

# **Reform Communists in the twentieth-century global network: The Italian Communist Party's agrarian policies in the postwar period**

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*Abstract.* This article aims to explain the main agrarian policies of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the early postwar period with the analytical category of “reform communism” and the “global network” methodological approach. These tools help to understand the PCI decisions in these years in historical rather than polemical terms. The argument is strengthened by archival materials which include Central Committee meeting minutes, congresses records, internal reports and pamphlets. In the first part, the author introduces the ‘New Party’, which was the evolution of the traditional Communist Party of Italy, to identify its main historical and intellectual coordinates. Then, the article analyzes through those analytical innovations some of the main agrarian policies that the PCI tried, more or less successfully, to implement between 1944 and 1947, i.e. when there existed a series of governments of national unity. These policies were the 1944 Gullo Law, the subsequent organs like Land Committees, and the debates around the Agrarian Reform, which are analyzed respectively in the second, third and fourth parts.

*Key words:* agrarian policies, Italian Communist Party (PCI), reform communism, Italy, global network, asymmetric interdependencies

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This article discusses the agrarian policies that the Italian Communist Party (*Partito comunista italiano*, PCI) implemented or failed to realise in the early postwar period, roughly between 1944 and 1947. At the time, there existed a series of coalition governments of “national unity” (*unità nazionale*) which consisted primarily of the three major Italian mass parties: Communists, Socialists, and Christian Democrats. All of them had contributed to the war against fascism and their unity lasted until the Cold War crept in. In May 1947, Christian Democrats, supported by the Vatican and the US, expelled Socialists and Communists from the government, starting the rule which lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. So, if we want to understand what the Italian Communists contribution to the Italian polity at the executive level was, we need perforce to orbit around this historical parenthesis.

This study was inspired by new analytical and methodological tools and also by recently unearthed empirical materials. In Volume

3 of *The Cambridge History of Communism*, historians Silvio Pons and Michele Di Donato (2017: 179) study the “historical phenomenon” of “reform communism”. “Reform communism” serves well to introduce in the scientific literature a useful analytical concept. This category — Pons and Di Donato refrain from using this term — is helpful to understand some transformations of communism in the 20th century and overcome endless debates about so-called “reformists” which are rhetorically charged but often fail to move the limits of our historical comprehension forward. We can define reform communism as a set of strategic ideas and practices driven by an evolutionary and gradualist vision of, and approach to, progressive social change within a capitalist institutional framework, with the ultimate goal of achieving communism<sup>1</sup>. According to the two historians, reform communists “clearly leaned toward gradualism and nonviolent transformation more than revolutionary thrust”, both in terms of “lexicon and of practices” (Pons & Di Donato, 2017: 178). For them, it has three characteristics: (1) it was never developed monolithically or systematically, appearing instead in various geopolitical situations (in the Soviet Union between 1953-6, the 1968 Prague Spring, and Eurocommunism from the mid-1970s); (2) although reform communists were close to social-democratic ideas, they never rejected their communist identity, seeking some return to “original inspiration” (Marx, Engels and Lenin) (Pons & Di Donato, 2017: 179); (3) it was a European and Russian phenomenon.

While the main coordinates of the category are valid, some of its boundaries can be expanded still, improving its hermeneutic precision whilst also widening its applicability. Leaving aside the geographic coordinates to do so (think of China), its time limits can be extended further back than those offered by Pons and Di Donato to include Palmiro Togliatti’s PCI. This was suggested by Giuseppe Vacca (2021: 25-26), who has praised the “innovative and “necessary” category” of reform communism, explaining that “one must go back to “wartime anti-fascism” and to the possibility that arose at that time of declining the national-international connection in relatively autonomous ways”. I agree with Vacca’s reading, specifically focusing on the PCI decisions in the agrarian field.

Methodologically, then, the article is based on the world network approach to understand the history of the 20th century by situating the national dynamics of different communist parties, thus rethinking the national-international nexus. This approach implies a global and transnational perspective to appreciate the multidimensional relations of forces at the international level which shaped the dynamics of the 20th century, thus performing a heuristic function for the historical discipline (and for international relations too). The study of com-

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1. I owe the inspiration for this definition to Nathan Sperber (private correspondence). See also Pons (2020, 22).

munist networks reflects, perhaps even anticipating it (Kolář, 2020), the broader transnational and global turns in the historical profession in the last decades. And this international framework of asymmetric interdependencies enables us to place single, national histories of communist parties (and their relations with other forces) (Vacca, 2017: ix). So, we explore the PCI agrarian policies in the early postwar period in terms of reform communism, using them to illustrate how the coalition that produced such policies and its collapse encapsulated the tense equilibrium between the two main global poles at the time — the USA and the USSR — and its fortunes depended to a great extent and in the last instance on their interactions. Indeed, failing to use this world network approach leads to missing what certain decisions meant or why certain policy plans were implemented and others failed.

Substantial waves, both recent and dated, of scholarly interest in the rural world of postwar Italy further strengthen the case for applying new research instruments to a period which is historically gravid. The traditional wave is affected by what may be called the “betrayal of revolution” outlook which grew around the 1970s, an issue that has already been established for some time and which we cannot discuss in details here.<sup>2</sup> Still, more recent scholarship seems influenced by a certain trend to approximate or ignore historical complexities, which can result in over-simplification and misinterpretation of the past.<sup>3</sup> An example illustrates the point. It has recently (Cac-

2. Anna Rossi-Doria (1983) criticised effectively the “revolution betrayed” thesis put forward by Sidney Tarrow (1972) in his classic 1967 study. Daneo (1969: 23) accused the PCI of ‘refut[ing] a revolutionary strategy and reduc[ing] it to a reformist practice’. The issue is not limited to the study of Italian agrarian history. For example, the reading of China conducted by Edoarda Masi (1979) mirrored in many ways debates that coloured 1970s Italy as much as they belonged to the historical analysis of post-Cultural Revolution China. The accusatory implications of many of these works remind one of Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Novecento* (1976), and they seem based more on suppositions and anachronistic hopes rather than on historical agents’ concrete actions, objective facts and situations of the historical process.

