

The Relationship Between the United States and the Italian Right-Wing During the Nixon Administration (1969-1974)

PhD in History

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I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing during the Nixon Administration. The focus of this study is the alleged US role in the terrorist attacks and coup plots in Italy in the years between 1969 and 1974. This thesis will make three original contributions to the Cold War history, the US-Italian relations and the history of terrorism through the use of primary sources found in the Italian and American archives. It provides an interpretation of the Cold War as an imperialistic, rather than an ideological clash, in line with the post-revisionist school of thought. It contributes to the literature on terrorism by explaining how manipulating terrorist groups is a means that states can use to achieve more effective results than with orthodox methods. Finally, it shows how the cooperation between the Italian and American governments have evolved in face of the Communist challenge.

This research analyses the political goals that the Nixon Administration meant to pursue in Italy, and how it perceived the Italian right-wing as a useful tool in this regard. It investigates how the relations between the two sides evolved over the years starting from the end of World War II and how they affected the course of history in Italy. Through the use of archival evidence, the research proves that there had been interactions between US Government representatives and various neo-Fascist groups to undermine the Italian Communist Party's ever-growing popularity.

The results of this study illustrate that there was an internal rift between the various US state branches regarding support for the Italian right-wing and also within the CIA. It is plausible that such rift prevented the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing to become closer, and that they contributed to the failure of the coup plots and the exhaustion of the neo-Fascist terrorist strategy.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	7
List of Italian right-wing groups and secret services	8
Introduction	9
The Cold War	18
The US-Italian relation	20
Terrorism	29
Research questions	42
Methodology and structure	44
Chapter structure	49
Chapter 1- USA and the Italian right-wing in historical context	52
Intro	52
Development of US interference	57
Rise of the centre-left governments and opposition	69
CIA's use of third actors: Aginter Press	82
Richard Nixon and the Italian Social Movement	91
Chapter 2-Attack on the Italian democracy	96
Intro	96
The international context	103
Prelude to Piazza Fontana	109
Political crisis of summer of 1969	121
Press response to the terrorist wave	127
Interpretation and explanation of Piazza Fontana	132

Chapter 3-The coup season	150
Intro	150
1970: Borghese coup	154
Background to Borghese coup and aftermath	166
Interference in the 1972 elections	176
Chapter 4-The final phase	188
Intro	188
1973: <i>Rosa dei Venti</i> coup	192
1974: the final year	205
End of the strategy of tension	227
Conclusion	238
Intro	238
Italian historical context	240
US responsibilities	245
Final considerations	249
Bibliography	254

Abbreviations

CIA-Central Intelligence Agency

CIC-Counter Intelligence Corps

DC-Democrazia Cristiana

FN-Fronte Nazionale

LANDSOUTH- Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe

MSI-Movimento Sociale Italiano

NATO-North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSC-National Security Council

OSS-Office of Strategic Services

PCI-Partito Comunista Italiano

ROS-Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale

SID-Servizio Informazioni Difesa

SIFAR-Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate

UAR-Ufficio Affari Riservati

List of Italian right-wing groups and secret services

Avanguardia Nazionale-in English, National Vanguard. Far-right group founded by Stefano Delle Chiaie on 25 April 1960 after a split from New Order; responsible for the bombs planted in Rome on 12 December 1969

Fronte Nazionale-in English, National Front. Founded by the ex-general of the infantry marine division of the Italian Social Republic *Decima Mas* Junio Valerio Borghese on 13 September 1968; responsible for the attempted coup on 7-8 December 1970

MSI-in English, Italian Social movement. Founded by Italian Social Republic veterans on 26 December 1946

Ordine Nuovo-in English, New Order. Far-right group founded by the Social Republic veteran Pino Rauti on 14 January 1957 after a split from the Social Movement; responsible for the massacre in Milan on 12 December 1969

Repubblica Sociale Italiana-in English, Italian Social Republic. Puppet state of Germany created by Benito Mussolini in Northern Italy on 23 September 1943 after being freed by German troopers from his captivity to which he had been subjected

SID-in English, Defense Information Service; Italian military intelligence, created in 1966 in place of SIFAR

SIFAR-in English, Armed Forces Information Service; first Italian military intelligence, created in 1949

UAR-in English, Office for Reserved Affairs; civilian Italian intelligence under the Ministry of Interior, created in 1948

INTRODUCTION

“Since the post-war period, a structure parallel to the security services and which depended on the Atlantic Alliance has existed in Italy. Personnel were recruited from far-right circles and used for internal purposes by national and international forces. By international forces, I mainly mean the United States of America.”.¹

Between 1969 and 1988, Italy experienced a wave of terrorist attack unprecedent in history. It reached its most acute phase in the period 1969-1974, coinciding with Richard Nixon's tenure as US President. Scholars and journalists often refer to this period as strategy of tension.

The definition appeared for the first time in an article published on the British newspaper *The Observer* on 14 December 1969, two days after a bomb exploded in the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* branch in Piazza Fontana, Milan. The article used the term to describe the alleged efforts by the then Italian head of state Giuseppe Saragat to facilitate the establishment of a conservative government and the consequent sidelining of the Italian Communist Party. According to *The Observer*, the strategy was Saragat's brainchild, as he was the one who created the whole political and social instability in which Italy found itself since the summer of 1969 after the Social Democrat split from the Unified Socialist Party. It was Saragat, *The Observer* claimed, who caused this split that brought down the first Mariano Rumor-

¹ Translation by the author of this thesis of a statement by Vinciguerra Vincenzo at the trial on the Peteano bombing, Assize Court of Venice, First Degree Sentence on the Peteano bombing, n. 2/86 General Register, 25 July 1987. His original statement in Italian is as follows: *“Fin dal dopoguerra sarebbe stata costituita una struttura parallela ai servizi di sicurezza e che dipendeva dall'Alleanza atlantica. Si trattava di una struttura attrezzata anche sul piano operativo ad interventi di sabotaggio nel caso si verificasse un'invasione sovietica. Il personale veniva selezionato e reclutato negli ambienti di estrema destra. Quindi la strategia della tensione che ha colpito l'Italia, e mi riferisco a tutti gli episodi che partono dal 1969 e anche prima, è dovuta all'esistenza della struttura occulta di cui ho detto e agli uomini che vi appartenevano e che sono stati utilizzati anche per fini interni da forze nazionali ed internazionali. Per forze internazionali intendo principalmente gli Stati Uniti d'America”.*

led government and the end of the centre-left coalition. The head of state expected that the single-Christian Democrat party government that Rumor would recreate would be too weak to last an entire legislature, and that therefore there would be early elections in 1970. On that occasion Saragat believed that the so-called "Hot Autumn" (the period of trade union struggles that took place in the autumn of 1969 in Italy) would have rewarded the conservative parties. Since the workers' unrest did not degenerate into waves of widespread violence, *The Observer* argued that Saragat and the Italian right-wing decided to force the issue and resort to terrorism to revive Italian population's fear of left-wing subversion.²

Subsequent judicial inquiries confirmed this hypothesis: the material executors of the bombing were militants of the far-right group New Order, but the inspirers were within the Italian and the US security apparatuses. The right-wing terrorism season, that started with the 12 December 1969 bombings and ended with the attack on the *Italicus* train on 4 August 1974, led Italy to a state of emergency. The aim of this thesis is to explain how the strategy of tension originated, and what its ultimate outcome was. It is important to place this period in the context of the Cold War and treat it as a fact pertaining to the history of international relations, and not only to the contemporary history of Italy. Only if one starts from the assumption that Italy was the crossroads of the balance between the Western and the Communist blocs is it possible to understand what triggered the right-wing terrorism. This premise also helps understand what led some US intelligence sectors to cooperate with the Italian right-wing subversive groups.

It may be helpful to explain the framework of the right-wing parties and movements in Italy, in order to facilitate the understanding of the issue this thesis deals with. From the end of World War II until the mid-1990s, the Italian Social Movement was the only self-proclaimed right-wing party. Veterans of the Italian Social Republic such as Pino Romualdi (deputy leader of the Republican Fascist Party), Arturo Michelini (deputy leader of the National Fascist Party in Rome during

² Neal Ascherson, Michael David and Frances Cairncross. 'Italy: Fear of revolt returns,' *The Observer* (14 December 1969)

the Fascist regime) and Giorgio Almirante (cabinet head of the Ministry of Popular Culture in the Italian Social Republic) founded the party on 26 December 1946. Its three initial goals were: revive Mussolini's legacy; attack the Italian democratic institutions; fight Communism.³ Giulio Caradonna, a leading figure of the neo-Fascist party, revealed to scholar Giuseppe Parlato that the Italian Social Movement received US fundings in the first months after its foundation. The financial aid came through a channel linking the Archbishop of New York Francis Spellman and the head of X-2 Counter Espionage Branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Italy James Jesus Angleton.⁴

The main Italian terrorist far-right group in the post-war era was New Order. Its genesis traces back to 1 January 1948, when two Italian Social Republic veterans, Enzo Erra and Pino Rauti, founded the magazine *La Sfida*, the official journal of the Italian Social Movement's youth organization. One of the contributors of the magazine was philosopher Julius Evola. Evola's thought was based on the concept of Tradition. The followers of this concept believed that the ancient civilizations were the ideal societies, as they were founded on the principles of aristocracy of the spirit, caste hierarchy and warrior virtues. According to Evola, the French Revolution destroyed these models of civilization and spread ideas that he deemed destructive such as equality, materialism, rationality and economism. Therefore, Evola argued, it was necessary to oppose the modern world and bourgeois society as denial of the founding principles of the righteous ancient European civilizations.⁵

³ Stephen Atkins, *Encyclopaedia of modern worldwide extremists groups* (Westport, Connecticut, 2004), 151-152

⁴ Giuseppe Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini. Le origini del neofascismo in Italia, 1943-1948* (Bologna, 2012), 297

⁵ Evola's main works are as follows:

- *Revolt Against the Modern World: Politics, Religion, and Social Order in the Kali Yuga* (original title in Italian: *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*, 1934) (Rochester, Vermont, 1995)
- *Men Among the Ruins: Post-War Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (original title in Italian: *Uomini tra le rovine*, 1953) (Rochester, Vermont, 2002)
- *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul* (original title in Italian: *Cavalcare la tigre*, 1961) (Rochester, Vermont, 2002)

For a thorough study on Evola's worldview and influence on the far-right, see: Francesco Cassata, *A destra del fascismo. Profilo politico di Julius Evola* (Turin, 2003)

These concepts had provided the young Fascist veterans a reason to keep their political struggle going.⁶

Evola suggested his followers create a faction within the Italian Social Movement, that would embody his thought and influence the Italian right-wing policy. In his mind, this faction should have been a right-wing elite that used the party for tactical and contingent purposes in order to create and train forces ready to intervene in the event of a war against Communism. Evola suggested the name New Order after the "New European Order" formula that Adolf Hitler enunciated in a speech at the Berlin Sport Palast on 30 January 1941, which entailed the creation of a pan-German racial state, structured according to Nazi ideology.⁷

The disciples Enzo Erra and Pino Rauti implemented Evola's teachings. At the Italian Social Movement congress, held in Viareggio from 9 to 11 January 1954, they created the New Order faction, with the intention of translating Evola's ideas on a political level. At the following congress, held in Milan from 24 to 26 November 1956, the New Order faction decided to quit the Italian Social Movement. Afterwards, on 14 January 1957, Pino Rauti, along with other militants, founded the *Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo* as a think tank far from any political and electoral competition.⁸

Another important far-right group was National Vanguard. Its founder, Stefano Delle Chiaie, had left the Italian Social Movement in 1956 to join the *Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo*. Soon after, he left New Order too, in controversy with Pino Rauti's decision not to engage in politics and to limit the group's action only to intellectual activity. On 25 April 1960, deliberately on the anniversary of Italy's liberation from Nazi-Fascism, Delle Chiaie founded National Vanguard. It became immediately infamous due to its marked propensity for aggression against left-wing militants.⁹

⁶ Nicola Rao, *La Fiamma e la Celtica. Sessant'anni di neofascismo, da Salò ai centri sociali di destra* (Milan, 2006), 52-53

⁷ Interview with Julius Evola by Gianfranco De Turris, *L'Italiano*, No. 11 (November 1971)

<https://www.rigenerazionevola.it/intervista-a-julius-evola/> (last accessed 25 March 2023)

⁸ Antonio Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò. Il Sessantotto nero dei giovani neofascisti nel dopoguerra 1945-1951* (Milan, 2008), 251

⁹ Mario Caprara and Gianluca Semprini, *Destra estrema e criminale* (Rome, 2009), 27

This, in short, is the profile of the institutional and extra-parliamentary right-wing groups in Italy. Their existence would not have had much importance in history if there had not been an actor in the Italian political scene whose presence unleashed a series of reactive mechanisms that resulted in the strategy of tension during the Nixon Administration. Such an actor was the Italian Communist Party. Its popularity in one of NATO's founding countries is the key to understanding the events that occurred in Italy during the Cold War.

Briefing reviewing the origins of the Communist Party can help better understand the issue. As in almost all European countries, in the nineteenth century (to be precise, in 1892), a Marxist-inspired Socialist Party was founded in Italy. The real turning point came at the party congress held in Livorno from 15 January to 21 January 1921. On that occasion, the Italian Socialist Party discussed the Twenty-one Conditions of Admission to the Communist International that Vladimir Lenin set at the Second Comintern Congress held in Petrograd and Moscow from 19 July to 7 August 1920.¹⁰ At the congress in Livorno, a disagreement arose between the reformist and maximalist faction on the acceptance of the Twenty-one Conditions. It resulted in the maximalists' split from the Socialist Party and the foundation of the Communist Party. Soviet political and financial support immediately made the Communist Party the main left-wing political force in Italy and, after the fall of fascism, the second largest Italian party, regularly gaining between 25 and 30% of popular votes.¹¹

The fact that, after the end of the 1943-45 civil war the Communists claimed the right to build the new Italy and acted as Soviet agents, resurrected the red scare that had hung over the country between 1919 and 1922. Moreover, communism had become a global issue. The Soviet Union, along with the United States, was the great winner of World War II, and both have established themselves as major powers from

¹⁰ Giorgio Amendola, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano 1921-1943* (Roma, 1978), 6-10

¹¹ For a thorough history of the relationship between the Italian Communist Party and the Soviet Union, see: Elena Aga Rossi and Viktor Zaslavskij, *Togliatti e Stalin. Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca* (Bologna, 2007). On the Soviet fundings to the Italian Communist Party, see: Gianni Cervetti, *L'oro di Mosca. La testimonianza di un protagonista* (Milan, 1993); Valerio Riva, *Oro da Mosca. I finanziamenti sovietici al PCI dalla Rivoluzione d'ottobre al crollo dell'URSS. Con 240 documenti inediti degli archivi moscoviti* (Milan, 1999)

the victorious outcome of the conflict, with the firm intention of maintaining the acquired status.

This raised concerns among US officials, as Italy was a country bordering the Communist bloc. The balances that the Yalta Conference had established in 1945 could guarantee that Italy, as a country located in the West, would never have a Communist government. Nevertheless, the Yalta agreements were not enough to avert the risk that the Communists could get closer to the government, with a consequent increase in Soviet influence in Western Europe and the weakening of the Atlantic ties' cohesion. This situation became more pronounced after the launch of the centre-left coalition in 1963.

Henry Kissinger put forward an interesting point of view in his memoir regarding the political effects that the centre-left coalition produced in the long term. According to Kissinger, the Social Democrats lost their main reason for existence as non-Communist opposition on the left. The Liberal Party quit the government as an entry price for the Socialists. The latter did not make any gain, because they still were part of coalitions in the provinces while governing with and the Christian Democrats at the national level. For this reason, Kissinger argued: *“the opening to the left ended up making the Communists the sole significant opposition party, as it deprived the Italian political system of flexibility by destroying the smaller democratic parties”*. The final consequence was that the Communists would benefit from any government crisis, and Italy found itself with the only choice between the Christian Democrats and a *“radical antidemocratic change”*.¹² It would be unfair to deny that Kissinger was right. Democratic political systems always tend towards a kind of bipolarity, with two large parties competing for power and other small and medium-sized parties equally divided between each orbit. In Italy's case, bipolarism took on characteristics that have ended up undermining the democracy's health itself, as Kissinger highlighted.

Kissinger was not the only one who exposed such views. The Italian journalist Alberto Ronchey talked about the “K factor” in an article published on the *Corriere*

¹² Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 102-103

della Sera on 30 March 1979, with reference to the presence of the largest Communist Party in the West. According to Ronchey, it resulted in the non-turnover of government political forces in Italy in the post-war years because it prevented the Communist Party from being part of the government, due to its close link with the Soviet Union.¹³ The same considerations as to those on Kissinger's views apply to Ronchey's opinion. Moreover, the permanent state of stalemate the Italian democracy found itself in facilitated the spread of social unrest in the 1970s. This was undoubtedly both the breeding ground for the so-called "opposite extremisms" and the fertile ground for exploitation by the secret services.

For the right-wing, the matter was different and at the same time mirroring. There is no need to dwell on the anomaly of the presence of a neo-Fascist party like the Social Movement carrying an anti-democratic ideology in a democratic system. Rather, there is another anomaly to reflect on, namely that in Italy the largest right-wing party was the Social Movement. In Italy, a liberal-conservative right-wing did exist in the nineteenth century with the Historical Right led by the first Prime Minister of the unified Italian state Camillo Benso Count of Cavour. In the twentieth century, the Italian Liberal Party, founded by Benedetto Croce and Luigi Einaudi immediately after the fall of Mussolini's regime in 1943, inherited the Historical Right's legacy.¹⁴ The fact is, a party, in order to be relevant, must be a "*volkspartei*", to use a term from the German political science, that is, a mass party, rooted in society, and bearer of ideas and values spread among the population. The Historical Right, being avowedly a dignitary party, did not meet these requirements, and neither did the Liberals. Like it or not, the first example of a "*volkspartei*" right-wing in Italy was fascism. Hence the Italian anomaly, whereby Italy never had a fully democratic right-wing party like the Tories in the UK, the Gaullists in France, and the Republican Party in the United States. Certainly, the fact that, during the Cold War, the barrier to communism in Italy was represented by a confessional and catch-

¹³ Alberto Ronchey, "La sinistra e il fattore K", *Corriere della Sera* (30 March 1979)

¹⁴ For a history of the Italian Liberalism, see: Antonio Patuelli, *I liberali da Cavour a Malagodi* (Roma, 1992)

all party, such as the Christian Democrats, did not help the formation of a conservative right-wing, faithful to democratic principles.

The fact that the Communist Party and the Social Movement were respectively the second and the fourth most voted parties in Italy prove that the anomaly was cultural as well as institutional. Two of the major Italian parties were linked to ideologies and historical experiences that denied the liberal democracy's principles. Those who were rightist without being Fascists ended up being attracted to the Social Movement as the only openly right-wing party. Those who were leftists without adhering to Marxist-Leninist dogmas almost automatically voted for the Communist Party as it was perceived as the only opposition party from the left. The result, as Kissinger correctly wrote, was that the Italian political system remained embalmed. The Christian Democrats knew that they would never lose their political hegemony, while the Communist Party and the Social Movement were aware that they would never come to power. Inevitably, Italian politics ended up becoming sclerotic, while the democratic institutions rapidly aged and lost their driving force.

At the same time, in the first half of the 1960s, the Italian society was experiencing the most rapid and impetuous social and cultural modernization in the country's history. The so-called "economic miracle" had generally improved the population's standard of living but also left behind a considerable segment of excluded and increased social inequalities. Furthermore, economic growth was due to the exploitation of the working class, not being paid an adequate salary to support the living costs.¹⁵ This whole series of contradictions facilitated both the Communist Party's electoral advance and the rise of extra-parliamentary left-wing movements in late 1960s.

¹⁵ For a history of the Italian economic miracle, see: Patrizia Gabrielli, *Anni di novità e di grandi cose. Il boom economico fra tradizione e cambiamento* (Bologna, 2011)

For the social contradictions of the economic miracle, see the Powerpoint work by Professor Pasquale Iuso, from the University of Teramo, "L'altra faccia del miracolo economico", [https://www.unite.it/UniTE/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/File_Prof/IUSO_592/L_altra_faccia_del_miracolo_economico_\(file_leggero\).pdf](https://www.unite.it/UniTE/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/File_Prof/IUSO_592/L_altra_faccia_del_miracolo_economico_(file_leggero).pdf) (last accessed 20 November 2024)

See also: Marie Thirion, Elisa Santalena, Christophe Mileschi (ed.), *Introduzione: la faccia nascosta del miracolo: dallo sfruttamento alla riscossa dei lavoratori*, in *Contratto o rivoluzione! L'Autunno caldo tra operaismo e storiografia* (Turin, 2021), 9-20

The new Cold War's climate suggested the US Government pursue opposition to the Communists in key countries such as Italy also through the use of covert operations. To carry out clandestine actions against the Communists, the OSS deemed it would be useful to use the Italian Social Republic's veterans, as they were the harshest anti-Communists in Italy. Both sides wanted to neutralize the Communist Party and the Soviet influence on the peninsula. The ex-Fascists, for their part, far from resigning themselves to defeat, were animated by a revanchism that led them to reject and fight the status quo that arose in Italy after the end of World War II. They put into practice the so called "unorthodox war" that the CIA's counterintelligence had designed, carrying out terrorist attacks under the guise of leftist groups. The aim was to generate public opposition towards the whole left-wing, and ultimately to outlaw the Communist Party. Thus, two former enemies at war until a few months earlier found themselves on the same side of the barricade for almost the entire duration of the Cold War. That was the premise to the events that took place in Italy in the 1960s and the 1970s.

The introduction to this thesis begins with a review of the key historiographical debates surrounding US-Italian relations during the Cold War. It will, then, outline the dissertation's research questions, its methodology and its structure. Although the time span of this thesis is limited to the period 1969-74, it is essential to retrace both the origin and development of this relationship and the events that occurred in Italy in those years. This way of proceeding helps understand how two former opponents found a collaboration ground, to fight a common foe and pursue the same goal. On the one hand, there were the various Italian right-wing factions, composed of revanchist Fascists unwilling to accept their ideological defeat, and the conservative bourgeoisie that had supported fascism during the twenty-years regime. On the other hand, there was the United States with its military and political apparatuses, also internally diversified by ideological background and political perspectives, but unified in considering the old Soviet ally as a new enemy. Neither side could oppose the Italian Communist Party on their own. Only by joining forces could the struggle be carried out effectively, and some significant results be achieved.

The Cold War

The relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing fall in the framework of the Cold War. Three distinct schools of thought are usually identified in Cold War studies: orthodox, revisionist and post-revisionist.

The orthodox school was prevalent for more than a decade after the end of World War II, during which few American historians saw any reason to challenge the official US interpretation of the onset of the Cold War. According to such interpretation, the deterioration of the USA-USSR relationship was the direct result of Stalin's violation of Yalta agreements and the aggressive Soviet expansionism on Eastern Europe.¹⁶

William Appleman Williams reacted against the orthodox interpretation of the Cold War, arguing that Americans had always been an empire-building people¹⁷. This interpretation gave life to the revisionist school, which fostered a larger rethinking of the US role in international affairs, seen more in terms of American empire. According to revisionists, both the United States and the Soviet Union were responsible for blundering into the war and rejected the premises of "containment". Their thesis was that the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe had a defensive rationale, aimed at avoiding encirclement by the United States and its allies.¹⁸

The release of new evidence generated a post-revisionist wave of literature, started in 1972 with the release of John Lewis Gaddis's book *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947*. Although maintaining that neither side could bear sole responsibility for the Cold War's onset, Gaddis emphasized the constraints that the domestic politics' complications imposed on US policymakers.¹⁹

¹⁶ See: Thomas Andrew Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (Ithaca, NY, 1950)

¹⁷ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland and New York, 1959)

¹⁸ Craig Calhoun, ed, "Cold War". *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York, 2002) 74–76

¹⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 1972)

Since the end of the Cold War, the post-revisionist school has been the dominant one. Rather than attributing the start of the Cold War to one of the two superpowers, it focuses on mutual misperception and responsiveness, and shared responsibility between the superpowers.

The present thesis sits the post-revisionist school of thought. Whereas the orthodox and the revisionist schools of thought fit in the Cold War's contingencies that influenced their orientations, post-revisionism analyses the links between the events that have taken place over time with the help of recent findings. Thus, post-revisionism synthesizes the orthodox and the revisionist's stances, offering more complete interpretations considering how the history of the Cold War evolved until its conclusion.

An approach of this type is based not only on the interpretation of facts, but also on their causes and effects, through both the study of the chain of events that preceded and followed them and the new archival sources. In this sense, this thesis shows that the Cold War was more of a contrast between two last two empires left standing after 1945 that used ideology only to assert themselves over the other, rather than an ideological conflict. Walter Lafeber argues a similar thesis in his book *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-2000*. According to Lafeber, the rivalry between the United States and Russia began in late nineteenth century, when their respective expansionism collided in the Pacific area. This means that the beginning of the Cold War was just a further step in a half a century of Russian-American enmity.²⁰ After the end of World War II, the downgrading of France and the UK as world powers left the field open to the USA and the Soviet Union as the only still standing empires. As Gaddis argued, such a power vacuum pushed the United States and the Soviet Union to run into each other, thus sparking the Cold War.²¹ Indeed, when there are only two empires in the world, they divide the world up and compete to wrest even an inch of space.

²⁰ Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-2000* (New York, 2002), 1-6

²¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History* (New York, 1997), 11-12

Obviously, every time a country placed under the tutelage of one of the two empires attempted to acquire its own autonomy, the hegemonic power abruptly called it to order. It goes without saying that both the Soviets and the US did not hesitate to resort to dirty tricks in countries belonging to one's bloc whenever their allegiance showed risk of failure. With due differences, this is what happened both in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Italy between 1969 and 1978. In this respect, the main contribution this thesis makes to the existing debates is to show how one of the main US policies during the Cold War consisted in the contrast to any possible erosion of the Western front's stability.

Although the Soviets did not want the Communist Party to come to power in Italy, in compliance with the Yalta's agreement, they still did not intend to give up using it to exert their influence in Italian politics and society. The US, for their part, could not tolerate a fifth Soviet column in a NATO's pillar country, even though they knew that the Communists would never have ruled Italy. Thus, Italy ended up being the bone of contention, as a Western country bordering the East, and as an Atlantic Alliance member country with the largest Communist party in the West. This is the key to understanding not only the US attitude towards Italy during the Nixon Administration, but probably the entire American foreign policy during the Cold War. The importance of Italy in view of the Cold War balance is a gap that still needs be filled. Addressing this gap is another aim of this thesis.

Italian-US relations

The scholars that studied the Italian-US relations mostly focused on the fact that the existence of the Communist Party has always determined every US administration's decision. Two schools of thought have emerged from the mass of studies published over the years, regardless of periodization.

The first one may be defined as pro-America, consisting of positively evaluating the US attitude towards Italy. The first important study attributable to this school of thought is *Stars, Stripes, and the Italian Tricolour: The United States and Italy, 1946–1989*, by Leo Wollemborg. The author argues that, after the end of World War

II, the United States always had at heart the Italian people's well-being and the stability of democracy in Italy. According to Wollenborg, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations positively valued the Socialists' entry in Italian governments, as it would encourage the evolution of a truly democratic left-wing.²²

According to the pro-America historiography, the Italian politicians always urged the American administrations to intervene more in Italy's domestic affairs to prevent the Communist Party's growth. One of the examples reported is Richard Nixon's official visit to Italy between late February and early March 1969. During the visit, Nixon had a conversation with the President of the Republic Giuseppe Saragat. Saragat told Nixon that the Communist Party's attempts to pass itself off as a respectable European-style socialist force following the party's condemnation of the Soviet Union for the previous summer invasion of Czechoslovakia, were fictitious. As Lucrezia Cominelli explains, Saragat's conversation with Nixon was an example of the tendency by Italian centre-right politicians to make an instrumental use of alarmism on Italy's political situation, based on domestic political purposes. In this sense, the exaggeration of the Communist threat was functional to accredit themselves as reliable and privileged interlocutors.²³

Other authors have attempted to prove the US good intentions towards Italy. Timothy Smith wrote that, in the years 1943-46, US policy sought to construct a democratic government in Italy and to achieve a non-punitive peace treaty that would draw the country into the American sphere of influence in Western Europe. According to Smith, the US got involved in Italian politics and economy to make sure that a new totalitarianism, in the guise of Communism, would not come to dominate Italy.²⁴

The pro-America historiography also argues that the US were committed to reviewing the peace treaty signed in Paris on 10 February 1947. One of the main

²² Leo Wollenborg, *Stars, Stripes, and the Italian Tricolour: The United States and Italy, 1946–1989* (Westport, 1990)

²³ Lucrezia Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela. Stati Uniti, Europa e crisi italiana degli anni Settanta* (Milan, 2014), 40

²⁴ Timothy Smith, *The United States, Italy, and NATO: 1947–52* (London, 1991), 7

arguments of the pro-America historiography is that the US never considered the Italian people as an enemy. According to this thesis, the US, after the war was over, spared no effort to help Italy return to being an autonomous and strong country and a prosperous economy through the Marshall Plan, thus facilitating US access to foreign markets. Despite the British efforts to punish Italy beyond its faults, the pro-America historiography gives credit to the United States for achieving the Italian democratic stability and the economic self-sufficiency. Historians related to this school of thought even praise the partnership that the United States had established with the Italian right-wing. In their standpoint, it guaranteed a brighter future for Italy.²⁵ These authors, who are both Italian and American, created their works in the years following the end of the Cold War. The end of this historical era placed the relations between Italy and the United States in a long-term historical perspective, allowing the pro-America scholars to positively evaluate the US policy towards Italy.

The pro-America historiography also believes that the United States was interested in making Italy a nation capable not only of self-determination, but also of pursuing a regional power status in the Mediterranean Sea. One of the examples this school of thought reported is the encouragement to the Italian government to play a stabilizing role in Malta during a crisis that hit the small Mediterranean island between 1971 and 1972. In Valerio Bosco's opinion, the United States favoured Italy's taking up the role of protector of a small but strategically important island such as Malta instead of the United Kingdom. Dom Mintoff's new government had decided to renegotiate the British military forces' stay and to agitate the neutralist threat, in order to obtain a consistent flow of aid to support the fragile Maltese economy. US policy makers feared that the Soviet Union might take advantage of the change in Maltese foreign policy to extend its hegemony in the Mediterranean Sea. In January 1972, the Maltese government put forward, as a condition for confirming the lease of military bases to the British armed forces, a payment of £

²⁵ John Lamberton Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948* (Cambridge, 2002), 159-160

14,000,000 a year, plus an extraordinary indemnity of £ 5,000,000. Richard Nixon directly encouraged the Italian government to take on the role of negotiator between the United Kingdom and Malta. On 26 March 1972, thanks to the Italian government's commitment to paying half of the compensation requested (£ 2,500,000), the UK and Malta signed the agreement under the conditions that Dom Mintoff had set.²⁶

As for the right-wing terrorism that overwhelmed Italy, the pro-America historiography rejects the alleged US responsibilities. At the same time, it acknowledges that there was an excess of hysteria from the US Ambassador to Rome Graham Martin about the threat the Communist Party posed. Bosco reports how, in 1970, the Communist Party's willingness to collaborate with the government, led Graham Martin to outline a scenario in which Italy was almost on the point of becoming the Chile of Europe. Nevertheless, as Bosco wrote, the State Department always kept a balanced position, dissuading Nixon from giving credit to Martin's alarming reports.²⁷

Thus, the pro-America school of thought positively evaluates the US policy towards Italy and acknowledges that there has been interference in Italian political life but for a good purpose. The second school of thought that may be called revisionist, being critical of the American politics, takes a quite different position. The scholars belonging to this school of thought agree that the sole US purpose was to make Italy nothing more than a province of their own empire. To this end, the revisionists say that the United States resorted to all kinds of political and military interference, and cultural influence, to crush Italian autonomy and sovereignty to preserve their hegemony conquered after World War II. These scholars are all Italians, and in some cases, they were influenced by their left-wing ideology that made them believe that the US were accountable for most of the troubles that affected Italy during the Cold War. Nevertheless, their works include documents

²⁶ Valerio Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia. Tra distensione e crisi mediterranee (1968-1975)* (Rome, 2009), 279

²⁷ Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, 220

from the US National Archive Records Administration that proved their thesis right. Most of the revisionist authors wrote their books after the end of the Cold War, when they had the chance to view documents from the Italian and the American archives that had been declassified.

The first of these books is *Gli americani in Italia* ("The Americans in Italy"), by Marco Fini and Roberto Faenza. The authors argued that the US have pursued a policy of submission of Italy ever since the Allied landing in Sicily on 9-10 July 1943. One of the pieces of evidence reported in the book is that the Americans enlisted mafia bosses within their own strategic and military services, making them essential tools of their political intervention in Italy.²⁸ The explanation of such policy is in the rhetorical question that Fini and Faenza asked:

*"How to rule a completely unknown, but certainly underdeveloped country, without relying on traditional and secular forms of power, such as the clergy and the mafia?"*²⁹ The authors clearly referred to the collaboration between the Allied military command and the Mafia boss Lucky Luciano aimed at facilitating the landing in Sicily and the rule of the region.³⁰

Fini and Faenza also revealed for the first time the content of the so-called "Plan X". It was a National Security Council's project that Fini and Faenza obtained from the US Department of Defence in 1975 through the Freedom of Information Act. It consisted in supplying weapons for a total value of 10 million dollars to counter any communist riots during the elections held in Italy in 1948. The NSC document is explicit in reporting that the Italian government was supposed to distribute weapons to the various right-wing organizations formed after the end of World War II under James Jesus Angleton's supervision.³¹

Gianni Cipriani, one of the leading Italian intelligence experts, went further. In his book, *Lo stato invisibile* ("The invisible state"), he wrote that US policy aimed

²⁸ Roberto Faenza and Marco Fini, *Gli americani in Italia* (Milan, 1976), 10

²⁹ Faenza and Fini, *Gli americani in Italia*, 12

³⁰ See also: Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Storia segreta della Sicilia. Dallo sbarco alleato a Portella della Ginestra* (Milan, 2005)

³¹ Faenza and Fini, *Gli americani in Italia*, 255

at exercising hegemonic control over Italy began with a fake news that the National Security Council purposely created and disclosed in December 1947. The fake news was that the Yugoslav Army was about to invade the Italian territory to provide support for the Socialist Party and the Communist Party's revolutionary aims. Since that moment, the US began to supply arms to anti-Communist organizations, and to put into practice the plans that the CIA drew up to keep Italy under the threat of a coup to neutralize the Italian left-wing.³² Another important revelation Cipriani made in support to the revisionist historiography is that the CIA supervised the creation of the new Italian secret services in 1949. The US intelligence imposed that all information collected be provided to American counterpart, while the Italian intelligence personnel had to receive prior approval from the US Government before conducting any operation.³³

Another book that falls into the revisionist historiography is *Sovranità limitata* (in English, "Limited sovereignty"). The authors, brothers Antonio and Gianni Cipriani, refer to Allen Dulles, CIA's head between 1953 and 1961, as the architect of the collaboration between the American secret services and the right-wing terrorist groups. According to the authors, Dulles was responsible for rescuing the Nazi war criminals and Italian Fascists who could form the anti-Communist structures' backbone.³⁴ One of the examples that the authors provided is the Field Manual 30-31, which the US Defence Department drew up in 1970. According to Cipriani brothers, this document was the summa of the unorthodox war theory that the US military circles elaborated. It dealt in detail with infiltrating left-wing groups in order to create chaos and unrest through subversion and violent actions. While not specifically dealing with Italy, the Cipriani brothers are convinced that the Field Manual 30-31 referred to the Italian case. In fact, the document argued that if a

³²Giuseppe Cipriani, *Lo stato invisibile. Storia dello spionaggio in Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Milan, 2002),

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³³Cipriani, *Lo stato invisibile*, 27

³⁴Antonio Cipriani and Gianni Cipriani, *Sovranità limitata. Storia dell'eversione atlantica in Italia* (Rome, 1991), 27

friendly country government was inactive in the face of Communist subversion, the US Army's services had to launch special operations to convince the local public opinion of the need to respond adequately. According to this interpretation, this passage meant that it was necessary to heat up the tones of the political and ideological conflict and increase the violence by the extra-parliamentary groups. Thus, it would be possible to trigger the "adequate response" and gain approval from the population.³⁵

The application of the Field Manual 30-31's theories, the Cipriani brothers wrote, contributed to confuse Italian public opinion. For many years, the Italian people had read the terrorist phenomenon as a simple fluctuation of "Fascist" and "Communist" attacks, without realizing that the confrontation terms were very different. The disorientation induced in the population was in fact among the Atlantic circles' purposes, as they were willing to violate laws and deceive allies, promote coups and encourage terrorist actions by using the terrorist groups as covers. Thus, the consequent social destabilization would have facilitated the political stabilization and the strengthening of the Christian Democrats³⁶

A book which placed itself in revisionist historiography is Luigi Guarna's *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani, 1969-1972* (in English, "Richard Nixon and the Italian political parties"). Using declassified CIA documents, Guarna wrote that Nixon's victory in the 1968 US presidential elections aroused great enthusiasm in the Italian Social Movement, as they thought the new US President would be friendly towards them. Some emissaries from the party even went to the United States to establish contacts with the new administration, in order to raise the awareness among the US political circles on the need for greater US involvement in Italian political life.³⁷ After retracing the American military circles collusion with the Italian far-right movements, Guarna concluded that the United States had no direct role in the far-right terrorist campaign. Nevertheless, Guarna believes that the

³⁵ Cipriani, Cipriani, *Sovranità limitata*, 202-203

³⁶ Cipriani, Cipriani, *Sovranità limitata*, 204

³⁷ Luigi Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani, 1969-1972*, (Milan, 2016), 71

Nixon Administration knew months in advance that New Order was about to carry out the massacre in Milan on 12 December 1969. The Nixon Administration, Guarna added, was also aware of the preparations for the coup that General Junio Valerio Borghese planned for 8 December 1970. Guarna's hypothesis is that Italian minds conceived the massacres and coup plans and the US approved them, as they were interested in taking advantage of the consequent chaos to pursue their anti-Communist agenda.³⁸

The United States had a similar attitude towards the Italian Social Movement. Revisionist historiography believes that, from the American point of view, the pressure that the neo-Fascist party exerted on the Christian Democrats from the right played a positive role. This school of thought believe that such pressure strengthened the more moderate positions among the Christian Democrats and weakened those on the left. Nevertheless, on the eve of the Italian political elections scheduled for 7 May 1972, the US began to fear that an outsized expansion of the Italian Social Movement would reduce the Christian Democrats' strength and further exacerbate the tensions in Italy. For this reason, the revisionist scholars believe that the US interest for the Italian Social Movement was purely instrumental, useful to increase the pressure on the Christian Democrats and to recover the leverage lost against them. Since the Christian Democrats remained the only political force capable of maintaining Italy's internal status quo and stability within NATO, it was necessary to support the Italian Social Movement. The purpose was to favour the neo-Fascist party just enough to achieve two goals: forcing the Christian Democrats to rebalance its line to the centre to avoid losing more votes on the right; spreading the fear that the United States would seek more reliable allies among other Italian parties, if there were further openings to the left.³⁹

Jonathan Marshall provided an interesting contribution to the revisionist school of thought on Italian-US relations with the article "U.S. Cold War Policy and the Italian Far-Right. The Nixon Administration, Republican Party Operatives, and the

³⁸ Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani, 1969-1972*, 115-116

³⁹ Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani*, 259-260

Borghese Coup Plot of 1970". This article shows evidence that some US policymakers interacted with Italian right-wing extremists seeking cooperation in a joint anti-Communist struggle. Marshall focuses on the coup that the general of the infantry marine division of the Italian Social Republic, *Decima Mas*, Junio Valerio Borghese attempted on the night between 7 and 8 December 1970 as a case study to argue his thesis. The Nixon Administration, Marshall wrote, contemplated directing towards Italy the same policies used in Chile to thwart the perceived Communist threat. In this regard, CIA agents in service at the Rome station and diplomats from the US Embassy had agreed to meet Borghese to evaluate his coup plans. However, according to Marshall, as the weeks passed by, the US realized that the Borghese coup would have been counterproductive for their interests and decided to dismiss it.⁴⁰

It is now possible to draw some conclusions. The first is that, apart from Timothy Smith, Leo Wollenborg (who, however, was born in Italy and moved to the United States at the age of thirty) and John Lamberton Smith, no American scholar has dealt directly with the relations between the United States and Italy. Moreover, Timothy Smith and John Lamberton Smith have focused their work on the period between 1945 and the early 1950s, i.e., when the American policy towards Italy, with the Marshall Plan, was more beneficial. This means that the American historiography is still reluctant to investigate the US policy towards Italy in the 1960s and 1970s. A possible hypothesis is that, ever since the beginning of the Cold War, it was the US interferences in Latin America that mostly attracted the scholars' interest, as they were clearer. The US involvement in the coups that took place in countries such as Guatemala in 1954, the Dominican Republic in 1961 and Chile in 1973 had been well documented while they were ongoing.⁴¹ On the contrary, US influence on Italy and Europe was perhaps more subtle. The fact is that it is mostly the Italian scholars

⁴⁰ Jonathan Marshall, "U.S. Cold War Policy and the Italian Far-Right. The Nixon Administration, Republican Party Operatives, and the Borghese Coup Plot of 1970", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2023), 138-167

⁴¹ See: Ruth Blakely, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (London, 2009); William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (London, 2003)

that emerge from this literature review, probably because they felt more personally touched by an issue like the US interference in Italian affairs.

The second conclusion is that both the pro-America and revisionist schools of thought are substantially correct in the interpretations that each has provided. Most of the good and the bad things that occurred in Italy during its first half-century of democratic life stemmed from the relationship with the United States. Italy certainly owes the United States the advent of democracy, the so called “economic miracle” in the 1960s, that was the outcome of the Marshall Plan, and the central role played on the geopolitical scene after the defeat in World War II. There was a price to pay in terms of limited freedom of action, both in domestic and foreign affairs, though. Ultimately, this was the leitmotif of the US-Italian relationship during the Cold War as it emerged from historiography in its various schools of thought. Carrot and stick alternated depending on who was in the White House and the domestic and international political contingencies but always aimed at preserving Italy as an Atlantic Alliance pillar in opposition to the neighbouring Eastern bloc. This, ultimately, is the contribution that this thesis provides to the history of the Italian-US relations debate.

Terrorism

Scholarly and judicial inquiries in the 1990s revealed dangerous links between members of the American diplomatic corps and the US Armed Forces in Italy and the Italian right-wing terrorist groups. There may, in fact, be scenarios where common political practices are not enough to avert a threat that certain parties pose. In this case, the secret services design covert actions and false-flag operations using third actors as a smokescreen without being directly involved, to discredit the allegedly hostile political faction. The core chapters of this thesis explain in detail how this strategy works, and how the CIA counterintelligence resorted to it in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s to undermine the Communist Party. In order to better understand this issue, it is useful to make a literature review of the terrorism practice

per se. This review focuses mostly on the terrorist season that bloodied Italy between 1969 and 1988, especially on the right-wing terrorism.

There has never been a unanimous view on terrorism. Suffice to say that scholars such as Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman counted one hundred and nine definitions of terrorism that covered a total of twenty-two different definitional elements.⁴² The first scholar that engaged into the analysis and the definition of terrorism was Ali Khan in 1987. In an article entitled “A Legal Theory of International Terrorism”, Khan wrote that terrorism sprouts from the existence of aggrieved groups that share two essential characteristics: they have specific political objectives; they believe that violence is an inevitable means to achieve their political ends. According to Ali Khan, the political dimension of terrorist violence is the key factor that distinguishes it from other crimes.⁴³ Another scholar, Jack Gibbs, provided a more complete definition two years later. Terrorism, according to Gibbs, is illegal violence directed against human or nonhuman objects. Its features are as follows: having secretive features that the participants expected to conceal their personal identity; being perceived by the participants as contributing to the normative goal by inculcating fear of violence in persons other than the immediate target of the actual violence.⁴⁴ These definitions are useful to better understand what distinguishes terrorism from other violent practices. Furthermore, they clarify that, to paraphrase Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz, terrorism is the continuation of policy with other means.⁴⁵

Walter Laqueur also reviewed the most varied definitions of terrorism, concluding that the only characteristic generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence.⁴⁶ Bruce Hoffman, for his part, found the following key characteristics related to terrorism: ineluctably political in aims

⁴² Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988), 5-6

⁴³ Ali Khan, “A Legal Theory of International Terrorism”, *Connecticut Law Review*, Vol. 19 (Summer 1987), 945-972

⁴⁴ Jack Gibbs, “The Conceptualization of Terrorism.” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, N. 2 (June 1989), 329-40

⁴⁵ Carl Von Clasewitz, (Michael Howard and Paret eds.) *On War* (Princeton, 1984), 87

⁴⁶ Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York, 1999,) 6

and motives; violence; it is designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; it is conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure or by individuals or a small collection of individuals directly influenced by the ideological aims of some existent terrorist movement and/or its leaders; perpetrated by a subnational group or nonstate entity.⁴⁷

One branch of terrorism studies focuses on psychological significance, and on the importance that terrorists themselves place on it. Carsten Bockstette, a German military officer serving at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, wrote that terrorism is designed to induce psychic fear through the violent victimization and destruction of non-combatant targets. In Bockstette's opinion, terrorism's purpose is to exploit the media in order to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier and influence the targeted audience.⁴⁸ Louise Richardson sees terrorism as politically motivated violence directed against non-combatant or symbolic targets which is designed to communicate a message to a broader audience.⁴⁹

It was only after the attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 that the academic world formulated the most complete definitions of terrorism. In this sense, Israeli scholar Boaz Ganor elaborated a definition that, in its apparent banality, contains the true meaning of terrorism, especially from this historiographical study point of view: *"Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence aimed against civilians in order to achieve political ends."*⁵⁰

Until the attacks on the World Trade Centre, scholars, while taking into consideration the political motivations that were at the base, analysed terrorism in a somewhat generic way, focusing mainly on its practice's characteristics. Since 2002,

⁴⁷ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, 2006), 40

⁴⁸ Carsten Bockstette, "Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication Management Techniques", *George C. Marshall Center Occasional Paper Series*, No. 20, (December 2008)

⁴⁹ Louise Richardson, "Terrorists as Transnational Actors", *Terrorism and Political Violence*: Volume 11, Issue 4, (1999), 209-219

⁵⁰ Boaz Ganor, "The Relationship Between International and Localized Terrorism", *The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 26 (28 June 2005)

studies have begun to consider also the importance of the political aims that terrorism intends to pursue, and how the psychological consequences on the civilian population are functional to the success that terrorist organizations aspire to.

A distinction has arisen between those who believe that the governments' actions can be labelled as "terrorism" and others who rather use this term to refer only to the violent non-state actors' actions. In the first case, the examples are the "Reign of Terror" established during the French Revolution and the measures that Hitler and Stalin adopted in Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, Igor Primoratz argued that both the Nazis and the Soviets used terror against defenceless civilians to pursue the total political control on the populations.⁵¹ Other examples of state terrorism may include the World War II bombings of Pearl Harbour, London, Dresden, Chongqing, and Hiroshima.⁵²

There is also a school of thought that represents a third way between the two interpretations. It argues that the governments charge existing terrorist organizations to carry out attacks to achieve their own political goals. Countries such as the United States, Israel, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, just to name a few, have often been accused of resorting to state-sponsored terrorism to carry out their geopolitical hegemonic designs. These authors identify above all the United States as the state that has supported terrorist organizations in the world with greater frequency and alacrity. The book that best illustrates American support for terrorist organizations and paramilitary formations is *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman. Chomsky and Herman wrote that terror was mainly present in the US sphere of influence in developing countries, and documented human rights abuses that US client states in Latin America carried out. They also argued that ten Latin American countries that had death squads were all US client states. Chomsky and Herman concluded that the global rise in state terror was a result of US foreign policy.⁵³ According to Ruth Blakely, the United States and their

⁵¹ Igor Primoratz, "Terrorism", Edward N. Zalta, eds, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford, 2007)

⁵² Michael Stohl, "The Superpowers and International Terror", Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, (Atlanta, 27 March –1 April 1984)

⁵³ Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (Boston, 1979)

allies sponsored and deployed state terrorism on an "enormous scale" during the Cold War. The official reason was the containment of communism, but Blakeley contends it was also a means by which to buttress the US business elite's interests and to promote neoliberalism expansion throughout the Global South.⁵⁴

Luca Trenta contributed to this debate with the article "Remote killing? Remoteness, covertness, and the US Government's involvement in assassination". In this article, Trenta provided three interpretations of the "remote warfare" concept. The first is remoteness as geographical distance that allows Western governments to deploy violence globally and far from their own national territories. The second is remoteness as cover for the distance between the forces on the intervening country and the fighting on the ground through the reliance on local actors. The third is remoteness as a way for the Western governments to act away from their own citizens, thus allowing policymakers to deploy violence and achieve their strategic objectives without paying the financial and political costs traditionally associated with war. Starting from the explanation of the "remote warfare" concept, Trenta writes that the US interposed third parties in the conduct of covert operations, relying on local proxies and the intelligence services of the countries where such actions were carried out. Thanks to this device, the American Government could support local groups and coups being able to deny its involvement since no clear evidence could be found. Thus, Trenta argues, the US policymakers understood that relying on third parties could better shield them politically and morally the controversies that would arise from such option.⁵⁵

Although Trenta made no specific mentions in his article, his thesis is applicable to the Italian case. As the Italian judiciary's investigations have established, the CIA and the US Army Intelligence's sectors have relied on Italian far-right groups to influence the political dynamics in Italy from an anti-Communist perspective. Rather than acting directly, with the risk of creating political problems, the

⁵⁴ Ruth Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (Milton Park, Abingdon-on-Thames, 2009), 4

⁵⁵ Luca Trenta, "Remote killing? Remoteness, covertness, and the US Government's involvement in assassination", *Defence Studies*, Vol. 21 (2021), 468-488

stauncest anti-Communist US policy makers found it more advantageous to support those who shared their hostility towards the Italian Communist Party. Thus, they thought they could gain political benefits in terms of Italy's consolidation in the Atlantic field without the risk of incurring setbacks. If, in the worst-case scenario, the true origin of the terrorist attacks had been found out, the American state branches most colluded with the Italian right-wing felt confident that the United States would have remained immune from accusations. In this regard, Luca Trenta's article deserves a place in the literature review of this thesis, as it provides a framework to understanding the US foreign policy towards Italy during the Cold War.

The present thesis subscribes to the school of thought that argues that some states exploit the non-state actors' terrorist activities. The analysis of the Italian case will provide confirmations in this regard. Nevertheless, thousands of youths already felt motivated to join terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas the main motivation for left-wing terrorism was the desire to complete the work their partisan fathers left halfway, the historiography believes that the right-wing terrorists mostly aimed to avenge their defeated fascist fathers.⁵⁶

The left-wing terrorists, from a Marxist standpoint, conceived the right-wing, the bourgeoisie and, to quote the Red Brigades, the "Imperialist State of the Multinationals" as their foes. The right-wing terrorists, on their part, considered themselves at war with the whole society. The leftist terrorist's political perspective was insane, but lucid and coherent with a Marxist-Leninist political discourse, and the targets they intended to strike for achieving their goals were specific. They refused to hit the masses, believing they could redeem them with their actions and hoping to bring them on their side.

The right-wing terrorists, on the other hand, were animated by hatred towards the whole population, guilty of siding against the Fascists during the 1943-45 civil war. These feelings of hatred mingled with revenge purposes and the nihilism that came

⁵⁶ Franco Ferraresi, *Minacce alla democrazia. La destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in Italia* (Milan, 1995), 351

from the feeling that there was nothing to lose and nothing to gain but an imaginary defence of their honour. Renzo De Felice, in a book-interview with American scholar Michael Ledeen, presented a very interesting point of view in this regard. De Felice responded to Ledeen's observation saying that whereas the historical fascism had its own idea of social progress, the far-right was instead carrying on an idea of regression. He added that tragic pessimism and a sense of impending death were characteristic of the far-right. The right-wing terrorists, continued De Felice, were fighting for a demonic and super manhood affirmation of their own personality against the rest of the world, as if they meant:

"I want to show you that I have the bravery to fight you; even if I stop you for just one day, it is an affirmation of my personality against you, although I know there is no hope for me".

In De Felice's opinion, this nihilism not only clearly distinguished the far-right from fascism, but also denoted their dangerousness, as they were an expression of fanaticism as an end in itself, as to say, *"let Samson die with all the Philistines"*.⁵⁷

From what De Felice said, it is possible to identify a school of thought on terrorism in Italy, that analyses it mostly under the ideological and cultural profile. Regarding right-wing terrorism, this school of thought has focused on the influence that Evola has exerted on neo-Fascist groups ever since the early 1950s. Furio Jesi wrote that Evola played an important role in the right-wing terrorist groups, as he passed on to them the religion of death that Nazism had embodied.⁵⁸ According to Elisabetta Cassini Wolff, the concepts that Evola formulated and taught to young and inexperienced followers such as legionary spirit, aristocracy, hierarchy, made him morally responsible for the right-wing terrorism.⁵⁹

There is no doubt that Evola's theses constituted a first brick in the construction of the far-right ideology in the post-war period, though. Much of the historiography,

⁵⁷ Renzo De Felice and Michael Ledeen, *Intervista sul fascismo* (Bari, 1975), 102-103

⁵⁸ Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra* (Milan, 1979)

⁵⁹ Elisabetta Cassini Wolff, "Evola's interpretation of fascism and moral responsibility", *Patterns of Prejudice*, Volume 50, Issue 4-5, (2 November 2016), 478-494

even without directly accusing him, agrees that Evola had at least a moral accountability for the right-wing groups' terrorist attacks. In his thought, in fact, the masses are composed of inferior people, and only the few who belong to the so-called "aristocracy of the spirit" must exercise power. They ought to give life to a "new order", an organism composed of superior men entitled to hold absolute power and faithful to the traditional and timeless principles, whose historical origins can be traced back to the ancient monastic-knightly orders.⁶⁰ It follows the need to reject democracy as idea, and to fight it relentlessly. For these reasons, in most scholars' opinion, Evola's theories served as an ideological basis and orientation for the terrorist attacks and coup plans in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶¹

Giorgio Galli took a long-term historical and sociological perspective with his book *La crisi italiana e la destra internazionale* ("The Italian crisis and the international right-wing"). Tracing the Nazi and Fascist movements that arose in the 1920s and 1930s and comparing them with the Italian reality of the 1970s, Galli argued that the far-right develops when a reformist-democratic project fails. According to his thesis, the initiation of a reformist process encourages the creation of revolutionary tendencies, which are reabsorbed in case of positive results. If, on the other hand, the process fails, an open space is kept for revolutionary tendencies, but at the same time another one is open for right-wing radicalism. According to Galli, it is necessary to analyse the link between reformist failure and the far-right's rise, bearing in mind the socio-political and cultural variables. The main social-political variable to consider is the fact that the intellectual and social energies that reformism mobilized and activated remained unsatisfied and frustrated by its failure. The main cultural variable is, for its part, the ability of the right-wing culture to graft onto traditional worldviews some apparent novelties that partially calm the anxieties that the fermentations and transformations that industrial society have stirred up.⁶²

⁶⁰ Rao, *La Fiamma e la Celtica*, 52

⁶¹ Mario Caprara and Gianluca Semprini, *Neri! La storia mai raccontata della destra radicale, eversiva e terrorista* (Rome, 2009), 176-177

⁶² Giorgio Galli, *La crisi italiana e la destra internazionale* (Milan, 1974), 16-20

Most of the books on the strategy of tension covered the collusion between terrorists and secret services, finding confirmation in judicial inquiries on the attacks ever since the early investigations on the Piazza Fontana bombing. The book that revealed this collusion, even before the investigations took the neo-Fascist trail, was *La strage di Stato* ("The State massacre"), probably the most famous book ever written on right-wing terrorism. This book, published on 13 June 1970 by two journalists and a lawyer who collected revelations from Italian secret services agents, had the great historical and political merit to reveal a truth that six months after the Piazza Fontana bombing no one knew yet. That is, state security agents had conceived all the attacks that had followed one another in 1969, culminating in the explosion at the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura*'s branch. The perpetrators were right-wing extremists that aimed to put the blame on the left-wing.

The importance of *La strage di Stato* also lies in having revealed that the whole project consisted in criminalizing the left-wing and thus facilitating Italy's shift to the right.⁶³ Another merit of this book is to have revealed the international connections between the far-right, and the foreign interests in the destabilization of Italy. The authors wrote that the Continental Illinois Bank (one of the largest US commercial banks, absorbed by the Bank of America in 1984) funded the neo-Fascists. Its president was David Kennedy, Secretary of Treasury in the Nixon Administration, who for some time had a close relationship with the Italian Social Movement's deputy Luigi Turchi. Other American money came from the CIA, which used the "Greek channel" for this purpose, represented by Prime Minister Georgios Papadopoulos, head of the military regime established in Greece in 1967.⁶⁴ These and other precious information make *La strage di Stato* the founding study on the Italian terrorism.

Nowadays, the historiography is almost unanimous in accepting the thesis on collusion between right-wing terrorists and the Italian state apparatuses, thanks to the judicial inquiries. A school of thought that has emerged over the decades is the

⁶³ Edoardo Di Giovanni, Marco Ligini and Edgardo Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato* (Rome, 1970), 156-163

⁶⁴ Di Giovanni, Ligini and Pellegrini, *La Strage di Stato*, 64-165

one that claimed that American political and military circles fostered terrorism. The book *The Puppet Master. The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* by Philip Willan fits in this school of thought. In this book, Willan revealed that the strategy of tension was the result of secret NATO agreements that the Atlantic Alliance upper echelons sanctioned. Among the various passages of this book, one is worthy of mention. On 27 June 1980, a revolt in Libya, that France had instigated, aimed at overthrowing the Gheddafi's regime, was expected. The Italian secret services, at the urging of FIAT, which feared for its economic interests in Libya, intervened to warn Gheddafi in time of this plot. Thus, according to Willan, on the expected day of the start of the uprising, Libyan jets have taken off to intercept the French military planes that were on their way to the former Italian colony to provide support to the insurgents. The French planes, during the air battle that followed, took the opportunity to deliberately shoot down the *Itavia* aircraft, which was flying over Ustica, in retaliation against Italy for betraying an allied.⁶⁵

Willan claimed that the Bologna Station bombing that took place five weeks later falls within the retaliation that NATO had prepared. To support this thesis, Willan quoted the testimony that the head of the Italian police and former director of the Italian Military Secret Service Vincenzo Parisi gave to the Parliamentary Commission of Terrorism. Parisi, as Willan reported, said that the shooting down of the *Itavia* plane was a deliberate terrorist act, and that the Bologna station's bombing aimed at emphasizing the message launched in the Ustica's skies.⁶⁶

Frédéric Laurent argued that the CIA and NATO, in the wake of the paranoid obsession with the growing strength of the Italian Communist Party, used New Order to carry out a coup in Italy. According to Laurent, the conspiratorial organization *Rosa dei Venti*, that plotted a coup in 1973, received a million-dollar funds that the CIA had given out on the orders of the 40 Committee group and Henry Kissinger. The US Ambassador in Italy Graham Martin, in close personal relations with the Italian military secret services' head Vito Miceli, advocated these fundings.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Philip Willan, *The Puppet Master. The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London, 1991), 167-169

⁶⁶ Willan, *The Puppet Master*, 170-171

⁶⁷ Frédéric Laurent, *L'Orchestre Noire. Enquête sur les Réseaux Néo-Fascistes* (Paris, 2013), 265-266

In opposition to those who point the finger at foreign responsibilities, in recent years a school of thought that sees terrorism as a solely Italy's internal matter has arisen. Representatives of this school of thought are mainly Italian scholars specializing in the history of US foreign policy and transatlantic relations between America and Europe. Their thesis is that the American military and political echelons were aware of the terrorist and subversive plans but played no roles in them. An example of this school of thought is the book *La CIA e il terrorismo Italiano* ("The CIA and the Italian terrorism") by Giovanni Mario Ceci. The volume starts from the reports and analyses that the CIA had drawn up since the 12 December 1969 attacks and ends with the examination of the US intelligence report of the mid-1980s. Within this broad chronological span, Ceci identified four main phases, based on the fact that the variation over time is closely correlated with the CIA's level of attention and interest towards terrorism in Italy. The first phase went from 1969 to 1976 and coincides with the Nixon and Ford administrations and with Henry Kissinger's control over the US foreign policy. Above all, Ceci explains, in those years the relations between Italy and the United States reached their lowest point, due to the shift to the left of the Italian political axis.⁶⁸

In this book, a contrast emerges within the political and American apparatuses on the ways of coping with Italy's shift to the left. The main opponents were Henry Kissinger and Graham Martin, on one side, and the US State Department, the CIA station in Rome and the main executives of the agency itself, on the other. In Ceci's opinion, the conflict between the Nixon Administration and the CIA, and between the US Embassy and the CIA station in Rome, is among the reasons why in this first phase the US attention to right-wing terrorism was low. Ceci's book reveals that it was only from the second phase, lasted from 1977 to 1981, coinciding with the Carter Administration, that the United States began to pay attention to terrorism in Italy, with the rising of the Red Brigades. Ceci argues that the two subsequent phases, began respectively with the Ronald Reagan's arrival at the White House, and

⁶⁸ Giovanni Mario Ceci, *La CIA e il terrorismo italiano. Dalla strage di Piazza Fontana agli anni Ottanta (1969-1986)* (Rome, 2019), 9-13

starting from 1985 until the Berlin Wall's fall, have seen the highest attention from the CIA towards terrorism in Italy. An apparently paradoxical attention, but which Ceci explains with the strong revitalization and strengthening of the CIA by the Reagan Administration after a whole decade of crisis and delegitimization. Another reason was the beginning of a serious reflection by the CIA on the support the Soviet Union may have provided for international terrorism during the 1970s.⁶⁹

Valerio Bosco is in the same vein with his book *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia* ("The Nixon Administration and Italy"). Commenting on the covert operations' issue, Bosco argues that neither the US State Department and the American Embassy in Italy nor the CIA had anything to do with the terrorist attacks and the coup plans. According to Bosco, the US interest was to strengthen the Christian Democracy, not to facilitate an authoritarian shift. It is true, Bosco wrote, that at first the American Embassy was interested in the developments of the Borghese coup, to understand where it could get. Nevertheless, within a few weeks, scepticism about success had prevailed, and the awareness that it was not worth putting Italian democracy at stake to stop the Communist Party's advance, for the risks that would also ensue for US interests. For these reasons, Bosco believes that all the theories pointing at a US direction behind terrorism and coups are imaginary.⁷⁰

At the end of this historiography, it is possible to say that terrorism is mainly a Sub-State organizations' practice. The adjective "terrorist" may describe the action that a state has carried out, but "terrorism" as a noun is the strategy that underlies the non-legal political groups' activities and aims. These groups lack the monopoly on the use of force, which is in the hands of the state. Moreover, they have ideological purposes and subversive political perspectives unrelated to the social cohesion's principles that regulate the life of all the states in the world. It follows that the non-legal political groups feel that resorting to violent means against those they perceive

⁶⁹ Ceci, *La CIA e il terrorismo italiano*, 14-18

⁷⁰ Valerio Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia. Tra distensione europea e crisi mediterranea (1968-1975)* (Rome, 2009), 222-229

as enemies is an obvious choice. Only by making this preliminary clarification, one can adequately distinguish the various types of terrorism.

