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**Absolute Beginners of the “Belpaese.”  
Italian Youth Culture and the Communist  
Party in the Years of the Economic Boom**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## *Abstract*

This study has the aim of exploring aspects of youth culture in Italy during the economic boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its theoretical framework lies between the studies around Italian youth culture and those around the Italian Communist Party (PCI), investigating the relationship between young people and contemporary society and examining, for the first time, the relationship of the former with the PCI, its institutions and media organs.<sup>1</sup>

The arrival of an Anglo-American influenced pop culture (culture transmitted by the media and targeted at young people) and of its market, shaped the individualities of part of the pre-baby boomers that, finally, were able to create bespoke identities somewhat disconnected from the traditional party-related narrative while remaining on the left of the political spectrum. Pop symbols that blossomed in the late 1950s, such as the striped t-shirt, would characterise the style of young protesters who included them in their collective imagination from the early 1960s onwards.

Simultaneously, a flourishing pop market gave space to other cultural experiences including Cantacronache, a group of young musicians based in Turin who vividly depicted Italy of the boom through their lyrics. Their efforts can be read as belonging to a pop market that finally starts to open up towards new musical stimuli. They aimed to make their music available beyond the circle of left-wing activism as well and they were produced by a label linked to the PCI that in those years was reshaping its approach towards society, getting rid of its radical fringes and opening to a dialogue with diverse strata of the public, including young people, women and non-members.

The thesis investigates how the Communists and its Youth Federation (FGCI), reacted to the development of youth culture as an aspect of modernisation in general. Through an examination of the party's approach to the youth revolts of the early 1960s and of its formal documents targeted at young people in general, we analyse how – and how successfully – the Communists tried to engage with young people while often, internal strands, the monolithic nature of the party and other elements, posed severe obstacles in meeting their demands, creating a fracture that would grow in the following years. The thesis also investigates how the party's attempt to address young people was translated into the promotion of magazines in which serious political topics were discussed alongside other themes such as investigations into society and into the “questione giovanile.” In this respect, we will see how the FGCI journal *Nuova generazione* tried, in the late 1950s, to

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<sup>1</sup> For more about this topic see the Introduction.

take account of youth inclinations paying attention to other important topics such as the emancipation of young women. The generation we look at is the first to claim the right to build its individual identities by drawing on pop culture and modernisation, developing codes and behaviours that pulled away from those set by the institutions.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Guglielmo Perfetti

## List of Abbreviations

AC	Associazione Cattolica
ACLI	Associazione Cristiana Lavoratori Italiani
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale
CONI	Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
FGCI	Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana
Fiat	Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino
FIOM	Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici
Istat	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
RAI	Radiotelevisione Italiana
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Journals

NG	Nuova generazione
VN	Vie nuove



## Introduction

*Youth has power, a kind of divine power  
straight from mother nature<sup>1</sup>*

Late 1950s Italy witnessed a radical change in its social texture which went along with the spread of the economic boom that started around the mid-1950s. The period saw an enhancement in living conditions and, with the development of economy from rurality to industrialisation, an increased access to the emerging market of new goods, which were now finally more affordable. This process, along with others, led to a profound transformation of habits and identities.<sup>2</sup>

Among the social strata affected by this revolution, we can find a brand new one: that of youth. What Paul Morley writes about Britain applies to Italy too: the late 1950s were the time ‘when the idea of youth was rapidly developing as a separate class, a distinct cultural entity.’<sup>3</sup> Across Western countries, those years saw the establishment of the teenager as a new social actor with its own niche in the market. Youth started to become a powerful force that was able to influence society, orientating it towards new pathways. In the United Kingdom and United States, this process had begun at the end of the Nineteenth Century when, with the advent of industrialisation, young people started to earn a wage. Although a limited amount, this money was usually spent on leisure such as music halls, variety theatres, pantomimes and so on.<sup>4</sup> This created a new stratum based on age, shared tastes, common habits and, to a certain degree, class (music hall regulars came mainly from a working class milieu and were suspect in the eyes of part of the bourgeoisie).<sup>5</sup> As we will see, in Italy the situation was different and we have to wait until the 1950s to observe the appearance of a generation that began to develop peer-to-peer relationships based on shared tastes and on a collective imagination. Here lies the focal point of this research. We aim to investigate how Americanisation and an Anglo-American influenced pop culture impacted the dynamics of young Italians’ relationships and those between youth and institutions such as political parties, the Italian Communist Party in particular (PCI) and its Youth Federation (FGCI). We will see how symbols borrowed from pop culture were present in young people’s lives of the time, including those moments in which they took to

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Maccinnes, *Absolute beginners* (London: Allison & Busby, 1959), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> On this, Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia 1943-1996. Famiglia, società, Stato* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Morley, *The North (And Almost Everything In It)* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 50. Those were also the years when, as Julian Cope puts it, ‘electric music took over as the main populist entertainment.’ In Julian Cope in <http://www.headheritage.co.uk/unsung/feature/hardrockssampler>, (26 August 2008).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed book on the origin of the teenager as a social actor, Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth: 1875-1945* (London: Pimlico, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See Jacky Bratton, *Music Hall: Performance & Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

the streets in summer 1960 and 1962 (see chapter 7). As in Britain, juvenile pop symbols characterised the demonstrations of the period, as we can see for example in pictures of the ‘Ban the Bomb’ marches (1961) with some participants wearing striped t-shirts similar to those seen in Genoa in 1960, or in the style of Ken Barlow from *Coronation Street* when, in episode number 9 (1961), he participates in a disarmament march, sporting a long quiff, and a hairstyle which seems to foreshadow the long-haired fashion to come.<sup>6</sup>

The first two chapters of this thesis will investigate the political context of the country, with special attention paid to the PCI’s strategy of the “partito nuovo.” Although the research on this specific topic is extensive, we focus on its relationship with the youth and with the PCI’s Youth Federation analysing the way the two institutions interrelated through older leaders’ messages to young activists.<sup>7</sup>

The Communist Party of the 1950s and early 1960s is the focus of chapter 2, 5 and 6 and the study of its history is still a useful lens through which to view Italy’s multifaceted past and to understand why the impact of the socialist dream had been so powerful for many Italians. As Antonio Gramsci said: ‘si può dire che scrivere la storia di un partito significa niente altro che scrivere la storia generale di un paese da un punto di vista monografico, per porne in risalto un aspetto caratteristico.’<sup>8</sup> Chapter 2 investigates how the PCI strained in its effort to find a balance between its past and the demands of a society which was changing at a very fast pace. We will look at a journal born within the party and founded by some radical elements of the PCI, *Azione comunista*, discussing how these elements criticise the approach of the PCI in interpreting the events of Hungary (1956) broadening the criticism to Togliatti’s strategy of compromise as a whole. The magazine puts forward a point of view different from that of the journals of the PCI and FGCI as discussed later. The vicissitudes of *Azione* have never found room in scholarship and we hope that further research on this topic will be carried out. For example, *Azione* is barely mentioned also in

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<sup>6</sup> In another episode of the same year, he also says: ‘you can’t go on just thinking about your own street these days. We’re living with people on the other side of the world.’ (8 November 1961). For pictures of the “Ban the Bomb” march (<http://flashbak.com/ban-the-bomb-movement-walks-from-aldermaston-to-london-1952-1963-2458/>). A similar scene, with young people marching, accompanied by a guitar and wearing a striped t-shirt could be seen in the pictures of “Marcia per la pace,” from Perugia to Assisi of 1961.

<sup>7</sup> See among others: Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party. The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Donald L. M. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity: Italian Communism and the Communist World* (Boston: the M.I.T. Press, 1968); Giorgio Galli, *Storia del Pci* (Milano: Bompiani, 1976); Massimo Ilardi, Aris Accornero, *Il Partito Comunista Italiano: Struttura e Storia dell’Organizzazione, 1921/1979* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1982); Giuseppe Mammarella, *Il partito comunista italiano: 1945-1975: dalla liberazione al compromesso storico* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1976); Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party. From the Resistance to the Historic Compromise* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981); Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano. Vol. 5: La Resistenza. Togliatti e il partito nuovo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975); Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere V, 1944-1955; VI, 1956-1964* (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1984); Albertina Vittoria, *Storia del PCI 1921-1991* (Roma: Carocci, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere* edited by Valentino Gerratana (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), Q13, p.27.

pivotal books by Nello Ajello or Albertina Vittoria on the relationship between intellectuals and the PCI or in books about the press and intellectuals in post-war Italy such as Piero Lucia's *Intellettuali italiani del secondo dopoguerra*, for example.<sup>9</sup> This chapter also analyses messages from the older PCI leaders to the youth of the FGCI in which the model behaviours of young Communists are expounded, together with reflections on modern society and on the new party strategy, as young people and women become key targets. This topic has been neglected by scholars, as we can see in a couple of pages.

Chapter 3 looks at the coming to the fore of the late 1950s generation. After an analysis of youth during Fascism and in the early 1950s, we will linger on the restlessness of part of the late 1950s youth, and on certain behaviours connected with rock and roll music and with what the press called “teppismo.” We will discuss the emerging of a “questione giovanile,” the arrival of rock and roll in Italy and the consequent reaction of the press. We want to demonstrate that the rebelliousness exhibited by young people in the protests of the early 1960s (see chapter 7) found its roots in the late 1950s. An interpretation which is similar in part has been given by Philip Cooke, while other scholars have often interpreted those revolts as the starting of the politicisation of the youth, opening the way to the turmoil of the late 1960s.<sup>10</sup> However, our discussion is broader and seeks to set the analysis in the context of modernisation which brought with it, together with economic benefits, a set of new symbols that appealed to the youth; stimuli also channelled by the development of media such as television, radio, music appliances and so on. This contributed to creating original peer-to-peer relationships in which young people were in dialogue with each other on the basis of shared collective passions; a development accompanied by the flourishing of the pop market and by a new-born pop culture. According to Tim Delaney, the term ‘popular culture’ holds different meanings ‘depending on who is defining it and the context of use,’ and from our perspective this assumption is true.<sup>11</sup> By pop culture we mean all the artefacts and the arts which are conveyed by modern media and targeted at reaching an audience, small or large, especially of young people, and above all, those which are included in an actual market, that of records for example. This is why we have decided to

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<sup>9</sup> Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI. 1944/1958*, (Bari: Laterza, 1997) and *Il lungo addio. Intellettuali e PCI dal 1958 al 1991* (Bari: Laterza, 1997); Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2014); Piero Lucia, *Intellettuali italiani del secondo dopoguerra. Impegno, crisi, speranza* (Napoli: Guida, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Philip Cooke, *Luglio 1960. Tambroni e la repressione fallita* (Roma: Teti, 2000). Annibale Paloscia, *Al tempo di Tambroni Genova 1960: la Costituzione salvata dai ragazzi in maglietta a strisce* (Milano: Mursia, 2010); Attilio Mangano, *Le radici del presente: il '68 italiano* (Bari: Sapere 2000, 1998) or M. De Pasquale, G. Dotoli, M. Selvaggio, *I linguaggi del Sessantotto. Atti del convegno multidisciplinari libera università degli studi «San Pio V» (Roma, 15-17 maggio 2008)* (Edizioni APES, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Tim Delaney, *Pop Culture: An Overview in Philosophy Now* (Vol. 64, November/December 2007).

include an artistic experience like Cantacronache in the realm of pop music. (See below and chapter 4).

Journalist Paul Mason states, in a documentary about Northern Soul music, that British ‘working class culture was very pop orientated.’<sup>12</sup> This statement is also true for Italy which saw expanded industrialisation and the appearance of a real working class only in the 1950s. Part of this class was composed of young people – a large number of them newly migrated to industrial cities – who finally had a small surplus of money to spend on artefacts such records, magazines or in fashion.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, a section of working class youth, together with young people from other classes, started to reshape their free time around these objects and it is not surprising that an item such as the jukebox, usually installed in a bar, enjoyed great popularity in those years. This way of socialising was brand new in Italy and both the press and the parties were concerned about the consequences that it could have. A veritable subculture was being created, and it challenged society through its symbols and rituals.<sup>14</sup> As we will see, major newspapers dedicated numerous articles to this topic, focusing on the acts of bravado of the “teddy boys,” who were demonised as a group (See chapter 3).<sup>15</sup> The political parties, especially the PCI, were terrified by this original form of socialisation, acknowledging that it could be the engine for young people’s detachment from their youth federations and institutions. (See chapter 2, chapters 5 and 6). The relationship between the institutions, pop culture and young people in the boom which we are examining has been often neglected by the researchers who privileged – at times – the one or the other term of the equation.<sup>16</sup>

The cultural identity of young people living in industrial cities (especially Milan, Genoa and Turin), and a flourishing pop market are at the core of the topics discussed in the first four chapters. Chapter 4 will treat Cantacronache, a collective of young artists founded in Turin in 1957 and active until the early 1960s, and their repertoire.

The discussion around Cantacronache fits in this thesis because it is closely related to what is discussed in the first three chapters: the artists were young and belonged to the same

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<sup>12</sup> *Northern Soul: Keeping The Faith* in The Culture Show BBC2 (25 September 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Luca Gorgoglioni, *Un mondo di giovani. Culture e consumi dopo il 1950* in Paolo Sorcinelli, *Identikit del Novecento: conflitti, trasformazioni sociali, stili di vita* (Roma: Donizelli, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> On the idea of ‘subclutures,’ some books are indispensable: Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin, 2009); Stuart Hall, *Resistance Through Rituals, Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Harper and Collins, 1976); Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> See Simonetta Piccone Stella, *La prima generazione. Ragazze e ragazzi nel miracolo economico italiano* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1993); Marilisa Merolla, *Rock ‘N’Roll Italian Way. Propaganda americana e modernizzazione nell’Italia che cambia al ritmo del rock: 1954-1964* (Roma: Coniglio, 2011); Tiziano Tarli, *La felicità costa un gettone. Storia illustrata del primo rock’n’roll italiano* (Roma: Arcana, 2009).

generation as the “teddy boys,” they lived in an industrial city (Turin), they were related to the PCI and, although they were not part of the working class, they managed to narrate the lives of the latter, together with those of other social strata, in an exquisite manner. Their songs are a mirror of Italy of the time and its symbols. Cantacronache represented the other side of the Italian pop music coin: they rejected the shallowness of “canzonetta” or the pounding music of “urlatori” but they did not exclude themselves from the pop market.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, they injected new life into it, expanding it and opening the road to the song-writing genre which would flourish in the subsequent years. Cantacronache were a product of the years of the “miracolo,” a fruit of the Turin milieu where the intellectual elites walked hand by hand with left-wing political activism and industrialisation. In the past twenty years there have been a few studies on their activity described as pioneering in Italian song-writing. Besides *Cantacronache. Un'avventura politico-musicale degli anni Cinquanta* written by the two founding members Michele L. Straniero and Emilio Jona in 1995, the other cluster of studies have focused on the dichotomy Cantacronache versus pop music market.<sup>18</sup> As stated by the artists, in fact, their first aim was to fight the supremacy of “canzonetta.” The collective succeeded in developing a musical genre in which, for the first time in Italy, lyrics acquire great value and distance themselves from the lack of profundity of pop music of the period. However what scholars have not underlined is the fact that the young artists are part of the pop market itself and, in our opinion, instead of a dichotomy we could talk about a development of pop music which, thanks to this experience, opens up to formulae that bring with them intellectual and deeper insights unheard before. Cantacronache in fact came to prominence also thanks to the use of the 45s vinyl format which allowed them, like the “canzonetta,” to reach a broader target and to become known throughout the country. They were produced by a label connected to the Communist Party, Italia Canta, and although they never became very successful, they left a legacy which would be taken up by the young song-writers to come; many of them with great results in popularity. As explained in chapter 4, some scholarship has always given more space and importance to their lyrics, overlooking their music completely. Our approach differs, we will in fact also discuss their musical forms underlining the influences in it. Apart from the high-brow and declared references to George Brassens or Kurt Weil,

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<sup>17</sup> In this respect it is not coincidence that two “urlatori,” Giorgio Gaber and Enzo Jannacci would become popular songwriters in the 1960s. Adriano Celentano himself, between the 1960s and the 1970s, would start writing more profound lyrics to his songs.

<sup>18</sup> Emilio Jona, M. L. Straniero, *Cantacronache. Un'avventura politico-musicale degli anni Cinquanta* (Torino: Paravia, 1995). See also Giovanni Straniero and Carlo Rovello, *Cantacronache. I cinquant'anni della canzone ribelle. L'eredità di Michele L. Straniero* (Zona: 2008); Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962. Politica e protesta in musica in Storicamente, Rivista del Dipartimento di Storia Culture Civiltà*, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, 2013.

in certain songs we can identify a style which is not very far from pop music of the time, especially in those composed by Fausto Amodei or in those sung by Mario Pogliotti. Moreover, as far as the lyrics are concerned, the collective thrived more in songs which recounted their historical period with a penchant for irony and societal observations. In this sub-corpus we find a bitter-sweet description of the economic boom and of the vicissitudes of new Italians.