3. For an example which is related to but trespasses the field of this piece of research see *Rising ’44* by Norman Davies (2018). Works like his (which often are influential in the Anglo-Saxon academic world and can be easily popularized because they are written in English) rather than reconstructing the complexities of the past, as any serious historian should strive to do, instead simplify them, caricaturizing historical actors. In David’s work, Hitler and Stalin belong to the same plate of the scale and are analysed from some psychological pseudo-category, thus being explained in terms of (and becoming) “evil” or “mad”. While psychological aspects should not be underestimated in historical research, to rely on these terms exclusively belongs more to the world of *The Lord of the Rings* or maybe *Star Wars* than anywhere else. The issue is quite typical for those who use, consciously or not, a certain reading of the “totalitarianism paradigm”. In Davies’ work, when he discusses Stalin’s relations to Poland’s communist leadership, we

ciarru, 2020) been argued that the “landowners’ lobby demonstrated strong political opposition in the central government, so that in 1949 a new Agrarian Reform was discussed. Minister Gullo was replaced as Minister of Agriculture by Antonio Segni, a rich landowner. Under Segni, the law that Gullo had designed was modified so as to remove elements that would have protected peasants’ claims. Even before the approval of Agrarian Reform, much of the land that peasants had managed to gain between 1944 and 1947 had been lost by 1948, and such loss became irreversible in 1949, with the formal approval of the new Agrarian Reform. Hence, Christian Democrats regained the important support of landowners and the majority in parliament”.

This is problematic insofar as it omits the collapse of the anti-fascist alliance and of the government of national unity, the very existence of which was possible due to that alliance. Segni replaced Gullo in July 1946 (Mattone, 2016: 523), when that paradigm came under strain, with Stalin’s reckoning of US atomic supremacy and his initial planning, from early 1946, to establish what became the Cominform, and, later, with Churchill’s Fulton speech on March 5, 1946 (Vacca, 2018: 165-169). Focusing on the immediate legislative action, the view ignores the relation of forces that determined the conditions for a situation to take place, i.e. why landlords managed (were permitted) to force a situation. Commenting the 1950 agrarian reform, Cacciarru (2020) continues, “Southern latifundists’ reaction to expropriation was violent. Powerfully connected, they managed to get some of the expropriated land “re-assigned” to them through coercive actions. They also succeeded in taking control of large portions of land where municipalities had implemented forestry projects”.

Thus, this reading further trivializes the relations of forces that worked at multiple levels in a world that was increasingly bipolar. Its limits are finally confirmed when we read that *Tangentopoli* revealed webs of corruption in the Italian political machinery, ignoring, however, that the investigation which uncovered these webs was allowed only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and, more influentially, after the removal of the US “invisible hand” on its sphere of influence — the same occurred in Japan (Hobsbawm, 1995: 238-239; D’Eramo, 2024).

Indeed, statements like those that we just read downplay or neglect international dynamics characterized by a global network of asymmetric interdependencies (and their national repercussions) which created the conditions for a set of reforms to take place or to fail. Without understanding the significance of the government of national unity (between Communists, Socialists and Christian Demo-

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read things like “Yet such is life among gangsters. The big fry beat the lesser fry; and the lesser fry beat the small fry” (David, 2018: 516). This, it seems to us, may well be called, without exaggeration, a process of “stupidification” both of history and of readers.

crats), which was just the Italian manifestation of a deeper, global network of antifascist forces, one is unlikely to appreciate the decisions that Communists made at the time. The “betrayal of revolution” and the over-simplification of situations (systems of events) are equally inadequate to frame that phase of history. In both cases, the result has a limited explanatory potential for the complexities of historical processes.

So, I aim to explain the main lines of the principal PCI agrarian policies in the postwar period with the reform communism analytical tool and the global network methodological approach. My case is strengthened by documents collected at the *Istituto Alcide Cervi*, in the archives of PCI leaders like Ruggero Grieco and Emilio Sereni. In the first part, an excursus introduces the “New Party” to establish its main historical and intellectual coordinates; the detour is necessary because historical and historiographical points of reference about the PCI are often only vaguely known outside of the Italian-speaking world. Then, I explore some of the main agrarian policies of the PCI in the postwar period, illustrating the validity of the article’s analytical terms: the 1944 Gullo Law (part two), the subsequent democratic organs that emerged in the following years like Land Committees (part three), and the debates around the Agrarian Reform (part four).

Striving for democracy (both political and economic) and aware of the possibility of the return of fascism at home and of the relation of forces at the international level that eventually placed Italy in a hostile sphere of influence, the PCI promoted a strategy of reform communism for the advancement of socialism in Italy which informed the party’s policies in the agrarian field. The article explains the agrarian policies of the PCI after World War II with the category of reform communism and within the perspective of the global network of international forces. To put it another way, I bring together and illustrates the workability of a new analytical concept with an efficacious methodological approach, buttressing this with archival evidence. This enriches the toolbox for the study of the international dynamics which constituted the 20th century (and *mutatis mutandis* continue in the 21st), opposing straightforward but facile explanatory models and, thus, improving our understanding of one part of that history.

### **1. Togliatti, 1944 and the New Party**

On March 27, 1944, the PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti returned to Italy after two decades of exile. In a series of speeches (e.g., 30 March, 11 April) and interviews (as on 2 April for *l’Unità*), he introduced and formalized the New Party (*Partito nuovo*) in what came to be known as the Salerno Turn (*svolta di Salerno*) (Canfora, 2021: 33-34). It has been claimed that the turn was imposed by Stalin to Togliatti. In essence, the argument goes, Stalin ordered Togliatti to sup-

port the Badoglio (a royalist) government, a decision that the Italian communist leader had previously denounced due to the King's earlier affiliation with fascism, thus giving up the possibility of a communist seizure of power. The "order" was given on the night of March 3–4, 1944, right before Togliatti left the Soviet Union for (eventually) Italy. This thesis, which relies on some of Georgi Dimitrov's *Diary* entries, was put forward by Elena Aga Rossi e Victor Zaslavsky (1996; 1997) in the late 1990s. It still enjoys some support (Naimark, 2019: 123-125). It has numerous, yet clear, implications engulfing the paternity of the Salerno Turn, the theoretical significance of the New Party and its "progressive democracy", and the historical meaning of the Italian way to socialism.

The work by the two democratic anti-communists caused heated debates, opening a *voxata quaestio*. Aga Rossi and Zaslavsky's reading is problematic and its limits have already been pointed out by numerous scholars. Pons (2007: 196), among others, remarked the inadequacy of isolating the hierarchical relation between Stalin and Togliatti, which betrays the view of a mono-dimensional and unilateral dynamic of subservience to the Soviet autocrat — again, simplifying dialectical complexities and flattening political variables. More recently, Vacca (2018: 19-24) has argued convincingly that Togliatti had envisaged the turn before Stalin's instruction arrived, working — not without twists — to form a government of national unity in light of the anti-fascist struggle for national liberation that required cooperating within the existing Italian government (i.e., the Badoglio government). Before April 1944, Togliatti had framed the historical coordinates to justify this policy of cooperation in his speech at the Hall of Columns in the House of Unions in Moscow on November 26, 1943. Stalin modified his opinion — from refraining to support the PCI entry in the government to its diplomatic recognition after Badoglio's request sent on February 26, 1944 — thus allowing Togliatti to move forward in the direction that he had intended all along. The fact that the two leaders had agreed upon this policy was never a secret, and Togliatti openly recognized it in his speech to the Italian Parliament on March 6, 1953 on the occasion of Stalin's death (Vacca, 2007: 5). The turn was not an order imposed from above: it was in line with the convictions of the Italian reform communist.