Regardless of the ideological connotations and political aims of each terrorist organization, the real distinction that needs to be made is the one between Sub-State terrorism and State-sponsored terrorism. What establishes this distinction is the social relevance and political repercussions of the terrorist actions that groups carry out, and their ability to affect the course of history. In this respect, a terrorist organization, with no ties with states, is recognizable by the fact that its action is limited in time, it has no influence on a country's social life political dynamics, and the victims are relatively few. Even when the victims are illustrious, there were no significant consequences. The case of State-sponsored terrorism, recognizable by the enormous political and historical entity of its actions, is different. The death toll may be one of the distinguishing factors of State-sponsored terrorism, but it doesn't need to be huge. A historical example is the assassination of the crown prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Franz Ferdinand by the secret society Black Hand, founded by Serbian Army's officers with the purpose to liberating the Balkan territories from the Habsburg's yoke. This primary distinction allows to look deeper into the literature review on terrorism and more broadly into the American involvement in the strategy of tension in Italy.

This thesis contributes to the historiography by arguing that, in Italy's case, there has been an example of State-sponsored terrorism. In the mid-1960s, the neo-Fascist groups located in the Veneto region and the US Army Intelligence serving at the NATO base in Verona found a common ground to fight the Communist Party through the false-flag terrorist attacks to blame on the left-wing. This means that some sectors of the US Government deemed helpful to rely on existing terrorist groups to carry out attacks in an allied nation such as Italy to prevent any possible weakening of the NATO cohesion that might result from an opening to the left. This is the main contribution from this thesis to the existing literature on the Cold War.

Research questions

No definitive studies have emerged on the US role in the massacres and coup plots the far-right carried out in Italy between the 1960s and the 1970s. The analyses on the strategy of tension have not offered a comprehensive overview of the contacts between the US and the Italian right-wing since the end of World War II. The historiography focused on how the presence of a strong party such as the Italian Communist Party in the Italian political scenario always determined the US attitude towards Italy. Some historiographical trends have highlighted that during the Nixon Administration the concern for the growth of the Italian Communist Party led to resorting to unorthodox operations, such as terrorist attacks and coup plans.

Nevertheless, historical research has neglected to thoroughly examine how the Italian right-wing and the United States interacted to give rise to the strategy of tension, and more generally how this synergy began and why it ended. For example, what emerges from the literature is that there were frequent and considerable divergences between the American policymakers and the US military intelligence services on support for the Italian right-wing. It appears clear that there was some American involvement in the events that occurred in Italy between 1969 and 1974, and that, either directly or indirectly, the US influence made itself felt in the main events that took place in Italy. What is still lacking is an in-depth study that details the US responsibilities and its ties with the Italian right-wing. This thesis addresses this gap in the literature. It will do this by answering the following questions:

1. How has the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing evolved over the years?
2. Did the Nixon Administration take advantage of this links with the Italian right-wing in its anti-Communist policy?
3. What role did the American military and political elites play in the strategy of tensions?

4. How did the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing influence the Italian history?
5. What place did the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing have in Cold War history?

Methodology and sources

Italian and American documents provide answers to the research questions of this thesis and will support its arguments. The main American primary sources consulted are the Department of State Central Files at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park. These files contain the memorandum and the reports of the meetings with Italian right-wing politicians that the US diplomats drew up.

As this thesis focuses on the years between 1969 and 1974, the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda also proved useful. In fact, it contains relevant documents to this work, such as special files and official White House documents covering the Nixon Administration's years and the former president's correspondence and the Henry Kissinger Office and the National Security Files. While no record proves White House's interest in supporting terrorist campaigns and coup attempts, the records found in the Nixon Library reveal that the Communist Party's strengthening raised concern in the Nixon Administration. One of the documents found in Yorba Linda, dating back to 1969, shows how Nixon's staff feared that the centre-left coalition that had ruled Italy since 1969 might be a sort of Trojan horse for the Communists' entry into the government. In case of such an outcome, the memorandum argued, Italy would become a Soviet Union's satellite state, all North African and the Middle Eastern nations would be subject to a domino effect, and the entire Mediterranean would become a Soviet lake. Hence, the recommendation for an immediate US action in support of all anti-Communist parties, so that a stable government could be formed in Italy with men of unquestionable allegiance to NATO.⁷¹

The reading of the documents found in the US archives provided a coherent picture of the relationship between US state sectors and the Italian right-wing. The documents show that it was mostly the Italian right-wing representatives that sought the relationship with the US, especially with the Nixon Administration, in order to gain a political endorsement and a financial support. Their attempts produced only

⁷¹ Memorandum from the National Security, 1969, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, BOX 694 Italy, Volume 1, Jan 69 - 31 Jan 70,

limited and occasional fundings, as occurred prior to the 1972 Italian general election. The Nixon Administration, like the previous ones, preferred to rely on the Christian Democrats rather than being too close with a party bearer of an anti-democratic ideology such as the Social Movement. Especially the files included at the Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda reveal the Nixon Administration's willingness to avoid contacts with the Social Movement as much as possible.

Another helpful American source was the report of the US House Select Committee on Intelligence's works on the CIA's illicit activities that Senator Otis Gray Park chaired from 1975 to 1976. From the report, it was possible to find out that the Nixon Administration funded the Italian Social Movement in the 1972 Italian general elections with the aim of creating a sort of right-wing influence on the Christian Democrats. The exposure of such an operation by an American institutional source provided further confirmation of the links between the US Government and the Italian right-wing in the Nixon's years.⁷²

As far as the Italian archives are concerned, this thesis took advantage of the directive that the Matteo Renzi government issued on 22 April 2014. It ordered all the state administrations and intelligence bodies to transfer the documentation they had, specifically relating to terrorist attacks on Italian territory from 1969 to 1984, to the Central State Archive. Among the documents included therein, the author of this thesis paid special attention to the *Series 1.5 Sabotages - Attacks*, from the Italian secret services' files. It includes the attacks carried out in the five-year period 1969-74 object of this study, namely the massacres of Piazza Fontana in Milan (1969), Piazza della Loggia in Brescia (1974) and the *Italicus* train (1974). Although the files concerning the bombings have been declassified, much of the documentation in the Italian state archives is not available to researchers, on the grounds that they include extremely sensitive data. To consult the most interesting papers, it is necessary to submit a formal request to the Italian Ministry of the Interior with a specific form provided by the State Archive, specifying the purpose of the research

⁷² The Pike Committee's works have been collected and published in 1992. See: House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Unexpurgated Pike Report* (New York, 1992)

and the number of files and documents requested. Only after the Ministry gives consent, is it possible to access the required documentation. These bureaucratic obstacles, on the one hand complicated the work, on the other they confirmed that the search for truth on the strategy of tension still raises concerns in the Italian state. This confirmation also seals the importance and necessity of the present research.

In addition to the research in the archives, this research benefited from the aid of the documents produced by the *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Terrorism in Italy and on the Causes of Failure to Identify the Responsible for the Mass Killings*, established on 17 May 1988, and operating until 29 May 2001, and the judicial documents, especially those relating to the attack in Piazza Fontana. This thesis focuses on the last judicial procedure, started in 2000 and ended in 2005 with the definitive acquittal of New Order's militants charged with the crime. In fact, it was this judicial proceeding that took shape from the prosecutor Guido Salvini's investigation that highlighted the US involvement in the strategy of tension.

Finally, the research also made use of interviews with experts in strategy of tension and with ex far-right militants. Oral history has an importance that is equal to that of documents, because they provide an explanation and in-depth analysis that may be missing in written sources. In the specific case of this research, conversations with former right-wing militants are essential to understand the background of the facts under scrutiny, the motives of the subversive operations carried out and the motivations of the people involved. What this research does is analyse the documents and the interviews in order to extract the traces that will allow to recreate a coherent historical framework.⁷³

The main oral source among the former right-wing militants who accepted to talk was Vincenzo Vinciguerra, with whom the author of this thesis had a considerable exchange of letters. Vinciguerra is currently serving a life-sentence for the murder

⁷³ On oral history methodology, see:

- Thomas Charlton, Lois Myers and Rebecca Sharpless (eds), *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* (Lanham, Maryland, 2007)
- Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford, 2014)
- Cynthia Stokes, *Like It Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History* (New York, 2000)

of three Carabinieri by a car bomb in Peteano, near the border with Yugoslavia, occurred on 31 May 1972. He was the only right-wing militant culprit of an attack to confess his responsibilities after turning himself in in 1979, justifying his action with the intent to sever ties between neo-Fascists and Italian military intelligence and the Carabinieri. Furthermore, Vinciguerra has always refused to appeal his life sentence or to request pardon or leniency, which the judicial authority would certainly grant as he is a seventy-six-year-old man. To date, he is the only one serving a life sentence, while terrorists found guilty of much bloodier attacks are now out. He says that his condition as a lifer proves his seriousness and his honourability and gives him the freedom to accuse his former comrades of collusion with the Italian and foreign state apparatuses. His long militancy in the Italian right-wing allowed him to acquire a considerable amount of knowledge from the inside. His memoir, *Ergastolo per la libertà* (“Life imprisonment for freedom”), and the interrogations he was subjected to over the years are full of revelations that the parliamentary commission on terrorism and the investigators have deemed fully reliable. As scholar Aldo Giannuli said, it is impossible to write the history of the strategy of tension without Vinciguerra’s contribution.⁷⁴

Finding oral sources in the neo-Fascist area was probably the hardest part of this research. Few people accept to speak, thus confirming that even after half a century a climate of silence continues to hover in the Italian right-wing area. Moreover, some of those who agree to talk use a typical secret services’ tactic, that consists in mixing truth with falsehood. Thus, they create a kind of fog that makes it difficult to navigate. This tactic leads one to disbelieve the truth precisely because it is mixed with lies, and this is ultimately the main goal.

To provide an example, during a phone interview with the author of this thesis, a prominent neo-Fascist active in the 1960s and 1970s acknowledged his own political area’s responsibilities in the terrorist attacks and expressed his condemnation. At the same time, he reiterated the thesis that the anarchist Pietro Valpreda planted the

⁷⁴ Aldo Giannuli, *La strategia della tensione. Servizi segreti, partiti, golpe falliti, terrore fascista, politica internazionale: un bilancio definitivo: un bilancio definitivo* (Milan, 2018), 379

bomb in the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* in Piazza Fontana. According to this ex far-right militant, neo-Fascists under the guise of anarchist comrades manipulated Valpreda. These fake anarchists allegedly instructed him to place the bomb in the bank, making him believe that it would explode after the closing time without causing harms to anyone.⁷⁵ It is a thesis that still finds some credence, but that the judicial investigations have denied. During the phone conversation, it was easy to understand the ex-right-wing militant's purpose. Being unable to deny the evidence of his political area's accountability on the Piazza Fontana massacre, he attempted to lighten such guilt by pointing at the anarchists as co-responsible. This example demonstrates how oral sources can be useful insofar as the questioned people are well informed about historical events by having been involved in them. At the same time, they are a pitfall that may mislead the researchers by offering them a confusing scenario for the obvious purpose of adulterating the outcome of the research.

It was easier to approach the prosecutors who have investigated the terrorist season. Investigative judge Guido Salvini provided the most useful revelations. His investigative work that started on 15 July 1988, as part of the last investigation into the Piazza Fontana massacre, led to the judicial orders of 18 March 1995 and 3 February 1998. These sentences certified the involvement of the US military intelligence and the officers serving at NATO's Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona in the strategy of tension. The conversation the author of this thesis had with Salvini took place in person in his office at the Court of Milan on 4 June 2021. During the interview, he talked about the background of his ten-year investigation into right-wing terrorism and deepened some aspects of his findings. In addition, he exposed some of his personal beliefs matured over the years that clarified some doubts concerning the origins and the development of the strategy of tension. The core chapters will expose both Vinciguerra and Salvini's revelations to the authors of this thesis.

Ultimately, this research on the US-Italian right-wing relations during the Nixon years provides three key contributions, each revisited in the conclusion. First, it

⁷⁵ Phone interview with an ex right-wing militant that asked to remain anonymous, 12 May 2022

contextualizes these relationships within the Cold War's historical framework. This is an original take on the topic. Previous works have certainly not neglected American interest in the Italian political scenario, nor have they failed to overlook the US role in the darkest Italian history's chapters. Nevertheless, a study that demonstrates how the collaboration established between the US political and military circles and the Italian right-wing significantly determined the course of the Cold War is still missing.

Secondly, the thesis explores the different views of the various American political and military bodies' stances regarding the events that occurred in Italy and the evolution of the Italian political and social framework. In the 1960s and the 1970s, several political and social upheavals took place in Italy. Suffice to mention that the Socialist Party turned into a pillar of the centre-left governments, and that the Communist Party progressively acquired more strength up to becoming an indispensable interlocutor of the majority parties. As the thesis points out, these upheavals in Italian politics have influenced the US approach to Italy and determined the Nixon Administration orientation. However, there was often no shared vision between the CIA, the State Department, the US Embassy in Italy, the US Armed Forces echelons and the various US administrations' entourages. As it emerges from the thesis, this lack of common line often made the relations with the Italian right-wing incoherent.

Finally, it highlights how the Italian and American governments have cooperated, and diverged, especially when the centre-left coalitions ruled Italy. Both governments agreed on the need to oppose the Communists, but they frequently disagreed on the policies to adopt, and on the usefulness of relying on far-right clandestine groups and institutional collaboration of the Italian Social Movement.

Chapter structure

In seeking answers to these questions, the thesis adopts a mixed chronological and thematical approach. Chapter I explores the historical background of the links between the United States and the Italian right-wing. It focuses on the first contacts

established between the American counterespionage and the officers of the Italian Social Republic's army in the final days of World War II. It proceeds by examining the directives and the operations the US policy makers and secret services designed to counter Communism abroad. It also shows how the establishment of the centre-left government in Italy in 1963 gave impetus to the collaboration between the CIA station in Rome and the subversive right-wing in Italy. They both, in fact, perceived that the centre-left government might be a Communist's Trojan horse. Hence, a further strengthening of the relations between the Italian right-wing and the staunchest anti-Communist sectors of US intelligence. In this regard, the Italian Social Movement and the Republican Party got in touch, with the neo-Fascist party's participation in Nixon's presidential electoral campaign in 1968.

Chapter II focuses on the American involvement in the Piazza Fontana bombing. This chapter explores how the bombing aimed at putting the blame on the extra-parliamentary left to create a social climate of disapproval of the Italian left-wing as a whole. Such a means was supposed to facilitate the spread of a demand for law-and-order measures among the Italian population. The expected outcome would be the right-wing parties in possible early elections. The chapter also explains that the fall of the centre-left government in July 1969 following the abandonment of the coalition by the Social Democrats created a political situation conducive to the implementation of terrorism. The explanation of this political crisis will confirm the content of *The Observer's* article published on 14 December 1969.

Chapter III examines the alleged US role in the attempted Borghese coup on the night between 7 and 8 December 1970. It explains that the US Government exploited the plotters' plan to pursue two purposes: issuing a warning to the Italian ruling class against giving more space to the Communist Party; paving the way to the establishment of Giulio Andreotti, head of the Christian Democrats' right-wing faction, as the central figure in the Italian political scenario. It also shows the correlation between the Borghese coup and the fundings that the Nixon Administration provided to the Social Movement on the occasion of the 1972

general election, aimed at creating a pressure from the right to the Christian Democrats.

Chapter IV deals with the years coinciding with the second term of the Nixon Administration, when there was a progressive separation between the US and the Italian right-wing until the definitive end with Nixon's resignation in August 1974. In this regard, the chapter examines the rumours that have circulated over the years that the last coup in Italy, allegedly scheduled for 10 August 1974, failed due to Nixon's resignation. It also highlights NATO's involvement in the *Rosa dei Venti* coup, supposed to take place in the spring of 1973. The chapter concludes by analysing the reasons why the relationships between the United States and the Italian right-wing ceased.

The final chapter takes stock of the story this thesis tells and exposes the author's final considerations on the issues treated and on his experiences in the accomplishment of the research work. It assesses how the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing influenced the Italian history.

Chapter 1- USA and the Italian right-wing in historical context

*“Neo-Fascists are a strong bulwark against communism. Since the United States does not want Bolshevism to take hold in Italy, it should open a negotiation with the neo-Fascists to support them. In return, the United States would be able to control the political situation by leaning on the neo-Fascists”.*⁷⁶

Intro

On 26 April 1945, the infantry marine division of the Italian Social Republic, *Decima Mas*, formally surrendered to a delegation of the *Corpo Volontari della Libertà* (in English, “Volunteers of Freedom Corps”), the unified command structure of the Italian Resistance during World War II. Right after, the *Decima Mas* commander Junio Valerio Borghese took refuge in an apartment in Milan, where he remained hidden until 9 May. On that date, James Jesus Angleton, head of X-2 Counter Espionage Branch of the OSS in Italy, reached out to him. Aware of being in a race against time to secure the collaboration of a useful ally in the fight against the Communist enemy, Angleton explained to Borghese that his capture by the left-wing partisans was imminent. The only way he could escape a certain death sentence was to follow him to Rome. Borghese agreed, and Angleton dressed him up in an American uniform and drove him from Milan to Rome, offering him a fair trial, in return for his collaboration in the fight against the Communists.⁷⁷

Angleton's rescue of General Borghese fits into the historical context of the nascent Cold War. The OSS's aim was to delay the prosecution of Borghese by the Italian judiciary, in order to facilitate a calm evaluation by the court. It was, therefore, necessary to keep Borghese in safe Allied hands while waiting for the

⁷⁶ Secret OSS report by General William Quinn, director of the Strategic Services Unit, Entry 108-A, Box 272, 10 April 1946, National Archives Records Administration, Washington Registry Special Intelligence Field Files 1943-1951, Record Group 226, Records of the Research and Analysis Branch

⁷⁷ Jack Green and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince and the Sea Devils: The Story of Valerio Borghese and the Elite Units of the Decima Mas* (Boston, 2009), 183

excitement aroused by the civil war to subside, so that a new season-namely, the fight against Communism-could begin. Hence Angleton's recommendation to the US Army high commands to rely on Borghese, since his military expertise would be of great interest for the purposes of naval espionage.⁷⁸

That was the first real step in the collaboration between the ex-Fascist troopers and the US armed forces and intelligence. In the weeks following the end of the war, the OSS managed to persuade a large portion of the Italian Social Republic's troopers to go to the other side of the barricade and join forces with the Americans to carry out covert actions against left-wing militants and trade unionists.⁷⁹

After World War II was over, Nazi-Fascism was definitively buried, and Communism was the new threat. A fact that should emerge from this thesis is that Italy played a sort of historical role as Western barrier against Communist expansionism. In the years immediately following the end of the war, the United States feared that a Communists' seizure of power in Italy could have a domino effect on the rest of Western Europe. With tensions between the East and the West already high, such a perspective was unacceptable for the US officials. James Jesus Angleton could easily use his position as head of the US intelligence in Italy to pass the message that the ex-Fascists were reliable and determined people in the anti-Communist struggle. Thus, the first brick for the construction of relationship between the United States and the Italian right was laid. The first chapter of this thesis will show how these relations evolved in the context of the joint anti-Communist struggle before Nixon's arrival in the White House.⁸⁰

The aim of this chapter is to provide a contextualisation and historical background to this thesis. Placing the topic of this thesis in a broader historical context will clarify what led to the destabilization of Italian politics and society

⁷⁸ Letter from Angleton to col. Nicols, e. 108 A, Box 260, 14 July 1945, Washington Registry Special Intelligence Field Files 1943-1951, National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 226, Records of the Research and Analysis Branch

⁷⁹ Nicola Tranfaglia, *Come nasce la Repubblica. La mafia, il Vaticano e il neofascismo nei documenti americani e italiani 1943-1947* (Milan, 2004), 41-42

⁸⁰ For a thorough study on the attempts by the Italian Social Movement to establish a cooperation with the US and their outcome, see: Gregorio Sorgonà, *La scoperta della destra. Il Movimento Sociale Italiano e gli Stati Uniti* (Rome, 2019)

between 1969 and 1974. The chapter starts by focusing on the development of US interference in Italian domestic affairs following the first democratic elections held in Italy in 1948. The main points of this section are two. The first is the National Security Council's directives regarding the anti-Communist struggle in Italy and how it structured the CIA in such a way that it could carry out covert operations abroad bypassing the White House and the Congress. The second point concerns the organization of the Italian intelligence in the late 1940s. The way the Italian government structured the new secret services was such as to subordinate them to US intelligence. As a result, the Italian secret services were executors of US directives throughout the Cold War.⁸¹

The second section deals with the Kennedy Administration's support for the formation of the first centre-left government in Italy. This is a crucial point in the narrative of this thesis, because it triggered the mechanism that led to the strategy of tension in Italy. Both in Italy and in the United States there were strong disagreements on the stance towards the centre-left. According to the supporters of the centre-left, the Socialist Party's entry into the government would have encouraged the creation of a fully democratic and pro-Atlantic left-wing in Italy and undermined the Communist Party. The opponents argued that the centre-left would have been the communism's Trojan horse. For this reason, those within the Italian and US intelligence who opposed the Socialists' entry into the government immediately began to plot against the centre-left coalition formed in 1963. The outcome was the so-called *Piano Solo*, which the Italian military intelligence's head Giovanni De Lorenzo devised in 1964. It provided for the arrest and deportation to Sardinia of hundreds of Socialist MEPs and the overthrow of the centre-left coalition. Although this plan was not implemented, it had the effect of frightening the centre-left government members and reducing the coalition's reformist drive.

⁸¹ For the most comprehensive history of the Italian intelligence and its links with the CIA, see: Giuseppe De Lutiis, Giuseppe De Lutiis, *I servizi segreti in Italia. Dal fascismo all'intelligence del XXI secolo* (Milan, 2010)

With due differences, it can be said that the *Piano Solo* was the anticipation of the Borghese coup attempted in 1970.⁸²

The third section details the relationship between the Nixon Administration and the Italian Social Movement. It began during the 1968 US presidential electoral campaign. The neo-Fascist party believed that it would have everything to gain from Richard Nixon's victory, since the US would have stopped supporting the centre-left coalition and given its blessing to a right-wing government. For this reason, in the summer of 1968, the Italian Social Movement sent representatives to the United States to campaign for Nixon among the Italian-American community, contributing to his victory. The third section highlights how the US Government instrumentally conceived the relationship with the neo-Fascist party. Neither Nixon nor any other member of his administration had any sympathy for the Italian far-right. They believed that the Christian Democrats were the most effective bulwark against the Communist Party's advance in Italy. Nonetheless, the Nixon Administration thought that the Christian Democrats would have counteracted the Communist Party more effectively if they had moved further to the right. Hence, the attention that the US paid to the Social Movement during the Nixon Administration, with the aim of exerting a sort of pressure on the Christian Democrats to accentuate their anti-Communist political line.⁸³

The fourth section examines the CIA's use of third parties in its covert operations in Italy, with reference to Aginter Press, a fake news agency that served as a global anti-Communist powerhouse. Its founder was Yves Guérin-Sérac, a former member of the right-wing French terrorist group *Organisation Armée Secrète*. This section argues that the CIA used Aginter Press to indirectly infiltrate and instigate left-wing extra-parliamentary groups in order to pin the blame on them for attacks such as those of 12 December 1969. Such false-flag actions were part of Operation CHAOS,

⁸² For a thorough history of the *Piano Solo* in the historical context of the Cold War, see: Mimmo Franzinelli, *Il Piano Solo. I servizi segreti, il centro-sinistra e il «golpe» del 1964* (Milan, 2010)

⁸³ See: Luigi Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani, 1969-1972*, (Milan, 2016)

which the CIA's counterintelligence designed in 1967 to undermine left-wing subversion in the USA and abroad.⁸⁴

The topics that each section of this chapter deals with may appear heterogeneous and poorly blended. On the contrary, putting them together allows to contextualize the events that took place in Italy between 1969 and 1974. It was during the quarter century from the end of World War II to the Piazza Fontana massacre that the strategy of tension matured. The characters and organizations that emerged and the events that occurred between 1945 and 1969 are essential to understanding the historical phase Italy found itself in during the Nixon Administration. The close bond between James Jesus Angleton and Junio Valerio Borghese explains the future interactions between US intelligence and the Piazza Fontana massacre perpetrators. The Kennedy Administration's support to the Socialists' entry into government in Italy in 1963 highlights the internal conflicts within the US state apparatus that would also characterize the years between 1969 and 1974.

⁸⁴ For the links between the Aginter Press and the Operation CHAOS, see: Fabrizio Calvi and Frédéric Laurent, *Piazza Fontana - La verità su una strage* (Milan, 1996), 137

Development of US interference

In 1948, the first democratic elections after the fall of fascism took place in Italy. Numerous historical works have argued that the US interfered to ensure the victory of the Christian Democrats over the Popular Front coalition made up of Communists and Socialists. Likewise, many studies have highlighted how the 1948 Italian elections represented the first CIA's covert actions.⁸⁵

US interference in the 1948 Italian elections fits in the context that had arisen with the speech that President Harry Truman delivered to the US Congress on 12 March 1947. In this speech, that went down in history as Truman Doctrine, the US President argued that the United States could not remain insensitive to cases in which internal Communist subversion endangered the independence and sovereignty of free peoples. In that case, Truman said, the United States would support free peoples in resisting attempts at subjugation by armed minorities or external pressure. As Dennis Merill wrote: *"It (the Truman Doctrine) dealt with Washington's concern over communism's domino effect and it mobilized American economic power to modernize and stabilize unstable regions without direct military intervention."*⁸⁶ Although it was the ongoing civil war in Greece between the Greek security forces and the Communist armed groups that influenced the Truman Doctrine, it was applicable to Italy as well. The first democratic elections that took place in 1948 was also the first serious test of the US ability to support "free people" in face of a possible Communist take-over in a Western country.

The strategy of containment, that the head of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department George Frost Kennan exposed in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, also makes the context of the US opposition to the Italian Communist Party. As Kennan argued, it was vital for the Soviet Union that all the Communists abroad promoted the Soviet fortunes and fight its opponents, thus

⁸⁵ The main work that highlighted the importance of the 1948 Italian elections as the first CIA's covert operation abroad is: Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare 1945-1950*, (Cambridge, 2016)

⁸⁶ For a historical analysis of the Truman Doctrine and how it determined the US foreign policy during the Cold War, see: Dennis Merill, "The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. No. 36 (1) (2006), 27-37

acting as Moscow's fifth column in their respective countries. Therefore, the United States had to contain the Soviet expansionism and pressure against the Western countries. The means Kennan suggested to use to contain the Soviets was: "*the application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and manoeuvres of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence.*"⁸⁷

The National Security Council accepted Kennan's recommendation with the NSC 20/4 on 23 November 1948. According to this memorandum, the Soviets aimed at dominating the entire world. Moreover, they would not feel safe until the non-Communist nations was so much reduced in strength and numbers so that Communist influence would be dominant throughout the world. To thwart such a danger, the NSC 20/4 recommended that the United States reduce Soviet power and influence to limits which no longer constituted a threat to the peace, national independence and stability of the world family of nations.⁸⁸

It is possible to say that the Truman Doctrine, the containment strategy and NSC 20/4 oriented not only US foreign policy throughout the Cold War, but also the opposition to the Communist Party in Italy. The worldwide anti-Communist policy that the United States pursued from 1947-48 for four decades was in effect the application of Harry Truman's speech and George Kennan's article. Without being explicit, they also, in some ways, laid the foundations for covert operations abroad to counter Soviet influence.⁸⁹

With regard to covert operations, the CIA's very origins offer some hints as well. The National Security Act enacted on 26 July 1947 established the CIA's tasked function to perform functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national

⁸⁷ "X" (alias George Frost Kennan), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1947), 566-582

⁸⁸ Report to the President by the National Security Council NSC 20/4, Note by the Executive Secretary on US Objectives with Respect to the USSR to Counter Soviet Threats to US Security, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, General; the United Nations, Volume I, Part 2* (Washington, 23 November 1948), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v01p2/d60> (last accessed 12 February 2024)

⁸⁹ See: Moritz Pieper, "Containment and the Cold War: Reexamining the Doctrine of Containment as a Grand Strategy Driving US Cold War Interventions", *Inquiries Journal*, Vol. 4 No. 08 (2012), 1-4

security as the NSC would direct.⁹⁰ Some scholars, such as retired US Navy Captain Frank Bowman, pointed out that the Act recognized an acceptance of the necessity to engage in covert action.⁹¹ Furthermore, the vagueness of this statement gave carte blanche to the CIA to act in the ways it deemed most appropriate.

The formalization of the CIA's functions regarding covert operations occurred with the NSC directive 10/2 of 18 June 1948. It determined that, in the interests of world peace and US national security, covert operations had to supplement the US Government overt foreign activities. A passage of this directive claimed that the US Government would conduct or sponsor the covert operations against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states. The covert operations were planned and executed in a way that any US Government responsibility for them would not be evident to unauthorized persons. If uncovered, the US Government could plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them.⁹²

The National Security Council admitted in the early months of its existence that the US Government would act in such a way that it would not be possible to detect its support for friendly governments or groups. Indeed, on 25 September 1947, CIA's General Counsel Lawrence Reid Houston drafted a memorandum to the agency's director Roscoe Hillenkoetter regarding the intelligence's authority to perform propaganda activities. This memorandum acknowledged that the National Security Act could bear almost unlimited interpretation.⁹³ As regards the specific Italian case, this was exactly what it attempted to do in the 1960s and 1970s. Through the cover of "friendly governments or groups" such as various right-wing organizations and

⁹⁰ United States Senate, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, Final Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Book IV, Report N. 94-775 (Washington, 1976), 15.

⁹¹ Frank Bowman. "Secrets in Plain View: Covert Action the US. Way", *International Law Studies*, Volume 72: Law of Military Operations, (1998) <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1470&context=ils>, (last accessed 2 November 2023)

⁹² National Security Directive 10/2 on Office of Special Projects, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950*, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment Council (Washington, 18 June 1948), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d292> (last accessed 2 November 2023)

⁹³ Memorandum From the General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency (Houston) to Director of Central Intelligence Hillenkoetter, Subject: CIA Authority to Perform Propaganda and Commando Type Functions, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950*, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment (Washington, 25 September 1947), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d241> (last accessed 13 November 2024)

the Christian Democratic governments, the CIA effectively conducted covert operations against the Communist Party and the extra-parliamentary left-wing.

By virtue of the successful application of the new form of warfare adopted for the first time during the 1948 Italian elections, the National Security Council drafted the top-secret report NSC 67/1 on 21 April 1950. This report, entitled *The Position of the United States with Respect to Communism in Italy*, was the cornerstone of US policy towards Italy throughout the Cold War. It is worth quoting some excerpts from the NSC67/1, in order to better understand significant aspects of the entire US foreign policy from 1945 to the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the final lines, the report says:

"In the event that the communists gain participation in the Italian Government by legal means, or in the event that that Government ceases to evidence a determination to oppose communist threats, the United States should be prepared to initiate measures designed to prevent communist domination and to revive Italian determination to oppose communism."

The report concluded by stating: *"Further, the United States should take military measures in collaboration with other North Atlantic Treaty nations to counter communist actions which would threaten the strategic position of the United States in the Mediterranean."*⁹⁴

This NSC report clearly stated that the United States had to prevent Communists from entering the government area even if they do so through legal means. It suggested spread hostility towards Communists among the Italian population. Finally, it established the protection of US interests in the Mediterranean as the ultimate goal. One can find a thread that links this report with the strategy of tension. Terrorist attacks such as the one in Piazza Fontana aimed to blame anarchists and the extra-parliamentary left and to spread the belief that the Italian Communist Party was the protector of terrorists. The cooperation between the secret services and sectors of the Italian press proved helpful in this regard. A typical example is the

⁹⁴ Top Secret 67/1 Report, The Position of the United States With Respect to Communism in Italy, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Western Europe, Volume III (Washington, 21 April 1950), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v03/d659> (last accessed 7 November 2022)

magazine *Il Borghese*. The editor Mario Tedeschi, close collaborator of the Italian intelligence, carried out a press campaign against the Communist Party after the Piazza Fontana massacre, accusing it of collusion with the anarchists indicted for the attack.⁹⁵

Furthermore, the Piazza Fontana bombing occurred in the middle of a political debate that the Christian Democrat statesman Aldo Moro had started about the need to open up to the Communist Party. It may sound like a bold statement that the NSC 67/1 laid the foundations for the strategy of tension. Nevertheless, one can neither rule out that sectors within the CIA took the recommendations of this report as a sort of compass to orient future actions to oppose the Communist Party in a completely discretionary manner. Certainly, the NSC 67/1, without being explicit, made it clear that the US officials were willing to use any means to undermine the Communist Party and to maintain the US rule in the Mediterranean. Even in this last regard it is possible to refer to the Truman Doctrine, conceived mainly for the civil war underway in Greece. The Mediterranean, along with Latin America and South-East Asia, was the geographical area that mostly concerned the United States. Indeed, the US feared it could be the most fertile ground for the expansion of communism, and Italy and Greece were the countries in this area where the US anti-Communist commitment was most intensive.⁹⁶ NSC 67/1 confirmed that the Truman Doctrine and Kennan's strategy of containment were both the context and the starting point of global US anti-Communist policy and interference in Italian domestic affairs to oppose the Communist Party.

In the following years, the Eisenhower Administration adopted measures aimed at opposing international communism also applicable in Italy, in particular regarding psychological warfare and covert operations. President Dwight Eisenhower established the United States Information Agency (USIA) for carrying out psychological warfare on 1 August 1953 and signed the Executive Order 10483 that

⁹⁵ See the section "Press response to the terrorist wave" from the second chapter of this thesis, pages 128-130

⁹⁶ For an overview of the relevance of Greece, and more broadly of the Mediterranean in the Cold War balance during the Truman Administration, see: Judith Jeffrey, *Ambiguous Commitments and Uncertain Policies: The Truman Doctrine in Greece, 1947-1952* (Lanham, 2000)

created the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) on 2 September 1953. The latter was in charge to act as the president's coordinating committee for covert operations abroad.⁹⁷ As scholar Kenneth Osgood explained, the Eisenhower Administration's psychological warfare included "offensive" operations designed to weaken Soviet influence and to counter the attraction of communism.⁹⁸

In Italy, the psychological warfare began to take shape with the creation of the "Monte Grappa" psychological support department in Verona. Established on 1 January 1957 as a unit of the Italian Army specialized in warfare and military psychological operations during the Cold War, it depended directly on NATO's Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona. Several Italian officers from the "Monte Grappa" department made numerous trips to the United States to attend courses in psychological warfare at the Special War School in Fort Bragg. During these trips, they would also receive instructions from upper US military commands on the methods to use against the left-wing in Italy.⁹⁹ Some of these methods were included in a manual entitled "Examination of the possibility of PSYOP conduct in a Stay Behind environment", which the Court of Bologna acquired while investigating on the 2 August 1980 massacre at the local railway station. They mainly consisted in infiltrating the opposing front, soliciting resentment against the subversion and making the population believe that it was responsible for the disorder that affected the country.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, that was exactly the strategy followed with the Piazza Fontana massacre, as the remainder of this thesis will show.

⁹⁷ Memorandum From President Eisenhower to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950–1955, The Intelligence Community 1950-1955* (Denver, 2 September 1953), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/d158> (last accessed 13 November 2024)

⁹⁸ Kenneth Osgood, "Form before Substance: Eisenhower's Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 2000), 405-433
See also: Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA & American Democracy* (New Haven, 1989), 92

⁹⁹ Civil and Criminal Court of Venice-Criminal Investigation Office, Sentence-order on the sabotage of the Argo 16 military plane, N. 318/87A Investigative Judge General Register (23 November 1998)

¹⁰⁰ First Court of Assizes of Bologna, Sentence-Order *Italicus-bis*, N. 1251/A/82 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, N. 1329/A/84 General Register of the Investigating Judge (3 August 1994)

With regard to covert operations, the National Security Council issued the directive NSC 5412/1 on 12 March 1955. It stated: *"in the interests of world peace and U.S. national security, the overt foreign activities of the U.S. Government should be supplemented by covert operations"*. The covert operations' tasks were: *"all activities conducted pursuant to this directive which are so planned and executed that any U.S. Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the U.S. Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them"*. One of the covert activities listed was: *"support of indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world"*.¹⁰¹

Although the memorandum does not mention Italy, it is obvious that the "support of indigenous and anti-Communist elements" referred to Italian right-wing groups as well. Italy was one of the main Cold War frontlines, and the United States spared no efforts to undermine the Communist Party and counteract the Soviet influence. The Christian Democrats governments, as much as reliable, were not a sufficient guarantee to thwart the Communist threat. Covert operations that *"are so planned and executed that any U.S. Government responsibility for them is not evident"* clearly implicated the cooperation with clandestine groups, rather than with legal parties. Supporting and funding the Christian Democracy would never have been a reason of embarrassment, therefore the US Government would never deny it. On the contrary, acknowledging ties with neo-Fascist groups that advocated anti-democratic ideas and practiced political violence would have undermined US credibility as protectors of freedom and democracy. Hence, the legitimate assumption that the NSCC 5412/1 served as compass for the cooperation between the United States and the subversive right-wing in Italy during the Nixon Administration.

Meanwhile, the Christian Democrats' victory at the 1948 elections clarified the political scenario. Having averted, at least temporarily, the risk that the Communists

¹⁰¹ National Security Council Directive 5412/1, Covert Operations, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950–1955, The Intelligence Community, 1950–1955*, (Washington, 12 March 1955), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/d212> (last accessed 13 November 2023)

might come to power, Italy could be admitted to the Western bloc, officially created with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. What should be pointed out are some details regarding Italy's admission, as they explain the subsequent thirty years of Italian history and a significant part of the history of the Cold War as a whole. With the armistice signed between Italy and the Anglo-American on 8 September 1943, and after King Vittorio Emanuele III and Prime Minister Piero Badoglio fled to Brindisi to escape Nazi vengeance, the Italian state had collapsed. Italy had become a no-man's land with no state authority, and the Italian secret services had effectively ceased all activities. The OSS filled this void and acted as an intelligence service also on behalf of what remained of the Italian state confined to Southern Italy. In the years immediately following the end of World War II, the US prevented Italy from having its own autonomous intelligence, preferring to use agents who did not come from the partisan ranks as their informants. Only from 1947 did the General Staff of the Italian Armed Forces resume using its information agency. Nevertheless, the United States persisted in preventing the reconstruction of a genuine Italian secret service, until the Christian Democrats' victory in the 1948 elections.¹⁰²

After the Christian Democrat consolidated their power, the United States allowed Italy to set up its own intelligence system. On 30 March 1949, the Minister of Defence Randolfo Pacciardi issued an internal circular ordering the establishment of *Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate* (SIFAR), the first real Italian intelligence in the democratic era. The then deputy head of the Office of Policy Coordination (CIA's department in charge of covert operations from 1948 to 1952) Carmel Offie supervised the creation, making sure it would comply to the CIA's directives.¹⁰³ Three days earlier, on 27 March 1949, the Italian parliament had voted in favour of Italy's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty, signed on 4 April 1949. Exactly one month later, on 4 May 1949, Italy became part of the Atlantic Alliance. Massimo Caprara, former Communist MP, revealed in 1974 that some NATO protocols

¹⁰² Giuseppe De Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia* (Rome, 1984), 138

¹⁰³ Emiliano Di Marco, "L'Ufficio R.E.I. del SIFAR, tra Confindustria e Gladio", Agoravox (24 April 2014), <https://www.agoravox.it/L-Ufficio-R-E-I-del-SIFAR-tra.html> (last accessed 27 November 2024)

compelled the Italian secret services to pass news and receive instructions from a special CIA centre directly dependent on the presidency of the United States.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, NATO assigned the Carabinieri the task of Atlantic security police.¹⁰⁵ This detail is important, because during the terrorist season, the Italian military police was the armed force most colluded with the subversive right-wing, mainly in side-tracking the inquiries on its terrorist attacks.¹⁰⁶ Given its subordination to NATO, it can be deduced that the Italian military police acted according to the Atlantic directives. In retrospect, it is possible to state that these agreements were the basis for the collaboration between the Italian and American intelligence agencies, on the one hand, and the Italian subversive right-wing, on the other.

The Italian intelligence organization can be described as follows. The military secret service, that in 1966 changed its name from *SIFAR* into *Servizio Informazioni Difesa* (SID), was closely linked and subordinated to the CIA and the NATO command in Verona.¹⁰⁷ The civil secret service was represented by the *Ufficio Affari Riservati* (in English: “Office for Reserved Affairs”) of the Ministry of the Interior, founded in 1948 and subordinated to the Atlantic Pact Security Office. The Italian secret services, both military and civilian, never acted without approval from the US counterpart. As former Minister of Defence and of Interior Affairs Paolo Taviani once said, the CIA and the US Embassy in Rome commanded and funded the Italian secret services.¹⁰⁸ Taviani and Caprara’s revelations confirm that US political and military upper echelons approved the Italian intelligence’s involvement in terrorism actions.

The US policy makers most hostile to the Italian left-wing could achieve their unorthodox plans against the Communist Party thanks to a trusted man whose name was Federico Umberto D’Amato. Enlisted in the Italian police in 1940, following the

¹⁰⁴ Massimo Caprara, “I sette diavoli custodi. La mappa dei servizi segreti in Italia”, *Il Mondo*, Anno XXVI, N. 25, (20 June 1974)

¹⁰⁵ VVAA, *Le istituzioni militari e l’ordinamento costituzionale* (Rome, 1974), 54

¹⁰⁶ Carlo Schaefer et al. *Vent’anni di violenza politica in Italia* (Rome, 1988), 24

¹⁰⁷ Daniele Ganser, “The ghost of Machiavelli. An approach to operation Gladio and terrorism in Cold War Italy”, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 45, No.2, (March 2006), 111-154

¹⁰⁸ William Scobie, “Stay Behind Units”, *The Observer* (18 November 1990)

armistice of 8 September 1943, when he was deputy commissioner of Public Security in Rome, D'Amato chose to remain faithful to the Kingdom of Italy under the Anglo-American tutelage. He immediately began to cooperate with James Jesus Angleton. As D'Amato himself said, the most important action he performed for the OSS was recruiting the Italian Social Republic's police. His task was to propose the Fascist police officials to join the new Italian state that would arise after the end of World War II, and thus continue their anti-Communist struggle in the new security forces.¹⁰⁹ For these services, after the end of World War II, D'Amato was awarded the Bronze Medal by the CIA and the Medal of Freedom by the US Congress.¹¹⁰

On 23 November 1960, thanks to US support, D'Amato entered the ranks of the Office for Reserved Affairs at the Ministry of the Interior. In 1965, on the recommendation of the Minister of Interior Paolo Emilio Taviani, D'Amato was appointed as Italian representative at the Office for Internal Security of the Atlantic Pact. This body had the specific task of issuing the security clearance access to the secret services' confidential documents. Thus, D'Amato was able to acquire documents which, up to that moment, were solely within the SIFAR's competence. Simultaneously, D'Amato also became the head of the Italian delegation to the NATO Security Committee, made up of the member countries' secret services responsible for internal subversion and terrorism.¹¹¹

Thanks to these assignments, that placed him in the Atlantic Alliance upper echelons, D'Amato, organized and directed far-right terrorist groups to carry out attacks and inspired the coup projects, as the Court of Milan investigations in the 1990s ascertained.¹¹² D'Amato also arranged the misdirection against the anarchists

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Federico Umberto D'Amato by Mario Tedeschi, "Il favoloso Angleton", in *Il Borghese*, Year XXXVIII, N. 28, (12 July 1987)

¹¹⁰ Vladimiro Di Costanzo, "Il Club di Berna: la nascita del circolo delle spie nell'epoca della strategia della tensione", (8 March 2022)

<http://www.salvisjuribus.it/il-club-di-berna-la-nascita-del-circolo-delle-spie-nell'epoca-della-tensione/>, (last accessed 22 March 2023)

¹¹¹ Giacomo Pacini, *Il cuore occulto del potere. Storia dell'ufficio affari riservati del Viminale (1919-1984)* (Rome, 2010), 84-85

¹¹² Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20^, Sentence-Order on the Piazza Fontana bombing, N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, 18 March 1995

on the occasion of the Piazza Fontana bombing, and orchestrated the journalistic campaign aimed at blaming the left-wing for the massacre.¹¹³

In the judicial investigations carried out into terrorism over the years, many elements have emerged pointing at D'Amato as the organizer of the Piazza Fontana massacre. The former official at the Office for Reserved Affairs Guglielmo Carlucci said that he witnessed meetings between D'Amato and National Vanguard's leader Stefano Delle Chiaie, involved in the 12 December attacks. Judge Carlo Mastelloni summarized the deposition in these terms: "*Dr. Carlucci recalled that Delle Chiaie used to meet Dr. D'Amato both when the official was deputy director and in the subsequent times after he had taken office as director*".¹¹⁴

During an interrogation as part of the third investigation into the 12 December 1969 attacks, a senior Italian military intelligence official, General Nicola Falde, revealed that D'Amato personally organized the massacre.¹¹⁵ Further confirmation came from an associate justice named Filippo Barecca, who hosted Franco Freda (on trial for Piazza Fontana) at his home in Calabria, when the latter obtained house arrest in 1978. In an interrogation, Barecca revealed that Freda confided to him that D'Amato was the instigator of the 12 December bombings, and that he was confident that his ties with Giulio Andreotti (at the time of Freda's revelation to Barecca, Italian Prime Minister) would grant him acquittal.¹¹⁶ For all these clues, it is possible to consider D'Amato the connection between the US and the Italian subversive right-wing.

With the reorganization of the Italian security services, the US Government was able to influence more broadly Italy's domestic affairs. The most authoritative confirmation of American interference in Italian domestic affairs to undermine the Communist Party came from William Colby's autobiography *Honourable men. My*

¹¹³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 Investigating Judge Register File., 3 February 1998

¹¹⁴ Criminal Court, Criminal Investigation Office of Venice, Sentence-order issued by investigative judge Carlo Mastelloni on Argo 16, Investigating Judge, details of act n. 318/87A Investigating Judge (23 November 1998)

¹¹⁵ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre

¹¹⁶ Court of Assizes of Brescia, Criminal Procedure N. 003/08 General Register, interrogation of Filippo Barecca, (22 December 1998)

life with the CIA. CIA's director from 4 September 1973 to 30 January 1976 and station chief in Rome from 1953 to 1958, Colby introduced the chapter "Covert Politics in Italy" with the following quote: "*My job, simply put, was to prevent Italy from being taken over by the Communists, and thus prevent the NATO military defences from being circumvented by a subversive fifth column, the Italian Communist Party*".¹¹⁷

This statement would be enough to clarify the American policy towards Italy (and, perhaps, the entire American foreign policy) during the Cold War. In the following pages, Colby clarified two aspects he deemed essential. The first is that the CIA indeed interfered in Italy throughout the Cold War, and that interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign countries is illegal and immoral, but that it was done for a good purpose. The aim was to support the democratic parties so that they could face the Communist Party's subversive policy, in order to safeguard the US security and the Atlantic stability. In this regard, it is worth quoting an interesting passage from Colby's memoir: "*This framework cannot justify every act of political interference by CIA since 1947, but it certainly does in the case of Italy in the 1950s*".¹¹⁸

What makes this passage interesting is, above all, the temporal context of the publication of Colby's autobiography. This book was published in 1978, when the echo of the revelations that emerged from the Pike and Church committees' work on the CIA operations was still ringing loud. One gets the feeling that, not being able to deny certain crimes the CIA committed over the years, Colby wanted to shift the accountability to others to defend what he alleged being the goodness of his work. In other words, the feeling is that Colby wanted to carry out both an act of personal self-defence and a political operation in support of the worldwide CIA's anti-Communist policy, pinning its excesses and deviations on a few bad seeds. It can be deduced, following Colby's narration, that the CIA had exercised "good" interference in Italy, out of altruism towards the Italian people, during the 1950s,

¹¹⁷ William Colby, *Honorable men. My life with the CIA* (London, 1978), 109

¹¹⁸ Colby, *Honorable men*, 114

and that such interference became "deleterious" in the following years. For these reasons, his narration must be taken with due caution, although it deserves attention.

In another passage worthy of mentioning, Colby argued that the covert operation's primary purpose in the 1950s was to provide support to the centrist parties, without resorting to bribes and dirty tricks, since the CIA's stand was for a democratic Italy. In support of this alleged good intention, Colby wrote: *"What's more, the very deliberate and conscious policy was made both in Washington and in Rome that no help of any kind go to the Neo-Fascists".¹¹⁹*

One can add to this last passage that one of the discoveries by the Pike Committee was the funding for the Italian Social Movement in 1972 at the request of the then US ambassador in Rome Graham Martin. It is, therefore, a further confirmation of the Colby's autobiography's political purpose. It indeed aimed at distinguishing the responsibilities of single individuals belonging to the American intelligence and diplomatic circles from the policy that the US Government pursued. Notwithstanding the understandable intent, Colby's statements confirmed that various American state apparatuses resorted to dirty tricks and co-operated with right-wing groups.

Rise of the centre-left governments and opposition

In 1963, the centre-left governments' season in Italy began. According to scholar Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, the process that led to the formation of the centre-left government started with a meeting in Washington between John Kennedy and the then Italian Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani on 14 June 1961. During the meeting, Kennedy told Fanfani that if the Christian Democrats decided to open to the left, the United States would approve. Kennedy's position, Silveri argues, is explainable also with more pragmatic considerations. In NATO's Euro-Atlantic partnership, French President Charles De Gaulle had opposed the plan to create the Multilateral Force, an American proposal to produce ballistic missile submarines and warships, crewed by international NATO personnel. De Gaulle's opposition to this project rose fear in

¹¹⁹ Colby, *Honorable men*, 115

American political and military circles that France could hegemonize Europe. Since Fanfani had sided with the United States, Kennedy got the impression that the then Italian Prime Minister, who was the main sponsor for the Socialists' entry into the government, was a reliable ally.¹²⁰

Leopoldo Nuti has his own interpretation of the US position regarding the formation of the centre-left government in Italy. Throughout the period of the opening to the left, there was a close connection between the evolution of the international system and the evolution of Italian domestic politics. On the one hand, there was the detente between the Western and Eastern blocs that was taking shape after the meeting between Dwight Eisenhower and Nikita Khruščëv at Camp David between 25 and 27 September 1959. On the other hand, the dialogue between the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party had began after the latter abandoned the pro-Soviet policy following the invasion of Hungary in 1956. This coincidence, Nuti argues, put an end to the Eisenhower Administration's opposition to the Socialists' entry into the government in Italy. Thus, Nuti concluded that the Eisenhower Administration itself was the first to open to the formation of the centre-left government in Italy.¹²¹

Aldo Moro took the first step at the eighth congress of the Christian Democracy, held in Naples from 27 January to 31 January 1962. The then Christian Democrat's secretary obtained the approval of the delegates to start a collaboration with the Socialist Party to promote and make democracy more secure in Italy.¹²² Arthur Schlesinger, John Fitzgerald Kennedy's adviser, shared Moro's stance, being convinced of the need to support, even financially, the Socialist Party's faction that

¹²⁰ Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia e la nuova frontiera. Stati Uniti e centro-sinistra 1958-1965* (Bologna, 1998), 116-118

¹²¹ Leopoldo Nuti, "The United States, Italy, and the Opening to the Left, 1953-1963" *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol 4, N.3 (Summer 2002), 36-55

¹²² For comprehensive accounts of the Moro's initiative towards the formation of the centre-left coalition, see: Michele Marchi, "Moro, la Chiesa e l'apertura a sinistra. La "politica ecclesiastica" di un leader post-dossettiano", *Ricerche di Storia Politica*, No.2 (August 2006), 147-180; Enrico Farinone, *Aldo Moro. Alle radici del centro-sinistra. Discorso al Congresso di Napoli* (Guidonia Montecelio, Rome, 2020)

yearned for a loosening of ties with the Communist Party. Initially, Schlesinger's intentions found obstacles within the US Embassy in Italy and the State Department, still largely composed of conservative officials. Nevertheless, in the Italian political elections held on 28 April 1963, the Italian Socialist Democratic Party and the Italian Socialist Party increased their parliamentary representations respectively by eleven and three seats in the Chamber of Deputies and by nine seats in the Senate.¹²³ These results facilitated Kennedy's freedom of action. The meeting between Kennedy and the Socialist Party's head Pietro Nenni, on the occasion of the US President's official visit to Italy on 1 July 1963 proved that the US Government was in favour of a centre-left government.¹²⁴

A few days prior to his assassination, Kennedy communicated to the US Embassy to Rome that the formation of a government including the Socialists had to be a top priority.¹²⁵ According to scholar Leopoldo Nuti, the Kennedy Administration was convinced that a centre-left government was the only solution that could guarantee parliamentary stability and compete effectively with the Communist Party's propaganda.¹²⁶ Kennedy, indeed, believed that a progressive anti-Communism that would achieve economic development and social justice was most suitable to reduce the room for manoeuvre for the Communists.¹²⁷ Thus, on 5 December 1963, Aldo Moro formed the first centre-left government in Italy.

There was a considerable disagreement between the liberal and the conservative factions within the US state apparatuses about the stance to take towards the centre-left coalition. An example of the conservative sectors' attitude against the centre-left government project was the meeting that took place at the US Embassy in Rome in

¹²³ Historical Archives of Elections-Italian Ministry of the Interior, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=28/04/1963&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (last accessed 8 October 2024)

¹²⁴ Leo Wollemborg, *Stars, stripes and tricolor. The United States and Italy, 1946-1989* (New York, 1990), 164.

¹²⁵ Wollemborg, *Stars, stripes and tricolor*, 176

¹²⁶ Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra: importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*, (Bari, 1999), 609

¹²⁷ Alberto Giovagnoli and Sergio Pons, *L'Italia Repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta. Vol.1, Tra guerra fredda e distensione* (Florence, 2003), 31

late November 1961. The participants in the meeting included Ambassador George Frederick Reinhardt, the CIA station chief in Italy Thomas Karamessines and the military attaché at the US Embassy Colonel Vernon Walters, future CIA's deputy director from 2 May 1972 to 2 July 1976. Walters forcefully advocated the use of US troops to prevent the Socialist Party from entering the government coalition. Karamessines, more realistically, argued that the process of bringing the socialists closer to the government was irreversible, but that it could be counterbalanced by strengthening those in Italy who opposed it. Ambassador Reinhardt agreed with Karamessines, and the possibility of US intervention just before or after the consummation of an "opening to the left" was ruled out.¹²⁸

The idea Karamessenis exposed began to take shape during a meeting between Vernon Walters and the SIFAR's head, General Giovanni De Lorenzo in the autumn of 1962, shortly before the latter took office as Chief of Staff of the Carabinieri. During the meeting, De Lorenzo and Walters finalized the details of a secret plan that SIFAR and the CIA had agreed upon following the local elections held in Italy on 10 and 11 June 1962. Alarmed by the Communist's electoral growth, the Italian and American secret services signed the memorandum. The salient points were as follows:

1. Planning diversified actions for any emergency situations.
2. Intensifying funding for forces opposing the centre-left.
3. Supporting the Christian Democrat MEPs hostile to the opening to the left, starting from the newly elected President of the Republic Antonio Segni, who was clearly against to the Socialists' entry into the government.¹²⁹

Giovanni De Lorenzo was the right man to implement this plan, as he had already been one of the American's trusted men for some time. He had, in fact, been appointed SIFAR's head by pressure from the CIA officer Carmel Offie on the then Minister of Defence Paolo Emilio Taviani on 27 December 1955.¹³⁰ During his

¹²⁸ Robert Leonardi and Alan Platt, "American Foreign Policy and the Postwar Italian Left", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 93, No. 2 (Summer, 1978), 197-215

¹²⁹ Roberto Faenza, *Il Malaffare: dall'America di Kennedy all'Italia, a Cuba, al Vietnam* (Milan, 1978), 315

¹³⁰ De Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia*, 61

tenure as Italian military intelligence's chief, De Lorenzo carried out the largest spy work ever in the history of Italy, managing to create dossiers on 157,000 citizens.¹³¹

The plan that Walters and De Lorenzo devised took a concrete shape in 1963. The new head of CIA station in Rome, William Harvey, coordinated along with Italian Army Colonel and director of SIFAR's Economic and Industrial Research office, Renzo Rocca, a series of attacks against the Christian Democrats' headquarters. The attackers were right-wing extremists and veterans of the *Decima Mas* in the guise of left-wing militants, and the purpose was to sabotage the project of forming centre-left governments and lead the public opinion to demand emergency measures. Investigative journalist Roberto Faenza found at the US National Archives in College Park a list of far-right-paramilitary groups that have carried out similar actions and that have participated in other anti-Communist operations in Italy.¹³² The presence of such a list, including the names of these groups' members and the description of their activities, in the US archives, proves that some CIA's sectors carried out covert operations jointly with the Italian right-wing.

A further confirmation of the US determination to stop the Communist Party's advance came in 1990. The Italian weekly *Panorama* revealed the content of the memorandum NSC 6014/1, "US Policy Towards Italy", drawn up on 19 January 1961. It stated that if the Communists took power even legally by winning fair democratic elections, the United States had to take every possible and appropriate action to assist any Italian group that sought to prevent, or overthrow, Communist rule.¹³³ It is to assume that the neo-Fascists were among "any Italian group".

The intensity of the struggle against the Communists soon reached unimaginable levels. During an interrogation at the Court of Milan on 7 March 2000, Paolo Emilio Taviani said what follows. On 23 February 1964, the then President of the Republic Antonio Segni, commenting on the progressive strengthening of the Communist Party, confided to Taviani (who, at the time, was Minister of the Interior) his fear

¹³¹ Eugenio Scalfari and Lino Jannuzzi, "1964, Segni e De Lorenzo tentarono il colpo di stato", *L'Espresso*, N. 4, Year XIII, (29 January 1967)

¹³² Faenza, *Il Malaffare*, 369

¹³³ Pino Buongiorno, "Se vince il PCI", *Panorama*, Year XXVIII, N. 1286, (9 December 1990)

that the Italian political situation would force him to give to task a Communist MP to form a new government. During the same testimony, Taviani added that, in the same period, MEPs from various parties expressed their concerns to the CIA agents in Rome about the risk that the centre-left government could pave the way to the Communist Party.¹³⁴ Thus, they implicitly appealed to US intervention to overthrow the centre-left government.