Italia Canta, CEDI from 1963, was a music label strongly connected to the PCI and was designed to produce protest and folk music.<sup>19</sup> Founded in Turin in 1956, it synthesises perfectly the strategy of the “partito nuovo” reaffirmed by the party at the VIII congress in the same year: to open the PCI towards different strata of society, including non-members and the newer generations, and to gain the sympathies of the Italian voters. In order to do this, the PCI needed to eradicate the most belligerent inner components, many of them pivotal during the Resistance, and become a progressive and democratic force inside parliament. For this purpose, over the 1950s and early 1960s, the PCI invested a lot of energy in its media, especially in its magazines, and in cultural activities. Of course, the episode of Italia Canta and Cantacronache can be related to this scenario.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the Youth Federation of the PCI and its way of treating emerging and important topics such as the “questione giovanile” and the condition of women and this represents another point of originality of this thesis. So far, extensive research into the FGCI has not been carried out and often accounts are based on personal testimonies. In the historiography referring to the Italian left wing, the discourse on the FGCI has mainly been associated with its position inside the PCI and therefore analysed through the lens of the party’s history and hegemony. Besides a book by Donatella Ronci and some interesting yet short articles by Gianmario Leoni or Andrea Marinelli, a real corpus of work on the history and importance of the Youth Federation does not exist yet.<sup>20</sup> In these cases, the texts deal with the history of the FGCI without analysing the documents or a newspaper such as *Nuova generazione*, as we do. Articles from the latter appear in Marilisa Merolla’s *Rock’n’Roll Italian Way* (cited in a footnote above) but they serve the purpose of carrying out a broader analysis of modern Italy, without focusing on the newspaper *per se*. Even in an interesting article by Leo Goretti aiming at providing an

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<sup>19</sup> Mario De Luigi, *Storia dell'industria fonografica in Italia*, edizioni Musica e Dischi, Milano, 2008 and Vincenzo Santangelo, *Le muse del popolo. Storia dell'Archi a Torino 1957-1967* (Rome: Franco Angeli, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Donatella Ronci, *I giovani comunisti: dalla Liberazione al 1957* (Quaderni della F.I.A.P., 1980); Gianmario Leoni, *I giovani comunisti e "il partito."* *La Fgci dal 1956 al 1968 in Italia contemporanea* (n. 267, 2012); Andrea Carmine Marinelli, *Giovani e comunisti. Lineamenti per una storia della Fgci negli anni '60-'70* (Dipartimento di Storia Culture Civiltà – DiSCi, 2014).

image of the young Communists' propaganda against the DC, the analysis of the FGCI's press and its documents is not systematic.<sup>21</sup> As it stands, it seems that scholars have not had interest in developing comprehensive and analytical research based on FGCI's documents while other aspects of the Communist press have been amply investigated.<sup>22</sup> Until at least the late 1970s, Italian historiography on youth cultures in general was scant if not absent. However, even after the 1970s, systematic research into the FGCI's method of communicating with young people, through either magazines or official documents, has not developed. A solid discourse around the FGCI has not found space in any of the extensive corpus on the PCI, not even in seminal books on which this research draws, such as those by Nello Ajello, Paolo Spriano or Albertina Vittoria, or in paradigmatic texts on the party such as those by Giorgio Galli and Giuseppe Mammarella (see footnotes above). Among British and American scholars too, who in the past thirty years have begun to take interest in Italian popular culture and in the PCI, there is no discussion of the way the FGCI and its magazines, pamphlets or documents related to the youth. David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, in *Mass Culture and Italian Society* and Gundle in *Between Hollywood and Moscow* for example, mention the FGCI frequently but, in that case also, the focus is still on the PCI. The same happens in books by Donald Sassoon or Grant Amyot (see footnotes above).<sup>23</sup>

In chapter 5 we will look at formal documents issued by the FGCI in national and provincial contexts in relation to these topics. We will analyse and compare two statutes of the federation (1957 and 1962) in which its role in society is described along with further documents spanning the late 1950s to 1962, the year of the revolt of Piazza Statuto in Turin (July 1962). This event is particularly relevant to our research as it highlights the schism between the party – which criticizes the spontaneity of the uprising denying any involvement in it – and the protest methods of part of the youth who had found in “spontaneismo” and violence a way to react, a modality which has its roots in the restlessness of youth of the late 1950s. By looking at the documents issued by the Turinese federation after summer 1962, we will demonstrate how the FGCI embraced the same attitude of denial of the PCI. In those documents there is no trace of discussion around that

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<sup>21</sup> Leo Goretti, *Truman's bombs and De Gasperi's hooked-nose: images of the enemy in the Communist press for young people after 18 April 1948* in *Modern Italy* (n. 16, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> See Marcello Flores, *Il Quaderno dell'attivista: ideologia, organizzazione e propaganda nel PCI degli anni Cinquanta* (G. Mazzotta: Milano, 1976) or Andrea Mariuzzo, *The training and education of propagandists in the 'repubblica dei partiti': internal-circulation periodicals in the PCI and the DC (1946–58)* in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* (n. 16, 2011), and above all A. Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*.

<sup>23</sup> David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press); Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham and London: Duke University press, 2000).

protest which saw the participation of a new working class, a big part of it freshly migrated to Turin, that did not recognise itself in the policy of the PCI (see chapter 7).<sup>24</sup> Piazza Statuto surely opens towards the spontaneity of protest of the years to come and the communist denial is a missed chance that will increase the gap between the party and young people. In the documents analysed there are very few references to the event and when this happens an attitude of reproach appears. By including the FGCI formal communications in our investigation of youth trends of the time we will see how, despite its focus on youth, its dependence on the PCI did not allow, at least in formal documents, an understanding of the new social reality embodied by part of the youth which finds its blueprint in the restlessness of young people of the late 1950s.

Chapter 6 focuses on the FGCI magazine *Nuova generazione*, which has not been comprehensively studied previously. Our aim is to see if, at least in informal communication, the federation grasps the problematics around the “questione giovanile” and women’s emancipation. In looking at issues released between autumn 1956 and summer 1957, we will investigate how the younger generations of the late 1950s are portrayed as showing an original approach to the contemporary world, an open-mindedness corroborated by a lucid view of their role in society and desires, along with a certain restless and dissatisfaction towards the political system: the same dissatisfaction which would explode in 1960 and 1962 (see chapter 7). We will focus on three main topics: the “questione giovanile,” the condition of women and a discourse around Americanisation, which had followed on from the first rock and roll festival of Milan in May 1957, an event discussed in chapter 3. The magazine structures its investigations through a constant dialogue with the reader often supported by surveys and letters. In this respect *NG* manages to give voice to a “spregiudicata” generation that is claiming agency in creating its individual identity. These letters tend to be a response to opinions of older journalists in which a different perspective is presented. In this way the magazine plays on contrasting views and becomes the platform for a generational discourse. Discussion of these topics will be considered in parallel with some extracts from interviews published in *Vie nuove* on the same topics.

The theoretical framework of this thesis lies in the area of the studies around the PCI and that of cultural studies, a field which would only appear in Italian academia after the 1970s when a new direction in scholarship developed, also inspired by the Centre for

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<sup>24</sup> ‘E ci chiamano teppisti/ e ci dicono provocatori/ ma noi siamo lavoratori/ che Togliatti non amiam,’ *Inno dei teppisti* sung in Turin after the events of July 1962, on the motive of *Inno dei lavoratori*. In Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni, *L'orda d'oro 1968-1977. La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997), p. 83.



Contemporary Cultural Studies of Birmingham. Before that point, in Italy, cultural studies had always been considered ‘unsystematic and without methodological dignity.’<sup>25</sup> Through our research we want to give space to the analysis of an earlier generational transition which has often been overlooked in scholarship, in favour of more conspicuous studies on Italian youth culture of the late 1960s and 1970s. Its originality lies in the investigation of archival material and of a journal such as *Nuova generazione* that have never been explored before methodically. Our aim is to examine a generation which potentially anticipates the inclinations of those of the subsequent decades. We want to show how, for the first time in the country, part of the Italian youth shaped its identity around cultural symbols, rituals and choices not prearranged by institutions such political parties, but decided to build their own identities relying on other codes transmitted by a more global pop culture. As underlined by Enrica Capussotti, young people of that time ‘dialogano soprattutto con i dispositivi emergenti del consumo e della cultura di massa, rivendicando [...] una nuova identità.’<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Emiliana De Blasio, M. Sorice, *Cultural Studies in Italy and the Influence of Gramsci, Catholic Culture and the “Birmingham School,”* CSM Working Papers published by Center for Media and Communication Studies “Massimo Baldini” LUISS University, 2009, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Enrica Capusotti, *Gioventù perduta: gli anni Cinquanta dei giovani e del cinema in Italia* (Firenze: Giunti, 2004), p. 19.

## *1. The years of Change*

### *1.1 Italy and the Political Scenario in the 1950s and early 1960s*

In this section, we are going to look at the socio-political scenario of Italy during the years of the boom. Our intention is to set out some contextual information in order to better understand the material investigated in the research. In this thesis, we want to demonstrate how, during that period, part of the younger generation tried to express itself by creating individual identities and peer-to-peer relationships somewhat detached from the political parties and other institutions. At the same time, the parties understood that being up-to-date and therefore changing their approach towards society was necessary. At the forefront of this process, we find the Communist Party that, under the leadership of Palmiro Togliatti, aimed at getting rid of its radical fringes and enlarge its electoral constituency. Through the promotion of magazines targeted at larger strata of the public, including the youth, the party wanted to establish a communication also with non-members and non-activists. In this respect, we will later consider *Nuova generazione* especially, a youth-oriented magazine born under the wing of the FGCI, the Youth Federation of the PCI. The following historical discussion is hence necessary, as we will deal with the coming into prominence of the generation of pre-baby boomers, the people born between the middle-1930s and the early 1940s. It is impossible to comprehend their role without looking at the context.

Until the mid-1950s, Italy was still an underdeveloped country in which the agricultural sector represented the main source of wealth. Essential facilities like electricity, sanitary installations or drinkable water were not common in Italian homes. Apart from internal migrations, many people still sought fortune in the United States, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany or South America. Some of them migrated permanently, some others left with the intention of staying in these countries for a while: the necessary time to accumulate an amount of money with which they could help their families back home.

The period between 1957 and 1963 saw a remarkable shift that would revolutionise the economic, political and social landscape of Italy. According to the statistics, Italy ceases to be a poor rural country to become an industrialized power. The national income increased: from 17,000 billions of lire in 1954 to 30,000 billion in 1964; the per capita income went from 350,000 lire to 571,000 lire. The people employed in the agricultural sector diminished from 40% to 25%; instead, the people employed in the industrial field

increased, from 32% to 40%.<sup>1</sup> The key words of the time were mass production, Fordism and consumerism, and finally, Italy took part in the new European market. According to Beppe Severgnini, 1957 is the year of the three “C”s: the year of the first Fiat Cinquecento, the starting of the broadcasting of Carosello and the founding of the Comunità Economica Europea.<sup>2</sup> In the first period of the “miracolo economico” the investments were focused especially on the construction sector and public works: for example, in 1956 the construction of the A1 highway had begun, completed in 1964. From 1958 to 1963, instead, the investments were concentrated more on the industrial sector. In fact, in this period the financing of industrial installations and plant grew by 14% per year.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, in the vanguard of the economic development, we find the petrochemical and engineering sector and, above all, the export of manufactured products, particularly domestic appliances such as fridges, and motor vehicles. An important example of the progressive face of the boom is the case of Olivetti, specialised in the production of typewriters. The Ivrea factory was the prototype of a factory in which workers could find a more human and friendly environment. Founded by Camillo Olivetti in 1908, it flourished under his son Adriano Olivetti thanks to the export of high quality typewriters with a stylish design for which brilliant designers such as Marcello Nizzoli worked.<sup>4</sup>

It must be underlined, on the other hand, that the Italian boom, together with the positivity of the economic growth, had its dark sides: a big part of its strength, in fact, dwelt in the exploitation of underpaid workforces, an aftermath of the tragic unemployment that took place just after the world war. The passage from an agricultural based economy to industrial capitalism, which had its main productive core in the “triangolo industriale” of the North of the country, triggered a shift also in the habits, in the culture and in the way of thinking of the Italians.<sup>5</sup> This change was not painless and it had enormous consequences, especially on the construction of the identities of the citizens. The building up of massive industries in the North led to a vast migration from the poorer South and, concurrently, as it had happened for example in the United Kingdom during the late Nineteenth century, it led also to a horizontal migration movement which goes from the countryside to the cities. The issues of poverty, solitude, alienation experienced by many of the new citizens are a

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<sup>1</sup> Guido Crainz in VV AA, *Storia Contemporanea* (Roma: Donzelli, 1997) p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Beppe Severgnini, *L'Italia e il fattore ottimismo: Come 50 anni fa in Corriere della Sera* (2 January 2007). In <http://www.pressreader.com/italy/corriere-della-sera/20070102/282243776111848>.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), p.253.

<sup>4</sup> For an exhaustive insight on the factory and on Adriano Olivetti's ideas and ambitions: Adriano Olivetti, *La città dell'uomo* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1959).

<sup>5</sup> The industrial triangle is the more productive area of Italy from which important brands such as Fiat, Alfa Romeo and so on, came from. It has its pounding heart in the cities of Turin, Milan and Genoa.

common trait in various songs and films of that era and beyond: “E poi mille strade/ grige come il fumo/ in un mondo di luci/ sentirsi nessuno.”<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, the new migrants brought with them a powerful baggage of traditions and habits that often clashed with the rituals and the milieu of the new cities. Some examples of these dynamics are provided by films such as *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), by Luchino Visconti or novels like *La vita agra* (1962), by Luciano Bianciardi.<sup>7</sup> In 1961 Pier Paolo Pasolini released *Accattone* and, in 1962, *Mamma Roma*. Two important films in which the intellectual recounted the loss of innocence of the new citizens who moved from the countryside in order to establish themselves in the shanty towns or in the “case popolari” around Rome. In a moving scene, the dialogue goes like this:

Anna Magnani: “C’hai fame?”

Ettore Garofolo: “Stamattina me so magnato ‘nu tozzo di pane co li patati”

Anna Magnani: “Li...che? Ma che hai detto? Ma che ‘ssò ‘se parolacce? Tu devi parlà come parla tu madre, mica come quei quattro bigonzi laggiù. Guarda che te meno, sa!”

In this exchange, the main character, Mamma Roma, a prostitute who established herself in the Capital, reproaches her son who just moved from the countryside because of his uncouth language, still affected by his rural background. The myth of modernity and the hope for a promised land that had the shape of a possible affluent society, pushed people to leave villages and towns where their ancestors had lived for ages. Besides the wave that goes from South to North or from the villages to the city, we have another important phenomenon: the growth of the commuters. Many workers, clerks, students lived in the outskirts of big centres, especially in Milan and Turin and, each morning, they were compelled to undertake long journeys by trains or by coaches to reach their final destination: ‘in due ore ogni mattina 300 000 persone entrano a Milano, con tutti i mezzi, in condizioni spesso penose’<sup>8</sup> The quality of transport was often very low and characterized by overcrowded carriages, cold in the winter and too warm in the summer. The response of the authorities was non-existent. To understand the extent of this phenomenon we can look at the many articles, books and investigations that Giorgio Bocca wrote during those days.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Luigi Tenco, *Ciao amore ciao*, 1967. Even many years later, these migrations still had a great resonance. In the 1990s the 99 Posse, a band from Naples sang: ‘Napoli, città dimenticata, sfruttata, abbandonata/ da tutti disprezzata ma a Agnelli c’è piaciuto/ ‘o lavoro ‘e l’emigrato, pacche scassate/ famiglie disgregate e a Torino, Milano/ napoletano, terrone e ignorante.

<sup>7</sup> Luciano Bianciardi, *La vita agra* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1962).

<sup>8</sup> Vittorio Emiliani, *Arriva stanca al lavoro l’avanguardia del miracolo* in *Il Giorno* (22 June 1962), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Giorgio Bocca, *Miracolo all’italiana* (Milano: Avanti!, 1962).

The new migrations, the acquisition of new goods, the hope for a better future founded on an improved standard of living and many other factors, started a process of radical renewal which affected, as it has been said, the identities of the Italians and the images that they had of themselves. For a while, this renewal did not go together with the gaining of a better living condition, especially for the poorest:

Qui (nei villaggi attorno alla grande città) come nel West, una generazione allo sbaraglio, che costruisce le sue case nella notte, che rischia tutto ciò che possiede. Ma chi pensa che da qui possa uscire un nuovo italiano, sicuro, fiducioso, orgoglioso della propria epopea come l'americano, probabilmente si sbaglia<sup>10</sup>

According to Bocca, the relocation to a big city did not always produce a change in the mental archetypes. This is in part true for the older generations but, we must admit, that it is less true when we consider the youth. Young Italians who migrated from the “Meridione” found themselves in contact with the vibrant milieu of cities in development. Furthermore, social conflicts which had re-spread in Italy from the late 1950s, turned work places as factories into laboratories for the acquisition of a collective identity; a class consciousness, oftentimes disconnected from the rhetoric of the parties, as we will see later. The political struggles, especially after the late 1950s contributed to creating a common purpose in which both the young native and migrant workers were slowly getting involved. Nevertheless, this latter element would not be quickly perceived by the Communist Party for example that from the late 1950s onwards would be stuck between a strategy of moderation (and procrastination) and a timid attempt at speaking to the new generations. For instance, as we will see, many of the young people involved with the Piazza Statuto riots in Turin (July 1962) were in fact “meridionali” but the PCI would promptly take a step back from the clashes. The Turin riots saw the involvement of workers and students – from both the universities and secondary schools – a union of efforts that will become very common in the late 1960s. The revolts of 1962 is a turning point of a period of transition, for both society and institutions, and represent a missed chance for the left-wing to be at the vanguard of a new way of conceiving protest which would, instead, deeply influence the youth of the late 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, those riots, together with those of 1960, as we will see, saw the display of a rage and restlessness that could be traced back to the late 1950s. Before investigating these topics later on, we will consider further aspects

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<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Bocca, *La fabbrica dei nuovi italiani* in *il Giorno* (8 September 1963), p. 3.

of the socio-economic and political context, briefly looking at the situation inside the two main parties of the country: the Democratic Christians (DC) and the PCI.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Socio-economic Change and the DC

In this part, we will go back in time a little to analyse some economic and political trends between the mid-1950s and the years of the boom, particularly in relation to the DC.

Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, state funds were allocated mainly for public works. In 1956, in San Donato Milanese, the building of the “Autostrada del Sole” had started; it would be completed in 1964 under Aldo Moro’s centre-left government. In the same area but a little later, ENI opened its new base, composed of modern and futuristic buildings; a bastion of modernity placed at the entrance of the Italian heart of capitalism: Milan.<sup>12</sup> The area would see a massive demographic explosion in a short time and it would be known as “Metanopoli”. Apart from the problems that went with the miracle, these were years of optimism. For example, in 1960 the *Financial Times* had awarded its ‘monetary “Oscar” to the Italian lira as the most stable currency of 1959.’<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, if we examine the political situation of Italy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it is possible to identify a condition of instability. The governments of those days had succeeded only in part in the implementing of necessary reforms, not allowing a full development of the Nation. In 1960 economy was flourishing and the ‘time was ripe for a clear political leadership’ but the DC, the ruling party since the end of the WWII, ‘was not capable of giving it.’<sup>14</sup> The social changes caused by the boom represented an enormous challenge for the political class, demanding a prompt response, and in a very short time, from the middle-1950s onwards, Italy experienced a fundamental break with the past.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, cinema, newspapers, magazines, radio and above all television certainly played their part in helping Italians to create their new identity, promoting the process of modernisation.<sup>16</sup> As Silvio Lanaro points out, television ‘non si limitava a vantare i pregi

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<sup>11</sup> Cities like Milan or Rome saw the flood of a new humanity not only composed of workers but also petite bourgeoisie or people with a good level of education that moved there in order to seek for fortune. Among them we find many would-be artists: writers, actors, directors and so on. A magnificent depiction of this type of situation could be seen in films like *Io la conoscevo bene* (1962), by Antonio Pietrangeli or the masterpiece *La dolce vita* (1960), by Federico Fellini.

<sup>12</sup> G.Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano, Culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni cinquanta e sessanta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2003), p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d’Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, p. 256.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Many films of the era were ironic about the new state of affairs. See *La Cambiale* (1959) by Camillo Mastrocinque.

<sup>16</sup> It would be interesting to take a look to the quality of Italian television’s programmes in the 1950s and early 1960s. It is assumed that they worked as media of integration and alphabetization, at least in the

intrinseci di una merce ma suggeriva stili di vita.’<sup>17</sup> However, the path towards modernisation had its bad sides and, besides the problems of disparity between the new rich and poor, internal migration, the exploitation of the labour force and so on, the challenge of modernisation itself became a tug of war between conservative tendencies and hopes for rejuvenation. Often, the presence of a strong and powerful conservative culture at the top of political life and in areas of the main parties, PCI included, contributed in slowing the process of social development of Italy.

In the first years of the Cold War, the hopes for a complete renewal, embodied by a prominent part of the CLN (the National liberation committee) and grown during the immediate post-war period, were abandoned. During the 1950s, institutions such as the Church or part of the politics, the right wing of DC for example, built a barrier – sometimes explicit, sometimes silent – against any proposal of change. The habit of collaborating and working together at the core of politics between 1945 and 1948, had quickly vanished and, from the general elections of 1948 onwards, Italy kept in step with United States foreign policy. Within the council of ministers, the anti-fascist commitment of the previous era gave way to a strong anti-communist sentiment. As the DC prime minister Mario Scelba said in November 1954 during an assembly: ‘anzi tutto occorre partire da una precisa constatazione, e cioè che il partito comunista agisce fuori dalla Costituzione.’<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that the right wing of the Democrazia Cristiana returned frequently to this issue. What it is striking, instead, is that also Giuseppe Saragat, the leader of the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano, would say until the late 1960s that the RAI (Radiotelevisione italiana) was in the hands of the PCI, a party that, according to him, had a strong terrorist core.<sup>19</sup> This is surprising when we think that at least in the 1950s, Rai followed the government’s *weltanschauung* almost slavishly. These anti-communist messages had mainly an intimidating nature, but they contributed to create a culture of exclusion, a common feeling against some elements, virtually cutting out a side of the nation. Beyond the intimidations, it is certain that organs of control, such as the Casellario

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beginning, following the John Reith BBC’s three rules of information, education and entertainment. In this context a typical example could be: *Non è mai troppo tardi. Corso di istruzione popolare per il recupero dell’adulto analfabeta*, a show presented by Alberto Manzi, broadcasted from 1960 to 1968.

For more information about the history of radio and television in Italy: Aldo Grasso, *Storia della televisione italiana. I 50 anni della televisione* (Milano: Garzanti, 2000); Franco Monteleone, *Storia della Radio e della Televisione Italiana. Un secolo di costume, società e politica* (Padova: Marsilio 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Silvio Lanaro, *Storia dell’Italia repubblicana. La politica, la cultura, la società dal dopoguerra agli anni ’90* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992), p. 255.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Sergio Segre would state: ‘Saragat diceva che in Rai eravamo un covo di eversori... La parola è forte ma non me ne viene un’altra.’ In Ettore Bernabei, Giorgio Dell’Arti, *L’uomo di fiducia* (Milano: Mondadori, 1999), p. 198-199. The formula of the “Rai comunista” was later used also by Silvio Berlusconi.

Politico Centrale, were still active until the early 1960s, directed almost exclusively against the Communists and the Socialists.<sup>20</sup>

The elections of 1958 reaffirmed the DC as the ruling party, although the PCI gained few more votes than the previous elections and the Partito Socialista increased its share.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the situation within the DC was far more complex as the party was dominated by Amintore Fanfani, who had started to become very powerful yet very unpopular. After the elections, he became Prime Minister and, at the same time, Foreign Minister. Not satisfied, he kept the secretariat of the party as well: Fanfani 'sembrava essere il padrone d'Italia,' Piero Ottone underlines.<sup>22</sup> Fanfani aimed to revolutionise the strategies of the DC, until then based on a series of very cautious governments. From 1957, Fanfani maintained that the involvement of the Socialist Party in the government was necessary, his plan focused on a moderate reformism founded on a possible alliance between the DC and the PSI, which could have also been useful to isolate the Communists.<sup>23</sup> The idea of a shift towards left, even if moderate, was not widespread among the right wing of the party, the one led by Mario Scelba and close to the Vatican and to Azione Cattolica. For them, the possibility of any alliance with Pietro Nenni's party could have led to a time when 'i cavalli dei cosacchi si sarebbero abbeverati nelle fontane di San Pietro.'<sup>24</sup> As the journalist Edmondo Berselli recalls:

Ma noi non ce lo saremo mica dimenticati che contro il centrosinistra l'avversione della Chiesa è stata fortissima e compatta, a partire dall'*Osservatore Romano* e da tutta la curia vaticana, non ce lo saremo mica dimenticato il "partito romano" che si era messo di traverso a De Gasperi, che voleva l'operazione Sturzo con i fascisti e i monarchici...<sup>25</sup>

In Fanfani's wing, the "Iniziativa Democratica," several colleagues did not agree with his desire to reform the party, among them Paolo Emilio Taviani, Mariano Rumor and Emilio

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<sup>20</sup> The Casellario was established during the *Regno d'Italia* with the aim of keeping tabs on subversives but also on vagabonds and tramps. The office survived the end of fascism and it has been kept in use up to the early 1960s. Its database can be consulted on the Archivio Nazionale dello Stato website (<http://151.12.58.148:8080/CPC/>).

<sup>21</sup> The Democrazia Cristiana went from 40.1 of the last elections (1953) to 42.4 per cent; the Partito Socialista went from 12.7 to 14.2 per cent. The Movimento Sociale Italiano lost some votes, from 5.8 to 4.8 per cent, the Partito Comunista Italiano gained just the 0.1 per cent, from 22.6 to 22.7 per cent. In P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia*, p. 344.

<sup>22</sup> Piero Ottone, *Fanfani* (Milano: Longanesi, 1966) p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia*, p. 345.

<sup>24</sup> A famous motto used during the Cold War years in Italy.

<sup>25</sup> Edmondo Berselli, *Adulti con riserva. Com'era allegra l'Italia prima del '68* (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), p. 142.



Colombo.<sup>26</sup> These rifts led to the collapse of the government in 1959 and, few months later, some ex members of “Iniziativa Democratica” created a new political strand baptized “dorotea”, imposing Aldo Moro, a professor in his forties with a pronounced gift for oratory, as the secretary of the party. The opening towards the left was not rejected definitively but postponed.<sup>27</sup>

In 1960, the Presidente della Repubblica Giovanni Gronchi, nominated Ferdinando Tambroni to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Tambroni’s image appeared strong and determined but, in reality, he was an opportunist good at making compromises. During the Fanfani period he did not take a firm position against the Socialists’ involvement, however as soon as he was in charge, his actions led in a totally different direction,<sup>28</sup> in fact his government was strongly supported, at least in the parliament, by the votes of the Movimento Sociale Italiano. This occurrence would lead to a firm revolt, that of July of 1960, that is going to be discussed in the last chapter. It is now time to look briefly at the second biggest party of the time, the PCI, and to some of its inner dynamics. A more detailed insight into it will be given in chapter two.

### 1.3 Il partito nuovo

In those years, the Communist Party was the second major force in the political sphere. It was an institution in transition and its main aims had become winning new voters and growing into a powerful force, not only in the streets but also in parliament. To achieve this, the PCI continued its work of renewal which had started in the post-war years, reshaping its image and developing new approaches towards the Italians, becoming a self-declared progressive force in the realm of democracy.<sup>29</sup> From 1944, Togliatti began developing the idea of the “partito nuovo:” ‘un partito non di quadri, ma di massa, che doveva assolvere un ruolo nazionale per la creazione dello Stato democratico,’ as Albertina Vittoria emphasises.<sup>30</sup> A national party that, in the words of Togliatti, should follow the ‘tradizione nazionale e popolare’ in which people could find ‘gli elementi italiani di una

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<sup>26</sup> Francesco Malgeri, *La stagione del centrismo. Politica e società nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra: 1945-1960* (Rubettino: 2002), p. 334.

<sup>27</sup> The postponement has been one of the main features of the DC throughout the Sixties, an elegant way of stopping the necessary reforms and changes.

<sup>28</sup> Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 163.

<sup>29</sup> As it is affirmed in an official document (1944): the PCI was aimed to ‘permeare tutta la società, tutte le istituzioni, tutte le amministrazioni della nuova Italia dello spirito della democrazia progressiva.’ In *A tutti i comitati federali*, circolare del 27 settembre 1944, in APC, Direzione, Busta 3, Fasc. 8, BFG, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Albertina Vittoria, *Storia del PCI 1921-1991*, p. 55.

cultura socialista nostra.’<sup>31</sup> The revolutionary prospects of the Resistance were slowly replaced with an attention to campaigning for the social rights and emancipation of Italian citizens. In this respect, as Paolo Spriano highlights: ‘si vogliono battere posizioni di sinistra definite settarie o ingenuë.’<sup>32</sup> Or, as Sandro Bellassai affirms, the PCI’s policy went towards ‘la neutralizzazione delle tendenze di tipo insurrezionalista presente tra i militanti.’<sup>33</sup> For this reason, the party had to silence the most radical wing, the one that was pivotal in the days of the Resistance, and get closer both to intellectual elites and to the younger generations who did not take part in the Partisan war. In fact, ‘negli appelli di Togliatti, la nozione di “giovani” e quella di “intellettuali” s’identificano,’ Nello Ajello pointed out.<sup>34</sup> As Togliatti had affirmed already in 1944, in young people ‘si trovano [...] spunti ideologici nuovi, una nuova coscienza in embrione dei problemi sociali [...] una curiosità vivissima.’<sup>35</sup> The discourse around its relationship with the youth was the backbone of Togliatti’s “partito nuovo” and from our point of view it is important. In chapters 5 and 6, in fact, we will analyse the characteristics of this rapport, carrying out an original analysis that takes into account the dialogue between the Youth Federation of the party (FGCI) and young people, filtered through the lens of the FGCI’s official documents and through its main journal: *Nuova generazione*. For now, in the first and second chapter, it is enough to give an overview of the connections between the PCI and the youth of the late 1950s.

The second half of the 1950s opened up a significant evolution for Communism in general and, around that period, a series of remarkable events took place. Besides episodes such as the tragedies of Poland and Hungary and the congresses of CPSU and PCI, there was a previous event that is worth mentioning: the reconciliation between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The reunion can be included in the climate of international détente, which had started to slowly develop after 1953. The meeting of Belgrade (1955) sanctioned a compromise of acceptance between the two parties in applying Marxist theories according to national differences. In the same fashion, the Italian Communist Party would explicitly open towards a national way to socialism the year after. The reconciliation also fitted perfectly in Khrushchev’s plan of detachment from the heritage of Stalinism. However, the Hungarian tragedy of the following year brought the relationship between the USSR and

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<sup>31</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere V, 1944-1955; VI, 1956-1964*, p. 882, Vol. V.

<sup>32</sup> Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano. Vol. 5*, p. 523.

<sup>33</sup> Sandro Bellassai, *La morale comunista. Pubblico e privato nella rappresentazione del PCI (1947-1956)* (Roma: Carocci, 2000), p. 46.

<sup>34</sup> Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Ai giovani* in *La Rinascita* a. I, n. 2 (July 1944), pp 1-2.

Yugoslavia back at a stalemate yet not to a state of animosity.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, in the ranks of the PCI, a generational switch was happening and a new generation of activists was gradually coming to prominence.<sup>37</sup> As appropriate, a younger section of these activists was still part of the FGCI, to whom, in 1955, the leader Giancarlo Pajetta gave a speech. Espousing a style that sounds very contorted to the modern ear – and probably also to the ears of the youth of the time – Pajetta included a reflection on reconciliation among his topics. He wondered: ‘forse che i giovani comunisti non hanno niente da chiedersi, non hanno da cercare, da passare dalla considerazione immediata e pratica del grande risultato del rafforzamento della pace e problemi di dottrina?’<sup>38</sup> Throughout the 1950s, peace is a fil rouge of communist discourse together with an attention to contemporary society, especially as far as Americanisation and anti-Americanisation are concerned. As we will see, these were the other main topics of the communist narrative and, as Sondra Cerrai explains: anti-Americanisation was pivotal in order to ‘tenere i giovani italiani lontani dalle tentazioni del capitalismo e dalle illusioni di vivere una vita senza impegno, in maniera superficiale e vuota.’<sup>39</sup> Besides the rules set by the party about what was right or wrong, the younger generations of the time had a broader idea of what progressivism itself should be. For a portion of them, for example, the dependence on Moscow was also experienced as a constraint and slowly Soviet Union began to cease to be a mythic land, as it had been for previous generations, as Donald Blackmer underlines: ‘younger generations’ were ‘less affected by the prestige of Soviet Union and better attuned to the realities of Italian life.’<sup>40</sup> The party, in its formal communications would often put forward suggestions about young activists’ behaviours noticing but reluctantly accepting that their horizons widened and with them also their modalities of protest. The social texture of Italy had changed and young people were at the forefront of this mutation, being one the protagonists of the social narrative. The PCI tried to negotiate this change, also accepting and endorsing some of their pastimes but, on the other hand, was not able to see things from a broader perspective. Apart from pastimes, the identity of the nation as whole was becoming different, massive

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<sup>36</sup> The thawing between the two countries triggered a series of problems at the borders between Yugoslavia and Italy, in the area around Trieste.

<sup>37</sup> Among those: Pietro Ingrao, Aldo Natoli, Antonello Trombadori, Mario Alicata and so on. ‘Sarà a partire da questa fase [...] che questi protagonisti cominceranno ad assumere ruoli significativi negli organismi dirigenti del PCI.’ In Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p. 152. In fact: ‘Dopo l’VIII congresso ci fu una significativa riorganizzazione per quanto riguardò il gruppo dirigente con l’ingresso di esponenti della generazione più giovane in segreteria (Ingrao e Bufalini) e in direzione (Alicata e Romagnoli).’ A. Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p. 235.

<sup>38</sup> Giancarlo Pajetta, *Discorso ai giovani comunisti* (Roma: Gioventù Nuova, 1955), D.G.N. Op. 18, Inv. 000115429 / 1 v. BFG, pp. 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> Sondra Cerrai, *I partigiani della pace in Italia. Tra utopia e sogno egemonico* (Padova: Libreria Universitaria, 2011), p. 138.