On a trajectory of evident reform, the New Party was politicking within the coalition government, abandoning its Bolshevik outlook of professional revolutionaries for the idea of a mass-party that would work within the institutions (Canfora, 2021: 21-35). Even though the turn was announced and took place in 1944, its foundations were laid in the interwar struggle against fascism. According to Donald Sassoon (2014), in 1944 the PCI "reverted back" to policies initiated in the mid-1930s. In fact, their intellectual origins can be traced to the 1924–6 struggle between Amedeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci for the leadership of the Pcd'I, which culminated in the Lyon Theses

of January 1926 (Vacca, 2021: 125). At the 7th Comintern Congress in July–August 1935, Togliatti and Dimitrov put forward the “united front” policy in the face of the growing fascist threat (Lussana, 2004: 932–934). They reiterated it as they moved to Spain to fight in an anti-fascist alliance of progressive forces. Togliatti elaborated the theory for a “democracy of a new type” (*democrazia di tipo nuovo*) — which was related to Dimitrov’s “popular democracy” but also differed from the latter’s anchoring to the dictatorship of the proletariat as the form of the State and the October 1917 as a revolutionary model — in the October 1936 essay “On the particularities of the Spanish revolution” (*Sulle particolarità della rivoluzione spagnola*). The new line followed several years of “third period” strategy that was initiated by Stalin at the time of collectivization in 1929 in the belief that capitalism in Europe was about to collapse and that everyone who was not CP-affiliated was a social-fascist (Vacca, 2018: 107–116). The growth of totalitarian fascism in Italy, Germany and Japan and of coalitions to fight it convinced Stalin to alter the third period strategy and, consequently, the dichotomic concept of “social fascists”. Differences between so-called “liberal bourgeois” and fascists had to be reckoned with in an anti-fascist perspective.

The global network in which the New Party could take shape consisted of an anti-fascist alliance. From April 1941, Stalin began to work for the dissolution of the Comintern to operate within an international system of states (Vacca, 2018: 20). The Comintern ceased to exist in May 1943, as the Allies were fighting world fascism. In June 1943, the Italian party changed its name from Communist Party of Italy (*Partito comunista d’Italia*, Pcd’I) to Italian Communist Party (*Partito comunista italiano*, PCI), signaling a shift away from the idea of being a machinery for an international and Bolshevik-styled revolution.

The change in name was no small issue. At the 7th Session of the 2nd Comintern Congress on July 30, 1920, 21 conditions were put forward, and every party that wanted to adhere to the Comintern had to agree to them — the 21 conditions (or at least the one concerning the expulsion of the “reformists”) had caused the rupture between Italian Socialists and Communists in January 1921 during the so-called Livorno split (*scissione di Livorno*) (Canfora, 2021: 22). One of the 21 points stated that the “question of the name is not formal, but a highly political question of great importance” because it differentiated communists from socialists and social democrats (MIA, 1920). So, the end of the Pcd’I name also marked the end of a certain, “Cominternist” phase of Italian communism.

Shortly after the Comintern dissolution, a series of conferences laid the foundations for a postwar world order based on the anti-fascist paradigm. The Teheran Conference of December 1943 emphasized pacific coexistence between the winners of the world war, sacrificing any (realistic or utopian, real or imaginary) plans to spread socialism

(Hobsbawm, 1981: 488). Later, at the Yalta Conference of February 1945, the major global powers indicated the emergence of new spheres of influence — not of blocs (Vacca, 2021: 135). In July 1944, the Bretton Woods meetings started to remove the restrictions of the previous world order and to create the conditions for a new set of asymmetric interdependencies of global scale by linking (with the active support of the Soviet Union) the emerging system to the US dollar, at the expense of the British sterling and to the detriment of the empire it represented (Vacca, 2016: 80-94). However, the anti-fascist paradigm had a short life. The world was divided into two camps led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union, with their relations freezing at the start of the Cold War in 1946-7.

What was the New Party conceptually? As Mario Tronti (2015) said, “the New Party was the Revolution in the West. It was the way to build socialism in the West”, to build socialism without following the Soviet statal model (dictatorship of the proletariat), the limits of which Togliatti had seen with his own eyes during two decades in the Soviet Union, between the 1920s–40s. The New Party was Togliatti’s translation of 1917 to the Italian context and an answer to the end of the revolutionary phase in Western Europe in the early 1920s. It was the “conversion” of the Bolshevik October — which, however, never led the PCI at the helm of the Italian polity —, and therefore the revolution started to be conceptualized in terms of both “moment X” and long process, as opposed to the 1917 swift turning point (Gozzini, 2019: 149; Sereni, 1978: 66-69).

The New Party was a mass party. Its membership grew from about 5,000 in 1943 to almost 2 million by December 1945. The PCI was the largest Communist Party in the West (Sassoon, 2014: 64). This sudden expansion meant that the essence of the party was designed to change. The Leninist conception of a small group of professional revolutionaries (explained in *What is to be done?*) was dropped, encouraging a national policy of unity of strata (not classes). The nation was considered the most effective category to reflect upon modernity as a set of, thus through, nation-states (Vacca, 2014: 197-215). National ways to socialism became the path forward. For instance, at the 5th PCI Congress held between December 1945 and January 1946, national issues were discussed first. This is significant because traditionally the international situation was analyzed first and foremost, and only then the national condition was considered (Vacca, 2018: 32).

The New Party tried to implement a “progressive democracy” — of which the concrete political mechanisms to reach socialism were somewhat ambiguous and nebulous (Hobsbawm, 1981: 478-490). This was a transitory form to build up momentum and provide a foundation for a new mechanism of mass participation in society through parliament, collaboration between political parties, and structural reforms in the economic, social and institutional fields. The goal was to reorganize the polity along progressive lines and insert the mass-



es into the life of the nation, in theory ensuring the slow ousting of capitalist production and market relations and enabling the evolution of socialism in the long term; these trajectories differed from the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat and the collectivization model of the Soviet Union. Togliatti's pendulum swayed "towards democracy rather than Bolshevism", and his intellectual axis for the development of Italy was based on economic productivism, democracy and peace (Barbagallo, 1985: 543).