At the same time, General De Lorenzo designed the so-called *Piano Solo*, a name that was devised to indicate that the Carabinieri alone ("alone" is the English translation of the Italian word "solo") would carry it out. It was a special emergency plan scheduled for the summer of 1964, with the approval of President Segni. The plan was to arrest and deport to Sardinia approximately a thousand of leftist MEPs and intellectuals, including the deputy Prime Minister and Socialist Party leader Pietro Nenni.¹³⁵ The *Piano Solo* had some similarities with the Walters-De Lorenzo agreement. Moreover, the US were aware of the *Piano Solo* preparation, as proved by an air gram sent by the embassy in Rome to the State Department on 26 June 1964. This document reads that the Italian economic and political situation was serious and, whatever centre-left formula was adopted, it would inevitably fail. The only solution, the document added, was to overthrow the current coalition government. General Giovanni De Lorenzo represented the only force around whom the Italian security forces could rally, and for this reason he organized mobile task force battalions ready to take action in the event of a political emergency. The document concluded by saying that a centrist government would take office, and a show of force would face leftist reactions.¹³⁶

It is interesting to report a conversation between General De Lorenzo and the military attachés at the US Embassy that took place on 26 May 1964. During the

¹³⁴ Court of Milan, N. 1152/2000 Prot. Ord, Historical Archives of the Italian Senate, Archival Collection Mariano Rumor, Serial Number II, Box 180

¹³⁵ For these details and more info on *Piano Solo*, see: Italian Senate, Fifth Legislature, Inquiry Parliamentary Commission on the June-July 1964 Events, Report by Sen. Giuseppe Alessi, Doc. XXIII, N. 1 (Rome, 1971)

¹³⁶ Intelligence Information Cable, "Views of Senior Italian on the Present Political Situation" (Washington, 26 June 1964), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XII, Western Europe*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d99>, (last accessed 14 April 2023)

conversation, De Lorenzo said that the Italian top security and military officers would very much prefer to see organized a strong rightist political party that they would support. The problem, De Lorenzo said, was that the Italian right-wing was in disarray.

He verbatims stated:

“The Neo-Fascists (MSI) leaders are hopelessly divided, squander their time in gambling houses, and still pretend to live in an age (the Fascist Era) which the great majority of the Italians abhor. There is no future for them in Italy; both should dissolve themselves as soon as possible.”

According to De Lorenzo, the only solution was to set up a Liberal Party-led government, rather than an authoritarian regime:

*“What the country’s security and military leaders wished was the emergence of a new party, with the PLI as the nucleus, which would embrace all the right-wing forces.... Such a party would have the full support of the security and military establishments either indirectly in elections or directly, if need be, should the security of the state be threatened through Communist subversion”.*¹³⁷

Another point General De Lorenzo raised concerned the Italian Communist Party. According to his own words, there was general agreement at the top levels of the military establishments that the most efficient way to eliminate the internal Communist threat would be for the party to take the fatal step of staging an open revolt. The security forces would then suppress the revolt so ruthlessly that the Italian Communist Party would be eliminated for good. Nonetheless, De Lorenzo added, the Communists were fully aware of the consequences of an open rebellion, and they were accordingly banking on assuming power through parliamentary procedures.¹³⁸

The impression is that, in De Lorenzo's intentions, the plan mainly consisted in frightening the left-wing MEPs and making them realize what the consequences

¹³⁷ Dispatch from the US Embassy in Italy “Lt. Gen. De Lorenzo’s Comments on Security and Political Subjects”, 26 May 1964, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 12 IT. Secret

¹³⁸ Dispatch from the US Embassy in Italy “Lt. Gen. De Lorenzo’s Comments on Security and Political Subjects”, 26 May 1964

would be had the Communists gone too far and crossed the drawn line. That was, to quote Pietro Nenni, a "sabre-rattling". Enough for Aldo Moro's second centre-left government to be formed on 17 July 1964, again with Socialist ministers, with a social reforms program, compared to the first government, considerably resized. A sign that the message was well received.

It was in this context that New Order turned into a subversive group. The introduction to this thesis has set out how New Order came into being as a think-tank.¹³⁹ In this section, it is useful to mention its ideological shift in the early 1960s. Up until then, New Order followed a pro-European orientation, that yearned for the creation of a single huge European nation that would oppose both the United States and the Soviet Union. At that moment, the process of decolonization of European possessions in Africa had reached a climax. The anger at the loss of the European primacy went along with the fear that the Communists might settle in the new African states, and that the Soviet Union could become their guide and protector.¹⁴⁰

In the wake of these upheavals, the idea that the opposition between the West and Communism was a clash between incompatible models of civilization, began to spread in the European far-right groups. It followed that the Communist parties in Western countries were a foreign body to surgically remove. The result of this new approach was the switch from the pan-European nationalism to the defence of the West as a whole, including the United States. Inevitably, in order to defend the West, it was necessary to make a common front with those conservative political circles that were ideologically different from the historical fascism and the neo-fascism's doctrine that arose after 1945. In this perspective, the far-right groups, starting with New Order, have ended up accepting American hegemony and inserting themselves into secret NATO bodies.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, New Order elaborated the terroristic ideology with an article by one of its leading members, Clemente Graziani, published on the think tank's official journal in April 1963. In this article, Graziani wrote that the revolutionary war's

¹³⁹ See pages 12 and 13 from the Introduction

¹⁴⁰ Aldo Giannuli and Elia Rosati, *Storia di Ordine Nuovo* (Sesto San Giovanni, Milan, 2017), 81-84

¹⁴¹ Giannuli and Rosati, *Storia di Ordine Nuovo*, 85-88

doctrine provided for recourse to ruthless and indiscriminate forms of terrorism to totally conquer the masses.¹⁴² It was a matter, the article continued, of conditioning the crowds by acting on the main innate reflexive fear. Terrorist activity of this type tends to exasperate the opponents to force them into retaliatory actions that alienate population's sympathy. In the most interesting passage, Graziani wrote that, with these methods, the French far-right terrorist group *Organization Armée Secrète* managed to block the entire Islamic population in its neighbourhoods in Algeria. Such action, Graziani argued, did not achieve full success as and it lacked the CIA's support. Hence, Graziani's conclusion: "*we understand that revolutionary action is doomed to defeat if it is not inserted in a favourable situation in the international politics.*"¹⁴³ It is clear that this article, in addition to being the manifesto of New Order's terrorist ideology, also reminded the need to insert in favourable international circumstances and to gain American support with a view to war against the common foe.

New Order moved soon from theory to practice. Former general Vittorio Emanuele Borsi Di Parma said that in the mid 1960s, while he was chief of staff of the Italian Third Army Corp, SIFAR informed him that New Order was preparing guerrilla training plans in cooperation with NATO's security services. General Borsi Di Parma described New Order as a typically American organization, with armaments and radio equipment supplied by the NATO command in Verona and trained by US instructors.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² The revolutionary war's doctrine was the product of the theoretical elaborations of the French Army Colonel Charles Lacheroy at the time of the Algerian War. In a conference held in the autumn of 1955, Lacheroy exposed this doctrine by summarizing the revolutionary process in five phases: a period of apparent calm with sporadic attacks; a phase of widespread terrorism in which the terrorized population no longer collaborates with the authorities, becoming "silent accomplices" of the terrorists; a third phase that sees the insertion among the amorphous mass of the first armed elements and the first agitators, who mobilize to transform the "passivity of silence" into "active complicity"; a fourth phase of transition in which semi-regular guerrilla forces and a clandestine political-administrative organization are constituted; a final phase that sees the formation of regular troops and the replacement of legal authorities by the rebels. See: Michael Finch, "A Total War of the Mind: The French Theory of la guerre révolutionnaire, 1954–1958", *War in History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (July 2018), 410-434

¹⁴³ Clemente Graziani, "La guerra rivoluzionaria", *Ordine Nuovo*, Year IX, N.4 (April 1963), 73-80

¹⁴⁴ Testimony by General Vittorio Emanuele Borsi at the Assizes Court in Venice, 30 December 1997, in Sentence - order of the Civil and Criminal Court, Criminal Instruction Office of Venice on Argo 16, Legal Procedure n. 318/87A

From the subsequent investigations, the first judicial case involving New Order also emerged. In May 1966, the Verona police arrested New Order militants Elio Massagrande and Roberto Besutti for possession of weapons and explosives. During interrogation at the police headquarters, Besutti revealed that Theodore Richards, a US army officer serving at the NATO base in Verona, supplied New Order with weapons and explosives. As CIC agent Carlo Digilio revealed, Theodore Richards escaped prosecution by bribing some prosecutors.¹⁴⁵

In the same years, the rapprochement between New Order and the US Embassy's staff in Rome also took place. According to the Italian intelligence, the first contacts date back to the end of 1967, when Pino Rauti approached the US Embassy's press officer asking for financial support for the organisation's magazine. The US Embassy accepted and began to pass New Order a 200,000 Lire monthly check (approximately, equivalent to GBP 3,625 in those days).¹⁴⁶

Pino Rauti had also connections with the US intelligence. Former New Order militant Giancarlo Stimamiglio revealed that, in the early 1950s, unspecified US intelligence agents had approached some former Social Republic troopers proposing that they collaborate in the anti-Communist struggle.¹⁴⁷ According to Stimamiglio, Rauti was the only one who accepted the proposal. On 30 December 1994, during an informal conversation with Carabinieri Captain Massimo Giraudo, New Order's head in the North-Eastern regions Carlo Maria Maggi said that Rauti was the real handler of the relations with the CIA in the area.¹⁴⁸ US Army Intelligence agent Carlo Digilio confirmed this allegation in an interrogation on 14 December 1996. On that occasion, Digilio revealed that he had learnt from his referent in the US Army David

¹⁴⁵ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register of Investigating Judge, 3 February 1998

¹⁴⁶ Note by source "Mortilla", 12 November 1970, in Gianni Flamini *Lo stato invisibile. Storia dello spionaggio in Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Milan, 2002), 392

¹⁴⁷ Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of the Defense/Carabinieri Army/Piazza Fontana (1969)/Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (ROS) Reparto Anti Eversione (1992-2013)/1: Activities in support of investigative judge Guido Salvini's inquiries as part of the investigations into the right-wing subversion (legal procedure 2/92F) (1992-2013)/Report of the interrogation to Giancarlo Stimamiglio (Trieste, 17 April 1997), Italian Central State Archive

¹⁴⁸ Vincenzo Vinciguerra, "Il pudore del silenzio", <https://guidosalvini.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Vincenzo-Vinciguerra-Il-pudore-del-silenzio.pdf>, Opera, (10 September 2012)

Carret that Pino Rauti was a CIA informer and trustee.¹⁴⁹ It is therefore evident how both the military and civilian US intelligence maintained relations with the subversive right-wing in order to influence Italian political life.

In the climate of opposition to the centre-left government, New Order was an active part of the first turning point of what went down in history as the strategy of tension. That was the Conference on the Revolutionary War, that the Alberto Pollio Institute of Military Studies organized in Rome with SIFAR funding from 3 to 5 May 1965.¹⁵⁰ This institute was founded by Enrico de Boccard, an Italian Social Republic veteran and reporter from the newspaper *Lo Specchio*, with the help of General Egidio Viggiani, head of SIFAR¹⁵¹. The conference had as its main theme the revolutionary war, a doctrine that in those years was circulating in military circles, and its aim was to coordinate and give a greater vigour to the opposition against the possible Communist advance in Italy. The founding assumption of the conference was that a third world war against the international communism, was already underway.

It should also be added that in 1972, during a search of a safe belonging to the neo-Fascist Giovanni Ventura (whom the Italian Supreme Court acknowledged as one the culprits of the Piazza Fontana massacre¹⁵²), the investigators found a document from the Italian military intelligence that defined the Pollio Institute as a "cover for CIA's activities in Italy".¹⁵³ It is therefore presumable that the Conference on the Revolutionary War was an operation that some CIA's sectors suggested to give a qualitative leap to the opposition to the Italian Communist Party.

¹⁴⁹ "Carlo Digilio – dichiarazioni 14.12.1996", <https://4agosto1974.wordpress.com/2015/02/03/carlo-digilio-dichiarazioni-14-12-1996/>; Preliminary custody order in prison against Carlo Maria Maggi and Delfo Zorzi, by the Judge of the Preliminary Investigations of Milan Clementina Forleo, (12 June 1997)

¹⁵⁰ For an overview of the conference proceedings, see: VVAA, *La Guerra Rivoluzionaria. Atti del primo convegno di studio promosso ed organizzato dall' istituto Alberto Pollio di studi storici e militari svoltosi a Roma nei giorni 3, 4 e 5 maggio 1965 presso l' hotel Parco dei Principi*, https://web.archive.org/web/20160620002545/http://www.stragi.it/la_guerra_rivoluzionaria/index.htm (last accessed 27 November 2024)

¹⁵¹ Gianni Flamini, *Il partito del golpe. Le strategie della tensione e del terrore, dal primo centrosinistra organico al sequestro Moro, 1964-1968. Volume I* (Ferrara, 1981), 84

¹⁵² See: Corte di Cassazione, Sentence N. 470 on the Piazza Fontana massacre, (3 May 2005)

¹⁵³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20^, N.2643/84A Public Prosecutor General Register, Sentence-Ordinance on the bombing of Milan (18 March 1995)

The attendants of the conference were personalities linked to the anti-Communist world, especially high-ranking military officers, Italian Social Movement and Italian Social Democratic Party MEPs, journalists, and a group of National Vanguard militants. The most famous participants were New Order's head Pino Rauti, General Adriano Magi-Braschi and professor and ex Waffen SS trooper Pio Filippini Ronconi. Ronconi suggested creating cells in concentric circles with increasingly secret and clandestine levels, with the function of defence from the Communist offensive and counterattack. Two of these structures would act within the legal framework in defence of the state. The third would operate in complete anonymity with the tasks of counter-terror and possible breaking the points of precarious balance, in order to determine a different constellation of forces in power. These nuclei could be composed in part of the youngsters who, he said, were wasting their energies and their time in noble demonstrations that fail to shake the masses' indifference in the face of the deterioration of the national situation. In Ronconi's mind, a council in charge of coordinating all the activities needed to be established above these cells.¹⁵⁴

For his part, Magi-Braschi argued that what was underway against communism was not only a military war, but also an economic, social, religious, ideological one. Making a comparison with the two world wars, he explained that the need to have commands composed of all the armed forces arose from World War I, and that World War II generated the General Staffs made up of personnel from several nations. The war against communism, on the contrary, required a General Staff that would include civilians and military as well. It is easy to understand how, by the term "civilians", Magi-Braschi meant far-right militants.¹⁵⁵

These and other interventions prove right those who maintain that the Conference on the Revolutionary war laid the ideological, programmatic and organizational

¹⁵⁴ Pio Filippini Ronconi, *Ipotesi per una contro rivoluzione*, in *La guerra rivoluzionaria - Atti del Primo Convegno organizzato dall'Istituto Pollio* https://web.archive.org/web/20160420160302/http://www.stragi.it/la_guerra_rivoluzionaria/05.htm#Ipotesi%20per%20una%20contro%20rivoluzione (last accessed 18 April 2023)

¹⁵⁵ Adriano Magi-Braschi, *Spoliticizzare la guerra*, in *La guerra rivoluzionaria- Atti del Primo Convegno organizzato dall'Istituto Pollio*

foundations of the strategy of tension.¹⁵⁶ It can be added that one of the first effects was the creation of the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato* (“State’s Defence Nuclei”) at the disposal of the General Staff of the Italian Armed Forces. Adriano Magi-Braschi oversaw its implementation, inserting New Order militants into this secret group’s mixed civilians and military body, obtaining explicit support from US military leaders.¹⁵⁷ Basically, the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato* was a secret organization, directly linked to the Italian military secret service and fully inserted into the NATO’s security system. Its task was to create the conditions for a coup d'état to accomplish through terrorist attacks. The first act of the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato* was the sending of two thousand letters to Italian Army’s officers in July 1966, urging them to join to the political project to “*strike out the Communist infection*”.¹⁵⁸

Another immediate outcome of the Conference on the Revolutionary war was the so-called “Chinese poster operation”, a disinformation campaign that National Vanguard militants carried out on Office for Reserved Affairs’ order between January and February 1966. It consisted of posting posters praising Stalin and polemical towards the alleged Communist Party’s revisionism and signed by a non-existent pro-Chinese Marxist-Leninist movement, on the walls of Rome, Milan, Florence, Livorno, Venice and Padua. The purpose was to encourage dissidence within the Italian Communist Party and the birth of far-left extra-parliamentary movements, in order to push it to radicalize its positions and frighten public opinion¹⁵⁹. As the former New Order militant Vincenzo Vinciguerra said, that was the concrete launch of the strategy of tension.¹⁶⁰ Thus, it can be said that, with the 3-5

¹⁵⁶ All the scholars that dealt with the strategy of tension agree that the Conference on the Revolutionary War was the starting point of the terrorist season in Italy. See:

- Philip Willan, *The Puppet Master. The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London, 1991), 414
- Mirco Dondi, *L’eco del boato. Storia della strategia della tensione 1965-1974* (Bari, 2015), 19

¹⁵⁷ De Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia*, 75

¹⁵⁸ See a sample on Guido Salvini’s website: <https://guidosalvini.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Volantino-Nuclei-per-la-difesa-dello-Stato-inviato-agli-uffciali.pdf> (last accessed 18 April 2023)

¹⁶⁰ Interrogation of Vincenzo Vinciguerra by the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the Opera penitentiary on 30 May 1992, Court of Assizes of Venice, Sentence-order issued against Zvi Zamir and others in the context of

May 1965 conference, the die was cast. The first twenty years after World War II had laid the basis for the terrorist and coup season in Italy. At the end of 1960s, it was time, for the anti-Communists, to spring into action.¹⁶¹

CIA's use of third actors: Aginter Press

In the late afternoon of 12 December 1969, three anarchist posters were found in Milan's central areas, not far from Piazza Fontana, claiming responsibility for the massacre with the inscription "*Autunno 1969: l'inizio di una lotta prolungata*" (in English: "Autumn 1969: the beginning of a prolonged struggle"): one, in Piazza Cordusio, placed on a metal box bearing traces of timers like the one used in Piazza Fontana; another in Piazza Filippo Meda; yet another one just behind Piazza Fontana. The inscription of this poster paper echoed the slogan of the 1968 French youth protest, "*Mai 68, Debut d'une lutte prolongée*". Later, it was discovered that only the French far-right group Aginter Press used the type of poster paper found near Piazza Fontana, and that the inscription was a misdirection to divert the investigations into the Piazza Fontana massacre onto the left-wing.¹⁶²

According to a note that the Italian military intelligence wrote on 16 December 1969, Aginter Press was the mastermind of the 12 December attacks.¹⁶³ It is, therefore, necessary to focus on this group, as the judicial investigations and several books on the Piazza Fontana massacre have highlighted its importance in the strategy of tension, as well as its links with Western secret services.¹⁶⁴ Yves Guérin-

criminal case on the downing of the Argo 16 airplane, 318/87A Investigative Judge General Registry (10 December 1998)

¹⁶¹ Frédéric Laurent, *L'Orchestre noir: Enquête sur les réseaux néo-fascistes* (Paris, 1978), 416

¹⁶² Paolo Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana. Finalmente la verità sulla strage* (Milan, 2009), 55-58. On Cucchiarelli's reliability, see the section "Interpretation and explanation of Piazza Fontana" from the second chapter of this thesis, pages. 131 and 132introduction

¹⁶³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge, (3 February 1998)

¹⁶⁴ For the Aginter Press' role in the strategy of tension, see:

- Andrea Sceresini, *Internazionale Nera. La vera storia della più misteriosa organizzazione terroristica europea* (Milan, 2017)
- Fabrizio Calvi and Frédéric Laurent, *Piazza Fontana - La verità su una strage* (Milan, 1996)
- Daniele Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation GLADIO and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London, 2005)
- Frédéric Laurent, *L'Orchestre noir. Enquête sur les réseaux néo-fascistes* (Paris, 1978)

Sérac, veteran of the 1946-1954 Indochinese and the 1954-1962 Algerian Wars and former member of the French right-wing terrorist group *Organization Armée Secrète*, founded Aginter Press in Lisbon in September 1966 as a news agency. Its function was to serve as a cover for two organizations that he had founded at the same time: *Ordre et Tradition*, Aginter Press' clandestine political branch; *Organization d'Action contre le Communisme International* (OACCI), its armed wing. Guérin-Sérac's purpose was to create, through Aginter Press, an international anti-Communist army by recruiting various mercenaries and training far-right militants, with the PIDE (the Portuguese security agency during Antonio Salazar's regime) and the CIA's support.

As a note from the Italian Police Counterterrorism Service dating back to 1967 revealed, Aginter Press, in fact, acted at the CIA's behest, with its own armed men, wherever the anti-Communist struggle was most acute.¹⁶⁵ There is no certain information about when this collaboration between the CIA and Aginter Press began. The fact that the Italian police wrote this note a few months after Guérin-Sérac founded Aginter Press may suggest that this collaboration started right after the foundation. An anonymous former right-wing terrorist revealed to the Carabinieri's Special Operations Group that the CIA had recruited Guérin-Sérac when he was still a member of the OAS. According to this source, the US wanted the French to remain entangled in the Algerian War so that they would not be able to develop an autonomous nuclear capability, and with this regard they provided support to the OAS through Guérin-Sérac.¹⁶⁶ Since the OAS was founded on 11 February 1961 and

- Pauline Picco, *Liaisons dangereuses: Les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960-1984)* (Rennes, 2016)

¹⁶⁵Central Directorate of Prevention Police, file "Ordre et Tradition", note on Aginter Press activities, 14 June 1967, Court of Brescia, Court of Assizes, Criminal Case No. 3/08 General Register on the Piazza della Loggia massacre, Hearing of 15 December 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of Defense/Carabinieri Army/Piazza Fontana (1969)/Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (ROS) Reparto Anti Eversione (1992-2013)/1: Activities in support of investigative judge Guido Salvini's inquiries as part of the investigations into right-wing subversion (legal procedure 2/92F) (1992-2013)/52: Confidential source.

The OAS, with its terrorist actions against the Algerian civilian population and against French characters opposed to the perpetuation of French colonial domination, intended to prevent in all ways the granting of independence to Algeria. Its terrorist actions caused a total of 2,700 victims, of which 2,400 were Algerian and 300 French. For a comprehensive history of the OAS, see: Rémi Kauffer, *OAS. Histoire d'une organisation secrète* (Paris, 1986)

remained active until the independence of Algeria proclaimed on 5 July 1962, it is likely that the CIA employed Guérin-Sérac during this period.

Another note from the Office for Reserved Affairs revealed that Aginter Press had links with the US Republican Party's right-wing faction led by Senator Barry Goldwater ever since its foundation in 1966. It also added that the financial means for its counterguerrilla warfare activities in Africa (especially in Angola, Mozambique, Congo and Rhodesia) against the anti-colonial liberation movements came directly from the United States.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, a document by the SDCI (Portuguese secret services in the period following the 1974 Carnation Revolution) reported that Robert Leroy, Guérin-Sérac's right-hand, had specialized in counterespionage and from 1958 to 1966 had collected intelligence information for NATO.¹⁶⁸

A source from inside the organization confirmed these allegations. In fact, a former Yves Guérin-Sérac's former collaborator named Jean-Marie Laurent, revealed to journalist Andrea Sceresini that during the Nixon years, Aginter Press, acted in synergy with the CIA, without providing specific details.¹⁶⁹ It is therefore possible to say that Aginter Press was a sort of sub-agency, in charge of criminal and terrorist actions without directly involving American official bodies in order to avoid diplomatic problems between states.¹⁷⁰ As scholar Luca Trenta explained, the US interposed third parties in the conduct of covert operations over the years, relying on local proxies and the intelligence services of the countries where such actions were carried out. Indeed, relying on third parties could better shield the US Government politically and morally from the controversies that would arise from

¹⁶⁷ Note from the Aristo source for the Private Affairs Office, 7 February 1968, Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome IV, 2001

¹⁶⁸ Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale Carabinieri-Reparto Eversione, "Annotation on the activities of psychological and unorthodox warfare (psychological and low-density warfare) carried out in Italy between 1969 and 1974 through the "AGINTER PRESSE", protocol Nr.509/62 "P", Vol. XLVIII, Rome, 23 July 1996, Milan State Archives

¹⁶⁹ Andrea Sceresini, *Internazionale Nera. La vera storia della più misteriosa organizzazione terroristica europea* (Milan, 2017), 145

¹⁷⁰ Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale Reparto Eversione, "Annotation on the activities of psychological and unorthodox warfare (psychological and low-density warfare) carried out in Italy between 1969 and 1974 through the "AGINTER PRESSE", Nr.509/62 di prot. "P", Rome, 23 July 1996, Milan State Archives, Vol. XLVIII

such option.¹⁷¹ In this regard, Aginter Press was a good example of how, during the Cold War, the CIA used third actors locally for anti-Communist covert operations.

An important meeting took place between New Order's leader Pino Rauti and Yves Guérin-Sérac in Rome between 30 January and 1 February 1968. During the meeting, Guérin-Sérac kept asking Rauti about New Order's stance regarding American policy in the world and if it would be willing to support the US government's choices. To clarify the meaning of his question, Guérin-Sérac explained to Rauti that the US Republican Party and other American circles (not cited in the document) funded Aginter Press and its covert groups to carry out anti-Communist activities around the world. Finally, Guérin-Sérac told Rauti that unspecified US representatives were organizing a meeting in Greece for the spring of 1968 between Greek military junta's members and delegations from worldwide far-right groups. The purpose of the meeting would be the elaboration of joint anti-Communist strategies, and Guérin-Sérac suggested that it would be good if New Order and the National Vanguard participated in order to learn how to act against the left-wing in Italy.¹⁷² At the end of Guérin-Sérac's trip to Rome, Rauti accepted his proposal for collaboration in the anti-Communist struggle. In the following days, Aginter Press began sending instructors to Italy to teach the New Order and National Vanguard's militants how to set up and handle explosives to use in attacks.¹⁷³

The trip to Greece took place on 16 April 1968. On that day, Italian military intelligence, in agreement with Greek secret services and the CIA, organized a travel for a group of fifty-one New Order and National Vanguard militants, Rauti included. During the journey in Greece, the neo-Fascists attended training courses on techniques of infiltration in the left-wing groups and methods of carrying out coups.¹⁷⁴ Upon returning to Italy, some National Vanguard militants began to

¹⁷¹ See: Luca Trenta, "Remote killing? Remoteness, covertness, and the US Government's involvement in assassination", *Defence Studies*, Vol. 21 (2021), 468-488

¹⁷² Note drawn up by the source "Aristo" on 1 February 1968 for the Private Affairs Office of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, in the file "Nuclei Difesa dello Stato" A-Central Department of the Prevention Police, Rel. 1 at the Court of Milan, Annex 115.

¹⁷³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

¹⁷⁴ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome IV, 2001

disguise themselves as left-wing extra-parliamentarians and founded the fake anarchist group XXII March. The neo-Fascists chose the name with reference to the day the students at the University of Nanterre, in France, occupied the Council Hall of the Faculty of Literature as a protest against the arrest of some anti-war in Vietnam demonstrators in Paris.¹⁷⁵

In December 1968, Aginter Press drew up its ideological manifesto. The text, entitled "Our political action", began by arguing that it was necessary to encourage the installation of chaos in all the state's structures and create confusion around the legal apparatus (although it doesn't specify the country, the document probably refers to wherever there was a strong Communist party). This would lead to a situation of great political tension and fear in the industrial world and hostility towards the government and all parties. In this perspective, the text continued, an effective group, able to gather around itself the dissatisfied people from all social classes, should be ready to make the revolution. The first step to take to achieve such a goal was the destruction of the state apparatus. In this regard, the concluding passage of the text is the litmus test of the entire strategy of tension: *"We have already infiltrated all these groups; we will obviously bring our action on them: propaganda and strong actions apparently made by our Communist opponents and pressure on individuals that centralize power at all levels.*"¹⁷⁶

As the document itself explained, the outcome of these actions would be a popular feeling of hostility towards those who threaten the peace of each individual and of the nation (the document clearly referred to the left-wing movements). From this situation, the document argued that the anti-Communist groups should work on public opinion to show the failure and inability of the legally constituted apparatus (that is, the democratic states). Thus, the groups related to Aginter Press would appear as the only ones who might provide a proper social, political, and economic solution to the moment. At the same time, the text continued, *"we should raise up a*

¹⁷⁵ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome III, 2001

¹⁷⁶ Corrado Incerti and Sandro Ottolenghi, "Siamo entrati nel carcere di Lisbona. E abbiamo fotografato i documenti proibiti", *L'Europeo*, Year XXX, N.47, (28 November 1974)

defender of the citizens against the disintegration provoked by subversion and terrorism”. This propaganda, the text concluded, should exercise a “*psychological pressure on the foes*” (the left-wing) and create a current of sympathy for “*our political body*” and force the army and the judiciary to act against the subversion.¹⁷⁷

The Aginter Press' document is important, because it explains the right-wing terrorist groups' false-flag operations and goals. In Italy, New Order and National Vanguard acted exactly as the Guérin-Sérac organization prescribed. The militants infiltrated the extra-parliamentary left-wing groups to incite them to carry out increasingly violent actions. In some cases, they would cause unrests during peaceful rallies, throwing Molotov cocktails and bolts at the police and starting riots that discredited the left.¹⁷⁸ One of the neo-Fascists infiltrated among the anarchists, Mario Merlino, planted one of the bombs of 12 December 1969 at the *Altare della Patria* in Rome. Thus, when serious attacks such as those of 12 December 1969 occurred, public opinion and the police automatically would blame the left-wing movements. The final outcome, as the document says, would be the repression of the left-wing, the discrediting of the democratic state as incapable of guaranteeing social peace and popular consensus towards the far-right as the only bulwark against subversion. It is, therefore, possible to say that Aginter Press provided those responsible for the Piazza Fontana massacre with a course of action and instructions on how to act.

This Aginter Press document clearly echoed Operation CHAOS, originally designed by the CIA's counterintelligence in 1967 to infiltrate youth and student protest groups in the United States between 1969 and 1970. A note from the Carabinieri's Special Operations Group reported that Operation CHAOS was the basis of the strategy of tension. The same note explains that US intelligence created a climate of terror in Italy to be blamed on anarchist and left-wing groups thanks to the infiltrations carried out with Operation CHAOS. According to the Carabinieri's note, the purpose was to shift the electorate to the right and to strengthen the centrist

¹⁷⁷ Incerti and Ottolenghi, “Siamo entrati nel carcere di Lisbona. E abbiamo fotografato i documenti proibiti”

¹⁷⁸ Edoardo Di Giovanni, Marco Ligini and Edgardo Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato. Controinchiesta* (Rome, 1970), 169

parties. Finally, the Carabinieri's document added that it was James Jesus Angleton, as CIA's counterintelligence head, who managed the US intelligence's activities in Italy, counting on the support of individuals placed in key positions.¹⁷⁹

Operation CHAOS was exported abroad through the so-called Project 2. The CIA's Plan Directorate designed this project in late 1969 with the aim of infiltrating agents posing as dissident sympathizers within the foreign intelligence target.¹⁸⁰ Like Operation CHAOS, the Project 2 had placed agents within domestic radical organizations for the purposes of spying on their activities.¹⁸¹ As part of Project 2, agents were recruited in Europe among far-right militants to strengthen and develop the "Maoist left". At the time, in fact, there was an ongoing rift within the Communist front between the USSR and China that started after the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced the Stalinist crimes at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956.¹⁸² The Chinese President Mao Zedong Mao proposed himself as the theoretical continuer of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and guardian of its orthodoxy, which the Soviet Union had allegedly betrayed.¹⁸³

This thesis is not the most suitable place to delve into the Sino-Soviet rivalry, if not to examine the impact it had in Europe, especially in Italy. Starting from the Chinese cultural revolution of 1966, many left-wing militants, disappointed with all the European Communist parties' alignment with Khrushchev's revisionism, founded several Maoist movements. In fact, they saw in Mao and in the People's Republic of China the hope for a new revolution linked to the Third World independence movements and the opposition to the Vietnam War. The specific reference to the Maoist experience was the distinctive character of Italian extra-

¹⁷⁹ Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of the Defense/Carabinieri's General Command/Piazza Fontana Massacre (1969-2001)/325: Note on searches by the Special Operations Group of five agents of the NATO clandestine information network involved in the Piazza Fontana massacre/ Rome, 16 May 1995), Italian Central State Archive

¹⁸⁰ Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Book III, Senate Rep. No. 94-755, 94th Cong., 2d Sess. (Washington, 1976), 704

¹⁸¹ Russell Napoli, *Intelligence Identities Protection Act and Its Interpretation* (New York, 2005), 18-20

¹⁸² Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, 2010), 6

¹⁸³ Julia Lovell, *Maoism: a Global History* (New York, 2019) 88-150.

parliamentary left-wing.¹⁸⁴ Thus, Maoism became a political and ideological point of reference and a model of anti-revisionism and anti-imperialism in the world, thanks above all to the push of the 1968 global protest.¹⁸⁵

In this climate of great ideological confusion (as Mao once said, "*Everything under heaven is in utter chaos; the situation is excellent*") it was easy for Aginter Press to infiltrate the extra-parliamentarian left-wing. In 1967, Guérin-Sérac's right hand Robert Leroy went to the People's Republic of China's Embassy in Bern (Switzerland was the only Western country that had relations with Communist China until the 1970s) and obtained a sort of certificate proving his alleged Maoist faith that allowed him to infiltrate Maoist movements in Europe.¹⁸⁶ Notwithstanding the Chinese diplomats in Switzerland were aware that Leroy was a right-wing extremist, they chose to lend themselves to any type of alliance in order to counter the "revisionist" Soviet enemy.¹⁸⁷

In Italy, the main Maoist movement was the Communist Party of Italy (Marxist–Leninist), founded in 1966. Since the months following the meeting between Rauti and Guérin-Sérac, several right-wing militants infiltrated the Communist Party of Italy, with the aim of concealing their neo-Fascist identity and involving the Maoist movement in their subversive activities.¹⁸⁸ The main purpose was, therefore, to deepen the rift between the pro-Soviet and the pro-Maoist and to create a chaotic state in the far-left, in order to facilitate the scapegoating of their militants when events like the Piazza Fontana massacre occurred. In this regard, it is possible to say that the CIA exported Operation CHAOS to Europe through Aginter Press.

A document from the Department of Defence demonstrates that the US Government's upper echelons shared the infiltration tactic. It is the U.S. Army Field

¹⁸⁴ See: Ferdinando Dubla, "Il movimento del '68 e la genesi del maoismo militante in Italia", *Calendario del Popolo*, N.619/1998 (April 1998)

¹⁸⁵ Jeffrey Crean, *The Fear of Chinese Power: an International History. New Approaches to International History series*. (London, 2024), 122

¹⁸⁶ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 Investigative Judge General Registry File (3 February 1998)

¹⁸⁷ Assessment by Dr. Aldo Giannuli, vol.22, file.169, Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre (3 February 1998)

¹⁸⁸ Aldo Giannuli. *La strategia della tensione. Servizi segreti, partiti, golpe falliti, politica internazionale: un bilancio definitivo* (Milan, 2018), 216-218

Manual 30-31B, a supplement to a top secret classified manual that the Chief of Staff of the US Army William Westmoreland drew up in 1970. The FM 30-31B's contents directly referred to counterinsurgency and joint operations between US and host country to secure stability. Counterinsurgency operations in this fields, says the document, are strictly clandestine, and the US Army involvement shall never be acknowledged. The document added: "*A democratic government serves well if it satisfies the requirements of an anti-Communist posture. Otherwise, the US government might modify the host country structure.*"¹⁸⁹

The most interesting part of FM 30-31B is the section on how to operate when a host country government shows passivity or indecision in face of Communist subversion. In such cases, the document says, the US Army intelligence must have the means of launching special operations to convince the host country government and public opinion of the reality of the insurgent danger and of the necessity of counteraction. It is useful to quote verbatim the passage regarding how the US Army intelligence should act in this regard: "*To this end, the US Army Intelligence should seek to penetrate the insurgency by means of agents on special assignment, with the task of forming special action groups among the more radical elements of the insurgency.*"

The document proceeds by stating: "*When the kind of situation envisaged above arises, these groups, acting under US Army intelligence control, should be used to launch violent or non-violent actions according to the nature of the case*".¹⁹⁰

This, in summary, is the content of the document FM 30-31B, and it deserves a reflection. This text gives the impression of providing an accurate description of the strategy of tension, especially on the 12 December 1969 attacks. Even if it does not mention Italy, when it says that it can happen that a host country government is passive in the face of the Communist danger, it is easy to make a connection with

¹⁸⁹ Department of the Army, Stability Operations, Intelligence-Special Files, Supplement B to FM 30-31 (Washington, 10 March 1970), <https://ia803101.us.archive.org/30/items/1976-fm30-31b/FM30-31B.pdf> (last accessed 8 October 2023)

¹⁹⁰ Department of the Army, Supplement B to FM 30-31

the Italian government at the time of the centre-left coalition. Likewise, the idea of penetrating the insurgent groups to push them to carry out violent actions echoes the neo-Fascists' infiltration among the anarchists, which resulted in the Pietro Valpreda's framing for the Piazza Fontana's bombing. It is therefore obvious that the strategy of tension was part of the false flag mechanism, and that FM 30-31B gave it a systematic structuring. This document, along with the Operation CHAOS, shows the US Government's willingness to conduct covert actions in countries with significant Communist presence using third parties like Aginter Press and with no holds barred.

Richard Nixon and the Italian Social Movement

The relationship between the Nixon Administration and the Italian right-wing began during the 1968 US presidential election. The Italian Social Movement did not hesitate to actively support Richard Nixon's candidacy. His visceral anti-Communism and his appeal to the American "silent majority", opposed to what was perceived as social degeneration, made the neo-Fascists believe that, for the first time since 1945, they would have a friend in the White House. For these reasons, in the summer of 1968 the Italian Social Movement began to seek contacts with Nixon's electoral staff. The neo-Fascist emissaries were MEPs Raffaele Delfino and Franco Servello.

On 24 August 1968, thanks to the mediation of Vinzo Comito, a journalist for the Italian-American community's newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-American*, Servello and Delfino met the then governor of Massachusetts John Volpe in Boston. The purpose of this meeting with Volpe (who would be US Ambassador in Italy from 1973 to 1977) was to discuss how the neo-Fascists could participate in Nixon's electoral campaign.¹⁹¹ Back in Italy, Servello and Delfino began to proselytise in the Southern regions, where most Italian-Americans have their roots, to convince the many families that had relatives in the United States to urge them to vote for Nixon.

¹⁹¹ "Missione di Gardner a Washington", Archivio Fondazione Ugo Spirito, Raffaele Delfino collection, series 1, general political activity, file 5, USA-Ital (24 August 1968)

Servello himself wrote to a cousin who lived in America urging him to let the Republican electoral committee know that the neo-Fascists had already convinced thousands of Italian-Americans' relatives to send postcards from Italy with voting instructions.¹⁹² Raffaele Delfino sent a similar letter to Philip Guarino, a member of the Republican National Committee, asking him to report the initiative to pro-Republican US newspapers.¹⁹³ The aim was to prove how much the Italian Social Movement was actively committed to Nixon.

The Italian Social Movement rejoiced over the presidential election result of 5 November 1968. The neo-Fascist party's head, Arturo Michelini, cheered Nixon's victory defining it as a turning point for the West.¹⁹⁴ The party's newspaper *Il Secolo d'Italia* commented on Nixon's rise to the White House stating that he had all the credentials to reverse "*the path that Kennedy had begun by provoking the general advance of the left throughout the world, including Italy*".¹⁹⁵

There were, however, also more practical considerations. On 9 November 1968, Delfino wrote to Vinzo Comito to arrange a meeting with John Volpe to examine the Italian situation. Delfino concluded the letter with this statement: "*We believe we deserve some credit!*".¹⁹⁶ It is clear, by the way Delfino concluded his letter, that the Social Movement expected a political and economic reward from the newly elected US for its commitment during the presidential campaign.

Comito replied that that as soon as the neo-Fascists wanted to make another trip to the United States, John Volpe, who was to take office as US Secretary of Transportation, would gladly speak with them. Afterwards, Servello and Delfino were invited to attend the Inauguration Day at the White House on 20 January 1969. The newly inaugurated Nixon Administration, for its part, covered the Social

¹⁹² Franco Servello's letter to Anthony Servello, Archivio Fondazione Ugo Spirito, Raffaele Delfino collection, series 1, general political activity, file 4 (17 October 1968)

¹⁹³ Letter from Philip Guarino, Archivio Fondazione Ugo Spirito, Raffaele Delfino collection, series 1, general political activity, file 4 (17 October 1968)

¹⁹⁴ Arturo Michelini's statement on *Il Secolo d'Italia* (7 November 1968)

¹⁹⁵ Article without signature, *Il Secolo d'Italia* (8 November 1968)

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Raffaele Delfino to Vinzo Comito, Archivio Fondazione Ugo Spirito, Raffaele Delfino collection, series 1, general political activity, file 4, Raffaele Delfino's (9 November 1968)

Movement MEPs' travels costs and granted the neo-Fascist party a million-dollar funding through the Continental Illinois Bank.¹⁹⁷

It seems, however, that there were disagreements within the Nixon Administration regarding the attitude to take towards the Italian Social Movement. It was especially the State Department that strongly distrusted the party. Interestingly, Henry Kissinger seemed to share this distrust. On 2 May 1971, Social Movement MP Orazio Santagati had written a letter to Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs, Peter Flanigan, to request that a meeting be set up between Nixon and the neo-Fascist party's leader Giorgio Almirante in Washington. As Santagati wrote, Almirante wanted to argue with Nixon on "*the brave and sincere line of my party in support of the Atlantic Pact and in precise opposition to the Communist Party.*"¹⁹⁸ In a memorandum drafted for Flanigan on 21 June 1971, Kissinger wrote that it would seem particularly unwise for the President to meet with Social Movement members, due to the negative impact both on Italian politics and US domestic affairs. Similarly, Kissinger added: "*no senior White House staff member should meet with them*".¹⁹⁹ The meaning of these documents is clear. The Italian Social Movement could be an interlocutor of the Nixon Administration only in specific cases, such as the participation in the US presidential electoral campaigns, or in crucial political elections in Italy, like the one that took place in 1972.²⁰⁰ Otherwise, the US officials had to keep away from the neo-Fascist party as much as possible, in order to avoid any possible reputational risk for being in touch with an anti-democratic party.

Far from accepting the White House's refusal to meet with Social Movement members, Santagati wrote another letter to Flanigan on 10 November 1972 requesting to meet with Nixon, this time in person, to discuss the party's political

¹⁹⁷ Annex 164 to the First Report of Prof. Aldo Giannuli to the Court of Milan on the documents found in Via Appia, 13 March 1997, State Archive of Milan,

¹⁹⁸ Letter from Social Movement MP Orazio Santagati to the Assistant to the President Peter Flanigan, Catania 2 May 1971, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Vol. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files, BOX 41, Subject files CO 72 Italy, Beginning-6/30/69

¹⁹⁹ Memorandum from Henry Kissinger for Mr. Peter Flanigan, Subject: your correspondence with Sr. Santagati, 21 June 1971, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Vol. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files, BOX 41, Subject files CO 72 Italy, Beginning-6/30/69

²⁰⁰ See the section "Interference in 1972 election", from the third chapter of this thesis.

line.²⁰¹ Following this latest letter from Santagati, the State Department drafted another memorandum on 24 November 1972. The author, Executive Director Theodore Eliot Jr., wrote that Santagati's request to meet Nixon was an attempt by the neo-Fascist party to achieve political respectability both in Italy and in United States. If the White House had accepted this request, the neo-Fascists would have publicly exploited it, and the friends of the United States in the Italian democratic parties would have misunderstood it. Eliot Jr. concluded by saying that, for the foregoing reasons, the State Department strongly recommended against any appointment with Nixon or another official at the White House for Santagati.²⁰² Following these indications, on 19 December 1972, Flanigan wrote to Santagati that Nixon's schedule for the next months would be too busy to add his request to the presidential calendar.²⁰³

Flanigan's diplomatic response and the memoranda that State Department's members and Henry Kissinger himself drafted following Santagati's requests summed up the US position towards the Italian right-wing during the Cold War. It was almost always Italian right-wing's representatives approaching US Government's members. It appears clear that the Social Movement sought political legitimacy from the US that would allow the Italian right-wing to emerge from the ghetto the Fascist ideological legacy confined them to. The Nixon Administration, for its part, believed that the only reliable ally in Italy were the democratic conservative political forces, such as the Christian Democrats. The neo-Fascists could only be casual and tactical allies to push the political axis to the right, not close

²⁰¹ Letter from Social Movement MP Orazio Santagati to the Assistant to the President Peter Flanigan, Catania 10 November 1972, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Vol. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files, BOX 41, Subject files CO 72 Italy, Beginning-6/30/69

²⁰² Memorandum from Theodore Eliot Jr. for Mr. Peter Flanigan, Subject: Request by Italian Deputy Santagati for Appointment with President, 24 November 1972, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Vol. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files, BOX 41, Subject files CO 72 Italy, Beginning-6/30/69

²⁰³ Letter from the Assistant to the President to Social Movement MP Orazio, 19 December 1972, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Vol. Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files, BOX 41, Subject files CO 72 Italy, Beginning-6/30/69

partners. This is probably the most correct interpretation of the relationship between the Nixon Administration and the various Italian right-wing factions.

The dual nature of US policy toward Italy during the Nixon years is therefore clear. It is possible to state that the entire Nixon Administration's foreign policy was perpetually two-faced, as the handling of the Vietnam crisis showed: conciliatory and moderate or intransigent and unscrupulous, depending on the specific circumstances. In this regard, the policy towards Italy and the occasional support for the Italian right-wing were the litmus test of Richard Nixon's modus operandi. This is the main contribution the last section of this thesis provides to the historiography on Nixon, that is, the confirmation of the mixture of common sense and cynicism that characterized his policy.

Chapter 2: Attack on Italian democracy

“It is unbelievable how many forces contributed to the plan that led to Piazza Fontana. Italian intelligence, the US Army’s secret services, the CIA, the Aginter Press, Stay-Behind, the colonel’s regime in Greece. All these thread ends intertwined with each other and converged in the Italian extra-parliamentary right network.”²⁰⁴

Intro

On 12 December 1969, at 4.37 pm, a bomb exploded at the *Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura* branch in Piazza Fontana in Milan, causing seventeen deaths and eighty-eight injuries. Around 6.00 pm, another bomb was found at the *Banca Commerciale* in Piazza della Scala, a few hundred meters away. About twenty minutes after the explosion at the *Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura* in Milan, at 4:55 pm, a bomb also exploded at the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro* branch in Rome, causing fourteen injuries, while at the *Altare della Patria* two other explosions, at 5.22 pm and 5.30 pm respectively, injured four passers-by.²⁰⁵ The first suspect of the

²⁰⁴ Translation by the author of this thesis of an extract from Paolo Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana. Finalmente la verità sulla strage* (Milan, 2009), 550. The original line in Italian is as follows:

“E’ incredibile quante e quali forze abbiano contribuito ai progetti golpisti che hanno condotto a Piazza Fontana. L’Anello, la mafia, i servizi segreti dell’Esercito USA, la CIA, l’Aginter Press, la rete di Gehlen in Germania, gli ustascia, la rete parallela di Stay-behind della NATO, la Grecia dei colonnelli, la cordata politica italiana favorevole a una svolta autoritaria. Tutti i capi di questi fili si intrecciavano tra loro e convergevano nella rete degli organizzatori ed esecutori della destra extraparlamentare italiana: Ordine Nuovo e Avanguardia Nazionale.”

²⁰⁵ Vincenzo Macrì, “12 dicembre 1969, Nel cinquantenario della strage di Piazza Fontana”, *Meer* (23 November 2019), <https://www.meer.com/it/59009-12-dicembre-1969> (last accessed 16 February 2025)

Piazza Fontana bombing was Pietro Valpreda, arrested on 15 December 1969 after the taxi driver Cornelio Rolandi testified that he had driven him to the bank where the anarchist allegedly entered with a black bag and came out without it a few minutes later. Valpreda was a militant of the anarchist group "22 March", founded in Rome by the fake anarchist Mario Merlino, who actually was a neo-Fascist. In late April 1969, after two attacks took place at the Central Station and at the fair trade in Milan, Valpreda took refuge in Rome to escape the police raids, as the judiciary initially believed that the anarchists were the culprits. In the days preceding the Piazza Fontana massacre, Valpreda informed his comrades that he would go back to Milan on 11 December 1969 to submit to questions in court for having printed an offensive flyer against Pope Paul VI. Hence, the idea by the Piazza Fontana perpetrators to send a Valpreda's double near the bank on a cab. The aim was to have the passenger draw the taxi driver's attention as much as possible, so that he could provide a detailed description to the investigators. In fact, after the radio broadcast the news of the explosion, Rolandi went to the police to testify that he had driven a suspicious passenger to Piazza Fontana. The police showed the taxi driver a picture of Valpreda prior to drawing an identikit, and he recognized him as the passenger. Thus, with incorrect procedures and psychological conditioning of the witness, the anarchist was indicted for the massacre. The judicial investigations in the 1970s that led to the first sentence issued in 1979 proved that the masterminds of the massacre framed Valpreda in order to have an anarchist scapegoat.²⁰⁶

There were five preliminary investigations, eight trials and three *Corte di Cassazione*²⁰⁷'s rulings on the Piazza Fontana massacre between 1972 and 2005. It took about thirty years of judicial investigations to establish that the far-right group New Order was responsible for the Piazza Fontana massacre, with US and Italian intelligence support. The last trial began in Milan on 24 February 2000. Among the various defendants, there were the New Order militant Delfo Zorzi (accused of being

²⁰⁶ For a description of how the police manipulated Rolandi to frame Valpreda, see: Court of Assizes of Catanzaro, First Instance Sentence on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N. 33/72 General Register N. 5/79 (23 February 1979)

²⁰⁷ The Italian Supreme Court.

the material executioner of the massacre) and the head of New Order's Milan section Giancarlo Rognoni (accused of having provided logistical support to the terrorists coming from Veneto). On 30 June 2001, Zorzi and Rognoni were convicted to life imprisonment. On 12 March 2004, the Milan Court of Appeal acquitted the defendants. On 3 May 2005, the Italian Supreme Court confirmed the acquittals of the defendants. At the same time, it stated that, had the elements collected in the latest investigations previously emerged, the right-wing militants Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura (co-founders of the Padua's New Order cell) would certainly have been found guilty and convicted.²⁰⁸

Scholar Benedetta Tobagi summarized the history of the various proceedings on the 12 December 1969 attacks in the book *Piazza Fontana, il processo impossibile* (in English, "The impossible trial"), published in 2019. Tobagi's book clearly shows that virtually all the Italian State bodies tried in every way to obstruct the investigations and conceal the truth. Consequently, the investigations and trials took a long time. Tobagi's book highlights how the judiciary also helped to leave the massacre in Piazza Fontana unpunished, as well as the others carried out in the five-year period 1969-74. Especially the Courts of Appeal judgments and the rulings in the *Corte di Cassazione*, have always buried the investigator's work that had led to the convictions at first instance.²⁰⁹

This second chapter argues that the Communists' advance at the 1968 Italian elections convinced a part of US intelligence that a centre-left coalition in Italy would pave the way for the Communists' entry into the government. For this reason, US intelligence began to design non-orthodox methods to oppose the Communist Party and the centre-left. They mainly consisted of supporting the neo-Fascists in Italy in executing terrorist attacks to be blamed on the extra-parliamentary left-wing. The main goal that the masterminds of the 12 December bombings wanted to achieve

²⁰⁸ Corte di Cassazione, Sentence N. 470 on the Piazza Fontana massacre (Rome, 3 May 2005). Right-wing extremists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, accused of being the organizers of the Piazza Fontana massacre, were sentenced to life imprisonment on 23 February 1979 and then acquitted on appeal on 16 March 1981, and in the retrial on 1 August 1985 for lack of evidence. The *Corte di Cassazione* confirmed their acquittals on 27 January 1987.

²⁰⁹ Benedetta Tobagi, *Piazza Fontana. Il processo impossibile* (Milan, 2019), 312-313

was a declaration of the state of emergency in Italy that would keep the Communist Party out of government via a declaration of the state of emergency. The following step to the declaration of the state of emergency would have been early elections. Public opinion's resentment towards the left-wing hopefully would have facilitated the right-wing parties' victory at the election.²¹⁰ It was probably the unexpected death toll in Piazza Fontana that made this plan fail.²¹¹

The arrival of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger at the White House in January 1969 created a favourable context for the CIA to carry out their so-called "dirty tricks". On the basis of the investigations that the US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence conducted into the CIA's illicit activities in 1975, this chapter suggests that Nixon and Kissinger gave directives to the CIA to counteract communism abroad. Afterwards, they would approve the operations that the CIA had conceived.²¹² This means that, rather than being directly involved, Nixon let US intelligence take charge of any joint covert action with the right-wing terrorists.

The first section of this chapter explores the international context in the Mediterranean after the military regime installed in Greece on 21 April 1967 with a CIA-backed coup. In early 1969, the Council of Europe had launched an investigation into the legitimacy of the coup and the systematic use of torture by the Greek regime. The Italian centre-left government line against the Greek military junta upset the US Government. The Greek colonels' regime was a bulwark against Soviet expansion in the Mediterranean, and the US concern was that the Italian government's opposition to the military junta could undermine NATO's cohesion. West Germany shared the Italian political line towards Greece, ever since Willy Brandt's appointment as Chancellor in October 1969. A Council of Europe's session to discuss the Italian and the German governments' proposal to expel Greece was

²¹⁰ Peter Tompkins, "Strategy of terror", unpublished document in the possession of the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, used in the context of Criminal Procedure 91/97 on the Piazza della Loggia massacre, General Register Form 21 (1999)

²¹¹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 F.R.G.G.I. (3 February 1998)

²¹² Paul Blackstock, "The Intelligence Community Under the Nixon Administration", *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1975), 231-250

scheduled for 12 December 1969. On the same day, bombings occurred in West Berlin, as well as in Milan and Rome. This section highlights the involvement of the Greek regime in the 12 December 1969 attacks through its agents disguised as left-wing students enrolled in Italian universities.²¹³

The second section of this chapter examines the prelude to the 12 December attacks. Specifically, it retraces the political context in Italy that preceded the bombings to outline the path that led to the Piazza Fontana massacre and its main stages. This section has two focal points. The first is the Italian Communist Party's advance in the elections held in 1968, which sanctioned the political failure of the centre-left coalition in its aim to attract the Communist electorate's votes. The second focal point is the so-called "strategy of attention" towards the Communist Party that Aldo Moro elaborated in the autumn of 1968. These two circumstances were the key factors that led to the strategy of tension as a reaction to Italy's perceived slide to the left and as a means of moving the country to the right.²¹⁴

The third section focuses on the political crisis that the social democratic faction of the Unified Socialist Party caused by deciding to split in July 1969. Thus, the Social Democrats brought down the first Mariano Rumor-led government and put an end to the centre-left's season in Italy. The confidential documents that the secret agent Guido Giannettini provided to the right-wing extremists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura two months prior to the fall of the Rumor government revealed that the Social Democratic split was a political operation that the CIA and Italian industrial groups had encouraged. The aim was to create a state of instability due to the lack of a solid parliamentary majority in support of Rumor's new single-party Christian Democrat government, and that would therefore lead to early elections. The simultaneous neo-Fascist terrorist offensive under a leftist false-flag would have further exacerbated this state of instability and facilitated the right-wing parties' victory. The masterminds of the strategy of tension partially achieved these goals in

²¹³ With regards to the Greek role in the 12 December attacks, see: Edoardo Di Giovanni, Marco Ligini and Edgardo Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato. Controinchiesta* (Rome, 1970), 132-145

²¹⁴ On the political purposes of the 12 December attacks, see: Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20th, N.2643/84A Public Prosecutor General Register, Sentence-Ordinance on the 12 December attacks (18 March 1995)

the early political elections held in 1972, with the Social Movement's advance and the formation of the first centre-right government in Italy after ten years of centre-left coalition. For these reasons, the political crisis of July 1969 deserves in-depth analysis, as the beginning of the political operation that culminated in the 12 December attacks.²¹⁵

The fourth section exposes the coverage of the Piazza Fontana massacre by the Italian press. From reading the articles published both in the mainstream newspapers such as *Il Corriere della Sera* and in those more aligned to the right, it clearly emerges how a considerable portion of the Italian press led a propaganda campaign. It aimed at blaming the extra-parliamentary left-wing and accusing the Communist Party of being the protector of the alleged perpetrators of the Piazza Fontana massacre. None of the articles published in the mainstream media even questioned the official police version of the anarchists' responsibility. Likewise, no reporter from the main Italian newspapers asked the Political Office of the Milan Police Headquarters to explain why, to quote Commissioner Luigi Calabresi, there could be no doubt that the massacre was the work of left-wing extremists. Since many of these newspapers were owned by Italian industrial groups that had always been hostile to the centre-left coalition and eager to replace it with a right-wing government, it is inferable that superior political interests inspired this media campaign. It goes without saying that the success of a political operation such as the 12 December attacks required the help of the mass media to mislead public opinion and guide the electorate to choose right-wing parties in early elections.²¹⁶

The fifth section of the chapter analyses the background of the 12 December 1969 bombings and attempts to clarify the motives. A focal point of this section is the re-creation of the US Army Intelligence network in North-eastern Italy that backed the right-wing terrorist attacks. It also shows that it was the US Army Intelligence that provided the right-wing terrorists with the explosive used in Piazza Fontana. This

²¹⁵ Di Giovanni, Ligini and Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato*, 150-154. See also: Neal Ascherson, Michael David and Frances Cairncross. 'Italy: Fear of revolt returns,' *The Observer* (14 December 1969)

²¹⁶ On the role the press played in the strategy of tension, see: Mirco Dondi, *L'eco del boato: Storia della strategia della tensione 1965-1974* (Bari, 2015), 76

section also explains how the Piazza Fontana massacre marked the beginning of the distancing between the United States and the Italian subversive right-wing.

Overall, this chapter contributes to the dissertation's argument by explaining how the anti-Communist policy in Italy that had been ongoing since 1945 accelerated in the three-year period 1967-69, to reach its peak with the Piazza Fontana massacre. The contingencies that arose in those three years, namely the coup d'état in Greece in 1967, the Communist Party's advance in the 1968 Italian elections and the political crisis of July 1969 after the Social Democrat's split precipitated a situation that had remained stable for a quarter of a century. The first step towards this context was the Greek coup, when Richard Nixon was not yet president of the United States. This detail is important, because it clarifies how the Nixon Administration was not fully accountable for the strategy of tension. This chapter often reiterates that it is impossible to establish the precise responsibilities of both Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger as head of the National Security Council. At the same time, it is not plausible that they were unaware of the US intelligence's involvement in the terrorist attacks in Italy given the tight control they exercised over the secret services' activities.

Overall, it is possible to assume that the Nixon Administration's main function was to provide protection to those among the harshest US and Italian anti-Communists who intended to use subversive and violent means to end the centre-left season. Those who opposed the centre-left in Italy, believing that it would be a Communists' Trojan horse, probably took the return of the Republicans to the White House as a green light to implement the strategy of tension. It is reasonable to assume that had the Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey won the presidential election in 1968, the White House would have continued the Kennedy and Johnson administrations' support to the centre-left coalition in Italy. Therefore, this chapter makes it clear that the arrival of Richard Nixon at the White House brought to fruition a joint strategy between US intelligence and the Italian subversive right in opposition to the centre-left. This, in essence, is the contribution that this chapter offers to the dissertation's overall argument.

The international context

The Mediterranean geopolitical context that emerged after the coup carried out in Greece in 1967 helps to better understand the 12 December 1969 events. In the climate of political conflict in which Italy found itself in the late 1960s, a military coup carried out a few hundred kilometres away had aroused as much disquiet in the Italian left-wing as enthusiasm in the Italian right-wing. It seemed that the Greek coup had provided the Italian right-wing with a model to follow and replicate in Italy. In rallies and public gatherings, right-wing militants would chant slogans such as "Ankara e Atene, adesso Roma viene" ("Ankara and Athens, Rome is coming") and "Cile e Argentina, l'Italia come l'America Latina" ("Chile and Argentina, Italy like Latin America"). Furthermore, a CIA Intelligence Information Cable drawn up on 19 February 1971 revealed that a Social Movement emissary had gone to Greece earlier that month to seek financial assistance from the military junta. According to the CIA cable, the Social Movement asked for the funding to provoke a Greek-style takeover of the Italian Government by the Italian army.²¹⁷

On the Italian left-wing, there were opposite reactions. Scholar Aldo Giannuli, in the research he carried out in a Ministry of the Interior's storage on behalf of the Court of Milan, found files of the Office of Reserved Affairs kept secret. Some of these files reported that, in the months following the coup in Greece, the Communist Party's leadership had issued instructions to each headquarters setting out precautionary measures to adopt to prevent espionage activities and break-ins on premises. One of these instructions explained how to face attacks and resist sieges by the police and army in the event of a coup.²¹⁸ It is, therefore, understandable that

²¹⁷ Intelligence Information Cable, Subject: Plans of Italian Social Movement to provoke a Greek-style takeover of the Italian Government by the Italian army, TDCS DB-315/00868-71, Washington, 19 February 1971, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969-1976, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d207> (last accessed 9 July 2024)

²¹⁸ Court of Milan, Hearing Office, Criminal case no. 2/92F General Register of the Investigating Judge n. 9/92A General Register Public Prosecutor on the Piazza. Fontana massacre, Expert report by Professor Aldo Giannuli, Findings "Via Appia", 6 November 1997, Flamigni Archive, Flamigni Collection, Series "PCI's Activities at a National Level", Subseries "Right-Wing Subversion 1/30".

there was a widespread feeling in all Italian political areas that the Italy could soon follow in Greece's wake.