<sup>40</sup> Donald L. M. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity*, p. 5.

internal migrations were bringing people, the young especially, from different regions together, with problems often arising from the encounter. At the same time, communication among younger activists also began to rely on codes that differed from the usual communist communiques and this, certainly worried the PCI's leaders. As Togliatti had stated already in 1944: 'il PCI non lascerà' young people 'allo spontaneismo [...] quasi che le questioni della gioventù fossero cosa privata.'<sup>41</sup> The PCI of the time tried to instigate dialogue with the youth, but remained monolithic, suffering from a lack of flexibility.<sup>42</sup> For the first generation of Communists born in the 1930s and 1940s, the word peace and the support of different worldwide causes, the Third world liberation movements for example, had the same importance that the Resistance or Soviet Union had had for the older ones. It is also true that for those comrades, terms such as Resistance assumed a broader meaning, as highlighted in later. The scope of their action became far-reaching and Togliatti was good at recognising it but this process never led to a radical reform of the party. However, young people had become the people who Togliatti relied on in order to achieve his model for the new party.

As mentioned, the new party followed what had been decided at the "svolta di Salerno," the decision made in 1944 to participate in a government of National unity with all the forces involved in the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (CLN). As in that case, it was necessary to find an alliance with the other political powers to play a prominent role in the government and open towards society as a whole. As Togliatti had stated in *Rinascita* (October-November-December 1944): 'The new party is the party of the working class and of the people, a party which no longer limits itself to criticism and propaganda but intervenes in the life of the country in a positive and constructive way.'<sup>43</sup> As Donald Sassoon pointed out, the party's aim was to grow 'not only in terms of membership but in terms of its effective presence in the Italian political system.'<sup>44</sup> In this respect, the party opened towards society and non-members.<sup>45</sup> Although the theoretical and hierarchical background of the PCI remained fixed, nevertheless one component improved: the PCI

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<sup>41</sup> Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*, p. 27. It is not by chance that the late 1950s and early 1960s also saw the birth of different movements, the Movimento Nonviolento founded by Aldo Capitini in 1962 for example.

<sup>42</sup> In that era, for example, in the ranks of the FGCI there were individuals who would go on to radically reform the PCI between the early 1960s and the 1980s. In 1955, for instance, Enrico Berlinguer was still its secretary and Achille Occhetto was one of the active members who would eventually become secretary in the 1960s.

<sup>43</sup> Palmiro Togliatti in Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Since 1944 Togliatti insisted 'sul carattere aperto che deve avere il PCI,' especially through spaces and centres for the "vita popolare" opened to 'i compagni, i simpatizzanti e quelli senza partito,' where there will be comrades who 'forniranno loro una guida.' They will always find someone who 'li può consigliare e può dar loro la possibilità di divertirsi se questo è necessario.' Palmiro Togliatti in Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*. P. 417.

developed and remodelled its image getting more and more engaged in cultural activities. From the end of the war, Togliatti had intended to win intellectuals, students and the progressive middle classes to his side.<sup>46</sup> His efforts grew stronger throughout the late 1950s and the involvement of cultured people who could work as a ‘transmission belt’ towards the masses was more necessary than before, in this respect – as we will see – the inclusion of students in the official communications starts to become a constant. As stated by R.Y. Levi and Ilaria Cavallo, at that time, ‘lo studio del marxismo-leninismo è posto in subordine rispetto al dovere di elevare la propria cultura e personalità’ and moreover ‘scompare infatti ogni riferimento alla “guida sovietica” (si ricorda che si era già tenuto il XX congresso del Pcus del 1956!)’<sup>47</sup> Or as Rossana Rossanda recalls: ‘in un partito come il PCI’ of the 1950s it seemed that ‘non si parlasse affatto di Marx.’<sup>48</sup> In the creation of the new party, Togliatti’s approach focused on a few keywords: most notably “policentrismo” and the national road to socialism. These were two of the themes treated at the VIII congress which held its starting session on 8 December 1956. The intention of the assembly was to show all the activists that the party was really determined to renew itself. For the first time, in a cautiously open way, the PCI asserted its autonomy from the USSR, claiming that concepts such as “partito-guida” or “Stato-guida” were old fashioned. Although only verbally, Internationalism seemed to go back to its original position of importance and Togliatti announced that a “democrazia di tipo nuovo” should become the engine of ‘trasformazioni strutturali in direzione del socialismo.’ In short, the claims of the congress and the partial changing of the ‘personale politico dirigente, sia a livello centrale che periferico’ shaped the PCI.<sup>49</sup> The trend would be confirmed at their IX congress in 1960 where leaders such as Giorgio Amendola or Luigi Longo supported an alliance with progressive catholic and republican forces. However, the left of the party remained classist and suspicious towards the other democratic forces while the moderate elements promoted solidarity between classes. As a consequence of the renewal, at the elections of 1958, the masses of industrial cities displayed their solidarity with the party that gained 6,704,706 votes, a satisfying growth from the election of 1953 when only 6,120,809 Italians had voted PCI.<sup>50</sup> Although far from the results of the late 1960s and then 1970s, it seemed that masses, as far as elections were concerned, gave the PCI their trust. This happened in the

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<sup>46</sup> On this specific topic: Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*; Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*; Nello Ajello, *Il lungo addio*.

<sup>47</sup> Roberta Yedid Levi and Ilaria Cavallo, *Il Partito Comunista a Torino 1945-1991. I suoi archivi, la sua storia organizzativa* (Torino: Fondazione Istituto Piemontese Antonio Gramsci: 2006), p. 636.

<sup>48</sup> Rossana Rossanda to Massimo Fini, in Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*, p. 126.

<sup>49</sup> Aldo Agosti, *Storia del Partito Comunista* (Bari: Laterza, 1999), p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, *Il partito comunista italiano: 1945-1975*, p. 150.

polling station but the same did not occur inside the party where the members dropped from 2,035,353 in 1956 to 1,789,269 in 1958.<sup>51</sup> The statistics show an inversely proportional curve from which it is possible to conclude that trust among the active members went down – probably due to the abandonment of radical positions –; but by contrast, the transformed image of the PCI succeeded in winning common voters, in accordance with Togliatti's ideas.

Another of the themes brought to the VIII congress was the encouragement of constructive criticism among the members and a better way to speak to the progressive side of society. In this fashion, a section of the media linked to the party refreshed its image. It is the example of *Vie nuove* which tried to approach further readers dedicating articles to leisure, gossip and culture, but also poignant insights into the life of the Italians, as we will see later. Around the same period, from 1956 onwards roughly, the PCI attempted to establish a more intense dialogue with young people as the youth had become a matter of interest. Generally the discussions revolved around the influence of Americanisation and capitalism on teenagers and post-teenagers, and an examination, though at times not very accurate, of the needs and ambitions of the younger generations. In 1956, the FGCI gave birth to *Nuova generazione*: a weekly magazine whose main arguments varied between the political participation of the youth and the analysis of contemporary society. The two periodicals mentioned above aimed at an evaluation of capitalism in more specific and social terms. In magazines and formal communications time was ripe for a discourse around capitalism of which 'si è sentita influenza su alcuni compagni nostri, nella valutazione delle cose nuove che oggi vi sono nel mondo.'<sup>52</sup> As Giorgio Amendola would stress a few years after: the PCI must not 'lasciare in mezzo alle masse lavoratrici campo libero all'influenza crescente del miracolo economico.'<sup>53</sup> The discussion took account of all the citizens, including young people, non-activists and women.

In this first chapter we have taken a brief look at the socio-political and economic context of Italy during the late 1950s and very early 1960s. As has been shown, that period witnesses very important changes that affect the economy and society but also people's habits, rituals and identities. Politics and parties tried to deal with this process. Nevertheless, a lack of flexibility and some inherent conservative trends prevented them from fully grasping the potential of the course of the events. For example, Fanfani's attempt at opening towards the left-wing led to the collapse of his government and thus to a shift towards the right. The DC of the 1950s was a party in transition caught between

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<sup>51</sup> [www.cattaneo.org/archivi/adele/iscritti.xls](http://www.cattaneo.org/archivi/adele/iscritti.xls).

<sup>52</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, *Il partito comunista italiano*, p. 136.

<sup>53</sup> Giorgio Amendola, *Il "miracolo" e l'alternativa democratica* in *Rinascita* (September 1961), p. 21.

conservative and progressive stimuli. The same happened, although in a different way, inside the PCI which was split between the moderate and democracy-oriented side and the more radical fringe that had played a pivotal role in the Resistance. The PCI of the 1950s would get rid of that fringe definitively to move towards a dialogue with all strata of society, including young people, who are the focus of chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. This was carried out through a remarkable attention paid to culture and translated into several initiatives such as festivals or the publishing of magazines and newspapers as we will see. As mentioned, the youth of the late 1950s and early 1960s is our object of investigation. Nevertheless, in the next chapter we will continue our investigation into the PCI in order to analyse in more detail the way that the transition was implemented, taking into particular account the events of the late 1950s, such as the invasion of Hungary of 1956. Following this, we will then briefly look at *Azione comunista*, a journal founded in 1954 by members belonging to the most radical fringe of the PCI who did not recognise themselves in the new party strategy. We will see how these people interpreted the tragedy of Budapest, a theme that we will return to in chapter 6 through the reading given by the FGCI's *Nuova generazione*. In the last part of chapter 2, instead, we will look into the PCI official communique for the members of the FGCI underlining specific elements of the messages. The situation inside the Youth Federation cannot be fully understood without paying due attention to the context, in particular to the messages and guidance from the PCI to the youth.

## 2. *The PCI in the 1950s*

In this chapter we will explore the features of the Italian Communist Party during the 1950s more closely, focusing especially on the period that goes from the mid-1950s to the end of the decade. Our aim is to examine a party experiencing a profound transition, as we have suggested earlier. This will provide a framework for the analysis of various aspects of the party's internal communication and other publications, especially concerning young people and related topics (see chapters 5 and 6).

In the first part, we look at the implementation of the strategy of the “partito nuovo” and the complaints of a radical internal fringe of the party: *Azione comunista*, especially in relation to the invasion of Hungary in 1956. *Azione* found its voice in the homonymous journal *Azione comunista* whose articles provide our main source of analysis. The group did not recognise itself in the *weltanschauung* of the 1950s PCI and therefore rejected its policy of compromises with the other political forces. Many of the members of *Azione* were pivotal during the Resistance, and in their magazine, they favoured a Leninist approach, inspired by primal communist ideals such as internationalism and by the experience of the Resistance. The fringe despised the way the PCI acted both in internal politics and in its relationship with Moscow, loathing the way the USSR was dealing with de-Stalinization. *Azione* is important for us as it involuntarily anticipated the frictions that would emerge between the youth and the PCI throughout the following years. The ideals claimed by *Azione* are the same embraced by part of the protesting youth of the early 1960s, for example. In the last section of the chapter, instead, we will go through some of the messages from the PCI leaders to the youth in which we can identify clear guidelines for the behaviour of the activists. We will also see how some elements of modernisation, youth pastimes for instance, were endorsed and implicitly promoted. This strategy is a product of the idea of the “partito nuovo.”

### 2.1 *A Party in Transition*

The brief introduction below is a necessary contextual frame to shed light on the PCI of the 1950s, a place where fresh tendencies begin to emerge.

Giorgio Galli in his *Storia del Partito comunista italiano* written in the 1950s explains that the process of De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union was ignited by reasons that were, above all, economic rather than ideological: ‘un tentativo della classe dirigente sovietica di adeguare le strutture della società civile al livello economico-produttivo raggiunto



dall'Urss.<sup>1</sup> In short, through the process of cautiously releasing the hold of Stalinism, Soviet Union opened towards a somewhat freer society which could keep up with the new wealth created by the quinquennial plans. Independently of what was happening in Soviet politics, the majority of the European communist parties embraced De-Stalinization, with various consequences.. In this case, the reasons were mainly ideological and, of course, the parameters adopted by Moscow needed to be followed. However, inside the PCI, with the death of Stalin and with the Resistance not being a personal experience for the younger activists, a change was needed in order to connect with the generations coming to the fore. Moreover, for the PCI, De-Stalinization gave start to a period of transition, which would be fully accomplished a decade later, after Togliatti's death in 1963. In a broader spectrum, the death of Stalin in 1953 can be read as the beginning of a progressive detachment of the Italian party from Moscow. The process moved slowly and it was accompanied by not a few criticisms. In the Khrushchev era, the PCI would maintain an ambiguous relationship with the Soviet capital, at least until 1956, when at the VIII congress of the PCI a national road to socialism was explicitly theorised. In fact, as Grant Amyot underlines: 'Khrushchev in keeping with the policy of broad alliances, had admitted that different roads to socialism were possible as early as in 1956.'<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, in the meantime, the events of Hungary cast a dark shadow on Khrushchev's real intentions. This last event led to a series of confusing decisions by the PCI which reacted by supporting the invasion in full and therefore discrediting the popular uprising in the beginning, to then shift the focus of its communication onto the responsibilities of the Hungarian government.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1950s, the historiography on the PCI was of course scarce as the party had just emerged as a significant force. The role of Galli as pioneer is then undeniable. The book is seminal in following the fluctuations inside the party while they were happening and according to the reissues throughout the decades (1958, 1976, and even in 2011) we can conclude that Galli's text succeeded in expounding a complex history, which went along with that of the country. Throughout the last years of Stalinism, his death in 1953 and then the events of 1956, the PCI got ready for a readjustment. According to Paolo Spriano, to deal with 'lo stalinismo diventava per molti [...] riesaminare, quindi contestare, una serie

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<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Galli, *Storia del Pci* (Milano: Bompiani, 1976), p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Also in the PCI, a few voices were raised against the PCI's stand on the Hungarian invasion, for example, as Albertina Vittoria points out: 'A Torino la cellula comunista Giaime Pintor [...] stese un documento in cui il PCI era accusato di trovarsi "impreparato e in grave ritardo sugli avvenimenti."' In A. Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p. 207. However, while it is true that some prominent members left the PCI, it is also true that the majority of them remained in the party since, to borrow Togliatti's words to the head of CGIL, Giuseppe Di Vittorio: 'Si sta con la propria parte anche quando questa sbaglia.' In Chiara Valentini, *Enrico Berlinguer, l'eretico mite e quella crisi per la rivolta in Ungheria* in *L'Espresso* (9 May 2014) in <http://espresso.repubblica.it/visioni/cultura/2014/05/09/news/enrico-berlinguer-l-eretico-mite-1.164671>.

di certezze che avevano informato la cultura marxista italiana.’<sup>4</sup> The many people who coped with the transformation were historians, of course, but also intellectuals, philosophers, artists and regular activists. The consequences of the renovation were several. From a cultural-theoretical point of view, those years epitomised the shelving of Internationalism as founding value for the communist ideology. The intelligentsia brought the discussion to a more provincial position, focusing on internal politics, and the publications of Gramsci’s *Quaderni dal carcere* between 1948 and 1951 enabled Togliatti to reinforce his stratagem of paying attention to Italy’s uniqueness, developing a strategy in order to expand his power over the intellectuals and in the country in general.<sup>5</sup> A second element that surely influenced Italy’s communist policy of the era was the discourse around the leaders’ personality cults, a constant element from the end of WWII, which was condemned all of a sudden. This had happened with Stalin’s figure and the same dynamic seemed to involve Togliatti with whom the history of the PCI had been identified since the days of the Resistance. On 26 March 1953, “il migliore” turned sixty and at the apex of the electoral campaign, in *Rinascita*, Pietro Secchia wrote an article which synthesises the PCI-Togliatti marriage in a simple and effective way. The piece is called *Palmiro Togliatti capo del Partito comunista e dei lavoratori italiani*. Togliatti’s life and action are ‘inscindibilmente legate alla vita del partito comunista italiano,’ and he ‘dà ogni giorno il meglio di se stesso. Senza sosta egli studia i problemi della politica nazionale e internazionale, svela al popolo i criminosi disegni dell’imperialismo americano e dei suoi agenti.’<sup>6</sup> Besides the depiction of the leader as *deus ex machina* of politics, our attention should be kept on the latter words: Togliatti reveals to people the criminal intentions of Imperialism and its agents. These words could be seen as prophetic, if applied to the context of USSR politics.

Upon Stalin’s death, the Soviet Communist Party found itself at the dawning of a new era. It was necessary then to get rid of the so-called traitors who unexpectedly seemed to materialise. More subtly, they were only the weakest link of a natural race to power. The Lavrentiy Beria case would confirm a few months later that what Secchia had anticipated was true; the Communist Party had to keep an eye on the authority given to certain “agenti,” especially if they resided inside the party. When in June 1953 a spontaneous revolt against the East German Communist regime broke out in East Berlin, Beria, then one of the most powerful people of the Soviet establishment, was suspected of being willing to trade the

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Spriano, Simona Colarizi, *Intervista sulla storia del PCI* (Bari: Laterza, 1979), p.8.