The form of the State was republican, with a Constitution approved on December 22, 1947. The PCI was "the only communist party that participated in the birth of a democratic republic based on the principles of European constitutionalism" (Vacca, 2018: 19). Although the PCI was an ardent defender of the republican Constitution, its "progressive democracy" was accused of deceitfulness (*doppiezza*) by both the PCI opponents and parts of its rank-and-file. That is, many believed that Togliatti was only waiting for the right moment to launch a violent uprising, and progressive democracy was only meant to buy time and leave the stage for "The Revolution" to break out at the right moment. In actual facts, the PCI leadership was far from this conception of politics (Canfora, 2021: 21-41). Even Pietro Secchia (1979: 421), the partisan leader and a left-critic of the "moderate" line at the time, explained that: "What did I want? To make the revolution? No, this is the usual nonsense ... I don't think at all that in 1945 we could start a revolution. Our country was occupied by the Anglo-Americans, etc. I fully agree with the party's analysis made at that time and with the conclusions it reached. But we should have defended better certain positions. We should have done something concrete and positive when we were in government. Also, the Anglo-Americans left at some point, and we should have put down our foot with more decisiveness." Of course, there were disagreements about the application of the labels of "socialism" and "democracy", about the stage of development the Italian polity had reached and therefore about the appropriate way to proceed. But to seize power violently was out of the question.

In addition to the historical and intellectual coordinates mentioned above, it is useful to outline the analysis of fascism that the PCI developed to comprehend the party policies after 1944 which we are about to study. The most significant examination in this sense is Togliatti's "Lessons on fascism" which constitute the main part of the broader *Course on the adversaries*. Togliatti articulated them during a series of lectures that he delivered at the International Leninist School in Moscow from January to April 1935 (Vacca, 2022: 99-112). In essence, fascism was conceptualized as a mass reactionary regime (Siena, 2019: 9-18). It must not be conflated with liberal democracy (like the social-fascist doctrine predicated) and was the product of Italian capital backwardness and the inability of the bourgeoisie to develop and maintain any hegemonic project on to the Italian nation

(Rapone, 1992: 376). In 1919, the first proportional elections in Italy with universal male suffrage led to the growth of Socialist and Popular mass parties. Fascism was a new phenomenon to keep the working masses excluded from the national political life that organized them violently and from above, and which, in time, grew into a totalitarian state (Vacca, 2022: 42-43).

Togliatti explained some of the most relevant implications of this analysis of fascism on different occasions. In the speech “Middle stratum and Red Emilia” (*Ceto medio e Emilia rossa*) on September 24, 1946 — a well-known instance which we will revisit later —, Togliatti (2014: 704) pointed out the weaknesses of the reformists (Socialists of the Second International), stressing the differences between them and the PCI. He argued that the reformists had made two mistakes at the beginning of the 20th century. One was the problem of particularism (*particolarismo*): losing sight of the general movement of society with its contradictory and stable phases. Two, the reformists had framed or formulated erroneously the peasant problem. Their analysis identified only two classes (agrarian workers and capitalists) but failed to include the middle stratum. Thus, reformists had called for socialization, which Togliatti (2014: 705) termed “dangerous levelling tendencies” because it alienated vast groups of the Italian society, i.e. the middle stratum. In this fracture, fascism had found the space to grow. As he put it, the “defeat of the socialist movement ... was essentially a great rupture between the organized socialist laborers with a collectivist attitude and the intermediate groups in the countryside and the city. This rupture ... was at the origin of fascism” (Togliatti, 2014: 706). Indeed, the goal of the PCI agrarian policy in the postwar period was not to establish collective farming of the Soviet type.

Enriched by the historical experience of fascism in Italy, Togliatti measured the asymmetric relation of forces between the PCI and the other political parties and, more largely, of the two central poles supporting their interests. So he tried to preserve — not to fight against — a tense equilibrium on which the (more or less socialistic) development of Italy could be based. It is on this assumption that in the postwar period the New Party upset the previous connotation of “class cooperation” and “class war”, striving for class collaboration (between labourers and middle stratum) insofar as this prevented the return of fascism and, instead, opposing some abstract concept of class war levelled against any private propertied classes. Anti-fascism remained one of the main characteristics (with its value and limits) of Italian communism. In short, since at least the 1930s Italian communists aimed not at “making The Revolution” (at least not in terms of a swift and violent seizure of power) but at approaching (advancing closer to) communism through democratic forms of progressive movement that growingly allowed masses of workers inside the mechanisms of the State and of production. At the historiographical

level, this means that the category of reform communism explains the decisions taken during this historical phase more convincingly than the pseudo-category of the revolution betrayed. In turn, at the political level, the relevant issue is not whether Togliatti betray the revolution, but rather the extent to which the PCI under Togliatti reached the full limits of what was objectively possible to achieve. This last point is obviously beyond the scope of this article, and I will now show that the PCI main agrarian policies in the years under consideration followed the general line of the New Party.

## 2. The Gullo Law of October 1944

Renato Guttuso's painting "Occupation of Uncultivated Lands in Sicily, 1949–50" (*Occupazione delle terre incolte in Sicilia, 1949–50*) shows well the situation in rural Italy in the early postwar period. Guttuso was an artist and a long-term member of the PCI. Two of the main policies that the PCI in these years tried to carry out in rural areas were the recognition and extension of the land occupation consolidated by the Gullo legislation of October 1944 and an agrarian reform which was passed in 1950. The partial (and temporary) success of the first and the dire limitation of the second show the diaphragm-like variations imposed by the interactions of the global network within which the dynamics of the PCI agrarian policies must be placed. They also validate the category of reform communism within which the PCI was doing politics.

At the end of World War II, Italian agriculture was structured around *latifundia* (large estates) and small peasant farms. During the war, this had caused the decline of agrarian workers' life standards which led to widespread and growing discontent (Bonanno, 1988: 136). In summer 1943 fascism collapsed. Social tensions in Italy became explosive and peasants in the South began to occupy abandoned lands. For instance, in September 1943, the Crotona marquisate (*Marchesato di Crotona*) witnessed the occupation of lands by the impoverished peasantry (Santarelli, 1997: 71). Such grabs continued throughout 1944, reaching more violent forms in parts of the country: in September–October 1944 a number of (medium-sized and large) landowners with fascist sympathies were killed around Bologna by partisans (Dondi, 2012). Under these circumstances, in October 1944, the communist Minister of Agriculture Fausto Gullo approved a decree to recognize the occupation of abandoned lands. The so-called Gullo Law (*Legge Gullo; decreto legislativo luogotenenziale 19 ottobre 1944, n. 279*) also "allowed peasants organized in cooperatives to acquire land belonging to uncultivated or ill-cultivated *latifundia*" (Bonanno, 1988: 136). The land request was to be submitted by cooperatives, but farming could be individual. Furthermore, the acceptance or rejection of the application was at the discretion of re-

gional officers who were often anti-communists and collaborated with large landowners (Rossi-Doria, 1983: 149-151).

