted to avoid a bombastic celebration of the Resistance and, instead, deliver a 'storia politica della resistenza, non consolatoria, non edulcorata' which would highlight, along with the unity of the Resistance movement, the differences *and* contrasts occurring among the various parties of the C.L.N. (Argentieri 2012, 17). It might well be that this was the impression received by viewers in 1976, in the midst of the 'beatificazione della Resistenza' (Bermani 1997, 49). To a modern viewer, however, *Resistenza una nazione che risorge* appears as an all-round endorsement of a Communist reading of the Italian Resistance. In particular, the documentary is aimed at conveying three fundamental messages which were also the three pillars of Communist historical interpretation with respect to the years spanning from 1943 to 1945.

Firstly, the Italian Resistance was a popular movement exclusively aimed at the liberation of the country from Fascist tyranny and Nazi invasion. In this sense,

(Partito Repubblicano Italiano), Girolamo Li Causi (PCI), Oreste Lizzardi (PSI), Luigi Longo (PCI), Cino Moscatelli (PCI), Giuseppe Spataro (DC), Enzo Storoni (PLI), Emilio Sereni (PCI), Leo Valiani (Partito d'Azione), Umberto Pajetta (PCI) and Gian Carlo Pajetta (PCI).

¹⁵⁹ See the debate on *Nascita di una dittatura* on *l'Unità*, in December 1972.

and as the title of the film suggests, the *Resistenza* was a ‘secondo Risorgimento’. Secondly, the *Resistenza* was ‘unitaria’, that is, each and every one of the political forces belonging to what would be defined as the ‘Arco Costituzionale’ had jointly participated to the *Resistenza* in one way or another. ‘Arco Costituzionale’ was an expression linking the Italian political parties which played a part in the drafting and approval of the Italian Constitution of 1948. In this respect, the screenplay sets the film’s ecumenical tone from the beginning: the list of the early martyrs of anti-Fascism includes the Communist Gramsci, the Socialist Matteotti, and the Catholic Don Minzoni. Thirdly, the fundamental event of the years 1943 – 1945 was Palmiro Togliatti’s *Svolta di Salerno*, a policy which allowed the formation of a unitary anti-Fascist front and paved the way for the establishment of a democratic regime. During the 1970s, this reading of the *Svolta di Salerno* policy turned into a key Communist propaganda issue in that it historically legitimized the PCI’s ambition to participate in the national government by stressing the PCI’s endorsement of parliamentary democracy as early as 1944.¹⁶⁰

Resistenza una nazione che risorge was specifically designed to be projected in schools and this accounts for its didactic tone.¹⁶¹ Particularly interesting is the use of music in the editing. The pictures of the Fascist *gerarchi*, and those of the leaders of the pre-Fascist liberal regime, are always accompanied with the sound of

¹⁶⁰ See the special issue of *Il Contemporaneo* devoted to the *Svolta di Salerno* with articles by historians Ernesto Ragionieri, Enzo Santarelli, and Paolo Spriano, and by major PCI leaders such as Giorgio Amendola, Gian Carlo Pajetta, Gherardo Chiaromonte and Alessandro Natta, in *Rinascita*, 13, 29/3/1974, 11 – 36. The Communist interpretation of the *Svolta di Salerno* was, by and large, accepted by historiography until the eclipse of European communism at the end of the 1980s, see Spriano (1975), Sassoon (1981). A new thread of literature would question the traditional reading of the *Svolta di Salerno* policy, describing it as engineered by Stalin in order to consolidate the anti-Nazi coalition, dispelling any suspicions about the Soviet Union’s intentions for post-war Italy, see Gallerano and Flores (1992) and Narinskij (1994).

¹⁶¹ A rather negative critique of the stylistic choices deployed by the authors of *Resistenza, una nazione che risorge* can be found in Bernagozzi (1979a, 202 – 3).

trombones which makes them appear rather ridiculous. The music ceases when Togliatti, De Gasperi, and the other leaders of the CLN are introduced. Quite significantly, the trombone plays again for Benedetto Croce, and the voice-over commentary defines the idealist philosopher as ‘l’ideologo del gruppo monarchico e conservatore’. Evidently, the Communist polemic against the author of *Materialismo storico ed economia marxistica*, initiated by Togliatti in 1944, was not finished yet (Gundle 1995a, 34).

At the same time, *Resistenza una nazione che risorge* seems to read the past through the lens of the ongoing political debate. For example, the political collaboration among Catholics, socialists and Communists is presented as the precondition for the development of the Resistance Movement and the most fruitful period in Italian history. This implicitly suggests that such an alliance could be the key for future social, political and economic achievements, as proposed by the PCI in regard to the *Compromesso storico* policy. One of the most interesting theses proposed by *Resistenza una nazione che risorge* is that the *Regno del Sud*, namely the Italian provisional government established in the south of Italy under the protection of the Allied armed forces, was as much a puppet state as the *Repubblica di Salò*, the Fascist government established in the north of the country between 1943 and 1945. In fact, according to the voice-over commentary, moral legitimacy did not reside with the King and his court, or in the rather conservative Allied Military government, but in the Italian people who organised to fight the invaders, under the guidance of the anti-Fascists.

The Italian Resistance is presented as different from the French model, where the partisans were emissaries of a government in exile, and much more similar to the

Russian and Yugoslavian ‘guerre di popolo’, even if the voice-over commentary frankly admits that ‘la Resistenza italiana crescerà più gracile dal punto di vista militare’, than its Russian and Yugoslavian counterparts. Dispelling the myth of Resistance unity, the film provides evidence of the ambiguous attitude of the Italian industrialists who are accused of having frequently played a ‘double game’.

Resistenza una nazione che risorge also devotes several minutes to the ‘Repubbliche partigiane’ established in the north of Italy in the summer and autumn of 1944 (Legnani 1968). These were, in the directors’ opinion, characterized by ‘una quotidiana dimostrazione di equilibrio e oculatezza’. Both the interviewees and the voice-over commentary stress how this unprecedented experiment of popular government, far from producing a socialist government, resulted in a remarkable example of unity of all the anti-Fascist forces. In this respect, Communist politician and former member of the provisional government of the *Repubblica partigiana dell’Ossola* Umberto Terracini claims: ‘Nelle repubbliche partigiane nemmeno si pose il problema di un rinnovamento sociale del nostro paese’. Although mentioned occasionally, the role of women in the Resistance is rather neglected. Yet, Liliana Cavani had already directed a documentary devoted to this issue, titled *La donna nella Resistenza*, in 1965.

Resistenza una nazione che risorge had mainly positive reviews. Gianni Rodari, in *Paese Sera*, praised the impartiality of the film which, in his opinion, did not support any preconceived thesis and presented documents and interviews ‘come elementi di una ricerca aperta e problematica’.¹⁶² In April 1976, *Resistenza, una nazione che risorge* was projected in two high schools in Rome and introduced by a

¹⁶² Gianni Rodari *Resistenza illustrata per la scuola*, *Paese Sera*, 5/3/1976, p. 3, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone ‘R’, fascicolo *Resistenza una nazione che risorge*

presentation by Umberto Terracini.¹⁶³ The following year, the ARCI integrated the documentary into its circuit to celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the Resistance.¹⁶⁴ The film had limited distribution however, grossing just 410,000 lire at the box office.¹⁶⁵

In 1976, the production of another four-part film, *Quattro lezioni su Togliatti*, completed the PCI's reassessment of its own history. Like *Resistenza, una nazione che risorge*, these four filmed lessons concerning Togliatti's thought allowed the past to articulate the present and were quite didactic. They were designed, however, to address party militants rather than students. Each lesson is held by a major party leader with the help of archival footage, and has a running time of 30 minutes. Cherardo Chiaromonte, in *Togliatti e le grandi componenti della società italiana* (lesson n. 1) tackles the issue of the *Svolta di Salerno* policy once again, countering the criticism of Togliatti's policy put forward in those years by radical left-wing groups. These, along with a few historians¹⁶⁶, accused Togliatti of having worked to restrict the social and political aspirations of the Italian workers, between the years 1944 – 1947, whereas the Italian working class was actually politically ready and strong enough to start a revolution (Focardi 2005, 46 – 50). In this respect, Chiaromonte claims:

Si è molto discusso in tutti questi anni sopra la Svolta si Salerno. Alcuni hanno parlato di occasione rivoluzionaria mancata, altri, più benevoli,

¹⁶³ See *Al Liceo Cavour lezioni di Resistenza con film e dibattito*, *Corriere della Sera*, 7/5/1976, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone 'R', fascicolo *Resistenza una nazione che risorge*

¹⁶⁴ See *La "Resistenza" ma senza retorica*, *La Repubblica*, 14/4/1977, in AAMOD Archive, Faldone 'R', fascicolo *Resistenza una nazione che risorge*.

¹⁶⁵ Bollettini Siae of *Resistenza una nazione che risorge*, In AAMOD Archive, Faldone 'R', fascicolo *Resistenza una nazione che risorge*.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Galli (1977).

hanno detto che l'azione delle forze avanzate della democrazia fu frenata dalla presenza delle truppe straniere nel nostro paese.

Chiaromonte rejects these interpretations by claiming that Togliatti's policy stemmed from careful thought on Italy's history and was primarily aimed at preventing Fascism from prevailing once again, as it had managed to do after WWI, when it had exploited the divisions among Italian democratic forces. Chiaromonte stresses how the pursuit of unity had been inspiring Communist policy ever since. This has been proved, for example, by the fact the PCI voted, in 1947, in favour of Article 7 which incorporated into the Italian Constitution the so-called *Patti Lateranensi* (namely, the agreements made in 1929 between the Fascist government and the Vatican). Aspiration for unity is at the roots of the *Compromesso Storico* policy too:

Oggi più che mai, io credo, si avverte la verità della politica che Togliatti indicava. La crisi del nostro paese è una crisi profonda, economica, politica, morale, sociale e anche culturale. Da questa crisi non si può uscire se non tornando agli ideali della Costituzione Repubblicana, della Resistenza antifascista, agli ideali che mossero i passi di Palmiro Togliatti nei primi anni della sua attività in Italia.

