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Liberation, national unity, and the politics of limited reform: Part 1: Italy, 1944-1948

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Liberation, national unity, and the politics of limited reform. Part I: Italy, 1944-1948.

Italy from the mid to late 1940s provides a classic instance of a massive uprising by the poorest elements in society in support of fundamental changes in their condition. The efforts of the Italian industrial working class and the peasantry through strike action, land seizures and military action in the Resistance, were supported by the unions and by the Socialist and Communist parties. But the political project for fundamental reform was undermined in the post-liberation settlement. The great wave of mobilisation generated during the mid-1940s subsided for a variety of reasons. With its subsidence, the hopes of fundamental change which had inspired many to risk their lives in the revolt against fascism and the German occupation declined. Italy's subsequent history was one of economic growth, but it was purchased at the expense of basic reforms on the land, in industry and the state.

Of course things did not go back to where they had stood in 1944. Conservatives opposed to Fascism formed the Christian Democratic Party in 1943. They enjoyed enough credibility to assume a leading position in the anti-fascist coalition which assumed office once the enfeebled Badoglio government had given way to a more representative provisional government. The Christian Democrats (DC) used their authority to consolidate an alliance which stretched across Italian party politics from the Resistance, Communists, Socialists and Liberals, to unions and business associations. The effect of Christian Democratic hegemony was to undermine the most radical elements in the coalition. But they made sufficient concessions to pressures for change from the peasantry and the working class to contain them, and thus to ensure major continuities with the social, economic and political status quo ante. These concessions were important in maintaining their hegemony: each time Christian Democratic policy shifted markedly to the right they experienced rather rapid deflations in electoral support.

The war-end

The fall of Mussolini and the collapse of Fascism, the German occupation and the Allied invasion left a political vacuum in Italy which a number of parties untainted with fascist associations attempted to fill. The most important of these were the Christian Democratic Party, closely associated with the Church; the Communist Party, closely associated with the Resistance and with a variety of working class and peasant movements; and the Socialist and Liberal parties, the latter the remnant of the pre-Fascist ruling class.

The Resistance must be counted as a political force within these parties both through its Committees of National Liberation (CLN) and because of the large number of Communist partisans, though its political life was short. The Allies had clear plans for post-war Italy. In the longer run, Italian politics were deeply marked by the Cold War.

Initially, the Communist Party occupied the centre of the

political forces which emerged in 1944. This was partly accomplished because Togliatti's strategy placed national unity in the fight for liberation ahead of and to the exclusion of reforms in state and economy. This strategy initially won important benefits for the party. It enabled the party to achieve a pivotal position within the coalition of forces on which Italy's provisional government was based. But it also constrained the party from taking full advantage of the political and economic upheavals in Italy at the end of the second world war to push through a programme of reforms, particularly on the land and in the industrial areas. Its national leaders used their authority within the unions, and to a lesser extent the peasantry, to dampen their protests, and to reduce the effects of these protests on Italian politics. Despite their historical links within the movements for land reform and the reconstruction of industry, the Communists came to play a restraining and conservative role. It was fearful that a radical position might induce Allied intervention. But it also developed a preference for electoral over protest politics.

Communist strategy dovetailed with the inter-classism of the Christian Democrats. As the Christian Democrats consolidated their position, with considerable help from other conservative forces in Italy, the Allied occupying forces and later the United States government, the Communists and Socialists were forced into opposition, and the reforms in state and economy which they were distinctively able to identify, and for which the partisans had made such sacrifices, were dropped from the political agenda of Italian governments, or displaced by limited reforms which achieved a degree of social consensus without significantly changing the major institutions of Italian society. In the longer run, the need to define a precise programme for reform was postponed, thus blurring the policy options available to the left.

Potentially three foci for reform in Italy presented themselves during the 1940s and the 1950s: the land and industry, both seething with discontent, and the state. These will be briefly outlined, and then some attention will be paid to the politics of the process which began with Mussolini's resignation and kidnapping on 25 July 1943, and ended with the Christian Democratic victory in the general election of 1948.