Far from being revolutionary, the Gullo Law was nonetheless a powerful recognition or a ratification of the situation on the ground, accepted by some in the antifascist coalition reluctantly and by others wholeheartedly. As Gullo reiterated in 1945, “It is right and urgent that these peasant masses seriously become the protagonists in the great work of rebuilding the fatherland. There will be a true and definitive rejuvenation of the Fatherland only when these masses, through the pious justice of labour, see the recognition of their rights and will be able, in a climate of absolute freedom and of achieved democracy, to devote all of their activity to the welfare of Italy... We think that small and medium-sized property... can and must be safeguarded. We want small and medium-sized property, even if absentee, to be respected”<sup>4</sup>.

From this passage, the dynamics of reform communism can be evinced with ease, and the principles upon which the statement was made were economic productivism, democracy and social harmony. There was no proposal for a violent revolution, and, instead, the focus was on reconstruction for the benefit of the community identified as the nation (though there is some interesting tension between “fatherland” and “nation”). Still, the legalization of an effectual form of expropriation was an important fact, which is even more significant given that southern and central Italy at the time was under the Allies military occupation (to liberate the country from Nazi-fascists).

To the extent that some lands were given to peasant cooperatives, the Gullo Law can be considered a newer version of the Visocchi Reform (*Decreto Visocchi*) of the early interwar period (Daneo, 1975: 68). In September 1919, this had allocated some land to peasant associations and offered some limited rent incentives (Castronovo, 1976: 26). That reform was also the result of the early interwar peasant movement, and in fact it was abolished by the fascist government in 1923 (Mattone, 1973: 942-3). Similarly, the Gullo Law of 1944 did not aim to extemporaneously abolish or even challenge private property *per se* or to revolutionize the structure of the Italian southern economy. Rather, in the spirit of reform communism, Gullo wanted to consolidate a certain advantageous position that had already been conquered and which was already a raw fact on the ground; he did not prepare the stage for any new revolutionary offensive or further radical action. With the first skirmishes of the Cold War and the untangling of the anti-fascist alliance, on September 6, 1946 the new Minister of Agriculture Antonio Segni passed a law to weaken Gullo’s

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global network...

4. Istituto Alcide Cervi (IAC), Fondo Grieco (FG), File 5 1938-1946, fasc. 16, 1946, Documenti del V congresso del P. C. I. La questione agraria al V congresso [Documents for the 5th PCI Congress. The Agrarian Question at the 5th Congress], Rome: Società editrice l’Unità (1946), pp. 32-33.

achievements — this was a tactical offensive against the Gullo Law. According to the new norm, land concessions could be terminated for lands which were not properly tilled. More importantly, this norm also eliminated any mentions in the Gullo Law regarding credit facilitation for cooperatives, which significantly decreased peasants' ability to work the land (Rossi-Doria, 1983: 151-152).

Indeed, what was needed for the ratification of the Gullo Law and what did exist was a coalition of forces not just at the national level (Italian Socialists, Communists and Christian Democrats) but also at the international level (USA and USSR) — as the alliance against fascism. In other words, we can explain the successful implementation of the — certainly progressive, but not revolutionary — Gullo Law only by the interactions of a global network of political forces.

### 3. Land Committees

The Gullo Law created cooperatives of poor and middle peasant households. These included the majority of the agrarian movement in southern Italy, where the Gullo Law had been mostly effective: around 70% of peasants in the south as opposed to 25% nationally (Rossi-Doria, 1983: 145). The evolution of these cooperatives in the following years is symptomatic not only of the global network at play but also of the validity of the reform communism category to understand the PCI choices in the field of agrarian policies. The PCI strategy was to avoid open confrontations and, instead, to defend and to try to preserve a coalition of antifascist forces (workers and middle stratum) for the sake of developing Italy in a democratic way, both economically and politically. A sign of this was the transformation in December 1947 of peasant cooperatives into Land Committees (*Comitati per la terra*) under the auspices of the PCI. Similarly, in the Italian north, Farm Councils (*Consigli di fattoria*) and Farmstead Councils (*Consigli di cascina*) were also organized. A detailed account of their features is of great interest but not of primary relevance to illustrate the reform communist concept and the global network of asymmetric interdependencies, which are the kernel of this article. Thus, we shall discuss them only to the extent that they are relevant to prove the usefulness of our analytical instruments.

Land Committees attempted to unite different strata of the rural population to increase production and to defend their interests against large landowners, at the same time also mobilizing masses for the planned agrarian reform. Two long paragraphs from the 1949 article “Land Committees” by Ruggero Grieco (1968: 88), at the time responsible for the PCI Agrarian Commission (*Sezione agraria*), illustrate this: “The aim of the land committees is to promote the social and political alliances necessary for a victorious struggle for the land reform. This objective does not interest only a specific party or a specific category of land workers: it interests, and it must interest, all land work-

ers and indeed the entire rural population. In fact, it interests all those who want to fight for a profound renewal of social life in our countryside. How can we bring together these forces which are different and heterogenous socially and politically? The initiators of the Land Constituent [*Costituente della terra*] said: the village assemblies, the rural village assemblies shall elect their own committees with broad representative functions, directing the struggle for that set of demands (economic, social, cultural) that go under the name of agrarian reform. These committees will thus enjoy a popular basis for designation and control. They will have authority and tasks to perform. If we proceed in this way, it is *impossible* for the land committee to be identified or confused with any other form of organization. This is because its nature, its origin, its composition, its character and its aims are different from those of any other existing organization. The land committee is the organized form of a social (and political) *alliance* for a given goal, it has a transitory function determined by the goal to achieve”.

Casting aside hypotheses about dubious revolutionary projects, Grieco picked his lexicon, and followed it up through actions, within a cast of reform communism that called for the political unity of different social strata. The emphasis was on a strategy of large alliance for the land reform vis-à-vis class struggle and on educating the militants about the new forms that the party intended to follow to exercise power in postwar Italy. As the article continues (Grieco, 1968: 88-89), “In some provinces, we have encountered a certain delay in the development of the land committees movement. There can be no doubt that the main causes for this are the lack of understanding and application of the policy of alliances and, therefore, the insufficient study of the organizational forms suitable for consolidating such alliances. This situation constitutes a weakness in the party’s general agrarian and peasant policy. This cannot be limited to trade union action. Instead, it must aim at determining new situations in the countryside (thus in the country), which is possible only by intervening in the right way *in the movement of all classes, of all strata and of all social groups* that gravitate in the countryside”.