It would therefore be useful to retrace the main steps that led to the Greek coup, as it was a scenario that it seemed it could occur in Italy as well. After a few years of political instability following the dismissal of Georgios Papandreu's government in 1965, King Constantine II called new elections for 28 May 1967. The widespread impression was that Papandreu would win again. Although he led the moderate party Centre Union, Papandreu was influenced by his son, Andreas, already his right-hand, who was of leftist ideas. Some of his son's suggestions were the closing, or curtailment of several important US and NATO installations. Papandreu's son argued that Greece's sovereignty was threatened because American officers occupying senior positions in NATO command interfered in the Greek military affairs.²¹⁹

The prospect that the moderate George Papandreu could follow his son's leftist suggestions was rather alarming for the United States. Concerns about a possible Greece's exit from the Atlantic deployment went along with the increased Soviet military presence in Southern Europe. In fact, in early 1967, the Soviet naval warships had begun to permanently sail in the Mediterranean, with the aim of challenging the complete dominance by the West of this sea.²²⁰ Thus, the CIA station chief in Athens, Jack Maury, immediately took action with Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos (since 1952 on the CIA's payroll²²¹) and the Greek intelligence officer Konstantinos Plevris to stage a preventive coup. Furthermore, the former political

²¹⁹ John Maury, "The Greek Coup: A Case of CIA Intervention? No, Says Our Man in Athens", *Washington Post* (1 May 1977); Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, Athens 5 September 1965, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XVI, Cyprus; Greece; Turkey* (last accessed on 5 July, 2023) Airgram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, Subject: Andreas Papandreu's Comments on Current Greek Situation, A-369, Athens, 30 November 1965, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XVI, Cyprus; Greece; Turkey*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v16/d214> (last accessed on 5 July 2023). For a historical contextualization, see: Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels* (London, 1985)

²²⁰ Captain F. M. Murphy, U. S. Navy, "The Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean", *Proceedings*, United States Naval Institute, Vol. 93/3/769 (March. 1967), <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1967/march/soviet-navy-mediterranean> (last accessed on 7 April 2024)

²²¹ David Binder, "U.S. Said to Order C.I.A. To Curtail Role in Greece", *New York Times*, (2 August 1974) See also: Tim Winer, *Legacy of Ashes. The History of Cia* (New York, 2007), 382

analyst at the US Embassy in Greece from 1966 to 1969, Robert Keeley, revealed in his memoir that hundreds of CIA agents of Greek origin had infiltrated Greek intelligence with the task of acting against Andreas Papandreou's government and encouraging and facilitating the coup.²²²

The prelude to the coup was a series of terrorist attacks that Plevris's far-right group "4th of August" carried out in Athens, and that were attributed to the left-wing.²²³ The aim was to arise fear in the Greek population that in the event of Papandreou's victory in the elections, the country would plunge into chaos. Thus, on the morning of 21 April 1967, five weeks prior to the general elections, Athens's streets were filled with tanks. It was the implementation of the Prometheus Plan, a NATO plan that the US Armed Forces officers designed to neutralize a Communist uprising in case of a Warsaw Pact troops invasion.²²⁴ The new installed military junta also received the US Military Assistance Program's aid in staging the coup.²²⁵ Furthermore, as a Greek intelligence agent who fled to Italy revealed, in the night between 20 and 21 April 1967 CIA agents wearing Greek military uniforms overviewed the achievement of the coup in Athens.²²⁶ Such a revelation is a further evidence of the CIA's involvement in the Greek coup.

Italy opposed the Greek regime ever since the Foreign Affairs Minister Pietro Nenni met Andreas Papandreou in Rome on 6 March 1969.²²⁷ Afterwards, the Italian government joined the Swedish, the Norwegian and the Dutch governments in the European Convention of Human Rights' investigations into the Greek regime's abuses ongoing since September 1967.²²⁸ During the discussions at the Council of

²²² Robert Keeley, *The Colonels' Coup and the American Embassy. A Diplomat's View of the Breakdown of Democracy in Cold War Greece* (Philadelphia, 2010), 50

²²³ Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana.*, p. 471; Marco Ligini, Edoardo Di Giovanni and Edgardo Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato. Controinchiesta* (Rome, 1970), 22

²²⁴ Theodore Sedgwick, "Repression Greece's Anniversary", *The Harvard Crimson*, (21 April 1970) Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 13

²²⁵ Telegram from the State Department to the Embassy in Greece, N.181462, Washington, DC, 24 April, 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XVI, Cyprus; Greece; Turkey*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v16/d280> (last accessed on 5 July 2023)

²²⁶ Charles Foley, "Greek dictator inquiry", *The Observer* (1 July 1973)

²²⁷ "Solidarietà di Nenni con Andrea Papandreu", *Corriere della Sera* (7 March 1969)

²²⁸ James Becket, "The Greek Case Before the European Human Rights Commission", *Human Rights*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (August 1970), 91-117

Europe about the measures to adopt towards Greece, a meeting took place in Washington between the Under Secretary of State Robert Beaudry and the Italian Ambassador to the United States Egidio Ortona on 19 November 1969. Beaudry expressed concern that Greece's expulsion from the Council of Europe would affect NATO. Indeed, Greece was a NATO pillar country, and the Nixon Administration feared that its expulsion might cause political and security damages to the Atlantic Alliance. Beaudry then urged the Italian government to treat the Greek case in the Council of Europe in such a way as to preserve Atlantic stability.²²⁹

Ortona also met with the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Stuart Rockwell on 17 December 1969. During the meeting, Rockwell expressed embarrassment at the position that the Italian government had taken in favour of the expulsion of Greece from the Council of Europe. Furthermore, Rockwell expressed to Ambassador Ortona his fear that Italy would advocate for the expulsion of Greece from NATO as well, with consequent destabilization of the Atlantic Alliance's southern flank.²³⁰ This may suggest that the US Government saw Italy as a weakening factor of the Atlantic cohesion, due to its commitment in favour of Greece's expulsion from the Council of Europe.

The Italian Government's anti-Greek activism was not in line with the Atlantic interests because Greece had taken on the role of stabilizer in the Mediterranean. As Giannuli wrote, the Soviet Union had further increased its presence in the Mediterranean after Algeria entered its orbit. Furthermore, the events that occurred between 1967 and 1969 such as the Six Day War in the Middle East, the Libyan revolution and the expulsion of the NATO naval command from Malta, had increased the strategic importance of the Greek naval bases to support the Atlantic defence system.²³¹ It follows that the Greek junta, by virtue of its intransigent anti-

²²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Greece-Council of Europe-NATO, Box "Italian Political Affairs", Pol 23-9, File Pol. It-US, 19 November 1969, National Archives Records Administration, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, Record Group 59, Department of State

²³⁰ Athos De Luca, "Notes for a glossary of recent national history", Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify the Persons Responsible for the Massacres, XIII Legislature, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome IV (Rome, 2001), 170

²³¹ Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry, Criminal case no. 2/92F R.G.G.I. n. 9/92A R.G.P.M, "La crisi diplomatica italo-ellenica del 1969 e i riflessi sull'Alleanza Atlantica", Expert report by Professor Aldo Giannuli delivered to the Court of Milan as part of the latest investigation into the Piazza Fontana massacre (13 March 1997)

Communism, was the most reliable factor of stability on the Atlantic Alliance's southern flank, and that it was necessary to dissuade the Italian government's attempts to isolate it. In this sense, the 12 December 1969 attacks in Milan and Rome would take on the meaning of both a retaliation and a warning to Italy not to go further in opposing the Greek regime.

The meeting to decide on Greece's stay in the Council of Europe took place on the morning of 12 December 1969. On the same day as the Piazza Fontana massacre, three other bombs were planted in West Berlin in front of the US garrison, the *Amerika Haus* and the Israeli airline *El Al*'s offices. Only the first bomb exploded, without causing any deaths or injuries.²³² West Germany was indeed, along with Italy, among the states that pushed for Greece's expulsion ever since Willy Brandt became Chancellor after the German Social Democratic Party won its first elections in the post-war years on 28 September 1969.²³³ As in the case of the banks and the *Altare della Patria* in Italy, the West Berlin targets, in the popular imagination, proved the left-wing extremists' responsibility. Moreover, in 1967, members of the Socialist German Student Union had thrown makeshift water balloons filled with red paint at the *Amerika House* building as a protest against US imperialism and occupation of West Germany.²³⁴ It is clear that those who planned the attacks in West Berlin on 12 December 1969 believed that such precedents would have facilitated the blaming of the German extra-parliamentary left-wing.

If one adds that centre-left coalitions were ruling both Italy and West Germany, it becomes legitimate to suspect that the 12 December 1969 attacks in Italy and West Germany had two main purposes. The first was to convince public opinion that a very serious "red threat" was hovering over Europe, and that allowing left-wing parties to rule would pave the way for the victory of anarchy and subversion. The second was to make two of the European governments most committed against the

²³² "Attentati anche a Berlino", *Corriere della Sera* (13 December 1969). See also a short clip from British Pathé newsreel archives: "West Germany: Night watchman finds time bomb in the United States Information Centre", <https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/141597/> (last accessed 18 April 2025)

²³³ Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany Volume 2: Democracy and its discontents 1963–1988* (Hoboken, New Jersey, 1989), 138–139

²³⁴ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest. Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003), 175

Greek regime understand what consequences a foreign policy too independent from Atlantic orientations and interests would have had.

The Greek regime was actually involved in the 12 December attacks. Shortly after the coup, the Greek regime had sent hundreds of young secret agents to Italian universities to set up the National League of Greek Students in Italy. This organization's tasks were to spread propaganda in favour of the Greek regime, spy on and intimidate Greek students who opposed the junta and carry out joint actions with the Italian neo-Fascists such as harassment against left-wing students.²³⁵ Some of its members kept one of the 12 December 1969 bombs in a den in Via Margherita, near La Scala Theatre in Milan, and handed it to someone who then planted it in one of the targets. The person who went to the Greek students' den on 12 December 1969 was the right-wing extremist Antonino Sottosanti, a double of the anarchist Pietro Valpreda²³⁶. Sottosanti arrived in Piazza Fontana aboard Cornelio Rolandi's taxi from Piazza Napoli carrying an empty black bag. This is an important detail, since Rolandi reported to the police the actual colour of the bag found at the *Banca Commerciale*. From Piazza Fontana, Sottosanti went on foot to the Greek students' den to take the bomb. After inserting it in the black bag, he went to place it at the *Banca Commerciale* branch in front of the La Scala Theatre.²³⁷ This is further evidence of the Greek regime's involvement in the strategy of tension.

²³⁵ Ligini and Di Giovanni, *La strage di stato*, 160

²³⁶ For more details about Pietro Valpreda, and how he was framed, see:

- Paolo Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana. Finalmente la verità sulla strage* (Milan, 2009)
- Vincenzo Nardella, *Noi accusiamo! Contro requisitoria per la strage di Stato* (Milan, 1971)
- Andrea Barbieri and Marco Fini, *Valpreda. Processo al processo* (Milan, 1972)
- Paolo Morando, *Prima di Piazza Fontana. La prova generale* (Bari, 2019)
- Luciano Lanza, *Bombe e segreti. Piazza Fontana: una strage senza colpevoli* (Milan, 2005)

²³⁷ Revelation by prosecutor Guido Salvini to the author of this thesis during an interview at his office at the Court of Milan on 4 June 2021. The author of this thesis came to this conclusion by comparing Guido Salvini's revelations to the content of the book *Noi Accusiamo!*, by Vincenzo Nardella, a counter-requisition to the narrative on the Piazza Fontana massacre published in 1971 (when the neo-Fascists' responsibilities had not emerged yet). Nardella was an anarchist who carried out a first-person investigation into the 12 December 1969 attacks. The most interesting result is that the taxi driver Cornelio Rolandi had driven someone who resembled Pietro Valpreda from Piazza Napoli (south-western outskirts of Milan) to Piazza Fontana around 3:30 pm, and that only a ride of that length (about a twenty-minute drive) could justify the 660 Italian Lire fare that the passenger paid. According to Nardella, this passenger could only be the neo-Fascist Antonino Sottosanti for two reasons: the first, which the judicial investigations have also clarified, is that shortly after 3:00 pm he had left a bank near Piazza Napoli where he had gone to cash a check; the second is that the description of the passenger that Cornelio Rolandi provided to

A confirmation came from the former special assistant to the Deputy Director of the CIA Victor Marchetti. According to Marchetti, it was the Greek intelligence that supported right-wing terrorism in Italy, while the CIA just approved.²³⁸ Marchetti was a reliable source, as he authored “The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence”, a book denounced CIA’s lawlessness and obsession with clandestine operations.²³⁹ For this reason, his revelations on the Greek involvement in the Piazza Fontana bombing deserve credit.

To conclude this section, in the weeks following the bombings in Italy and West Germany, the Italian and German governments’ stance on the Greek regime softened. At the Ministerial Session of the North Atlantic Council held in Rome on 26 and 27 May 1970, the only countries that proposed the expulsion of Greece from NATO were Norway and Denmark. All the others, including Italy and West Germany, voted against the expulsion, effectively marking the end of the Greek regime’s international isolation.²⁴⁰ The message delivered with the 12 December bombings in Milan, Rome and West Berlin had got through.

Prelude to Piazza Fontana

The 12 December 1969 attacks were the culmination of a series of steps. Only by retracing them will it be possible to understand what led to the bombings. The first step was the outcome of the Italian general elections held on 20 May 1968. The only parties that increased their votes compared to the previous elections in 1963 were the Christian Democrats, the Italian Communist Party and the Italian Republican Party. The Communists had the biggest increase, as they went from 25.24% to 26.90% in the Chamber of Deputies, while in the Senate, where they ran on the list including the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (founded on 12 January

the police (physical build, facial features, haircut, voice and way of speaking) did not match that of Valpreda, but of Sottosanti.

²³⁸ Interview with Victor Marchetti and John Marks by Duilio Pallottelli, “Due agenti della CIA raccontano”, *L’Europeo*, Year XXX, N. 31 (5 August 1974)

²³⁹ See: Victor Marchetti, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York, 1974)

²⁴⁰ Report of the Council of Europe Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Abuses Greece, “The Second Greek Case”, Denmark, Norway and Sweden against Greece, Application No. 4448/70, Adopted on 4 October 1976

See also: Effie Pedaliu, “Human Rights and International Security: International Community and the Greek Dictators”, *The International History Review*, Vol. 38, N. 5 (2016), 1014-1039

1964 by Socialist MEPs in disagreement with joining the government with the Christian Democrats), they went from 25.35% to 30%. The Unified Socialist Party (the party's federation formed by the Italian Socialist Party and the Italian Social Democratic Party that lasted from 30 October 1966 to 5 July 1969), on the other hand, had the most disappointing result. The Socialists and the Social Democrats had fewer votes than they had competing separately in the elections held five years earlier, when the sums of their votes were 19.94% in the Chamber of Deputies and 20.36% in the Senate. In 1968, the Unified Socialist Party had 14.48% in the Chamber of Deputies and 15.22% in the Senate.²⁴¹

All these results meant that the centre-left coalition failed its tasks. The centre-left had two purposes. The first, was to offer the left-wing electorate an alternative to the Communist Party, thus reducing the Communists' popularity. The second, was to facilitate the rise of an anti-Communist and pro-Atlantic left-wing that could be a viable governing force. As the 1968 electoral results proved, the centre-left did not achieve its goals. Afterwards, a struggle began within the centre-left coalition, due to the realization that it had not fulfilled its political task of acting as a progressive bulwark to the Communists. Within a year, it would lead to the Social Democratic split and to the fall of Mariano Rumor-led centre-left government.

The following step was Richard Nixon's taking office as US President. Nixon wanted to achieve coexistence with the Soviet Union, to establish relations with the People's Republic of China and to put an end to the conflict in Vietnam. In other words, he wanted to achieve détente with the nations belonging to the Communist hemisphere and a consolidation of the balance between the Western and Eastern blocs that would smooth out the Cold War tensions. Nixon was a pragmatist, and he understood that it was time to emphasize economic goals in foreign policy, and to dismiss expensive ideological commitments. In this regard, establishing good relations with China and saving military expenses with the Vietnamization of the

²⁴¹ Historical Archives of Elections-Italian Ministry of the Interior,
<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=19/05/1968&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (last accessed 14 December 2023)

conflict in Southeast Asia and the Strategic Armaments Limitations Talks with the Soviet Union would also guarantee economic advantages for the US.²⁴²

To achieve these goals, each bloc had to maintain maximum internal cohesion. When Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 had sought an autonomous and democratic way to socialism, the Soviet Union did not hesitate to send tanks to Budapest and Prague to suppress the reform processes. Likewise, the US could not allow a Western country to loosen its Atlantic ties by giving way to parties that were Soviet agents of influence. This is a principle that every US president adhered to during the Cold War, and Nixon made no exception.²⁴³

The Nixon Administration's foreign policy was part of the context of the broader détente policy that the major powers had begun to pursue in the late 1960s. As scholar Jeremi Suri explained in his book *Power and Protest*, the social unrest that spread all over the West and in some Eastern bloc countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia (and also chaos in the Far East, due to the war in Vietnam and the Chinese cultural revolution), aroused the need for a new international policy. This new policy had to mitigate the Cold War's tensions and at the same time preserve the status quo.²⁴⁴ Hence, the rapprochement that Richard Nixon, Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Zedong started to pursue in 1969.

It is no wonder Richard Nixon chose an eminent scholar of the post-1789 restoration's architect Klemens von Metternich such as Henry Kissinger for the position of head of National Security Council. Despite all the obvious differences, even in 1969, as during the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it was a question of

²⁴² On the Nixon Administration's foreign policy, see:

- Richard Thornton, *The Nixon-Kissinger years. The Reshaping of American Foreign Policy* (St. Paul, Minnesota, 2001)
- Franz Schurmann, *The Foreign Politics of Richard Nixon: the Grand Design* (Berkeley, 1987)
- Robert Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969–1976* (Cambridge, 1984)
- Fredrik Logevall, and Andrew Preston, (eds), *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969–1977* (Oxford, 2008)

²⁴³ See: Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952", *Journal of Peace Research*, 23 (3) (1986), 263–277; Klaus Larres, *Uncertain Allies: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Threat of a United Europe* (Yale, 2022)

For an explanation of Nixon's foreign policy, see: Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest. Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003), 232–259

²⁴⁴ Suri, *Power and Protest*, 213–216

recreating the political conditions that pre-existed before the revolutionary upheavals.²⁴⁵ Political initiatives such as the stipulation of SALT I and the establishment of friendly relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States had the aim of guaranteeing the continuity of the post-1945 world order.

With regard to Nixon, a month after taking office, the new US President made an official tour in Europe, arriving in Rome on 27 February 1969. During his visit to Italy, Nixon met with the President of the Republic, the Social Democrat Giuseppe Saragat. Saragat wanted no Italian politicians to attend the meeting. From the memorandum of the meeting that the former military attaché at the US Embassy in Rome Vernon Walters drafted, one can understand why.²⁴⁶ Saragat started by saying that the Italian Communists remained loyal to Moscow and used any expedient to get closer to the government and get Italy out of NATO. Thus, according to the Italian head of state, they would feel much freer to attack the Atlantic Alliance, as its destruction was their major goal. Saragat added that the most serious problem in Italy was the ruling parties' inability to oppose the Communist Party, as they had strong factions lukewarm towards NATO and in favour of including the Communists in the government.²⁴⁷

Saragat's claims concerning the Communist Party deserve a reflection. The Italian Communists' loyalty towards the Soviet Union is unquestionable, and the ties have remained solid until 1991, when they both ceased to exist. The huge Soviet funding²⁴⁸ allowed the Italian Communist Party to be the second political force in Italy, and at the same time made it an instrument of Soviet influence. These ties, although never broken, began to loosen on the occasion of the invasion of

²⁴⁵ See: Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812–1822* (Boston, 1957)

²⁴⁶ Memorandum of Conversation between Richard Nixon and Giuseppe Saragat, Rome, 27 February 1969, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, NSC Files, Box 694, Country Files—Europe, Italy, Vol. I 1 Jan 69 - 31 Jan 70., Doc. N. 179

²⁴⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Richard Nixon and Giuseppe Saragat, Rome, 27 February 1969, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

²⁴⁸ The journalist Valerio Riva found out that the Soviet Union had founded the Italian Communist Party for a total amount of 989 billion Italian Lire (approximately GBP 369,785,607) from 1951 to 1991. See: Valerio Riva, *Oro da Mosca. I finanziamenti sovietici al PCI dalla Rivoluzione d'ottobre al crollo dell'URSS* (Milan, 1999)

Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968. Unlike the invasion of Hungary in 1956, which the then Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti had supported, the repression of the Prague Spring met with strong criticism from the Italian Communist Party. The party's Central Committee expressed "serious dissent" from the Soviet Union's decision to suppress the so-called "socialism with a human face" and condemned it as a "tragic mistake". Proof of the Italian Communists' sincerity was the visit that the then secretary of the party, Luigi Longo, made to Prague to show support for Alexander Dubcek's new political course on the previous 6 May 1968.²⁴⁹

Saragat, therefore, was not wrong to deem the Italian Communist Party loyal to the Soviet Union, but he deliberately ignored the first step the party had taken towards more autonomy and a greater critical sense towards Soviet policies. This path would then lead to important steps in the history of the Communist Party under Enrico Berlinguer's leadership, such as the advocacy of a democratic communism jointly with the French and Spanish Communists in 1976.

The US themselves had already acknowledged the Italian Communists' drifting away from the Soviet Union. A CIA's special report drawn on 25 October 1968 stated that the support to the Czechoslovak leadership made the Italian Communist Party more autonomous from Moscow. According to the report: *"The party's position is, in fact, an outright rejection of Soviet leadership of the world Communist movement....The Italian party under its present leadership is unlikely to return to the relationship it had with the Soviet party before August"*.²⁵⁰

The CIA's special report is quite interesting, because it explains how the distancing of the Italian Communist Party from the Soviet Union in the days of the invasion of Czechoslovakia was not an isolated episode, but a stage in a process that.

²⁴⁹ On the thirtieth anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Rossana Rossanda, a leading figure of the Italian Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s, published an article in the communist newspaper *Il Manifesto* rereporting her testimony on the events in Prague and on the attitude that the Italian Communists held on the occasion. See: Rossana Rossanda, "Pci e Praga, incertezza e viltà", supplement "Praga 68-98", *Il Manifesto* (21 August 1998)

²⁵⁰ Special Report Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, Subject: Italian Communist Party Draws Further Away From Moscow, Washington, 25 October 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XII, Western Europe, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d144> (last accessed 28 November 2024)

had began some years earlier ago. This report, indeed, exposed the various phases through which the Italian Communists gradually acquired more and more autonomy from Moscow, dating the beginning back to the months preceding the invasion of Hungary in 1956. As the CIA wrote, Palmiro Togliatti had advocated the so-called "polycentrism" in an interview in June 1956, arguing that there were many roads to socialism, not only the Soviet one.²⁵¹ This shows that the US were aware that, notwithstanding the problematic nature of its ideology and its ties with the Soviet Union, the Italian Communist Party no longer posed any threat to the democratic stability in Italy.

It therefore appears clear that Saragat's speech to Nixon was a political initiative aimed at gaining American support for shifting Italy to the right, as the remainder of this chapter will explain. Henry Kissinger's memorandum to Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson regarding the Nixon-Saragat meeting was even more detailed. Scholar and long-term British Intelligence collaborator Fulvio Bellini obtained it from an MI6 agent and supplied it to the Court of Milan during the last trial for the Piazza Fontana massacre in 2000. According to Kissinger's testimony, Saragat told Nixon that the former Prime Minister Aldo Moro was preparing to unseat the then Prime Minister Mariano Rumor and take his place to then bring the Communists into government.²⁵² In fact, after leading the centre-left governments from 5 December 1963 to 25 June 1968, Aldo Moro held no ministerial positions until 5 August 1969, when he took up the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs.²⁵³

The real problem with Moro was his alleged opening to the Communists. On the occasion of the Christian Democrats' national council meeting on 21 November 1968, Moro had stated that it was necessary to understand the great social changes that were ongoing in Italy in the late 1960s. For this reason, Moro added, it was also necessary to start a "strategy of attention" towards the Communist Party based on

²⁵¹ Togliatti granted the interview to the magazine "Nuovi Argomenti" on 20 June 1956. To read the full interview, see: "9 domande sullo stalinismo", *Nuovi Argomenti*, N. 20 (May-June 1956), 702-728, https://www.associazionestalin.it/togliatti_4_nuoviargomenti.html (last accessed 28 November. 2024)

²⁵² Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Inquiry Office-section 20, N.2/92F, Examination of the testimony of Fulvio Bellini in the investigation on the Piazza Fontana massacre (2 April 1997)

²⁵³ For a political biography of Aldo Moro, see: Salvatore Bernocco, *Aldo Moro. Lo statista, il ministro degli esteri* (Lecce, 2020)

"mutual consideration" and "democratic dialectics" in order to guarantee the social stability and the democracy's functioning.²⁵⁴ Despite the somewhat convoluted language, the meaning of Moro's speech was clear right from the start. The Christian Democrats and the Communist Party were the two major Italian parties since the advent of democracy in Italy and would remain so until the end of the Cold War. The respective electoral areas, put together, represented approximately 60% of the entire Italian population with the right to vote. This fact had an important consequence. On the one hand, it was not conceivable that the Communist Party would enter the government, due to the logic of the Cold War. On the other hand, carrying on ostracising the second most voted Italian party would have done nothing but exacerbate political and social tensions.

The most plausible interpretation of Aldo Moro's speech is that in a period of strong social conflict in which Italy found itself at the end of the 1960s (in the autumn of 1969, there were two hundred and fifty million strike hours in all working categories due to the trade union dispute over the renewal of metalworkers' employment contracts²⁵⁵), it was necessary to collaborate with the Communist Party to devise common solutions to the social problems that afflicted the country. To quote scholar Giovanni Ceci, Moro believed that the confrontation between the Christian Democrats and the Communists was the only way to ensure that all the voices calling for justice and freedom could find attention in the Italian political system.²⁵⁶

Thus began the cliché that depicted Moro as a Communist Party friend and as a proponent of the Communists' entry into the government. The US Government noted that Moro's "strategy of attention" towards the Communist Party had generated discontent even among the Christian Democrats. On 25 June 1969, conversing with the then US Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Mariano Rumor

²⁵⁴ Giovanni Maria Ceci, *Moro e il PCI. La strategia dell'attenzione e il dibattito politico italiano (1967-1969)* (Rome, 2014), 72-80

²⁵⁵ "I numeri dell'Autunno Caldo", in http://archivio.fiom.cgi.it/autunno69/autunno_caldo.htm

²⁵⁶ Ceci, *Moro e il PCI*, 97

described Moro as a dangerous man because he was flirting with the leftists, with the purpose of getting advantage of the country's shift to the left.²⁵⁷

The then Italian Prime Minister's words to the US Ambassador clearly denoted the climate of hostility that had spread around Moro since the day of his speech at the Christian Democracy's council. An example of this hostility was the front page of the Italian Social Movement's official newspaper *Il Secolo d'Italia* published on 27 February 1969, the first day of Richard Nixon's official visit to Italy, published both in Italian and English: "Watch out Nixon! Italy is going to betray the Atlantic commitments signed with the United States and to bring the Communists to power". The reference to Aldo Moro was clear, as was the Italian right-wing's attempt to suggest the US Government that the Christian Democrat statesman was a source of danger for Italy's stability on the Atlantic front. It is, therefore, possible to say that Moro's outstretched hand towards the Communist Party was among the factors that fuelled the strategy of tension, aimed at bringing the Christian Democrats back on the path of anti-Communist intransigence.²⁵⁸

This also explains why a part of the US intelligence collaborated with the Italian subversive right-wing in the anti-Communist struggle, despite the CIA's reports argued that the Italian Communist Party no longer posed a threat to democracy in Italy. Although the Communist Party had toned down its Marxist-Leninist ideological orthodoxy and gradually began to distance itself from the Soviet Union, its political and economic ties with the Soviet Communist Party remained strong. Any opening to the Communists still entailed an increase in Soviet influence in a NATO's pillar country. Not even in the context of détente that began with the inauguration of Nixon's presidency was this acceptable. It therefore appears clear that Aldo Moro's opening to the Italian Communist Party is the key to understanding the strategy of tension, especially in light of the outcome of the Italian political elections of 20 May 1968.

²⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation Ackley-Rumor, Box "Italian Political Affairs" 2235, Airgram A-467, File Pol. It-US, 25 June 1969, National Archives Records Administration, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, Record Group 59, Department of State

²⁵⁸ Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana*, 433

During the meeting with Nixon, Saragat added that the establishment of the centre-left governments in Italy was the cause of this “catastrophic situation”. The only possible solution, Saragat argued, was to return to the pre-1963 balance, through the Social Democrats’ split from the Unified Socialist Party and their reconstitution into an even more anti-Communist party than its predecessor. Subsequently, according to the Italian head of state, it was necessary to bring down the Mariano Rumor-led centre-left government and replace it with a one-party Christian Democratic government. As a last step, Saragat said, he would dissolve the Parliament and call new elections. Since the new elections would have been held in a climate of strong tension due to the ongoing social turmoil and political instability, Saragat believed they would certainly have rewarded the anti-Communist parties. As Kissinger reported, Nixon listened in silence to Saragat's entire speech and then said that he agreed with everything the Italian head of state said. At the end of the meeting, Nixon said that he would use all the means to oppose the opening to the Communists with effective measures.²⁵⁹

The impression one gets is that Saragat, with this alarmist speech, intended to ask for greater US intervention in Italian internal affairs. This, combined with the hope he expressed that the climate of tension would facilitate the anti-Communist parties' victory, cast a shadow on Saragat's figure. Had Saragat allowed Italian politicians to attend the meeting with Nixon, a very serious political crisis would have resulted due to the clear abuse of his presidential powers.²⁶⁰ This explains why the documents with the content of the meeting have only come to light in recent years, and why there is no trace of them in the Italian national archives.

Several scholars of the terrorism years in Italy, such as Mirco Dondi and Fulvio Bellini, have accused Saragat of having somehow created the proper conditions for the Piazza Fontana massacre with his heartfelt appeal to Nixon.²⁶¹ This dissertation

²⁵⁹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry-section 20, N.2/92F, Examination of the testimony of Fulvio Bellini, 2 April 1997

²⁶⁰ Mariano Rumor gave the same explanation in his memoir. See: Mariano Rumor, *Memorie (1943-1970)*, (Vicenza, 1991), 401

²⁶¹ See: Dondi, *L'eco del boato*, 130-131; Fulvio and Gianfranco Bellini, *Il Segreto della Repubblica. La verità politica sulla strage di Piazza Fontana* (San Giovanni, Milan, 2005), 30-36, 70-72

See also the *Observer*'s article “Italy: Fear of revolt returns”, published on 14 December 1969

does not mean to accuse Saragat of being among the instigators of the Piazza Fontana massacre. Nonetheless, his speech to Nixon, and his underground manoeuvres with the Social Democrats to put an end to centre-left governments, prove that he bore some political responsibility for the 12 December 1969 attacks. It is a President of the Republic's duty to stay above the parties, as Italy is a parliamentary Republic, whose constitution does not allow the head of the state to be directly involved in political dispute. Saragat, on the contrary, violated the constitutional rules by pushing for the Social Democrat's split from the Unified Socialist Party and thus favouring the government crisis and the end of the centre-left.

As far as Nixon's final words are concerned, a possible interpretation is that he meant that his administration would resort to whatever could stop the Communist Party's advance. It is important to bear in mind what the Pike Committee's report stated in 1975, though. With regard to covert operations, the Pike Committee (the common name for the United States House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence during the period when it was chaired by Democratic Representative Otis G. Pike) wrote that on several occasions involving highly sensitive projects, Nixon and Kissinger summarily ordered the CIA to carry out a covert action program. Moreover, the CIA received the order by "the President and his National Security Advisor" to engage in covert action over the agency's prior objections.²⁶² Both Nixon and Kissinger always distrusted the CIA and believed it was a pro-Communist entity. For this reason, right after taking office in the White House, they implemented a centralization work of both foreign policy and intelligence activities, thus minimizing CIA's degree of autonomy.²⁶³

While researching for this thesis, it was not possible to find primary sources pointing at Nixon's direct responsibility for the strategy of tension in Italy. Many of the documents related to the US policy towards Italy in the 1960s and 1970s included

²⁶²House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Unexpurgated Pike Report* (New York, 1992), 124

²⁶³Dan Caldwell, "The Legitimation of the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design and Grand Strategy", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 633-652. See also: Dafydd Townley, *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee* (London, 2021)

in the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park are still classified. As for the documents that the author of this thesis read at the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, none proves Nixon's involvement. The fact remains that the tight control Nixon exercised on the intelligence's activities suggest that, as the former head of the Italian military counterintelligence Gianadelio Maletti stated, he knew the truth about the bombings.²⁶⁴ Moreover, as written in the introduction to this chapter, the US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence's investigations on the CIA's illicit activities found that Nixon and Kissinger gave directives to the CIA to counteract Communism abroad.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, for lack of more substantial clues, it is impossible to say what role Nixon actually played in the terrorist wave that hit Italy.

Meanwhile, bombs began to explode in Italy. Between 3 January 1969 and 12 December 1969, one hundred and forty-five explosions took place, with an average of one every two days.²⁶⁶ The investigations that the judges Gerardo D'Ambrosio and Emilio Alessandrini carried out in the early 1970s, determined that twenty-two of these bombings were attributable to New Order.²⁶⁷ The escalation of these attacks was decided during a meeting held in Padua on 18 April 1969 between New Order members and an unknown traveller from Rome. The most likely hypothesis is that the latter was Guido Giannettini, the secret agent in charge of acting as a connecting link between the Italian military intelligence and the far-right. The first investigation by judge Gerardo D'Ambrosio proved that Giannettini often went to Padua to meet with local New Order militants. During the meetings, he would gather information from the neo-Fascists regarding their plans to pass on to the secret services and

²⁶⁴ Andrea Sceresini, Nicola Palma and Maria Elena Scandaliato, *Piazza Fontana, noi sapevamo: Golpe e stragi di Stato. La verità del generale Maletti* (Sesto San Giovanni, Milan, 2010), 84

²⁶⁵ Paul Blackstock, "The Intelligence Community Under the Nixon Administration", *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1975), 231-250

²⁶⁶ Eduardo Di Giovanni, Marco Ligini and Edgardo Pellegrini, *La strage di stato. Controinchiesta* (Rome, 1970), 10

²⁶⁷ Appeal for Cassation by the Attorney General of Bari against the appeal sentence of 1 August 1985 for the massacre in Piazza Fontana (14 April 1986)

provide them with intelligence briefings that allowed them to infiltrate left-wing groups.²⁶⁸

It was not possible to prove whether Giannettini instructed the New Order militants regarding the operations to carry out or instigated them to. Still, he was an important character in the history of the strategy of tension. In 1979, at the first trial on the Piazza Fontana massacre, the jury found him guilty of involvement in the attacks and sentenced him to life imprisonment. Furthermore, Giannettini had ties with the upper Italian and foreign military echelons. He got in touch with the US circles in November 1961, when the Marine Corps General Pedro Augusto Del Valle invited him to give a lecture at a conference at the Naval Academy in Annapolis entitled "Techniques and Possibilities of a Coup in Europe".²⁶⁹

The point is, the judiciary ascertained that the right-wing extremists gathered in Padua decided to raise the level of their subversive activities, and to start carrying out attacks against civilian targets. The social and political climate that reigned in Italy at that time had, in fact, facilitated the qualitative leap of right-wing terrorism. The youth unrest began in 1968 had created disquiet in the Italian middle class. The participants in the meeting in Padua believed that such a situation had created favourable conditions for the beginning of a terrorist strategy. The message they intended to deliver to public opinion was that anarchists were the executors of the Communist Party's subversive plans. This strategy would result in blaming the whole left-wing, thanks to the Italian intelligence's side-tracking of the investigations on the anarchists.²⁷⁰

The main attacks took place on 25 April 1969 and in the night between 8 and 9 August 1969. On 25 April, two bombs exploded in Milan, respectively at the exchange office at the Central Station and at the trade fair, causing fifteen injuries. In the night between 8 and 9 August 1969, eight bombs exploded on seven trains in

²⁶⁸ Sentence-order of the Civil and Criminal Court of Milan on the Piazza Fontana massacre, General Register File of the Investigating Judge 1197/72 (18 March 1974)

²⁶⁹ Ferdinando Scianna, "Un governo in esilio della destra italiana?", *L'Europeo*, Year XXX, N. 28 (11 luglio 1974)

²⁷⁰ Court of Assizes of Catanzaro, First Instance Sentence on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N. 33/72 General Register, N. 5/79 Sentence Register (23 February 1979)

as many railway stations, causing twelve injuries.²⁷¹ The Italian police immediately rounded up dozens of anarchists, taking for granted they were the culprits. Only in 1981 did the justice definitely find the neo-Fascists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura responsible for the attacks on 25 April and 8-9 August 1969.²⁷² It was the real beginning of the terrorist season, and of the implementation of the prescriptions set out in the Aginter Press document "Our political action".²⁷³

Political crisis of summer of 1969

Meanwhile, a crucial political fact occurred in Italy, namely the dissolution of the Unified Socialist Party. On 5 July 1969, the Social Democratic component quit the party and formed the Unitarian Socialist Party (on 6 February 1971 it resumed the name Italian Social Democratic Party), led by Mario Tanassi, one of the staunchest Italian anti-Communist MEPs. The official reason for the split was the dissent towards the alleged lack of weight the Social Democrats had in the decision-making processes within the party despite having won the majority of delegates at the socialist congress held from 23 to 28 October 1968.²⁷⁴ The consequence was the fall of the first Rumor government, and the end of the first centre-left coalition in Italy. On 6 August 1969, the second Rumor government made up only of Christian Democrat ministers, took office.²⁷⁵

It would be wrong to believe that this split was a matter pertaining only to Italian domestic politics, though. In fact, Guido Giannettini wrote in one of his secret reports that the CIA and the State Department paid the Social Democrats to leave the Unified Socialist Party and put an end to the centre-left coalition, to inaugurate

²⁷¹ On the bloodbaths bombings that preceded the Piazza Fontana massacre, see: Paolo Morando, *Prima di Piazza Fontana. La prova generale* (Bari, 2019)

²⁷² Court of Assizes of Catanzaro, Appeal Sentence on the Piazza Fontana massacre, General Register 27/79 (20 March 1981)

²⁷³ Corrado Incerti and Sandro Ottolenghi, "Siamo entrati nel carcere di Lisbona. E abbiamo fotografato i documenti proibiti", *L'Europeo*, Year XXX, N.47 (28 November 1974)

²⁷⁴ Ferdinando Leonzio, "L'unificazione socialista del 1966-69", *La Rivoluzione Democratica-giornale socialista di idee e critica politica*, Year III (25 June 2019), <https://www.rivoluzionedemocratica.it/LAUNIFICAZIONE-SOCIALISTA-DEL-1966-69.htm>

²⁷⁵ "Il Governo Rumor 5 agosto 1969-27 marzo 1970 Monocolore DC", *Della Repubblica. Per la storia dell'Italia Repubblicana*, <https://www.dellarepubblica.it/v-legislatura-ii-rumor>

a new conservative season in Italy.²⁷⁶ On the previous 4 May, Giannettini had also drawn up another information report and gave it to the right-wing extremists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura. In this report, Giannettini wrote that Italian political and economic groups (which he did not name), with US support, decided to replace the centre-left government with a centrist government. This operation would unfold according to the following steps: fracture of the Unified Socialist Party with the Social Democrats' split; success of the Christian Democratic right-wing faction at the party's congress scheduled for 27-30 June 1969; wave of terrorist attacks to convince public opinion of the dangers of opening to the left; psychological pressure on the armed forces by Saragat so that they would be on an anti-Communist government's side.²⁷⁷ Exactly what the strategy of tension consisted of.

In fact, it was necessary to prepare the ground for the 12 December attacks to have the hoped-for effects. An isolated massacre disconnected from a favourable political context would not have had significant consequences. On the contrary, the Piazza Fontana massacre fits in a context of political instability artfully created with the Social Democratic split and the end of the centre-left season. This instability gave rise to a weak single-party Christian Democrat government that certainly could not have lasted the entire legislature. Those who wanted the end of the centre-left predicted that the most likely outcome of the political crisis resulting from the Social Democratic split would be early political elections. In order to ensure the right-wing parties' victory and the establishment of a conservative government, an ever-increasing terrorist campaign needed to accompany these political manoeuvres. In fact, it was a matter of convincing public opinion of the danger of openings to the left and of the need for a strong government that would guarantee social order. It therefore appears clear that the strategy of tension was a political operation conceived at the highest levels, being the 12 December 1969 attacks its final stage.

²⁷⁶ Guido Giannettini, "Dossier San Marco", Archivio Flamigni, Flamigni Collection, Box 66, Series 7, Subseries 1, File 1-11

²⁷⁷ Guido Giannettini, "Informative report KSD/VI M, N. 0281, 4 May 1969, Object: Italian and foreign pressure groups would cause the end of the centre-left in Italy in favor of a centrist formula" in Roberto Pesenti, and Marco Sassano, (ed.). *Fiasconaro e Alessandrini accusano. La requisitoria sulla strage di Piazza Fontana e le bombe del '69* (Padua, 1974), 275-276

Following this split, the Italian Social Democrats increasingly resembled a right-wing party. Examples of this new right-wing identity were the advocacy of state reform in the presidential direction on the French model, the limitation of the right to strike and the adoption of a majority electoral system to reduce the number of Communist MEPs. Attempts to form a centre-right government with Christian Democrats and liberals, the sympathy shown towards the security apparatuses and the search for common ground with the neo-Fascists went along with this political agenda²⁷⁸ Indeed, the Social Democrats soon began to attract far-right militants, many of whom, as in the case of Social Republic veteran Sergio Minetto joined the party to use it as a backing for their own subversive activities.²⁷⁹

The Social Democrat split had the political result that Saragat had expected. The Socialists had become too weak to guarantee a confidence vote to a new centre-left government. For this reason, in the summer of 1969, there were two prospects: either a centre-right government made up of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Social Democrats that would last until the end of the legislature; or another centre-left government with the Communist Party's support. In this latter perspective, there would have been a military intervention to force the government to adopt drastic measures to restrict the Communists' political action, or, in an extreme case, to carry out a coup d'état. The alternative would have been early elections in 1970, when the Italian population, disturbed and frightened by the left-wing's violence and extremism, would have overwhelmingly voted for the right-wing parties. This, ultimately, was the goal that those who put an end to the centre-left governments wanted to achieve.²⁸⁰

While the Italian political turmoil was ongoing, Richard Nixon appointed Graham Martin as US Ambassador to Italy on 26 September 1969. His predecessor, Gardner Ackley, had been in office since 3 April 1968, and was removed after just a year and a half, while the ambassadorial mandate lasts four years. In the Italian state

²⁷⁸ Aldo Giannuli, *Il Noto Servizio. Le spie di Giulio Andreotti* (Rome, 2013), 131-132

²⁷⁹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 Investigative Judge General Registry File (3 February 1998)

²⁸⁰ Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana*, 438-440

archives, there is a possible explanation for this anomaly. A note from the Office for Reserved Affairs at the Italian Ministry of the Interior dated 16 September 1969 revealed that it was the President of the Republic Saragat who asked the US Government to remove Ackley, as he actively collaborated with the secretary of the Socialist Party Francesco De Martino in designing plans to relaunch the centre-left.²⁸¹

This document confirms two points that this thesis already explained in the previous pages. The first is the primary role that Giuseppe Saragat, as President of the Republic, exercised in undermining the centre-left, to the point of going beyond the constraints that the Italian constitution provides. The second is that in many cases it was the Italian right-wing that turned to the US Government to make requests and support in opposition to the Communist Party and the centre-left. Saragat's demand that Gardner Ackley be dismissed from his function as US Ambassador to Italy almost seems to reverse the common place that the United States exercised a hegemonic policy towards Italy during the Cold War. In fact, in this case, an Italian head of state practically imposed his will on the president of the United States, purely for political gain.

It is also interesting to report the record of the meeting between the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Europe at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, David Bendall, and the editor of *The Times* William Rees-Mogg, held on 17 October 1969. Rees-Mogg had recently taken a trip to Rome to see for himself the political situation in Italy, and once back in the UK he called on Bendall to share his impressions. During the conversation, the editor of *The Times* mentioned the apparent conflicts within American policy towards Italy. The US Embassy in Rome, Rees-Mogg told Bendall, seemed to strongly favour the whole concept of a centre-left coalition. On the contrary, the Nixon Administration and the CIA sympathized with those who advocated a shift to the right. According to Rees-Mogg, given the US influence in Italy, there was a danger that the proponents of a possible right-wing

²⁸¹ Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of the Interior/Department of Public Security/Central Directorate of Prevention Police/Criminal Proceedings 91/1997 on the Brescia massacre/United States Embassy in Italy (1954-1971) (Turin 16 September 1969), Italian Central State Archive

coup might be encouraged to take action by belief that they could count on strong support from the US Government.²⁸²

It is worth dwelling for a moment on this passage of the conversation between William Rees-Mogg and David Bendall. The very fact that the editor of *The Times* felt it necessary to contact an FCO official to inform him of what he had learned during his journey in Italy is significant. The impression one gets is that he acted as an informer, and that he wanted to warn the British Government about possible American interference in Italian domestic affairs. The record of the meeting does not mention any links with neo-Fascist groups, nor terrorist attacks in preparation. Nonetheless, the fact that Rees-Mogg and Bendall met on 17 October, less than two months before the Piazza Fontana massacre, raises the suspicion that the *Times* editor had an inkling that something serious was going to occur. He probably didn't know exactly what it would be, and this would explain why he was not more specific.

The date of the meeting raises a further reflection. In mid-October 1969, the US Ambassador to Italy was still Gardner Ackley, whose removal the President of the Republic Saragat had expressly requested for his contacts with the Socialist Party. Rees-Mogg talked about conflicts between the US Embassy in Rome and the Nixon Administration regarding the attitude towards the centre-left coalition. All these elements prove that the early replacement of Ackley with Graham Martin was a necessary condition to complete the political operation of shifting the Italian political axis to the right.

Martin presented his credentials to President Saragat and took office the following 30 October. Nixon chose him for the friendship the two men established during a visit he made to Bangkok in 1967 when Martin was ambassador to Thailand.²⁸³ Besides, Martin had already made a reputation for being a fiercely anti-Communist man and unscrupulous in choosing the methods with which to counter

²⁸² Record of Meeting with Editor of *The Times* on Friday 17th October 1969, File FCO 33/637 "Italy: Political Affairs, Internal Situation", London, 20 October 1969, National Archives, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department Western Europe

²⁸³ Jonathan Marshall, "U.S. Cold War Policy and the Italian Far-Right: The Nixon Administration, Republican Party Operatives, and the Borghese Coup Plot of 1970", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 1 (Winter 2023), 138–167

the Communists. He earned his reputation when, as ambassador, he persuaded the US Government to commit to suppressing the Communist insurgency in North-eastern Thailand by increasing economic and military assistance to the Thai government in 1965.²⁸⁴ As Wells Stabler, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Italy from 1969 to 1973, revealed, Nixon appointed Martin to bring about a shift in Italian politics to centre-right and to keep the Socialists away from government.²⁸⁵ He therefore had all the characteristics to influence Italian politics so that the axis shifted to the right.

Graham Martin was not the only one in the US Embassy in Rome to show sympathy towards the Italian right-wing. Peter Bridges, First Secretary at the Embassy from 1966 to 1971, met regularly with National Vanguard leader Stefano Delle Chiaie at a private house in Rome to discuss anti-left activities throughout 1969.²⁸⁶ According to former OSS agent Peter Tompkins, in one of those meetings, Bridges gave the neo-Fascists the green light to carry out the 12 December attacks, as long as they ensured that the blame would fall on the left-wing.²⁸⁷ This detail confirms that there were representatives of the US Government in Italy who did not hesitate to collaborate with neo-Fascist groups in order to oppose the Communist Party.

Tompkins added that the US government was in favour of Saragat's plan to call early elections in Italy that would reward the right-wing. The problem was that, in order to dissolve Parliament and call elections, the President of the Republic needed the consent of the majority of the chambers. Saragat and the US Government feared that, in the meantime, Aldo Moro could form a new government with the support of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity. According to Tompkins, the Nixon Administration decided to create a state of emergency to

²⁸⁴ Sean Randolph, *The United States and Thailand. Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985* (Berkeley, 1986), 95-96

²⁸⁵ Wells Stabler interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/mss/mfdip/2004/2004sta01/2004sta01.pdf> (28 February 1991)

²⁸⁶ Roberto Fabiani, "Una mano dall'estero", *Panorama*, Year XI, N. 366 (26 April 1973)

²⁸⁷ Peter Tompkins, "Strategy of terror", unpublished document in the possession of the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, used in the context of Criminal Procedure 91/97 on the Piazza della Loggia massacre, General Register Form 21 (1999)

prevent Moro from creating such a coalition that would have thwarted Saragat's plan to call early elections.²⁸⁸

There are no documents in the Italian and American archives that support this version of events. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that Peter Tompkins was a member of the US intelligence, and that his testimony is included in a secret document that he drafted for the court of Brescia in the context of the investigations into the massacre that occurred in the same city on 28 May 1974. It is to be excluded that these revelations were speculation, or that he was moved by anti-American sentiments. They therefore deserve to be quoted in this dissertation and be taken into account in the study of the strategy of tension in Italy.

Press response to the terrorist wave

Throughout 1969, most of the Italian media, attributed the terrorist attacks to the extra-parliamentary left-wing. Many newspapers were owned by large industrial groups that were pushing for a shift of the Italian political axis to the right. Such groups, indeed, believed that only a right-wing government would have protected their economic interests and repressed the strikes. The fact is that the industrial groups did not limit themselves to fuelling the press campaign against the left, but financed the attacks themselves, as the first investigation into the Piazza Fontana massacre found. It was the case of the industrial group headed by Attilio Monti, owner of the SAROM oil company and of the right-wing newspapers *Il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione* and *Il Giornale d'Italia*, and funder of both New Order and the Social Movement. One of the pieces of evidence that emerged in the investigation is the letter that the journalist Lando Dell'Amico (editor of the Social Democrat newspaper *La Giustizia*, owned by Monti) sent to the SAROM's general director Bruno Riffeser on 18 September 1969. With this letter, Dell'Amico informed Riffeser that he had given 18.5 million Italian Lire (approximately, equivalent to today's 395,300 Euro and to GBP 335,000) to the New Order's head Pino Rauti as

²⁸⁸ Peter Tompkins, "Strategy of terror", Court of Brescia, Criminal Procedure 91/97 on the Piazza della Loggia massacre, General Register Form 21 (1999)

from assignment.²⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that Attilio Monti went to the United States where he met with financiers, industrialists and representatives of the Nixon Administration in June 1969.²⁹⁰ The content of the conversations is unknown, but Monti's oil company had the VI US Fleet stationed in the Mediterranean among its clients, so it is unlikely that he discussed only business.

As far as the press campaign itself is concerned, the *Corriere della Sera*, being the newspaper of reference for the upper middle class and owned by the wealthy Crespi's industrialists family, was in the front row. Among the articles, it is possible to cite those in the days following the Piazza Fontana massacre. On 13 December 1969, a reporter wrote that it was the second time, after the bombing at the theatre *Diana* on 23 March 1921 (twenty-one deaths and eighty injuries), that Milan had suffered a wave of anarchist violence.²⁹¹ It is important to remark that in the hours following the explosion at the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricolura*, the police had not yet charged the anarchists. Nonetheless, the *Corriere della Sera*, without having any clues, immediately indicated them as guilty, citing the previous attack carried out in 1921.

Another article published on 17 December 1969, the day after Pietro Valpreda's indictment, defined the anarchist as "a human beast who has never done anything good in life". The author of the article, Vittorio Notarnicola, added: "*Valpreda got caught up in the new wave of this era and entered the crowd of stoners up to his eyes. Pietro Valpreda came out of this background, and from there he arrived at the massacre.*" Notarnicola concluded thus: "*With the testimony of the taxi driver, the equivocal story of a gang animated by hatred, by many internal failures ends. The innocent deaths at the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura must be charged on those who have to pay, not only on Pietro Valpreda and his comrades*".²⁹² It is not clear what the author of the article meant by this cryptic conclusion. It is difficult to dispel the suspicion that he wanted to insinuate that there were responsibilities on the part

²⁸⁹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, sentence-order on the Piazza Fontana massacre, General Register File of the Investigating Judge 1197/72 (18 March 1974)

²⁹⁰ Ligini, Di Giovanni and Pellegrini, *La strage di Stato*, 151

²⁹¹ Alberto Grisolia, "Un tragico precedente: lo scoppio al Diana", *Corriere della Sera* (13 December 1969)

²⁹² Vittorio Notarnicola, "La furia della bestia umana", *Corriere della Sera* (17 December 1969)

of the left-wing as a whole, from the parties to the progressive intellectuals up to the militants of the various extra-parliamentary groups.

On the same day, another article briefly retraced the history of anarchy. According to the author, Dino Zannoni, the anarchists had always resorted to violence, bombs and attacks against people who were not only innocent, but also completely unrelated to the most visible targets that anarchy sets itself. In fact, according to the author: *"The real enemy of anarchy is society. Therefore, the anarchists' tragic actions have caused indiscriminate massacres."* The author concluded by writing: *"The moral, social and economic condition is progressing all over the world. The anarchist utopia, on the contrary, does not give up, its war knows nothing but pauses of silence, it is a hopeless war, it explodes again all of a sudden, blindly."*²⁹³

It would be possible to cite other articles and editorials that appeared on the *Corriere della Sera* aimed at demonizing Valpreda and the anarchist movement when the evidence against them was still weak. These quotes are enough to demonstrate how the most authoritative newspapers in Italy took part in a press campaign comparable to a lynching, not justifiable even with the emotional impact of the recent massacre. In doing so, most of the Italian mainstream media fuelled the climate of condemnation and demonization of the entire left-wing, just as the CIA's counterintelligence and the Aginter Press expected.²⁹⁴

The more markedly right-wing newspapers further accentuated their anti-left tone. As an example, the campaign that the magazine *Il Borghese* carried out should suffice. The director, Mario Tedeschi, a former *Decima Mas* trooper and in the post-war a Counter Intelligence Corps agent²⁹⁵, wrote in an op-ed published on 21 December 1969 as a comment on the Piazza Fontana massacre and the inquisition of Pietro Valpreda: *"If the Communists were not the rogues that they are, they would now go into hiding by rereading their proclamation of 18 December to denounce the typically reactionary and fascist character of the attacks. If the Socialists and the*

²⁹³ Dino Zannoni, "Storia degli anarchici: ideologia e bombe", *Corriere della Sera* (17 December 1969)

²⁹⁴ See the extract from the Aginter Press document "Our Political Action", quoted in the section "CIA's use of third actors: Aginter Presse" from the first chapter of this thesis, page 34

²⁹⁵ Mirco Dondi, *L'eco del boato. Storia della strategia della tensione (1965-1974)* (Bari, 2015), 86

left-wing Christian Democrats were not all cowards and already resigned to the victory of communism, they should go into hiding for having supported this umpteenth shady manoeuvre by the PCI".²⁹⁶ Continuing the op-ed, Tedeschi added: "The facts prove that there is a direct relationship between the anarchists and the PCI; the same relationship that binds the hitman to his protector".²⁹⁷

Tedeschi concluded the op-ed by claiming that the Minister of the Interior Franco Restivo, with his speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 9 December (on that day, Restivo had stated that the violence committed throughout 1969 was attributable to evenly divided right-wing and left-wing groups), had made himself an accomplice of the Italian Communist Party, which "wants to sow terror and death" to come to power.²⁹⁸

It was necessary to report this long extract from Tedeschi's op-ed because it sums up the whole rightist propaganda campaign following the 12 December 1969 attacks. Unlike the *Corriere della Sera*, the right-wing press campaign did not just criminalize the anarchists but explicitly accused the Communist Party of being the instigator of the Piazza Fontana massacre and the centre-left coalition of being an accomplice. To deliver this last message, the 28 December 1969 edition of *Il Borghese* published on the cover a picture of a bomb with Christmas present bows and the words "a gift from the centre-left". To accompany this cover, *Il Borghese* attached a coupon on the first page with Mario Tedeschi's invitation to readers to send it to Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats MEPs and city councillors and progressive newspapers and magazines. It is worth reporting verbatim the content of this coupon: "*Dear Sir, you are among those who right after the Milan massacre on 12 December supported the thesis of a fascist attack. Later on, when the police identified those responsible among some anarchists protected by the PCI, you spoke of the need to avoid a witch hunt. Therefore, you fully earned the title of ROGUE OF THE YEAR*".²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Mario Tedeschi, "Assassini e protettori", *Il Borghese*, Year XX, Volume XLV, N. 54 (21 December 1969)

²⁹⁷ Tedeschi, "Assassini e protettori", *Il Borghese* (21 December 1969)

²⁹⁸ Tedeschi, "Assassini e protettori", *Il Borghese* (21 December 1969)

²⁹⁹ Mario Tedeschi, "Le carogne dell'anno", *Il Borghese*, Year XX, Volume XLV, N. 55 (28 December 1969)

It is clear that with this last initiative, Tedeschi meant not only to demonize the whole progressive front, but also to instigate retaliations and further violence. This is the main difference between *Il Borghese* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, as the latter was more committed in reporting news and expressing opinions in line with the Italian law enforcement's charges against the anarchists.

To conclude the citations of *Il Borghese*'s articles, suffice to say that the director Mario Tedeschi collaborated closely with the head of Office for Reserved Affairs Federico Umberto D'Amato. The two had organized the "Chinese posters" operation that National Vanguard had carried out in 1966, i.e. the posting of posters on the walls of various cities of a fake Maoist party that accused the Communist Party of revisionism to foment dissent and chaos on the left.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, on 11 February 2020, the new investigation into the Bologna railway station bombing on 2 August 1980 (eighty-five dead and two hundred injured) found Mario Tedeschi as one of the organizers of the massacre along with D'Amato and the head of the Masonic lodge P2 Licio Gelli.³⁰¹ All these elements prove that, during Mario Tedeschi's direction (which lasted from 1957 to his death in 1993), *Il Borghese* was the mouthpiece for the part of the secret services mostly colluded with right-wing terrorism.

Ultimately, this brief excursus in the mainstream and right-wing press reaction to the Piazza Fontana massacre shows that there was an intertwining between mass media, secret services, industry and Italian and US political circles. This intertwining aimed at favouring the misdirection of terrorism towards the left-wing. This is a key element of the whole strategy of tension that makes it clear that the 12 December 1969 attacks fell into a high-level political operation.

³⁰⁰ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20, Sentence-Order on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

³⁰¹ Giuseppe Pipitone e Giovanna Trinchella, "Strage di Bologna, chiusa l'inchiesta sui mandanti: Fu organizzata e finanziata dalla P2 di Gelli e dal prefetto D'Amato. Bellini tra gli esecutori", *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (11 February 2020);

Court of Assizes of Bologna, sentence against Paolo Bellini for the massacre of 2 August 1980, No. 2/2021 General Register of Assizes, No. 2/2022 Sentences (6 April 2022)

Interpretation and explanation of Piazza Fontana

On the basis of the most exhaustive judicial sentences and the most reliable books,³⁰² the plausible reconstruction of what occurred on 12 December 1969 is as follows:

- the mastermind of the attacks was Aginter Press, probably on the CIA's counterintelligence suggestion;
- the Office for Reserved Affairs of the Ministry of Interior set up the whole operation;
- the organizers of the attacks were members of the Padua New Order cell; the lawyer Franco Freda managed the operational part by ordering the bags and timers used in the various bombings, while the publisher Giovanni Ventura went to Milan to supervise the attacks; Pino Rauti either ordered the bombing, or approved it;
- the material executors were members of the Venice New Order cell; one of them, Delfo Zorzi, took the black bag containing two different types of explosives (one, with a timer, based on dynamite gelatine; the other, a fuse, a mine explosive) from a truck parked in front of the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* and gave it to the militant Claudio Bizzarri, who entered with it;
- National Vanguard militants planted the bombs exploded in Rome; Mario Merlino, the neo-Fascist who infiltrated the anarchists, planted one of the bombs at the *Altare della Patria*; Merlino and Valpreda, on 19 October 1969, had also founded another anarchist group along with dissident militants from the Bakunin anarchist circle, in controversy with its alleged excessive moderation; the name of the group was 22

³⁰² The sources used to support this scenario are:

- Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20[^], N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, Sentence-Ordinance on the bombing of Milan (18 March 1995)
- Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)
- Second Court of Assizes of Milan, First Instance Judgement of Piazza Fontana Bombing, N. of Register Decisions 15/2001 (30 June 2001)
- Vincenzo Nardella, *Noi accusiamo! Contro requisitoria per la strage di Stato* (Milan, 1971)
- Paolo Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana. Finalmente la verità sulla strage* (Milan, 2009)
- Guido Salvini, *La maledizione di Piazza Fontana. L'indagine interrotta, i testimoni dimenticati, la guerra tra i magistrati* (Milan, 2019).
- Interview with judge Guido Salvini at the Court of Milan, 4 June 2021

March, the same name as the XXII March group that the National Vanguard militants founded after their trip to Greece.