Lesson number 2, titled *Rapporto tra democrazia e socialismo*, is given by Giorgio Napolitano and is primarily aimed at demonstrating that the PCI has democratic credentials. In this respect, Napolitano claims that the PCI's endorsement of western-style democracy is well-rooted in the history of the party. In particular, the concept of *democrazia progressiva*, formulated by Togliatti in 1944, represented, according to Napolitano, the solution to the dilemma of socialism versus bourgeois democratic institutions. Having finally reconciled socialism with parliamentarism, the PCI is

perfectly entitled to participate in a democratic government. Putative participation of the Communists in the government would not even be much of a novelty, since the PCI was in government along with the other anti-Fascist parties, between 1944 and 1947. Napolitano presents the process leading to the PCI's endorsement of western democratic values as a coherent and perfectly logical development of the Italian Communists' thought and praxis, even if, according to the future President of the Italian Republic, there have been 'contraddizioni e anche battute di arresto' along the road. Noticeably, Napolitano's reading implies that the forty-five years which had elapsed since the founding of the party were nothing more than a period of preparation for the present moment, in which history is finally accomplished. Such determinism was consistent with the concept the Italian Communists had of history, seen as a linear and coherent development towards an end (Ballone 1994, 134).

Lesson n. 3, *Togliatti e il partito nuovo*, by Alessandro Natta, concerns the *partito nuovo*. The future leader of the PCI claims that the creation of the *partito nuovo*, namely the mass-based party engineered by Togliatti at the end of the war, is (further) proof of the PCI's endorsement of democracy, since at least 1944.

Finally, lesson number 4, *Analisi del fascismo e dell'antifascismo in Togliatti*, by Gian Carlo Pajetta, reminds the Italian working class, defined as 'classe nazionale che ha il dovere dell'egemonia', of its fundamental duty to avoid a return of Fascism. Any other question, whether in 1944 or in 1976, should be considered as secondary:

Oggi il pericolo grave, ed è già apparso in questi anni, è quello che forze conservatrici, che forze reazionarie, che forze della destra cattolica, che forze che dirigono la Democrazia Cristiana, cedano a destra. Bisogna

considerare che qui sta il punto essenziale, e ricordare l'esperienza antica.

Overall, the *Quattro lezioni su Togliatti* were aimed at providing the party's militants with a justification of the *Compromesso storico* policy rooted in the party's history. This was especially intended to mitigate militants' dismay provoked by Berlinguer's appalling proposal of an alliance between the PCI and the DC.¹⁶⁷

Yet, such an alliance appeared the only practicable solution after the political election of 20 June 1976, when the PCI increased its share of votes to 34.4%, while the DC managed to recover from the electoral decline of the previous years by gaining 38.8% of the votes (Galli 1993, 267). After that election, the country reached a political impasse. The DC was not able to form a stable government without some support by the PCI. At the same time, the participation of the Communists in the government was out of the question, given the strong opposition by right-wingers within the Democrazia Cristiana as well as, and perhaps more importantly, by both the US and the USSR.¹⁶⁸

The PCI had reached the peak of its electoral popularity but it was immediately clear to the Communist leadership that such a result, far from paving the way for profound political and social change, was going to place the PCI in a situation of uncertainty, or 'in mezzo al guado'. This expression described the 'Catch 22' situation the PCI found itself in after the election. It could no longer express a strong political opposition to the DC government, as this would make the country ungovernable, and yet, at the same time, it could not participate in government. The

¹⁶⁷ On this point, see Barbagli and Corbetta (1979, 54).

¹⁶⁸ On US hostility to Communist participation in government, see the compelling analysis by the Rai US correspondent Rodolfo Brancoli (1976). An analysis of the USSR leadership's point of view on the matter is in Barbagallo (2006, 233 – 240). For a general overview of Berlinguer policy over this period, see Pons (2007).

Italian Communist Party was going to pay a high price, in electoral and political terms, due to such a paradoxical situation. The possibility of Communist political hegemony, which had dawned between 1974 and 1976, was destined to wane rapidly in the following years. Before discussing how Communist cinematographic production mirrored the party's political crisis during the years 1977 – 1980, it is important to analyse the films devoted to the 'feminist question'. The feminist movement was, indeed, turning into an important social and political phenomenon by the mid-1970s and posed some difficult problems for the PCI.

Chapter 12. The Feminist Movement and the PCI.

As pointed out by Donald Sassoon, there were several economic and social preconditions that gave rise to the feminist movement in Italy. These included the increase in female education and employment as well as the decrease in the birth rate occurred during the 1960s (1997, 107 – 117). The cultural impact of the *contestazione* also played a pivotal part. At the beginning of the 1970s, a small but not insignificant number of left-wing women, largely inspired by the American feminist movement, founded groups such as *Rivolta Femminile*, *Lotta Femminista* and the *Movimento di Liberazione della Donna*.¹⁶⁹ The feminist movement created many political and cultural problems for the PCI in the middle of the decade due to its rather innovative approach to the *questione femminile*. In fact, the feminist movement shifted the focus from the relationship between women and society to that between men and women.

Unlike the PCI and its flank organisation Unione Donne Italiane (UDI), the feminist movement did not regard the subordination of women in modern society solely as a by-product of their social exclusion. Rather, it ascribed such subordination to cultural factors, especially to the patriarchal mentality still characterizing modern society and affecting the bourgeoisie as well as the members of the working class. In opposition to the idea of ‘emancipazione’, namely the economic emancipation of women as a social group, the feminist movement advocated the ‘liberazione della donna’, that is, the personal liberation of every woman from cultural subordination. Such an approach, which questioned the policy previously pursued by left-wing parties and the UDI, could potentially result in a

¹⁶⁹ A list of the feminist groups can be found in Bono and Kemp (1991, 377 – 380). For an overview on the feminist movement in Italy, see Lumley (1998, 291 – 316).

split in the working class movement along gender lines (Rodano 2010, 214). As long as debate centred principally on the issue of divorce, feminists and female militants belonging to the PCI found themselves on the same side of the barricade. For many left-wing women, these were the years of the so-called ‘doppia militanza’, namely the concurrent membership in both the PCI and a feminist group (Lilli and Valentini 1979).

After the resounding ‘No’ vote at the referendum on divorce however, a major disagreement occurred between the PCI and the feminist movement on what was considered to be the next fundamental step in women’s liberation: the legalization of abortion. This became a heated issue in the party itself from 1975 onwards.¹⁷⁰ The PCI leadership, while endorsing the decriminalization of abortion, was favourable to legislation which would maintain some restrictions with respect to age and circumstances for legal abortion (Rodano 2010, 218). Such a political position had both tactical and idealistic reasons. On the one hand, the PCI did not want to jeopardize the prospective alliance with the DC postulated by the *Compromesso Storico* policy. On the other, far from regarding it as a matter of personal choice, the PCI leadership saw abortion as a social injustice, and personal trauma, that Italian women had to be protected from (Barbagallo 2006, 221; Crainz 2005, 515 – 516). This was consistent with the long-lasting Communist conception of maternity as a socially relevant issue rather than a private matter. Hence the PCI’s

¹⁷⁰ For example, Nilde Iotti claimed ‘Da alcuni mesi non riusciamo a tenere riunioni di donne in cui questo problema [the legalisation of abortion] non venga posto e ci venga sbattuto in faccia’ (Barbagallo 2006, 221). See also *Raccolta di lettere e messaggi sul tema dell’aborto* mailed to the Sezione femminile of the PCI by Communist militants and sympathizers in 1975, in IG, APCI, MF 209, pp. 953 – 1004, Sezioni di lavoro, VI bimestre 1975. The following year, two books concerning the relationship between the PCI and the feminist movement were published: Editori Riuniti published a book by Aida Tiso summarising the Communist theoretical elaboration of the ‘woman question’ since Engels, while Carla Ravaioli edited a book including interviews on the ‘questione femminile’ with major leaders of the PCI including Enrico Berlinguer, Giorgio Napolitano and Adriana Seroni.

and UDI's struggle undertaken during the first three decades of the Republic in establishing public kindergardens and support for working mothers through legislative measures.

Communist ideas on abortion, rather inevitably, put the party on a collision course with the feminist movement. The *casus belli* was the rejection of a bill on abortion by the Senate in June 1977 which the feminist movement blamed on Communist MPs. On that occasion, the UDI was accused of endorsing the PCI's compromising attitude on the question of abortion and of being incapable of assuming an independent position (Beckwith 1985, 30). Quite significantly, the first PCI film dealing with the feminist movement begins by showing the demonstration against the rejection of the law on abortion occurring on 10 June 1977. The film in question is *Non ci regalano niente*, a sixteen-minute documentary directed by the Italian-Argentinian filmmaker Rosaria Polizzi and sponsored by the UDI. The aim of the film is to defend the image of the UDI and to answer, albeit not polemically, the allegations of the feminist movement. The voice-over gives the UDI credit for the demonstration on the 10 June:

Eravamo migliaia di donne di ogni età e di ogni parte d'Italia a gridare la nostra rabbia e la nostra protesta, tutte insieme, contro la violenza dell'aborto clandestino.

The film tells the story of the UDI from its foundation in September 1944 to the present day and focuses on the struggles undertaken by the UDI, such the ten-year struggle for equal pay, the campaign for the legal protection of working mothers and the 1971 Kindergarten Bill. The film includes three interviews with three women of different ages: Evelina, a 79-year-old housewife, and two working women, 32-year-

old Grazia, and 24-year-old Simonetta. These represent the three phases of UDI's history: the post-war years, the years of the *contestazione*, and the present day. The voice-over emphasizes how the history of the UDI proves that if women want to obtain something, they have to get organised and fight together, otherwise they will not achieve anything – 'nothing comes for free', reads the title of the film. The voice-over commentary also emphasizes the importance of the referendum campaign on divorce, which represented the first experience of personal involvement in politics for thousands of women. Grazia recalls with emotion the first meeting concerning the divorce campaign she attended:

Mi ricordo sempre, una prima riunione nel quartiere S. Lorenzo, con le donne, che parlavano, cominciavano, diciamo, a parlare, partivano dalla loro famiglia, dai loro problemi, del marito, con i figli, e per me era una cosa nuovissima, bellissima, vedere che in qualche maniera io mi identificavo con queste donne, che non ero più sola.