A Political mobilisation

The political and military circumstances of the mobilisation were crucial factors in shaping its progress. Both peasant and industrial unrest were exacerbated by Italy's weakening military situation and the collapse of Mussolini's government. The wretched conditions of the two elements of the subordinate classes and strata -- the industrial working class and the peasantry -- provide the setting for the massive upheavals which commenced even before Mussolini's downfall. The end of fascist rule changed Italy's relations with Germany from a partner to an occupied zone. The German presence took the form of an army of occupation. Working and living conditions worsened dramatically under the occupation, particularly in industrial areas under German occupation. Allied bombing of industrial cities intensified working class misery. The Italian working class became a source of slave labour. Numbers were deported to Germany

and eastern Europe. In the countryside the occupying forces inflicted massacres on the peasantry in reprisals for attacks by the Resistance.
The mobilisation took three forms: peasant occupations of land, uprisings by industrial workers against the German occupation, mainly in Milan, Genoa and Turin, but also in Naples; and a massive influx of volunteers into the Resistance. The intensity of the struggle against the German occupation assisted the Allies considerably, but also induced among them fears that Italian independence would precipitate a situation comparable to that in Greece, and require military intervention to contain it. The insurrections of 1945 in northern industrial cities led to the fear that a social revolution was imminent.
American and British policy towards Italy diverged somewhat: British policy was aimed at preventing "epidemics and disorders" in order to preserve British hegemony in the Mediterranean. American policy was more subtle but no less interventionist. It aimed at creating "stability and prosperity", a policy which was to culminate in the Marshall Plan and blatant interference in the elections of 1948.
Neither policy was compatible with a strong left, or an armed populace. The Allies were apprehensive of the Resistance, and specially the strength of the Communists within its ranks. By mid-1944 membership in the Resistance had grown to over 80,000, and at its height reached 100,000. It took an important role in action against the Germans from mid-1944. In October 1944, the Allies, facing tough German opposition, decided to suspend the military offensive in the north until June the following year. Arguably this decision was based on good military reasoning, but it had disastrous consequences for the partisans who now faced the prospect of taking on the Germans on their own. The partisans went into hiding; even so, many lost their lives.
This military disaster was followed by political defeat late in 1944 when the CLNA signed the Protocols of Rome, in terms of which they undertook to place themselves under the command of the Allied Commander-in-Chief, to hand over their arms, and to agree to disband at the moment of liberation. They were also expected to place themselves under the command of a regular officer in the Italian Army. From then on, the partisans became a subordinate element in the Allied forces, rather than an independent player in Italian post-war politics.
In April, 1945, partisans were instrumental in the fighting which ended in the unconditional surrender of the German force investing Genoa. Later in the month the Turin factory workers rose in revolt against the Germans in anticipation of the arrival of a partisan force in the city. But the British advised partisans in the area that the insurrection was to be postponed. The Turin factory workers faced the Germans without partisan help. This was probably the consequence of military incompetency, but like the events of the previous October, it served further to marginalise the Resistance.
The Allies saw the partisans as a threat to public order; were suspicious of their relations with the Communist Party, which they viewed as a revolutionary party; and were anxious to keep them (or more specifically their Committees for National Liberation, the CLN) out of government and politics. Although the

Allies came to appreciate the military assistance of the partisans as they pushed up the peninsula, they were also anxious to disarm them and get them back into civilian life as soon as possible; or to have them enlisted in the Italian army and police force. Rather than give them a role in the police which acknowledged them as a distinct entity, the Allies soon after landing in Sicily, had placed the Carbinieri, a section of the Italian army, under the control of a force of London policemen. The policy was maintained after the occupation of Rome. The partisans were excluded as far as possible from local administration.[1]

With the end of Fascism, there was a movement, the epurazione, to expel fascists from the administration, specially from the judiciary, army and police forces. In the event, the epurazione boomeranged on its authors: the main casualties were members of the Resistance who had joined government service, mainly the police force and the military, at the end of the war.

The policy of epurazione was partly frustrated by political antagonisms in the coalition. The assistant commissioner in charge of "epuration" was the Communist Scoccimarro. The demand for his resignation by the Liberal premier Bonomi led to the crisis which broke up the provisional government.