It may be useful to do a brief review of some of the texts that have proven most useful in reaching these conclusions. *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana* was the result of ten-year research on the Piazza Fontana bombing by the investigative journalist Paolo Cucchiarelli. According to Cucchiarelli, two different people arrived in Piazza Fontana aboard two taxis carrying two bags with a bomb inside each. One was Pietro Valpreda, on whom Cucchiarelli credits the testimony of the taxi driver Cornelio Rolandi. The other was a double of the anarchist, whom Cucchiarelli identifies as Claudio Orsi, a militant of the trans-European far-right group Jeune Europe, who arrived aboard the other taxi. In Cucchiarelli's opinion, far-right militants disguised as Valpreda's comrades had manipulated him into believing that the bomb would explode after the bank closing hour, without any deaths. According to Cucchiarelli, Valpreda's fake comrades had tampered the bomb with the timer to make him believe that the explosion would occur around 6:00 pm, when the bank was closed. The two bombs, in addition to having the purpose of framing Valpreda, aimed to cause as many casualties as possible due to the joint explosion, which would allegedly have occurred as a result of mutual detonation. Furthermore, two taxi drivers doubled the chance that Valpreda would be recognized.³⁰³

There are two elements that, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, exonerate Valpreda, though. The first is the fact that in the 1990s, many right-wing extremists revealed that a neo-Fascist who looked like Valpreda had got into Rolandi's cab, although it would have been in their interest to confirm that the anarchist was the attack perpetrator. The second is that Valpreda was arrested in the Court of Milan where he had gone on Monday 15 December for another pending legal case. It is impossible that Valpreda was so naive to enter the belly of the beast after committing a massacre.

³⁰³ With regard to the section that Cucchiarelli dedicated to the "double bomb", see: Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana*, 37-108

According to the author of this thesis, it is more likely that two people brought two bags, one empty and one that contained two bombs. In any case, except for the problematic aspect concerning Valpreda, Paolo Cucchiarelli's book is an essential work in the historiography on the strategy of tension, and it proved to be of great use for this research work. His book was the first to spread the thesis that two bombs exploded inside the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura*. Although no judicial investigation explicitly confirmed it, the description that the surveyors provided of the debris found in the bank belonged to two different types of explosives. Likewise, the first investigation that the investigating magistrates Gerardo D'Ambrosio and Emilio Alessandrini carried out in 1974 demonstrated that there were burnt remains of two different bags. Cucchiarelli's merit was that of having recovered elements that were not public knowledge from the numerous judicial documents. Nowadays, these elements make readers understand all the technical, legal and political details of the 12 December 1969 attacks that previous books had neglected.

As for *La maledizione di Piazza Fontana* ("The curse of Piazza Fontana"), the author is Guido Salvini, the last prosecutor to have investigated the Piazza Fontana massacre. With this book, published in November 2019 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre, Salvini exposes the insights and interviews with former right-wing militants he carried out after the definitive end of the judicial proceedings. Salvini's book revealed info on the Piazza Fontana massacre that, as in the case of Cucchiarelli's book, were absent from previous works. The most important points are: the name of the person who physically planted the bomb in the bank (in the book he is called "The paratrooper", and the journalist Gianni Barbacetto revealed on the newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* that his name was Claudio Bizzarri)³⁰⁴; the exact dynamics of the attack (a truck arriving at Piazza Fontana with terrorists from Veneto on board, from which the bag was handed over to the perpetrator of the massacre who was waiting in the square); the existence of a video footage made by the controversial private investigator Tom Ponzi who had known

³⁰⁴ Gianni Barbacetto, "Il "Paracadutista che mise la bomba in piazza Fontana", *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (29 November 2019)

in advance that there would be an attack in Piazza Fontana.³⁰⁵ This and other unpublished information make the book by the judge who more thoroughly investigated the Piazza Fontana massacre an essential title in the bibliography on the strategy of tension.

At this point in the narrative, the question of the degree of US responsibility remains outstanding. The documents included in the American archives offer some hints. In Henry Kissinger's files found in the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, there is a document that raises the suspicion that the Nixon Administration knew in advance what was going to happen on 12 December 1969. It is a top secret-marked telegram, having as subject the Secretary of Defence program Redcoste for reducing costs in Europe by removing troops, that the State Department sent to the US ambassador in Rome on 21 January 1970. This telegram stated: *"The catalytic effects of the Milan bombings in stimulating a serious drive within Italy to reconstitute the centre-left coalition was, of course, not foreseeable when our scenario was developed during your visit to Washington last November"*.³⁰⁶

Since it was not possible to track the transcript of the conversation that Graham Martin had in Washington with members of the State Department in November 1969, this telegram prompts some reflection. First, at a time when Mariano Rumor was leading a one-party Christian Democrat government, the major immediate political concern for the Nixon Administration was that a coalition including Socialists could be recreated in Italy. Indeed, the widespread feeling since the outcome of the July 1969 political crisis was that the second Rumor government was too weak to last long, and that it was only a matter of time before a new centre-left government took office. This fear proved well founded when on 28 March 1970, following the Socialists' no-confidence vote that brought down the government on 7 February 1970, the third Rumor government arose, ushering in the second phase of the centre-left. Hence the suspicion that, in the autumn of 1969, the Nixon Administration, besides knowing in advance about the bombings planned for 12

³⁰⁵ Salvini, *La maledizione di Piazza Fontana*, 294-382

³⁰⁶ Telegram by the Department of State to the US Embassy in Italy, Subject: Redcoste, 21 January 1970, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, BOX 694 Italy, Volume 1 Jan 69 - 31 Jan 70

December 1969, also hoped that they would have the effect of averting the re-creation of the centre-left.³⁰⁷

The hypothesis that the White House hoped that the 12 December 1969 attacks would contribute to putting a tombstone on the centre-left is an assumption that the author of this thesis makes by interpreting the document found in the Nixon Library. Certainly, Nixon, following the conversation he had with Saragat on 28 February 1969, was convinced that the Italian Communist Party represented a concrete threat, and that it was necessary to oppose it with unorthodox methods. A definitive confirmation came from the former head of Italian counterintelligence Gianadelio Maletti. In the interview-book *Piazza Fontana. Noi sapevamo* ("Piazza Fontana. We knew"), Maletti stated that the Americans supplied the Italian far-right with explosive from their bases in Germany, and had it transported to Italy by truck. The purpose was to create a state of tension and social opposition from which the Communist Party would emerge discredited.³⁰⁸

Maletti added that since the US intelligence was never accustomed to personally do dirty works, they let the fiercest anti-Communist group in charge of the action, that is New Order, choose the target. The conception and inspiration for the bombings were attributable to the CIA and the US military intelligence. Richard Nixon, although having no direct responsibility, was aware of the activities the American secret services were carrying out. Saragat too was aware that the US intelligence was preparing something with New Order. Nevertheless, Saragat was so concerned with what he perceived as the Communist threat, which he constantly talked about with Nixon, that in the end he viewed favourably the resort to any possible means to undermine the PCI strength³⁰⁹

Maletti's revelations in the interview-book are credible for two reasons. The first is that, as head of Italian military counterintelligence, he was probably the best-informed person about terrorist attacks and attempted coups in Italy. It is also true

³⁰⁷ See Peter Tompkins's unpublished document quoted in the section "Political crisis of summer 1969" of this thesis, page 31

³⁰⁸ Andrea Sceresini, Nicola Palma and Maria Elena Scandaliato, *Piazza Fontana, noi sapevamo. Golpe e stragi di Stato. La verità del generale Maletti* (Sesto San Giovanni, Milan, 2010), 83

³⁰⁹ Sceresini, Palma and Scandaliato, *Piazza Fontana, noi sapevamo*, 84-85

that Maletti was personally involved in the strategy of tension. In 1979, at the first trial for the Piazza Fontana massacre, he was sentenced to a four-year of serving time for making the right-wing militants involved in the attacks flee abroad (sentence reduced to two years at the appeal trial in 1981)³¹⁰. One must note, however, that in 2001, when the Italian judicial authority granted him a fifteen-day safe conduct to return from South Africa (where he had taken refuge in 1980 to escape prison) to testify at the last trial on the Piazza Fontana massacre, Maletti had made similar statements.³¹¹ On the same occasion, Maletti gave an interview to the *Corriere della Sera* clarifying the concept. When the interviewer asked him whether there was direct US responsibility in the strategy of tension, Maletti replied that the CIA gave the green light to the attacks. As Maletti argued, the CIA is in charge of the political guiding function of the US intelligence community, which can sometimes diverge from the White House political line.³¹²

The former head of Italian military counterintelligence also specified that, despite the CIA's pre-eminent role, it was also necessary to take into account other commands' intelligence services, such as the G-2, the military intelligence staff in the United States Army at the Divisional Level and above. As Maletti explained in the interview with the *Corriere della Sera*, the NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the NATO's Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona and the American high military commands in Germany depend on these intelligence services. To quote Maletti's exact words, the intelligence services of all these commands, "*in their main function of opposition to communism in a country that the Americans still deemed unstable (always tempted to slide to the left on the internal level and to quit the Atlantic Alliance) have thought of resorting to terrorist methods*".³¹³ From Maletti's words it clearly emerges how

³¹⁰ Court of Assizes of Catanzaro, First Instance Sentence on the Piazza Fontana Massacre, N. 33/72 General Register, N. 5/79 Recent Sentence. (23 February 1979)

³¹¹ Paolo Biondani, "La CIA dietro la strategia della tensione", *Corriere della Sera* (21 March 2001)

³¹² Interview with Gianadelio Maletti by Maria Antonietta Calabò, "La strage alla stazione di Bologna? Libici o francesi", *Corriere della Sera*, (21 March 2001)

³¹³ Interview with Gianadelio Maletti, "La strage alla stazione di Bologna? Libici o francesi", *Corriere della Sera* (21 March 2001)

various American and Atlantic intelligence services and military bodies had a role in the strategy of tension, and that the CIA mainly had a coordination task.

The former head of Italian military counterintelligence was not very explicit in attributing specific responsibilities and in naming the main culprits. Nevertheless, in the same interview, when asked whether the end of this policy of collusion with right-wing terrorism in Italy was linked to the ouster of James Jesus Angleton as CIA counterintelligence's head, Maletti replied verbatim: "Of course"³¹⁴. With regard to Maletti's deposition at the trial on the Piazza Fontana bombing, since the judges had deemed him reliable, there is no reason to believe that he lied to the authors of the interview-book. The second reason is that the questions posed to him in the book were very straightforward, and in some cases, Maletti tried to evade them, only to then, once put under pressure, provide detailed. For these reasons, the interview-book *Piazza Fontana. Noi sapevamo* is another essential title in the bibliography of the strategy of tension.

Maletti had made similar allegations regarding the American responsibilities in the past. The first was in 1976, during the first preliminary investigations on the Piazza Fontana massacre. Answering the judges at the Catanzaro court, he said that a "friendly secret service" forced Italian intelligence to cooperate with right-wing terrorists.³¹⁵ The term "friendly secret service" was deliberately generic, as in 1976 Maletti could not dare mention the United States or the CIA by name. In the midst of the Cold War, it would have been too risky for the former head of an Atlantic Alliance's member state's intelligence to disclose the US involvement in the strategy of tension.

In another interview in 2000 with *La Repubblica*, Maletti said that the CIA tried to do in Italy what it did in Greece. According to Maletti, the CIA wanted to stop, with the far-right's contribution, Italy's slide towards the left that had started in the early 1960s as the Communist Party's electoral support began to steadily increase.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Interview with Gianadelio Maletti, *Corriere della Sera* (21 March 2001)

³¹⁵ Roberto Fabiani, "Il segreto di Labruna: Lassù qualcuno mi spara", *L'Espresso*, Year XXII, N. 14 (11 April 1976)

³¹⁶ Interview with Gianadelio Maletti by Daniele Mastrogiovanni, "Maletti, la spia latitante: La Cia dietro quelle bombe", *La Repubblica* (4 August 2000)

Indeed, the 1968 electoral results must have provided some hints in this regard. Since the political methods to counter the Italian Communist Party, such as funding Christian Democracy and supporting the centre-left coalition to drain Communist votes, had proven ineffective, more drastic and less orthodox means were needed. Maletti's statement regarding the CIA's decision to operate jointly with the far-right to stop Italy's slide to the left fits into this scenario.

The analysis of the relationships between US intelligence and the Italian subversive right-wing offers other elements of even greater interest in the context of this research. The Carabinieri's special organization ROS (Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale) exposed the United States Army Intelligence Agency (which, in 1967, replaced CIC as the US military intelligence) network operating in Veneto in the 1960s and the 1970s behind the Piazza Fontana massacre. The head of this network was Colonel Frederick Tepaski, who served at the US military base in Heidelberg, Germany. On a lower level, acting as the US Army Information Agency coordinator in Veneto, were David Carret (US Navy captain serving at NATO's Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona) and Theodore Richards (also US Navy captain, in service at the US military base Ederle in Vicenza). In the service of the US military intelligence there were Italian agents infiltrated in New Order. The Italian network heads for all the North-eastern Italy were Lino Franco and Sergio Minetto, veterans of the Social Republic's *Decima Mas* infantry division. Former Counterintelligence Corps Captains Joseph Luongo and Leo Pagnotta had recruited them as US intelligence agents. Their role was to maintain the links between the confidential sources inserted among New Order militants in Veneto and the US information structure.³¹⁷ To support their activities, Leo Pagnotta, who had stayed in Italy after the end of World War II, had set up various cover commercial activities, allocating part of the revenues to them.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20[^], N.2643/General Register of the Public Prosecutor, Sentence-Ordinance on the bombing of Milan (18 March 1995)

³¹⁸ Special Operations Group of the Carabinieri/Anti-Subversion Department/1: Support activities for the investigations of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the context of the investigations into right-wing subversion (criminal proceeding n. 721/88F)/812: request for assessments on US aircraft carriers in Venice between 1967 and 1971, Italian Central State Archive

The first chapter of this thesis showed that, after the end of World War II, Minetto and Franco had founded the Siegfried group, together with other Italian Social Republic veterans. The main purpose of this group was to serve as a point of reference for all the neo-Fascists in North-eastern Italy while waiting for the favourable conditions to launch an attack on the democratic republic after 1945. To this end, the Siegfried group had accumulated a considerable number of weapons and distributed them to the Veneto's New Order cells, enjoying the Carabinieri's protection. CIC had used the Siegfried group ever since the end of World War II to carry out informative activities in Northern-eastern Italy and actions against Communist targets, such as launching bombs against the Eastern European countries' embassies.³¹⁹

As the ROS reported, Giovanni Bandoli (civilian employee at the US Ederle base in Vicenza), Marcello Soffiati and Carlo Digilio acted as operational agents, charged with acting as a link between US intelligence and New Order, and played a leading part in the terrorist attacks.³²⁰ Carlo Digilio had inherited his role for the US military intelligence from his father, whom the Americans recruited during the World War II. It was David Carret, who acted as his referent, that infiltrated Carlo Digilio in New Order. Apart from informing his American contact about New Order's activities, Digilio's task among the neo-Fascists consisted in putting his expertise in weapons and explosives at their service. It was Digilio who provided technical assistance to right-wing terrorists in setting up the Piazza Fontana bomb.³²¹

For his part, Marcello Soffiati, like Carlo Digilio, became a US Army Intelligence agent being the son of another CIC agent, Bruno Soffiati. The difference was that while Michelangelo Digilio had fought in the Resistance, Soffiati's father

³¹⁹ Carabinieri Special Operations Group/Anti-Eversion Department [1992-2013]/1. Support Activities for the Investigations of the Investigating Judge Guido Salvini/412: ROS Report signed by Captain Massimo Giraudo, "Note on Investigative Emergencies and Related to the Involvement of Foreign Intelligence Structures"/9: Transmission of files relating to the characters who emerged during the investigations and believed to be embedded in US and Atlantic intelligence facilities (30 June 1997), Italian Central State Archive

³²⁰ Carabinieri Special Operational Group-Eversion Department, "Annotation on investigative emergencies relating to the involvement of foreign intelligence structures in the strategy of tension", Criminal Case No. 378/307, Rome (8 May 1996)

³²¹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20^, N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, Sentence-Order on the Piazza Fontana massacre (18 March 1995)

was a Social Republic veteran. Another point in common with Carlo Digilio was that Marcello Soffiati too had been infiltrated in New Order by the US military secret service, eventually becoming an ardent militant. Soffiati was so important to the American military commands in Italy that he had a card that allowed him access at any time to the United States military complex at Camp Darby, near Pisa, a privilege granted to few.³²² As part of his role, Marcello Soffiati handled part of New Order's weapons and explosives. He personally used them to carry out an attack on the headquarters of the Trentino Region in Trento on 11 April 1969 and some of the bombings on trains in the night between 8 and 9 August.³²³ In a few words, the Veneto network that the United States Army Intelligence Agency set up had the task of controlling and supporting New Order's activities in North-eastern Italy.

The North-eastern New Order militants played such an important role in the strategy of tension as they were located in a crucial area for the geopolitical balance of the Cold War such as the border with Communist Yugoslavia. This accentuated the anti-Communist feelings in that area more than elsewhere in Italy. Moreover, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia have always been the most rightist regions in Italy, and the Cold War context had exacerbated the political extremism that already existed ever since the rise of fascism. For this reason, when NATO created the Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona in 1951, the rapprochement between American officers serving in Veneto and local New Order militants was natural.³²⁴

Confirmation of the US responsibilities in the strategy of tension came from the former Ministry of Interior (and Deputy Prime Minister at the time of Piazza Fontana massacre) Paolo Emilio Taviani's hearing at the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism on 1 July 1997. Here, a clarification needs to be made in advance. In the

³²² Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Memory of the Public Prosecutor on the Piazza della Loggia massacre, Criminal Case No. 03/08, Court of Assizes of Brescia (1 November 2010)

³²³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

³²⁴ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre (3 February 1998). For an overview on the North-eastern far-right context, see also: Giovanni Fasanella and Monica Zornetta, *Terrore a Nord-est* (Milan, 2008)

hearings, those who were questioned could choose to speak in public or in secret session, and even during the same hearing it was possible to switch from one type of session to another. After the end of the commission's work, dissolved on 28 May 2001, those who had been questioned in secret session received a letter asking if they allowed the publication of their testimony. Taviani responded in a letter sent on 5 June 2001 saying that he refused to let his secret session be published.

The volumes containing the works and hearings of the parliamentary commission do not include his revelations regarding US responsibilities. Only in the Italian Central State Archive is it possible to find these revelations, that the following lines report. Taviani told the commission's members that the US secret agents on duty at the CIA station in Rome in the 1960s and 1970s were obtusely anti-Communists. This narrow-mindedness, mixed with ignorance and coarseness, led the CIA agents in Rome to meddle in the preparations for the Piazza Fontana massacre. In fact, they were opposed in principle not only to any opening towards the Communist Party but also to centre-left governments. For this reason, they did not hesitate to provide those who, like the neo-Fascists, were more determined and intransigent in the anti-Communist struggle with explosive material.³²⁵

Paolo Emilio Taviani made other revelation regarding the US intelligence involvement during the last trial on Piazza Fontana massacre. The former Deputy Prime Minister, in fact, said that the CIA had nothing to do with the massacre, but it was a US Army Intelligence Agency agent (according to Taviani, a much more efficient structure than the CIA) serving in Germany who provided the explosives in New Order.³²⁶

Taviani died on 18 June 2001, aged 89, less than two weeks after refusing authorization to publish his secret deposition. Not even his advanced age, nor the fact that he was close to death, made him consider it was worth letting the public know that some US bodies were involved with right-wing terrorism in Italy. Only

³²⁵ Carabinieri Special Operations Group/Anti-Subversion Department [1993-2008]/1. Assessments on investigations delegated by the Judicial Authority (1993-2008)/2447: Criminal Proceedings. 91/97, General Role mod. 21 of the Public Prosecutor of Brescia (27 March 2000), Italian Central State Archive,

³²⁶ Judicial Documents Pradella-Meroni, Paolo Emilio Taviani's hearing, Box 117, File 1, September 2000, Milan State Archive

the Renzi government's directive of 22 April 2014, that declassified the files concerning the strategy of tension, made it possible for researchers to read the full Taviani's revelation and to learn a truth that otherwise would have never been proven.³²⁷

As far as the political establishment's collusion with the right-wing terrorists is concerned, one cannot forget the then Prime Minister Mariano Rumor's responsibilities. Guido Salvini's investigations revealed that there was a negotiation between New Order's emissaries and members of government circles (perhaps, Filippo De Jorio, advisor to the Prime Minister and affiliated to the P2 Masonic lodge) for Mariano Rumor to decree a state of emergency following assumedly bloodless attacks. According to what the US Army Intelligence Agency agent Carlo Digilio revealed to Salvini in 1995, Rumor was the political key to the success of the 12 December operation. The whole operation should have led not to a coup but to a repositioning of the government in a conservative sense and to greater power of the Italian armed forces. Digilio added that this was the outcome the US would have approved.³²⁸ New Order repentant Martino Siciliano, for his part, revealed that the far-right expected Rumor, in his capacity as Prime Minister, to declare the state of emergency immediately after the massacre. Still according to his testimony, even before the attack there had been contacts between New Order's leaders in Rome and institutional circles, above all Christian Democrats, to reach a solution of that type in the event of serious attacks. This outcome seemed certain, but after the massacre Rumor disregarded the far-right's expectations and did not want to pursue this choice.³²⁹

There are two possible explanations why Rumor disregarded his commitments. The first is that there were deaths in Piazza Fontana, contrary to what was allegedly

³²⁷ The Renzi government's directive removed the state secrecy on the strategy of tension, making available to researchers 4,406 intelligence files. See: "4.406 fascicoli intelligence all'Archivio centrale dello Stato", *Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica a protezione degli interessi politici, militari, economici ed industriali d'Italia*, <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/contenuti/4-406-fascicoli-intelligence-allarchivio-centrale-dello-stato> (4 February 2016)

³²⁸ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

³²⁹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre

expected. The second explanation is the deep impression that the 300,000 people's crowd attending the funeral of the victims at the Milan's Duomo Cathedral made on Rumor. That day, every intention to take forward the agreement stipulated with the terrorists and to set up an emergency government completely dissolved.³³⁰

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to answer an apparently trivial question, but crucial for the purposes of understanding the 12 December 1969 attacks: was the massacre intentional? This question stems from the fact that a recurrent thesis is that the massacre was involuntary. According to those who argue this thesis, the intention was to carry out a bloodless attack, like the ones carried out on 25 April and on 8-9 August. Paolo Emilio Tavani was among those who argued this thesis in the aforementioned hearing at the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism. As to why the carnage ultimately took place, there are two main interpretations. On the one hand, some maintain that the attackers did not know that on Fridays (the day the attacks took place) the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* would remain open until 5:00 pm, while during the rest of the week the closing hours was 4:30 pm. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the bomb's timer was faulty, meaning that the explosion took place before the scheduled time, when the bank was still open and full of customers.³³¹

The most plausible interpretation is as follows. The right-wing terrorists had agreed with the American contacts at the NATO base in Verona and with the Italian government on a series of bloodless attacks. According to the agreements, the bombings would frighten public opinion just enough to accept emergency measures against the left-wing, on whom the blame would have fallen, and to ensure right-wing parties' victory in early elections. However, New Order militants in Padua and Venice disregarded the agreements, using a type of timer that allowed the insertion

³³⁰ Cuucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana*, 447-448

³³¹ Paolo Emilio Tavani assumed both scenarios were likely during the secret hearing at the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism on 1 July 1997. See: Carabinieri Special Operations Group/Anti-Subversion Department [1993-2008]/1. Assessments on investigations delegated by the Judicial Authority (1993-2008)/2447: Criminal Proceedings. 91/97, General Role mod. 21 of the Public Prosecutor of Brescia (27 March 2000), Italian Central State Archive,

of a timepiece that indicated a different duration from the real one.³³² In other words, the person carrying the explosive, seeing that the timer displayed a time duration of about two hours starting from half past three, felt reassured that the bomb would explode when the bank was closed.

In one of the interrogations given to the investigating judge Guido Salvini, Carlo Digilio said in fact that the day after the massacre, he met with David Carret. According to Digilio, Carret was furious for the fact that the attack in Milan had caused victims, because that was not the deal. The United States, Carret told Digilio, was determined to fight the Communists strenuously, but without shedding innocent blood.³³³ It therefore appears clear that New Order wanted to force the issue, deliberately seeking, and achieving a massacre that the American and Italian institutional representatives thought would not take place. The latter hoped that demonstrative attacks, at most with only a few, possibly minor injuries, would be enough to create a conservative government and turn the Italian state into a presidential republic. That is to say that the ultimate goal of those who used right-wing terrorists was a presidential republic, on the French and American model, with no place for the Communists. Saragat himself, in a conversation with a journalist, said that he had no interest in a coup d'état, but that he was a staunch admirer of what Charles De Gaulle had done in France by establishing the Fifth Republic.³³⁴ The right-wing terrorists, on the other hand, wanted a Greek solution to Italy's problems, namely a coup d'état that would bring a military regime to power.

In short, two different operations converged on Piazza Fontana, both aiming at preventing the formation of a new centre-left government and at marginalizing the Italian Communist Party, but with two different final goals. The fact that, despite this, the real culprits were not prosecuted for a long time, and that in the end they remained unpunished, has an easy explanation. The Italian and American state

³³² Court of Assizes of Catanzaro, First Instance Sentence on the Piazza Fontana Massacre, N. 33/72 General Register, N. 5/79 Sentences Register (23 February 1979)

³³³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

³³⁴ Enrico Mattei, "Saragat all'alba degli anni di piombo", *Il Giornale* (20 June 1985)

bodies had compromised with the terrorists, and even if they did not want innocent deaths, they could not allow the real culprits to be identified and convicted. It would have been easy for the right-wing terrorists to exert blackmail pressure, threatening to reveal that the Italian and US governments had collaborated in the attacks. This would have been too embarrassing and destabilizing. For this reason, the secret services side-tracked the investigations in every possible way, so that in the end the culprits were acquitted for lack of evidence.

At the end of this section, it is possible to draw some conclusions. There were several motives in the 12 December 1969 attacks. The main ones were: warning Italy to stop opposing the Greek regime as an anti-Communism's bastion in the Mediterranean to protect Atlantic interests; facilitating a political turning point in Italy that would shift the political balance of the country towards the right through a false-flag operation. This operation had the aim of presenting the anarchists as executors and the Communist Party as protector, if not as instigator. The underlying political message, that the right-wing newspapers explicitly delivered, was that the centre-left coalition had made that chaotic situation possible, with Aldo Moro's opening to the Communist Party. The only solution to counter anarchy and terror was a conservative government that would use an iron fist against subversion to ward off the "red threat".

In the short term, the masterminds of the strategy of tension achieved both goals. At the decisive NATO summit in May 1970, some of the countries that had held a hostile attitude towards the Greek regime (among them Italy and West Germany) made a step back, allowing Greece to remain in the Atlantic Alliance. In the early political elections held in Italy in 1972 (not in 1970, as hoped), the Communist Party had a drop in votes while the Social Movement made a notable leap forward. Until judicial investigations revealed the neo-Fascist responsibilities in 1972, it seemed that the masterminds had succeeded. This impression proved to be unfounded between 1972 and 1974. The emergence of the neo-Fascist trail on the Piazza Fontana massacre, and the fall of the Greek regime on 24 July 1974, sanctioned the

failure of the US policy of collaboration with the Italian right-wing to counteract the Communist Party.

New Order's decision to turn the demonstrative attack in Piazza Fontana into a massacre marked the beginning of the end of the relationships between the Italian far-right and the United States. The neo-Fascists were useful to American interests as long as it was a question of discrediting the Italian left-wing just enough to put an end to the centre-left governments and prevent the Communist Party from approaching the governmental area. Bloodless bombings to be blamed on the anarchists and the extra-parliamentary left-wing would have been enough to frighten the public opinion and guarantee popular consensus towards law-and-order measures. Furthermore, had early elections been held in the months following the 12 December 1969 attacks, the right-wing parties would most likely have won, and the Communist Party would have had a drastic drop in votes. Thus, without suppressing democracy and without innocent victims, Operation CHAOS would have succeeded in its aim of neutralizing the Communist Party and bringing the Italian political axis back to the centre with no more shifts to the left. In this regard, the US intelligence deemed the collaboration with the neo-Fascists and their infiltrations in the anarchist and Maoist movements useful, so that suspicions for attacks such as those of 12 December 1969 would be focused on the left.

The bombing's death toll at the *Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura* branch, rather than facilitating the achievement of these plans, prevented them. The last thing the US policymakers wanted was a civil war in an Atlantic Alliance's pillar country. This, in fact, would have been the outcome had the massacres continued and a coup d'état as in Greece taken place. Here, in conclusion to the second chapter, suffice to say that, with the massacre in Milan, the US realized that the neo-Fascists were no longer useful allies but a threat to the Atlantic stability as much as the Communists.³³⁵ It is, therefore, possible to say that the 12 December 1969 attacks

³³⁵ This is what can be deduced from the National Security Council memorandum "U.S. Policy Toward Italy", drawn up in June 1970, which explicitly recommends preventing Italy from ending up like Greece. See: Response to National Security Study Memorandum 88, SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward Italy (NSSM 88) (Washington, 11 June 1970), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-72*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d195>

were, at the same time, the culmination of the collaboration between the United States and the Italian far-right and the beginning of the estrangement between the two sides.

Conclusion

This chapter contributed to the thesis' argument by exposing the main steps that, starting in 1968, pushed a part of the US intelligence to cooperate with the subversive Italian right. The United States had remained discreetly present in Italian political and social life since the first covert operation conducted during the 18 April 1948 elections to guarantee the victory of the Christian Democrats up to the following twenty years. The Communist Party raised concerns, but the US policymakers were confident that, despite its considerable electoral following, it would never become a hegemonic force.

The formation of the first centre-left government in Italy in 1963 had raised hopes in the US Government that proposing a credible pro-Atlantic progressive would reduce consensus towards the Communist Party. The 1968 general elections, which saw the Communist advance and the retreat of the progressive parties that were part of the centre-left government, dashed this hope. This gave rise to the fear that the centre-left coalition was a tool that the Communist Party was using to get closer to the government in Italy, rather than a bulwark against its advance. This fear found a confirmation after Aldo Moro argued at the Christian Democrats' national council meeting that a confrontation with the Communist Party was necessary to develop shared solutions to tackle the social problems that afflicted Italy. As highlighted in this chapter, Richard Nixon was not yet President of the United States when this phase preceding the implementation of the terrorist wave that hit Italy unfolded. Therefore, the hypothesis that this chapter has suggested is that Nixon, after taking office as President on 20 January 1969, endorsed the CIA's counterintelligence's plan to use neo-Fascist groups as third actors in the anti-Communist struggle in Italy.

The first chapter of this thesis had highlighted how the CIA station in Rome had already began to elaborate similar plans after the formation of the first centre-left

government in 1963. It is plausible that an endorsement from the White House was needed to implement similar plans on a large scale in Italy, which probably a Democratic president would not have granted. Hence, the interpretation that the author of this dissertation provides of the path that led to the Piazza Fontana massacre:

- a part of the US intelligence decided to give further impetus to the anti-Communist campaign in Italy in 1968 after the election results and Aldo Moro's openness gave the impression that there were no more obstacles to the Communist Party's approach to the government;
- with the arrival of Richard Nixon in the White House in 1969, the harshest anti-Communist faction within US intelligence received the authorization to proceed that it probably would not have received from a Democratic president.

This is the main contribution that the second chapter makes to the themes introduced in the introduction to this thesis.

Chapter 3: The coup season

“Italians,

the hoped-for political breakthrough, the long-awaited coup d'état has taken place. The political formula that ruled us for twenty-five years and brought Italy to the brink of economic and moral collapse has ceased to exist.

Soldiers of land, sea and air, forces of order, we entrust to you the defence of the fatherland and the re-establishment of internal order.

In returning the glorious TRICOLOR into your hands, we invite you to shout our irrepressible hymn to love: ITALY! ITALY! LONG LIVE ITALY!”³³⁶

Intro

In the night between 7 and 8 December 1970, Junio Valerio Borghese, his followers, and some Italian armed forces' officers attempted to carry out a coup against the democratic institutions in Italy. The operation began with the concentration in Rome of a few hundred conspirators. National Vanguard militants entered the Ministry of the Interior and took possession of weapons and ammunition to distribute to the coup plotters. A second group, under the orders of Sandro Saccucci, lieutenant of the *Folgore* paratroopers brigade and close Borghese's collaborator, gathered in a gymnasium in Rome, ready to arrest the Communist and Socialist MPs. Another group led by Amos Spiazzi, colonel of the 11th Field Artillery Regiment in Verona, headed with tanks towards Sesto San Giovanni, a working-class suburb on the outskirts of Milan. Sesto San Giovanni was in fact known as the "Stalingrad of Italy" for being a Communist feud constituency. Hence, the intention of occupying the

³³⁶ Translation by the author of this thesis of the declaration that Junio Valerio Borghese would have read to the Italian Population from the Italian public television studios had the coup succeeded. To read the original text in Italian, see: <https://www.mirkorazzoli.it/proclama-di-borghese-del-1970/> (last accessed 10 November 2024)

small town to counter any possible reaction from the working-class, mostly made of Communists' supporters.³³⁷

The high number of military officers involved and the US support that some American agents had promised seemed to guarantee a successful outcome of the coup. Furthermore, it also seemed that the social and political context in Italy could facilitate the success of the coup. Public opinion's widespread belief was that the origin of the attacks was left-wing. The increasingly violent youth protests that had begun in 1968 further contributed to spreading the "red scare" among the Italian population. Italy, therefore, seemed to present a favourable scenario for the achievement of a coup that would neutralize the Communist Party and the extra-parliamentary left-wing and restore order. Mariano Rumor-led government's failure to proclaim a state of emergency after the Piazza Fontana massacre convinced Junio Valerio Borghese and his supporters that there was no other alternative to the coup. Nevertheless, in the early hours of 8 December 1970, Borghese ordered his followers to demobilize and go home.³³⁸

Numerous books have been written on the Borghese coup, and the judiciary inquiries by the Courts of Rome and Milan have thoroughly focused on it.³³⁹ Nevertheless, for the purposes of fully understanding the events of the night between 7 and 8 December, some details have so far been missing, such as the US role, and the real aims of the attempted coup. Studies and investigations have not yet clarified whether Borghese was the *deus ex machina* of the whole story, or a puppet in the hands of those who exploited him to achieve certain political goals.

³³⁷ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

³³⁸ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

³³⁹ The main titles are:

- Camillo Arcuri, *Colpo di Stato, Storia vera di una inchiesta censurata* (Milan, 2004);
- Adriano Monti, *Il «golpe Borghese». Un golpe virtuale all'italiana* (Bologna, 2006);
- Fulvio Mazza, *Il Golpe Borghese: Quarto grado di giudizio* (Cosenza, 2020);
- Monica Di Profio, *Il Golpe Borghese e le ipotesi golpiste in Italia 1970-1974* (Saronno, 2011);
- Solange Manfredi, *Il Golpe Borghese* (Naples, 2014);
- Claudio Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi. L'America, l'Italia, la questione comunista: i segreti di 50 anni di storia* (Milan, 1991)

It is necessary to stress that the Nixon Administration opposed Borghese's subversive plans. The bloody outcome of the 12 December 1969 bombings had prompted the US intelligence branches that had maintained relations with the Italian far-right to gradually distance themselves. At the same time, the US deceived Borghese and his followers by making them believe that the Nixon Administration would support the coup. The remainder of the chapter will explain the reasons for this deception, and the political outcomes that the Nixon Administration intended to achieve.³⁴⁰

The first section provides the background to Junio Valerio Borghese's subversive plan, to highlight its genesis and development and how he and his followers attempted to win US support. Borghese was aware that in a country like Italy, virtually under American tutelage since the end of World War II, it was impossible to carry out a coup without US support. For this reason, the plotters approached members of the US Embassy's staff and Nixon Administration's representatives to convince them that the Borghese coup was the only possible guarantee of safeguarding Atlantic interests in Southern Europe. In the end, the US representatives told the plotters that the White House would approve the coup only if Giulio Andreotti, the most authoritative member of the Christian Democrats right-wing faction, led the new government.³⁴¹

The second section explains why the Borghese coup failed. It shows that US policymakers understood how the coup in Italy would be detrimental to the stability of the Atlantic bloc, as a civil war would result to the benefit of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the US Government believed that manipulating right-wing extremists such as Junio Valerio Borghese and his followers, to then abandon them all to their fate, was an effective way of sending a message to the Italian political establishment: Italy could not cross the line of openness to the left and loosen its ties

³⁴⁰ With regard to the Nixon Administration's role in the Borghese coup, see:

Jonathan Marshall, "U.S. Cold War Policy and the Italian Far-Right. The Nixon Administration, Republican Party Operatives, and the Borghese Coup Plot of 1970", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2023), 138-167

³⁴¹ Adriano Monti, who was one of the main plotters, wrote the most exhaustive book in support of this thesis. See: Adriano Monti, *Il Golpe Borghese. Un Golpe Virtuale all'Italiana* (Bologna, 2006)

to NATO. Judging by the definitive exhaustion of the centre-left governments' driving force, and by the temporary Communist Party's electoral drawback, it is possible to say that the plotters achieved their goals without carrying out the coup.³⁴²

The final section of the chapter is dedicated to the US support to the Social Movement in the 1972 elections, as it was part of the Borghese coup plan, consisting of shifting the Italian political axis to the right and giving greater impetus to anti-Communism.

The contribution that this chapter provides to the overall thesis is to further clarify how the US conceived the relationship with the Italian right-wing. It shows how the Nixon Administration exploited Borghese's coup-plotting ambitions and funded the Social Movement during the 1972 general elections to facilitate Andreotti's political rise and the establishment of a centre-right government in Italy. The United States had decided to bind itself inextricably to the Christian Democrats ever since the 1948 elections, and nothing could break this bond as long as the Cold War lasted. Only the Christian Democrats had the electoral strength, and the economic resources to bar the road to the Communist Party. At the same time, the US wanted to make sure the Christian Democrats did not take their ties for granted, hence the support for the Social Movement as a means of pressure from the right. For this reason, it is possible to say that the third chapter contains within itself the entire essence and meaning of the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing during the Nixon's years at the White House.

³⁴² See: Nicola Tonietto, "Un colpo di stato mancato? Il golpe Borghese e l'eversione nera in Italia", *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, No. 27 (March 2016), 48-68

1970: Borghese coup

Before delving into the 7-8 December 1970's events, it is necessary to assess whether there was a link between the Borghese coup and the Piazza Fontana massacre. A recurring rumour is that the coup was supposed to take place right after the 12 December 1969 attacks, and that it was postponed due to the Italian government's refusal to declare the state of emergency in the following days.³⁴³

Former New Order militant Sergio Calore, for example, argued that the Borghese coup was scheduled for December 1969. According to Calore, the Piazza Fontana bombing was expected to bring about a more widespread demand from the public opinion for order and the discrediting of the left-wing, singled out as responsible for the massacre.³⁴⁴

British intelligence collaborator Fulvio Bellini made an interesting contribution to the link Piazza Fontana-Borghese coup thesis. According to Bellini, on 22 December 1969, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Aldo Moro went to the President of the Republic Giuseppe Saragat for the traditional Christmas greetings. What was supposed to be a friendly conversation soon degenerated into a bitter argument. Moro, in fact, had come into possession of intelligence information revealing the true origin of the Piazza Fontana massacre and the innocence of the anarchists. Adding this information to the article published on *The Observer* on 14 December on the alleged Saragat's role in the strategy of tension, Moro became convinced that Saragat orchestrated the end of the centre-left coalition. During the meeting, Moro openly accused the President of the Republic of having abused his powers to create the conditions favourable to a coup after stipulating a secret agreement with Nixon.³⁴⁵ The heated discussion ended with a compromise. Saragat promised not to go further with the coup plans and to return within the limits that

³⁴³ Interview with judge Guido Salvini by Paolo Guzzanti, "La mia verità su Piazza Fontana", *La Stampa* (22 June 1996)

³⁴⁴ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20th, N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, Sentence-Order on the bombing of Milan (18 March 1995)

³⁴⁵ Jurists Antonio Baldassarre and Carlo Mezzanotte confirmed Bellini's account. See: Antonio Baldassarre and Carlo Mezzanotte, *Gli uomini del Quirinale* (Rome, 1984), 156

the Italian constitution provides for the office of head of state. In return, Moro pledged not to reveal what he had learnt.³⁴⁶ In retrospect, the Moro-Saragat compromise, like Rumor's refusal to proclaim a state of emergency, likely saved Italian democracy from a dangerous drift that, probably, would have resulted in a coup or a civil war, or maybe both.

Documents included in the US archives provide a slightly different reading of events. A note that the CIA station in Rome prepared on 6 August 1970 reported a series of meetings that agency officers attended at the US Embassy with Italian secret services men in 1969.³⁴⁷ In one of these meetings, on 4 March 1969, an Italian Naval Intelligence officer told a CIA agent about previous preliminary meetings among unspecified influential friends of his to discuss a coup. He said that the group wanted to know what position the US Government would take in the event of a coup, i.e., whether they would oppose it and stick with the centre-left government. The American officer told his Italian colleague that the CIA could not speak for the US Government, nor could it endorse such vague embryonic plans or ideas.³⁴⁸

In another meeting, on 25 May 1969, the CIA learned from the same Italian officer (whose name was not reported in the note) that Borghese already had got in touch with an unidentified US intelligence official in Naples. Borghese, according to the Italian-Naval Intelligence officer, alleged that he had influential friends in places in Washington, including the State Department. The same source stated that when a coup did take place, it would be a combination of military men and the economic leadership of the country.³⁴⁹

Indeed, Borghese spent 1969 meeting with big business entrepreneurs (such as Andrea Maria Piaggio, CEO of the chemical company Mira Lanza and scion of the

³⁴⁶ Walter Rubini (alias Fulvio Bellini), *Il Segreto della Repubblica. La verità politica sulla strage di Piazza Fontana* (Bari, 1978), 118

³⁴⁷ Dispatch from Rome's CIA station to CIA's European Desk, Alleged Role in Coup Plans of Valerio Junio Borghese, N. OIRA-53013 (6 August 1970),

https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/BORGHESE%20JUNIO%20VALERIO_0024.pdf (last accessed 24 August 2023)

³⁴⁸ Dispatch from Rome's CIA station to CIA's European Desk, Alleged Role in Coup Plans of Valerio Junio Borghese,

³⁴⁹ Dispatch from Rome's CIA station to CIA's European Desk, Alleged Role in Coup Plans of Valerio Junio Borghese

Piaggio automobile industrial dynasty³⁵⁰) and representatives of the military and intelligence agencies to raise funds and proselytize. In the course of 1969, the only truly relevant events related to Borghese's activities were two meetings held in Viareggio on 19 March, and in Genoa on 12 April. In the first meeting with two hundred delegates from the National Front, Borghese said that the organization could count on the support that the Armed Forces would guarantee in the fight against Communism.³⁵¹ In the second, Borghese declared to twenty shipowners and industrial managers (the most important of whom were the brothers Alberto and Sebastiano Cameli, scions of the homonymous shipowners family) that a military organization was already in place, ready to act to prevent the coming to power of the Communists and to establish a Gaullist-type regime.³⁵²

It was only at the end of 1969, in conjunction with the 12 December attacks that the National Front began to organize itself in a structured way. Since Prime Minister Mariano Rumor refused to sign the decree of state of emergency after the Piazza Fontana massacre, Borghese decided to move on to the next stage and organize the coup. After National Vanguard decided to join forces, the Borghese's group created an internal clandestine group in charge of finding weapons and explosives and recruiting men willing to do anything in the anti-Communist fight.³⁵³ This, beyond all conjectures and imaginary reconstructions, is the only reasonable interpretation of the link between the 1969 attacks and the 1970 attempted coup.

After the above premises, it may be useful to retrace the passages that led to the night between 7 and 8 December 1970. On 13 September 1968, Junio Valerio Borghese founded his movement, the National Front. The notarial act that created

³⁵⁰ Aldo Pietro Domenico Daghettia, "Nome in codice: Tora-Tora. Il Golpe Borghese", [https://www.misteritalia.it/golpeborghese/minuto-per-minuto/Borghese\(NomeincodiceToraTora\).pdf](https://www.misteritalia.it/golpeborghese/minuto-per-minuto/Borghese(NomeincodiceToraTora).pdf) (last accessed 10 November 2024)

³⁵¹ Public prosecutor Claudio Vitalone's requisition in the "Borghese coup" proceeding, filed on 9 September 1975, in Court of Rome-Investigation Office, Sentence-Order, N.3361/71 - Public Prosecutor General Register, N.1054/71- Instructor Judge General Register (15 December 1975)

³⁵² Public prosecutor Claudio Vitalone's requisition, Criminal Court of Rome, Office of Inquiry, Sentence-Ordinance on the Borghese coup, N. 1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge, N. 3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor (15 December 1975)

³⁵³ Criminal Court of Rome, Office of Inquiry, Sentence-Ordinance on the Borghese coup, N. 1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge, N. 3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor (15 December 1975)

the movement stated its main goal: "*To pursue all activities useful for the defence and restoration of the highest values of the Italian and European civilization*".³⁵⁴ In the statute drawn in January 1969, the goals the organization set out were: the repudiation of class struggle and materialism; the construction of a strong, efficient and authoritative state as a "dam against communism" and the "red terror"; recognition of the Armed Forces' primary role; the exclusion of parties from any participation in government activity; establishment of unitary trade associations with managers of proven professional competence.³⁵⁵

From early 1970, the preparations for the coup began. The earliest testimony that could be found in the American archives is the memorandum of the conversation between Junio Valerio Borghese and the Second Secretary of the US Embassy to Rome Charles Stout on 26 January 1970. Borghese explained that Italy was very rapidly sliding toward Communist control, and that no party and no government's member seemed to care, while the Italian people were worried about it. For this reason, according to his own words, Borghese went to the American Embassy to ask for support to the National Front, because the United States was the leader of the world and had considerable influence in Italy. For his part, Stout replied to Borghese that he could sympathize with many of his criticisms of the Italian system, but he doubted it that a group outside the system could so easily carry out a coup. Stout concluded the meeting with Borghese by saying that the US Embassy's staff would be glad to see him in the future if he had something to add.³⁵⁶

This first meeting between Borghese and the US Embassy's staff summarizes the role-playing between coup plotters and US representatives. The subversive right-wing hoped that fighting the same anti-Communist battle as the United States would endear them to sympathies from the US. The US government, for its part, conceived

³⁵⁴ "Il Fronte Nazionale di Junio Valerio Borghese", in <http://www.misteriditalia.it/estremadestra/destra-estrema/reaz-rivol-trame/fronte-nazionale/frontenazionaleborghe.pdf> (last accessed 26 August 2023)

³⁵⁵ <http://www.misteriditalia.it/estremadestra/destra-estrema/reaz-rivol-trame/fronte-nazionale/frontenazionaleborghe.pdf>

³⁵⁶ Dispatch from the CIA Station in Rome to the CIA's European Desk, Memorandum of Conversation between Charles Stout and Junio Valerio Borghese, Subject: The National Front and the Italian Political Situation, Ref. 4526 (26 January 1970),

https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/BORGHESE%2C%20JUNIO%20VALERIO_0028.pdf (last accessed 24 August 2023)

the relations with the Italian right-wing in a tactical and instrumental manner, and believed it had to resort to it only occasionally. The US ultimate goal was the Atlantic front's stability, and Italy was one of its pivots. In this sense, the US political and intelligence sectors could use the Italian right-wing as a tool to keep the Communist Party away from power and to facilitate a conservative turn in Italian politics. In the Borghese coup's specific case, this meeting between the former *Decima Mas* general and Charles Stout denoted the US diplomat's scepticism and distrust behind a cautious openness' facade. It is clear that the US Embassy refused from the beginning to get involved in an operation that could be dangerous for the American and Atlantic interests. At the same time, the US diplomats were interested in monitoring the coup's developments.³⁵⁷

At the end of the meeting, Borghese took his leave, giving Stout a copy of a memorandum that he had given to a member of Richard Nixon's entourage in Rome during the official visit of 27-28 February 1969. The memorandum that Borghese had provided to Nixon's entourage was attached to the meeting's report held at the US Embassy. According to Borghese's memorandum, people in Italy were getting deadly tired under the pressure of a heavy political situation, due to the perennial governments' instability and to the student and worker turmoil. For this reason, the Italian people began to see no way out, unless some drastic means changed the whole system. In Borghese's opinion, the solution was a concentration of nationalist forces, not bound to any party, resolved to fight Communism sternly and efficiently. The final goal was the establishment of a new and more rational political system, in which industry and business's representatives would replace the political representatives, free from party pressures. Borghese concluded the memorandum arguing that the dilemma before the US Government was either to leave Italy to slide inexorably into the "Red Area", or to come to the rescue before it was too late and support the National Front.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Dispatch from the CIA Station in Rome to the CIA's European Desk, Memorandum of Conversation between Charles Stout and Junio Valerio Borghese (26 January 1970)

³⁵⁸ Dispatch from the CIA Station in Rome to the CIA's European Desk, Memorandum of Conversation between Charles Stout and Junio Valerio Borghese (26 January 1970)

Borghese's memorandum was a clear invitation to the United States to join his plan to establish a Fascist-type regime. One might wonder how Borghese could have been so impudent as to make such requests directly to Nixon's staff, and to imagine that a quarter of a century after the end of World War II, the US would be in favour of a return to fascism. It is not easy to provide an answer. Perhaps his friendship with CIA's counterintelligence head James Jesus Angleton made him feel sure the American political circles would support him. It may also be that Nixon's victory in the 1968 presidential elections made Borghese believe that, in the Cold War's climate, he would have allies in Washington.

Meanwhile, the White House was studying the Italian political situation in the weeks following the 12 December 1969 attacks. On 12 February 1970, Nixon requested a study on political developments in the Northern Mediterranean, particularly in Italy, Greece and Spain. The study had to consider the broad implications for US policy in the short and medium term resulting from the political evolution in this area. Prime focus had to be placed on Italy and on the scope of action the US might take to prevent Communist's entry into the government. Another purpose of the study was to work out ways to improve the effectiveness of the US presence and interest in Italy.³⁵⁹

The result was the National Security Study Memorandum 88 "US Policy Toward Italy", issued on 1 April 1970 and revised on 11 June 1970. According to the document, the goals that the US government had to pursue were:

- a) a stable and prosperous Italy willing and able to meet its NATO Alliance responsibilities and to play a constructive and cooperative role in Europe and the world scene;
- b) a democratic Italy without either Communist or neo-Fascist participation in the government.

³⁵⁹ National Security Study Memorandum 88, SUBJECT: US Policy on Italy and the Northern Mediterranean, Washington, 12 February 1970, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-72*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d30> (last accessed 25 August 2023)

According to the memorandum, it was agreed that the Communists would not enter the government during the next two or three years. It was also believed unlikely that there would be a coup from the right-wing.³⁶⁰

Nonetheless, US Government's effort to solve the Italian problems and to achieve the goals set above risked backlash. Indeed, the drafters of the memorandum wrote: *"If we permit the impression to develop that the United States is "disengaging" from Italy and Europe, if we ignore Italian sensibilities and if we follow policy in nearby areas such as Greece, and to a lesser extent in Spain, which runs counter to Italian public attitudes, then we can undermine our friends in Italy."*

For this reason, the memorandum recommended to restore confidence among the moderate leaders, support them, seek out younger political figures, urge modernization, and assist by providing training and exchange ideas and advice. As it stated:

"We must remain faithful—and be seen to remain faithful—to the concept of Alliance solidarity so that the Italian efforts to reform can be carried out without the conflicting complications arising from an upsurge of fear of an intensified Soviet military threat".³⁶¹

This NSC memorandum deserves further scrutiny. At the time of its writing, the US Government had already learnt that Junio Valerio Borghese was planning his coup and that his followers were all neo-Fascists. It also knew that those responsible for the Piazza Fontana massacre were right-wing extremists, and that they, like the National Front, wanted to replicate the Greek experiment in Italy. Hence, the two memorandum's recommendations: neither the Communists nor the neo-Fascists should enter the government; and the United States should not follow the same policies in Italy that it followed in Greece.³⁶² The NSC was probably warning the Nixon Administration against getting involved in the Italian right-wing's subversive

³⁶⁰ Response to National Security Study Memorandum 88, SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward Italy (NSSM 88), Washington, 11 June 1970, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-72*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d195> (last accessed 25 August 2023)

³⁶¹ Response to National Security Study Memorandum 88, SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward Italy

³⁶² Response to National Security Study Memorandum 88, SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward Italy

activities. Hence, the recommendation to the Nixon Administration's upper echelons to distance themselves as much as possible from the Italian subversive right-wing, and to stick to democratic methods.

To facilitate interactions with the Nixon Administration, the coup plotters used two Italian-American citizens residing in Rome as communication channels. One was Pierfrancesco Talenti, a Roman builders' scion who shuttled between Italy and the United States, becoming US citizen in 1961. His entry into US politics occurred in 1964, when he helped organize support for Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign among American expatriates in Italy.³⁶³ Thanks to his work for the Republican Party, Talenti befriended Nixon, and in the 1968 presidential elections he performed the double function of fundraiser and his press officer.³⁶⁴ In 1969, he began spending most of his time in Rome, where he became honorary president of the Italian branch of the Republican Party, acting as Nixon's personal ambassador in Italy.³⁶⁵

The other figure was Hugh Fenwick. Having settled in Rome in 1960 to work in an Italian IT company, in 1964, he befriended Pierfrancesco Talenti. In May 1968, Talenti summoned Fenwick and other US residents in Italy and announced to them that he would set up the Italian section of the Republican Party to support Richard Nixon's presidential candidacy among the US community. Being already a high-profile person with his business activities, Talenti offered the post of president of the Republican Party's Italian branch to Fenwick, who accepted.³⁶⁶

On a spring day in 1970, Adriano Monti, a member of the National Front and a CIA agent, approached Fenwick. Monti informed him of the coup's planning and explained that the National Front needed US support to achieve it. Fenwick, as chairman of the Republican Party's Italian branch, could use his political contacts in Washington to ensure that the White House would recognize the new government

³⁶³ Jonathan Marshall, "U.S. Cold War Policy and the Italian Far-Right. The Nixon Administration, Republican Party Operatives, and the Borghese Coup Plot of 1970", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2023), 138-167

³⁶⁴ Paul Hope, "Republicans Dig for Votes in Western Europe", *Reading Eagle* (14 April 1970)

³⁶⁵ Hope, "Republicans Dig for Votes in Western Europe",

³⁶⁶ Claudio Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi. L'America, l'Italia, la questione comunista: i segreti di 50 anni di storia* (Milan, 1991), 95-100

resulting from the coup. Fenwick told Monti that he would discuss it with the appropriate people.³⁶⁷

In the following days, Fenwick went to the American Embassy in Rome to discuss the coup plot with Graham Martin. During the conversation, Martin showed an initial interest. He then appointed Fenwick to carry out further investigations by meeting with other exponents of the National Front, including the group's deputy chief Remo Orlandini, equipped with a hidden tape recorder. Fenwick brought the tapes of the conversations to Graham Martin. Martin reported the content of the meeting in a memorandum sent to the State Department on 10 August 1970. Following Martin's instructions, Fenwick told Orlandini that the US Government deemed it completely inappropriate to resort to means such as a coup. Therefore, the US Government would not provide any support to the plotters.³⁶⁸ It is useful to quote Martin's exact words as Fenwick reported to investigative journalist Claudio Gatti and included in the book *Rimanga tra noi* (in English, "Just between us"): "Now I want you to go to Remo Orlandini and tell him that the US government will not recognize any government that they install in power, and that we Americans oppose such attempts."³⁶⁹ Thus, at least as far as the American Embassy in Italy was concerned, the US involvement in the Borghese coup ended.

Martin had sent another telegram to the State Department three days earlier describing the coup's plans. Martin's comment was that he did not believe that there was the slightest immediate danger of a Communist takeover in Italy, and that in any case a movement toward the centre could be worked out within the democratic process. According to Martin, if the coup succeeded, such a government could not maintain power without violent opposition and consequent necessity for massive oppression. If, on the contrary, the coup failed, it would cause a massive shift to the left in the political spectrum. Either outcome would seriously weaken the Alliance

³⁶⁷ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi* (Milan, 1991), 101-106

³⁶⁸ Telegram from the US Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Subject: Planning for Possible Coup Attempt in the Week of 12 August, 10 August 1970, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, BOX 695 Italy, Volume 2, 01 Feb 70 - Jan 71

³⁶⁹ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, 95-106

structure and entail unpredictable repercussions on the Mediterranean political balance.³⁷⁰

In another report sent the next day, Martin informed the State Department that the President of the Republic Saragat, and the Minister of Defence Mario Tanassi were informed of what was being prepared against democracy in Italy.³⁷¹ Thus, the highest state authority in Italy, and the ministry that oversaw military espionage and the armed forces knew four months in advance, thanks to the information that the US Embassy gave them, that a coup attempt was going to take place.

Meanwhile, in late October 1970, Adriano Monti, who aspired to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to Madrid to meet Otto Skorzeny, the Austrian SS officer who, on 12 September 1943 had freed Benito Mussolini from custody. After World War II, Skorzeny had become part of the Gehlen Organization. It was an intelligence network that the US authorities in the post-war occupied Germany had established in June 1946. Allen Dulles had entrusted the Gehlen Organization with keeping the Italian Communist Party's under control, and Skorzeny would accomplish the task from Spain, where he had taken refuge to escape the Dachau trials.³⁷² Due to this role within the CIA, Monti, after obtaining Borghese's approval, decided to go and meet Skorzeny in Madrid.

Monti himself revealed in an interview on Italian public television that he asked Skorzeny if he could confirm that American intelligence was in favour of the coup. Skorzeny gave a positive response, adding that the condition was that the government resulting from the coup should be led by a representative of Italian politics who would give guarantees of reliability as far as the US and the Atlantic interests were concerned. That man who, according to Monti, the Americans wanted

³⁷⁰ Telegram from the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, N. 1205Z, Subject: Planning for possible coup attempt week of 10 August. Pass White House, Rome, August 7, 1970, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-72*,

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d196> (last accessed 25 August 2023)

³⁷¹ Telegram from the US Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, Subject: Possible Coup Attempt, 11 August 1970, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, BOX 695 Italy, Volume 2, 01 Feb 70 - Jan 71

³⁷² Pablo Del Hierro, "The Neofascist Network and Madrid, 1945-1953: From City of Refuge to Transnational Hub and Centre of Operations", *Contemporary European History*, No. 31 (December 2021), 171-194

to be Prime Minister was Giulio Andreotti. Monti specified in the same interview that he did not know whether Andreotti agreed or not.³⁷³

In early November 1970, Fenwick told Adriano Monti that he would meet with Herbert Klein, White House Communication Director and Henry Kissinger's right-hand, who was visiting Italy for a series of talks. At Monti's request, Fenwick undertook to discuss the coup project with Klein, and to probe the US Government's willingness to offer its support. A few days later, Fenwick reported to Monti the outcome of the meeting, and the conditions the Nixon Administration imposed to support the coup. The conditions were:

1. Neither US troopers nor civilians stationed in the NATO bases in Italy were to be engaged;
2. The operation had to foresee the active participation of the Carabinieri and the Italian Army, Air Force and Navy;
3. Once the operation was completed, a Christian Democrat politician trusted by the United States had to take the lead of the government and hold political elections within a year;
4. These elections, although "free" in principle, needed to exclude Communist and far-left parties in general.