The voice-over goes on to explain that, in the meantime, the women's movement has been enriched by what is defined as 'l'impetuosa presenza femminista'. The film gives the feminist movement credit for having pointed out 'l'oppressione specifica' suffered by women regardless of the social class they belong to but also introduces a semantic distinction between the feminist movement (*il movimento femminista*) and the women's movement (*il movimento femminile*). These two movements are said to be different, even if natural allies, and that they have to fight together in order to obtain a fair abortion bill and change society: 'Sapremo trovare la via della solidarietà, per contare, come donne?', the voice-over asks emphatically.

Along with *Non ci regalano niente*, Rosaria Polizzi directed another documentary for Unitelefilm dealing with the problem of motherhood, *Madre, ma come?*, which has a running time of 33 minutes. From a technical point of view, *Madre, ma come?* stands out as it is shot in a vivid colour which effectively renders the atmosphere of the mid-1970s: the interiors' shrill and colourful wallpapers, the formica tables and wood-effect furniture, the intense green of a countryside under siege from a concrete-grey building speculation, and the multicoloured clothes of the numerous girls and women interviewed by Polizzi's troupe. Also remarkable is the use of music, with a selection of feminist songs of the period utilized to divide the various scenes of the film. These include 'I figli' and 'La nuova lega' by folk singer Anna Identici, 'Il parto' by the *Canzoniere Femminista* band, and 'Non c'è nessuna differenza' by Ombretta Colli. *Madre, ma come?* can be read as a journey into motherhood which is analysed from a political and social point of view, fully endorsing the Communist conception of motherhood as a matter of public interest. Based on scenes from everyday life along with interviews, the film shows what the women's movement has managed to achieve for safe and informed motherhood through the struggles it has undertaken and thanks to the support from the PCI and the *amministrazioni democratiche*. One of the most important accomplishments in this respect has been the *Legge sui consultori familiari*, passed in July 1975¹⁷¹, which established counselling centres providing psychological and social assistance in preparation for motherhood and responsible parenthood. The film thus features a meeting at the *consulorio* of Cinisello Balsamo, a town in Milan's metropolitan area, attended by many women of different ages and chaired by a woman

¹⁷¹ Law 29 July 1975, n. 405. Istituzione dei consultori familiari.

psychologist. The consultorio of Cinisello is one of the first ever opened and works 'in stretto collegamento con le strutture democratiche del territorio'. However, much more needs to be done before Italy can reach a level of maternity support worthy of a 'modern' country. The service provided by public hospitals is particularly unsatisfactory. In this respect, the film features overcrowded maternity wards and soon-to-be mothers who had been asked to bring their own sheets and, in some cases, drugs, while the speaker reminds the viewers that 61 women still die per 100,000 births in Italy compared to 18 in the UK.

Madre, ma come? also offers a valuable visual documentation of the demonstrations organised by the feminist movement. Especially interesting are the slogans written on the protesters' signs which summarise the reasons for the feminist struggles of those years: 'La donna è una disoccupata che si chiama casalinga', 'Libera nella maternità, autonoma nel lavoro, protagonista nella vita, 'Autocoscienza anche maschile per rifiutare il ruolo fittizio dell'uomo forte', and the rather amusing 'Abortiamo la DC'. It is worth retelling that, while the sign that reads 'L'aborto è un diritto non un reato', is shown, the voice-over claims that abortion is 'un dramma e non un reato'. This succinctly highlights the interpretative difference on abortion between the feminist movement and the Italian Communist Party.

Despite the fundamental disagreement on such an important subject as abortion, the Communist Party and the feminist movement never came to a political split (Gundle 1995a, 346). Feminists felt that the PCI was, for better or worse, their principal point of reference from a political point of view. The approval of the abortion bill gained from the decisive contribution of Communist MPs in May 1978, was definitive proof in this regard. Indeed, the PCI leadership showed an increasing

openness towards the ideas of the feminist movement. A turning point, in this respect, was the Fifteenth Congress of the party (Rome 30 March – 3 April 1979). In his opening speech, the leader of the party Enrico Berlinguer proved to have fully understood the perspective represented by the feminist movement:

I movimenti delle donne italiane vanno oltre la semplice richiesta di parità con gli uomini. Attraverso le lotte per la riforma del diritto di famiglia, per il divorzio, per una nuova legislazione sui casi di interruzione di gravidanza, per i consultori, per i servizi sociali, le donne hanno fatto diventare problemi politici e sociali fatti che una volta venivano affrontati nell'ambito personale o familiare. In tal modo le masse femminili hanno indicato nuovi campi nei quali operare una profonda trasformazione: la sfera della famiglia oltre a quella della produzione e delle istituzioni politiche; i rapporti sessuali oltre ai rapporti di classe.¹⁷²

This new awareness called upon a major revision of the long-term political strategy for the working class:

Bisogna uscire da un vecchio schema, che influenzò anche il pensiero e l'azione di grandi rivoluzionari di ogni tempo, secondo cui prima si deve fare la rivoluzione sociale, e poi si risolverà la questione femminile. Non deve essere più così: il processo della rivoluzione sociale e quello della liberazione della donna devono procedere di pari passo e sostenersi l'un con l'altro.

¹⁷² Berlinguer's speech is titled *Avanzare verso il socialismo nella pace e nella democrazia. Unità delle forze operaie, popolari e democratiche per una direzione politica nuova dell'Italia e per il rinnovamento della Comunità europea*, and can be found in Pugliese and Pugliese (1985, 5 – 75). Both quotations are on page 62.

In the approach of the forthcoming election in June 1979, Unitelefilm produced a propaganda film specifically addressing women voters: *Insieme per cambiare* (20 minutes) directed, like the 1977 films dealing with women's issues, by Rosaria Polizzi. The film features interviews with several women, embodying different types of potential Communist voters, who explain to the viewer the reasons why they are going to vote for the PCI at the forthcoming election. A middle-aged woman who voted for the PCI in the previous 1976 election as a 'voto di protesta', namely as a way to demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the Democrazia Cristiana, is this time going to vote with conviction and awareness for the Italian Communist Party:

Adesso è un voto cosciente, anche perché ho dei figli e quindi mi aspetto nel futuro che i miei figli possano vivere in una società diversa, una società che sia uguale per tutti, che non vi siano discriminazioni, che possa lavorare e vivere in un mondo dove ci sia la pace.

A young *femminista* also expresses her intention to vote for the PCI as she feels that militancy in the feminist movement alone cannot solve the problems of women. She also claims that the PCI is the political party which is fighting, more than any other, for women's rights:

E' un partito in cui, anche se con un po' di ritardo, ma in cui le donne sono molto cambiate, in cui si discute, in cui si affrontano problemi molto, molto, molto importanti, insomma, oggi come oggi, ad esempio la difesa della legge sull'aborto il partito comunista la fa, la fa con più coraggio di molti altri.

In this respect, the voice-over stresses how it is only thanks to Communist party policy of pursuing a compromise with a wide range of social and political forces that

the abortion bill has finally been approved. This claim is certainly aimed at targeting the feminist voters, urging them to avoid radicalism and trusting, instead, the gradualism of the Italian Communist Party.

Chapter 13. The Crisis of the PCI (1977 – 1979)

Fra tutte le scelte compiute da Berlinguer nella sua segreteria, quella di giocarsi la vittoria del 20 giugno [1976] con un'astensione appare di più difficile comprensione per il popolo di sinistra.

This trenchant statement by left-wing historian and political scientist Giorgio Galli, published in the 1977 edition of his *Storia del PCI*, effectively describes left-wingers' disappointment with PCI policy over the years 1976 – 1979. During these years, the Communist party was stuck, to quote Guido Crainz, in a 'compromesso senza dignità e risultati di carattere storico' with the Democrazia Cristiana (2005, 552). Berlinguer's decision to allow the *monocolore democristiano*, led by Giulio Andreotti, to be in power, between 29 July 1976 and 16 January 1978 through the benign abstention of Communist MPs, actually had no alternative unless the PCI was ready to accept the risks posed by a long phase of political instability. This would occur in the context of the most serious economic crisis since 1945.

In fact, such a decision was ultimately consistent with Togliatti's political heritage: the working class was supposed to act as a 'classe nazionale' and take on the problems of the country (Barbagallo 2007, 22- 23). In order to fulfil such a role, in autumn 1976, the PCI endorsed the austerity measure proposed by the so-called 'Governo della non sfiducia'. This produced dismay among party militants and resulted in a dramatic fracture between the PCI and the student movement which, from that moment onward, would no longer constitute a pool of potential votes for the PCI, as had been the case since 1968. This became clear at the beginning of 1977 when Berlinguer's policy was resolutely challenged by fringes of students and young workers starting a new and rather anomalous movement which became known as *Il*

Movimento del '77 (Lumley 1998, 273 – 290). This movement specifically targeted the incipient collaboration between the PCI and the DC, strongly opposed the austerity measures implemented by the Andreotti government (and endorsed by the PCI), and it championed, instead, the reduction of working hours and an expansion of private consumption. In this respect, the *Movimento del '77* was a forerunner of trends that would fully develop in the next decade: the exponential growth of consumerism, and the central role played by consumption, rather than work, in constructing individuals' personality.