Although senior officials in the Fascist administration were routinely expelled from their posts as the Allies advanced through Italy, the CLN often complained that the men replacing them were also Fascists. The instructions to tribunals which Count Sforza summarised as "Far presto, colpire in alto, perdonare in basso" (act quickly, strike the top ones, pardon the menials") provided a humane net through which many escaped. After the war, the spirit and letter of the epurazione was reversed, as courts drew distinctions between "ordinary" torture (which was condoned) and "particularly atrocious" torture. Of the nearly 400,000 civil servants investigated, only 1,200 were dismissed or retired early, and 8,000 were reprimanded. As late as the 1960s, all but two out of 64 prefects, the main representatives of the central government in the provinces, had held appointments under the fascist regime. The proportion of police chiefs and deputies who had served in the Fascist administration, was as high. On taking office in 1948, the Christian Democrats purged the civil service and the police as part of the general suppression of left-wing political groups.

The partisan leader, Ferruccio Parri became the leader of the government of anti-Fascist parties which held office from June to December 1945. But by then the partisans had all but been eliminated from significance in the array of forces which were to preside over post-war Italy. The partisans had a potential political strength which they were unable to deliver. One reason why the partisans remained politically weak was their relative isolation from Italian society. For instance, the Action Party was a major political force within the Resistance, but had little

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[1] The official history of the Allied Administration of Italy offers some revealing views of the British attitude towards the partisans. C R S Harris, Allied Military Administration of Italy, 1943-1945, London (HMSO) 1957.

base in the wider society, and managed to gain little more than 1% in the elections to the Constitutional Assembly in 1946.

B) The land [2]

As the Germans retreated, peasants occupied land in the more backward southern regions, where agriculture was dominated by large estates -- the latifondi -- commonly owned by absentee landlords. The increasing momentum of the war from mid-1943 had an effect on peasant activism. Partisan activity led to savage reprisals against local populations. Peasants bore the bulk of these attacks. On the other hand, partisans and escaped prisoners of war ameliorated conditions by exaggerating the records of their seizures of produce, thus reducing the quantities which producers were obliged to place in the state granaries. The Communists (PCI) took a prominent role in peasant land occupations, and later in the land reform programmes through which peasants attempted to consolidate the gains they had made. A Communist with long experience of involvement in peasant struggles, Fausto Gullo, was made Minister of Agriculture in Parri's government. This government passed the Legge Gullo which basically ratified the peasant land occupations. Despite this lead, however, the peasants tended to vote for the Christian Democrats, not the Communists.

The protest on the land continued throughout the 1940s. Numbers of people lost their lives, some at the hands of the police, others by the Mafia, as in the episode during a demonstration on a latifondo near Palermo on 1 May, 1949 when 25 people were killed. This episode precipitated the crisis which afforded de Gasperi the opportunity to resign and form a government which excluded the left-wing parties.

The struggle for the land intensified after the war. From 1945 till 1948, the land struggles spread to nearly all the regions, though it remained strongest in the South. Part of the reason for the intensification of the struggle lay in the dissolution of the coalition of anti-fascist parties and the formation of a government based in a coalition of conservative parties in which the DC assumed the dominant position. The Christian Democrats became considerably more reliant on the support of large-scale landowners. In 1949, the peasant movement proclaimed a national strike in favour of land redistribution and the renegotiation of land contracts. Industrial workers struck in sympathy with them. This was the context for the shootings of 1 May and the incident in Calabria in October in which the police shot and killed a woman.

In response to the agrarian crisis, the Christian Democrats

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[2] Cf Paul Ginsborg, A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988, Penguin 1990, Chapter 4, The Agrarian Reform; and Alessandro Bonnano, Theories of the State: the case of land reform in Italy, 1944-1961, **The Sociological Quarterly**, 29, 1, 1988, pp 131-147. Bonnano's article argues that the Italian land reform presents a number of similarities to contemporary industrialising countries. Op cit p 132.

introduced a land reform of their own in 1950, which was partly based on and partly transcended the Legge Gullo. These reforms, which Bonnano accurately describes as "partial" were intended to restore peace in the countryside by making sufficient concessions to the demands of the peasantry without, however, alienating the land-owners upon which the DC depended for much of its support. This was achieved in part by permitting big land-owners to retain ownership over property in which they had invested productive resources. As a result, major beneficiaries were the owners of productive large and middle-sized farms. Hired labourers and sharecroppers benefitted least of all.