<sup>5</sup> As Palmiro Togliatti would affirm: Gramsci should be interpreted in a way that goes beyond ‘la vicenda storica del nostro partito’ in order for him to become the ‘coscienza critica di un secolo di storia del nostro paese.’ *Gramsci un uomo*, supplement to *Paese Sera* (19 June 1964), pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Pietro Secchia in *Rinascita* (March 1953), p. 144-150 of *Rinascita* (1953).

reunification of Germany for massive help from the United States.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, Beria was put on trial and sentenced to death for treason. A different political class was taking over and Beria case stood as a mark of the turning point directed towards a new approach whereby the single leader should be put aside in favour of the party. Despite the distance of Soviet Union from Italy, its affairs always had an impact on the activities of the Italian Communists. In fact, while in the words of Secchia, Togliatti had emerged as the supreme chief, in July of the same year, straight after the Beria incident, the same periodical would state that ‘il principio supremo della direzione del partito comunista deve essere la direzione collettiva. Le decisioni individuali del dirigente comunista, anche se si tratta di una grande, di una forte personalità, sono *quasi* sempre unilaterali.’<sup>8</sup> The leader-based party started its descending curve and years later, in 1957, Moscow would firmly reproach the PCI: ‘se il culto della personalità, la direzione personale e la non osservanza delle regole di partito hanno provocato dannose conseguenze a noi dell’Unione Sovietica, ancor più gravi saranno per voi, che al potere non siete ancora arrivati.’<sup>9</sup> In short, at least theoretically, a new vocabulary was introduced and the PCI started to shift from the scheme leadership/party to a more pluralistic framework which will open towards a variegated stratum of possible voters. In order to do this, the leadership had to get rid of the leaders who endorsed radicalism as the main component of their activism, as we will see soon. In the new strategy, the aim of the Italian Communists was also to deal with the drop in membership as the gap between the higher ranks and the masses had become bigger since the end of the war. Statistics confirm that in 1947 the people enrolled in the party were 2,252,446 whereas just ten years later the number had fallen down to 1,825,342.<sup>10</sup> However, as far as the hierarchical structure is concerned, the change did not reflect an actual shift of policies. On the contrary, the ruling organic of Botteghe Oscure was never blamed for any possible mistakes and the local leaders always took the responsibility. As we will see, in the preparatory documents and files of the province-based congresses, themes such as guilt for something that did not work as expected, or the commitment to do more, are recurrent.

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<sup>7</sup> A very interesting book on Beria is Amy Knight’s *Beria: Stalin’s First Lieutenant* (Princeton: University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Pietro Secchia, *Insegnamenti del caso Beria* in *Rinascita* (July 1953), pp. 304-307.

<sup>9</sup> In Giulio Seniga, *Dal Kremlino alle botteghe oscure* in *Azione comunista* (15 September 1957), p. 5. A similar point was already made by Nikita Khrushchev in his *Rapporto segreto*. An Italian translation is available at [http://www.sitocomunista.it/stalinismo/rapporto\\_krushev.html](http://www.sitocomunista.it/stalinismo/rapporto_krushev.html).

<sup>10</sup> [www.cattaneo.org/archivi/adele/iscritti.xls](http://www.cattaneo.org/archivi/adele/iscritti.xls).

Nevertheless, in the early 1950s, far from the propaganda and the strategy of prudence promoted by the headquarters, a wave of strikes again hit the Italian factories.<sup>11</sup> In March 1953, during a Senate assembly, Pietro Secchia – again – gave an inflammatory speech which resounded with an angst that had seemed to be forgotten, overwhelmed by the calls to prudence and waiting, Secchia said: ‘A coloro che vi insultano, vi denunciano e vi multano perché nelle fabbriche parlate di politica, fate sentire che le vostre mani callose non sono soltanto capaci di lavorare e di produrre. Difendete la vostra libertà, rafforzate ancor di più l’unità della classe operaia e delle vostre organizzazioni.’<sup>12</sup> The words of Secchia gave the impression of opening a revolutionary glimmer in the future of the party and can be seen as symbolic of his approach to politics. However, the line endorsed by Togliatti, the other leaders and the unions remained focused on caution and procrastination. They, in fact ‘consigliavano attesa e prudenza nelle settimane in cui la spinta doveva necessariamente o giungere a uno sbocco o afflosciarsi’, as Galli points out.<sup>13</sup> The pathway taken by Togliatti and the unions let down the expectations of the more radical workers who slowly lost their fighting spirit. The activist workers in fact were stuck in the middle, on the one hand Botteghe Oscure temporised and tried to persuade them to rely on Unions; on the other, bigger factories, such as Fiat, took advantage of the situation, punishing and fining the active elements. From 1954 until the late 1950s, the workers’ movement entered a phase of stagnation and anti-communist propaganda inside workplaces and inside society in general was intensified. The doubtful and uncertain stance of the party must be seen as the implementation of a precise strategy through which the PCI aimed to get rid of the revolutionary component and finally rise to a more prominent position inside the government. In order to do this, the party also needed to gain sympathy from society in general, including the non-members. This is the core of our analysis here and the trajectory of Togliatti’s party in the 1950s. This tactic created discontent among not a few members. For instance, the vice-chair of the “commissione nazionale di vigilanza,” Giulio

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<sup>11</sup> By strategy of prudence we mean the approach of the PCI of the 1950s which was aimed to placate the radical attitude of a part of the “base” and move towards a dialogue with the rest of the political forces.

<sup>12</sup> Senato, *Atti parlamentari*. March 1953, p. 39579. Pietro Secchia grew up in a poor family and worked in a factory since a very young age. Although his ideas during the Resistance – in which he took part as member of the Brigade d’assalto Garibaldi – led him to postulate a more revolutionary approach, in the end he adhered to the svolta di Salerno. In his word: ‘Certamente, non era possibile un radicamento del partito se questo avesse mantenuto i connotati del partito di propaganda e agitazione che lo avevano caratterizzato fino all’organizzazione della Resistenza [...]bisognava mutarne la fisionomia come forza politica di massa.’ In Ferdinando Dubla, *La Resistenza accusa ancora. Pietro Secchia e l’antifascismo comunista come liberazione popolare e lotta di classe (1943-1945)* (Nuova Editrice Oriente: 2002) pp. 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> G. Galli, *Storia del Pci*, p.365.

Seniga, experienced the institution's teetering with a certain dose of intolerance.<sup>14</sup> Disillusioned, he called to his side some of the former partisans and launched an appeal to all the militants who saw in Togliatti's approach a defeat of the ideals of the Resistance. Seniga, the right-hand man and close friend of Pietro Secchia, was not a moderate element. He had been a worker since young age and then the leader of the Milanese workers revolt of 1943. On 25 July 1954, he deliberately left his position in Rome to rush back to Milan carrying with him some 'documenti che pochissimi avevano diritto di leggere e una parte dei fondi segreti del Pci.' Seniga considered Togliatti the executor of a 'politica pantofolaia' who obstructed 'la destalinizzazione e che predichi la rivoluzione senza volerla fare.' His friend and mentor Secchia, although theoretically on the same page, tried to trace him and persuade him to go back to his office. He finally found him in Cremona, accompanied by other rebels, carrying a gun. The dissident asked Secchia to impose a less conformist line on Togliatti but Secchia refused to come to terms with his utterances. In an interview Seniga affirmed that the PCI wanted to kill him: 'volevano farmi impacchettare e prendermi,'<sup>15</sup> he also maintained that the stolen secret documents saved his life which would end in 1999 due to natural causes. However, the efforts made by Secchia were not enough and the consequence was that his authority slowly declined. Finally, the PCI had found an excuse to remove its most revolutionary main leader. Eventually he would be excluded from the leadership and then substituted, in his role, by the more moderate Giorgio Amendola, a man on the other side of the spectrum and leader of the "miglioristi" stream.<sup>16</sup> Secchia had been the chief of the party's propaganda sector between 1946 and 1954. Under his leadership the number of new members enrolled in the PCI grew to more than two millions in 1947, a result which would never be achieved anymore. As he would state later: 'Sono stato [...] il responsabile della propaganda del tesseramento dei record: più di due milioni di iscritti, una cifra mai più raggiunta. E' per questo che Togliatti e la maggioranza del gruppo dirigente del PCI mi vollero ai margini: gli facevo paura. E poi, loro erano per il compromesso con la DC, io simpatizzavo per la lotta armata.'<sup>17</sup> With Secchia's exclusion, any possibility of a revolutionary approach faded away and the party could fully conform to the rules of democracy, in short: the 'eterna antitesi tra riformismo e

<sup>14</sup> "Dopo l'attentato a Togliatti del luglio 1948, viene costituita la commissione nazionale di vigilanza e Giulio Seniga è nominato vice responsabile dell'organismo, mantenendo questo incarico" in Giulio Seniga, *Credevo nel partito. Memorie di un riformista rivoluzionario* (Pisa: Bfs, 2011), p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Maurizio Caprara, *Seniga: quando il PCI provò ad "impacchettarmi"* in *Corriere della sera* (17 August 1992), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> The "migliorismo" represented a 'right-wing' position inside the PCI, the one to endorse a policy based on gradual and cautious reforms of capitalism, closer to social-democracy than communism.

<sup>17</sup> Giacomo Di Girolamo, *Dormono sulla collina. 1969-2004* (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2004), p. 87. Another good book on Pietro Secchia: Miriam Mafai, *L'uomo che sognava la lotta armata. La storia di Pietro Secchia* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1984)

massimalismo' as Spriano defined it, paled.<sup>18</sup> During and straight after the Resistance the motto had been 'oggi sulle montagne contro i nazifascisti, domani nelle strade e nelle piazze di tutt'Italia contro i borghesi e i residui del fascismo.' In the mid-1950s the situation turned into something else as the party aimed to enhance its influence, to climb the ladder of politics and walk the "via italiana al socialismo."<sup>19</sup> As Aldo Agosti reminds us 'l'emarginazione di Secchia [...] aprì la via a un cauto rinnovamento dei quadri dirigenti a livello di federazione, e alla progressiva sostituzione dei dirigenti appartenenti alla leva della clandestinità e della resistenza con elementi più giovani, più in sintonia con la concezione togliattiana del "partito nuovo."<sup>20</sup> This opening would also be mirrored by the approach of the PCI towards society, as we will see the relationship with the younger generations, and not only with the young workers, would become an important aspect of the new party strategy. Until 1954 the base was composed of workers and peasants, and the middle class represented only the 1.5% of the total, from 1956 the party outline began to change as the leadership's main intention was to include the middle classes and intellectuals in its strategy. Simultaneously the link with USSR started to weaken.<sup>21</sup> The closeness to the Soviet Union had been indeed a validation of the PCI in the broader scale of world powers, but coincidentally it had also been a limit for its national positioning, excluding the party from the real decisions in the parliamentary sphere. It is not by chance that in 1956, in an interview with *Nuovi argomenti*, Togliatti was quick to deny Moscow's guidance. He asserted that it was far from true that the Soviet capital was the only centre of command for the international communist movement because 'in ogni paese governato dai comunisti possono e debbono influire in modo diverso le condizioni oggettive e soggettive, le tradizioni, le forme organizzative del movimento.'<sup>22</sup> The latter passage is very important and it is a good summary of the idea of "policeentrismo," a key word at the congress of 1956, whereby different nuclei should coexist together, in their independence, under a bigger umbrella that here is the Soviet Communist Party.

As said, the strategy of the new party did not please all the members. In the section below we will take a look at the affairs which concern Azione Comunista, a movement – and a magazine – born to the left of the PCI. What happened between Azione and the party is a fracture that anticipates many other fractures to come. In this respect we will see how the movement disagrees with the way the PCI reacts to a seminal event: the invasion of

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<sup>18</sup> P. Spriano, *Intervista*, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, *Il partito comunista italiano*, p.11.

<sup>20</sup> Aldo Agosti, *Storia del Partito Comunista*, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> G. Mammarella, *Il partito comunista italiano*, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> In Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul Pci. Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1992), p.78.

Hungary in the autumn of 1956. To summarise we can say that Togliatti's party, from the mid-1950s onwards, moved in two directions: it aimed at removing the more radical internal members and activists and, at the same time, it also aimed at creating a façade that could be appealing for different strata of society. In this respect we will see how then, the PCI and its Youth federation, invested energy in developing its communication through various media: magazines, journals but also through specific guidelines in formal documents targeted at the members.

## 2.2 Another Trend, Same Party: *Azione comunista*

*...sconfessare l'opportunismo piccolo Borghese del partito comunista italiano  
e dei suoi accoliti, e colpire al cuore del sistema, il capitalismo.  
La rivoluzione non è un pranzo di gala, diceva il compagno Mao.  
E noi aggiungiamo [...] bastoniamo il cane che affoga.  
(Spartiti, Sendero luminoso, 2016)*

*Azione Comunista* was a pioneering component in Italian Communist history. It aimed at finding an alternative way to the policy of the main party, filled with the hope of bringing back communist activism to original values like internationalism and revolution. From this perspective, the movement, and almost every issue of its journal, *Azione comunista* (founded in 1956), is inspired by Leninism and overflows with references to Lenin's doctrine as the real backbone of a humanitarian and libertarian communism. A discussion of *Azione* is necessary because, first of all, it represented – involuntarily of course, –an experience that anticipates many of the tendencies in the activism of the decade to come. From this viewpoint, it is pioneering in preceding that fracture between some internal strands of activists and the PCI. This would be a leitmotiv from the mid-1960s onwards when new – and more radical – movements would form on the left of the party inspired by the values of a primal communism. It is not by chance, for instance, that one of the contributors to *Azione*, Arrigo Cervetto, would found the extra-parliamentary group *Lotta comunista* in 1965. Secondly, some of the topics brought forward by the magazine (internationalism, for instance) are also at the core of FGCI's periodical *Nuova generazione*.<sup>23</sup> However, the latter, being the main organ of the FGCI, was never willing to criticise the PCI's policies. From this point of view, instead, *Azione* followed the opposite trajectory, harshly criticising the role of the PCI during De-Stalinisation and the

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<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, topics such as internationalism do not find mention in FGCI's official documents or in the PCI's whereas they find space, in different modality, both in the journals *Azione comunista* and *Nuova generazione*.

events of Hungary, and this is our main point in this section. While the PCI was starting the renewal of the party, on the other hand it was still strictly under Moscow's influence, despite its claims. This is clear when we look at the reaction from its press during the invasion of Hungary. Below we will report *Azione*'s take on that event that could be easily compared with that of *Nuova generazione*, as discussed in chapter 6. Until today, *Azione* has not received real attention by scholars. Also in seminal books on the relationships between the PCI, its press, and the intellectuals, such as those by Nello Ajello or Albertina Vittoria mentioned previously, there are only brief references to the journal. Our aim in the next chapter is to give voice to an overlooked experience which is, in our opinion, pivotal for the reasons listed above.

At a superficial glance, the Seniga affair before reported could represent just a mere anecdote in the chronicle of the Italian Communist Party, but a closer examination will help to grasp more about the frictions and positions of some strands inside the workers' movement. With the stolen funding mentioned above, Seniga financed the publication of the journal *Azione comunista* in support of an internal leftist trend that could give vent to the rage of the activists who felt betrayed by the reformist position of the PCI, still defined "our party" in the first issue of the periodical in 1956. According to Giorgio Galli, the inner structure of the party walked two distinct pathways: 'da un lato i rivoluzionari, dall'altro i gradualisti:' among the former, and it is the case of *Azione*, 'gli iscritti di vecchia data, gli ex partigiani, i militanti delle zone depresse; tra i secondi gli intellettuali, gli uomini del dopoguerra, gli organizzatori sindacali dei centri industriali.'<sup>24</sup> The first category would be slowly silenced by the party who would get rid, step by step, of its revolutionary component. The birth of *Azione* was a response to the reactionary forces at work in the broader scenario. Anti-communist measures inside main factories like Fiat had started to become tighter and communist workers were constantly threatened. The influence of FIOM inside workplaces went down: 'scesa alle elezioni del 29 marzo 1955 dal 70,4% dell'anno precedente al 39%.' And simultaneously 'la Cisl e la Uil avevano firmato con la Confindustria l'accordo sul conglobamento, e ne erano seguiti in decine e poi centinaia di fabbriche accordi separati che avevano messo ai margini la Cgil.'<sup>25</sup> FIOM and left-wing unions' crisis had a more profound impact on the workers' movement, as Spriano reminds us: 'nel 1955 [...] il campanello d'allarme fu suonato dalla secca sconfitta delle liste sindacali Fiom alla Fiat.' The repercussions of the defeat triggered various strands of

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<sup>24</sup> G. Galli, *Storia del PCI*, p. 383. As far as the gradualists are concerned: 'accettano i punti del togliattismo, ma ne deplorano l'immobilismo, le ambiguità, il pedissego allineamento all'Urss.' G. Galli, *Storia del PCI*, p. 383.