To be fair to Berlinguer, he did not merely sanction Andreotti's decision to impose austerity measures, but sought instead to exploit the economic crisis and the consequent necessity of austerity measures in order to partially reshape the country's economic system according to a socialist model. In Berlinguer's vision, austerity could potentially be 'un'occasione per trasformare l'Italia'. This was the title of the first of the two speeches delivered by the PCI leader in January 1977 in front of an audience of left-wing intellectuals and factory workers respectively.¹⁷³ According to Berlinguer, austerity could pave the way for the construction of a new society based on 'una programmazione dello sviluppo che abbia come fine la elevazione dell'uomo nella sua essenza umana e sociale', 'il superamento dei modelli di consumo ispirati ad uno sfrenato individualismo', 'la partecipazione dei lavoratori e dei cittadini al controllo delle aziende, dell'economia, dello Stato', and 'la solidarietà e cooperazione internazionale'.

Although undoubtedly motivated by moral reasons, including a genuine concern for the disruptive impact of industrial production on the environment,

¹⁷³ See Berlinguer (1977). An overview of the interpretations of Berlinguer's *austerità* in the historiography is in Soddu (2007, 69 – 71).

Berlinguer's proposal was unlikely to be welcomed by the country as it arrived too late: consumerism had already made its way, at least from the years of the boom, into the hearts and minds of Italians, workers and bourgeois alike. Even the Italian working class objectives, once the seizure of power had been put aside or indefinitely postponed, had progressively come to coincide with aspirations towards higher living standards, and in a framework which was essentially social democratic. This had occurred in spite of the fact that the PCI had always countered the social democratic model, given its inability at overcoming the capitalist system (Gozzini 2001, 119; Lusanna 2007, 155 - 6).

Berlinguer himself strived to find an unprecedented, and frankly rather unlikely, *terza via* between social democracy and Soviet-style socialism, coining the formula of the *eurocomunismo* (Salvadori 1978; Boggs and Plotke 1980). In this sense, the proposal made by Berlinguer to the working class, the intellectuals and party members to voluntarily embrace austerity was part of a more general design aimed at revitalizing a revolutionary strategy in order to peacefully overcome a capitalist system that, due to a crucial misjudgement, was regarded as close to collapse. However, the movement of 1977, which was politically influenced by the *sinistra extraparlamentare*, did not grasp the complexity of Berlinguer's design and interpreted PCI policy as a surrender before the class enemy. The economic crisis had made young people even more resentful as it had produced a strong sense of social exclusion: students felt that their degrees would no longer automatically guarantee well-paid jobs and high living standards while young workers seemed to be doomed to unemployment or, at best, to unskilled professions. Cultural issues also divided the PCI and the new movement. In particular, young people's aspirations for

material well-being, and the urgent need for freedom in all fields, including the sexual one - perhaps the most enduring legacy of the *contestazione* - were as far from the austere and rather moralistic pedagogy of the Italian Communist Party as could be imagined.

Such various factors aroused criticism against the PCI which was accused by the movement of exclusively safeguarding the interests of the already well-protected industrial workers of the great factories, and having abandoned the lowest strata of the population by trading political opposition to the DC for a share of political power. At the beginning, the movement had a rather creative and joyful character. In this respect the *Movimento del '77*, albeit a short-lived movement (February – September 1977), left a deep cultural mark, especially on popular consumer products such as comics and music. Very soon, however, part of the movement, and especially a network of radical groups called *autonomia*, leaned towards violent confrontation. A defining moment of the escalation of violence were the clashes which occurred on 17 February 1977 between the *autonomia* and the CGIL's security organisation, at *La Sapienza* in Rome. A few weeks later, the city of Bologna, that is to say the propaganda showpiece of the Italian Communist Party, became the stage of violent clashes between the movement and the police, which resulted in the death of *Lotta Continua*'s militant Francesco Lorusso on 11 March 1977.

The PCI reaction to these events was anything but sympathetic to the movement. On 14 March 1977, the PCI held a meeting of the *Comitato Centrale* devoted to 'I compiti e le iniziative dei comunisti di fronte alla condizione giovanile nell'attuale crisi del paese'.¹⁷⁴ The leader of the FGCI, Massimo D'Alema, claimed

¹⁷⁴ See *l'Unità*, 14/3/1977, front page.

in his opening report that what had happened in Rome and Bologna marked the beginning of ‘una fase nuova e più acuta della strategia della tensione’. In D’Alema’s reading, the outbreak of violence was attributable to factions of *squadristi* who, by exploiting young people’s anger due to unemployment, were trying to target the PCI, the democratic movement, as well as the Republican regime in order to pave the way to reactionary forces.¹⁷⁵

Such a frenzied reaction was probably due to that organicist vision which characterized the Communist leadership in the 1970s and that, according to a few authors, was the philosophical framework of the *Compromesso storico* policy (Ignazi 2006, 10 - 11). This was ultimately aimed at creating an ideal society in which the political and social conflict would be nullified by a preventive agreement among the democratic parties and via a common management of politics. Even individual self interest would be ‘metodicamente combattuto e sconfitto nelle sue stesse radici’, so that ‘il bene del singolo venga a coincidere realmente con il bene generale’ (Rodano 1975, 40 - 41). Given this organicist framework, the PCI leadership regarded any dissidence towards the *Compromesso storico* policy as exclusively motivated by the selfish desire to sabotage the effort to save the nation and create a fairer society.

Nonetheless, the PCI desired the *Movimento del ‘77* to be more attentively analysed in order to address young people’s needs and aspirations. Such analysis was provided by Ugo Gregoretti’s *I giovani, il lavoro, la crisi*. This film, which has a running time of 14 minutes, effectively illustrates the effort made by the PCI to understand the students and meet, so to speak, the *Movimento* halfway. At the same time, it reveals that the party was unwilling to fundamentally question its policy. The

¹⁷⁵ D’Alema’s report in *l’Unità*, 15/3/1977, front page and page 6.

opening statement by the voice-over commentary recognises that the student movement has posed political questions that the party and the Italian Workers' movement must address:

L'Italia riscopre bruscamente, nel 1977, l'esistenza di una questione giovanile. La rivolta nelle università [...] rivolge il suo attacco, per la prima volta, direttamente, verso il movimento operaio e il partito comunista.

At the same time, however, the voice-over commentary describes the student revolt as motivated by 'un intreccio di aspirazioni di rinnovamento e di radicalismo corporativo'. This claim shows how the *Movimento del '77* remained a rather enigmatic, even puzzling, phenomenon for the PCI as it could hardly be construed in accordance with known categories. For this reason, the documentary focuses primarily on unemployment - a problem the party was well acquainted with. In this respect, the voice-over commentary claims that the party is determined to tackle the issue of unemployment, while avoiding a painful and counterproductive split between young unemployed people and industrial workers 'tra chi un lavoro ce l'ha e magari rischia di perderlo e chi non ce l'ha ancora e non lo trova'. Young people, the commentary claims, have the right to organise themselves independently but, at the same time, they must find their place 'a fianco dei lavoratori'.

Meanwhile, the editing provides footage depicting the protests occurring that year, showing both peaceful processions of young protesters as well as members of the *autonomia* wearing helmets and brandishing iron bars. Cinematographically, *I giovani, il lavoro, la crisi* is quite similar to Ugo Gregoretti's *Contratto*, the 1969 film devoted to the *autunno caldo*. Unlike what he did in his previous film, however,

director Gregoretti never hands over the floor to the protesters and the film's message is solely entrusted to the voice-over commentary. The film also lacks musical accompaniment. Because of these features, *I giovani, il lavoro, la crisi* clearly communicates the embarrassment and bewilderment of the party in dealing with the *Movimento del '77*.

Because the film has established that the outbreak of the movement is ultimately due to unemployment, the final say lies with the CGIL. *I giovani, il lavoro, la crisi* thus features an interview with CGIL leader Bruno Trentin, who appears much less self-confident than in the scene of the film *Contratto* in which he victoriously leaves the final negotiating conference at FIAT. Trentin cannot help but admit that the CGIL is unprepared to deal with a movement which seems to possess unique characteristics:

Siamo di fronte ad un problema senza precedenti e che pone all'intero paese una serie di questioni rispetto alle quali forse non solo la classe politica dominante ma anche il movimento operaio è ancora abbastanza impreparato.

According to Trentin, the root cause of youth discontent lies in the 'scolarizzazione di massa' achieved by the workers' movement over the past decade. This has produced thousands of young educated people who are no longer content with 'un salario qualunque' and want a job corresponding to their level of study. The Italian economic system, however, cannot fulfil such aspirations. Not surprisingly, young people are leaning towards:

una specie di autodifesa corporativa che trasforma il titolo di studio in una specie di diritto, non ad un lavoro diverso, come certamente è giusto,

ma un lavoro tutelato, protetto dalle regole burocratiche di un vecchio stato assistenziale.

Noticeably, in this part of the interview, Trentin seems to tackle the problem of the ‘liberalizzazione delle professioni’, an issue that Italian politicians would debate for decades and something that has retained much contemporary significance in present-day Italy.

After the political analysis, the film goes on to illustrate what the PCI and the CGIL are concretely doing to address young people’s problems. The voice-over commentary reads the articles of the ‘legge per il pre-avviamento al lavoro’ proposed by the PCI, which consisted in a reform of the *uffici di collocamento*.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, the film mentions the newly established farmers’ cooperatives sponsored by the CGIL in the south of Italy and, in order to prove the CGIL’s commitment towards the young unemployed, shows ‘un’occupazione simbolica di terre malcoltivate’ by a group of young people organised by the CGIL and occurring near Tivoli. This scene is actually unintentionally amusing. It recalls the Communist films depicting the land occupations promoted by the PCI in the south of Italy in the late 1940s. Instead of a long procession of black-veiled women and poorly-dressed peasants riding mules, however, it features long-haired young men wearing elephant leg pants and Ray-Ban sunglasses and hippie girls with headbands and flowers in their hair. Times had really changed.