In terms of the land reforms introduced by the the Christian Democrats, about 29% of the arable land in the country was expropriated and distributed to 133,000 families (about half a million people). The average size of the new farms was six hectares, often poor in quality, many without any of the infrastructure which would make them economically viable. However these measures (reformist rather than reforming), fulfilled the most potent aspirations of rural Italians to become land-owners. The limited redistribution which did take place created plots sufficiently productive to provide a refuge for their occupants in hard times, when employment in industry was not available. But this refuge was insufficiently attractive to offer an alternative to industrial employment when jobs opened up during periods of economic upswing. It is not fanciful to compare such a system with a "market-driven" form of apartheid. The reforms were limited also in the sense that they were largely confined to redistribution, and touched hardly at all on contracts and other conditions of employment. Arguably, other beneficiaries of land reforms were the industrialists and entrepreneurs of the post-war Italian reconstruction, for whom a more productive and affluent agricultural sector provided an internal market. The way in which production was organised encouraged competition between peasants, making it difficult to maintain high levels of political mobilisation which might have made it possible for the initial waves of protest to become translated into effective political organisation in the countryside. Peasants preferred individualistic to collectivist strategies in production. Wretched living conditions and poor communications reinforced the isolation of peasant communities. Italian peasants might follow the lead of communists in land occupations, but they tended also to vote for Christian Democrats or more populist deputies. The populist party Fronte dell'Uomo Qualanque enjoyed considerable support in the South in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly. In the long run, the Christian Democrats were the main political beneficiaries of the limited land reforms. They established the basis for a social consensus within the numerous group of peasants who became land-owners via the reforms.

C. Industrial insurrection

The partisan campaigns against the German forces in the north were closely intertwined with the seizure of factories in the northern industrial cities after the Germans had been forced out. Partisan committees (the CLN) took control in factories from which their owners, fearing revolution, had fled. One of the first decisions the CLN took was to deny owners the right to dismiss workers. Italian businessmen in the north were

discomforted by the seizures, which they had not anticipated. They had hoped that there would be a smooth transfer of power to the Allies; not a repetition of the events of the early 1920s. The business community soon recovered confidence however, and developed a strategy which would restore the sovereignty of capital in Italian industry. Confindustria, the industrial employers' association, rejected workers' control in the factories, and wound up the factory CLNs which had taken them over. The business community claimed the right to hire and fire, demanding that productivity should be the sole criterion on which a worker could expect to be kept in his job. During the same period Confindustria got the unions to accept their demand for wage agreements which were conditional on the requirement that factory committees were not to seek improvements beyond those achieved in national agreements. The CLNAI had set up Councils of Management which they hoped would become instruments of workers' control. Employers won an important victory by thwarting these aspirations. The Councils increasingly became instruments for enforcing discipline on the shop floor, and were used to choose which workers would be dismissed.

After benefiting for so long under Fascist intervention, business rediscovered the principles of the free market, and rejected all state intervention. Although businessmen had supported the establishment of the Christian Democratic Party in 1942, they generally preferred the Liberal Party. However, the Liberals lived in a world that preceded fascism, and in practice business was forced to support the DC. In the long run, the peculiar mixture of paternalism, authoritarianism and limited concessions to popular demands which made up Christian Democratic ideology and strategy, worked as well as any to serve capital in one of the most explosive environments in post-war Europe.

One of the short-term reasons why workers were unable to consolidate the gains which seemed within their grasp at the war-end lay in the weakness of the left-wing parties, and specially the Communists, even when they held office in post-war government. In particular, the left failed to get government action on critical social and economic issues, partly because of a lack of support in the government, and partly because of resistance from the bureaucracy. Thus despite the wholesale destruction of housing during the war, government housing policy produced a dribble of accommodation. The government signally failed to preserve the currency. Although the much-dreaded Communist Scoccimarro was Minister of Finance, the government in 1946 permitted businessmen in successful export sectors to sell a high proportion of the foreign currency they had earned on the exchange markets. This stimulated speculation in the currency. Scoccimarro took the opportunity afforded by the introduction of a new currency to introduce a progressive wealth tax, but the Treasury impeded, and virtually demolished his policy.