In light of the principles of progressive democracy, among the tasks of these councils was to “make workers participants — active participants — in the productive process of factories, workshops and farms. There is a function of leadership, therefore, which must enable farm workers to have an economic policy to oppose to that of the landlords when the latter proves unsuccessful” (Grieco, 1968: 202). In this spirit, Article 46 of the approved Constitution explained that “the Republic shall recognize the rights of workers to collaborate in the management of enterprises”<sup>5</sup>. Although the insertion of workers in

5. Costituzione, Parte I, Titolo III — Rapporti economici, Art 46. Available at: <https://www.senato.it/istituzione/la-costituzione/parte-i/titolo-iii/articolo-46>.

the productive process was now an open possibility, the strategy did not translate in generic expropriation. Small and medium land property was defended: on December 20, 1949, Grieco (1968: 96-98) published the article “In Defence of Small Private Property” (*In difesa della piccola proprietà*). The PCI targeted large properties, trying to limit them; though somewhat generically, Article 44 states that “For the purpose of ensuring a rational use of land and equitable social relationships, the law shall impose obligations and constraints on private land ownership; set limitations to the size of property according to the region and the agricultural area; encourage and impose land reclamation, the conversion of large estates and the reorganisation of farm units; and assist small and medium-sized properties”<sup>6</sup>.

Over time, Land Committees’ tasks became increasingly challenging not only because their interests started to vary conspicuously but also, and even more importantly, because the progressive consolidation of the confrontational stance dictated by the Cold War started to unravel the anti-fascist alliance. In his classic study, Sidney Tarrow (1972: 252) argued with reference to the Land Committees that the “main drawback of these bodies was that, in their quest for a broad and popular appeal, they dispersed the fundamental objectives of the party and its revolutionary force: farm labourers and poor peasants. ... The formation of Land Committees incorporated the peasants in the “Movement for the Rebirth of Southern Italy” created by the party. This movement’s aims were broad and reformist rather than concentrated and revolutionary.” This misreading of PCI actions was based on the “revolution betrayed” pseudo-category and has already been effectively criticised (Rossi-Doria, 1983: 171-3). The PCI did not just “give up” poor peasants, but, given Togliatti’s analysis of Mussolini’s regime, it strove to latch the middle stratum to avoid the resurgence of fascism. Moreover, the development of global events was turning more confrontational, so the range of actions at the disposal of Italian communists shrank significantly. Indeed, many lands which ought to be redistributed returned to old large proprietors (Rossi-Doria, 1983: 152).

The formation of these institutions in agriculture (Land Committees and Farm and Farmstead Councils) was based on the same reform communism which also influenced communist industrial policy. To this extent, these organs in the agrarian sphere mirrored Management Councils (*Consiglio di Gestione*, CdG) in the factories. CdGs

6. Costituzione, Parte I, Titolo III — Rapporti economici, Art 44. Available at: <https://www.senato.it/istituzione/la-costituzione/parte-i/titolo-iii/articolo-44> (accessed 22 June 2024).

The term “abolition” (*abolizione*) was replaced by “conversion” (*trasformazione*) during the discussion of the draft article in the Constituent Assembly. The liberal (and landowner) Luigi Einaudi led the staunch opposition to the term “abolition” (Pacelli, 2012: 30).

aimed to connect industrial workers (proletariat) with technicians and capitalists in order to orient and manage together the life of the factory — the point was never to expropriate property or to install some collective organs on the model of the workers' councils of the *Biennio rosso*. Emilio Sereni was the main architect behind the CdGs, and he explained in 1946 that “a condition for the effective action of the working class, the technicians, the white-collars, for the sake of national reconstruction” was “their close collaboration with the other elements representing capital” (CGII, 1947: 239). The gradualist approach for the development of Italy was evident, and Sereni (1945: 17) had already stated in his speech in December 1945: “We, communists, wish to stand alongside all patriots regardless of their class or stratum [*ceto*], alongside and at the head of all those who sincerely wish to contribute to the work of reconstruction. We have not hesitated to declare that in this work of reconstruction we are ready to collaborate with those capitalists who honestly orient their activity in a productive, and not speculative, direction”.

At the 5th PCI Congress, Grieco stated that “Wherever there is management in a farm, peasants must participate in such management through Farm Councils [*Consigli di fattoria*]”<sup>7</sup>. Similarly to the CdGs, then, as a pamphlet of (probably) late 1948 indicated: “Farm Councils [*Consigli di Cascina*] ... must be immediately created by the workers of the land in agreement with technicians and all those farmers who have understood that the enemies of production are not the workers, but the large parasitic landowners who live off the labor of both farmers and entrepreneurial farmers [*agricoltore imprenditore*]. By the spring sowing, these Councils must be organized so that workers can participate in production management and crops control, which must aim especially at the realization of the National interest and no longer at individual selfish interests”<sup>8</sup>. The organization of various forms of councils was to mirror the CdG structure, and the pamphlet's first article defined the Farm Council as “a collegial body with the task of introducing workers into the effective management of the company [*azienda*]”<sup>9</sup>. Both workers and landowners (who were not abolished as such) were to participate in the management and overall life of the agricultural enterprise.

Revisiting those days with historical insights while also expounding some of the PCI strategic limits, the communist leader Giorgio Amendola (1962: 91) confirmed that “at times Management Councils

7. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 16, 1946’, ‘Documenti del V congresso del P. C. I. La questione agraria al V congresso’, p. 21.

8. IAC, FG, File 6 1947-1951, ‘fasc. 17, 1947-1948’, ‘Riforma agraria e Consigli di cascina’ [copies of the pamphlet titled ‘Agrarian Reform and Farmstead Councils’ by G. Pianezza], pp. 3-4.

9. IAC, FG, File 6 1947-1951, ‘fasc. 17, 1947-1948’, ‘Riforma agraria e Consigli di cascina’, p. 5.



[and] Land Committees ... fulfilled this function as new, democratic and unitarian organs of mobilization from below". By working in tandem, they attempted to unite workers and the middle stratum, building up (so trying to win) popular support for the PCI and its policies, like an agrarian reform, within a parliamentary polity. They aimed to be intra-class and popular tools, not instruments for class struggle or violent insurrection. Their importance should not be underestimated, and during the meeting of the PCI Central Committee of April 26, 1948, shortly after it had become clear that the PCI (united with the PSI in the Popular Democratic Front) had lost the elections against the Christian Democrats, Sereni stated: "Our fundamental deficiency was the lack of a serious struggle and also the fact that our campaign should have been based on the Land Committees and Management Councils, but it was not. That is, our campaign should have been set up as a struggle of all the popular organizations. In short, the party did not carry out the policy developed during its last Congress"<sup>10</sup>.

Symptomatic of the inter-class approach of the Land Committees and of the PCI overall policies in these years — which fall under the category of reform communism — is also Togliatti's speech on the middle stratum which we mentioned earlier. Emilia Romagna was a region of advanced agriculture, so this speech is typically viewed as one of the most relevant when studying the PCI agrarian strategy in the postwar years. It was preceded by another speech on the same lines by Sereni which was titled "Middle strata and the Constituent Assembly" (*I ceti medi e la Costituente*) and delivered on May 12, 1946 (Barbagallo, 1985: 530).