The ambiguous formula of the ‘non sfiducia’ lasted one and a half years. At the beginning of 1978, the PCI believed times were ripe to officially enter the majority,

¹⁷⁶ See *Un progetto di legge del PCI per cambiare il collocamento*, in *l’Unità*, 27/5/1977, 4. See also *Tempi stretti per il lavoro ai giovani. E’ con la mobilitazione unitaria che si attua la legge sul pre-avviamento*, in *l’Unità* 2/9/1977, 2.

and asked the DC to jointly form a 'governo di solidarietà e di unità democratica'.¹⁷⁷ The anti-Communist stance of part of the DC and the US government's firm opposition, however, could not be overcome. The negotiation for the new government lasted for two months and ended inconclusively. The kidnapping of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades, on 16 March 1978, forced the PCI to vote in favour of another Andreotti government which once again excluded the PCI and lasted until January 1979. At the next election of 3 June 1979 the PCI lost almost one and a half million votes. Berlinguer blamed:

il massiccio e concentrato attacco che, da più parti diverse, con straordinaria dovizia di mezzi e ricorrendo a mistificazioni di ogni sorta è stato sistematicamente portato al partito comunista negli ultimi tre anni e nel corso della campagna elettorale.¹⁷⁸

Claiming that the attack on the PCI had come 'from different directions', Berlinguer was referring to the ongoing ideological and political friction between the PSI and the PCI. Aiming to reverse the progressive political marginalization of the PSI caused by Berlinguer's policy of the *Compromesso storico*, the socialist leader Bettino Craxi had challenged the PCI on the ideological plane, denouncing the totalitarian character of every form of communism as being opposed to the libertarian and non-Leninist tradition of the kind of socialism embodied by the PSI.¹⁷⁹ This had provoked an ideological skirmish which coincided with the

¹⁷⁷ See *Domani le dimissioni di Andreotti*, in *l'Unità*, 15/1/1978, front page.

¹⁷⁸ See *Dichiarazione di Berlinguer*, in *l'Unità*, 5/6/1979, front page.

¹⁷⁹ On the publication of the so-called *Vangelo socialista*, attributed to Craxi but actually written by Luciano Pellicani, in the magazine *l'Espresso*, in 1978, see Musella (2007, 155 – 166).

deterioration of political relations between the two historic parties of the Italian left.¹⁸⁰

There were, however, various cultural and political reasons behind the electoral defeat, as effectively shown by a few films produced by the PCI in 1979, and especially by Ansano Giannarelli's *Un film sul PCI*. The film in question, which has a running time of one hour, chronicles four months in the life of the Italian Communist Party from December 1978 until March 1979. Fifty hours of colour footage were recorded for a film entirely devoted to party militants, featuring interviews with Communist workers, meetings held in the party *sezioni* around Italy and *assemblee di quartiere* in Bologna and Naples. The only statement by a party leader is an excerpt of the speech given by Enrico Berlinguer at a meeting of the Livornese *Federazione del Pci* on 18 February 1978. The leader of the party hints at two central issues: the Sino-Vietnamese War (17 February – 16 March 1978), and the PCI's return to opposition (31 January 1979). The former has profoundly shocked the rank and file, as it seems to deal a further, perhaps fatal, blow to socialist internationalism.

A perplexed dockworker of Genoa asks Ansano Giannarelli:

Ma sono socialisti tutti e due questi stati? C'è qualcosa che non funziona nell'uno o nell'altro? Mi viene voglia di credere che anche qui c'è una lotta per l'accaparrazione dei mercati [...] l'unione dei paesi socialisti dove va a finire?

¹⁸⁰ See Ajello (1997, 187 – 192). For a general overview about the PCI – PSI quarrel in the 1980s, see Colarizzi (2007).

The interviewee also laments the lack of information and analysis by a party leadership which looks increasingly embarrassed in addressing issues related to socialist countries:

Ecco, il lavoratore si chiede queste cose, io sono lavoratore portuale, dico, che cos'è che non mi avete spiegato? Perché succedono questi fatti? Per esempio, non so tutto quello che è successo dopo Mao, come funziona laggiù? [...] Io lavoratore comunista devo essere informato per sostenere queste discussioni in mezzo agli altri lavoratori.

Such reticence threatens to erode militants' remaining certitudes, including the belief in the actual possibility of a democratic form of socialism:

Ecco, noi a quale socialismo vogliamo riferirci? Un socialismo che purtroppo non esiste ancora in nessun paese, un socialismo nuovo da costruire insieme a tutte le forze che rappresentano la nostra società, come già detto socialista, comunista, cattolica, ma non solo, noi chiediamo l'alleanza delle altre classi, classi che non possono essere nemici della classe operaia: quella dei ceti medi, della piccola impresa, dell'artigianato e via dicendo. Ma è possibile, dico io, costruire un socialismo del genere? [...] E' utopia quella che noi vogliamo creare?

Even when party leaders and intellectuals address such topics, they use a language that is barely understandable to ordinary militants. In this respect, another dockworker claims:

Io leggevo *Rinascita* stamattina, sono andato a prendere l'enciclopedia, non conto balle, perché volevo saper cosa diceva, ma non si può sempre fare un affare del genere, eh!

One of the editors of *l'Unità* confirms that the newspaper receives many letters of complaints concerning the language of the articles and denounces the party's disregard for its official newspaper:

Vorremmo che dell'*Unità* si parlasse di più nelle sezioni del nostro partito, e che se ne parlasse di più magari anche nei festival dell'*Unità*.

A *diffusore*, namely a Communist press voluntary promoter, stresses how the promotion of *l'Unità* is especially important now that the PCI's brief honeymoon with the bourgeois press seems over and a 'conspiracy of silence' against the Communist party is in full swing. Subsequently, the film shows how militants generally welcomed the news of the PCI's return to opposition with relief. This is demonstrated by a *segretario di sezione* from the podium at a pre-congress meeting:¹⁸¹

Si può dire che questa posizione del partito ha recuperato nei compagni la grinta, la volontà di tornare a fare politica.

As pointed out by another comrade, this sounds like a blatant disavowal of the *Compromesso storico* policy by ordinary militants:

No, io mi voglio chiedere, e penso che questo interrogativo come me se lo sono chiesto tantissimi altri compagni, cioè, se noi effettivamente, almeno tutti gli attivisti, abbiamo capito, ripeto, abbiamo capito, il valore del P.C.I. che è entrato nella maggioranza ed è rimasto poi in quel periodo nell'astensione.

Not only do socialist ideology and national party policy appear in crisis, but also Communist policy at grass-roots level. In particular, the new *giunte rosse* formed

¹⁸¹ On this point, see Ginsborg (1989, 540 – 41).

after the election of 1975 strove to meet the high expectations of the people.¹⁸² In this respect, there is a significant scene that depicts a public meeting attended by the Communist mayor of Naples Maurizio Valenzi, who appears besieged with citizens' requests and complaints. Eventually, he cannot take it anymore and has a public and rather telling outburst:

Durante l'estate scorsa mi è successo che ero talmente esasperato, durante la notte mi alzavo e non potevo più respirare. [...] Mi mandavano nella stanza gente e bambini che facevano le bizze, che non andavano via se non gli davò il lavoro. I bambini che venivano facevano la pipì nel corridoio, ed erano malati e volevano che noi li curassimo. Tutti me li hanno mandati per rendermi la vita impossibile. Ma non siamo andati via. Poi discutiamo quanto volete, ma partiamo da qua, benedetto Iddio! Sennò è finita. Sennò facciamo il gioco dei nostri nemici i quali oggi cercano di buttarci sulle spalle le loro colpe. E molti di noi ci cadono.

Even in Bologna, a city ruled for decades by the PCI according to a seemingly unshakable model based on class alliances, things are not going so smoothly as in previous years. The wound of March 1977, in particular, has not yet healed, and the administration is trying to mend a relationship with the student movement.

During a meeting of a *comitato di quartiere* with students, mayor Renato Zangheri presents the measures he has taken in order to help young people and solve the problem of youth marginalisation. A young man, in all likelihood a member of the FGCI, says:

¹⁸² On this point see Ginsborg (1989, 531 – 38).

Credo che abbiamo segnato un passo in avanti con la riunione di questa sera, abbiamo segnato anche un metodo di lavoro nelle lotte, e non unità formale, in cui le istituzioni qua presenti hanno anche un ruolo che può essere positivo.

Another student, however, claims that the PCI statements concerning socially marginalized youth are ‘semplicemente un bel discorso, una posizione di principio astratta’ and points out how marginalisation is due not only to unemployment but also to a philosophy of government shared by the *giunte rosse*.

In hindsight, *Un film sul PCI* is a rather faithful and even merciless portrait of the political and cultural crisis of the Italian Communist Party at the end of the 1970s. It is also the swan song of the Italian working class - or its last picture show (Carotti 1992, 60) - namely it is the last film to hand the floor to factory workers before the dramatic defeat of the trade unions at the FIAT, in September 1980, definitively ended the decade of the *centralità operaia*, pushing the Italian working class into cultural oblivion.

Un film sul PCI had a good review by Mino Argentieri in *Rinascita*.¹⁸³ Gian Carlo Pajetta, on the other hand, strongly disliked the film’s pessimistic tone and asked for major changes, which director Ansano Giannarelli refused to make.¹⁸⁴ As a consequence, *Un film sul PCI* had a very limited distribution.¹⁸⁵

Some of the topics contained in the film were further developed in two other productions of that year. Luigi Perelli made a 30-minute film devoted to *l’Unità*

¹⁸³ See *Rinascita* n. 16, 27/4/1979, 36.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Ansano Giannarelli, Rome, 30/6/2011. According to Edoardo Novelli, selected scenes taken from *Un film sul PCI* were broadcast by the PCI in its ‘tribuna elettorale autogestita’ in 1979 (1995, 193).

¹⁸⁵ *l’Unità* reports the news of a projection organized by the Federazione Romana del PCI at the *Teatro Centrale* of Rome on 11 April 1979. See *Sarà presentato oggi “Un film sul PCI”*, in *l’Unità*, 11/4/1979, 10.

titled *Dai comunisti un quotidiano popolare*, while Ansano Giannarelli, using the footage shot for *Un film sul PCI*, edited a 19-minute colour documentary devoted to youth marginalisation titled *Giovani*.