<sup>25</sup> Adriano Guerra, *Di Vittorio: la lezione di un uomo dell'800* in *L'Unità* (30 October 2007), p. 23.



analysis and brought up a new question: 'la classe operaia è ancora una classe rivoluzionaria? In che senso il neocapitalismo la può assorbire?'<sup>26</sup>

In a letter written in 1954, Giulio Seniga and Luciano Raimondi addressed all the comrades who would participate in the PCI national congress of 1956. The two called the activists to an action aimed at bringing the party back to the key principles of its birth. They rejected parliamentary reformism and shifted the attention back to the support of proletarian internationalism.<sup>27</sup> The story of *Azione comunista* started here, and from June 1956 it became a bimonthly magazine which included, among its main topics, a harsh criticism of the "opportunismo" of the PCI, with the intent of demonstrating how its ruling head continuously betrayed the aspiration of the working class. In those days, Luciano Raimondi and Bruno Fortichiari were the directors of the periodical and as a consequence, the latter would be excluded from the PCI in July 1956. Moreover, in the years of De-Stalinization and after Khrushchev's secret report of 1956, the journal took a firm stand, criticising the way in which the whole process was being put into practice. It was stated that blaming only Stalin for the vile deeds of the regime would have easily led to a loss of responsibility by the head of the CPSU and PCI, and therefore to the absolution of the many important members who had endorsed Stalin's line. *Azione* frowned upon the claims of renewal of the PCI and Soviet Union, considering their stoicism and procrastination a betrayal of Communism. In this respect, another hot topic of the magazine's narrative was a continuous reflection on the importance of Internationalism, the only antidote to the bureaucratic drift of the institution. In the wake of this belief the strikes of Polish and Hungarian rebels of 1956 were strongly supported as symbols of a pulsating communist aspiration. A year later, in 1957, *Azione* teamed up with other libertarian and radical movements eventually founding the Movimento della Sinistra Comunista. They engaged in a close fight against PCI and PSI reformism, criticising the Italian unions' policies and promoting international communism. The movement would finally split up in 1965 and with it, its periodical would go too. Although *Azione* did not last very long and did not represent a real threat for 1950s PCI, its legacy would be taken up by movements and periodicals that would spawn on the left of the Communist Party throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In its revolutionary naivety *Azione* represented a last spark of the Resistance spirit,

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<sup>26</sup> P. Spriano, *Intervista*, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> According to Bruno Fortichiari the three main points were: 1) rifiuto delle illusioni parlamentari e riformiste, per un'azione più risoluta della classe operaia, con obiettivi economici e politici di carattere generale; 2) discussione politica nel partito e direzione collettiva, recupero dei vecchi compagni e dei partigiani oggi costretti ai margini; 3) lotta per l'internazionalismo proletario, a sostegno di tutti i popoli che si battono per la pace, l'indipendenza nazionale e la liberazione sociale. Bruno Fortichiari, *Antologia di scritti* (Milano: Reprint Giovane Talpa, 2005), p. 93.

functioning as a connector between that experience and the rebellious tendencies which would take over from 1960 onwards.

Let us now have a closer look at the way the journal opposes the PCI line, especially during the events of Hungary.

Through an unsigned editorial in the first issue of *Azione comunista* (June 1956), under the heading *Il nostro compito*, the periodical sketches its manifesto, addressing its action in support of the: ‘lavoratori sinceramente rivoluzionari [...] ai militanti tuttora iscritti nonostante ogni disagio al PCI, a quelli che dalle file del PCI sono stati ingiustamente allontanati e a quelli che si sono spontaneamente staccati da esso perché non hanno più visto nel soffocante conformismo del Partito la possibilità di una leale e libera convivenza.’ The criticism moves on, reminding the readers of the premises behind the birth of the Italian workers’ movement now betrayed by the PCI line which ‘deforma il senso e la lettera’ of that spirit, deceiving the workers, making them believe that reformism is ‘tattica transitoria ma necessaria.’ In the same piece another point is made which has its origin in the defeat of the communist component in factories during the previous year. The stress is on the distance between the bureaucratic machinery of the leadership and the active workers, the people *Azione comunista* speaks for. Throughout the years, in fact, the gap had steadily grown as the party always looked for a ‘connubio piccolo-borghese.’ The periodical speaks to all the comrades who have been excluded from the game of power, to make the truth emerge, trying to go back to the original ‘spirito della rivoluzione, il richiamo costante dell’umanità comunista.’ However, the purpose of *Azione* was not to ‘costituire una fazione nel Partito ma erigere soltanto una tribuna libera di partito.’<sup>28</sup>

Six months later, December 1956, a first unsigned editorial about the invasion of Hungary appears. The words used in it are not less harsh than those above. In fact, in *Taci: il nemico ti ascolta*, the events of Hungary are defined as consequences of the ‘cretinismo staliniano,’ an error attributed to the ‘rinneamento dell’internazionalismo marxista-leninista.’ In the analysis of *Azione* the disowning of Internationalism by the Soviet Union matched a meek opposition by the PCI who timidly abided by the decisions from Moscow and was not able to react to the slanders of the Italian conservatives. In fact ‘gli avvenimenti ungheresi, come si sono svolti, come tuttora si svolgono, in senso generale dimostrano che non si è trattato di controrivoluzione [...] ma di rivolta della grande maggioranza della popolazione’ against a ‘cricca di satrapi’ (a clear allusion to the PCI too) who after ‘dieci anni di strapotere hanno prodotto una situazione di rivolta popolare che certo ha trascinato notevoli masse operaie e contadine.’ The latter passage is quite relevant for us, especially if

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<sup>28</sup> Unsigned, *Il nostro compito* in *Azione comunista* (21 June 1956), pp. 1-2.

we think that the line chosen by the PCI's main organ (*l'Unità*) was completely different and based on the denigration of the revolt. We will see this better when we deal with the articles of *Nuova generazione*. On the other hand, *Azione* continues, in the climate of the tragedy and 'dopo tante prove di bonario accomodantismo fornite dai partiti comunisti, dopo le più smaccate concessioni in nome della coesistenza pacifica' it is absurd and unfair that 'tanta rabbia anticomunista potesse improvvisamente erompere.' According to *Azione*, time was ready for the Italian Communist Party to move towards an actual and concrete renovation that ought to go beyond the easy 'slogan di schietto umorismo togliattiano: RINNOVIAMO IL PARTITO.' The renewal, it is said, must be factual and must reject any form of Stalinism, because in Hungary, the 'dominio indiscusso e incontrollato dello stalinismo rakosiano, stato maggiore dell'autocrazia internazionale che si è arbitrariamente sostituita all'internazionale comunista' obfuscated the sleepy 'partito comunista' that non solo 'è stato incapace di prevedere e prevenire la rivolta, ma si è evidentemente afflosciato come una vescica di fronte al furore popolare.' The facts showed how internationalism must continue to be the heart of the communist movement based on class struggle: 'l'unità comunista per l'unità del proletariato di tutti i paesi nella comune lotta per l'abbattimento del nemico di classe è possibile soltanto se avanguardie incorrotte espresse dai proletari dell'Unione Sovietica come della Cina, della Germania e della Jugoslavia, della Francia come dell'Italia, della Polonia come dell'Ungheria ed altri ed altri ancora, riusciranno a ricostituire l'Internazionale operaia rivoluzionaria voluta da Marx e da Lenin fondata.'<sup>29</sup> The key points of reference for the periodical are Marx and Lenin and in its approach to the analysis of the Hungarian tragedy it goes against the tide of the communist narration.<sup>30</sup> The magazine, in fact, defined the revolt as an act of revolution that, as Paolo Mieli explains, 'non [...] era rappresentata da fantomatiche forze restauratrici bensì [...] da quelle stesse espressioni di democrazia diretta' which had been the core of the Soviet revolution of 1917.<sup>31</sup> *Azione comunista* would come back to the Hungarian revolt a year after, in November 1957, speaking in a similar fashion, relying on a style which swings between irony and seriousness. The article is signed by Bruno Fortichiari and it is a vehement denunciation of the bigotry of Stalinism, defined 'ridicolo e insieme sanguinoso mito' which is still alive despite being placed under a new façade, as the periodical affirms. The Soviet regime of 1950s is defined as reactionary, drenched in an aboulc bureaucracy. And the same goes for the Hungarian puppet government that felt

<sup>29</sup> Unsigned, *Taci: il nemico ti ascolta* in *Azione comunista* (1 December 1956), pp. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> We may quote part of the long title by *L'Unità* (25 October 1956): *I controrivoluzionari si arrendono a Budapest dopo i sanguinosi attacchi al potere socialista*.

<sup>31</sup> Paolo Mieli in Alessandro Frigerio, *Budapest 1956. La macchina del fango. La stampa del PCI e la rivoluzione ungherese: un caso esemplare di disinformazione* (Torino: Lindau, 2012), p. 8.

‘tremare le vene ed i polsi quando il moto proletario ungherese si manifestò come tentativo di liberazione da una struttura politica e sociale poliziesca-reazionaria, poiché la vittoria del proletariato rivoluzionario sarebbe stata una mazzata alla stabilità dei regimi borghesi.’<sup>32</sup> Continuing, it stresses the values of the proletarian revolt that needed aid from the international movement which unfortunately never came, in fact: ‘Al generoso proletariato ungherese mancò la solidarietà di lotta del movimento operaio internazionale.’ Although the PCI response, which was based on a description of the revolt as ‘la manovra tentata dalla reazione borghese interna ed internazionale,’ had shut down any further discussion, *Azione comunista* and the leftist and most progressive avantgardes ‘rifiutano le verità comandate, i giudizi incontrollabili, le condanne inappellabili della politica di potenza, domandano e domanderanno che una risorta Internazionale Comunista intervenga, faccia luce, riporti le masse operaie di tutti i paesi sul terreno della loro operante solidarietà.’ Coincidentally in Western Europe the dramatic events had become an excuse to stigmatise communism, giving to ‘socialdemocratici, liberali, fascisti e preti’ the occasion to ‘speculare sulla sventura del proletariato russo, portato a sparare sui fratelli di classe ungherese.’ As written in the conclusion of the article, the awful scenario could only be addressed by solidarity among the workers and by their unity: the founding and real values of the communist movement. In the final part, after saluting and paying tribute to ‘gli operai, gli studenti, gli intellettuali ungheresi, i 250 mila profughi dispersi per l'Europa e l'America e le migliaia di caduti’ of October 1956, it highlights how the Hungarian tragedy has to be for the ‘proletariato mondiale un monito ed un appello, da nessuno raccolto, ed un insegnamento prezioso: che il comunismo non si eleva sulla burocrazia, sulla polizia, sul terrore.’ The discussion about international communism and international liberation movements is a topic which appears, in different forms, frequently in the Italian communist press of the 1950s and early 1960s, especially in those magazines targeted at young militants. For example, *Nuova Generazione* will reserve in almost every issue an entire page to liberation struggles all over the world. However, the events of Budapest were never defined as liberation struggle but a naïve revolt stained by the infiltration of conservative subversives (see chapter 6). Nevertheless, as far as the FGCI is concerned, it is worth remembering that some of its members wrote an official letter to denounce the PCI’s position on Hungary and a delegation of older literati would sign the *Manifesto dei 101* in which writers, philosophers, professors and other intellectuals would take a stand against the Soviet Invasion. Yet, it must be also admitted that the majority of the 101 would withdraw the manifesto soon after. In this respect, a tribute must be paid to the

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<sup>32</sup> Bruno Fortichiari, *L'ordine regna in Ungheria* in *Azione comunista* (15 November 1957), p. 7.

pioneering approach of *Azione*. It was probably the first communist journal to raise a voice against the USSR and the PCI behaviour towards the revolts. And, moreover, even if the left-wing generation who would come to the fore in the following years, at least until 1968, would be far from the old-fashioned rhetoric of the periodical, it incorporated some of the same claims for peace and internationalism that *Azione* had put forward years before.

We have lingered on *Azione comunista* because of its groundbreaking attempt to create an alternative discourse inside Italian communism. It was, for sure, a disturbing element for the PCI's strategy but, in reality, it was not as dangerous as other threats, which in that very period preoccupied the party. One of them was the rise of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), committed to become one of the forces of government. To respond to these dangers a complete renewal of the image of the party was necessary and Togliatti knew it. At the core of this process lies the attempt of the party to communicate with young people. In the next sections, we will first look at a series of messages that older PCI leaders addressed to young activists, and then – in chapters 5 and 6 – carry out a substantial investigation into the FGCI and its journal, *Nuova generazione*. The messages reported below were released in a five year period of key importance for the party during which, as suggested in Section 3 of Chapter One, the PCI tries to connect with society in general, including women, young people, students, intellectuals and non-activists. At the same time, the party understands that, to win young people to its side, it had to learn their language and accept their pastimes and leisure. All the communications, the articles, the pamphlets and so on considered from this point until the end of the thesis should be read through this lens.

### 2.3 1955-1960: Messages and Guidance from the PCI to the Youth

In the next segment we analyse messages and guidance released by older leaders of the Communist Party. They are directed at young activists and came out at the time of congresses which were the pivotal moments when the headquarters issued the guidelines to follow. In the texts, the leaders speak about the importance of activism and the part it should play in the lives of the youth: they provide examples of what activism among young people should be like because, as Mauro Scoccimarro put it: 'l'unità politica e organizzativa del partito ha il suo fondamento [...] anche nel costume morale del militante comunista.'<sup>33</sup> In the communications they include political involvement in a broader spectrum in which also leisure seems to find room. The language in the texts is evocative

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<sup>33</sup> Mauro Scoccimarro, *La funzione dell'istituto di studi comunisti nell'attività educativa del Pci* (Roma: La stampa moderna, 1955), F.COL Op. 3402, Inv. 000110468 / 1 op, BFG, p. 33.

at times, filled with metaphors and in some cases actual warnings. The last message proposed, instead, is by Pietro Ingrao and represents an exception. Ingrao was a distinctive character in the PCI and his manner is different from that of the other leaders. These messages are emblematic in expounding the strategy of the new party.

As mentioned before, in 1955, FIOM and CGIL in general were defeated inside the main factories of industrial Italy, anti-communism in society was at its apex and Stalin had only been dead for two years. At the time of FGCI's XIV national congress (June 1955), the PCI leader Luigi Longo wrote a pamphlet *I giovani comunisti ambasciatori del futuro* in which he speaks to the youth. Luigi Longo, a fervid anti-fascist since the 1920s, one of the founders of the PCI and a prominent partisan in the Brigade Garibaldi, represented a bridge between the radical line of his comrade Pietro Secchia and the parliamentary-oriented line of Palmiro Togliatti. Despite the fact that Longo belonged to the generation of the Resistance, in this document he demonstrates a clear idea of some of the dynamics concerning the younger generation of the 1950s. Although his judgment on society is harsh, being a communist of the old guard, through his speech it is possible to infer that despite his age he has a clear idea of how the system, a recurring term throughout the documents and the PCI's main 'nemesis', diminished and discredited the political commitment of the youth. He then stresses the importance of being a member of the Communist Party, praising the youth for their courage. In Longo's words, the usual themes of the communist communiqués return but in an interesting fashion. Without relying on the obscurity of Togliatti's discourse, Longo is able to blend iconic images of activism with an approval and promotion of the "partito nuovo," as an entity in which also modern pastimes find space. Moreover, he calls on the youth to develop their sense of criticism and discourages them from trusting mainstream media. He starts in fact by accusing the latter of patronising young Communists and of being interested in their political involvement only to demonstrate how their participation symbolises only a juvenile phase allowing them to let off steam. Through this assumption, he reaffirms one of the elements we are going to encounter often, whereby the blame is put onto the system, which here in the leaflet is indicated by the mainstream media. Longo criticises the press for its miscomprehension of young people's behaviour and according to him the media were only taking an interest in order to patronise them. In fact, he admits that the media gave prominence to the FGCI congress but suggests that 'non c'è da pensare che l'abbiano fatto per particolare riguardo' as their spirit was far away from any sympathy towards the Communists, with no

exceptions, ‘nemmeno per voi, giovani compagne e giovani compagni.’<sup>34</sup> According to Longo, the media exploited the congress to show how the activism of part of the youth was strictly linked to a generational restlessness and ‘ansia di rinnovamento’ rather than to a genuine socialist spirit. In the media narrative, there was no honest ‘comprensione dei vostri lavori,’ and their judgment oscillated between a condemnation of communism, as far as the adult members were concerned, and a justification of the youth adherence to FGCI as the result of generational agitation. As reported, for the press, young Communists embodied a paradox which was conveyed through derisive juxtapositions aiming at ridiculing their efforts. In newspapers, associations such as ‘lotta di classe o gare di bigliardino? Marxismo o scooterismo?’<sup>35</sup> were often made but the communist leader explains that in the political participation of the young, the two things could coexist and the derision of the media should not dishearten the juvenile activists. By doing this, he wants to demonstrate Communist Party’s intention of being close to the youth and moreover an acceptance of Togliatti’s plan of renewal. He allows that pastimes could live together with activism, in fact he states that one activity did not exclude the other one ‘quasi che un’attività escludesse l’altra [...] quasi che chi studia il marxismo non potesse andare anche in scooter o viceversa.’<sup>36</sup> Despite Longo being one of the main proponents of the revolutionary line, through his argument here he proves that he is firmly aligned with the line decided by the secretary and it is not by chance that Longo was the founder of a periodical like *Vie nuove*. In the document, he explicitly quotes a statement by Togliatti who had referred to the same topic, leisure time, straight after the XII congress of FGCI in 1950. Togliatti had said: ‘la vita stessa dei giovani non si può limitare alle lotte sindacali’ as there must be also aspects of ‘svago e divertimento’ in the political efforts.<sup>37</sup> The words of Togliatti displayed that already in 1950, although neither clearly nor overtly, the PCI had started to realise that the demands of young people were important and a communication with a broader and young audience was needed, since the Resistance ceased to be an object of identification for the younger generations. This idea stood as the backbone of the “partito nuovo.” And in fact, again, Togliatti would nebulously affirm in his personal message to FGCI XIV national congress of 1955: ‘vi è oggi un fermento, tra i

<sup>34</sup> Luigi Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro. 14. congresso nazionale della FGCI, Milano 23-26 giugno 1955* (Roma: Gioventù nuova, 1955), F.D.PCI Op. 2399, Inv: 000127521 / 1 op., BFG, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Luigi Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>37</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 9. For more about the XII congress: Enrico Berlinguer, *I compiti della gioventù comunista. Rapporto presentato al XII congresso nazionale della Fgci. Livorno, 29 marzo-2 aprile* (Roma: Gioventù Nuova, 1950). As we will see in a later chapter, those aspects were put into practice through the intense activity of Case del popolo, projects that along with orators on the other front were aimed at coordinating and gaining the sympathy of the youth.

giovani, di ricerche , di tentativi, di propositi e di volontà nuove. Vi sono movimenti ancora in embrione, che accennano a svilupparsi in campi spesso assai lontani da quelli del nostro campo di lavoro abituale.’<sup>38</sup> We will never know what aspects he was referring to, but in retrospect we can identify an effort of opening the party to other strata, fields and experiences that, in reality, was never effectively put into practice. The PCI of the 1950s, if seen from an external perspective, could be recognised as a party in motion, taking one step forward then a half step back. The intentions of the leaders were sincere, but the willingness to change always clashed with a) the lumbering and long tradition of the party b) the many internal strands and points of view.