Borghese, informed of the conditions the Nixon Administration posed, charged Adriano Monti with drawing up a list of names for the post of Prime Minister that could suit the US Government.³⁷⁴ Monti forwarded the list to the White House through Fenwick. In early December 1970, Fenwick let Monti know that the only name the Nixon Administration would accept was, again, Giulio Andreotti.³⁷⁵

While waiting for Andreotti to drop the reservations, preparations for the coup carried on. The last preparatory meeting for the coup took place on 5 December 1970. Outlining to the conspirators the program of the government that would take office after the coup, Borghese listed among the various points: development of a

³⁷³ "Il Golpe Borghese", episode of the RAI 3 television program *La Storia Siamo Noi* (6 December 2005), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzfGHni7l4U> (last accessed 27 August 2023)

³⁷⁴ Adriano Monti, *Il Golpe Borghese. Un Golpe Virtuale all'Italiana* (Bologna, 2006), 55

³⁷⁵ Monti, *Il Golpe Borghese*, 69

plan to increase Italian participation in the Atlantic Alliance; establishment of an economic-military pact of mutual assistance with the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek regimes; establishment of diplomatic relationships with the Rhodesian and South African segregationist governments; deployment of Italian troops in Vietnam to fight alongside the US army.³⁷⁶ The date the plotters chose for the implementation of the plan was 8 December 1970, as an official visit of the Yugoslav president Tito in Italy was scheduled for the same day. The obvious intent of the conspirators was to revive tensions between West and East in a circumstance that was supposed to improve the relationships.³⁷⁷

In short, the plotters government's program could suit both the neo-Fascists and the US and Atlantic circles. The promised support of the Italian armed forces' high officials seemed to guarantee the coup would succeed. Likewise, it seemed that the White House, thanks to the direct link between Fenwick and Nixon, would also support the plotters. The report that the SID compiled on the Borghese coup stated that, on the night of the coup, four NATO naval units anchored in Malta were ready to set sail for the coast off Rome to give military support to the coup plotters. While the coup plan was being completed, Fenwick, as the plan foresaw, phoned the NATO naval base in Malta to give the signal to send the frigates. The plan envisaged that, in turn, Fenwick's interlocutors in Malta would call Nixon, who was following the work in progress from the White House, to obtain the definitive green light. Nixon did not receive the fateful phone call, though. On the other hand, shortly before 2:00 am in the night between 7 and 8 December, Borghese received another phone call from an unidentified caller, who told him to give the order to the conspirators to demobilise and to go back to their own homes. Thus, the longed-for and necessary American support was lost, contributing to the failure of the Borghese coup.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Criminal Court of Rome, Office of Inquiry, Sentence-Ordinance on the Borghese coup, N. 1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge, N. 3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, (15 December 1975)

³⁷⁷ Paolo Cucchiarelli, *Il segreto di Piazza Fontana. Finalmente la verità sulla strage* (Milan, 2009), 500

³⁷⁸ Ministry of the Interior, Central Directorate of Prevention Police, Delegation of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Brescia (1998-2008), 4: Documents acquired from the SISMI archive (1945-2008) and delivered by SISMI on 28 July 2007 related to the Borghese coup (1974-75), 9: Coup attempt under the name of Junio Valerio Borghese-Origin: Development and Subsequent Reflections Until June 1974, Italian Central State Archive

Background to Borghese coup and aftermath

This chapter has this far exposed a short history of the Borghese coup, and the US attitude towards it. Nevertheless, the analysis of the Borghese coup certainly cannot end with its failure. It is important to have some further details about the stances of each sector of the US Government to better understand US policy towards Italy during the Nixon Administration.

In this regard, Hugh Fenwick's role in this story provides some hints. According to the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into P2, Fenwick was a CIA agent who had stayed in Cold War hot spots such as Korea and Vietnam before coming to Italy.³⁷⁹ This detail raises a question: was Fenwick committed in favour of the Borghese coup on behalf of the CIA? It is useful to recall the link between the then CIA's counterintelligence chief James Jesus Angleton and Junio Valerio Borghese dating back to 1945. Can it be said then that Fenwick acted on Angleton's orders to plead the coup in American political and diplomatic circles? The fact that Fenwick was a CIA agent makes this suspicion at least legitimate. Therefore, in the context of this research, one cannot fail to hypothesize, with all the due caution, that a part of the CIA, perhaps the counterespionage, offered support and encouragement to the coup.

Like Fenwick's, Pierfrancesco Talenti's commitment continued unceasingly, even after the failure of the coup. A memorandum that a NSC's member, Arthur Downey, drafted on 22 December 1970 reported the content of the meeting that took place the previous day between Talenti and the US Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander Haig. During the meeting, Talenti told Haig that the Italian situation was extremely serious, and that it would reach the critical point in three months. He was convinced that in that period, the Italian Parliament would pass a series of laws (like socialized health care) that would set Italy on a leftward course. For this reason,

³⁷⁹ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2, Volume III, Volume XI, Doc. XXIII n. 2-ter/2, 1984

Talenti urged that the US government take all the steps to prevent a Communist takeover in Italy.³⁸⁰

Unlike Fenwick, there are no clues that Talenti was a CIA agent or collaborator, so it is hard to tell why he still advocated US support for subversive operations in Italy. The surprising thing is that Nixon Administration's members were willing to meet him in person and discuss the political situation in Italy. The possible explanation is that the Nixon Administration wanted to keep agitating the coup as a bugbear against the Italian political establishment. In this regard, someone like Talenti, with his connections with the Italian far-right, could still be useful.

To better understand the context in which the Borghese coup took place, it is useful to report some excerpts from the article "Spaghetti with Chile Sauce", by Cyrus Leo Sulzberger, published in the *New York Times* on 13 January 1971. According to Sulzberger, the Italian Communist Party had maintained its electoral strength, and for this reason was slowly inching toward seizure of power by elections just as the Communists working with the newly elected Chilean president Salvador Allende did. In one passage of the article, Sulzberger wrote: *"Should Italy be legally taken over by a Communist-dominated government, there would be little NATO could do about it.....This would virtually.....drastically alter the tenuous power balance in the Mediterranean where the Soviet fleet is steadily gaining strength and Soviet diplomacy is steadily winning advantages".*³⁸¹

Sulzberger also made a parallel with Chile, where the Salvador Allende's socialist presidency took office on 3 November 1970: *"Thus NATO thinks of Italy when the 'word Chile is mentioned".*³⁸²

Sulzberger's article is relevant, as it was not simply the expression of his personal point of view, but rather the CIA's stance position. As Carl Bernstein explained in an article written in October 1977, there were several columnists and broadcast commentators whose relationships with the CIA would go far beyond

³⁸⁰, National Security Council, Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Meeting with Pierfrancesco Talenti, 22 December 1970, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, BOX 695 Italy, Volume 2, 01 Feb 70 - Jan 71

³⁸¹ Cyrus Leo Sulzberger, "Spaghetti with Chile Sauce", *New York Times* (13 January 1971)

³⁸² Sulzberger, "Spaghetti with Chile Sauce", *New York Times* (13 January 1971)

those normally maintained between reporters and their sources. According to Bernstein, the CIA classified these columnists as “known assets,” as they were considered receptive to the Agency’s point of view on various subjects and in charge of performing a variety of undercover tasks. One of these “known assets” was Cyrus Sulzberger, who signed a secrecy agreement with the CIA that provided him with classified information.³⁸³

In the specific case of the article "Spaghetti with Chile sauce", it is possible to deduce that the CIA used Sulzberger to deliver an underlying message: the only way to prevent a Communist government from establishing itself in Italy as it occurred in Chile was to resort to unorthodox methods. It is difficult to say whether the CIA, through the *New York Times*, wanted to prepare the ground for further attempted coups in Italy by spreading the "red threat". The fact remains that Sulzberger's article proves how the CIA used the press to influence the US policy towards Italy.

The files included in the Italian and US archives provide further elements to understand the Borghese coup background. On the day of the coup, a meeting took place in Washington between the Social Movement deputy Luigi Turchi and the country officer for Italy at the State Department Charles Johnson. During the meeting, Turchi expressed great concern about political trends in Italy, which, according to him, were leading to Communist entry into the government with increasing acceleration.³⁸⁴ The fact that this meeting took place on the same day Junio Valerio Borghese attempted to carry out the coup, gives rise to the most diverse hypotheses. The most plausible is that Luigi Turchi sought a sort of endorsement from the United States towards the Borghese coup. It is possible that the Italian Social Movement hoped that, after being excluded from the organization of the coup, it could re-enter it with important positions after its achievement. If so, it was a misplaced hope.

³⁸³ Carl Bernstein, “The CIA and the Media. How Americas Most Powerful News Media Worked Hand in Glove with the Central Intelligence Agency and Why the Church Committee Covered It Up”, *Rolling Stones*, N. 250 (20 October 1977)

³⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Italian political Situation, Box “Italian Political Affairs”, Pol 23-9, File Pol. It-US, 7 December 1970, National Archives Records Administration, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, Record Group 59, Department of State

A note from the Roman Police Headquarters drawn up on 23 February 1971 reported that the National Front was part of a game that Italian industrial groups, the CIA, the Social-Democrats and military officers led, in order to facilitate not a Fascist but "a centrist coup d'état". According to this note, Borghese, probably during previous meetings with the above-mentioned emissaries, had agreed to give up on carrying out a Fascist-type coup in favour of a stabilizing and bloodless coup to consolidate the established power's structure.³⁸⁵

Another note from the Rome Police Headquarters, dated 7 March 1971, supported this interpretation. In fact, it reported that mainly the circles associated with the Social Democrats, Republicans, Christian Democrats, Liberals, as well as Freemasonry, were interested in the "anti-government and revolutionary action" the National Front planned. The note mentioned the names of the President of the Republic Giuseppe Saragat and of the deputies Giovanni Leone (twice Prime Minister in 1963 and 1968, and President of the Republic from 29 December 1971), Giuseppe Pella (Prime Minister between 1953 and 1953, and Finance Minister for four months from 1972), Luigi Preti (Finance Minister, and member of the Social Democratic party), Mario Tanassi (Defence Minister, and secretary of the Social Democratic party from 1964 to 1969) and Flaminio Piccoli (Minister of State Holdings, and Secretary of Christian Democracy for ten months in 1969).³⁸⁶ All these politicians had close relations with American and Atlantic political circles and continued for a long time to have a notable political career, if not even more prestigious as in the case of Giovanni Leone. Moreover, a note from the Office for Reserved reported that Giulio Andreotti and Mario Tanassi encouraged and financed the Borghese coup and New Order's actions.³⁸⁷

It is therefore conceivable that in 1970, there was a double-sided coup going on in Italy. The apparent purpose (the conquest of power by a subversive group) masked

³⁸⁵ Note from the Rome Police Headquarters, 23 February 1971, Attachment no. 4 to the Expert Report by Aldo Giannuli for the Public Prosecutor's Office of Brescia, criminal proceeding no. 91/97 mod. 21, No. 50, 29

³⁸⁶ Note from the Rome Police Headquarters, 23 February 1971, Attachment no. 17, 102-103

³⁸⁷ Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of the Interior/Department of Public Security/Central Directorate of Prevention Police/Archive of the Central Directorate of the Prevention Police, New European Order file, summer 1974, Italian Central State Archive

a power game. To put it in other words, the Borghese coup was a sort of stabilizing action of the power system based on the entente with significant centrist parties' factions.³⁸⁸ This was exactly what the US government wanted for Italy: not the establishment of a new Fascist dictatorship or military regime, but a democratic albeit strong government that would reposition the political axis in the centre after the shifting to the left throughout the 1960s.

A further, and perhaps definitive confirmation came from a New Order repentant, Paolo Aleandri. Testifying to the Inquiry Parliamentary Commission into P2, Aleandri reported what his comrade Fabio De Felice told him in relation to the structuring of the coup organization. It consisted of three levels. The first was made up of subversive right-wing groups who dreamed of recreating a new Fascism. The second consisted of people who had in mind an authoritarian shift as in Greece, Spain and Portugal. The third level was made up of circles that were asked to join a project to strengthen democracy.³⁸⁹ It is obvious that "to strengthen democracy" meant marginalizing the Italian Communist Party, perceived as the only real danger for democracy in Italy in the Cold War context.

Regarding Martin's position on the Borghese coup, the former CIA agents at the Rome station whom Claudio Gatti interviewed for his book provided an interesting explanation. According to them, Martin wanted to strengthen the right-wing to counterbalance the left-wing's weight and reposition Italy to the centre. The stronger the Italian Communist Party was, the stronger the Italian Social Movement had to be, and the consolidation of the Christian Democrat's power was to derive from the rebalancing of the opposing extremisms.³⁹⁰ In other words, for Martin, the Italian right-wing was nothing more than a means to use to achieve the goal of preserving the status quo in a key Atlantic Alliance's member country and the Cold War's balance. Graham Martin, albeit a powerful man, still was a member of the US

³⁸⁸ Nicola Tonietto, "Un colpo di stato mancato? Il golpe Borghese e l'eversione nera in Italia", *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, No. 27 (March 2016), 48-68

³⁸⁹ Hearing of Paolo Aleandri to the P2 Commission, 9 February 1984, Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2, Annexes to the report, Series II: Documentation collected by the Commission, vol. III, t. IV, Part I, 88.

³⁹⁰ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, 110

Government. It means that this was the White House, the National Security Council and the State Department's stance. It is obvious that Martin received precise instructions. The opposition to the Communist Party and to the formation of new centre-left governments had to be resolute, but not to the point of subverting Italian democracy with a coup or making the Social Movement a governing force. Yet, from the testimonies of the conspirators and from documents found in the Italian Central State Archives, there are traces of contacts and apparent signs of interest by American emissaries even after the summer of 1970. What is the truth?

The following testimonies can provide some hints. One of the conspirators, Enzo Ferro, revealed to prosecutor Guido Salvini that the American military commands in Vicenza had supplied the coup participants with 9-gauge Parabellum cartridges in NATO's possession.³⁹¹ An investigative document drawn up by the Court of Bologna during the investigation into the massacre in the same city on 2 August 1980 reported the testimony of another participant in the coup, Presilio Vettore. According to this testimony, a military vehicle had transported the armament necessary to occupy the Rome Police Headquarters and the Bank of Italy from the US military base in Vicenza. The same document reported that during a search of the home of New Order militant Romano Coltellacci the police found a letter that reported the involvement of a unnamed American officer serving at the Vicenza base in the coup.³⁹²

Another conspirator named Gaetano Lunetta, a *Decima Mas* veteran, revealed an even more shocking detail in an interview with the weekly *L'Espresso*. According to Lunetta, on the evening of 7 December, while the attempted coup was in full swing, armoured vehicles from the NATO command in Verona had arrived at Rome's gates, ready to intervene alongside the coup plotters.³⁹³ It is also interesting to report Lunetta's historical-political evaluation of the 7-8 December 1970 events.

³⁹¹ Testimony of Enzo Ferro to the investigating judge Guido Salvini, Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office, Section 20, N.721/88F, 1 July 1992, Documentation Centre Archivio Flamigni, Flamigni Collection, Section 3, Series 11, Subseries 3, 2

³⁹² Special Collections/Renzi Directive/Ministry of the Interior/Department of Public Security/Central Directorate of Prevention Police/Criminal Proceedings 91/1997 on the Brescia massacre/Investigations into the far-right subversive and terrorist activity (1981-1984), Rome, 30 March 1984, Italian Central State Archive

³⁹³ Mario Scialoja, "Fu vero golpe", *L'Espresso*, Year XXXV, N.4 (29 January 1989)

According to him, it is wrong to define the Borghese coup as "attempted and then cancelled", because the coup actually took place and achieved its goals: freezing Aldo Moro's policy aimed at shifting the political axis to the left; removal of the Italian Communist Party from the government's area; guarantees of Italy's total pro-Atlantic and pro-American loyalty.³⁹⁴

Lunetta's judgment deserves attention. First, what he said is correct. It is true that the political pendulum in Italy gradually started shifting to the right. Likewise, the centre-left governments' driving force had come to an end. Until the second half of the 1970s, there was no more sign of openness towards the Communist Party. In this sense, it could be said that the Borghese coup failed in the aim of suppressing democracy in Italy but succeeded in achieving its real goals.

There are further considerations to add, that will probably help better understand the US and Italian officials' attitude. They both had understood, right from the Piazza Fontana massacre, that Italy, despite all its deficiencies, was in any case an advanced country, with a high level of political consciousness.³⁹⁵ In other words, it was not an underdeveloped country without a progressive bourgeoisie aware of its social role, like Greece or certain Latin American countries. The US Government must have understood that if supporting a coup d'état in Greece was advantageous for its own interests, in Italy it would have been counterproductive. The Italian people would not have hesitated to start a new armed resistance. Such an outcome would have undermined the Atlantic Alliance's very *raison d'être*, that is, the protection of the "free and civilized world" and the destabilization of the whole Western Europe. The Soviet Union could not have wished for anything better. On the other hand, the risk that the Communist Party could at least acquire more and more power, to allow the Soviets to considerably influence Italian political life, persisted. For this reason, it is likely that the Nixon Administration and the CIA concluded that if a coup d'état was a remedy worse than the disease, coming one step away from it was the best possible solution.

³⁹⁴ Scialoja, "Fu vero golpe", *L'Espresso* (29 January 1989)

³⁹⁵ See: National Intelligence Estimate 24-69, Prospect for Italy, Washington (12 November 1970), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d200> (last accessed 14 January 2024)

It remains to clarify who instructed Borghese to issue the counter order. On this aspect, there are numerous versions too. The main suspects were the head of the masonic lodge P2 Licio Gelli and Giulio Andreotti. According to what the ex-New Order militant Paolo Aleandri told the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the P2, Gelli countermanded the order as the Carabinieri's willingness to join the coup had failed and the US did not guarantee their support. During the same deposition, Aleandri added one of the plotters told him about Gelli's aim to use the coup attempt as a warning to the Italian political class.³⁹⁶ According to Amos Spiazzi, the order to stop the Borghese coup came from Andreotti.³⁹⁷

In any case, clarifying words on the background of the Borghese coup came from a sort of letter-testament that Junio Valerio Borghese himself wrote between 5 and 7 August 1974 from his Spanish exile to his followers to provide his version of the facts.³⁹⁸ Borghese wrote that he enjoyed James Jesus Angleton's support when he founded National Front in September 1968. In the following months, Angleton introduced him to various members of the State Department and the US Armed Forces, who declared their approval to his plan to give a drastic change to the Italian situation. Furthermore, the CIA's counterintelligence chief urged him to seek an agreement with Giulio Andreotti to ensure the coup's successful outcome. Borghese further specified that Angleton and those within the American state apparatus who were in favour of the coup preferred that, at least initially, Andreotti be placed at the head of the government that would have arisen.³⁹⁹

According to Borghese, after various denials, Andreotti accepted to meet him thanks to the intermediation of Angleton himself. During the meeting that took place

³⁹⁶ Hearing of Paolo Aleandri, 9 February 1984, Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2, Volume III, Volume XI, Doc. XXIII n. 2-ter/2

³⁹⁷ Hearing of Amos Spiazzi to the P2 Commission, 25 November 1983, in Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2, Report Annexes, Series II: Documentation Collected by the Commission, Vol. III, t. XI, Doc. XXIII n. 2-ter/2, p. 475-530.

³⁹⁸ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Provision of Appointment of Technical Consultant and Appointment to Prof. Aldo Giannuli, n.91/97, mod. 21 (11 November 2003)

³⁹⁹ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Provision of Appointment of Technical Consultant and Appointment to Prof. Aldo Giannuli, n.91/97, mod. 21 (11 November 2003)

on 6 January 1970, the Christian Democrat politician agreed to participate in the coup and to take the lead of the government that would have resulted from it. Continuing his narration, Borghese added that, soon after, Martin instructed the military attaché at the American Embassy, James Clavio, to report to him that the US Government set the final time limit for the accomplishment of the coup to December 1970. Thus, the coup mechanism was launched, with the date of its implementation set for the night between 7 and 8 December.⁴⁰⁰

That night, everything seemed to be going well, until the commander of the Emilia-Romagna region army corps, Renzo Apollonio, found what was going on and alerted the SID. Although the Italian military intelligence's head, Vito Miceli, sympathized with the plotters, all the other intelligence officers were against the coup. The latter alerted the presidency of the republic's offices and James Clavio, unaware that the military attaché of the US Embassy was involved (assuming that Borghese was sincere on this last point). This leak dissuaded the American troops in Italy from providing support. Upon learning these complications, Andreotti instructed one of his collaborators to phone Borghese to order him to demobilize and send all the conspirators back to their homes. This phone call (Borghese wrote that he received it at 1:49 am) put an end to the dreams he had pursued for two years.⁴⁰¹

It is not easy to assess whether Borghese's version of the events is correct or not. It has not been possible to find a document in the US and Italian archives that attests to the causes of the failure of the coup. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that Borghese's version is substantially true. The first reason is that the text that Borghese wrote was addressed only to his followers in the form of a confidential letter, so much so that it came to light only in 2003 in the context of new investigations into the Brescia massacre of 28 May 1974. At that time, apart from the legal problems he would have had if he had returned to Italy, Borghese would have had nothing to gain by spreading a false narrative about the coup. His prestige

⁴⁰⁰ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Provision of Appointment of Technical Consultant and Appointment to Prof. Aldo Giannuli, n.91/97, mod. 21 (11 November 2003)

⁴⁰¹ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Provision of Appointment of Technical Consultant and Appointment to Prof. Aldo Giannuli, n.91/97, mod. 21 (11 November 2003)

in the neo-Fascist groups had already faded. The most he could aspire to was to rehabilitate his reputation, certainly not to return to being a point of reference or a guide for new subversive operations.⁴⁰²

Secondly, Borghese's version is precise and detailed. He named important people such as Andreotti and Angleton, attributing them significant roles, and whom he would not have mentioned if he could not have proven their involvement. If he had lied, the National Front's high-ranking members could have easily contradicted him. For these reasons, it is possible to argue that Borghese's letter-testament is the most reliable source regarding the development and the failure of the coup.

The doubt remains about the actual CIA's role. The question that arises is whether Angleton was really in favour of the coup and worked for its achievement, or a part of the operation that the Nixon Administration had set up to deceive the plotters and send them into the fray. For lack of clear evidence, it is impossible to give a certain answer, and no assumption would have solid supporting evidence.

There is something more to say on the explanations why, after a little less than four years, he decided to write this letter. In Italy, after the Borghese coup, there were two other attempted coups: the one that the *Rosa dei Venti* scheduled for 2 June 1973, and the so-called "white coup" by Edgardo Sogno, scheduled for 10 August 1974. The investigation on the *Rosa dei Venti* coup was well under way and had found that some of the 1970 conspirators were part of it. Moreover, the Court of Rome decided to start a new inquiry on the Borghese coup on 15 September of that year. For these reasons, Borghese decided to get back in touch with his loyalists to provide the first clarifications on the coup. Furthermore, Borghese expressed his intention to return to Italy to testify before the judges that were investigating the 1970 coup and explain Andreotti and the US responsibilities.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² For a thorough Borghese's biography that exposes how his peers perceived him, see: Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince and The Sea Devils: The Story of Valerio Borghese and the Elite Units of the Decima Mas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008)

⁴⁰³ Vincenzo Vinciguerra wrote in a letter sent to the author of this thesis on 19 April 2021 that it was unthinkable that Giulio Andreotti would initiate the judicial action against the coup plotters if Junio Valerio Borghese had been alive.

On 26 August 1974, Borghese died in the arms of an anonymous lady who was a SID agent. The official cause of death was acute pancreatitis. The journalist Mino Pecorelli, very well informed on the secret services' activities and on the dark sides of Italian politics, revealed that the doctor who subjected the body to an autopsy found significant quantities of strychnine in its tissues.⁴⁰⁴ Since it is not imaginable that Borghese voluntarily poisoned himself, it can well be said that the Italian military intelligence sent the lady in time to providentially remove a major source of embarrassment. The only remaining doubt is who instructed the SID to silence Borghese forever. A doubt that will probably never be revealed. The certainty remains that many, in Italy and in the United States, breathed a sigh of relief at the news of his death.

Interference in the 1972 elections

The previous two sections of this chapter clarified the US instrumental use of the National Front's subversive purposes and the Nixon Administration's true purposes. The primary sources suggest that with the failed Borghese coup, the Italian subversive right-wing was no longer useful to the US interests. From then on, the US preferred to use the institutional and parliamentary right-wing to stop the Communist electoral advance. In this regard, in the aftermath of the attempted Borghese coup, the US Government turned its attention to the Italian Social Movement. This was a Graham Martin's initiative. In his opinion, supporting the parliamentary right-wing party was the only way to detach the US Embassy staff members and CIA agents from the subversive right-wing. According to one of the sources that Claudio Gatti interviewed, Martin learned that "certain entrepreneurs" (whose names were not reported) had sent Nixon, through private channels, unrealistic plans. Such plans, the anonymous source said, similar to Borghese's, aimed at putting an end to the political and social chaos in Italy. Since such remedies were worse than the disease, Martin proposed to the White House a

⁴⁰⁴ Solange Manfredi, *Il Golpe Borghese*, 64

financial aid plan to the anti-Communist parties.⁴⁰⁵ Such allegation finds a confirmation in a cable that the CIA station in Rome sent to the agency's headquarters on 11 February 1971. The cable stated that Martin was concerned that "certain people" would push the White House into a "disastrous program". The wording "certain people" refers to an unspecified international businessman. The exact Martin's words that the cable reported were: "*If you think Vito Miceli's program is bad, you should see the kind of staff the international businessman is trying to sell*".⁴⁰⁶

It is therefore obvious that, in the US political strategy towards Italy, the subversive right-wing had ceased to be an expendable card, even just as a means of pressure. Terrorists and coup plotters had carried out their task, and in hindsight it is possible to say that, at least in the short term, they achieved the goal that the most anti-Communist Italian and American political circles had set for themselves. Further insisting on supporting right-wing extremists who had no other purpose than carrying out indiscriminate massacres would have ended up nullifying the results achieved so far through their instrumental use. For its part, the Communist Party, although undermined by the suspicion that it was the institutional cover for the extra-parliamentary left-wing accused of the terrorist attacks, kept its strength. Hence the decision to support a legal neo-Fascist party such as the Italian Social Movement. Encouraging its electoral growth would create a sort of competitor to the Christian Democrats in terms of anti-Communism that had been lacking until the early 1970s. This does not mean that the Christian Democrats were the only Italian political party to have an anti-Communist political line. On the contrary, apart from the Socialists (and during its brief existence, the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity), the Italian political parties were all anti-Communists. The difference with the Social Movement is that they all gravitated around the Christian Democrats, alternating in Christian Democrats-led coalition, while the neo-Fascists were always excluded

⁴⁰⁵ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, 110

⁴⁰⁶ CIA cable, 11 February 1971, in House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Unexpurgated Pike Report* (New York, 1992), 129-130

from power for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, in 1971, the Social Movement began to acquire a relevance it never had before.

This had a major political implication. In the early 1970s, the electoral advance allowed the Social Movement to become a formidable antagonist of the Christian Democrats. This was possible thanks to the US funding, and the climate of resentment by a part of the Italian population towards the left-wing for the social turmoil. It is easy to understand what the ultimate purpose was. Giving rise to a competitor on its right flank would induce the Christian Democrats to abandon all leftist orientation and to resurrect the anti-Communist crusading spirit that had animated them in the elections of 1948 and during the 1950s. Even this fact shows the essence of the relationship between the Italian right-wing and the United States during the Nixon Administration. It was only a commonality of interests that bound them together, deluding the Italian right-wing of having a friend in the White House that would help it carry out its plans. Unfortunately for the neo-Fascists, not even in moments of greatest political tension, the US Government had deviated from the belief that they were nothing more than a tool to occasionally resort to. In the end, the Christian Democrats were for the US the only reliable Italian political party to have a deep and lasting relationship with. The US, indeed, deemed the neo-Fascists only useful to prevent the Christian Democrats from trespassing on the left.⁴⁰⁷

Documents included in the US National Archives in College Park and at the Nixon Presidential Library confirm this interpretation. A memorandum that Secretary of State William Rogers drew up for Richard Nixon on 5 January 1971 stated that the primary aim was to support the Christian Democrats and make sure that a centrist and moderate government ruled Italy. To this end, Rogers wrote that it was necessary to step up Ambassador Martin's efforts to ensure the Italian governing class realized that the U.S. would be greatly disturbed by any movement toward accepting the Italian Communist Party into the government. Especially the final comment matters to this research, and it needs to be reported: *"at the same time, we should not act in a manner that encourages far right-wing elements to believe that we would be*

⁴⁰⁷ Luigi Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani, 1969-1972*, (Milan, 2016), 259-260

willing to condone a military adventure in Greek style for the sake of order". Ultimately, for William Rogers, the United States had to continue to make clear their creed in a moderate Western-oriented democratic government for Italy.⁴⁰⁸ It is interesting that Nixon underlined that portion of the paragraph beginning "ensure that the Italian governing" and ending with "military adventure," and wrote: "*We must hit this hard.*"⁴⁰⁹

From this memorandum and from others that William Rogers compiled, it clearly emerges that the State Department was committed to preventing the United States from being compromised in the strategy of tension. Political-diplomatic language is by its nature vague, so nothing explicit emerges from what the Secretary of State wrote. However, if one connects the content of this memorandum to the historical context, then it is likely that Rogers' words were a warning delivered directly to Nixon to sever every possible link with the Italian right-wing.

If the Secretary of State decided to deliver such warning to the US President less than a month after the attempted Borghese coup, it is because he ascertained complicity within the US state branches with the right-wing subversive groups in Italy. Therefore, he wanted to counter them with the political means at his disposal. For all the nuances that characterize institutional language, especially when writing directly to the President of the United States, this is the only possible interpretation of Rogers's memorandum to Nixon.

With regard to the Italian political situation in the months following the failed Borghese coup, the most important close deadline was the election of the new president of the republic, scheduled for December 1971. The Nixon Administration took care to make sure a pro-Western personality was elected as head of state. Afterwards, the newly elected president would dissolve the parliament and call early elections. The hope was that the expected victory of the most anti-Communist parties

⁴⁰⁸ Memorandum by Secretary of State William Rogers to President Richard Nixon, Box "Italian Political Affairs", Pol 23-9, File Pol. It-US, 5 January 1971, National Archives Records Administration, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-69, Record Group 59, Department of State

⁴⁰⁹ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, SUBJECT: The Current Scene in Italy, Washington, 22 January 1971, Richard Nixon Presidential Library, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 695, Country Files—Europe, Italy, Vol. II. 1

would result in a centre-right government and in reorienting the Christian Democrats in a more conservative direction.⁴¹⁰ On 29 December 1971, Giovanni Leone, who had appeared on the list of politicians directly interested in the developments of the Borghese coup, was elected President of the Republic. On 15 January 1972, the Emilio Colombo-led centre-left government resigned after the Republican Party withdrew the confidence. Given the impossibility of setting up a new government that would last until the end of the legislature foreseen for 1973, Leone dissolved the chambers and called early elections for the first time in the history of the republic. Thus, the Italian political situation had the outcome that the White House hoped for.

With the calling of the general elections, scheduled for 7-8 May 1972, the US Government started to fund the Italian parties. As the Pike Commission report on the CIA's illicit activities revealed, in 1971, the 40 Committee accepted Martin's proposal to provide the anti-Communist parties with funds and allocated a total of \$ 11.8 million. Thanks to Kissinger's support, Martin managed to obtain the authorization to handle the program's operational part, to then delegate it to Vito Miceli, the head of the Italian military intelligence. Miceli, on behalf of the US Ambassador, donated \$800,000 to the Italian Social Movement.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, during the 1972 electoral campaign, Vito Miceli ordered the secret agents under his command to throw bombs at the neo-Fascist party's headquarters in the Italian major cities. The obvious purpose was to generate popular sympathy towards the Social Movement and hostility against the Communist Party, perceived as subversive and protector of terrorists, just like on the occasion of the Piazza Fontana massacre.⁴¹²

This funding plan has an historical importance, as it resumed the US donations to the Italian parties. In fact, before the 1968 elections, the US Government had stopped the donations believing that the Italian political system had become stable enough

⁴¹⁰ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Subject: Italian Politics, Washington, 14 October 1971, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969-72*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d214> (last accessed 2 September 2023)

⁴¹¹ House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Unexpurgated Pike Report*, 133

⁴¹² Giuseppe De Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia* (Rome, 1987), 225

to cope the Communists threats on its own. The centre-left was still enjoying the White House's trust and seemed to have fulfilled its function as a bulwark against the Communist Party. Furthermore, there was a widespread belief in the American political circles that the Christian Democrats and other centrist parties had acquired enough economic self-sufficiency to adequately face the Communists on their own. As a result, the American funding, which had totalled \$65,150,000 between 1948 and 1968, had ceased.⁴¹³ The political and social events in Italy between 1968 and 1970 must have led the Nixon Administration to believe that such optimism was excessive. The Communist Party's electoral advance in the 1968 elections, in the face of the retreat of all the other parties, showed that the "red threat" was more alive than ever, and that the centre-left coalition was inadequate to cope with it. On the other hand, the subversive right-wing proved to be out of control and unreliable, as the Piazza Fontana massacre and the Borghese coup proved.⁴¹⁴

In light of these considerations, it is possible to say that, in the early 1970s, the US Government believed that the Italian democracy was running the greatest dangers since 1948. The difference was that the threat did not come only from left but also from the right. Hence, the decision to resurrect the funds to Italian parties, whose sum of \$11,800,000 distributed in the two-year period 1971-72 exceeded the annual average of those for the twenty-year period 1948-68.⁴¹⁵

It may seem paradoxical that, while believing that the far-right was no less dangerous than the Communists, the US government donated \$800,000 to the Italian Social Movement. Actually, the explanation is simple. Funding a neo-Fascist party that was part of the Italian parliament, and therefore respectful of democratic rules, would drain the consensus that the Italian citizens hostile to the left-wing might have towards the extra-parliamentary far-right. With all due differences, it can be said that, in 1971-72, the Social Movement had for the United States the same function

⁴¹³ House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Unexpurgated Pike Report*, 132

⁴¹⁴ See the section "Interpretation and explanation of Piazza Fontana" from the second chapter of this thesis, page 131

⁴¹⁵ If one divides 65,150,000 by twenty, the result is 3,275.5, whereas the result of dividing 11,800,000 by two is 5,900,000. This calculation shows how the funding during the two-year period 1971-72 was proportionally higher than it was from 1948 to 1968

that the centre-left had in the five-year period 1963-68. In other words, the Nixon Administration hoped that, for the right-wing electorate, the Social Movement would represent a viable alternative to mass murderers and coup plotters. From this point of view, the funding to the Social Movement on the occasion of the 1972 Italian elections represents the litmus test of the entire history of the relationships between the United States and the Italian right-wing.⁴¹⁶

The support the US provided to the Italian Social Movement, in the climate of dismay that persisted in Italy due to the terrorist attack in Milan, proved to be successful. In the 1972 elections, the neo-Fascist party gained the 8.67% of the votes in the Chamber of Deputies and the 9.19% in the Senate, thus doubling the votes obtained in the previous 1968 elections in both houses of parliament. The Christian Democrats dropped from 37.12% to 36.66%. For their part, the Communists and Socialists, while remaining stable in the Chamber of Deputies, lost respectively 2.40% and 4.51% of the votes in the Senate.⁴¹⁷

By virtue of these results, on 26 June 1972 Giulio Andreotti became Italian Prime Minister, leading a government comprising the Christian Democrats, the Italian Liberal Party, and the Italian Social Democratic Party. It was the first centre-right government in Italy since 1957. With its constitution, and the 1972 election results, the Nixon Administration and the staunchest US and Italian anti-Communist political circles seemed to prove politically right. The terrorist offensive started in 1969 and attributed to the extra-parliamentary left and the US funding to the Italian Social Movement contributed to making the Communist Party retreat and putting a temporary end to the centre-left coalition. The US Government could therefore feel satisfied for having achieved its goal set ever since Richard Nixon entered the White House.

Andreotti's advent at the head of the Italian government pleased Atlantic circles, as it emerges from the Annual Review of Italy for 1972 that the British Ambassador

⁴¹⁶ Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani*, 259-260

⁴¹⁷ Historical Archives of Elections in Italy,

<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=07/05/1972&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (last accessed 4 October 2023)

to Italy, Richard Hancock, drafted for the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Sir Alec Douglas-Home. In the review, Hancock highlighted the Andreotti government's proactive attitude towards Atlantic commitments, unlike centre-left governments. The latter were "inclined to avoid too explicit a commitment, preferring such forms of word as NATO in its geographically limited and defensive capacity". As an example, the British ambassador reported Minister of Foreign Affairs Giuseppe Medici's defence of the government's decision to permit the US to establish a nuclear submarine supply base at La Maddalena island, off the Sardinia's coast. Addressing the Chamber of Deputies on 29 November 1972, Hancock wrote, Medici emphasized Italy's obligations to NATO Allies under Article III of the North Atlantic Treaty. In this regard, the British Ambassador' comment was: "*Moro would never have gone as far as that*".⁴¹⁸

Hancock's Annual Review confirms that the purpose the masterminds of the strategy of tension had pursued was to facilitate the end of the centre-left in Italy and the establishment of a centre-right government more zealous in its Atlantic commitments. It is also relevant that Andreotti's political rise coincided with the temporary political eclipse of Aldo Moro, who remained without any office for the entire duration of the centre-right government (from 26 June 1972 to 8 July 1973). This suggests that the strategy of tension aimed at marginalizing Moro, as he was the leader of the Christian Democrats left-wing faction and the proponent of the opening to the Communist Party and of greater independence for Italy from Atlantic constraints.

The Christian Democrats, on their part, were aware of the US funding to the Social Movement, and that the neo-Fascist electoral advance was to their detriment, and they clearly didn't take it well. When Richard Gardner took office as the new US Ambassador in Italy in 1977, one of the first things that Giulio Andreotti, again Prime Minister, said to him was: "*In Italy, you Americans made two mistakes: in*

⁴¹⁸ Annual Review of Italy for 1972 by the British Ambassador Richard Hancock to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, File FCO 33/2196, Rome, 1 January 1973, National Archives, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department Western Europe

1963 when you supported the centre-left, and in 1972 when you supported the right-wing".⁴¹⁹

From his point of view as a Christian Democrat politician, the resentment that Andreotti expressed to Ambassador Gardner is understandable. At the same time, it denotes a bit of ingratitude. Indeed, it was the American interference in the 1972 elections that consecrated him as the most important Italian politician in the Cold War years. His high-level political career had began at the early age of 28 on 1 June 1947, when he took up the position of Undersecretary of State in the Alcide De Gasperi's government and then continued at the lead various ministries. His last task as a minister, at the head of the Ministry of Industry, ended on 13 December 1968. Afterwards, he had no more government duties until 1972. For three and a half years, when it seemed that his political star had dimmed, Andreotti weaved his threads backstage. Already the founder of the Christian Democrats' right-wing faction "*Primavera*" in 1954, he had always been the reference point of the opponents to any opening to the left. With the temporary arrest of his political ascent, Andreotti became the card to bet on in the unorthodox war against the Communist Party. In the sections of this chapter dedicated to the Borghese coup, his name appeared several times. The sources that pointed at him as a figure designated to lead the government that would have resulted from the success of the Borghese coup at the Nixon Administration's behest are numerous enough to believe that they were not only rumours.⁴²⁰

At this point of the chapter, one might wonder if Andreotti and the Nixon Administration agreed to exploit the Borghese coup and divert it to its failure, to then reap the benefits. In hindsight, this is a plausible assumption. If the Nixon Administration deceived the coup plotters by telling them that they would receive support only if Andreotti was appointed Prime Minister, and if Andreotti deceived them as well by pretending to accept, it is at least likely that there was an entente. The fact that there are no sources does not forbid to suppose that there were

⁴¹⁹ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, 121

⁴²⁰ See also: Fulvio Mazza, *Il Golpe Borghese: quarto grado di giudizio: la leadership di Gelli, il "golpista" Andreotti, i depistaggi della "Dottrina Maletti"* (Cosenza, 2020)

interactions between Andreotti and the US Government, perhaps through intermediaries from the American Embassy in Rome. The second chapter of this thesis already highlighted the fact that the most important documents concerning Italy in the Nixon years included in the US archives are still classified. It is not possible to exclude a priori that their content concerns the US role in the Borghese coup, nor that they include conversation's reports that American representatives had with Andreotti in 1970.⁴²¹

It remains an irrefutable fact that Andreotti became Prime Minister for the first time in 1972 after the US covert operation carried out that year. For the next twenty years, until 1992, he led the Italian government seven times, resulting as the politician with the highest number of government posts in the history of Italy. Had the bribery scandal in the Italian politics not erupted in 1992, and had his links with the mafia not emerged, it is very likely that Andreotti would have also become president of the republic. Hence, the suspicion that he enjoyed a sort of American blessing for the role he played in the Borghese coup.

On the other hand, there are traces of American funding to Andreotti. The daughter of a CIA agent serving at the US Embassy in Rome named Salvatore Acampora testified that her father personally carried suitcases full of money to Andreotti between 1966 and 1970. According to his daughter (whose reliability was ascertained by the judiciary), Acampora told her about funding anti-Communist parties in order to maintain the status quo in Italy, while the only Italian politician to personally receive money was the Christian Democrat politician.⁴²²

These revelations provide two important hints. The first is that the only politician who received personal funding from him was Andreotti. This fact matters for the purposes of this research because it proves that the Christian Democrat right-wing leader had become a US protégé to the point of receiving money outside of the regular funding for his party. The second hint concerns the chronology. Mrs.

⁴²¹ See the chapter "Attack on Italian democracy" of this thesis, page 117

⁴²² Testimony of Elisabetta Acampora released on 14 November 1995, in the Civil and Criminal Court of Venice-Criminal Instruction Office, Sentence-Order following the outcome of the formal investigation of criminal proceedings No. 318/87 against Zvi Zamir and other defendants for the sabotage of the Argo 16 aircraft (10 December 1998)

Acampora referred to a period between 1966 and 1970. As mentioned above, the United States had temporarily suspended the funding to the Italian parties in 1968. This means that the US Government, through the CIA, had identified Andreotti as its point of reference in Italy before he became the most powerful Italian politician. Moreover, the US kept funding him even when the Christian Democrats themselves did not receive any more funds, until the attempted Borghese coup in 1970.

Ultimately, the revelations by the CIA agent's daughter provide sufficient elements to believe that the US Government chose Giulio Andreotti as the pivot of its own political action towards Italy. They also allow to at least infer that there was a thread that connected the attempted Borghese coup and the centre-right government that took office on 26 June 1972. A thread that had been woven starting from the early months of 1969 and that unravelled until the assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the overall purpose of the thesis by explaining how the US attitude towards the Italian right-wing changed after the attacks of 12 December 1969. After the terrorists had turned what were expected as harmless actions into a massacre, US officials had realized that the subversive Italian right-wing was a dead weight to get rid of. When Junio Valerio Borghese approached members of the US Embassy's staff in Rome to expose his coup plan and ask for US support, it was a good opportunity to end relations. Deceiving the plotters by making them believe that the White House would be on their side and then letting them down was a way to sever ties that could have harmed the US interests and the stability on the Atlantic front. A more important political outcome was the rise to power of Giulio Andreotti, whom the US Government had imposed on the plotters as Prime Minister in return for their alleged support. After the coup failed, Andreotti found his way clear, and with the US approval he became Prime Minister for the first time in 1972. Andreotti was the leading figure of the conservative faction of the Christian Democracy, which the Nixon Administration relied on to put an end to the centre-left era. Hence, the

White House's decision to use him, first to deceive the putschists, and then to create the first centre-right government in Italy in fifteen years.

In this regard, the third chapter of this dissertation delves into a thesis already exposed in the previous chapters. That is, the US instrumentalization of the subversive Italian right-wing to strengthen the Christian Democracy's most conservative and anti-Communist faction, seen as a privileged ally of the United States. It is possible to argue that, in 1970, US officials had finally convinced themselves of the harmfulness of right-wing terrorist and coup groups, and that after having severed ties with them they became even closer to the Christian Democrats. Since the ties with the Christian Democrats made sense to the extent that there was no longer an alliance with the Socialist Party, the White House thought that supporting the Social Movement in the 1972 elections was useful to shift the Italian political axis to the right. The electoral results of these elections, and Giulio Andreotti's political rise rewarded the American strategy. These concluding remarks provide answers to the research questions set out in the introduction to this thesis.

Chapter 4: The final phase

*“The reactionary right-wing attempted and carried out the most dangerous operation since the liberation to date. This disintegrating attempt, which likely found support not only at home, but also abroad, is not over. We know that this attempt is still ongoing”.*⁴²³

Intro

This chapter focuses on the last phase of the strategy of tension. The years 1973 and 1974 saw the last subversive actions by the Italian right-wing. Afterwards, the political turmoil that took place in the United States, namely the Watergate scandal that forced Richard Nixon to resign and the rifts inside the CIA, put an end to the relationship between the US policymakers and intelligence and the Italian right-wing.⁴²⁴

In 1973, a group composed of right-wing militants and Italian military officials, under the NATO's aegis, designed a new subversive plan that went down in history as the *Rosa dei Venti* coup. The details of this plan have never been entirely clarified. The Rome judiciary in charge of investigating the Borghese coup took upon itself the inquiry that the public attorney at the Court of Padua Giovanni Tamburino had started. The unification of the two investigations made it difficult for a long time to find useful information regarding the *Rosa dei Venti* plan. Only in the 1990s, thanks to the investigation that prosecutor at the Court of Milan Guido Salvini carried out,

⁴²³ Translation by the author of this thesis of extract from a speech that the secretary of the Christian Democrats Arnaldo Forlani delivered in La Spezia on 5 November 1972. The original lines in Italian are as follows:

“È stato operato il tentativo più pericoloso che la destra reazionaria abbia tentato e portato avanti dalla liberazione ad oggi. Questo tentativo disgregante, che è stato portato avanti con una trama che aveva radici organizzative e finanziarie consistenti, che ha trovato delle solidarietà probabilmente non soltanto di ordine interno, ma anche di ordine internazionale, questo tentativo non è finito. Noi sappiamo in modo documentato che questo tentativo è ancora in corso”. See: “Arnaldo Forlani – audizione commissione stragi 18.04.1997 – prima parte”, <https://4agosto1974.wordpress.com/2014/12/14/arnaldo-forlani-audizione-commissione-stragi-18-04-1997-prima-parte/>, (last accessed 12 November 2024)

⁴²⁴ Aldo Giannuli, *La strategia della tensione. Servizi segreti, partiti, golpe falliti, terrore fascista, politica internazionale: un bilancio definitivo* (Millan, 2018), 384

was it possible to begin to realize that the *Rosa dei Venti* coup was a re-edition of the Borghese coup. Likewise, thanks also to the publication of the report of Giulio Andreotti's visit to Washington in April 1973 by the Office of the Historian of the State Department, it was possible for the author of this thesis to reach a conclusion. The Italian Prime Minister secretly incited the *Rosa dei Venti* coup plotters by making them believe that he would facilitate their subversive plans. He then sent them into disarray to consolidate his power, just as he had done in 1970 with the Borghese coup. The first section of this thesis exposes the US role and explains that the aim was to make Andreotti the point of reference for US interests in Italy.⁴²⁵

In 1974, the last two massacres took place. On 28 May, a bomb exploded in Piazza della Loggia in Brescia during a trade union demonstration, causing eight victims and one hundred and four injuries. On 4 August 1974, a bomb exploded on board of the *Italicus* train traveling from Rome to Munich, inside a tunnel near the municipality of San Benedetto Val di Sambro, in the province of Bologna. The toll was twelve dead and forty-eight injured. In the case of the Brescia bombing, it was possible to understand, through the judicial documents, that there was a sort of double consortium. On the one hand, the Italian and US secret services pushed the New Order's Venetian Cell to attack a well-defined political enemy such as the left-wing demonstrators in Brescia. On the other hand, New Order instigated young neo-Fascist militants from Milan and Brescia to carry out the attack, making them believe that the Carabinieri would be the target of a retaliation. Indeed, in the previous days, the Carabinieri had ceased their long-term protection of the right-wing extremists with a series of arrests for the express purpose of provoking them. Thus, the judiciary would make a clean sweep of the neo-Fascists.⁴²⁶

With regard to the attack on the *Italicus* train, this thesis argues that the P2 Masonic lodge organized the massacre to sabotage the subversive plan that the former diplomat Edgardo Sogno had scheduled for the same period. The motivation

⁴²⁵ Aldo Giannuli, in his recently published biography of Andreotti, deems this thesis plausible, although not explicitly endorsing it. See: Aldo Giannuli, *Andreotti, il grande regista: Settant'anni di storia politica italiana fra luci e tenebre, dalla parte del potere* (Milan, 2023), 199-202

⁴²⁶ Giovanni Pellegrino and Giovanni Fasanella, *Segreto di Stato. Verità e riconciliazione sugli anni di piombo* (Milan, 2008), 312-13

was the same for the attack in Brescia. Here, lies the key point of this chapter, that was the decision the US Government made, in the first half of the mid-1970's, to change its way to oppose the Italian Communist Party. The Italian right-wing no longer served any purpose and had become a sort of ballast for the Nixon Administration, which was already facing several internal and external problems (for example, the Watergate and the Vietnam crisis).

The third section of this chapter analyses how internal dynamics in American politics led to the end of relations with the Italian right-wing. This section argues that the United States began its semi-official withdrawal from European affairs in 1973, when Henry Kissinger delivered the Year of Europe speech. In this speech, Kissinger announced that the United States would leave it to European states to provide their own opposition to communism. The aftermath of the Vietnam War, and the involvement in the turmoil in Chile, culminating in the coup against the Salvador Allende Government, led the Nixon Administration to redefine its geopolitical priorities. From 1973 onwards, Latin America would receive the most attention from the United States to the detriment of Europe. As a result, the Greek and Portuguese regimes, which the United States had supported as a bulwark against the spread of communism, fell abruptly, and right-wing Italian terrorist groups were swept away by judicial investigations.⁴²⁷

In this regard, Nixon's resignation following the Watergate scandal and the CIA's inner rifts, with the consequent dismissal of James Jesus Angleton, merely accelerated a process that had already begun the year before. It is plausible that even if Nixon had completed his presidential mandate and had the scandal of the CIA's illicit activities had not emerged, the US Government would have broken the relationship with the European right-wing regimes and the Italian right-wing anyway.

⁴²⁷ Giannuli, *La strategia della tensione*, 470. See also: Effie Pedaliu, "A Sea of Confusion: The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969-1974", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 735-750

Overall, the fourth chapter shows how in 1974 it all came to a head. Nearly thirty years of policies in support of the Italian right-wing in an anti-Communist function proved to be a failure. The Communist Party's strength, except for the temporary setback between the Piazza Fontana massacre and the 1972 general elections, remained unchanged. The US, for their part, were likely to irreparably compromise their reputation in the world. The revelations by the US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the US Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities on the CIA's illicit activities, emerged in 1975, called into question the US anti-Communist policy's legitimacy.⁴²⁸ In the same period, the conquest of Saigon by the Vietcong sanctioned the definitive US defeat in Southeast Asia. Both the US internal turmoil and the change international context explain why, on the occasion of the trip to Washington of the Italian Social Movement's head Giorgio Almirante in 1975, Henry Kissinger categorically refused to meet him. It was one of the signs that, after 1974, the United States had changed its attitude towards those, like the neo-Fascists, that were deemed useful allies in the anti-Communist struggle only a few years earlier.

The two-year period 1974-1975 was a turning point. The Cold War was still in full swing, although the détente that Nixon had initiated averted the risk that it could degenerate. The Soviet Union had taken advantage of the United States' weakening to expand its influence in the Horn of Africa after the *Derg* coup in Ethiopia and the deposition of the thousand-year-old Solomonic empire. Likewise, the former Portuguese colonies, which had become independent following the Carnation Revolution in the motherland, immediately passed into the Soviet orbit.⁴²⁹ The partial US retreat from southern Europe, without having achieved appreciable results in limiting the Soviet presence in the area, fits into this context.

⁴²⁸ For a comprehensive study on the US House and Senate committees' works on the CIA's activities, see: Dafydd Townley, *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee* (London, 2021)

⁴²⁹ See: Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer. *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Teaneck, New Jersey, 1991); Robert Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: The diplomacy of intervention and disengagement* (Cambridge, 2009)

1973: *Rosa dei Venti* coup

The attempted Borghese coup had a follow up in 1973. On 29 October 1973, the representative in Italy of the veteran's organization of the original paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party *Sturmabteilung*, Giampaolo Porta Casucci, turned himself in to the police headquarters in La Spezia. During the interrogation, Casucci revealed the existence and purposes of a subversive group, and that its leaders left him a bag containing compromising material. Such material included plans regarding the attack on public buildings, death sentences against political opponents and receipts for payment in cash.⁴³⁰

During the search in Porta Casucci's home, the police found the detailed plan and the name of the organization, *Rosa dei Venti* (in English, "Compass Rose"). The plan was as follows:

- funds by big industry, like FIAT;
- terrorist attacks to create a state of psychosis in the population;
- offensive against left-wing parties and assassination of their major representatives;
- setting the conditions for a civil war to break out, to which an intervention by the armed forces would follow to restore order by occupying the nerve centres of the country;
- death sentences and execution of all leftist politicians, for an expected total of 1,624 to execute;
- establishment of an Italian Social Republic-type regime.⁴³¹

One of the main funders of the *Rosa dei Venti* coup was the bankster Michele Sindona with his institution *Banca Privata Finanziaria*. Sindona's role is understandable in light of the personal relationship he had with Richard Nixon, the new ambassador to Rome John Volpe and the former Secretary of Treasury in the Nixon Administration from 22 January 1969 to 11 February 1971 David Kennedy.

⁴³⁰ Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese and others, n.3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, n.1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge (5 November 1975)

See also the book that the prosecutor Giovanni Tamburino wrote on the origin of the strategy of tension: Giovanni Tamburino, *Dietro tutte le trame: Gianfranco Alliata e le origini della strategia della tensione* (Rome, 2022)

⁴³¹ Frédéric Laurent, *L'Orchestre Noire. Enquête sur Les Réseaux Néo-Fascistes* (Paris, 2013), 254

The latter, at that time, was president of the financial company *Fasco*, one of the holdings owned by the Sicilian banker, and chief executive of the Continental Illinois Bank.⁴³² In 1968, the Continental Illinois Bank acquired 24.5% of the *Banca Privata Finanziaria*'s shares.⁴³³ According to Kevin Coogan, David Kennedy's entry into the *Banca Privata Finanziaria* made it clear that some sectors of the US state apparatus had decided to use Sindona and his financial resources to carry out covert operations in Italy.⁴³⁴ The *Rosa dei Venti* coup was, indeed, among these operations.

One of the conspirators was General Francesco Nardella, who from 1962 to 1971 had directed the Psychological Warfare Office at the Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces in Verona. NATO's Psychological Warfare Office in Verona worked in liaison with the US Army and was secretly flanked by a CIA research office. One of its main tasks was the study of psychological strategies to use in cases of coup, riots, and counterinsurgency. It is likely that NATO's Office of Psychological Warfare mainly devoted its attention to studying the strategy of tension.⁴³⁵

The investigations by Padua's court attorney Giovanni Tamburino penetrated the Italian state apparatuses up to reaching departments of the armed forces linked to the information offices in connection with NATO.⁴³⁶ The *Rosa dei Venti* was the direct subsidiary of a supranational secret service of NATO superimposed on the institutional bodies of the Italian state.⁴³⁷ It is no coincidence that the name *Rosa dei Venti* recalls the NATO flag. In fact, since ancient times, the compass rose has referred to a diagram that schematically represents the origin of the winds that persist during a rather long period of time. Its original purpose was to indicate the position

⁴³² Pietro Calderoni, *I servizi segreti* (Naples, 1986), 71-72

⁴³³ Claudio Oliva, "Henry Kissinger, l'anima nera del XX secolo",

https://www.glistatigenerali.com/geopolitica_storia-cultura/henry-kissinger-l'anima-nera-del-xx-secolo/, (26 November 2022) (last accessed 1 September 2023). Through the Continental Illinois Bank, Sindona funded the Italian subversive right-wing. See: Eduardo Di Giovanni, Marco Ligini, Edgardo Pellegrino, *La strage di stato. Controinchiesta* (Rome, 1970), 164

⁴³⁴ Kevin Coogan, "The importance of Robert Gayre", *Parapolitics U.S.A.* N.2, (May 1981), 44-51. Sindona provided \$ 1 Million funding to Nixon's electoral campaign on the occasion of the 1972 US presidential election. See: Lucinda Franks, "Sindona's \$1- Million Offer to Nixon Group Examined", *New York Times*, (15 July 1974)

⁴³⁵ Mario Scialoja, "Il generale è un nero", *L'Espresso*, Year XX, N.4, (27 January 1974)

⁴³⁶ Mirco Dondi, *L'eco del boato: Storia della strategia della tensione 1965-1974* (Bari, 2015), 300

⁴³⁷ Giuseppe De Lutiis. *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia* (Rome, 1984), 102

of the winds based on the four cardinal points: North, South, East, West. Due to its symbolic value, both NATO and the CIA decided to adopt the compass rose. The adherents to the *Rosa dei Venti* decided to do the same to prove their pro-Americanism and their adherence to the Atlantic political line.⁴³⁸

The investigation led to a series of arrests. One of the arrested was Roberto Cavallaro, a member of the right-wing trade union CISNAL (*Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Nazionali dei Lavoratori*) who had the task to seek adherents to the coup plot among the armed forces officials. In March 1974, while he was in custody, Cavallaro revealed the existence of an organization parallel to the SID, made up of Italian and American secret services. This organization, at times called Organization X, or Parallel SID, was set up in 1964 after the missed implementation of the *Piano Solo*. It was in charge of controlling and supervising the various right-wing terrorist groups and coup plotters such as the *Rosa dei Venti*. Above all, it acted as a link between political and civil hierarchies and military upper echelons united in the fight against Communism.⁴³⁹

According to the investigating judge Guido Salvini, the Organization X also corresponded to the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato*.⁴⁴⁰ The sentence-order on the Piazza Fontana massacre that Salvini issued on 18 February 1995 includes various testimonies by right-wing militants fully integrated into the NATO security system. One of them, named Enzo Ferro, revealed that the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato* pursued a coup within a situation that foresaw terrorist attacks in order to push the population to request or accept a "strong government". Another former member, Francesco Baia, said to the magistrates that the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato* were

⁴³⁸ Giuseppe Gagliano, "La strategia della paura: apparati deviati e tentazioni golpiste in Italia", *Osservatorio Globalizzazione*, <https://osservatorioglobalizzazione.it/progetto-italia/la-strategia-della-paura-apparati-deviati-e-tentazioni-golpiste-in-italia/> (last accessed 12 November 2024)

⁴³⁹ Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese and others, n.3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, n.1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge (5 November 1975)

⁴⁴⁰ See the section "Rise of the centre-left governments and opposition" of the first chapter of this thesis, page 74

under the NATO's command.⁴⁴¹ Roberto Cavallaro added that their function was to exercise psychological warfare's techniques (which he did not mention) and intervention with a view to the opposition to the Italian Communist Party.⁴⁴² Still according to Cavallaro, this structure depended directly on the General Staff of the Italian Armed Forces.⁴⁴³

Another *Rosa dei Venti* member, Colonel Amos Spiazzi, in a series of interrogations, stated that Organization X meant to defend the institutions against the Communist Party's advance. According to Spiazzi, it served to guarantee respect for the established power and for the confidentially signed NATO agreements. The philosophy that inspired this structure, in essence, consisted in protecting Italy's belonging to the Western bloc, being permanently mobilized against Communism, and preventing the rise to government by the left-wing.⁴⁴⁴

There is a detail that proves the subordination of the Italian security apparatuses to the Atlantic system. The Ministries of the Interior and of Defence still today host the Security Offices of the North Atlantic Treaty, connected to a central office at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. The main task is to guarantee the Atlantic loyalty of all officials whose duties have to do with NATO's security. One of the duties of the Security Office of the North Atlantic Treaty at the Ministry of Defence is to grant the authorization for security, the highest level of which is the "cosmic clearance". Amos Spiazzi was among the extremely small circle of people who obtained it.⁴⁴⁵

The first steps towards the *Rosa dei Venti* coup occurred during a meeting that took place among the Borghese coup plotters, convened to take stock of the situation after the failure of the plot, on 20 May 1971. One of the participants, a municipal

⁴⁴¹ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan - Hearing Office Section 20, Criminal proceedings against Nico Azzi and others, N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, N.721/88F General Register of the Investigating Judge (18 March 1995)

⁴⁴² For an overview on the US psychological warfare, see the section "Development of US interference" from the first chapter of this thesis, pages 59-61

⁴⁴³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan (18 March 1995)

⁴⁴⁴ Paolo Cucchiarelli and Aldo Giannuli, *Lo stato parallelo. L'Italia «Oscura» nei documenti e nelle relazioni della Commissione stragi* (Rome, 1997), 299

⁴⁴⁵ Investigation by the investigating judge of Padua Giovanni Tamburino into the Rosa dei Venti coup, in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese and others, n.3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, n.1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge (5 November 1975)

councillor from the Italian Social Movement in Padua named Dario Zagolin, was also an informant at the Ederle US military base in Vicenza. Zagolin's relationships with US officials at the Ederle base were so close that he was allowed to participate in confidential meetings aboard the aircraft carrier *Forrestal* moored off the coast of Venice.⁴⁴⁶ Zagolin guaranteed that thanks to his personal relationships with the American high officers he could gain US support for another coup.⁴⁴⁷ Another Social Movement militant who acted as an informant for the American military command in Vicenza, Gianfranco Belloni, made an interesting revelation to the prosecutors. According to Belloni, in January 1974, Zagolin managed to escape the arrest warrant that the Padua court had issued against him and take refuge in Paris thanks to the support that his US contacts provided him.⁴⁴⁸ These details help to understand how a neo-Fascist like Zagolin truly enjoyed a privileged relationship with the American military commands in Vicenza.