The former aimed at reassessing the importance of *l'Unità* for Communist politics and propaganda, in a period in which the official newspaper of the party was losing both readers and *diffusori*. *L'Unità* is said not to be merely 'l'organo di un partito' but rather 'un grande giornale popolare e di massa'. According to Togliatti's definition quoted by Alfredo Reichlin during an interview included in the film, it could even be said to be 'Il *Corriere della Sera* della sinistra', namely the newspaper through which left-wing public opinion is formed.

The first part of the film is devoted to the glorious history of the newspaper funded by Antonio Gramsci and courageously published for the first time on 12 February 1924, that is with the Fascists already in power. According to the voice-over commentary, from the very beginning *l'Unità* 'punta subito a diventare un giornale di massa, parlando il linguaggio dei lavoratori, interpretandone i bisogni, aiutandone lo sviluppo'. A shining example of fierce determination, the Communist newspaper never ceased publication, not even during the Fascist dictatorship. Two days after the liberation of Rome by the allied troops, *l'Unità* is back on newsstands and 'si impone come strumento essenziale delle battaglie per la difesa e lo sviluppo della democrazia, per l'emancipazione delle classi lavoratrici'. The voice-over claims that *l'Unità* had a prominent role in the great victories of the party during the Republican period: the struggle against the *Legge truffa*, the *luglio '60* and the trade union victories over 1968 – 69.

In 1976, *l'Unità*'s circulation reached 130,000. The tone of the documentary, however, becomes less triumphant once it gets closer to 1979. The crisis affecting Communist presses emerges distinctly during an interview with a group of *diffusori* from Tuscany. Door to door selling is getting harder and harder as people have become less interested in the party's political message. Fewer people attend political debates in the party sections, and young people are noticeably absent. One of the *diffusori* speaks of 'scadimento ideale'. The director of *l'Unità*, Alfredo Reichlin, claims that 'Il mondo è cambiato', due to the expansion of higher education and television. *l'Unità* must change accordingly, 'ripensare e rinnovare', says Reichlin. In this respect, the newspaper has already been modernized from a technical standpoint, and the documentary proudly shows the new equipment recently acquired by the Communist newspaper. It is not, however, just a matter of technology. The truth is, claims Reichlin, that political enemies are constantly trying to demoralise Communist voters. They cannot any longer claim that Communists 'hanno la coda' or 'mangiano i bambini' as they used to, and they are spreading new and more sophisticated lies aimed at demolishing 'la coscienza democratica dei lavoratori', such as that political parties are all the same or that the exploited and exploiters' dichotomy no longer exists. In order to counter such a political and ideological offensive, the party must, according to Reichlin, 'ricostruire le sue grandi idee, grandi idee forza su cui poggiare il movimento delle masse e la lotta per il rinnovamento'. As far as the newspaper is concerned, a profound renewal with respect to content and format is underway. Reichlin assures that the Communist newspaper will not, however, fall into the trap of the 'americanizzazione', that is to

say a model of information which tends to describe politics as if it were a variety show.

The final part of the film, featuring footage taken from *Togliatti è ritornato* (1948) and from *Festival dell'Unità* (1972) by Ettore Scola is rather telling with respect to the psychological state of the party. In fact, it looks like an attempt to enthuse the audience, supposedly composed of party militants, making them remember the halcyon days of yesteryear. These were the years of Togliatti's leadership, when militants and cadres' faith in the final victory of Communism was unshakable, or the PCI's ascendancy in first years of the 1970s, when it was still possible to enjoy the chorus of the Red Army without embarrassment, and to joyfully sing *Bandiera rossa* along with the Giovanna Marini at the Festival dell'Unità.

As mentioned above, another documentary revealing the crisis of Communist policy at the end of the 1970s was produced in 1979. The film in question is Ansano Giannarelli's *Giovani* (19 minutes).¹⁸⁶ This film is principally aimed at exorcising two ghosts harassing the PCI: the *autonomia*, and the so-called *riflusso*, namely the widespread tendency of political disengagement initiated at the end of the 1970s. The *riflusso*, which took the shape of a general retreat into the private sphere, was essentially the result of the awareness that politics had, somehow, failed, as it could not solve all problems - as widely believed during the long phase of collective political engagement initiated in 1968 - and it could certainly not solve existential problems (Ajello 1997, 213 – 19, Crainz 2005, 560 – 1). *Giovani* aims at dispelling the myth that young people are no longer interested in politics or that, when they practise politics, they are exclusively 'gli autonomi con la pistola', by depicting

¹⁸⁶ Ninety-five copies of *Giovani* were distributed to the federazioni. See AAMOD Archive, Unitelfilm Archive, Faldone "G", fascicolo "Giovani".

young people getting organised and fighting side by side with the working class under the guidance of the Communist party.¹⁸⁷ The film features, for example, young members of a farming cooperative near Palermo, a demonstration of young unemployed in Naples, another demonstration against violence and terrorism in Genoa, as well as several interviews. What emerges is a portrait of a generation which, although affected by dramatic problems such as unemployment, lack of affordable housing and the risk of social marginalization, is still willing to fight for a better society: ‘Questo non è certo riflusso, scelta individualistica, rifugio nel privato’, claims the voice-over commentary, and it is neither ‘l’ideologia della disperazione, la pratica della violenza, il verbalismo pseudorivoluzionario’. Watching the film, however, one cannot help but get the impression that it manages, above all, to prove the existence of what it intends to negate: the fall in political tension and the consequent crisis of the relationship between the PCI and young people. The narrative structure of the voice-over commentary, which is constructed on denials (‘young people are not this’, ‘they are not that...’), as well as the very fact that the PCI felt the need to produce a film like this, are revealing in this respect. Besides, there are a few admissions here and there. For example, a young Communist militant who passed to the PCI after the dissolution of *Lotta Continua*

¹⁸⁷ Enrico Berlinguer, in the opening speech of the Fifteenth Congress of the Italian Communist Party, attempted an analysis of the *riflusso*, which he regarded as a misleading term: ‘Noi respingiamo il giudizio superficiale e semplicistico secondo cui nel mondo giovanile sarebbe in atto un «riflusso». Ciò che viene chiamato «riflusso» nasconde, in realtà, anche fatto nuovi e positivi, come l’esigenza di un impegno individuale più serio nello studio e nel lavoro, nell’attenzione ai problemi dell’affermazione della propria personalità, ai problemi della famiglia e dei rapporti affettivi, e dell’amicizia. Sorge, tra molti giovani, anche il bisogno di una riflessione sull’esperienza compiuta in questi anni, sulle lotte e sui movimenti cui essi hanno dato vita o partecipato e che, spesso, sono stati segnati da una visione della politica e della rivoluzione che viene oggi largamente considerata utopistica e schematica. Tuttavia, anche noi non ci nascondiamo il rischio che in grandi masse di giovani tutto ciò possa condurre ad una sfiducia nella lotta politica democratica, ad una incomprendimento della esigenza fondamentale dell’impegno collettivo e sociale per mutare la propria condizione e trasformare la realtà’. Berlinguer concluded urging the working class to establish an alliance with ‘la grandi masse giovanili’. Berlinguer’s speech is in Pugliese and Pugliese (1985, 5 – 75), the quotation is at p. 60.

(which had occurred in 1976) claims that 'c'è stata una caduta di tensione rispetto a qualche anno fa'. He says that anti-imperialism, in particular, is no longer an issue capable of mobilizing young people as was the case until a few years earlier. This seems especially due to the end of the Vietnam War.

Overall, *Giovani* reveals the loss of that collective dimension on which the Communist party had built its political and electoral fortune from the end of WWII onwards. The PCI is no longer able to include the new generation in its social and political network at grass-roots level, and young people seem therefore ready to fall into the hands of the rampant consumerism advertised by the mass media.

The film ends showing more demonstrations, and the voice-over commentary makes a triumphant final statement which sounds more like a pipe-dream:

Sono casi eccezionali? Sono una minoranza? No, sono alcuni esempi di centinaia di migliaia, di milioni di giovani che insieme al partito comunista vogliono uscire dalla crisi, trovare lavoro, costruire insieme nuovi modi di vita, elaborare nuovi valori, cambiare la società, renderla più giusta e umana, sviluppare la democrazia e lottare per la realizzazione del socialismo.

The neoliberalism of the 1980s, however, and the new ideas it entailed, such as individualism and self-reliance, would soon undermine people's political commitment and many were to withdraw into the private sphere in order to seek satisfaction for their individual needs, and in the safe environment of their living rooms.

Chapter 14. The Selling of Unitefilm.

In summer 1977, Dario Natoli left Unitefilm to become deputy director of the newly established RAI 3, the third channel of the public broadcasting service. This plunged Unitefilm into a crisis that proved to be final. Quite apart from the lack of management – the new director Francesco Maselli was appointed only in 1978 – the reason for the crisis of the PCI film production company lay in a dramatic shift with respect to the communication strategy of the party. The PCI decided, in fact, to focus on television. This was due to two reasons. On one hand, the PCI had managed to become much more influential in the public broadcasting service than ever before following the *Riforma della Rai TV* of April 1975 (see part III, Chapter 11). In this respect, the non-Communist press regarded the appointment of Dario Natoli to RAI 3 as a sign that the PCI was finally taking part in the so-called *lottizzazione* of RAI TV, namely the division of power and offices of the public broadcasting network that the ruling parties had been doing for years.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, the unchecked diffusion of private television stations at the end of 1970s, encouraged the PCI to attempt the adventure of private broadcasting.