The continuities in the state

The state whose power Mussolini usurped had originally been modelled on the principle of the rechtstaat, with a highly centralised, but also inefficient and internally fragmented bureaucracy which responded more sensitively to party politicians than to formal rules. Paul Ginsborg described the Italian state

as an archipelago within which the different islands were controlled by different interests.[3] This combination underlay the striking feature of the bureaucracy -- its patron-clientelism, a feature which worked to the advantage of the southern landed gentry and bourgeoisie: more than half the administrative class in 1954 came from the south. The judiciary was virtually a closed caste, a considerable proportion of whom were recruited from the south. The higher echelons of the judiciary, sitting in Rome, were especially susceptible to informal political pressures. As we have seen, its deep hostility to the left and to the Resistance, eviscerated the epurazione.

Under Fascism the state became a bloated caricature of its earlier self. Between 1922 and 1940, 260 new government agencies were formed, many performing overlapping functions. Moreover, the opportunities for patronage proliferated, not only as a consequence of the expansion of government, but also because Mussolini deliberately pitted party officials against state functionaries in order to consolidate his own power.

The end of Fascism offered an opportunity to develop a new constitution which might effect a break with the past, including the pre-Fascist past. But the opportunity was lost, or perhaps deliberately mislaid, for all the main parties, including the left, played a part in composing a situation in which the fewest, rather than the most, opportunities for change, emerged. This situation developed long before the election of the Constitutional Assembly. In the Parri government, formed at the end of the war the PCI, PSIUP and the Action Party (P'dA) had a majority over the DC, but wanted to ensure that elections would not be delayed and therefore tried to avoid alienating the DC. The Allies wanted to delay elections as long as possible, in order to allow the "lava to cool" and they were not held until spring 1946. Parri was ousted by a Liberal withdrawal from the government late in 1945, and de Gasperi took over in November with the blessing of the Communists and the Socialists, who were influenced by Togliatti's mistaken belief that he represented a progressive force in Italian politics. De Gasperi then pulled some fast ones: demanding for instance that the Constitutional Assembly should have no legislative powers and that the decision over whether Italy would become a republic would be taken in a referendum. After a good deal of fighting, the left parties gave way. What held them back, then as earlier, were fears of a crisis which might culminate in Allied intervention. The election, which the left believed they could win, would legitimise a new political order with time enough to undertake reforms; in the meantime, it behove them to accept de Gasperi's steady hand on the wheel of the state. This attitude permitted de Gasperi quietly to consolidate the position of Christian Democrats within the institutions of government, with the result that the central administration of the state remained roughly what it had been under Fascism: a swollen, inefficient hodge-podge of little islands of political power.

The referendum on the monarchy and the elections to the Constitutional Assembly were held simultaneously in June 1946.

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[3] Ginsborg, op cit, 153 and Chapter 5 passim.

(The referendum favoured a republic despite massive support in the South for the monarchy.) The results of the elections were as follows:

PARTY	ASSEMBLY SEATS	PERCENTAGE VOTE
Christian Democrats(DC)	207	35.2
Socialists (PSIUP)	115	20.7
Communists (PCI)	104	19.0

The remaining quarter of votes and seats were divided between Republicans, the Action Party, the Liberals and a new party, the Fronte dell'Uomo Qualanque, a populist party with a huge following in the South.

The CPI and the PSIUP had done well enough between them to force Gasperi to keep them in the government, but the massive difference between his party's support and theirs, when counted separately, gave him the pretext to exclude the smaller parties from the government and to replace Communist ministers with Christian Democrats. Gullo was a significant casualty. This turn against the left was reinforced by discontent among the Christian Democrats' most important source of support, the middle classes. Under the whip of the post-war economic crisis, the middle classes began gravitating towards the far right, making the assumption that the crisis was largely due to its coalition with the left, and the DC lost disastrously in the municipal elections of November, 1946.