Going back to Longo’s message, let us see how his communication with young people continues. After the initial arguments we sketched above, the text soon falls back into the usual strenuous defence of communism against the criticism of detractors, or the system. The leader’s warnings sound almost like a messianic alert. In his view, several undefined enemies of the party ‘vanno cianciando che il PCI mortifica ogni slancio personale, ogni fantasia, ogni originalità,’ that is, for the partisan, a false and preposterous statement because communism is above all ‘slancio personale’ in which the sense of emulation must always triumph, especially among young members.<sup>39</sup> An opposite behaviour leads to perdition because ‘chi abbandona il partito finisce rapidamente nel fango.’<sup>40</sup> These sentences are loaded with evocative images, drawing on the religious rhetoric of damnation; they are followed by a degree of threat (the reference to “cadere nel fango”) not very far from reality if we took into account the many members who will be removed from important positions when they did not approve the line of the headquarters. In order to explain better the last affirmation Longo, in an exquisite oratory exercise, counterbalances the harsh words above by citing a touching letter, which almost represents a medieval

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<sup>38</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Messaggio inviato da Palmiro Togliatti al XIV congresso Nazionale della FGCI* (Roma: Gioventù nuova, 1955), pp. 1-3, in appendix to *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*.

<sup>39</sup> Palmiro Togliatti had anticipated this rhetoric device years before, for example, explaining the “svolta di Salerno, in *Rapporto ai quadri comunisti di Napoli* (11 April 1944) in Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica di unità nazionale dei comunisti* (Milano: Robin, 1999), p. 22. ‘Di che cosa noi comunisti non siamo stati accusati? Ci hanno accusato di essere i nemici della proprietà / Ci hanno accusato di essere fautori della violenza / Ci hanno accusato di essere nemici della famiglia / Ci hanno accusato di essere disfattisti / Ci hanno accusato, infine, di essere antinazionali.’

<sup>40</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 11. On the same discourse: ‘Sono stata espulsa perchè: piccolo borghese, animata da acceso individualismo, sviscerato amor proprio ecc., difetti che ancora mi permangono [...] nei consigli e nei richiami dei compagni della scuola (one of the PCI’s party schools) non vedevo l’insegnamento saggio e fraterno, ma la presa di posizione angarica.’ Compagna Farina, in Gian Carlo Onnis, *La gioia di essere e il sacrificio di vivere. Autobiografia di militanti comunisti savonesi 1945-1956 in Ventesimo Secolo. Rivista di storia contemporanea* N. 7-8, (1993), p. 101.



“exemplum,” to continue with the religious theme.<sup>41</sup> The letter, written by an anonymous twenty-year-old woman is characterised by a parable-like air:

E' dal 1949 che mi trovo nelle file del PC. E' una strada che mi ha insegnato la mamma. Sarei molto soddisfatta se io fossi costà a Milano; vorrei imparare molte cose che io non so. Oggi non ho più la mamma che mi insegna; è da tre mesi che l'ho perduta. Son giovane, ho vent'anni. Ma oggi mi sento così grande che sono pronta a tutto per difendere il mio partito. [...] Mia mamma mi ha lasciato l'eredità degli operai, un'idea sociale, un'idea democratica. [...] Faccio l'apprendista guardarobiera, faccio undici ore al giorno<sup>42</sup>

The source of the testimony remains unnamed. The language of the writing is a blend of formality – conveyed through the linguistic register of a working class girl from which respect towards the recipient transpires (the word “costà”, for instance) – and simplicity. It is similar to the kind of texts that could be found in magazines such as *Vie nuove*, rather than official party texts. Longo reports the letter in order to embolden the young members. The text is an example of dedication to the cause of socialism and an exemplary lesson of extreme loyalty to the party. By citing it, Longo wants to provide an idea of how the socialist dream and the belonging to the party should overcome any difficulty. The missive is affectionate yet bold and it is a good way to dilute the warning tone used previously but also an invitation for the youth to be united, with the other forces of the political spectrum too, which is another key point of the new party. In a stereotypical use of rhetoric Longo states: ‘I giovani sono sempre per chi combatte per degli ideali nobili e grandi,’ therefore an encounter with catholic workers is encouraged. In the final epic sentences a comparison with the broad ideals of the Resistance is drawn, praising the young Communists who still encounter ‘l'incomprensione dei vostri cari, e questo accresce la pena della vostra lotta.’<sup>43</sup> In a very last phrase Longo hopes for more young members to join the cause fiercely affirming that: ‘anch'io voglio essere un combattente del socialismo, anch'io voglio essere un militante del grande partito comunista.’<sup>44</sup>

In Longo's writing there are themes that we have identified already, powerful ideas that are scattered throughout the official and unofficial communication of the party. The obsession with acquiring new proselytes for example or the encouragement of creating links with other progressive forces. The activists must be open-minded and try to establish

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<sup>41</sup> In this respect it is worth reading Stephen Gundle's chapter, *La "religione civile" della resistenza: cultura di massa e identità politica nell'Italia del dopoguerra*, in Luisa Cicognetti, Lorenza Servetti and Pierre Sorlin, *L'immagine della resistenza in Europa dopo il 1945* (Bologna: Istituto Parri, 1996) and Lorenzo Ettore, *Il PCI e il Concilio Vaticano II. Dal partito dei cattolici al cattolicesimo* (Roma : Studium, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> L. Longo, *I giovani comunisti: ambasciatori del futuro*, p. 27.

connections with advanced minds of other parties but – at the same time – be firm in their communist advocacy. The process is carried out through the usual jargon in which warnings are flanked by testimonies of love for the communist cause, which represent a constant also in magazines such *Nuova generazione* or *Vie nuove* as we will see. To these factors must be added a pausing over concepts such as pride and belonging. Young activists, although criticised by their families, must proudly keep their faith and spirits alive. In short, Longo's writing summarises the "partito nuovo" strategy, the imaginative place where the symbols of the Italian communist history do not vanish but are combined with an opening towards contemporary society which, slowly, dilutes the violence of the memories of civil war. However, a specific jargon in particular situations reminds us that both Longo and Togliatti came from the climate of war, exile and clandestine organisation: the almost messianic warning about unity and the aftermaths of a possible betrayal, for instance. Moreover, the allusion to a Christian horizon represents an attempt to speak to an Italian audience who could easily see in it an opposite yet equally powerful counterpart to 'nella cabina elettorale Dio ti guarda, Stalin no!' In Longo's message, we can find elements in the way of addressing the youth that we have already seen briefly in Togliatti's message of 1950. However, Longo moves beyond a general discourse around the youth and mentions young people's pastimes that, for him, could coexist with socialist activism. Let us now go back to the message we briefly mentioned before, written by Togliatti himself and sent to the same XIV congress of FGCI (1955). Some elements are particularly significant and shed light on the intentions of the PCI and on the new party strategy. Although Togliatti, after the PCI congress of 1956 especially, would emphasise the importance of inner criticism within the PCI, in his message to the youth he clearly affirms that the aim of young activists should not reside 'soltanto [...] nel criticare ciò che in essa (the organisation) non va ancora bene e indicare i mezzi per rendere migliore il vostro lavoro.' In fact, 'il compito vostro sta soprattutto nel fare risuonare ancora una volta davanti a tutta la gioventù italiana il richiamo a quell'opera di rinnovamento ideale e pratico della nostra società; nel nome del lavoro, nel nome della pace, che è l'obiettivo di tutta l'attività nostra.'<sup>45</sup> Togliatti skirts the issue of inner criticism through a gentle warning to silence and alignment and conducts the discourse elsewhere, within a broader context of belonging. Like Longo, he uses the stereotype of the youth as a symbol of purity, a dynamic identifiable also in fascist propaganda on the same topic. According to Togliatti, the best youth rejects the 'conservazione sociale' corruption and 'una demagogia di parole, che stanca e delude.' He seems to steer away from the topic of internal criticism to point to

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<sup>45</sup> *Messaggio inviato da Palmiro Togliatti*, pp. 1-3.

the dangers of power. The threats to young people reside elsewhere, in a conservative society, outside the boundaries of the party which is, instead, always a safe haven. Togliatti is inflexible in insisting that the restlessness of the younger generations, has to be transformed into ‘spinta e azione positiva e rinnovatrice’ which is another leitmotiv of the party communication. By quoting Lenin – an action that here ratifies De-Stalinization and that is also carried out, with other intentions, by *Azione comunista* – Togliatti goes back to another key topic of his strategy. The ‘organizzazione’ of the party must be ‘esercitata sui più larghi strati’ which basically means to communicate with a broader audience outside the ranks because ‘essere giovani comunisti non vuole e non vorrà mai dire chiudersi altezzosamente entro una organizzazione, soddisfatti della propria dottrina.’ In other words he repeats the same invitation made by Longo. However, the secretary seems to contradict his initial words in this same message against the excessive importance given to criticism and plurality. Togliatti’s messages are often overtly contradictory and this should not surprise the reader.<sup>46</sup> His strategy in fact is always based on a balance between an opening towards the demands of society and a reaffirmation of the strict characteristics of communist combativeness. In the last part of the message, he tells us what to be a young communist means and, like Longo, he draws on religious symbolism. The activists have a spiritual mission, speaking in an evangelical tone Togliatti asserts that the activists must be able to ‘svegliare gli incerti, di spronare i timidi, di accostare gli audaci.’ These words seem to be an explicit reference to the Eight Beatitudes of Jesus. To be young activists also means to ‘indicare la necessità che alle parole seguano i fatti, secondo una coerente linea d’azione.’ He concludes with a slightly patronising tone. The youth federation must be independent, though only to a certain extent. In fact: ‘voi siete giovani comunisti, un orgoglio, una fierezza nel nostro Partito’ the engine for a ‘mondo migliore, un mondo socialista.’ In this passage, by stressing the inclusion of FGCI in the “nostro partito,” Togliatti implicitly reaffirms the dependency of the federation on the PCI. On the other hand, though, he says that young people have to play their part to acquire new members and to ‘portare dappertutto la parola nostra liberatrice,’ as if he were suggesting that they preach the gospel of socialism.<sup>47</sup> The reference to the language and rhetoric of catholic culture in these sentences is clear and, again, it is a narrative device adjusted to the

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<sup>46</sup> A very interesting text about Togliatti’s language is Enrico Paradisi, *Il discorso comunista del secondo dopoguerra*, in: AA.VV, *La lingua italiana in movimento* (Firenze, Accademia della Crusca, 1982), pp. 195-213. And, to go back in time, Ivano Paccagnella, *Retorica politica: gli interventi di Togliatti all’Internazionale nel 1926*, in AA.VV, *Attualità della retorica* (Padova, Liviana, 1975), pp. 169-186. The scholarship around Togliatti’s rhetoric is not very copious, however some interesting glimpses could be found in Maria Vittoria Dell’Anna, *Lingua italiana e politica* (Roma, Carocci, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> *Messaggio inviato da Palmiro Togliatti*, pp. 1-3.

figurative sphere of 1950s Italy. In this respect, as Sandro Bellassai points out, the communication of the PCI was based on a ‘necessità di trasmettere alle masse concetti, immagini, modelli e direttive in forme comprensibili,’ also drawing on Christian ideas.<sup>48</sup> Another important message addressed by Togliatti to the youth comes five years later in the autumn of 1960, shortly after the clashes of Genoa in July 1960. It is a crucial period for the PCI that has to come to terms with what had happened in the streets of Genoa, in which many young people partook. (See chapter 7). The tone of the dispatch is different from what we have seen so far. We do not find any allusion to a religious-like horizon and the communication seems to be richer and more focused in its aim, appropriate for that specific time. Togliatti’s style is never simple and the purpose of his words is often intentionally vague. The spectrum of his references is linked to an undefined scenario, which oscillates between references to the past communist battles, sketches of revolutionary claims and a well-defined acceptance of the rules of democracy.<sup>49</sup> However, through the reference to the revolts of 1960, the secretary validates the importance of the event and the position of youth in it. In his message, he affirms that ‘i giovani sono stati numerosi e in prima linea nelle manifestazioni che hanno espresso lo sdegno popolare’ and ‘questa presenza sempre più attiva e vivace dei giovani non stupisce noi comunisti.’<sup>50</sup> The last sentence is clearly disputable. As we will see later, the PCI was unprepared for a mass reaction like the one started by the youth in Genoa and the rest of Italy. Browsing through the pages of *l’Unità*, for instance, we can easily perceive that in the first place the party did not understand the degree of the revolt. In the second place, the PCI was unable to place the uprisings within the broader context of the series of events which had taken place before July and which had had as their protagonists what the press labelled as ‘teddy boys.’<sup>51</sup> In the message Togliatti goes on to list ‘le caratteristiche essenziali della ribellione giovanile,’ among those, he includes a youth opposition to the clerical and neo-fascist paternalism. Moreover, apparently understanding an important feature of the events, he recognises that the fights had brought together differently oriented young people ‘i giovani socialdemocratici, socialisti, repubblicani, radicali, comunisti,’ and he also recognises that the clashes could be linked to a rise of new workers in industrialised cities. The “meridionali” are not mentioned but, on the other hand, the presence of students is noted.

<sup>48</sup> S. Bellassai, *La morale comunista*, p. 116.

<sup>49</sup> In this respect it is worth mentioning the extensive work carried out by Edoardo Novelli in his books on Italian political communication. Edoardo Novelli, *La turbopolitica*.

<sup>50</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Copia della lettera del 7 luglio 1960 firmata dal compagno Togliatti e inviata a tutte le Federazioni del PCI e della FGCI in Documentazione per i membri del C.C. e della C.C.C (1960)* in Fondo PCI/FGCI, *Organismi direttivi 1958-1964*, Busta 8, Fasc 1, IGT, p. 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> This interpretation is somewhat put forward also by Nello Ajello, see *Il lungo addio*, pp. 14-21.

Following his own invitation to inner criticism already announced in the late 1950s, Togliatti blames the PCI and the FGCI for not having directed the clashes. In fact, he says, 'risultano piu' gravi e intollerabili le insufficienze e i ritardi che abbiamo indicato e sottolineato in passato' in that specific situation especially.

In addition, his message is addressed to the partisan organisations as well whose aim should be the transmission of the value of the Resistance to the youth. What Togliatti is really saying is that those clashes had been a missed chance for becoming a leading force for the new youth activism, a topic, which returns in some of the FGCI official documents, as we will see. We could speculate that, in fact, a certain deafness of the party to the demands of the young generation was deliberate, as the organisation was struggling to clean up its image in the days of fervid anti-communism. Prophetically, but without investigating the topic further, Togliatti also refers to a new ferment inside universities and schools, dynamics which will explode in the years to come. He states that the duty of the workers' movement is to communicate with the students. From what we see here, students are still considered to be a detached part of the movement, an external suffix almost. Moreover, a direct way to approach these new energies is not explained, the excessive bureaucracy of the party's structure is criticised once more but here too a solution is not proposed. It is stated that the youth must not 'stagnare nell'inerzia burocratica' but fight in order to create new possibilities for the generations to come. This is what Togliatti recommends to the FGCI but, of course, the same discourse did not apply to the PCI, which is completely left out of the reproach. In the last sentence a clear warning is expressed: 'Ogni comitato direttivo di federazione e di sezione tragga dalle lotte di queste settimane anche questa lezione e prenda le misure necessarie.'<sup>52</sup> The concision of this sentence says a lot about the way the new party should be put into practice. On the one hand the party should absorb the rebellious spirit of the youth into more institutionalised forms of protest. On the other, the secretary leaves this enterprise to the local federations of the FGCI without devoting a single word to the way in which the PCI should contribute to this process. As stated earlier, this is a frequent aspect in the PCI formal communication. So far, we have seen how two prominent members of the old guard of the PCI addressed a thorny argument such as the inclusion of young masses in the party strategy. Let us now look at a document, issued by Pietro Ingrao, in which similar themes are discussed. Pietro Ingrao, born in 1915 and passed away in 2015, has always represented a lone voice inside the party. As Donald Sassoon affirmed in its obituary: 'perhaps he was too much of an

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<sup>52</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Copia della lettera del 7 luglio 1960*, p. 1-3. 1960, pp. 1-3.

intellectual, too often racked by doubts, and too keen to own up to past mistakes.’<sup>53</sup> In this respect, he would never forgive himself for writing two editorials in support of Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, when he was the director of *l’Unità: Da una parte della barricata a difesa del socialismo* and *Il coraggio di prendere posizione*. Apart from that episode for which he publicly apologised, Ingrao was always on the left of the party, always coherent in his choices and from the early 1960s and beyond he would lead a political faction whose aim was to establish a dialogue with the emerging youth movements. This very brief introduction is a necessary prelude to the analysis of the text in which we can identify a more profound comprehension of youth agitation. Moreover, in the intellectual approach to the matter a strict self-criticism is carried out. The document is called: *L’azione dei comunisti per l’avvenire dei giovani* (1958), and it is a report addressed to the PCI and FGCI federations. The main theme of the document is a reflection on the involvement of the youth in political activism, a discussion about young people’s ideals or “orientamenti,” a theme often treated by magazines like *Vie nuove* or *Nuova generazione*. In fact, Ingrao’s words are characterised by neither the obscurity nor the detachment that could be found in both Longo and Togliatti, but rather by a profound scrutiny capable of connecting a reflection on youth ambitions with an analysis of contemporary society.