The issue of Communist commitment to private broadcasting has not been addressed by historians yet. Research conducted in both the Archivio Gramsci and the Archivio AAMOD has shown that, at the beginning of the 1980s, there were about eighteen local television stations controlled by the Italian Communist Party. Although this number might appear rather impressive, it must be taken into account that, according to official government figures, there were as many as 679 private television stations and no less than 3353 radio stations broadcasting in Italy at the

¹⁸⁸ See the article *Siamo lottizzati ma anche bravi. La parola ai dirigenti messi sotto accusa*, in *La Repubblica*, 12/8/1977, 13. On this affaire, see also *Dannose esasperazioni*, in *l'Unità*, 12/8/1977, 2.

end of 1979 (Ballini 2002, 30). Such a striking proliferation of private television, which had no parallel in any other European country, was due to the fact that the private broadcasting sector was without legislative regulation for over a decade. A sort of tacit agreement was in fact established between the principal corporations investing in private broadcasting and the leading political parties, particularly the DC and the PSI, entailing electoral support for the government in return for a deregulation that would allow business and profit to grow exponentially. In particular, the lack of any limitation on the sale of advertising space would be effectively exploited by the soon-to-be media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, who was laying the foundations of his media empire. Notoriously, he had a political patron in the leader of the PSI, Bettino Craxi (Monteleone 1992, 443; Ortoleva 2008, 145). In this context, private televisions became pivotal for the DC and the PSI communication strategy.

In view of the 1979 election, many local televisions, constantly seeking low-cost TV shows to fill the schedules, broadcast several '*tribuna elettorale* – like' TV shows in which politicians would pay to appear and which were generally characterized by a blatant pro-government ethos. The following year, in the run-up to the administrative election, Italians saw for the first time plenty of party election broadcasts aired by local television stations (Novelli 1995, 256 - 7). Communist interest in private broadcasting was thus motivated by the need to keep pace with the other political parties with respect to propaganda, especially at local level. Most of the Communist television stations were in fact founded at the initiative of the *federazioni regionali* and *provinciali* of the party. Because they lacked funding, many went bankrupt quite soon. Others, however, such as Video Uno of Rome,

Teleradio Milano 2, TeleVenezia and the Florentine TeleRegione, survived the break-in period and became locally well-known. The PCI therefore decided to support the development of a Communist television network and invest in the production of television shows to be syndicated to the various television stations politically linked to the party through the creation of NET (Nuova Emittenza Televisiva).¹⁸⁹ It was soon clear that such an endeavour required a large amount of money to be diverted from other types of propaganda.¹⁹⁰ The consequent lack of financing made the two final years of life of Unitelefilm especially difficult. For example, Unitelefilm's catalogue lists only eight films produced by the PCI film production company in 1979, including *Dai Comunisti un quotidiano popolare*, *Un film sul PCI*, and *Guido Rossa*.

The appointment of Adalberto Minucci as the new head of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, and a strong supporter of the party's commitment to television, led to the liquidation of Unitelefilm. The company was bought out by one of Unitelefilm's employees, Luciano Vanni, at the end of 1979. In November 1979, the Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico (AAMOD) was established with the aim of preserving the large collection of films and footage produced and collected by Unitelefilm over fifteen years of activity.¹⁹¹

Unitelefilm might have stayed in business for longer, if only it had been given a more central role in the party's cultural policy. This, however, had never been the case. A new cultural initiative taking place in Rome contributed to making

¹⁸⁹ See *Tv locali? Sì, ma intelligenti, I progetti della neonata NET*, in *l'Unità*, 23/5/1980, 8.

¹⁹⁰ In 1980, the PCI spent 840 million lire just on television hardware, see *Informazioni e proposte sulla nostra rete televisiva*, in IG, APCI, MF 488, pp. 1348 – 1359, December 1980.

¹⁹¹ See IG, APCI, MF 439, p. 2458, Istituti e Organismi vari, Archivio Storico audiovisivo del Movimento operaio, VI bim. 1979. The AAMOD foundation committee included Ivano Cipriani, Ansano Giannarelli, Paola Scarnati, Luciano Vanni, Cesare Zavattini (president), Pietro Ingrao, Giuseppe Chiarante, Romano Ledda, Citto Maselli, Fabio Mussi, Paolo Spriano, Giuliano Procacci, Ettore Scola, Bruno Trentin and Giorgio Amendola.

Unitefilm appear redundant and outdated. This was the famous *Estate romana*, a sort of festival of leisure and culture designed by the *Assessore alla cultura* of Rome, Renato Nicolini, and sponsored by the left-wing administration ruling the city. During the *Estate romana*, first held in 1977, citizens would enjoy a variety of cultural events such as poetry readings, plays, and film shows occurring in the streets and in the archaeological sites of the capital (Gundle 1995a, 479 – 86; Nicolini 2011). Because the festival was aimed at entertaining citizens eager to forget the economic crisis, terrorism and the widespread violence tainting the country, the *Estate romana* programme scheduled escapist feature films rather than politically engaged documentaries like those normally produced by Unitefilm. This seemed to suggest that Communist film production was not suitable for the general public. However, the problem was not so much that Unitefilm films were not entertaining enough with respect to the current public mood, but that the *Estate romana* marked a complete reversal in the PCI's approach to culture.

Communist cultural policy had previously been based on the assumption that cultural initiatives had to be designed with the aim of promoting the cultural elevation of the Italian masses, regardless of their appeal. With the *Estate romana*, a new conception made its way to Communist intellectuals and party leaders: cultural initiatives had to be evaluated according to measurable parameters, such as the number of people attending events, rather than by alleged and unquantifiable educational values. This conception led to the reassessment of a range of cultural products previously (at least in public) snubbed by Communist intellectuals, such as Hollywood movies and Italian popular cinema. Besides, profit became paramount. In this new cultural framework, the very existence of a production facility in permanent

financial deficit was bizarre. Rather significantly, Unitelefilm's crew and new director Francesco Maselli were among those who opposed the new course within the party (Medici, Morbidelli and Taviani 2001, 102 - 3).

PCI cinematographic production did not end completely with the selling of Unitelefilm. In fact, a few more films were produced in the 1980s. For example, in the run up to the administrative elections of 1980 and 1981, the party entrusted a group of left-wing directors with four documentaries concerning the accomplishments of left-wing local governments in the cities won by the PCI during the triumphant growth of the mid-1970s. Ugo Gregoretti shot *Comunisti quotidiani* (80 minutes), about Rome. Ettore Scola was entrusted with a film about Turin titled *Vorrei che volo* (66 minutes). Aldo and Antonio Vergine made *Un'eredità difficile* (66 minutes), about Naples. Giuseppe Bertolucci filmed *Panni sporchi* (95 minutes), which was supposed to depict the left-wing administration of Milan, but which turned into a documentary on social marginalization entirely shot at the central station of the northern metropolis.¹⁹² These four documentaries cost around one hundred million lire each but were scarcely effective from a propaganda perspective. Their length made them unsuitable for propaganda purposes and their editing finished too close to the elections (Novelli 1995, 218).

Although the last film produced by the PCI has been already discussed, it is worth mentioning the film again in the context of Unitelefilm's demise. The film in question is *L'addio a Enrico Berlinguer*, chronicling the funeral of Enrico Berlinguer in June 1984 (See Part III, Chapter 1). The film was a collective project involving, rather symbolically, many of the directors who had worked on films produced by the

¹⁹² See Ettore Scola, Ugo Gregoretti, Giuseppe Bertolucci *Un film una città. Cinque cineprese puntate sulle nostre città*, in *l'Unità*, 11/5/1980, p. 11.

Italian Communist Party from the early years. These included: Carlo Lizzani, Gillo Pontecorvo, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Rosaria Polizzi, Carlo di Palma, Ansano Giannarelli, Luigi Perelli, Riccardo Napilitano, Ugo Gregoretti, Bernardo Bertolucci, Giuseppe Bertolucci, Paolo Pietrangeli and Ettore Scola.

Conclusion

Bisogna convincersi che ci sono milioni e milioni di italiani che ignorano il nostro programma, e che sono ancora avvelenati dalla ventennale propaganda anticomunista del fascismo. Per convincere questi elettori non è certo sufficiente un bel manifesto, un opuscolo efficace, nè è sufficiente un comizio, anche se ben organizzato e ben riuscito. La propaganda frutta laddove trova un terreno fertile, ma è scartata con fastidio e con incredulità da tutti coloro che non conoscono quale sia veramente la politica del PCI. Avvicinarsi agli elettori dunque, andare casa per casa, fattoria per fattoria, spiegare come si vota, per chi conviene votare.

These remarks by Togliatti's personal secretary were published in *l'Unità* on 12 April 1946. They exemplify the pivotal role assigned to propaganda by the PCI leadership in the post-war years. They also provide an interpretive key to understanding the function assigned to films, as well as other mediated messages, in the party's communication strategy. Propaganda tools were not supposed to 'plough the ground' but rather plant seeds in a ground already prepared by the work of persuasive militants at grass-roots level.

In this sense, film was just one of the many tools available to the propagandist. This explains why the cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* did not bother to develop theoretical considerations on the specificity of film as a tool for propaganda. At the same time, they shared a misconception, widespread at the time, that films were 'a singularly powerful medium for propaganda' (Pronay and Spring 1982, 16). This accounted for the decision to invest in propaganda cinema from

1946. This was also a matter of prestige for the PCI, a visible sign of its ability to match the state-owned cinematographic company *Istituto Luce* in efficiency (Lizzani 1991, 102). This explains the tendency to stylistically imitate the newsreels produced during the Fascist regime, especially with respect to the stentorian voice-over, as in the case of *Togliatti è ritornato*.

Our analysis of early Communist propaganda films has revealed how deeply the party culture was influenced by both Stalinism and Catholicism. Symbolic elements borrowed from these two cultural traditions were effectively deployed by the party leadership to communicate cultural values, political perspectives and specific representations of the party. Films were also created to bolster the image of the leader endowed with charismatic, even mythical, traits. The research has also shown that, for these reasons, early PCI films were unsuitable for addressing non-Communist voters.