Zagolin was not the only person involved in the coup to have links with American circles. Another key figure was Carlo Fumagalli. During the 1943-45 civil war, in which he had taken part in a partisan group, Fumagalli had become an OSS collaborator, and in 1945 he received the Bronze Star Medal from the US Army, before the CIA recruited him as an undercover agent. In 1962, Fumagalli founded the *Movimento di Azione Rivoluzionaria* (MAR) with the aim of countering the nascent centre-left coalition. Moreover, in late 1960s, Fumagalli went to Southern Yemen to organize guerrilla warfare against the local Communist government on behalf of the CIA.⁴⁴⁹

One of the MAR members was Gaetano Orlando, former Social Democrat mayor of Lovero, in the province of Sondrio. During an interrogation before judge Leonardo Grassi, Orlando revealed that the group began to be fully operational

⁴⁴⁶ Criminal Court of Rome - Hearing Office, Sentence-order against Junio Valerio Borghese and others (15 November 1975)

⁴⁴⁷ Criminal Court of Rome - Hearing Office, Sentence-order against Junio Valerio Borghese and others (15 November 1975)

⁴⁴⁸ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan - Hearing Office Section 20, Criminal proceedings against Nico Azzi and others, N.2643/84A General Register of the Public Prosecutor, N.721/88F General Register of the Investigating Judge (18 March 1995)

⁴⁴⁹ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

following a series of meetings held between September and November 1969 in Padua with US officers serving at the Ederle Base in Vicenza. According to Orlando, after these meetings, MAR members were supplied with weapons and instructed to use them when the time came to carry out a coup and take action against the Communists.⁴⁵⁰

Fumagalli, for his part, designed a plan for attacks in the small towns in Valtellina, on the border between Italy and Switzerland to blow up the pylons and create a nationwide blackout. In the intents, such action would facilitate the achievement of the coup. According to what former right-wing militant Edgardo Bonazzi revealed, Fumagalli had agreed with the CIA to militarily occupy Valtellina to facilitate the *Rosa dei Venti* coup. Fumagalli himself told him that the goal was the establishment of a presidential republic.⁴⁵¹

Albeit indirectly, Fumagalli admitted in front of the judges his connection with American circles and that he was at their service. On 9 July 1974, two months after his arrest for his subversive actions, Fumagalli said to the Brescia prosecutors that the US would only support a Christian Democrat or in any case a centrist coup d'état.⁴⁵² It should be stressed that, personally, Fumagalli was not a neo-Fascist. By his self-definition, he was a centrist extremist, and his past as a partisan during the 1943-45 civil war placed him ideologically far from right-wing extremism.⁴⁵³

The *Rosa dei Venti* coup plot took the first concrete steps in the spring of 1973. The details were discussed during a meeting that took place in March 1973 in a Michele Sindona's house near Vicenza between high Italian and American

⁴⁵⁰ Court of Bologna, Office of Inquiry, Testimonial Examination of Gaetano Orlando before Judge Leonardo Grassi, 10 April 1991, in Assize Court of Bologna, Sentence-Ordinance Italicus Bis, No. 1251/A/82 General Register of the Prime Minister, No. 1329/A/84 General Register of the Investigating Judge (3 August 1994)

⁴⁵¹ Bonazzi to cap. Giraudo, 26 February 1996, in Carabinieri Special Operations Group-Subversion Department, Annotation on investigative emergencies relating to the involvement of foreign intelligence structures in the strategy of tension, N. 378/307, Rome, 8 May 1996, Italian Central State Archive

⁴⁵² Claudia Cernigoi, "Strategia dell'alta tensione", *La Nuova Alabarda*, Dossier N. 50, 2014

<https://www.diecifebbraio.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/la-strategia-dellalta-tensione.pdf>, (last accessed 2 October 2023)

⁴⁵³ Parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

officers.⁴⁵⁴ In one of his memoirs, Cavallaro added that one of the US officers, General Maynard Johnson, in service at the US military base in Vicenza, attended the meeting not in a personal capacity but on behalf of the US Government. According to Cavallaro, the purpose was to ascertain the real chances of achieving the plan. At the end of the meeting, General Johnson promised US support for the coup, and that the US troops stationed in Italy would intervene in case of left-wing reactions.⁴⁵⁵ US Army officers stationed in Italy also attended the preparatory meetings for the coup, and NATO gave the green light to its implementation. Amos Spiazzi confirmed Cavallaro's statements, stating that he had learned that, in the same period a meeting between US admirals took place aboard a battleship anchored off the Venice's coast to discuss an impending coup in Italy.⁴⁵⁶

The plotters scheduled the coup in conjunction with Andreotti's trip to America and Japan planned for 15 April 1973. Spiazzi received the order to get in touch with the plotters between 25 and 30 April 1973, with a phone call using a five-digit reference numerical mobilization code used in NATO exercises.⁴⁵⁷ During his visit to the United States, Andreotti met with Nixon at the White House on 17 April. It is useful to quote some excerpts from the memorandum of the conversation between Andreotti and Nixon that Kissinger transcribed, as they can provide some hints for understanding the situation Italy found itself in during the spring of 1973.

Andreotti gave a concise picture of the end of centre-left governments, explaining that the relationships among the coalition parties failed to improve over time, and various frictions and contradictions began to arise. This started a reaction in the form of increasing strength on the part of the Social Movement. For these reasons, Andreotti continued, the Christian Democrats decided to dissolve the centre-left in 1972, and in the elections that followed the results were good for the right-wing. A

⁴⁵⁴ Roberto Cavallaro interrogation to judge Giovanni Tamburino, 15 February 1974, in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese

⁴⁵⁵ Memoriale Cavallaro, in Cucchiarelli and Giannuli, *Lo stato parallelo*, 302

⁴⁵⁶ Investigations by Giovanni Tamburino into the Rosa dei Venti coup, in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese

⁴⁵⁷ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

new government was then formed under the Christian Democrats with the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party. The government was weak in the parliament, due to the small majority it had in both the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. At the same time, Andreotti stated that he was certain that until it became possible to bring about a change in the Socialist's basic stances, it would be better to have a small majority, rather than another centre-left that would lack vitality. Andreotti concluded that he was concerned that, if a new centre-left were formed without a thorough airing of the basic issues, a new crisis would soon ensue. Such an outcome would in turn again strengthen the neo-Fascists and deliver a trump to the hand of the Communists, who could say that it was not possible to govern effectively without them.⁴⁵⁸

Kissinger wrote about Nixon's response to Andreotti: "*The President remarked that, while he certainly did not wish to "interfere in Italian politics", he could not fail to express his admiration for Premier Andreotti's efforts, even with only a small majority, to have a government that stands for something, rather than accept having perhaps a larger majority, but which would lead to much compromise and really not stand for anything.*". Kissinger concluded the memorandum by adding that Nixon expressed his certainty that Andreotti, as a leader and as an individual, was able to speak to his people more firmly than any previous Prime Minister.⁴⁵⁹

This exchange between Andreotti and Nixon requires close examination. Andreotti declared the death of the centre-left, accusing it of the inability to improve Italy's economic and social conditions and accusing the Socialist Party of not being adequate to be part of a government structure. At the same time, he expressed concern about the gains the Social Movement earned from the failure of the centre-left, and about any further empowerment the neo-Fascists might gain in the future. There are two possible interpretations of this representation of the Italian politics by

⁴⁵⁸ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) for the President's Files, Washington, 17 April 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, Second, Revised Edition*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2Ed2/d344> (last accessed 2 September 2023)

⁴⁵⁹ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) for the President's Files, Washington, 17 April 1973

Andreotti. According to the first, Andreotti spoke more as a Christian Democrat politician than as Italian Prime Minister, thus expressing concern that his party could lose votes to its right. In this sense, it is possible that, with all the political language's subtleties he was a master in, Andreotti intended to reproach Nixon for the support to the Social Movement in the 1972 elections to the detriment of the Christian Democrats. Again, according to this possible interpretation, Andreotti perhaps intended to remind Nixon that the best friends the US could have in Italy were always the Christian Democrats.

A second possible interpretation, which complements the first, is that a centre-right government under the Christian Democrats, without giving in to the subversive right-wing, remained the best guarantee for the US interests and the Atlantic stability. In other words, given the closing towards the Communists, it was necessary to prevent the neo-Fascists from advancing further, and to protect Italian democracy from the threats that came both from the left and from the right. Judging by Nixon's response, the second interpretation seems the most correct.

Nixon had never expressed similar appreciations for other Italian politicians, at least in public occasions, except to Saragat. Considering that according to Cavallaro and Spiazzi the coup was expected to take place during Andreotti's visit to the United States, and that he himself was the instigator, the suspicion arises that the Italian Prime Minister played the same role he did in 1970. In other words, Andreotti probably fuelled the subversive intentions of Borghese's former acolytes gathered in the *Rosa dei Venti*, making them believe that he would facilitate their plans, to then letting them down. In this sense, Andreotti's official visit to the White House served to have a sort of endorsement from the Nixon Administration to exploit the plotters' plans in order to strengthen his own government. If this assumption is plausible, it means that Andreotti wanted to deliver a double message: to the coup plotters, that the strong man, was still him, thanks to the US endorsement, and that they could at most be useful as pawns in his political game; to the Nixon Administration, that the only way to avoid to choose the lesser evil between a government including

Communists and a right-wing coup was to give credit to him, as a politician who better than anyone else would protect the stability in Italy.⁴⁶⁰

A passage from Roberto Cavallaro's revelations makes this assumption credible. In fact, Cavallaro said he had learned from Spiazzi that the conspirators cancelled the coup because they suspected that Andreotti's aim was to seize power without sharing it with anyone, to give one blow to the left and one to the right.⁴⁶¹ It therefore appears clear that Andreotti made the plotters he would be on their side, and then sabotaged after earning Nixon's personal endorsement to his government during his visit to the White House.

While Andreotti was preparing his trip to the United States, a new terrorist offensive began in order to facilitate the coup's implementation. On 7 April 1973, some members of the New Order's Milanese cell, *La Fenice*, boarded the Turin-Rome train in Pavia with a bomb. One of the terrorists, Nico Azzi, went back and forth between the train's compartments ostentatiously displaying a copy of the left-wing movement *Lotta Continua* newspaper, so that the other passengers identified him as a leftist. At a certain point, Azzi locked himself in a bathroom and tried to activate the bomb but mishandled the explosive and detonated it between his legs being injured, thus determining the failure of an attack that would have caused dozens of victims.⁴⁶²

On 17 May, at the end of a memorial service at the Milan Police Headquarters of Commissioner Luigi Calabresi, the fake anarchist Gianfranco Bertoli threw a bomb at the car carrying Mariano Rumor, at that time Minister of the Interior. The bomb bounced off the car and exploded into the crowd, killing four people. Numerous neo-Fascist militants testified that he was a right-wing extremist.⁴⁶³ Judicial

⁴⁶⁰ Scholar Stefania Limiti subscribes to the thesis that Andreotti acquired further political strength after his trip to Washington. See: Stefania Limiti, *L'estate del golpe: l'attentato a Mariano Rumor, Gladio, i fascisti. Tra Piazza Fontana e il compromesso storico*. (Milan, 2023), 250

⁴⁶¹ Inquiry by the investigating judge at the Court of Padua Giovanni Tamburino into the Rosa dei Venti coup, in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese

⁴⁶² Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Investigation Office section 20^, N.2643/84A R.G.P.M, Sentence-Ordinance on the bombing of Milan (18 March 1995)

⁴⁶³ Interview with former New Order militant Martino Siciliano by Marco Travaglio "I nostri attentati fecero molto Rumor", *Il Borghese*, N.2, Year XLIX (21 January 1998)

investigations also established that New Order had organized this attack and instructed Bertoli to carry it out. The motive was to punish Rumor for not having decreed a state of emergency after the Piazza Fontana massacre, when he was Prime Minister. This attack also served to give further impetus to carry out the *Rosa dei Venti* coup, rescheduled for 2 June 1973.⁴⁶⁴

In the previous days, New Order militants had instructed Bertoli not only on how to carry out the attack, but also on how to pass himself off as an anarchist. Indeed, he threw the bomb shouting phrases such as "*You will all die like Calabresi, and now kill me like Pinelli*"⁴⁶⁵ and displaying a conspicuous medal with the "A" circled sign. After the arrest, he called himself an "individualistic follower of Max Stirner".⁴⁶⁶ Having Bertoli pass off as anarchist, like the display of *Lotta Continua* copies by the attackers on the Turin-Genoa train, obviously served to relaunch the left-wing trail of the Piazza Fontana massacre. Indeed, at that time, the judicial investigations had found that right-wing extremists were responsible for the 1969 bombings. New Order's purpose was to recreate the "red scare" among public opinion and facilitate popular consensus for the coup d'état that would restore order and security. On the contrary, as Amos Spiazzi explained to the Padua prosecutors, the failed Mariano Rumor's assassination at the Milan Police Headquarters and the internal conflicts within the various coup-plotting components made the *Rosa dei Venti* coup fail.⁴⁶⁷

While the investigation by the Padua judiciary continued, further details emerged on the *Rosa dei Venti* coup. On 17 October 1974, Cavallaro granted an interview to

⁴⁶⁴ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office - Tenth Section, Sentence-order on the massacre of the Milan Police Headquarters in Criminal Case No. 2322/73 against Carlo Maria Maggi and others, General Public Prosecutor's Register 6703/73 (18 July 1998)

⁴⁶⁵ Bertoli was referring to the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, who on 12 December 1969, in the hours following the Piazza Fontana massacre, was convened by the Milan police station. On the evening of 15 December, just before midnight, Pinelli fell from the window of Commissioner Luigi Calabresi's office. Hence the violent press campaign by newspapers and left-wing movements especially *Lotta Continua*, against Calabresi, accused of having caused Pinelli's death, if not actually having murdered him. On 17 May 1972, Calabresi was shot dead in front of his house. For his murder, the *Lotta Continua*'s head, Adriano Sofri, was convicted with a final ruling, with the charge of being the instigator to avenge Pinelli. On the still mysterious death of Pinelli, see: Gabriele Fuga and Enrico Maltini, *Pinelli: la finestra è ancora aperta* (Milan, 2016). On Calabresi's assassination, see: Daniele Biacchessi, *Il caso Sofri* (Rome, 1998)

⁴⁶⁶ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office - Tenth Section, (18 July 1998)

⁴⁶⁷ Investigation by the investigating judge of Padua Giovanni Tamburino into the Rosa dei Venti coup, in in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese

the Italian weekly *L'Europeo* revealing to public opinion what until then only the prosecutors knew. In one of the key passages of the interview, Cavallaro exposed the difference between a coup d'état and a "coup by the state": the first was of Greek-Chilean type, consisting in the seizure of power by the armed forces; the other was the state's strategy of tension, aimed at creating the justification for an authoritarian turn. Since the Italian political situation did not allow for the use of force as in Latin America, the Italian and US secret services at the head of the Organization X believed that in Italy it was better to resort to the strategy of tension rather than a military coup. To better clarify the concept, the former *Rosa dei Venti* member explained that the organization existed in a legal structure with the aim of preventing disruptions to the institutions. When these disruptions spread across the country, the organization would take action to restore order. Otherwise, the organization would cause them with terrorist attacks and attempted coups.⁴⁶⁸

At the end of the interview, when the interviewer asked him if the coup wave in Italy had ceased, Cavallaro answered yes, but adding that the Organization X had remained standing. To quote his exact words: "*Only a few dry and diseased branches have been cut, the tree remains standing. Faced with new disrupts, the organization can still activate its network. With new branches, less diseased and less compromised*".⁴⁶⁹

The subsequent events proved Cavallaro right. In October 1973, the *Nuclei per la Difesa dello Stato*/Organization X were deactivated to keep the secret bodies within the Italian Armed Forces and NATO from being discovered. Before Tamburino's investigations made enough progress to reveal who was pulling the strings of the terrorist and coup plotter groups, on 30 December 1974 the *Corte di Cassazione* sent him a telegram. This message informed him of the decision to transfer the trial on the *Rosa dei Venti* to the Court of Rome and unify it with the ongoing trial on the Borghese coup. Since the Rome's judicial environment has

⁴⁶⁸ Translation into English of an extra from the interview with Roberto Cavallaro by Corrado Incerti, "Clamorose rivelazioni. La NATO sapeva che si preparava il golpe in Italia", *L'Europeo*, Year XXX, N. 17, (17 October 1976)

⁴⁶⁹ Incerti, "Clamorose rivelazioni. La NATO sapeva che si preparava il golpe in Italia", *L'Europeo*, (17 October 1976)

always been accommodating with the defendants for subversion and conspiracy's crimes, the clear purpose was to frustrate the Padua Court's commitment. In fact, on 14 July 1978, the Court of Assizes in Rome condemned only the organization's middle levels such as Roberto Cavallaro, Amos Spiazzi, Giampaolo Porta Casucci and Francesco Nardella. The Court of Rome acquitted the main defendant, the military secret services head Vito Miceli (who, in the meanwhile, had become an Italian Social Movement MP) of aiding the coup because the crime did not exist. On 25 March 1986, the acquittal became enforceable after the *Corte di Cassazione* confirmed it.⁴⁷⁰

It is now necessary to delve deeper into the *Rosa dei Venti* coup's historical context, and the degree of American involvement in it. Professor Aldo Giannuli offered a helpful interpretation of the 1973 events. In Italy, there was a reorganization of political and economic powers in the two-year period 1972-73. The Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party organized congresses that redefined the internal power relations in view of the regional elections scheduled for 1975. Michele Sindona was trying to acquire ownership of the financial company *Bastogi*. Had he succeeded in the acquisition, Sindona would have become the biggest Italian entrepreneur along with Gianni Agnelli. In the media, a great battle was underway for the acquisition of *Corriere della Sera* so that ownership would pass to the Rizzoli family, closely linked to P2. At the same time, the endemic corruption system made a further qualitative leap with the maxi bribe on the sale of Libyan oil and on the supply of transport aircrafts to the Italian Air Force by the Lockheed Corporation. In this scenario, according to Giannuli, Giulio Andreotti outlined a political-economic plan aimed at consolidating his power and Sindona's supremacy in the financial and entrepreneurial fields.⁴⁷¹

This is the most correct key to understanding the attempted *Rosa dei Venti* coup. Andreotti had become the guardian of the US interests in Italy. Sindona, for his part, increased his own economic power in the US thanks to his personal and financial

⁴⁷⁰ Corte di Cassazione, Sentence on the Borghese Coup, General Register Crime News 24073-1985 (Rome, 24 March 1986)

⁴⁷¹ Aldo Giannuli, *Il noto servizio: le spie di Giulio Andreotti* (Rome, 2013), 208-209

relationship with Richard Nixon. It is understandable how the US government gave its blessing to a project aimed at consolidating both sides' power in their respective fields, since it was part of the logic of opposing openings to left in Italy. In this sense, it is possible to speak of continuity between the Borghese and the *Rosa dei Venti* coups. Whereas the Borghese coup paved the way to Giulio Andreotti's rise to power, the *Rosa dei Venti* coup consolidated his position.⁴⁷²

The indirect US involvement in the *Rosa dei Venti* coup is deducible from the fact that Vito Miceli used part of the \$800,000 he received from the Nixon Administration to finance the group's subversive activities.⁴⁷³ It is significant that the US archives have no documents dealing with the *Rosa dei Venti*, unlike the Borghese coup. Hence the doubt that the US involvement was greater in the subversive plot of 1973 than in that of 1970, and that many of the documents still classified regarding Italy concern the *Rosa dei Venti* coup.

1974: the final year

The year 1974 was the final act of this story. In Italy, a last coup d'état was attempted in the days following the massacre on the train *Italicus* on 4 August. 1974. In the United States, Richard Nixon resigned as president of the United States on 9 August, and the CIA director William Colby removed James Jesus Angleton as head of counterintelligence on 24 December. This section will show the links between the internal events in Italy and the United States and how they determined the end of the strategy of tension.⁴⁷⁴

Before delving into the theme of this last section, it is useful to report the thesis that scholar Gianni Flamini set out in his seminal work *Il Partito del Golpe* (in English, “The Coup’s Party”). According to Flamini, in the first half of the 1970s there were two consortia in Italy: one, including all the far-right groups, aimed to carry out a coup in the Greek-South American style; the other, made of the Italian

⁴⁷² Gianni Flamini, *Il partito del golpe: le strategie della tensione e del terrore dal primo centrosinistra organico al sequestro Moro*, Vol.III. (Ferrara, 1982), 331-335

⁴⁷³ Laurent, L”orchestre noir., 264-265

⁴⁷⁴ Giannuli, *La strategia della tensione*, 561

entrepreneurial and industrial establishment and the non-neo-Fascist right-wing groups and parties, wanted to turn the Italian state into a presidential republic with a majoritarian electoral system that would exclude the Communist Party. Flamini's thesis is that the two roped parties were not linked to each other, but on the contrary, there was a rivalry between them. The second consortium set a sort of trap for the far-right conspirators, making them believe that they would be on their side to then send them into the fray.⁴⁷⁵

The description of the Borghese coup and the role that Andreotti and Graham Martin played exposed in the third chapter lend legitimacy to Flamini's thesis.⁴⁷⁶ Since the far-right proved to be as dangerous as the Communists, and the need to fight the latter still persisted, those who yearned for a strong but still democratic solution devised a sort of "centrist coup". The ultimate goal was to be a two-party political system, with only two parties loyal to the Atlantic Alliance and hostile to the Communists. That was indeed the plan that the P2 masonic lodge designed.⁴⁷⁷ To achieve this goal, it was necessary to get rid of the far-right groups in order to pave the way for the democratic right-wing.⁴⁷⁸ This explains better the American Embassy's manoeuvres to derail the Borghese coup.

Meanwhile, the Italian political agenda foresaw an important schedule on 12 and 13 May with the referendum on the repeal of the law on divorce, adopted in 1970. Catholic activists had called this referendum to counter what they claimed to be the moral collapse of Italian society that the disintegration of the family as an institution had caused following the adoption of the law on divorce.⁴⁷⁹ The Christian Democrats and the Italian Social Movement immediately supported the repeal, arguing that the

⁴⁷⁵ Gianni Flamini, *Il partito del golpe. La strategia della tensione e del terrore dal primo centrosinistra organico al sequestro Moro*, Vol. 3, Part I (Bologna, 1983), .4

⁴⁷⁶ See the whole section "Background to Borghese coup and aftermath" of the third chapter of this thesis

⁴⁷⁷ For an overview on the P2 masonic lodge, see: Sergio Flamigni, *Trame atlantiche. Storia della loggia massonica segreta P2* (Milan, 2005)

⁴⁷⁸ Flamini, *Il partito del golpe*, Vol. 3, Part I, 21

⁴⁷⁹ On 26 April 1974, at a rally held in Caltanissetta, Sicily, for the referendum, the then secretary of the Christian Democrats, and five-time Prime Minister, Amintore Fanfani stated:

"Do you want divorce? Then you should know that abortion will come after. And then, homosexual marriage will come as well. And maybe your wife will leave you to run away with the servant!" See: Giampiero Pansa, "La caduta di Fanfani", *La Repubblica* (8 May 2004)

Communist Party inspired and rode the destruction of family values in order to access power more quickly.⁴⁸⁰ These positions were in line with those of the Catholic Church, which on the occasion of the referendum on divorce returned to engage in political disputes in Italy as in the 1948 elections.⁴⁸¹

The Church's political importance in Italy has always been considerable, at least since Benito Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaties with the State Secretary of the Holy See Pietro Gasparri on 11 February 1929. With the Lateran Treaties and the creation of Vatican City, the Church returned to being a state and political entity, after having been reduced to being a simple spiritual entity following the Capture of Rome by the Italian army on 20 September 1870. Before the Christian Democracy's foundation, there had already been a mass party of Catholic inspiration in the Italian political scene. It was the Italian Popular Party, founded by the priest Don Luigi Sturzo on 18 January 1919, then dissolved by the Fascist regime on 9 November 1926. After the fall of fascism, it was the Christian Democracy, secretly founded on 19 March 1943, that acted as the Church's political arm and bulwark of Catholic traditions and values threatened by the Socialists and Communists.⁴⁸²

The definitive Church's affirmation as a political actor of primary importance in Italy occurred in the 1948 democratic elections, when the Catholic organizations' massive commitment proved decisive in the Christian Democracy's victory.⁴⁸³ The last serious interference by the Church in Italian politics occurred during the administrative elections of 1952. On that occasion, Pope Pius XII put pressure on the then Italian Prime Minister and leader of the Christian Democracy Alcide De Gasperi to create a joint electoral list with the Social Movement to prevent a

⁴⁸⁰ For a political and social analysis on the referendum on divorce, see: Alberto Marradi, "Analisi del referendum sul divorzio", *Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, Volume 4, No. 3, (December 1974), 589-644. On the Communist Party's actual attitude on the divorce, see: Fiammetta Balestracci, "Il PCI, il divorzio e il mutamento dei valori nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta", *Studi Storici*, Year 54, No. 4 (October-December 2013), 989-1021

⁴⁸¹ For an overview on the Church's influence on the Italian politics and society, see: Roy Domenico, *The Devil and the Dolce Vita: Catholic Attempts to Save Italy's Soul, 1948-1974* (Washington, 2021)

⁴⁸² For a thorough history of the Christian Democracy party, see: Agostino Giovagnoli, *Il partito italiano: la Democrazia Cristiana dal 1942 al 1994* (Bari, 1996)

⁴⁸³ See the memoir of Luigi Gedda, founder of the *Comitati Civici*, the main Catholic organization involved in the 1948 electoral campaign: Luigi Gedda, *18 aprile 1948. Memorie inedite dell'artefice della sconfitta del Fronte Popolare*, (Milan, 1998)

Communist victory in Rome.⁴⁸⁴ Subsequently, the consolidation of the Christian Democracy's strength, and the beginning of the new course in the Church with the John XXIII's pontificate, had reduced the ecclesial intervention in Italian political life. After the approval of the law on divorce in 1970, the Church began to be politically active again, promoting the Catholic associations involved in collecting signatures to call the abrogative referendum and then in the propaganda campaign.⁴⁸⁵

As far as the US Government was concerned, the referendum on divorce did not seem to be the first step to a Communist takeover. In a memorandum that Kissinger wrote to Nixon concerning the divorce referendum on 6 May 1974, it was deemed unlikely that even a major Communist victory in the referendum would lead to their immediate participation in the government.⁴⁸⁶ A further addition to these considerations came from the results of the National Intelligence Estimate, published on 18 June 1974. This study, entitled "Prospects for and Consequences of Increased Communist Influence in Italian Politics", reached conclusions relevant to this research:

- “- Communist influence in Italy is on the increase;*
- The PCI does not appear prepared to accept actual membership in a governing coalition at this time;*
- An abortive coup attempt from the right or an economic collapse are the circumstances most likely to force the Christian Democrats into an immediate accommodation with the Communists.”⁴⁸⁷*

⁴⁸⁴ See the first-hand testimony by Giulio Andreotti, who was very close to De Gasperi: Giulio Andreotti, “Ma il Papa, alla fine, preferì la Dc”, *30 Giorni*, N.5 (May 1998)

⁴⁸⁵ Marradi, “Analisi del referendum sul divorzio”, *Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 589-644.

⁴⁸⁶ Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, 6 May 1974, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976, Second, Revised Edition*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2Ed2/d346> (last accessed 8 September 2023)

⁴⁸⁷ National Intelligence Estimate 24-1-74, Subject: Prospects for and Consequences of Increased Communist Influence in Italian Politics, Washington, 18 June 1974, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976, Second, Revised Edition*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2Ed2/d349> (last accessed 8 September 2023)

In other words, the US Government believed that the Communists, after the temporary setback in the early 1970s, had re-started to grow more and more, but their entry into the government was not forthcoming. A right-wing coup, on the other hand, could turn the entry of the Communists into the government into reality. The risk of a similar heterogenies of ends was sufficient for the United States to discard any possibility of giving support to the Italian subversive right-wing plans.⁴⁸⁸

The impression one gets from the Kissinger's memorandum is that the Nixon Administration had definitively decided to distance itself from the Italian far-right and to continue to counteract the Communist Party by legal means. Nevertheless, it seems that NATO and US intelligence did not disdain maintaining contact with the neo-Fascists. Two American officers attended a meeting between New Order militants in Rovigo, near Venice, in April 1974. During this meeting, Carlo Maria Maggi, New Order's head for the Italy's North-eastern regions and ideologist of terrorism as a political method, said that the time had come to carry out terrorist attacks against left-wing targets.⁴⁸⁹ The far-right group believed the time was ripe to launch a new terrorist wave amid the climate of fear among the conservative sectors of the Italian society that the upcoming referendum on the divorce would pave the way for the Communists to power. Maggi had previously asked to be part of the American intelligence network, but unsuccessfully. At that point, New Order was in a tough spot for the Piazza Fontana bombing. Furthermore, Maggi had made the request too late. In fact, this attempt dates back to the early 1970s, while the large-scale recruitment of safe elements had taken place much earlier and by then had concluded.⁴⁹⁰ The latest investigations on Brescia massacre revealed that other

⁴⁸⁸ Guido Salvini supports this thesis. See: "Golpe Borghese: giudice Salvini, 'operazione seria, fallì senza appoggio Usa'", *Adnkronos*, (5 December. 2020)

⁴⁸⁹ Court of Assizes of Appeal of Milan - Second Section, sentence against Carlo Maria Maggi and others on the Brescia massacre, N. 43/14 General Register, N. 91/97 General Register Crime News, 22 July 2015

⁴⁹⁰ Hearing of Carlo Digilio, 14 March 2001, Second Court of Assizes of Milan, First Degree Conviction Sentence against Carlo Maria Maggi and Others for the Piazza Fontana Massacre, No. 6071/95 General Register of Crime Notification, No. 15/2001 General Register of Sentences, No. 40+ 41/99 General Register, 30 June 2001

preparatory meetings for the terrorist attack in the same town were also held at the NATO base in Verona.⁴⁹¹

Along with New Order's new terrorist campaign, Carlo Fumagalli's group also prepared a series of actions. The most striking were the launch of bombs against the Carabinieri barracks in cahoots with the military police themselves, and the murder of the Christian Democrat senator Athos Valsecchi in Sondrio during the celebrations of Italy's liberation from Nazi-fascism. An intervention by the Armed Forces would have followed to restore order.⁴⁹²

On 15 May 1974, Carlo Maria Maggi convened another meeting in Verona between New Order militants, with the participation of two members of the Aginter Presse, two Italian army officers and two US officers serving at the NATO base in the same city. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the new terrorist strategy following the victory of the divorce supporters in the referendum. The participants agreed to carry out a massacre at Bologna station, as a symbol city of the Italian left-wing, between the end of July and the beginning of August, in order to facilitate the "centrist coup".⁴⁹³ One of the New Order militants that attended the meeting, named Silvio Ferrari, told the Brescia police station marshal that he had recognized one of the Italian Army officers he knew. The marshal, in turn, warned the officer that Ferrari recognized him, and together with the members of the Aginter Presse they decided to silence the New Order militant. Indeed, the young right-wing extremist had become a dangerous witness on the interweaving between the subversive right-wing and the Italian and US state apparatuses.⁴⁹⁴ Three days after the meeting in Verona, Silvio Ferrari's comrades convinced him to carry a tampered bomb on his motorcycle to carry out an attack on the headquarter of the CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacato Lavoratori) trade union. At 3 am, the bomb exploded while Ferrari

⁴⁹¹ Andrea Priante, "Piazza della Loggia, nei palazzi di Verona gli incontri tra i neofascisti e i servizi", *Corriere della Sera* (28 January 2022)

⁴⁹² Court of Assizes of Appeal of Bologna, Conviction Sentence against Mario Tuti and Others for the *Italicus* Train Massacre, N. 17/84 General Register (18 November 1986)

⁴⁹³ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia, Indictment of the Public Prosecutor, Criminal Proceedings n. 03/08 Court of Assizes of Brescia (1 November 2010)

⁴⁹⁴ Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Brescia (1 November 2010)

was carrying it and killed him, eliminating any source of embarrassment for the NATO commands in Verona.⁴⁹⁵

The trade unions in Brescia called a rally to protest against the neo-Fascist violence that had been taking place in the city for several months, culminating in Ferrari's death. On the day of the demonstration, held on 28 May 1974 in the central Piazza della Loggia, a bomb exploded in a rubbish bin, causing eight deaths and one hundred and two injuries.⁴⁹⁶

The scheme of the Brescia massacre was as follows:

- Marcello Soffiati, on orders from Carlo Maria Maggi, went to Mestre (in the province of Venice) to take the bomb; he then brought it to Milan and handed it to New Order's local cell *La Fenice* young militants;
- the latter, in turn, brought the bomb to Brescia and handed it over to the common thug Ermanno Buzzi (strangled with shoelaces on 13 April 1981 in the Novara prison by the neo-Fascists Pier Luigi Concutelli and Mario Tuti, tasked with silencing him before the prosecutors could hear him);
- Buzzi, in turn, handed the bomb to New Order militants from Verona Giovanni Melioli and Marco Toffaloni, who finally put it in the garbage bin.⁴⁹⁷

A few days after the massacre in Brescia, Gaetano Orlando fled Italy to rove across Europe. One of the stops was Brussels, where he was invited to a lunch at the NATO headquarter together with some US officials. According to Orlando's own

⁴⁹⁵ See: Carlo Bonini and Massimo Pisa, "Terzo livello. La nuova inchiesta sulla strage neofascista di Brescia porta lì dove nessuno poteva immaginare. Il comando Nato di Verona", *La Repubblica*, (27 January 2022)

⁴⁹⁶ The most exhaustive book on the Brescia massacre is: Mimmo Franzinelli, *La sottile linea nera*.

Neofascismo e servizi segreti da Piazza Fontana a Piazza della Loggia, (Milan, 2008). Mimmo Franzinelli is an experienced scholar of the strategy of tension. His book provides a detailed reconstruction of the groups and characters involved in the terroristic season.

⁴⁹⁷ The sources of this reconstruction are the sentences issued by the judiciary, in particular:

- Court of Assizes of Brescia, first degree sentence against Ermanno Buzzi and others, Criminal Procedure 10/2 (2 July 1979);
- Court of Assizes of Brescia, preliminary ruling on Cesare Ferri and others, N. 218/84 (28 March 1986);
- Court of Assizes of Brescia - Second Section, N.3/2008 General Register Form 19, N. 91197 - 9878/07 General Register of crime reports, first degree sentence against Carlo Maria Maggi and others (16 November 2010) ;
- Court of Assizes of Appeal of Milan - Second Section, No. 39/15 of the Sentence, No. 43/14 General Register, No. 91/1997 General Register Crime Notice, second degree sentence against Carlo Maria Maggi and others (22 July 2015).

testimony, the "working lunch" topic was the coup in Italy scheduled for the summer of 1974 with the active US support through terrorist attacks.⁴⁹⁸ This testimony from Orlando further confirms NATO's involvement in the events that affected Italy in 1973 and 1974 and leaves no room for any doubt.

The US role in the Brescia massacre still needs a clarification. In this regard, Gianadelio Maletti's statements released in the book-interview *Piazza Fontana: Noi Sapevamo* is worthy of attention. To the question about who could be responsible for the bombing in Piazza della Loggia, Maletti ruled out US guilt contrary to what happened in Milan in 1969. The Nixon era was at its sunset due to the Watergate affair, and just over two months before Nixon resigned, his administration was devoid of power. Furthermore, according to the former Italian counterintelligence's head, the links with the subversive right-wing and the involvement in their criminal actions had proved counterproductive for the Americans, as no tangible political successes had been achieved. Considering, then, that in the meantime the US involvement in the Piazza Fontana bombing had emerged from the book *La Strage di Stato*, the American state apparatuses decided to have nothing more to do with the neo-Fascists.⁴⁹⁹

The second chapter of this thesis reported several statements by Maletti regarding US responsibilities in the strategy of tension, also from the book *Piazza Fontana. Noi sapevamo* itself. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that he had an interest in defending the Americans regarding the Brescia bombing, nor to suspect that a well-informed person such as the Italian counterintelligence head could ignore the details. Someone else well informed, like former US Army Intelligence agent Carlo Digilio, provided a somewhat different version. Digilio revealed that in the months preceding the Brescia attack neo-Fascist militants kept saying that it was necessary to prove the Americans what the far-right could do against the Communists, and how

⁴⁹⁸ Testimony of Gaetano Orlando given to the Captain of the Carabinieri's Special Operations Group Massimo Giraudo, 1 June 1994, in Beccaria, Antonella, "Gaetano Orlando: il suo viaggio in Belgio, il traffico d'armi e il "pranzo di lavoro" alla sede della Nato" (6 May 2010), <http://antonella.beccaria.org/2010/05/06/gaetano-orlando-il-suo-viaggio-in-belgio-il-traffico-darmi-e-il-pranzo-di-lavoro-all-a-sede-della-nato/> (last accessed 22 September 2023)

⁴⁹⁹ Sceresini and Maletti, *Piazza Fontana, noi sapevamo*, 148

it was worth supporting it. In his testimony before the Milan judges, Digilio reported a quote from Carlo Maria Maggi: *"the Americans will never give us anything if we don't prove we are able to do something, remember this well".*⁵⁰⁰

In another interrogation, Digilio reported what Marcello Soffiati told him commenting on the Brescia massacre: *"if the Americans let things like this happen, in the end, in Italy, the ones who will lose out will be the right-wing"*. To a further question from the investigating judge Guido Salvini, Digilio added that, according to Soffiati, the Americans were inducing the Italian extra-parliamentary right-wing to harm themselves with terrorist attacks.⁵⁰¹ Former right-wing militant Edgardo Bonazzi corroborated Digilio's statements during an interrogation with the Carabinieri in 1996. According to Bonazzi, there was a CIA agent in Piazza della Loggia with operational tasks. Bonazzi added that it was the Americans who wanted Fumagalli's arrest, since his subversive activities had become counterproductive.⁵⁰²

The statements by Digilio provide the opportunity to report the opinion of the president of the parliamentary commission of inquiry into terrorism, Giovanni Pellegrino. According to Pellegrino, after the failed Borghese coup, the Atlantic apparatus definitively took note that pursuing a coup strategy in Italy would have been counterproductive, and that the neo-Fascists were no longer useful allies but ballast. For this reason, the Italian and US intelligence decided to induce the terrorists to carry out last actions in order to get rid of them. In this sense, according to Pellegrino, Carlo Fumagalli's arrest for possession of explosives and for subversive action against the state on 9 May 1974 can be considered an artfully provocative action.⁵⁰³ Fumagalli was arrested by Carabinieri Captain Francesco Delfino, one of the officers most involved with the subversive right-wing activities. Hence, the words that the right-wing extremist Giancarlo Esposti said to his mother

⁵⁰⁰ Hearing of Carlo Digilio, 15 May 1996, Court of Assizes of Brescia, 2010

⁵⁰¹ Hearing of Carlo Digilio, 5 May 1996, Court of Assizes of Brescia, 2010

⁵⁰² Special Collection/Renzi Directive (2014)/Ministry of Defence/Carabinieri Army/Italicus (1974)/ Carabinieri Special Operations Group/Anti-Subversion Department [1991-2000]/ 1: Proceedings of the ROS Anti-Eversion Department (1991-2000)/111: Operation Mephisto-Excamination of Edgardo Bonazzi (Parma, 23 February 1996), Italian Central State Archive

⁵⁰³ Giovanni Pellegrino, and Giovanni, Fasanella, *Segreto di Stato. Verità e riconciliazione sugli anni di piombo* (Milan, 2008), 312-13

before fleeing from Milan towards the central Italy regions, where he would die in a firefight with the Carabinieri two days after the Brescia bombing: "*the Carabinieri betrayed us.*"⁵⁰⁴

Giovanni Pellegrino's thought is well-grounded. According to widespread rumours, on 28 May 1974, in Brescia, two lines were created within the far-right. One aimed to hit the Carabinieri, as revenge for the failed protection and for the death of Silvio Ferrari, attributed to a plot by the security forces. The other, probably more organic to the Italian state apparatus and Atlantic circles, aimed instead to attack the participants in the anti-Fascist trade unions' protest, as they were considered a political target to struck.⁵⁰⁵ Carabinieri and the Police used to stand under the porches in Piazza della Loggia in Brescia during political rallies. Under those porches, there was the rubbish bin the attackers placed the bomb into. The fact is that 28 May was a rainy day in Brescia, and many demonstrators had positioned themselves under the porticoes right near the rubbish bin where the bomb exploded. The Carabinieri and Police, on the contrary, had positioned themselves far from the points where they usually stood.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Court of Brescia, Court of Assizes, Criminal Case No. 03/08 of the General Register against Carlo Maria Maggi and others on the Brescia massacre, hearing of 15 April 2009.

On 29 March 2022, the author of this thesis had a conversation via Skype with Alessandro Danieletti, who, along with Alessandro D'Intino, formed the trio fleeing from Milan with Giancarlo Esposti after the arrest of their protector Carlo Fumagalli. During the conversation, Danieletti said that Esposti, in addition to assassinating the President of the Republic Giovanni Leone during the celebrations of the anniversary of the birth of the republic, also wanted to make an oil refinery explode. Such an attack would certainly have caused hundreds of victims.

⁵⁰⁵ On 25 June 1997, in a hearing at the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Terrorism, Carabinieri General Francesco Delfino, who at the time of the Piazza della Loggia massacre was the Captain of the Carabinieri investigative unit serving in Brescia, recounted the conclusions he reached from his investigations, stating: "*I got to the point of assuming that the Brescia group wanted to play a trick... without realizing that the other group (Milanese and most likely Veronese) instead knew what they were going to do. In Brescia, something big was being prepared, and the opportunity was seized from the sudden and short-term unions' gathering.*" Delfino added: "*Therefore, I do not rule out that there were two different levels in the attack: one of those who wanted to play a trick on the Reds, as they had written on the walls; the other of those who instead, knowing that a trick was being played, wanted the massacre.*" See: Hearing of Cpt. Francesco Delfino at the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Terrorism in Italy on 25 June 1997, XIII Legislature, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Volume II, Tome II

⁵⁰⁶ Laura Fasani, "Cosa resta dei processi sulla strage di piazza della Loggia", *Il Post*, (28 May 2024) <https://www.ilpost.it/2024/05/28/processi-strage-piazza-della-loggia-brescia/>, (last accessed 16 November 2024);

Paolo Brogi, "Processo per la strage di Piazza della Loggia: il punto", *Brogi.Info*, (7 March 2010) <https://www.brogi.info/2010/03/processo-per-la-strage-di-piazza-della.html>, (last accessed 16 November 2024)

Hence, the following possible interpretation of the Brescia bombing. The Veneto's New Order cell, under Carlo Maria Maggi's orders, had already decided several weeks earlier to carry out a massacre in an unspecified city in Northern Italy in cahoots with some Italian and American security services' sectors. This is what the last sentence issued in 2015, and confirmed in the *Corte di Cassazione* in 2017, established. The events that occurred in Brescia in the first weeks of May 1974 had proven to be a great opportunity to look for a pretext to strike in the Lombardy city exactly on the occasion of a left-wing protest against the neo-Fascist violence. The neo-Fascists from Veneto proposed to the Brescia and Milan young far-right militants, who had a close ideological and personal linkage with Silvio Ferrari, to carry out a revenge against the Carabinieri. The Veneto's New Order militants knew in advance that it would rain in Brescia on 28 May, and that the porticoes would be plenty of demonstrators looking for shelter from the rain.

In other words, according to this interpretation, the Veneto's New Order cell organized the Brescia massacre, in agreement with Italian and American intelligence, to strike the left-wing. The Italian and American secret services, determined to get rid of the right-wing extremists, made them believe that they approved their plans and encouraged them to move forward. Afterwards, they abandoned them when the judicial investigations began to track the neo-Fascist trail, contrary to the red herrings that after Piazza Fontana had diverted the investigation towards anarchists. The Veneto's New Order cell, in turn, exploited the Brescia and Milan neo-Fascists by making them believe that they would carry out an attack against the Carabinieri which instead turned into a massacre of civilians. This is the most plausible explanation regarding the terrorist attack in Brescia and the Italian and American apparatuses' role.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁷ Francesco Delfino reiterated what he had stated to the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Terrorism in 1997 regarding his double involvement in the Brescia massacre in an interview granted in 2014 shortly before passing away. See: Stefania Limiti "Strage di Brescia. Parla il generale Francesco Delfino", *AgoraVox* (last accessed 18 February 2014), <https://www.agoravox.it/Strage-di-Brescia-Parla-il.html> (28 November 2024)

The recently published book "La ragazza di Gladio e altre storie nere" by Paolo Biondani sums up the fifty-year investigations on Piazza della Loggia bombing, including the latest findings. See: Paolo Biondani, *La ragazza di Gladio e altre storie nere. La trama nascosta di tutte le stragi* (Milan, 2024)

The US involvement in the *Italicus* train bombing traveling from Rome to Munich and in the Edgardo Sogno's so-called "white coup" appears less evident. Judicial investigations ascertained that there was a link between the two events, given that the train massacre was preparatory to the coup, and that the P2 was accountable for it. Some passages of Edgardo Sogno's biography will help to understand how this character was no stranger to American political circles. Already young officer of the Italian Army during World War II, after the 8 September 1943 armistice he sided with the Kingdom of Italy confined to the South. On behalf of the monarchy, Sogno became a UK Army's representative, and was parachuted from a British plane into Piedmont. Afterwards, he created the Franchi Organization partisan brigade, made up of soldiers loyal to the monarchy and anti-Fascists of a liberal-conservative orientation. His commitment alongside the Allies earned him the respect and the attention from the Anglo-Americans. Once the war was over, after a brief period as a Italian Liberal Party's MP in the National Council (the Kingdom of Italy legislative assembly of a provisional and non-elective nature, established on 25 September 1945), Sogno embarked on a diplomatic career that led him to hold positions that put him in contact with US and Atlantic leaders.⁵⁰⁸

In 1951 he was appointed as director of the Planning and Coordination Group at NATO in London. The following year, he went to Paris to attend the course at the NATO Defence College, an organization that Dwight Eisenhower had set up to train cadres destined for psychological warfare against communism. It was during this period that he was awarded the American Bronze Star, the highest honour a non-American can aspire to, for his services to the Allies during World War II and to the Western cause during the first phase of the Cold War.⁵⁰⁹

He returned to Italy in 1953 to serve at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this period, Sogno became head of the Italian branch of the French anti-Communist movement *Paix et Liberté*. This organization received fundings from the CIA

⁵⁰⁸ For an overview on Sogno's biography and anti-Communist activism, see his memoir: Aldo Cazzullo and Edgardo Sogno, *Testamento di un anticomunista. Dalla Resistenza al golpe bianco* (Milan, 2000)

⁵⁰⁹ See the voice "Edgardo Sogno" on the National Association of Italian Partisans' website:

<https://www.anpi.it/biografia/edgardo-sogno-rata-del-vallino> (last accessed 16 November 2024)

(according to US historian Christopher Simpson, over a billion dollars yearly⁵¹⁰) and followed NATO's orders.⁵¹¹ Its task was to carry out CIA operations in psychological warfare and spread anti-Communism propaganda through the use of media broadcasts. While serving at the Ministry, Sogno went to the US Embassy to Rome several times to converse with Ambassador Clare Booth Luce.⁵¹² In one of these meetings, that took place on 14 October 1954, Sogno told Mrs. Luce that his main purpose was to let people know that there were Italians ready to take up arms against the Communists to prevent them from coming to power. In this regard, Sogno said that his organization needed funding from the United States.⁵¹³

These frequent contacts with the US Embassy prove Edgardo Sogno's unconditional allegiance to the Atlantic cause, reflected in the posts he requested and obtained as General Consul in Philadelphia in 1959 and as Minister Counsellor at the Italian Embassy in Washington in 1962. Such posts enabled him to weave his network of contacts that might prove useful for his anti-Communist activism. Having ceased his diplomatic career in 1970 with his resignation as Italian Ambassador to Burma in controversy with the centre-left government's critical stance on the US bombings in Vietnam, Sogno permanently returned to Italy. Thus, he dedicated himself full time to his personal war against the Communist Party.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ Christopher Simpson, *Blowback. America's Recruitment of Nazis and its Effects on the Cold War* (London, 1988), 127

⁵¹¹ Frédéric Charpier, *La CIA en France: 60 ans d'ingérence dans les affaires françaises* (Paris, 2008), 364

⁵¹² Clare Booth Luce was the US ambassador who interfered most in Italian domestic affairs, along with Graham Martin. Although she had no sympathies for the subversive right-wing, she was strenuously committed to opposing the Communist Party and the Italian trade unions, even with unscrupulous methods. A draft drawn up by Dr. Ronald D. Landa (formerly historian with the State Department's Office and the Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense), declassified in 2016, revealed how she promoted CIA covert aid to Italian anti-Communist parties. See: Dr. Ronald D. Landa, "Shots from a Luce Cannon: Combating Communism in Italy, 1953-1956", 4th Draft, 11-12-11, Declassified in full Authority: EO 13526, Chief, National Security Archive at The George Washington University,

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB579-Defense-Department-draft-history-on-Clare-Boothe-Luce-and-US-diplomatic-intelligence-and-military-activities-in-Italy-in-1950s/Landa%20-%20Combating%20Communism%20in%20Italy%201953-1956-Text.pdf> (last accessed 16 November. 2024)

For a biography of Clare Booth Luce, see: Sylvia Jukes Morris, *Rage for Fame: The Ascent of Clare Boothe Luce* (New York, 1997)

⁵¹³ Telegram from the US Embassy in Italy, The Ambassador's conversation with Edgardo Sogno, Rome, 14 October 1954, National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 59, 765.00/10-2054 C-3, Box 9

⁵¹⁴ Report of the Democratici di Sinistra (Democratic Left) - Ulivo Group in the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy, "Massacres and Terrorism from the Post-War Period to 1974" (22 April 2000)

On 30 May 1970, Sogno founded the Democratic Resistance Committee along with right-wing partisan groups veterans. During the founding meeting, a ten-point program was discussed. According to one of them, Italy was in a state of deep political and institutional crisis which had undermined the Republic's authority. According to Sogno, it was necessary to create a second Republic that would re-establish Italy's western position, and only the Democratic Resistance Committee had the preparation and legitimacy to reform the Italian state.⁵¹⁵

In addition to the right-wing partisans, two British figures joined the Democratic Resistance Committees: John Mc Caffery Junior, son of Mc Caffrey Senior, head of the Italian section of the Special Operations Executive during World War II; and Edward Philip Scicluna, responsible for the trade union sector of Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories in Piedmont from 1943 to 1945, who in 1970 had become FIAT Agency's general director and Head Office in Malta.⁵¹⁶

Two aspects of the initiative that Sogno undertook appear clear. First, it was an alternative to the neo-Fascist coup that Junio Valerio Borghese was preparing at the same time. For this reason, it was renamed "liberal coup" or "white coup", to underline its centre-right connotations. The second aspect is that, judging by the membership, it is perhaps more possible to speak of a British rather than an American involvement, or at least of an interest, in Sogno's plan.

Some basis for this thesis emerges from the book *Il Golpe Inglese* ("The English Coup"), by the investigative journalist Giovanni Fasanella and researcher Mario Josè Cereghino. According to the authors, in the first half of the 1970s, the United Kingdom was mostly concerned with countering Italy's activism and the state oil company ENI's power in the Mediterranean. Hence, the hypothesis that the British intelligence, through Mc Caffrey Senior, prepared the subversive plan in agreement with Edgardo Sogno so that an Anglophilic government would arise in Italy, to serve the UK interests.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Edgardo Sogno. *La seconda Repubblica* (Florence, 1974), 62-64

⁵¹⁶ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, XIII Legislature, Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII n. 64 Volume I, Tome II (Rome, 2001)

⁵¹⁷ Giovanni Fasanella and Mario Josè Cereghino, *Il Golpe Inglese. Da Matteotti a Moro: le prove della guerra segreta per il controllo del petrolio e dell'Italia* (Milan, 2011), 252-283

In an interview given to the Italian weekly *Panorama* in 1990, Sogno provided further details. According to his revelations, the centre-left governments, having entered a crisis in late 1960s, had decided to let the Italian Communist Party enter the coalition in order to survive. Consequently, he founded the Democratic Resistance Committee to make every possible effort and to resort to every means to save Italian democracy from the Communist threat. Such a threat, according to Sogno, had become even greater after Enrico Berlinguer had become Communist Party's secretary in 1972, as he embodied the so-called "Communism with a human face", reassuring and polite. For this reason, Sogno's organization sought to create a sort of "Chilean complex". In other words, to carry out a series of actions and initiatives that would make the Communists realize that had they gotten closer to power there would have been serious consequences. For instance, shooting whoever would facilitate Communist Party's entry into the government. According to Sogno, the United States and NATO had guaranteed support for his plan.⁵¹⁸

According to the plans, the designated Prime Minister of the government that would be established following the success of the coup was Randolfo Pacciardi. Some passages of his biography also deserve to be reported to better contextualize the "white coup". Randolfo Pacciardi had began his militancy in the Italian Republican Party as a teenager shortly before World War I started and had been an irreducible opponent of the Fascist regime. With the end of World War II and the rise of democracy in Italy, Pacciardi became the Republican Party's secretary from May 1945 to December 1947 (except for a four-month interlude between September 1946 and January 1947). Until 1947, Randolfo Pacciardi's political orientation had been consistent with that of the Republican Party, liberal-left and not hostile to the Communists, although far from Marxist doctrine. Towards the end of his secretaryship, the radicalization of the Communist Party's policy in compliance with the new Soviet directives converted Pacciardi to anti-Communism. In short, he

⁵¹⁸ Interview with Edgardo Sogno by Giovanni Fasanella, "Sì, ho detto sparare", *Panorama*, Year XXVIII, N. 1287 (16 December 1990)

became the leader of the right-wing faction within the Republican Party and one of the most ardent supporters of the Atlantic cause in Italy.⁵¹⁹

After the expulsion of the Socialists and the Communists from the De Gasperi's government, Pacciardi had been deputy Prime Minister from 1 June 1947 to 24 May 1948 and Minister of Defence from 23 May 1948 to 7 July 1953. It was Pacciardi as Minister of Defence who ensured that Italy joined NATO and structured Italian intelligence in such a way as to depend on the CIA. In this capacity as standard bearer of the Atlantic cause, Pacciardi, like Sogno, visited several times the US Embassy in the 1950s. During a conversation with Mrs. Luce in 1954, he told her that the government should openly provoke the Communists and force them to resort to force, since it would have been easier to defeat them in the streets than in the elections.⁵²⁰

Pacciardi did not explain how to carry out such provocations, though it is easy to work out what he had on his mind. On 9 October 1963, during a peaceful protest by construction workers in Rome, groups composed of right-wing extremists, at the Italian military intelligence orders, attacked the demonstrators with sticks. The obvious purpose was to provoke street violence that would spread throughout Italy. On that occasion, the right-wing extremists had split into two groups. Some of them, disguised as workers, had infiltrated the demonstrators. Another group had dressed up as policemen. The latter, at a certain point, had begun to throw stones at the demonstrators, who were instigated by the infiltrators to react with further violence. The result was a day of urban warfare, at the end of which there were one hundred and sixty-eight injured and forty arrests among the demonstrators.⁵²¹

The first chapter of this thesis explained that it was Pacciardi, as Minister of Defence, who reorganized the Italian secret services in 1949. An operation of

⁵¹⁹ Alessandro Spinelli, *I repubblicani nel secondo dopoguerra (1943-1953)*, (Ravenna, 1998), 235-238

⁵²⁰ Telegram from the US Embassy in Italy, Talks Luce-Pacciardi, National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 59, 765.00/3-254, 27 February 1954, C-3, Box 9. It was not possible to find comments or reply by Mrs. Luce, so it would not be fair to attribute to her any thought without evidence.

⁵²¹ Intervention by Prof. Aldo Giannuli at the first seminar meeting with the collaborators of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into Terrorism in Italy and the Causes of the Failure to Identify the Persons Responsible for the Massacres, XIII Legislature, Doc. XXIII n. 64, Third Volume (Rome, 28 April 1998)

See also: Emiliano Di Marco, "L'Ufficio R.E.I. del SIFAR, tra Confindustria e Gladio", Agoravox, 24 April 2014, <https://www.agoravox.it/L-Ufficio-R-E-I-del-SIFAR-tra.htm> (last accessed 17 November 2024)

infiltration and provocation against the left-wing like the one that SIFAR carried out on 9 October 1963 was probably what he was referring to in his conversation with Mrs. Luce. Twenty years ahead of the subversive events that had involved him, Pacciardi already demonstrated that he was ready for the most extreme means to counter the Communists, and that he wanted to have support from the United States in this regard. Pacciardi's case is another example of how the request for support from the Italian right-wing to the United States was always the element characterizing the relations between the two sides.⁵²²

On 4 December 1963, Pacciardi voted against the formation of the first centre-left government, being immediately expelled from the Republican Party. A few months later, he founded a new political group, the Democratic Union for the New Republic, to advocate anti-Communism, opposition to the centre-left government and the establishment of a presidential republic on the French model.⁵²³

Sogno and Pacciardi's backgrounds reveal their alienation from right-wing extremism. Likewise, the aim to create a presidential republic with no place for the far-right and the far-left, indicates how Sogno and his acolytes looked at France as a model to follow. In other words, they wanted to establish a strong and democratic state with a majoritarian electoral system that would reduce the political spectrum to two parties. What made Sogno's plan problematic, and probably undermined US support, was the way to achieve it. Indeed, the qualifying points of the program Sogno prepared were the following:

- recognition of military power as the only power legitimized to resolve the country's crisis and consequent entrustment to the Armed Forces of an autonomous decision-making role at government level and in the entire constitutional system;
- dissolution of the parliament;

⁵²² See the section "Richard Nixon and the Italian Social Movement" from the first chapter of this thesis

⁵²³ VVAA, Volume containing writings and speeches by Randolfo Pacciardi published on the occasion of the conference "Randolfo Pacciardi: un protagonista del ventesimo secolo", held at the Italian Chamber of Deputies on 19 April 2011,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160304110403/http://archivio.camera.it/resources/pu01/allegati/pacciardi.pdf> (last. accessed 17 November 2011)

- recognition of the single trade union.⁵²⁴

Two operations should have facilitated the achievement of these goals: one aimed at breaking the anti-Fascist alignment; the other at acquiring consensus in the country. To achieve the first result, the coup-appointed government would outlaw the Social Movement and all the extra-parliamentary left-wing and right-wing groups. Thus, the government would acquire an anti-Fascist characterization together with the necessary political equidistance corollary. To achieve the second result, the coup-appointed government would revoke the parliamentary immunity of high political figures with retroactive effect. They would be charged with common crimes and then tried by a special court. In this way, the subversive intervention should have acquired a moralizing and "necessary" character.

The "white coup" was supposed to take place according to the following stages:

- between 10 and 15 August 1974, a "violent action" would be carried out against the President of the Republic to force him to appoint a provisional government expressed by the Armed Forces and state bureaucracy's elites, taking advantage of the Parliament's recess, the stagnation in the commitment of the political forces and break from work (as a document from the Sogno organization stated, "the coup must be organized according to the Blitzkrieg's criteria: on Saturday during the holidays, with the factories still closed for two weeks and the masses on holiday");
- the intervention of appropriately organized military and civil units would support this delicate initial phase.⁵²⁵

Some of the people that would be appointed as ministers were:

- Prime Minister, Randolfo Pacciardi;
- Minister of Defence, Edgardo Sogno;

⁵²⁴ Arrest warrant from the investigating judge at the Court of Turin Luciano Violante against Edgardo Sogno, n.665/75 General Register of the Investigating Judge– White Coup (5 May 1976)

⁵²⁵ Arrest warrant from the investigating judge of Turin Luciano Violante against Edgardo Sogno, n.665/75 General Register of the Investigating Judge– White Coup (5 May 1976)

- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Manlio Brosio, senator for the Italian Liberal Party, former Secretary General of NATO from 1964 to 1971 and Italian Ambassador to Washington from 1955 to 1961;
- Minister of Finance, Ivan Matteo Lombardo, former head of the Atlantic Treaty Association in Brussels and speaker at the Conference on the Revolutionary War in 1965 with a paper entitled "Permanent Communist war against the West";
- Minister of Education, Giano Accame, editor for various right-wing journals, as well as Italian Social Republic veteran and member of the Social Movement until 1968 before joining Pacciardi's movement; Accame, like Ivan Matteo Lombardo, also participated in the Conference on the Revolutionary War, with a paper on "The counter-revolution of the Greek officers".⁵²⁶

It appears clear that many of the government's members that would arise from the coup were of proven Atlantic and pro-American faith, and that apart from Giano Accame, they were liberal-conservatives, not neo-Fascists. Certainly, Sogno spared no effort in gaining the US support. In June 1974, Sogno requested a meeting with CIA station in Rome head Howard Stone. During the meeting, Sogno outlined the plan, and asked Stone to inform the US Government. According to Sogno's account, Stone replied that the United States would approve any initiative that would keep the Communists away from the government, and that especially if the Italian situation took a Chilean turn, they would support the "white coup".⁵²⁷ The Nixon Administration, merely took note, without committing itself.