In September 1946, Togliatti explained several things. (a) He praised the so-called 'New Path' (*nuovo corso*) in economy. This meant safeguarding small and medium private property and building a form of state capitalism, i.e. a mix of statism (e.g., tax exemption and other benefits for private enterprises) and of state capital (State monopolies) (Sperber, 2019). (b) Togliatti's class analysis included wage-labourers (*salaritati*), capitalists (large owners of the means of production) and the middle stratum (*ceto medio*). The middle stratum was very heterogenous: sharecroppers (*mezzadro*), land tenants (*fittavolo*), small and medium proprietors, small and medium shop-keepers, teachers, intellectuals, priests, poets, artists, scientists. They were not a "uniform mass", evidently, but economically they constituted the middle stratum. (c) Togliatti stressed productivity (at the expense of relations of production), since the improvement of the standards of life of the masses was part of the process to build a socialist nation. (d) He continued his project of the invention of a national tradition. In this sense, the forces which enjoyed a progressive character in the movement of history had created "the symbol of

10. Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Fondo Mosca, mf. 199 'Verbale Direzione Pci', April 26, 1948, folio 10.

our national unity, the *tricolore* [the Italian national flag]” (Togliatti, 2014: 700). In short, the progressive forces were the national forces.

Togliatti delivered his speech in Emilia Romagna, which was a region that had witnessed intense communist partisanship during the War of Liberation and its aftermath (Casali, 2019: 223-5). So, he was effectively trying to ensure that the more radical factions of the PCI understood the necessity of inter-class cooperation. He intended to avoid any radicalism, which was dangerous and unnecessary due to the possibility of a fascist return and also to the *de facto* American military occupation of Italy which would have prevented any communist uprising (the tragedy of Greece was unfolding closely) (Naimark, 2019: 145-146). Togliatti’s speech has been said to contain a “eulogy to reformist socialism” (Casali, 2019: 226). But the category of reform communism is more precise and works more accurately to understand in historical terms Togliatti’s thinking. Togliatti was wary of the fascist threat and also enriched by the social analysis deriving from that phenomenon and which it tried to explain; he was also well aware of the necessary asymmetric interdependence between the PCI and other political parties and, more largely, of the deeper forces supporting their respective interests. It is in this sense that we must locate the initial formation and evolution of the organs which we have outlined above.

#### 4. Towards the 1950 Agrarian Reform

In his speech “Middle stratum and Red Emilia”, Togliatti (2014: 698) also spoke of the “need for land reform to free a large share of our farmers from the excessive burden of land rent”. In the years after the end of World War II, struggles for land continued with varied intensity. Tensions culminated in 1949, which Guttuso represented in his piece of art that we mentioned above. A general strike for the renegotiation of labor contracts in agriculture was followed, on May 1, 1949, by the Portella della Ginestra massacre (Bonanno, 1988: 137-138). 11 people were murdered by the (in)famous bandit Salvatore Giuliano, probably hired by Mafia mobsters and latifundia landowners. Later, in early October 1949, a woman was killed by the police, and shortly after, on October 30, 1949, the Melissa massacre took place: 3 people were killed and 15 wounded by the police. More blood was spilled. All of this forced the government and opposition to work out an agrarian reform.

The agrarian reform was passed in 1950. It consisted of three parts: the Sila Law (*legge Sila* l. 230/1950), the so-called *legge stralcio* (l. 841/1950) which extended the previous one to other parts of Italy, and a specific law for Sicily (l. 104/1950) (Bonanno, 1988: 139). The reform did not constitute a major change for Italian agriculture, and virtually all historians agree upon its very limited nature, though some fail to recognize the untangling of the anti-fascist alliance as the

ultimate cause of this defeat. Less than one million hectares were either redistributed to or bought with incentives by poor peasants. That is less than what peasants had managed to obtain in the wake of the Great War (Bevilacqua, 2012: 229). There is a humorous, if not tragic, anecdote about the dire limits of this reform by one of its main protagonists, Manlio Rossi-Doria (who was not a communist at that time). As he put it, quite cynically, “The only land reform worth discussing is the Gracchi reform of Republican Rome”, i.e. what had taken place in the second century BCE (Bevilacqua, 2012: 229).

In 1950, the PCI had already been ousted from national governance for about three years. It did not have much space to affect this legislation except than from the oppositional bench. Thus, to study what the party was planning to achieve when it was still a member of the national unity government is more helpful to evaluate the usefulness of the reform communism category and of the global network methodology. The records of the PCI commission called to elaborate drafts and plans for a land reform are indicative in this sense. During meetings in November 1945, Sereni held that “thorough agrarian reform means agrarian revolution”, and this was an “essential element in the construction of democratic and progressive Italy”<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, Gullo “affirm[ed] that the solution leading to the expropriation of large estates in the *Mezzogiorno* and, instead, the respect of smallholdings is an unavoidable requirement” of any viable reform<sup>12</sup>. These goals were consistent with the New Party’s bases of productivism, democracy and peace. The “Outline for the Land Reform” was based on the principles of (1) “promoting... the technical development of Italian agriculture and therefore agrarian production”; (2) “ensuring peace of mind to land workers”, which meant “absolute respect for small and medium property and our commitment to defend it”; and (3) “implementing a series of measures so that large-landed property be available for the reconstruction of the country”<sup>13</sup>. These principles were reiterated shortly after by Togliatti<sup>14</sup>.

11. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 15, 1944-1945’, ‘Verbale riunione della commissione di studio per la riforma agraria del 10/11/1945’ [Minutes of the meeting for the study commission for the land reform, November 10, 1945], folio 3.

12. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 15, 1944-1945’, ‘Verbale riunione della commissione di studio per la riforma agraria’ [These notes are on sheets that follow those regarding the Minutes cited above. The format is slightly different from that of the Minutes, though the page number added in pen is continuous to those of the Minutes. Another indication (‘Last night, Comrade Sereni, ...’) indicates with all probability that the papers record a second meeting, on the same issue, that followed that of November 10 by a few days], folio 12-13.

13. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 16, 1946’, ‘Lineamenti della riforma agraria’ [Outlines of the land reform. The document belongs to notes of the PCI Fifth Congress (December 29, 1945 — January 6, 1946)], folio 2-4.

14. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 16, 1946’, ‘Documenti del V congresso del P. C. I. La questione agraria al V congresso’, p. 7.