The deputies elected to the Constitutional Assembly on 2 June, 1946, delegated the task to committees dominated by distinguished academics and lawyers, a number of whom had been associated with the Liberal Party before the Fascists took power. The Constitution was something of an anomaly in the seething ferment of post-war Europe. It was modelled on the "Albertine" constitution which had been bestowed on Savoy in 1848, and was basically a design for a rechtstaat onto which elements of contemporary liberal democracies had been grafted.[4] The highly centralised state, which Napoleon had bequeathed to Italy and France, were preserved in the 1946 constitution, and hence too the opportunity to preserve the practices which de Gasperi had inherited from previous governments. However it was less the defects in the Constitution itself than the inertia of succeeding governments in implementing its clauses that impeded it. Many clauses in the constitution, including the those concerning the Constitutional Court, had not been given effect by 1953. The institutions of "extraordinary" regional government in five regions with special features were retained from previous constitutions. But the clauses introducing "ordinary" regional government structures were not implemented until 1973.[5] This

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[4] For an excellent discussion of the Constitution, cf. John Clarke Adams and Paolo Barile, The Implementation of the Italian Constitution, American Political Science Review, Vol 47, No 1, March 1953, pp 61-83.

[5] Sidney Tarrow, Local Constraints on Regional Reform: A Comparison of Italy and France, Comparative Politics, October, 1974, 2-36.

meant that the instruments of "extraordinary" regional government reinforced the effective political autonomy of backward areas like Sicily, while progressive regions like Tuscany remained subject to the paralysing hand of the Roman bureaucracy, denied the creative potentialities of regional autonomy, for over a quarter of a century.[6] (The comparison would be to a federal constitution in South Africa which bestowed autonomy on KwaZulu, but not on the Witwatersrand.) Moreover parliament was reluctant to legislate on matters like local government which would in time be devolved onto regional government. As a result local government was badly neglected. The anomalies in the Constitution included the preservation in the archaic form in which they were originally written, of the Lateran Pacts which prescribed the relationship between the Vatican and the Italian state. (Article 26 stated that the Holy See recognised the Kingdom of Italy, the existence of which had just been terminated in the referendum!) Fascist censorship laws were retained.

The 1948 election

De Gasperi visited the United States in January 1947 to negotiate loans, and probably discussed the exclusion of the left with the State Department. The two left-wing parties to the coalition were immobilised for much of 1947, partly because of their relatively poor performance in 1946; partly because they were unable to develop any fresh policy initiatives. The Communists' position as an Italian electoral party was compromised by its place in the international communist movement. Yugoslavia wanted Trieste and Stalin backed Tito's claims. Moreover the Socialist Party split, losing nearly half its deputies to the breakaway party. The time would seem opportune for de Gasperi to get out of the alliance with the left. However he was constrained by his belief that the two left parties were indispensable to the political and social stability of post-war Italy. He delayed making a move as long as possible, but after a poor showing in the Sicilian regional elections, his fear that the Church as well as the middle classes might abandon the Christian Democrats forced his hand. He resigned in May 1947, but his successor Nitti was unable to form a government. De Gasperi returned to form a government, enjoying the support of more than half of the members of the Constitutional Assembly, based entirely on right-wing parties. The anti-Fascist alliance had ended with the demotion of the left to an opposition which had won little, and lost much, as a result of its attempt to placate the centre in the cause of liberation and national unity. This development signalled an increase in levels of repression against working class and peasant protest and the expulsion of partisans from the security forces.

The Cold War increasingly influenced Italian party politics. The Comintern criticised Italian and French communists for conciliating middle class parties. The consequence of the shift in government policy and in communist strategy could be seen in the massive agitations among landless peasants in northern Italy.

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[6] For the benefits of regional autonomy to dynamic regions, cf Carlo Trigilia, The paradox of the region: economic regulation and the representation of interests, Economy and Society, Vol 20, No 3, August 1991, 307-327.

Their union, Federterra, made significant advances including limits on the working day and increases in security. However they received little support from the Communist leadership. Togliatti found electioneering a more palatable form of political action than involvement in protest movements, believing that it was through the ballot box that change would come about. He concentrated his energies on preparing for the election.
To this end he formed the Democratic Popular Front with the socialists in order to fight the elections on a common platform. The election campaign of 1948 was deeply marked by the Cold War. The United States used the delivery of goods purchased under the "Interim Aid" programme to advertise the munificence of the United States, together with the warning from Marshall himself that future deliveries would halt in the event of a Communist victory. The delivery of goods was carefully orchestrated into an anti-Communist programme. Hollywood stars with Italian backgrounds extolled the virtues of the DC. American prelates joined the Pope in presenting the conflict as one between Stalin and God, a theme echoed by the Christian Democratic Party. In the elections the DC won nearly half of the votes, while the Popular Front dropped nearly 8% compared to the combined vote in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly.