In any case, the Italian government had already taken steps to defuse the coup. On 8 July 1974, the Italian counterespionage sent a report to Giulio Andreotti, at that time Minister of Defence, that extensively described the Pacciardi-Sogno's group plot. The report warned that coup would take place between 10 and 15 August and reported the names of the military officers most involved.⁵²⁸ After reading the report,

⁵²⁶ VVA, *Guerra Rivoluzionaria. Atti del Primo Convegno organizzato dall'Istituto Pollio* (Rome, 1965) https://web.archive.org/web/20160620002545/http://www.stragi.it/la_guerra_rivoluzionaria/index.htm (last accessed 17 November 2024)

⁵²⁷ Aldo Cazzullo and Edgardo Sogno, *Testamento di un anticomunista. Dalla Resistenza al golpe bianco* (Milan, 2000), 148-149

⁵²⁸ Eugenio Scalfari, "La verità postuma sul golpe di Sogno", *La Repubblica* (2 December 2000)

Andreotti called a summit with the Italian Armed Forces senior officers for 14 July and gave instructions to increase surveillance at the main Rome targets.

The next day, Andreotti ordered the transfer to other positions of generals Giuseppe Santovito (Folgore Brigade), Piero Zavattaro Ardizzi (head of the Civitavecchia War School) and Luigi Salatiello (head of the Central Military Region), who were among the military officers involved with the "white coup".⁵²⁹ These sudden movements disarticulated the conspiracy plan and decreed its failure. In 1974, like in 1970 and 1973, Andreotti played a decisive role in preventing a coup d'état. One should wonder whether in this circumstance, as in the previous ones, he acted on the basis of indications from the US Government. There are no clues that allow to state this with certainty. Still, it is a fact that the Ministry of Defence was, along with the Ministry of the Interior, the Italian state body over which American control was closest by virtue of the Atlantic loyalty of the political, administrative personnel and military personnel. Those in charge of these departments were unlikely to make important decisions without having consulted with the contacts at the US Embassy and the CIA station's agents in Rome. Therefore, the question remains whether Andreotti agreed with his American interlocutors to counter Sogno's acolytes.

There is another detail to take into consideration. The P2 had soon taken the lead in the coup plot. It is not clear whether Sogno knew it or not. Certainly, Sogno was a P2 member, and Randolfo Pacciardi was a Freemason as well, although not of Licio Gelli's lodge. The doubt arises regarding who used whom. Sogno's background suggests that he had been planning for some time a coup in order to inflict a decisive blow to the Italian Communist Party. This plan dated back before Licio Gelli rose to the top of P2. This would suggest that Sogno was autonomous, and that he affiliated with the Masonic lodge to gain valuable help and allies. The fact is that Sogno's

⁵²⁹ VVAA. "Italia, strana democrazia!", *Biblioteca Militare*, https://issuu.com/rivista.militare1/docs/segreti_mafia_massoneria_servizi_deviati (21 May 2022) (last accessed 23 September 2023)

program closely resembled the Democratic Rebirth Plan that Licio Gelli wrote in 1976, two years after the failed "white coup".⁵³⁰

A few days before the week Edgardo Sogno's coup was scheduled for, the massacre on board of the *Italicus* train occurred. Judicial investigations established that the P2 organized this massacre, instructing New Order Tuscan militants to carry it out. The material executors were Mario Tuti, who supplied the explosive, Piero Malentacchi, who placed it at the Florence train stop, and Luciano Franci, a railway worker at the same station, who acted as a lookout.⁵³¹

No link between the *Italicus* train massacre and the "white coup" ever emerged. It is a fact that the prosecutors have never accused Edgardo Sogno of links with terrorists. Nevertheless, even if one wants to acquit Sogno of accountability for the *Italicus* massacre, the chronological coincidence, and the P2's involvement in both events allow to believe there was a correlation. The real question regards the purpose of the massacre. At first glance, one might assume that the motive was to facilitate the coup, as in the case of previous terrorist attacks. Yet, thinking about it carefully, the suspicion is that, on the contrary, the *Italicus* bombing aimed at ruining Edgardo Sogno's coup. This section already showed that Sogno, despite having designed a plan with subversive characteristics, absolutely did not want to have anything to do with the neo-Fascists. The same neo-Fascists, following the P2 orders, carried out the attack a week before the coup could take place. Hence the suspicion the author of this thesis raises that Licio Gelli double-crossed Edgardo Sogno. He likely made him believe that the P2 would facilitate his subversive plan achievement, perhaps with the US and NATO's approval, to then sabotage it with a bombing that was not in the plotters' plans.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Complete text of the Democratic Rebirth Plan:

https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Piano_di_rinascita_democratica_della_Loggia_P2 (last accessed 17 November 2024)

⁵³¹ Court of Assizes of Appeal of Bologna, Conviction Sentence against Mario Tuti and Others for the *Italicus* Train Massacre, N. 17/84 General Register, 18 November 1986

⁵³² On the P2's accountability for the *Italicus* bombing, see: Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, IX Legislature, Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Masonic Lodge P2, Majority report by the Honorable Tina Anselmi on the connection of P2 with neo-fascist subversion, doc. XXIII, 1984

If this hypothesis is realistic, a further question arises, namely whether P2 carried out this bloody sabotage while in turn receiving a directive from the US. The P2, in the 1970s, had become a CIA's tool, and Licio Gelli was in all respects an US intelligence agent.⁵³³ This fact would be enough to legitimize the suspicion that the P2 sabotaged Edgardo Sogno's coup on orders from the CIA. There is, however, more. It is a detail concerning Mario Tuti. Former French right-wing militant and CIA agent Patrice Chairoff was a Tuti's inmates for a few weeks. In an interview with the Italian weekly *L'Europeo*, Chairoff revealed that Tuti told him he was in touch with CIA agents on duty at the US Embassy in Rome, naming each of them. Since the CIA agents operating in Italy use administrative and diplomatic duties at the US Embassy as a cover, no one can know who among the staff is a secret agent. For this reason, in the interview at *L'Europeo*, Chairoff asks, clearly rhetorically: "*how come Tuti knows them?*".⁵³⁴

There are no documents that allow to assume that the *Italicus* bombing aimed at sabotaging Sogno's plan. In the American archives in College Park, documents relating to Italy in the years after 1973 are completely absent, while in the Richard Nixon Library they are very rare. The historical documents concerning Italy in the years between 1973 and 1976 included in the Office of Historian at the State Department do not mention either the coups of 1973 and 1974 or the *Italicus* massacre. It can't be ruled out that the CIA, perhaps unbeknown to the US Government, used the P2 to prevent the "white coup" with bloody methods, aimed precisely at making Sogno's project fail. It may be that the CIA believed that Sogno's organization was too independent and that despite its pro-American and pro-Atlantic sympathies, it would hardly lend itself to acting as a mere American puppeteers' instrument, contrary to the P2. It is plausible that the CIA believed it was better to encourage Licio Gelli's lodge increasing influence on the detriment of Edgardo

⁵³³ Interview with former CIA agent Richard Brenneke by the Italian State Television Rai 1, "I legami della P2 con la C.I.A." part 1/2", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Irm4vZilpiU>, part 2/2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-poxdvzy5s&t=232s>, 2 July 1990 (last accessed 2 September 2023); Angelo Ventrone (ed), *L'Italia delle Stragi. Le trame eversive nella ricostruzione dei magistrati protagonisti delle inchieste (1969-1980)* (Rome, 2019), 59

⁵³⁴ Interview with Patrice Chairoff by Frédéric Laurent, "Un agente della CIA parla dal carcere", *L'Europeo*, Year XXXII, N. 21 (21 May 1976)

Sogno, and to stop the latter with a terrorist attack that would frustrate his plans. These are only assumptions, not certainties, and in the current state of the documentation it is impossible to say whether they are correct or not. What is certain is that the *Italicus* massacre and the failure of Edgardo Sogno's plot represented the final chapter of the right-wing terrorism and attempted coups d'état season in Italy.

Be that as it may, on 9 August 1974, the day after Nixon's resignation as president of the United States, the Italian military intelligence burned one hundred twenty-eight thousand files relating to terrorist attacks and various coup plots on order by Andreotti.⁵³⁵ As can be understood, the burning of so many primary sources of considerable importance constitutes one of the main troubles for researchers engaged in the study of the strategy of tension. In fact, many questions regarding the season of terrorism in Italy will remain unanswered due to Andreotti's decision to burn such a considerable number of first-hand documents.

The Nixon Administration's end also coincided with the definitive end of the centre-left coalitions in Italy, whose last government led by Mariano Rumor resigned on 3 October 1974. The first chapter of this thesis showed how the opposition to the centre-left in Italy, perceived as a Communists trojan horse, had coagulated neo-Fascists, anti-Communists and Atlanticists circles, tightening relations between the Italian right-wing and the United States. The fact that the centre-left coalition had no further follow-ups after Rumor's resignation certainly contributed to putting an end to the Italian right-wing's subversive activities. What did not end was the historical compromise's season between the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party. It began in 1973 after the coup in Chile and the Communist electoral rise, and it led to the national solidarity's years that lasted from 30 July 1976 to 31 January 1979.⁵³⁶

End of the strategy of tension

⁵³⁵ Italian Senate of the Republic, Chamber of Deputies, XII Legislature, Report of the Parliamentary Committee for the Information and Security Services and for the State Secret, Doc. XXXIV, n. 1, (9 April 1995)

⁵³⁶ Stefan Gundel, "The PCI and the Historic Compromise", *New Left Review*, I/163 (1 June 1987), 27-35

The end of the strategy of tension fits in the international framework as well. On 25 April 1974 (coincidentally, on the anniversary of the liberation from Nazi-fascism in Italy), the Carnation Revolution overthrew the *Estado Novo* para-fascist regime that had ruled Portugal ever since 1926. In Greece, the unfortunate outcome of the military campaign in Cyprus determined the fall of the colonels' junta on 24 July. These two countries, during Richard Nixon's first term, had been the cornerstones of the containment of Soviet expansionism in Western Europe, receiving considerable support from the US. Nonetheless, both dictatorships fell without the US Government being able to help it. The Watergate crisis was certainly a major factor that led the US to stop supporting the anti-Communist regimes in Greece and Portugal and the Italian right-wing, as the Nixon Administration could no longer focus on other issues.⁵³⁷

Another reason was the foreign policy line that the Nixon Administration had launched the previous year. On 23 April 1973, during the annual Associated Press luncheon in New York, Henry Kissinger delivered a speech that committed the Nixon Administration to making 1973 the "Year of Europe." In his speech, Kissinger exposed the need to address all the problems confronting the Atlantic Alliance and to give rise to a "New Atlantic Charter" that would set long-term Alliance goals.⁵³⁸ According to Kissinger, the Charter would create "a new relationship" among the Atlantic nations and lay the foundation for a "new era of creativity in the West."⁵³⁹ One of the main reasons that had led the Nixon Administration to launch the "Year of Europe" was the difficult situation the United States found itself in due to the Vietnam war. The South-East Asian crisis had undermined the US Government's

⁵³⁷ Theodore C. Sorensen, "Watergate and American Foreign Policy", *The World Today*, Vol. 30, No. 12 (Dec. 1974), 497-503. See also the chapter "Nixon's Farewell: Watergate, Kissinger, and Foreign Policy" in Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2004), 332-358. See also: James H. Barron, *The Greek Connection: The Life of Elias Demetracopoulos and the Untold Story of Watergate* (New York, 2020).

⁵³⁸ Henry A. Kissinger's address to the Associated Press in New York on 23 April 1973, https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/30/dec472e3-9dff-4c06-ad8d-d3fab7e13f9f/publishable_en.pdf (last accessed 6 October 2023).

⁵³⁹ Hardt Brent, "Symbolism and substance: Henry Kissinger and the Year of Europe", *The Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 1985), 167-192.

leeway in the world, and the burden of the huge military expenses was weighing on the American state budget.⁵⁴⁰ For these reasons, the Nixon Administration had to reduce America's global commitment.

Simultaneously with the end of the American involvement in the Vietnam War, other changes in US foreign policy contributed to influencing the Nixon Administration's attitude towards Europe. Nixon visited the People's Republic of China from 21 February to 28 February 1972. It was the beginning of the normalization of relations between the two countries, that split the Communist front. To quote Margaret MacMillan, Nixon's trip to Beijing ended the Cold War between the United States and China and ushered in an era of friendship still unfolding a half-century later.⁵⁴¹ For its part, the Soviet Union, finding itself isolated against the other two giants, understood that it had to come to terms with at least one of the two geopolitical enemies to break the encirclement. This was likely the main reason that pushed Leonid Brezhnev to accept the US Government's proposal to limit nuclear weapons and to sign, together with Richard Nixon, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in Moscow on 26 May 1972. It was the culmination of Nixon's détente policy, and it achieved the goal set to reduce Soviet influence in Western Europe in order to further smooth the tensions between East and West.⁵⁴²

In this context, the United States gradually withdrew from Europe to focus on some limited targets, such as Latin America. In the US Government's perception, it was time for the Europeans to take care of their own problems and handle the Communist challenge by themselves, since by then the United States had enough to

⁵⁴⁰ Zachary Hagen-Smith, "What Numbers Don't Know: The Broken Economics Behind America's War in Vietnam", *Berkeley Economic Review*. UC Berkeley's Premier Undergraduate Economics Journal (3 March 2022), <https://econreview.studentorg.berkeley.edu/what-numbers-dont-know-the-broken-economics-behind-americas-war-in-vietnam/> (last accessed 18 November 2024)

See also: David Gray Adler, Michael A. Genovese, *Vietnam, Watergate, and the War Power: Presidential Aggrandizement and Congressional Abdication*, in Iwan W. Morgan, Michael A. Genovese (ed.), *Watergate Remembered. The Legacy for American Politics* (London, 2012), 87-105

⁵⁴¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (London, 2008)

⁵⁴² Robert d. Schulzinger, *Détente in the Nixon–Ford years, 1969–1976*, in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume II. Crises and Détente* (Cambridge, 2012), 373-394

worry about. It is, therefore, understandable how the new Nixon Administration's foreign policy line let the anti-Communism bastions in Europe such as the Portuguese and Greek regimes fall. With the start of Nixon's second term presidency, the priority had become to reduce economic expenditures and focus political commitments on closer fronts. The détente with the Soviet Union had made Europe a less worrying front, hence a lesser US involvement.

The Helsinki Accords, signed on 1 August 1975, further contributed to making the European front of the Cold War less problematic.⁵⁴³ The "Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States" enumerated 10 points. The main ones were: Sovereign equality and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty; Refraining from the threat or use of force; Territorial integrity of states; Non-intervention in internal affairs; Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁵⁴⁴

It would be overstating to say that the Helsinki Accords put an end to the Cold War. The so-called "Euromissile crisis", began when the Soviet Union deployed SS20 missiles towards Western Europe in 1977 and ended only with the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in Washington on 8 December 1987, temporarily undermined the détente. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent US support for the *mujahideen* (Islamist guerrillas from all Muslim countries, who served as a breeding ground for future Islamic terrorism) confirmed that, despite the Helsinki Accords, it would take a few more years before the end of the Cold War could be proclaimed.

In hindsight, however, it can be said that the treaty signed in the Finnish capital served as the basis for substantial pacification at least within Western countries. The so-called Eurocommunism, that the Italian Communist Party's head Enrico

⁵⁴³ See: Helsinki Process Staff, "The Helsinki Process", United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, June 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210826022418/https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/The%20Helsinki%20Process%20Four%20Decade%20Overview.pdf> (last accessed 18 November 2024)

⁵⁴⁴ See the full text of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Final Act: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220425005359/https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/Helsinki%20Final%20Act%20-%20Long%20Version.pdf> (last accessed 18 November 2024)

Berlinguer launched in 1976, was part of this framework.⁵⁴⁵ This political project helped dispel the fear that the European Communist parties were Soviet fifth columns.⁵⁴⁶ The fact that the Euromissile crisis did not cause the same anxiety in the world as the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, also shows that the Helsinki Accords had at least created the conditions for relations between the two blocs not to degenerate. In a certain sense, it can be said that, while the détente that Nixon and Kissinger achieved in 1972, with the visit to Beijing and the SALT I treaty with the Soviet Union, prepared the ground for the end of the Cold War, the Helsinki Accords laid its foundations.

As far as the end of the strategy of tension in Italy is concerned, the simplest explanation could be that it ended due to Richard Nixon's resignation as US president. The historical reality is a little more complex. Vincenzo Vinciguerra made a statement at the court of Bologna during the *Italicus-Bis* trial worthy of being reported: *"In 1974 there was a harsh clash within the American secret services, so much so that at the end of that year Angleton was kicked out of the CIA. This clash was reproduced within our secret services and had as its target the line to follow towards the Communist party."*⁵⁴⁷ According to Vinciguerra, in this context, a part of the SID neutralized Fumagalli's action, and then blocked the coup scheduled for August 1974, perhaps jointly with the Ministry of the Interior. Vinciguerra added: *"In 1974, the armed forces accepted the possibility that the Communist Party could be integrated into the democratic system. This choice produced a crisis in the right-wing, left lacking primary support."*⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Rodolfo Bozzi, "Introduzione all'eurocomunismo", *Gregorianum*, vol. 59, n. 3, (March 1978,) 571-605

⁵⁴⁶ Already in 1975, the CIA had drawn up a study which highlighted that had the Communist Party joined the government, it would not have pushed for radical social and economic reforms, and that the evidence pointed to the leadership's commitment to a pluralistic society and to the parliamentary system. See: CIA study on the Communist Party of Italy, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976, Second, Revised Edition* (Washington, June 1975), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2Ed2/d355> (last accessed 18 November 2024)

⁵⁴⁷ Interrogation of Vincenzo Vinciguerra given to the investigating judge of Bologna on 30 April 1994, First Court of Assizes of Bologna, Sentence-Order *Italicus-bis*, N. 1251/A/82 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, N. 1329/A/84 General Register of the Investigating Judge (3 August 1994)

⁵⁴⁸ Interrogation of Vincenzo Vinciguerra given to the investigating judge of Bologna on 30 April 1994, Sentence-Order *Italicus-bis*,

It can be added that the subservience of the Italian Armed Forces and intelligence to their American counterparts was such that they probably would not even have been able to take a position that was not in line with the White House's.⁵⁴⁹

Since Vincenzo Vinciguerra is a very well-informed source on the neo-fascism and its interconnections with the Italian and American security apparatus⁵⁵⁰, his statements require reflection. James Jesus Angleton left his post as CIA's counterintelligence head on 24 December 1974. His rule had been unchallenged ever since Allan Dulles appointed him in 1953. His departure came in the wake of the scandal that arose from the publication of the Seymour Hersh's article "Huge CIA operation reported in the US against antiwar forces", on the *New York Times* on 22 December 1974.⁵⁵¹

The story of the effect that this article had on public opinion and American politics is well known and does not need to be retold. Rather, there would be a question to ask: were the events that led to Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974 and the revelation of the Operation CHAOS on the *New York Times*, and the work of the Pike and Church Committees the fruit of this CIA's inner war? In other words, is it possible that the Watergate scandal and the revelation on CIA's covert actions were part of a political operation that one side of American intelligence had been carrying on against the other since 1972? If this were the case, then Vinciguerra's statements would acquire further importance and meaning. Italy was under a sort of US special surveillance during the Cold War for hosting a Soviet fifth column such as the Communist Party. It follows that the internal upheavals within the American state apparatuses influenced the policy towards Italy. In this specific case, it is plausible that this conflict within the CIA contributed to ending the strategy of tension in Italy. The fact remains that, excluding a last blow with seven bombs exploded in Savona between 9 November and 23 November 1974 (total toll, one dead and twenty injured), Nixon's resignation placed a tombstone on the strategy of tension.

⁵⁴⁹ See the section "Development of US interference", from the first chapter of this thesis, page 61

⁵⁵⁰ See the section "Methodology and sources" in the introduction to this thesis, page 43

⁵⁵¹ David Robarge, "The James Angleton Phenomenon. "Cunning Passages, Contrived Corridors": Wandering in the Angletonian Wilderness", *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2009), 49-61

The other still remaining fact is that the collaboration between the United States and the Italian right-wing began at the end of World War II, when James Jesus Angleton personally saved Junio Valerio Borghese from the partisan firing squads. The first chapter of this thesis highlighted how this relationship had developed under Angleton's supervision before the beginning of Richard Nixon's presidency. It also showed that Angleton, as CIA's counterintelligence head, designed the Operation CHAOS, and that Aginter Press implemented it in Italy.⁵⁵² Consequently, there arises the question that the true inspirer of the strategy of tension in Italy was Angleton, and that he had the power to determine events regardless of who was in the White House.

From this point, another question is whether this CIA's inner war was part of an offensive that the liberal faction, led by the agency's head William Colby, conducted against the counterintelligence specifically to get rid of Angleton. Colby was the one who, as head of the CIA station in Italy, laid the foundations for the centre-left coalition, believing that it was the most effective way to weaken the Italian Communist Party. Angleton, for his part, was among the most critical of the support for the centre-left governments, since the Communists, instead of losing support, increasingly advanced, and he blamed Colby for this.⁵⁵³ A conflict ensued, further exacerbated when Colby became CIA's director in September 1973, making the coexistence with the counterintelligence's head problematic for the agency.⁵⁵⁴

In light of this feud, one might suspect that the leaks to the newspapers about the CIA's illicit operations, that inspired Seymour Hersh's article, were part of these internal oppositions. In other words, the impression is that each faction, in order to discredit the opposite side, did not hesitate to leak to the press embarrassing aspects of the operations that the CIA carried out, at the risk of damaging the US reputation in the world. The history of the strategy of tension in Italy fits perfectly into this

⁵⁵² See the section "CIA's third actor: Aginter Press", from the second chapter of this thesis

⁵⁵³ Interview with Philippe Thyraud by Duilio Pallotelli, "Parla l'agente segreto che sa tutto della CIA", *L'Europeo*, Year XXXII, N. 25 (18 June 1976)

⁵⁵⁴ See Colby's testimony from his own memoir: William Colby, *Honourable men. My life in the CIA* (New York, 1977), 377. See also: Edward Jay Epstein, "The War Within the CIA," *Commentary*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (August 1978), 35-39

broader story. It is likely that certain sectors within US intelligence wanted to force the hand of the Nixon Administration and drag it into dangerous adventures. Likewise, it is conceivable that adverse sectors have hindered these actions, for example by thwarting the various coup plans, to then expose their rivals to public humiliation.⁵⁵⁵

It is therefore undeniable that these internal conflicts between the various American state apparatuses, as well as within each of them, influenced the history of the Cold War and Italian and US domestic affairs. Following the press campaign that culminated in Seymour Hersh's article, Colby forced Angleton, already weakened by the fading protection of Nixon and Kissinger, to resign. The ultimate consequence, as far as Italy was concerned, was the loss of cover for the subversive right-wing, and the end of its criminal actions.

The Italian Social Movement also lost its appeal to the US upper echelons. In late September 1975, the neo-Fascist party's leader Giorgio Almirante travelled to the United States on his own initiative. According to Almirante's own statement, it was a private trip that aimed to explain to the American leaders the dangerous political situation in Italy and the Social Movement democratic nature.⁵⁵⁶ The American primary sources from the National Archives reveal a sort of embarrassment by the then US Ambassador in Italy John Volpe and Henry Kissinger. On 26 September 1975, Kissinger wrote to Volpe that Almirante unsuccessfully asked for appointments at the State Department. He added that if asked about

⁵⁵⁵ Christopher Moran, "Turning Against the CIA: Whistleblowers During the 'Time of Troubles'", *History*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (340), Special Issue: The CIA and American Foreign Policy (April 2015), 251-274
See also portions of transcripts of CIA Oral History Program interviews with William Colby and Richard Helms by the Center for the Study of Intelligence, carried out respectively on 15 March 1988 and 2 February 1988, to have a broader overview on the CIA's inner crisis in the mid-1970's: Nicholas Dujmovic, director of the CIA Oral History Program (ed.), "Oral History: Reflections of DCI Colby and Helms on the CIA's "Time of Troubles", *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 58 No. 2, (June 2014), <https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/static/reflections-times-of-trouble.pdf> (last accessed 19 November 2024)

⁵⁵⁶ Message text from US Embassy in Italy to US State Department, Subject: Almirante Visit to the White House, Document Number 1975ROME13932, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ROME 13932, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/creaepdf?rid=320341&dt=2476&dl=1345>, (Rome, 26 September 1975) (last accessed 13 October 2023)

Almirante, the State Department would deny knowledge of his activities.⁵⁵⁷ Much to John Volpe's annoyance, the National Security Council staff to the White House welcomed Almirante. In a message to the State Department, Volpe wrote verbatim: *"I wish to share with you my concern over the impact that this event has on our mutually shared goal of seeking to assure the continued existence of a democratic Italy free from the threat of extreme politics solution from the left or from the right"*.⁵⁵⁸

Kissinger replied that Almirante met at Capitol Hill with some unknown congressmen.⁵⁵⁹ One of them subsequently requested that a member of the executive branch meet with Almirante to discuss foreign policy matters. In response to this congressional initiative and as a courtesy to the Congress member concerned, Kissinger continued, Almirante met with members of the NSC staff at the White House.⁵⁶⁰ Finally, on 7 October, Kissinger sent a message to Volpe charging him to state that Almirante's visit to Washington in no way implied a shift of the American policy towards the Italian Social Movement. Furthermore, Kissinger wanted Volpe to state also that the US remained opposed to either the left or the right extremists' entry into the Italian Government.⁵⁶¹

This message exchange between the State Department and the American Embassy in Italy denotes how the US Government's perception of the Italian right-wing had mutated within a few years. Interestingly, John Volpe was the first to

⁵⁵⁷ Message text from Henry Kissinger to John Volpe, Subject: Almirante Visit, REF: ROME 13265, Document Number 1975STATE230692, Confidential State 230692, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=312495&dt=2476&dl=1345>, (Washington, 26 September 1975) (last accessed 13 October 2023)

⁵⁵⁸ Message text from US Embassy in Italy to US State Department, Subject: Almirante Visit to the White House, Document Number N750004-0718, REF: STATE 232148, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=320306&dt=2476&dl=1345>, (Rome, 30 September 1975) (last accessed 13 October 2023)

⁵⁵⁹ The right-wing weekly *Il Borghese* published, in the days of Almirante's trip to the United States, the picture of the meeting between the Social Movement's head and one of the American congressmen. It was Jesse Helms, senator for the Republican Party, whose political ideas were even more right-wing than those of Almirante. See: Mario Tedeschi, "L'America ha scelto", *Il Borghese*, Year XXVI, N.41 (12 October 1975)

⁵⁶⁰ Message text from Henry Kissinger to John Volpe, Subject: Almirante's meetings with staff members of the National Security Council, Document Number D750342-0369, Confidential State 234643, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=290029&dt=2476&dl=1345>, (Washington 2 October 1975) (last accessed 13 October 2023)

⁵⁶¹ Message text from Henry Kissinger to John Volpe, Subject: Almirante visit, Document Number D750348-0295

express concern about Almirante's trip. The section "Richard Nixon and the Italian Social Movement"⁵⁶² in the first chapter showed that, during the 1968 US presidential election campaign, Volpe, then governor of Massachusetts, received a delegation from the Social Movement. His mutated attitude clearly denoted a different US perception of the Social Movement. The neo-Fascists had ceased to be a useful tool in the anti-Communist struggle. Three years earlier, the American Embassy, the CIA and Kissinger himself deemed the Italian Social Movement a card to rely on to influence the Italian political framework and push the Christian Democrats further to the right. By 1975, after the Nixon and Angleton eras had ended and the Church and the Pike Committees had brought out the CIA's dirty tricks, the neo-Fascists had become a kind of political pariah to keep away.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the themes that the introduction and the research questions exposed by explaining how the relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing ended. The only appreciable result that the US had achieved was the Communist Party's temporary loss of votes in the 1972 elections and the formation of the first centre-right government in fifteen years that lasted only from 26 June 1972 to 12 June 1973. The Social Movement's increase in votes in 1972 was due to widespread tension among the population following the 1969 attacks, which resulted into a demand for law-and-order measures. The Social Movement was the party that most advocated this political line. Hence, its electoral advance, which the US funding facilitated. Still in 1972, the investigations into the Piazza Fontana massacre had found that the subversive right-wing was the culprit. It was therefore no longer possible to perpetuate false-flag operations, nor to raise alarm among the Italian population about the dangers that the left-wing allegedly represented. The discovery of the right-wing's accountability for the terrorist attacks made both New Order and the Social Movement lose their political usefulness.

⁵⁶² See the section "Richard Nixon and the Italian Social Movement" from the first chapter, page 89

International contingencies and the US intelligence crisis definitively ended the thirty-year relationship between the United States and the Italian right-wing.

The definitive break in relations between the United States and the Italian right-wing occurred simultaneously with the greatest Communist Party's electoral advance at the elections held on 20-21 June 1976. The Communists made an impressive step forward, rising from 27.15% in 1972 to 34.37%. The other parties that gained votes all had an increase in percentage terms far less than 1%. For example, the Christian Democrats went from 38.66% to 38.71%, while the Socialist Party rose from 9.61% to 9.64%. The right-wing parties all collapsed and were the only ones to lose votes. Suffice it to say that the Social Movement, the political winner of the previous elections, fell from 8.67% to 6.10%.⁵⁶³

These election results sanctioned the defeat of the Nixon Administration's support for the Italian right-wing. The shift to the right of the Italian political axis ended in a flash in the pan. In a way, the US refusal to have anything more to do with the neo-Fascists in terms of opposition to the Italian left-wing was the admission of the failure of a strategy began in April 1945. The abandonment of this political line did not mean giving up on countering the Communist Party, though.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ See: Italian Elections results Archive-20 June1976, Italian Chamber of Deputies

<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=20/06/1976&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>; Italian Senate (last accessed 7. November 2023)

<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=S&dtel=20/06/1976&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (last accessed 7. November 2023)

⁵⁶⁴ On the US opposition to the Italian Communist Party in the 1970s, see: Roberto Fornasier, "The DC and the PCI in the Seventies: A Complex Relationship Supervised by the United States", *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter 2012), 209-229

Former US Ambassador in Rome from 1977 to 1981 Richard Gardner gave an interesting interview to the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* in 2010, explaining how the US approach towards the Communist Party evolved over the years. See: Michele Brambilla, "Richard Gardner: dissi no alla Cia che voleva infiltrare le Br", *La Stampa* (12. June. 2010).

See also his own memoir: Richard Gardner, *Mission Italy. On the front lines of the Cold War* (Lanham, Maryland, 2005)

Conclusion

“I know the names of the culprits of the bombings in Milan in 1969 and in Brescia and Bologna in 1974.

I know the names of the powerful men who, with the CIA’s support, first created an anti-Communist crusade to stop the ‘68, and then have rebuilt an anti-Fascist virginity, to stop the disaster of the referendum.

I know.

But I have no evidence. I do not even have clues.

I know because I am an intellectual, a writer who coordinates distant facts by putting together the disorganized and fragmentary pieces of an entire coherent political framework and re-establishing logic where arbitrariness, madness and mystery seem to reign.”⁵⁶⁵

Intro

⁵⁶⁵ Translation into English by the author of this thesis of the op-ed by Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Cos’è questo golpe? Io so”, *Corriere della Sera* (14 November 1974). The original and full Italian version can be found here: <https://www.corriere.it/speciali/pasolini/ioso.html> (last accessed 28 October 2024)

This thesis reached its end. Despite focusing on the years between 1969 and 1974, it demonstrated how the origins of the relations between the United States and the Italian right-wing date back to the end of World War II. It also attempted to explain how this collaboration evolved over the years. A brief summary of the Italian historical context could be helpful to further facilitate the understanding of this issue. Indeed, only by briefly reviewing some of the most important Italian social and political features of the time will it be possible to completely understand why such events occurred in Italy and nowhere else in Europe.

In this regard, the first section of the final chapter briefly sets out the historical-political conditions that facilitated the emergence of both right-wing and left-wing subversion. The main cause is attributable to the state of stasis the Italian political system found itself in throughout the Cold War. Those who benefited from this were the far-right and far-left extra-parliamentary groups, that grew up in the Social Movement and the Communist Party's breeding ground. They would then break away from their political families, accusing them of having betrayed the Fascist and Communist principles by adhering to the parliamentary system.

The second section of this chapter deals with the US accountability for the strategy of tension in Italy. This thesis has so far exposed which US branches have been involved over the years. What remains to understand is which one was most involved. In this regard, the second section of the concluding chapter aims to retrace the responsibilities of each of them. It is possible to say immediately that the main suspect is the US Department of Defence. The entities related to the Department of Defence, such as US Army Intelligence and NATO (the latter, in fact a dependency of the Pentagon) appear most frequently in the events that occurred in Italy between 1969 and 1974. For these reasons, the second section argues that the Department of Defence bears the greatest responsibility.

The last section of this chapter takes stock of what has been written in this thesis and expresses the final considerations. It also presents a brief account of the author's experience in the US National Archives and Records Administration. Telling the difficulties encountered in finding primary sources in College Park, as the most

important documents are still classified, makes understand how the strategy of tension in Italy is a source of embarrassment for the US Government. More generally, it is possible to affirm that the history of the Cold War still maintains some dark sides that the US Government does not want the public opinion to know.

Italian historical context

As the first chapter of this thesis explained, the extra-parliamentary left-wing appeared starting from the late 1960s, when numerous young Communists who had supported Mao Zedong since the Cultural Revolution expressed dissent from the Communist Party's pro-Soviet stand.⁵⁶⁶ The term "extra-parliamentary" derives from the rejection by the far-left organizations of parliamentary democracy, considered obsolete and ineffective for solving the social problems as well as a bourgeoisie's tool to deprive the masses of political initiative.⁵⁶⁷ It is easy to understand how such an approach constituted the fertile ground for the rise of left-wing terrorism. Still in 1969, on 30 November, the foundation of the Red Brigades took place.

One of the founders of the Red Brigades was Corrado Simioni, who in 1965 had started working for the United States Information Service and for the CIA-financed Radio Free Europe in Munich.⁵⁶⁸ It may generate some surprise that an US

⁵⁶⁶ See the section "CIA's use of third actors: Aginter Press" in the first chapter of this thesis, pages 34-35

⁵⁶⁷ For a history of the extra-parliamentary left-wing in Italy, see: Mario Maffi, *Le origini della sinistra extraparlamentare* (Milan, 1976)

See also: Valentina Casini, *Sinistra extraparlamentare e partito comunista in Italia 1968-1976* (Ph.D thesis, Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna, 2015)

⁵⁶⁸ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, XVII Legislature, Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Kidnapping and Death of Aldo Moro, Doc. XXIII No. 29 (Rome, 2016)

intelligence employee was among the founders of the most important European left-wing terrorist group. On the other hand, in 1976, Simioni also founded the fake *Hyperion* language school in Paris, indeed a cover that several secret services, including the CIA, used for monitoring and directing international terrorism.⁵⁶⁹ The president of the last parliamentary inquiry commission into terrorism, Giovanni Pellegrino, gave the best explanation regarding why the Western secret services used *Hyperion* through agents such as Corrado Simioni. According to Pellegrino, *Hyperion* was necessary in the logic of preserving the balance deriving from the Yalta agreements, and to this end the US intelligence used it as a means against possible alterations of the Cold War balance. The very Aldo Moro's policy of opening up to the Communists was considered a threat to the status quo.⁵⁷⁰

Although Pellegrino did not elaborate further on the subject, it is possible to provide a correct interpretation of his words. The opening to the Communist Party made the secret services come into play. Some intelligence agencies, including the CIA, believed that nourishing and orienting already existing left-wing terrorist organizations could be helpful to stem the danger that the Aldo Moro's political operation posed. To this end, setting up a transnational intelligence centre such as *Hyperion* certainly helped. What could seem weird thus finds a politically logical explanation.

Pellegrino's words found a confirmation in a secret memo that Guido Giannettini, the SID agent that acted as a link to New Order, wrote on 11 August 1974. According to Giannettini, that there was a parallel manipulation by a single central group of clandestine right-wing and left-wing groups, in order to provoke chaos and civil war.⁵⁷¹ In this memo, Giannettini added that Italian and foreign pressure groups have

⁵⁶⁹ Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, VIII Legislature, Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Via Fani Massacre, on the Kidnapping and Assassination of Aldo Moro and on Terrorism in Italy, Doc. XXIII No. 5, Volume I, 1983

⁵⁷⁰ Giovanni Fasanella, and Giovanni Pellegrino, *Segreto di Stato* (Turin, 2000), 140

⁵⁷¹ Second Assize Court of Bologna, First Instance Sentence No. 4/88 against Ballan and others on the Bologna station massacre in Criminal Case 12/86, 11 July 1988

funded extra-parliamentary left-wing movements since 1967 with the aim of weakening the Communist Party.⁵⁷²

Giannettini's revelations on the single central group that manipulated both the far-right and the far-left were not isolated. The SID head Vito Miceli said to prosecutor Giovanni Tamburino on 31 October 1974, immediately after being arrested on his orders in the investigation into the *Rosa dei Venti* coup: "*from now on, you will no longer hear about the right-wing terrorism, but only about left-wing terrorism.*"⁵⁷³ Miceli's prediction was proved right. Less than three months had passed since Nixon's resignation and no more significant actions on the part of the subversive right-wing in Italy had occurred. The last far-right blows coincided with the offensive escalation by the Red Brigades. It is obvious that Miceli knew in advance what was in store for Italy, and he must have known what the sources of the past and future events was.

Simultaneously with the Communists' electoral success, the first murder of an institutional figure by the Red Brigades occurred. On 8 June 1976, left-wing terrorists assassinated the General Attorney at the Court of Genoa Francesco Coco.⁵⁷⁴ It certainly cannot be a coincidence that the Red Brigades escalated their offensive just when the Communist Party reached its electoral peak. One of the left-wing terrorists' primary purposes was to sabotage the historical compromise.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷² Memo by Guido Giannettini on the main Italian events, Milan State Archives, Trial on the Milan massacre-Milan Prosecutor's Office Collection, Pradella/Meroni Proceedings, Volume XIII, 6071/95 R

⁵⁷³ Investigation by the judge of the Padua Court Giovanni Tamburino into the *Rosa dei Venti* coup, in Criminal Court of Rome, Sentence-order of the investigating judge Filippo Fiore against Junio Valerio Borghese and others, n.3361/71 General Register of the Public Prosecutor, n.1054/71 General Register of the Investigating Judge (5 November 1975); De Lutiis, *Storia dei servizi segreti in Italia*, 137

⁵⁷⁴ In May 1974, Attorney General Coco had opposed the release of some militants requested by the Red Brigades in exchange for the release of the kidnapped Deputy Public Prosecutor Mario Sossi, after the Genoa Court of Appeal had given a favorable opinion. Hence, the retaliation by the left-wing terrorist group.

⁵⁷⁵ Sergio Flamigni, *La sfinge delle Brigate Rosse. Delitti, segreti e bugie del capo terrorista Mario Moretti* (Milan, 2004), 197-200

"Historical compromise" was a formula that the Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer adopted to call his proposal of collaboration with the government to protect the Italian democracy from the danger of an authoritarian involution and from the strategy of tension. He explained this proposal in a series of articles published on the party's official magazine *Rinascita* in September and October 1973, in the aftermath of the coup in Chile. In those articles, Berlinguer argued that had the Communists ever gained 51% of the votes in the elections, they could never have governed alone, because otherwise a situation like Chile's would have arisen. For this reason, Berlinguer wrote, a collaboration between Communists and Christian Democrats was necessary, as they represented the vast majority of the Italian electorate. See: Enrico Berlinguer, "Imperialismo e coesistenza alla luce dei fatti cileni - Necessaria una riflessione attenta sul quadro

Furthermore, Aldo Moro's kidnapping occurred on 16 March 1978, the day of the confidence vote in Giulio Andreotti's fourth government, which the Communist Party would vote in favour of. The Communist vote in favour of the formation of the fourth Andreotti Government was indeed the culmination of the historical compromise that Aldo Moro and Enrico Berlinguer had stipulated in 1973. It was also the final point in the "strategy of attention" towards the Communist Party that the Christian Democrat statesman had started in 1968. In many anti-Communists' perception, that seemed like the premise of the Communist Party's entry into the government too.⁵⁷⁶

All these facts, along with the anomalies in the whole affair that the studies of an expert like Sergio Flamigni have revealed⁵⁷⁷, prove that the Moro Case goes beyond the history of Italy in the 1970s. During a trip to the United States in September 1974, when he was in charge as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger threatened Moro by saying: *"You must stop pursuing your political plan of bringing the Communist party to collaborate directly with the government. Either you stop doing this, or you will pay dearly, you see how to get it".*⁵⁷⁸ It does not often happen that a statesman personally addresses a foreign counterpart in these tones, nor that he is so explicit in wanting to impose his own political line. The fact that Kissinger allowed himself such insolence towards Moro

mondiale", *Rinascita*, N. 38, (28 September 1973); "Via democratica e violenza reazionaria - Riflessione sull'Italia dopo i fatti del Cile", *Rinascita*, N. 39, (5 October 1973); "Alleanze sociali e schieramenti politici - Riflessioni sull'Italia dopo i fatti del Cile", *Rinascita*, N. 40, (12 October 1973)

⁵⁷⁶ On 12 January 1978, President Jimmy Carter took a stand on the Communists' approach to the government by stating: *"Our position is clear: we are not in favour of a similar participation, and we would like to see communist influence in the countries of Western Europe diminish"*. The whole Carter's statement is included in: Richard Gardner, *Mission Italy. On the front lines of the Cold War* (Lanham, Maryland, 2005). For an overview of the US attitude towards the political developments in Italy in the second half of the 1970's, see: Alice Ciulla, "The Carter Administration and the "communist question" in Italy: political development and action, 1976-1978", *Italia Contemporanea - Sezione Open Access*, (Yearbook), III Issue suppl. (July 2020), 101-126

⁵⁷⁷ See: Sergio Flamigni, *La tela del ragno. Il delitto Moro* (Rome, 1988)

⁵⁷⁸ Hearing of Corrado Guerzoni in Italian Chamber of Deputies, Senate of the Italian Republic, VIII Legislature, Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Via Fani Massacre, on the Kidnapping and Assassination of Aldo Moro and on Terrorism in Italy, 16 February 1983, Doc. XXIII No. 5, Volume II
See also: Sari Gilbert, "Italy's Red Brigades Appear Split at Moro Assassination Trial", *Washington Post* (5 December 1982); Nora Hamerman, "Witness fingers Kissinger in the Moro murder trial", *Executive Intelligence Review*, Volume 9, Number 45, (23 November 1982)

shows the level of concern that the US politics upper echelons had reached regarding the Communist Party's rapprochement with the government in Italy. When the nuances of political language and the diplomatic etiquette's formulas give way to arrogance and face-to-face threats, it means that hysteria has taken over reasonableness and coldness. Above all, it demonstrates how the US Government was willing to do anything to avoid such a risk. In retrospect, Aldo Moro's tragic fate makes Kissinger's threats even more upsetting.⁵⁷⁹

Moro's assassination put the historic compromise into crisis. Its end came on 31 January 1979, when the fourth Andreotti government resigned after the Communist Party announced that it would withdraw its confidence. Since then, the Communist Party never gave a vote of confidence to any government again.⁵⁸⁰ Moreover, the Communist Party entered an irreversible electoral decline. In fact, in the general elections held on 3-4 June 1979, the Communist Party lost nearly one and a half million votes compared to three years earlier, falling to 30.38%.⁵⁸¹ Judging by these results, it seems that exploiting the left-wing subversion turned out to be a more effective means to neutralize the Communist Party than resorting to the right-wing terrorism.

To conclude this section, it is possible to say that the Communist Party's strengthening and the spread of student and worker unrest led the Italian society's conservative sectors to fear that the country was in a pre-insurrection state. Those who believe in ever-recurring historical cycles can easily find analogies with the

⁵⁷⁹ At the Italian government's request, the US State Department sent the Deputy Assistant Steve Pieczenik to Italy to collaborate with the Italian authorities immediately after the kidnapping. The then Minister of the Interior, Francesco Cossiga, had set up a crisis committee aggregating Pieczenik. In a book published in 2006, Pieczenik explained how he acted and his role as consultant to the Italian government during Moro's kidnapping, to make sure that the outcome was his murder. The State Department Deputy Assistant claimed that he had implemented the strategic manipulation that led to Moro's death in order to stabilize the situation in Italy and achieve three goals: eliminate Moro as promoter of the political embrace with the Communists; seize the tapes of the Italian statesman's interrogation transcript that for the first time revealed the existence of Gladio; force the Red Brigades to silence. See: Emanuel Amara and Steven Pieczenik, *Nous avons tué Aldo Moro* (Paris, 2006)

⁵⁸⁰ For a report of the Communists' break from the government, see: Luigi Bianchi, "Il PCI si è ritirato dalla maggioranza. Tre ipotesi per evitare elezioni anticipate", *Corriere della Sera* (27 January, 1979)

⁵⁸¹ Italian Ministry of Interior, Electoral Historical Archive, 1979,

<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=S&dtel=03/06/1979&tpa=l&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (last accessed 30 September 2024)

context that had emerged fifty years earlier. Even in 1919, Italy seemed to be one step away from revolution, with the Socialist Party's victory in the elections held that year and the workers and peasants' armed groups occupation of factories and agricultural fields. In 1919, those who did not want Italy to be the second country in the world to go Communist after Russia found a valid solution in fascism. From 1968 onwards, those who had the same concerns widespread half a century earlier and believed that the democratic system was too weak to face similar dangers succumbed to the suggestive lure of terrorism and coups.

No one can understand anything about the strategy of tension in Italy without taking these aspects into consideration. It was this vicious circle "radicalization of the left-further radicalization of the right" that held Italy hostage in terror for almost thirty years. It was a period that, ideally, began on 30 June 1960 with the clashes in Genoa to protest against the Social Movement congress and ended on 16 July 1988 with the last murder by the Red Brigades of the Christian Democrat Senator Roberto Ruffili. This means that for three-quarters of the duration of the Cold War, Italy was the scene of a low-intensity civil war that the Italian and international secret services fuelled.

US responsibilities

A doubt that still awaits clarification concerns which US branch was most involved in the strategy of tension. The first suspect is the intelligence. On the CIA, the sources are divergent. Previous chapters have shown the interactions between the CIA station in Rome and terrorist and coup groups members, and that the New Order leader Pino Rauti was a CIA agent. There is also an interesting revelation that the ex-prosecutor Carlo Mastelloni made to the author of this thesis. According to Mastelloni, during the Cold War, the CIA placed its agents in the main police headquarters in Italy.⁵⁸² This may suggest that the agency helped divert investigations into the bombings and coup plots so that the truth would not be discovered. Furthermore, it was the CIA's counterintelligence that designed the

⁵⁸² Phone interview with Carlo Mastelloni by the author (7 May 2022)

Operation CHAOS, that is, the framework that served as the backdrop to the strategy of tension. Finally, prosecutor Guido Salvini's latest investigations found out that the input for the attacks of 12 December 1969 came from Aginter Press, which was to all intents and purposes an agency at the service of the CIA.⁵⁸³

A possible CIA's involvement in the strategy of tension also emerges from its attempt to spy on the latest investigations of the Court of Milan into the Piazza Fontana massacre in the months between 1993 and 1994. In the autumn of 1993, the captain of the Carabinieri Special Operations Group Massimo Giraudo had begun a series of investigative talks with the former neo-Fascist militant Biagio Pitarresi. The latter was a well-informed person having been part of right-wing groups in Milan involved in various criminal episodes. On 19 December 1993, Pitarresi reported to Giraudo that he had informed a CIA agent stationed in Milan named Carlo Rocchi of the content of the previous investigative hearings. Pitarresi already knew Rocchi, as he had previously carried out covert operations behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War with him. Rocchi showed interest in the collaboration between Pitarresi and Giraudo and asked him for a letter with the list of questions that the Carabinieri officer asked him in the talks. His aim was to understand how far the investigations of the Court of Milan had reached on the US involvement in the terrorist season. Afterwards, Rocchi would have sent the complete report to the CIA's headquarters to keep the agency updated on what Captain Giraudo and the investigating judge Guido Salvini were finding out about the US intelligence's role.⁵⁸⁴

Salvini issued his first sentence-order on the Piazza Fontana massacre only in 1995, so in 1993 the investigation was still secret. It is obvious that the CIA was interested in prizing out the secrets of the Court of Milan's investigations in order to sabotage the investigative work. The evidence of this is that Rocchi explicitly told

⁵⁸³ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Hearing Office section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 Investigative Judge General Registry File (3 February 1998)

⁵⁸⁴ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Office of Inquiry section 20, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre, N.9/92 General Register File of the Investigating Judge (3 February 1998)

Pitarresi "*now we're going to kill him*", referring to Giraudo, and that he requested to be kept updated in advance on next scheduled meetings at the Carabinieri headquarters in Milan so that he could tail the officer.⁵⁸⁵ Only Pitarresi's refusal to comply with Rocchi's request, due to his loyalty to Giraudo, thwarted the CIA's intention to murder the Carabinieri Captain, or have him murdered. The troubling fact remains that in the first half of the 1990s, when the Cold War was already over, the CIA, or sectors of the CIA, thought of murdering an armed forces' officer of a nation friendly to the United States. This fact, perhaps, does not prove that the CIA itself was involved in the Piazza Fontana massacre. It certainly confirms that the US state apparatuses had reason to fear that judicial investigations into terrorism in Italy would go too deep in their search for truth.

Among other things, regarding the CIA's role in Italian affairs, Kissinger let slip a sentence that he probably regretted having uttered. In September 1974, during a meeting with US Congressional leaders to discuss the CIA's activities, he reportedly advocated the use of covert actions. Kissinger asserted that despite criticism of the CIA, if Italy had gone Communist, there would have been criticism that the United States had not done enough to save her.⁵⁸⁶ It is difficult to say whether Kissinger made this statement out of imprudence or arrogance. As far as this thesis is concerned, his words were probably the most authoritative confirmation that the CIA intervened in Italy's internal affairs to counteract the Communist Party with methods that were at least unorthodox.

The involvement of the other American spy agency, the US Army Intelligence Agency, appears clearer. NATO's Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces Southern Europe in Verona served *de facto* as the centre of American military intelligence in Italy. Having infiltrated one of their agents in New Order such as Carlo Digilio and recruited other neo-Fascists as informants is enough to refer to the US Army Intelligence Agency as the American body most colluded with the Italian terrorists.

⁵⁸⁵ Civil and Criminal Court of Milan, Sentence-Order of the investigating judge Guido Salvini in the criminal proceeding on the Piazza Fontana massacre (3 February 1998)

⁵⁸⁶ Bernard Gwertzman, "Kissinger Sees Oil Crisis Peril Western Society", *New York Times* (27 September 1974)

Moreover, Digilio's main activity consisted of triggering New Order bombs, as he did with the bombs that exploded in Milan in 1969 and Brescia in 1974. A neo-Fascist informant like Marcello Soffiati, for his part, was the one who brought the bomb for the Brescia massacre to the material executioners.⁵⁸⁷

The doubt remains whether NATO, given its characteristics and the composition of its personnel, acted autonomously, or followed directives from the US Government. The fact that the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe of NATO commander is always a US four-star general officer or flag officer, who also serves as head of the US European Command⁵⁸⁸, legitimizes the second hypothesis. It is likely that the US Secretariat of Defence, at the behest of the President of the United States, issues directives to US military commands around the world.⁵⁸⁹ On their part, the US military commands elaborate in detail the plans to implement and then pursue them after receiving authorization from the Pentagon. In the specific *Rosa dei Venti* coup's case, a plausible hypothesis is that the US Government instructed the NATO commands in Verona to develop an alternative plan to the one that Junio Valerio Borghese pursued in 1970. This plan should have consisted in strengthening the government in office in a more conservative sense, with the consensus of the Italian public opinion frightened by the repeated terrorist attacks.⁵⁹⁰

To this end, also in 1973, as in 1969, the US intelligence and Armed Forces thought that, rather than directly getting their hands dirty, it was preferable to resort to the Italian right-wing extremists' manpower. As former New Order militant

⁵⁸⁷ Court of Assizes of Brescia - Second Section, N.3/2008 General Register Form 19, N. 91197 - 9878/07 General Register of crime reports, first degree sentence against Carlo Maria Maggi and others (16 November 2010)

⁵⁸⁸ See the page "Command Group", from the official NATO website:

<https://shape.nato.int/about/leadership-staff/command-group> (last accessed 21 November 2024)

⁵⁸⁹ The US State Codes, that is, the official codification of the general and permanent federal statutes of the United States, clearly states that the Secretary of Defense is subject to the direction of the President of the United States. See:

[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title%3A10%20section%3A113%20edition%3Aprelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title%3A10%20section%3A113%20edition%3Aprelim)) (last accessed 21 November 2024)

⁵⁹⁰ See the speech by ex-prosecutor Giovanni Tamburino "La Rosa dei Venti nel quadro dell'eversione stabilizzante" at the international conference *The far-right subversive network in Italy and Europe (1964-1980)*, held in Padua on 11-12 November 2016:

<https://memoria.cultura.gov.it/documents/37629/88666/La+Rosa+dei+venti+nel+quadro+dell%27eversione+stabilizzante.pdf/45f04374-6e5a-9bf6-df46-83c25b06bb25?t=1626423206940> (last accessed 21 November 2024)

Vincenzo Vinciguerra revealed, from the post-war period onwards, a NATO organization was responsible for all the tragedies that occurred in Italy. This organization, Vinciguerra said, made use of secondary groups from time to time, such as the P2 masonic lodge and the Aginter Press.⁵⁹¹ The neo-Fascists' fanaticism mixed with naivety made them willing to commit the most criminal acts and to believe that they were carrying out revolutionary actions that would bring them to power and restore fascism. Once they had done their job, and one step prior to crossing the drawn line, it was easy for the US to stop them and leave them to face justice, whereas it was more difficult for those indicted for the subversive plots to accuse their handlers.

Since both American military intelligence and NATO refer to the US Defence Department, it follows that the Pentagon also bears heavy responsibilities regarding the strategy of tension in Italy. Moreover, the first chapter exposed the contents of the FM 30-31 manual, explaining how it was the compass of American interference in Italy and pointing out that the Chief of Staff of the US Army William Westmoreland wrote it.⁵⁹² Speaking of American government departments, it is therefore possible to say that the one most involved was the Defence Department.

Final considerations

What this thesis has so far exposed should be enough to provide food for thought on the means the US Government, and especially the Nixon Administration, used to oppose the Italian Communist Party. There are some further reflections to make, though. The first concerns the obstacles encountered in carrying out this research in the archives. Although the events that this thesis deals with date back half a century ago, still nowadays the US National Archives Records Administration make only a few interesting documentations dating back to the 1960s-1970s available to researchers and prosecutors still engaged in the investigations. NATO's archives are

⁵⁹¹ First Court of Assizes of Bologna, Italicus Bis, Sentence-Order of indictment against Ivano Dongiovanni and others, No. 1251/A/82 General Register of Public Prosecutor, No. 1329/A/84 General Register of Investigating Judge, N. 1/96 General Register of the Old Assize Rite, 3 August 1994

⁵⁹² See the section "CIA's use of third actors: Aginter Press" in the first chapter of this thesis, pages 86-87

not accessible at all. It does not make much sense that the Italian sources suggest that there was American involvement in the subversive plots, while the US sources include so few documents related to the events that occurred between 1969 and 1974. Given the loyalty that ever since 1945 the Italian institutions have always shown towards the United States, it is not arguable that anti-Americanism dictated the judicial investigations and the intelligence's information notes. The fact that the potentially most interesting documents in College Park are still classified and that the FOIA requests to the CIA remain unanswered after over two years suggests that there are stories that the US Government still deems unseemly to let come out.

There is an interesting aspect regarding the research in the American sources on the relations between the United States and the Italian right-wing. The previous chapters have shown how American sources are quite rich in documents and information regarding the interactions between Nixon Administration's members and the Social Movement. Likewise, the reasons that the US Ambassador in Italy from 1969 to 1973 Graham Martin provided to justify support for the neo-Fascist party in the 1972 elections found a considerable space. For this reason, on the US side there is official acknowledgment that there had been links with the Social Movement, albeit occasional and never too close.

It was more difficult to find documents concerning the subversive right-wing. The various terrorist groups' names do not appear in the US archive sources (except for the National Front). The US Embassy and the CIA station in Rome constantly updated various US departments on important events in Italy. Yet, the only event it was possible to find interesting documentation about from US sources was the Borghese coup. Furthermore, these useful documents fail to mention the US role. Only Italian sources, such as judicial documents and intelligence notes, allow to reconstruct US involvement in the subversive events during the five-year span 1969-74. Obviously, it would be naive to hope to find in College Park or Yorba Linda documents reporting that Nixon expected to receive the phone call from the naval base in Malta to obtain his green light on the evening of 7 December 1970. Nevertheless, it is strange that in the US archives, and on the Office of Historians

and the CIA Reading Room websites, very few documents on the bombing in Piazza Fontana are available. The most interesting American primary sources turned out to be the Church and Pike Committees into the CIA's illicit activities' reports. The latter was responsible for revealing the funding to the Social Movement in the 1972 Italian political elections, but it did not dedicate a single line to Piazza Fontana or the Borghese coup. If a back thinking is allowed, one might suspect that revealing the US funding to the Social Movement served to cover up much more embarrassing CIA's operations, while making the public opinion believe in the sincerity of the intent to clean up.

The doubt is that the Pike Committee's work, while commendable for having revealed the truth about US intelligence and foreign policy, did not want to force too much the hand in the inquiries. Perhaps, the commissioners feared that the disclosure of certain secrets would have destabilized the internal situation in the United States and undermined the US position in the world. This would certainly be understandable, considering that the Cold War was still ongoing in the mid-1970s, and that any reputational damage to the United States would have been political gain for the Soviet Union.

Whatever the case, half a century after the events this thesis covered, the time has come for further investigations. The temporal distance, the end of a season that has been consigned to the history books and the change in the geopolitical framework allow and impose a different approach. The various Italian governments have desecrated a large number of documents, allowing researchers engaged in the study of Italy's history in the 1960s and 1970s to access precious sources. Until the US National Archives Records Administration and the CIA's reading room do the same with US documents, writing a complete and comprehensive history of US intelligence activities during the Cold War will remain a very complex exercise. The same goes for NATO archives in Brussels. It is obvious that revealing sensitive truths could spark controversies and put the US and Atlantic institutions in a difficult position. Nonetheless, to keep hindering the scholars' research by maintaining the secrecy on the policies pursued half a century ago will only fuel conspiracy theories

and make the US Government appear in an even darker light. Italy, albeit imperfectly and incompletely, decided to open the treasure chest of its secrets. This has encouraged study and reflection by both scholars and the political establishment about the country's past and the historical lessons to learn. The United States would stand to gain from following this example. In some cases, cleaning up the closet can be healthy.

The second reflection is more of a confession. The author of this thesis began this research work having various prejudices and a somewhat schematic vision of history. The main prejudice was that the United States was, if not a monolith, at least always animated by a unity of purpose. Finding out that, on the contrary, there has always been a dissonance between the various branches and even within each of them was quite surprising. More generally, there is a long list of lessons learnt during this research whose importance the author had previously underestimated. Perhaps the main lesson is that, rather than a single Cold War history, there was a set of peculiar stories that, put together, compose the whole Cold War framework.

As the introduction to this thesis already explained, the Cold War was a conflict between opposing empires rather than an ideological clash.⁵⁹³ The emergence of the People's Republic of China as a power on its own right after the conflict with the Soviet Union proves that the clash between communism and anti-communism is not the most effective key to understanding the Cold War. Rather, it is possible to say that the Cold War covered the clash between Communists and anti-Communists that had persisted in single countries ever since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. Italy was the paradigm of this clash that anticipated the Cold War by thirty years. It is not necessary to retrace Italy's history to know that the advent of fascism falls within this context. The strategy of tension was basically the continuation of the conflict between the Italian Communists and their opponents that had began in 1919 and worsened during the 1943-45 civil war. It is not far-fetched to suppose that the United States and the Soviet Union leveraged the ideological conflict within single countries to fuel their imperialist opposition. Both were determined to consolidate

⁵⁹³ See the literature review on the Cold War from the introduction, page 18

and expand their power over the world, rather than spreading what they claimed to be their values.

It is still, however, difficult to fully evaluate the strategy of tension's effects on the long term. To quote Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai's answer at an official banquet for Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 when asked what he thought of the French Revolution: *"It's too early to tell."* Something similar can be said of Italy's history in the 1960s and 1970s. It is a period that is no longer chronicle, but it is not yet history. There are still judicial proceedings ongoing, and the majority of those who have been involved in these events, or who have held political and institutional positions, persist in being silent, or, worse still, in telling lies. All this shows that the historicization of those years has not yet been completed.

To conclude, there is the need of greater courage and more painstaking work in reporting unspoken facts, in analysing events treated too superficially and in highlighting aspects and facets of the Cold War hitherto ignored. This research, within the limits imposed, has striven to fulfil these tasks. Hopefully, other scholars will follow the same path. Even better, if with more appreciable results. If this thesis manages to make at least one reader understand some aspects of the Cold War that are still unclear and inspire further study, then it will mean that carrying out this research work was a worthwhile effort.

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CO (Countries) (White House Central Files: Subject Files)

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Box 42

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