The note that Grieco wrote to the PCI secretariat of November 14, 1945, on the findings of the commission is also insightful. Grieco recognized the existence of “two fundamental alternatives” of land reform which circled around the terms of land expropriation<sup>15</sup>. Significantly, both alternatives shared the ideas about the value of the anti-fascist paradigm and of the prerequisite of preventing the return of the black regime prior anything else. As Grieco had it, “Different and in part conflicting demands were put forward in the various speeches. But they were all, in the end, in agreement on this fundamental conviction: since anti-fascism is the essential content of the democratic revolution underway, an agrarian reform conceived within its framework must have as its most immediate and pre-eminent objective the destruction of the roots of fascism in the countryside. In so doing, it must strike the base of large landowners, whether absentee or entrepreneurial”<sup>16</sup>. Even the most radical option that called for the expropriation of all land marked by absenteeism and of large property (100 hectares in the north, 200 in the south) was to be implemented through gradual forms “to avoid the break-up of the current policy of national unity”<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, Grieco was reasoning within the space of reform communism.

In addition to this category, we have also used another tool to study the PCI agrarian policies in the early postwar period. In turn, then, to notice the growing tension among the government of national unity as the anti-fascist paradigm collapsed illustrates the global network methodology, finally confirming its historiographical utility. One of many examples of this tension is Sereni’s *Il Mezzogiorno all’opposizione (Mezzogiorno in Opposition)*, which was published in 1948. The author indicated that the text was completed by September 23, 1947, which essentially coincided with the Cominform founding conference. Some salient passages from the book indicate the unravelling of a fragile alliance and the rise of the oppositional mentality characteristic of Cold War blocs. Sereni (1948: 11) did not mince words from the very opening sentence: “The coup d’état which led to the formation of Mr De Gasperi’s “Black Government” marks, without a doubt, a turning point in the development of the Italian political situation”. In line with Andrei Zhdanov’s two-bloc stance, Sereni (1948: 13) saw a “clear contraposition between the

15. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 15, 1944-1945’, ‘Nota per la Segreteria — Riforma agraria’ [Grieco’s note to the PCI secretariat on the land reform, November 14, 1945], folio 1. These two lines depended on different historical-analytical assumptions and had important political consequences. The details of these alternatives cannot be untangled here. See, Rossi-Doria (1983: 184-198).

16. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 15, 1944-1945’, ‘Nota per la Segreteria — Riforma agraria’, folio 1.

17. IAC, FG, File 5 1938-1946, ‘fasc. 15, 1944-1945’, ‘Nota per la Segreteria — Riforma agraria’, folio 2-3.

imperialist bloc of war provocateurs and the bloc of democracy and peace". The main political category retreated to "struggle" (against American imperialism), and this even implied the "overcoming of constitutional illusions" of the precedent period (Sereni, 1948: 13). The "struggle for an agrarian reform" was now placed in the conceptual field that privileged the notion of conflict, meaning the "effective democratization of the state structures", and the stakes included "peace", "national independence" and "freedom" (Sereni, 1948: 14; Bevilacqua, 1980).

The air was palpably heavy, and Togliatti became the victim of an assassination attempt on July 14, 1948 (Naimark, 2019: 149). Preparing for the general elections of April 18, 1948, in which Communists and Socialists were defeated by Christian Democrats, Grieco expanded the horizons of the confrontation: "The struggle for a land reform shall be placed on the broader level of national struggle in which this problem can be solved" (Anon., 1948: 3). The democratic organs that we have studied above were re-oriented in accordance with these directives, and Grieco explained that the "agrarian reform is not just a sectorial request of trade union organizations. The agrarian reform affects all problems and sectors of the national life. It affects all the political, economic and social forces of the Nation. For this reason, at the center of the struggle for the agrarian reform there are and must be land committees. In them, all the living forces of the nation must be represented, from peasants to workers, intellectuals and democratic municipalities" (Anon., 1948: 3).

In lieu of a conclusion, let us highlight two points. One concerns the agrarian reform, the other relates the dynamics of Italian development to global tendencies (the global network methodology). The first point is that the reform was "late" insofar as agriculture was on the path of becoming much more marginal for the model of Italian development than it had ever been before due to peasant migration and proletarianization. International capitalist growth in the 1950s–60s and the peasant outflow to the city were its economic driver: low salaries in the industry promoted growth. As Piero Bevilacqua (2012: 231), the leading scholar of agrarian issues in Italy, has put it, the "reform acted in an area that had been dominant in the past, and which was now destined to become marginal".

The second point concerns the impossibility of isolating these struggles and the state of Italian agriculture from the broader network of the 20th century. The bills that provided peasants with incentives to purchase lands in 1947–8 and those that constituted the agrarian reform were being discussed as Italy entered the Western camp. This was the precondition to access the coffers of the Marshall Plan, which was announced in June 1947, and Italy adhered to NATO at its foundation in 1949. In short, as common positions started to crumble in 1946–7, landlords had the strength (because now they also had support) to reject proposals from the Italian peasant move-

ment. Peasants, on the contrary, could now rely mainly on the limited weapon of organized struggles (strikes) to try to change the situation by force (Bevilacqua, 1980: 813-814). Schematizing things too much is inappropriate, of course, and the Christian Democrats were not just the Vatican's pawn or the landlords' puppets or the unconscious tool of the US (Forlenza, 2010: 332-334). Still, Italian agriculture from at least 1947 was submitted to the "Western choice" (Bevilacqua, 1980: 800-806), which implies another choice in the scary world of two camps that was being formed after the collapse of the anti-fascist alliance.

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### **Коммунисты-реформаторы в глобальной сети XX столетия: аграрная политика Итальянской коммунистической партии в послевоенный период**

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*Аннотация.* Цель статьи — объяснить основные положения аграрной политики Итальянской коммунистической партии (ИКП) в начале послевоенного периода с использованием аналитической категории «реформаторский коммунизм» и методологического подхода «глобальной сети», которые помогают рассмотреть решения ИКП в исторической, а не полемической перспективе. Автор использует архивные материалы, включая записи заседаний Центрального комитета и съездов, внутрипартийные отчеты и брошюры. В первой части статьи автор характеризует «Новую партию» как порождение традиционной Коммунистической партии Италии, чтобы определить ее основные исторические и интеллектуальные координаты. Далее в статье обозначены аналитические новации в ряде положений аграрной политики, которые ИКП более или менее успешно реализовала с 1944 по 1947 годы, т. е. при правительстве национального единства: Закон Гулло 1944 года, создание особых органов власти (земельных комитетов) и дебаты об аграрной реформе, которые рассмотрены, соответственно, во второй, третьей и четвертой частях статьи.

*Ключевые слова:* аграрная политика, Итальянская коммунистическая партия (ИКП), реформаторский коммунизм, Италия, глобальная сеть, асимметричные взаимозависимости