PARTY	ASSEMBLY SEATS	PERCENTAGE VOTE
Christian Democrats (DC)	305	48.5
Popular Front	265	31.07

However it was the decline in support for the Socialist Party, not the CPI, that accounted for the drop in support for the Popular Front. They returned only 41 deputies compared with 115 in 1946. The PCI considerably improved its position in 1948, compared with 1946, returning 140 deputies, compared with 106 in 1946. Italian politics was beginning to exhibit the pattern of polarisation between right and left which it has subsequently displayed, and which has worked to keep the Communists in opposition. The failure to change the social profile of the state bureaucracy, or to reform its structure, placed major obstacles in the path to reform, and entrenched the major impediments to reforms. The land reform in particular, but also reforms in the industrial arena, were blocked and diverted by hostile elements in the military, the police, judiciary, and other branches of government.
The inertia on these issues was reinforced by the ideology and organisation of the Christian Democrats, and the way this affected policy and administration. The party's deliberate attempt to forge cross-class alliances led in practice to factionalism, and severe struggles over resources.
The Christian Democratic Party was a moderately successful variant on the model of the post-war conservative party which survives or flourishes through its capacity to generate support from among the broad classes and strata of industrial society. Like other variants it was able to do so through a combination of appeals to core values in the society - family and religion - and through its capacity to deliver definite benefits to its clients. The most important organisation through which the DC reached into the working class and the peasantry was the Catholic lay organisation Azione Cattolica. The instruments through which

it delivered benefits to peasantry, working class and small artisans and businessmen were the Coldiretti and the Association of Italian Christian Workers (ACLI). Through these Catholic workers and peasants were provided with insurance, social assistance, and legal help. Its ideology stressed family values, the authority of the Church, anti-communism and pro-capitalism. However, there were tensions between its right and left wings. The Vatican would sometimes prod it towards a more authoritarian position, while its left wing presented it as a reformist and anti-capitalist force. De Gasperi exhibited the ability of the successful conservative leader by holding the centre against both of these extremes, while being able to move rapidly in one or the other directions when it suited him. It is worth noting that the Communists tried to counter the Christian Democrats' attempt to exploit the values of family morality. The women's union associated with the CPI, Unione delle Donne Italiane, attempted to counter this through slogans like "for a happy family, for peace and for work". But it was difficult for them to counter the ferocious propaganda of the Church, especially after a Communist deputy had (against a party decision) tried to have a debate on the issue of divorce.

The conservative hegemony was in part ensured by the adroit manoeuvres of the Christian Democrats, and their allies in the Vatican, who took advantage of the deep religious conservatism of the peasantry to mobilise support against the Communists while creating "openings to the left" during the 1950s which enabled them to mount a counter-mobilisation which neutralised the parties of the left. But it was a possibility which was enhanced by the ideology of the Communist Party.
Togliatti interpreted Gramsci's notion of the war of position to involve the development of a mass party, ie the building of alliances and the development of hegemony in society (rather than a vanguard party). This deeply influenced the strategy and tactics of, and produced some crucial turning points in post-war Italian politics. For instance, at the war end, the Action Party, tried to establish the partisans as the core of a "new democracy". The CPI refused to support this on the grounds that it would invite Allied intervention. This position was justified among radical workers on the grounds that the strategy of doppiezza involved the postponement, not the abandonment of revolutionary aspirations, and that gaining a foothold in existing institutions would enhance the ultimate objective.
The historian Paul Ginsborg, has suggested that the Communists' "two-stage strategy -- liberation first, social and political reform second -- caused them to dissipate the strength of the Resistance and of worker and peasant agitation. As a result, they were completely outflanked by the Allies and by the conservative forces in Italian society."[7] Ginsborg suggests that the problem was the displacement of a reformist strategy by the commitment to national unity, and not the replacement of a revolutionary project by a reformist one.
Some of the long-term socio-economic and political consequences

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[7] Paul Ginsborg, op cit p 47.

of the immobility of Italian politics will briefly be sketched. The most important was the perpetuation, indeed the intensification of the sharp inequalities between northern industrial centres and the south, both rural and urban through Italy's economic "miracle" and beyond. During this period, there was a massive migration from the south to the industrial north: in the course of this Turin became known as the biggest southern city in Italy.