Over the following decades, the approach to propaganda cinema by the party leaders and the cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* did not evolve significantly. In fact, it was very often narrow-minded, being based on the assumption that propaganda messages, especially those conveyed by the voice-over commentary, had to be straightforward and explicitly consistent with the political positions of the party. The production of propaganda films and documentaries for the party, entrusted to the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, was kept rigidly separate from the theoretical elaboration on cinema developed by the *Commissione Culturale*. Nonetheless, PCI cinematography did improve with respect to narrative devices, as well as to shooting and editing techniques, and Communist propaganda films became much more effective during the second half of the 1950s. This was especially due to

the work of numerous top-level artists and intellectuals committed to party cinematographic production.

Until the crisis of 1956, those who worked on PCI's cinematographic productions were *intellettuali organici* and they generally considered themselves as such. Soldiers in an epic battle of ideas and ideologies, the outcome of which was already decided by the immutable laws of history, heralds of the cause of the proletariat, which was also the cause of justice on earth, they did not feel, or experienced to a negligible extent, the pressure exerted on them by the cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda*, with whom they shared a substantial identity of views. The shock of destalinization drove many intellectuals away from the party. But others remained and new ones were recruited, as was the case with the Taviani brothers who joined in the renewed efforts of the PCI in film production in the second half of the 1950s. This happened because, in a country like Italy culturally dominated by the DC and the Catholic Church, the Communist Party came to be seen, rightly or wrongly, as an oasis of secularism and freedom of opinion by many young intellectuals of the new generation. Togliatti's personal charm should also be taken into account, and his influence on many intellectuals, who looked at him as the politician who knew the most, saw further, and embodied a certain, fascinating idea of the Communist party.

Togliatti's death coincided, rather symbolically, with the foundation of Unitelefilm. The Communist film production company was beset by an inherent problem from the outset: it was an unsuccessful hybrid between a party branch and a private company. Too expensive to be financed exclusively by the party, Unitelefilm was, at the same time, so underfunded that it could not compete efficiently in the

market and too concerned with ideological and political issues to work as a private company. In the new production structure, the relationship between the party and those involved in Communist cinematographic production became less ideological and somehow more professional. Artists thus generally demanded a higher degree of autonomy. The cadres of the *Sezione Stampa e Propaganda* would usually check the film after the pre-editing phase, asking for peremptory modifications with respect to form and content if deemed necessary. Sometimes, like in the case of Ansano Giannarelli's *Un film sul PCI*, disagreement between them and the director meant that the film failed to be distributed. Quite rarely, however, did disputes have such a dramatic outcome. After all, those who worked at Unitelefilm productions were left-wingers, and very often either members or sympathizers of the PCI. As such, they were therefore willing to sacrifice some of their artistic freedom for the sake of the party. In the late 1960s, working for the PCI became fashionable among filmmakers in general, at least as long as the fascination with the *Cinema militante* lasted. Subsequently, what provided the Communist production company with new collaborators was the fact that Unitelefilm productions represented a good working opportunity for many young filmmakers as well as the appeal exerted on intellectuals and artists by a Communist party whose march to power seemed unstoppable. Enrico Berlinguer also played a part in this respect. The Communist leader was perceived as an earnest and honest politician, a man whose integrity could be 'doubted only by those who had none' (Sassoon 1996, 590)

Was PCI cinematic propaganda effective? Nicholas Reeves has demonstrated how difficult it is to make successful and appealing propaganda films, and how the assumption that cinema is a powerful propaganda tool, able to radically affect

viewers and produce profound transformations in the attitude and ideology of the population, has proved ill-founded in the light of recent research (1999). If even the Nazis and the Soviets obtained results which are deemed to have been slight when compared to the levels of investment made in cinematic propaganda, what could have been expected from the much smaller and rather ill-equipped Partito comunista italiano? In this respect, this research has shown how the lack of a well-structured film distribution network represented the most serious obstacle preventing the development of Communist cinematography in the 1960s and 1970s. As far as the late-1940s and early-1950s are concerned, censorship must be regarded as the major impediment.

Communist propaganda cinema had its moment of glory in the run up to the 1968 elections, when, due to a precise strategy aimed at reaching young voters, the party made an unprecedented investment in film production and distribution. After that election, the results of which proved that the power of cinematic propaganda in orienting voters was far from overwhelming, the fundamental problems of Unitelefilm became chronic and the Communist film production company struggled to find a functioning organisation and management structure. Nonetheless, Unitelefilm gave its contribution to the party propaganda effort over the following ten years and even produced some valuable films designed to be distributed outside the Communist film distribution network.

The films produced by the PCI faithfully chronicled the history of the party by addressing the principal issues of party policy. In this regard, several arguments have been made in the present thesis. Other interesting considerations can be made with respect to what PCI cinematography failed to tackle. As far as the early

production is concerned, for example, it is rather striking that Communist cinema, while being widely deployed in order to illustrate party policy and to praise the achievements of the USSR, was never used to explain the foundations of Communist ideology to militants (such as Marx's or Lenin's thought). It could be argued that Communist ideology played a marginal role in the leadership-militants relationship. This reveals a similarity between the PCI and the Catholic Church or, more precisely, the Pre-Conciliar Church: the rank and file were required to believe in the party and its leadership rather than in the 'holy books'. The study of the latter by non-experts could actually be dangerous, as it might lead to interpretations which were not in accordance with the official doctrine of the party. Hence the necessity to carefully select the books to promote among militants, like the *Storia del Partito Comunista (bolscevico) dell'Unione Sovietica. Breve corso* which gave the greatest assurances in this respect since it was the quintessence of Stalinist orthodoxy.

It is also worth noting that PCI cinematography virtually neglected industrial workers, devoting only a handful of films to the social class supposedly entrusted with the future political direction of the country. This is particularly important as far as the first half of the 1960s is concerned, when no films specifically devoted to the working class condition were produced.¹ This happened in spite of episodes which clearly signalled the emergence of a working class question in the country. One example of such a question were the so-called *Fatti di Piazza Statuto* of July 1962, when, in Turin, hundreds of young workers confronted the police for three days while disregarding trade unions calls for restraint.² Also ignored was the work of

¹ Unitefilm's crew did record several events concerning the Italian working class, such as strikes, demonstrations and CGIL meetings, but the footage was very rarely edited. Several examples of *film non finiti* concerning Italian industrial workers can be seen at the AAMOD archive.

² See Crainz (2003, 42 – 3).

several left-wing intellectuals who focused their attention on the industrial working class, and laid the foundation of the so-called *operaismo* (workerism), as was the case with Renato Panzieri and Mario Tronti.³ As a consequence, Communist cinematography of those years pictured an image of Italian society as rather exclusively composed of southern peasants, middle-class students, and unspecified ‘cittadini democratici’ peacefully marching for Vietnam. This was certainly consistent with the ‘politica unitaria’ strategy first engineered by Togliatti and subsequently endorsed by the PCI leadership following the Eleventh Congress, in 1966. They argued that it was important not to emphasize the PCI’s political links with the industrial workers in order to cast the PCI as a party safeguarding the interests of a wider range of social groups.

PCI cinematography became more attentive to the working class only from 1968 onwards, and especially after the Hot Autumn opened up the decade of *centralità operaia*. For example, Unitelefilm produced films such as *Sabato, domenica e lunedì*, *La fabbrica parla* (Terzo Canale n. 6) and *Un film sul PCI*. Yet, the most important documentary on the Italian working class, *Contratto*, was not produced by the PCI, but by the CGIL, while *Apollon* was a rather atypical product born in the cultural climate of the *Cinema militante*. Whereas the early PCI propaganda films were tailor-made for party militants, Unitelefilm’s productions seem to have been principally aimed at addressing petit bourgeois and middle-class voters such as professionals, students, shopkeepers and small land owners.

By the end of the 1970s, facing the boom of private broadcasting, cinema suddenly appeared to be an outdated and ineffective propaganda tool. Consequently,

³ See Grandi (2003, 8 – 16).

the PCI decided to close Unitefilm. The history of the Communists' commitment to private broadcasting deserves to be the subject of future research because of the insights it could provide into propaganda activities, decision-making processes and the culture of the Italian Communist Party, at both national and local level from the early 1980s onwards. The PCI's involvement in public broadcasting also deserves attention from historians as one of the principal purposes driving the party policy during the 1980s was to ensure party control over one channel of RAI TV. As far as the advent of private broadcasting is concerned, it can be seen, in retrospect, as a sign that a phase of Italian history was inexorably coming to an end: Italy was entering its post-industrial age. The reassuring, fundamentally immutable world which had been nurturing the growth of the Italian Communist Party, a world ordered according to well-defined ideologies and social classes, was crumbling with increasing speed and was to be replaced with a much different society. This would appear, to Communists' eyes, shapeless, confused, and unreasonably optimistic. Private broadcasting was a faithful reflection of this new Italy: a mixture of anarchism, exasperated localism, smug ignorance and bright entrepreneurial intuitions. This was the age of the so-called *neotelevisione*, as Umberto Eco famously defined it in 1983,⁴ building a new relationship with the viewer through its unbroken, chaotic and vaguely insane stream of TV shows and ultimately shaping a new kind of citizen. That part of Italy, making a living on private broadcasting and, at the same time, pictured in private television shows, was, in many respects, the truest, most traditional part of the country re-emerging victorious after years of intense, but clearly superficial, left-wing pedagogy. Communists, by contrast, experienced a progressive cultural

⁴ *La trasparenza perduta*, see the English translation in Eco (1990).

marginalization that episodes such as the huge gathering at the funeral of Berlinguer, or the victory at the 1984 European Parliament Elections could hide, but not reverse.

When the last leader of the PCI Achille Occhetto, making a very unusual gesture for a Communist leader, burst into tears at the Nineteenth Congress of the PCI (Bologna, 7-11 March 1990), following the decision to change the name of the party, there were no Communist filmmakers there to record the historical moment for the sake of Communist militants. That very night, an anonymous mass of television viewers saw the scene on the evening news.

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