Yet there was only limited economic or industrial growth in the south, despite large-scale state intervention. There was some industrialisation in the south, notably around Naples, where Fiat established a plant. But the resources for economic development in the south were largely channelled through the patron-client linkages which Christian-Democratic hegemony perpetuated. The most important industrial development that took place in and around Naples, for instance, was in building construction via the networks established by the Gava machine within the Christian Democratic Party, which lasted until the Communists won the local elections there in 1975. These networks distributed construction contracts to local firms. (A member of the Gava family had been present at the formation of the DC in 1943, and there was a Gava in ministerial office in Rome for almost the entire subsequent period, providing the conduit for the flow of patronage to Naples. (The Gava machine dominated local politics through crude offers such as "a pair of shoes: one before, one after the election.")

A malign cycle worked to perpetuate patron-clientelism, unemployment and poverty. Neapolitans had voted overwhelmingly for monarchists in the 1946 elections for the Constitutional Assembly, in support of the long tradition which linked limited employment opportunities to court favours. The local electorate maintained this support until the central government removed the monarchists from office by decree in 1958. Machines like the Gava perpetuated the same kind of politics.

Naples was inundated with immigrants from its impoverished rural hinterland, but there was little economic growth which could provide them with jobs. Judith Chubb suggested that southern cities were characterised by "urbanisation without industrialisation", the identical term that Bauer used to describe urbanisation in west Africa during the 1950s.[8] Unemployment in Naples during the 1970s ran at about 25%; an additional 25% were under-employed. The massive influx placed a strain on services and infra-structure. The cholera outbreak of 1973 drew attention to the fact that the sewerage system had remained unchanged since 1888, though the population had doubled since 1945. The levels of infant mortality have remained at almost double the national average.

The widening gap inequalities was most visible between north and south, but it was also evident within regions in the most affluent parts of the country. Raphael Zariski and Susan Welch noted a moderate inverse relationship between economic modernisation and depolarisation in the North-West which Tarrow

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[8] Judith Chubb, Naples under the Left: the limits of local change, **Comparative Politics**, October, 1980, pp 53-78.

explains as a result of greater inequality, greater problems of transport and provisions of facilities and services, and a greater gap between private-sector efficiency and public-sector inefficiency.[9] The long-term political consequence was the maintenance of a sharp polarity between left and right, and the exclusion, except for a period during the 1970s, of the Communists from political office.

The Italian experience at the end of the second world war and after provides an instance of a liberation struggle which confronted the state and the dominant social and political order with the prospect of a radical alternative, without however commanding the political resources to carry that project through. The consequence in that case was the installation of a centrist coalition with domestic and international backing which skilfully balanced the contending forces in the society, conceding something, but also denying much, to each of them, and in the end retaining the reins of power in its own hands.

It also showed how difficult it is for a liberation movement to launch alternative political projects on the basis of a mass mobilisation, and the difficulties of translating discontent and insurrection into a political project sustainable over time, capable of overtaking or transforming key political institutions. This difficulty seems to be particularly acute if there are elections in prospect; mobilisation for change does not seem to converge on the processes required for successful electioneering.

Different perspectives will find different elements which provide the decisive explanation for the outcome of the Italian situation: the international environment; the Catholic Church; the Italian genius for compromise which has characterised its politics since the risorgimento.

The feature which I find most illuminating is the continuity in the state, and the persistence of its bureaucratic structures through a period of intense upheaval and turmoil. Within these continuities the most important are the continuities in control and purpose within the security forces. These continuities are prominent features in the two other cases, Kenya and Zimbabwe, which will be considered in the subsequent sections of this paper.

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[9] The Correlates of Intraparty Depolarising Tendencies in Italy: A Problem Revisited, Comparative Politics, April 1975, 406-433.