Ingrao takes into consideration the overt decline in number of young participants in the communist cause and tries to articulate a reason for the decrease. He starts by recognising that ‘alcuni seri pericoli che si presentano, alcune difficoltà oggettive e anche alcune debolezze soggettive’ inside the party did not allow a better ‘conquista’ of the young masses.<sup>54</sup> The term “conquista” obviously responds to the main aim of the PCI: to seize and educate the masses, very different from the idea of seducing the citizens by leveraging their instincts or fears, as was more the approach of Christian Democrat propaganda. While ‘una diminuita partecipazione delle masse giovanili alle lotte generali del nostro Paese’ was evident, this tendency was not only ascribable to the distractions of modernisation, in the words of the writer. By saying this, Ingrao distances himself from the trite narration of the “qualunquista” youth which, instead, was the depiction that many mainstream newspapers gave. In his view, the youth’s demands for social improvement were still in motion and a simplistic view like the one above could not be accepted ‘perché non permette di cogliere con esattezza la realtà; anzi stende su di essa un velo “psicologico” di nebbia.’ In the same way ‘una interpretazione unilaterale e parziale del fenomeno

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<sup>53</sup> Donald Sassoon, *Pietro Ingrao obituary* in *The Guardian* (9 October 2015) in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/09/pietro-ingrao>.

<sup>54</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L’azione dei comunisti per l’avvenire dei giovani: rapporto ai comitati centrali del PCI e della FGCI dell’1-2 dicembre 1958* (Roma: Seti, 1959), IGB.2 75.1300.14 IGT, Inv: 4076, p. 7.

dell'americanismo' was equally detrimental.<sup>55</sup> The reflection on the latter point is a spark which ignited periodic discussions inside the party and was a pivotal theme when youth was considered. Ingrao's words provide an acute understanding of what the youth situation is and he notes that 'larghe masse di giovani [...] oggi più di ieri partecipano ad una vita associata' but they do it 'in funzione di determinati bisogni quali la ricreazione, lo sport.' For Ingrao, as we have seen in other documents such as Longo's for example, recreative associations are 'di tipo paternalistico' and created in order to lure the youth and 'distrarla da una lotta politica generale rinnovatrice,' in short: to seduce it. The passage is a usual device of PCI narration: modernisation is not wrong per se, but some elements are promoted to sedate young people and citizens. Similarly to Longo, Ingrao says that the "giudizio di qualunquismo" of the media is a way to hide any progressive effort undertaken by the youth, as said – for example – by Longo. To overcome the situation a new effort, 'condotto con dovizia di mezzi e con sapienza di organizzazione' is needed. Neither the outline nor the core of this 'sforzo' are sketched, the attention is instead focused on the external causes which distance the youth from activism. In fact, while the partisan war had put the youth at the forefront, throughout the 1950s it does not represent a factor of shared belonging for the youth and 'il ricatto dell'occupazione, si e' esercitato in modo particolare [...] proprio nei riguardi dei giovani' along with an 'infame e indegna pressione' on life and family prospects as well.<sup>56</sup> Moreover the pressure on the young worker is useful to 'adoprarlo come forza di rottura contro i suoi compagni di lavoro più maturi sindacalmente.'<sup>57</sup>

Besides the accuracy of his analysis, it is peculiar that Ingrao does not consider the social background of the new young workers, many of them "meridionali." According to the writer, the 'indegna pressione' mentioned above is counterbalanced by condescending activities and organisations, which deviously promote capitalism and clericalism. This affirmation gives Ingrao the chance to begin a philippic against the Church and the role of priests inside Italian society. According to the writer, priests act as power brokers in the social fabric, helping young people to find a job or dispensing 'raccomandazioni.' The criticism of the church becomes harsher and Ingrao can see the dark side of certain "innocent" institutions such as Acli, Bonomania and oratori in general. He is able to understand the potential of sedation that these associations had and the way they co-opted young people, extinguishing their revolutionary essence. In doing that, they did not use force like Fascism, but they rely on a cautious opening towards modernity 'si consente

<sup>55</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani* pp. 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani* p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani* p. 12.

anche a rotture nel costume tradizionale, per esempio nel modo di vita delle ragazze' and 'si cercano strumenti nuovi d'azione' to seduce and indoctrinate the young population.<sup>58</sup> According to Ingrao, the DC leader Fanfani, with his relaxed and communicative attitude was the perfect embodiment of this tendency, therefore the symbol of a process of renewal based on a facade rather than on real intentions, like in *The Leopard* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa.<sup>59</sup> In terms of image Fanfani is perhaps the first modern leader of DC, different from the severe and almost ascetic Alcide De Gasperi, he would constitute the first centre-left government. Ingrao, in this text, criticises Fanfani's politics as the embodiment of an action based only on images, false promises and sedative pastimes: in fact, he says, 'è falsa, bugiarda, smentita dai fatti, la pretesa fanfaniana di presentarsi oggi con l'aureola della modernità.'<sup>60</sup> He is concerned that those seductive elements could have an impact on that generation who experienced neither Fascism nor the Resistance, the pre baby boomers. However, Ingrao is able to sense that under the surface of renewal, reaction flourished but – according to him – a part of young Italians grasped it too, in fact: 'l'appoggio dato dalla Chiesa alle forze conservatrici' has brought part of the new generation to distance itself from the Church. However, historically speaking, besides its political alliances, the distance of a section of the youth was also the consequence of an institution unable to open towards modernity, at least until the Concilio Vaticano II called by Giovanni XIII.

In the conclusion, Ingrao dedicates some last thoughts to sport and recreational activities going back to an old debate inside the PCI, saying that there was a 'momento' in the FGCI 'in cui si discusse a lungo se si doveva far politica o se ci si doveva occupare di sport e ricreazione.'<sup>61</sup> Ingrao, like Longo and Togliatti, agrees that both are important and he is aware that 'esiste oggi una questione delle nuove generazioni' on which an eye must be kept. Moreover in his words a sense of reality emerges, he knows that collectivism in strict terms is not useful and, in fact it is necessary to conquer 'le individualità giovanili le più intelligenti e combattive.'<sup>62</sup>

In the messages of Longo and Togliatti, although both aligned to the strategy of the new party, we can identify elements still connected to an almost old-fashioned concept of activism mixed with a patronising and detached view on "questione giovanile"; in Ingrao's

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<sup>58</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani*, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard: Revised and with New Material* (London: Vintage Classics, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani*, p. 27.

<sup>61</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>62</sup> Pietro Ingrao, *L'azione dei comunisti per l'avvenire dei giovani*, p. 33. It was clear, in fact, that at the end of the 1950s, 'I giovani in cerca di spazio non avvertono più il bisogno di un partito che ne egemonizzi le energie militanti,' Ajello underlines. In N. Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*, p. 449.



text the same elements are still present but the discourse gains complexity and profundity. Ingrao is able to discuss the dynamics of youth association, passions and pastimes in a fresher way, freer from biases or preconceptions, and he is also able to sketch a broader context. His approach surely comes from the fact that Ingrao belongs to a younger generation, but this element solely could not be an explanation that – instead – must be found in a personal and unconventional character, creativity and a passion for the cause that he kept alive until the end. It is not by chance that Ingrao, in his strict and severe approach to the facts of the country, was always able to maintain communication with young people.<sup>63</sup>

To conclude, this chapter has investigated, through the analysis of articles in *Azione comunista* and documents from the PCI's older leaders to young people, how the Communist Party was in a phase of transition which included its attitude to youth. Its main intention was to open up towards society in general and find a way to communicate with all its strata. In order to do so, the party had to distance itself from the radical revolutionary component of which *Azione* was a representation, and find a compromise with both Italian democracy and Moscow. The latter element is strongly stigmatised by *Azione*, especially regarding the PCI's reaction to the invasion of Budapest. However, in internal politics, the PCI renewed its strategy by talking with the youth too. In this case, this involves not only the workers but also the students and the women, as we will see better later. The youth had been a special focus for the communist narrative in the past, during the Resistance for example, but in the 1950s, for the first time, the party tried to understand the demands of the newer generation, reluctantly accepting that its pastimes that, as underlined by Togliatti and Longo, could co-exist with activism. Nevertheless, the machine moved slowly and did not fully grasp the extent of the change that affected young people. This is shown clearly in the delay of the party in comprehending the revolts of 1960, as Togliatti highlights in his message, and in the denial of those of 1962 as we will see. Yet, between the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s we can identify an effort by the FGCI to bond with contemporary young people, especially through its main magazine, *Nuova generazione*, founded in 1956. (see chapters 5 and 6)

In the next chapter, instead, we will look at young people of the 1950s in more general terms, analysing how pop culture of the time had an impact on their identities.

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<sup>63</sup> On the figure of Pietro Ingrao it is worth reading his autobiography: Pietro Ingrao, *Volevo la luna* (Torino: Einaudi, 2007).

### ***3. Young People Come to the Fore: The Role of Pop Culture in Young People's Identities***

#### ***3.1 Fascist-era Youth Culture***

In this chapter we will carry out a brief exploration on the 'idea' of youth in Italy before the early 1960s. We will see how that concept was experienced during fascism and in the post-war years, to then look at the arrival of the rock and roll subculture, which is essential for understanding the revolts of 1960 and 1962 (see chapter 7).

The process of creation of a youth identity as a separate stage of living had been in motion for centuries, but it began to have definite characteristics from the French Revolution onwards. The first bourgeois revolution, in fact, is a period which expressed, as Claudio Pavone points out, 'la coscienza di un nuovo inizio generale, che degradava la storia precedente a semplice preistoria.'<sup>1</sup> It represented a pathway towards a renewal in which young people were supposed to be the driving force. They were called to fight against the Ancien Régime and to play an active part in the rebirth of society.<sup>2</sup> However, only in the society of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century, we can see the affirmation of youth as a distinctive category. In this era, in fact, young people began to participate in associations whose aim was the sharing of free time through various nature-oriented activities: the *Boy scouts* in the United Kingdom and the *Wandervogel* in Germany are two examples of this tendency.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, in the cities in which the Industrial Revolution bloomed, a leisure industry was also growing providing song and supper rooms, music halls, cheap theatres and other types of recreational amenities to the young workers.<sup>4</sup> As far as Italy is concerned, the country would see the arrival of the Industrial Revolution – and thus of a proper leisure industry – later. In the Nineteenth century, the efforts of an elitist part of the youth had been often oriented towards the attainment of unification that would be achieved only in 1871. The many collective movements for the "Italia unita" revolved on the action provided by youth. In this respect, an important experience was Giuseppe Mazzini's *Giovane Italia* that had, at its core, the utopia of creating an

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<sup>1</sup> C. Pavone, *Prima lezione di storia contemporanea* (Bari: Laterza, 2008), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> A good text on this theme is Nicolas Deplanche, *The French Revolution and the Origins of Modern Youth Movements, 1788-1791* (Irvine: University of California, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed view on these experiences: Jon Savage, *Teenage*.

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of popular music and music halls in the United Kingdom: Jacky Bratton, *Music Hall* and Paul Maloney, *Scotland and the Music Hall, 1850-1914* (Manchester: University Press, 2003).

international exchange based on fraternity and mutual help, shared by all the like-minded people under forty years old.<sup>5</sup>

The Nineteenth century saw also the establishment and the formalisation of great ideologies, among them: modern communism and anarchism. Many young men and women were seduced by the appeal of these new ideals, also in Italy. History abounds with acts of rebellion undertaken by young people in that period. Some of those enterprises have become part of a popular mythology, which persists. The Italian songwriter Francesco Guccini, for example, in 1972 would write *La locomotiva*, one of his most famous songs. It is a ballad dedicated to Pietro Rigosi, a 28 years old anarchist railway worker and his failed attempt at derailing his train against another one, in which rich people were supposed to travel. It is set in 1893 and goes: ‘non so che viso avesse, neppure come si chiamava / con che voce parlasse, con quale voce poi cantava [...] nella fantasia ho l'immagine sua: gli eroi son tutti giovani e belli.’ The passage reminds us that a hero, in our imagination, should always look young and handsome. Later, a bit rhetorically, the reference to anarchy comes out: ‘Ma un' altra grande forza spiegava allora le sue ali / parole che dicevano "gli uomini son tutti uguali" / e contro ai re e ai tiranni scoppiava nella via la bomba proletaria e illuminava l' aria la fiaccola dell' anarchia.’<sup>6</sup>

With the advent of Fascism in the early 1920s, the concept of generation became a crucial point in Mussolini's strategy of power. The new regime was capable of creating ‘generazioni artificialmente prodotte [...] attraverso un'intensa opera di indottrinamento’ realised by ‘l'inquadramento coatto della gioventù in organizzazioni giovanili di massa di tipo para-militare’<sup>7</sup> (Figli della Lupa, Balilla, Avanguardisti, Giovani italiane and so on). As a totalitarian regime, for obvious reasons, Fascism could not allow the natural transmission of the past political heritage to the members of a new generation and, at the same time, it could not recognise any form of independence for the youth. Mussolini and his new elite represented a deep fracture with the previous politics. And in fact, as Alessandro Cavalli writes ‘il regime fascista aveva posto fortemente l'accento sulla discontinuità tra la generazione dell'ante-guerra, la generazione che dall'esperienza della trincea era passata nelle fila del movimento fascista e la generazione successiva che non aveva conosciuto gli anni cruciali del dopoguerra.’<sup>8</sup> Karl Mannheim's definition of “nesso generazionale” (*Generationszusammenhang*) – a bond between the members of a particular generation who embrace a common view towards the historical period they live in – could

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<sup>5</sup> An extensive book on the topic is: Ivo Bartolini, *Il padre della Giovane Italia (Giuseppe Mazzini)* (Roma: Fontelucente, 1949).

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Guccini, *La locomotiva*, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> A. Cavalli, *Generazioni*, in *Parolechiave*, 1998, n. 16, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> A. Cavalli, *Generazioni*, in *Parolechiave*, 1998, n. 16, p. 27.

be a useful lens through which we could study this era.<sup>9</sup> Fascism, in fact, succeeded in creating an exclusive link with young people, which is fully revealed when we look at the many anthems that came out during the period and in which youth is the protagonist. It is no accident that one of the most famous compositions of that era is called *Giovinezza*: ‘Giovinezza, giovinezza, Primavera di bellezza! / E per la vita e per l'ebbrezza Il tuo canto squilla e va!’ The song is the adaptation of *Commiato*, a “canto goliardico” composed by Nino Oxilia and Giuseppe Blanc in 1909 and, as Salvatore Coccoluto states, the song ‘conobbe diverse modifiche e rivisitazioni del testo sia da parte dei fascisti che degli antifascisti.’<sup>10</sup> Another famous adaptation, in fact, is the one that Spartacus Picens wrote in 1919 with the words: ‘Bolscevismo! Bolscevismo! Tu sei il vero socialismo! / Bolscevismo! Bolscevismo! Tu ci dai la libertà.’ The definitive fascist version of the “inno”, after several modifications, saw the light in 1925 with the lyrics of Salvator Gotta and became the official anthem of the Partito Nazionale Fascista. In the new lyrics we can identify some crucial points: the attention given to the youth as a regenerative force and the birth of the new Italian fascist: ‘Son rinati i figli tuoi/ con la Fe nell'Ideale’ and later ‘Dell'Italia nei confini son rifatti gli italiani, / Li ha rifatti Mussolini per la guerra di domani.’<sup>11</sup>

In Fascism, the idea of youth became an abstract symbol of freshness and rejuvenation set in a timeless perspective and detached from any sociological or historical connotation. This appears when we observe, for example, the many statues in Greek and Roman fashion in the Stadio dei marmi in Rome. Those statues are the symbols of the ideal body shape which the new Italian fascists must achieve. It is not by chance that Fascism transformed sporting activities mainly in the form of youth associations including also – for the first time but with certain restrictions – girls and young women. Sporting organisations had existed before this period – the CONI (Comitato olimpico nazionale), for example, had been founded in the 1910s – but the fascists used sport as a catalyst for identity: financing and centralising it, and assigning a fundamental importance to it.<sup>12</sup> Above all, they completely changed the connotation of sport: from leisure of the elites during the “periodo liberale,” to the favourite form of mass-entertainment during the fascist era, reaching the apex of a process that had started at the end of World War I.

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<sup>9</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Le generazioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Salvatore Coccoluto, *Il tempo della musica ribelle. Da Cantacronache ai grandi cantautori italiani* (Viterbo: Nuovi Equilibri, 2012), p.22.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed analysis of the fascist anthems: Virgilio A. Savona, Michele L. Straniero, *Canti dell'Italia Fascista* (Milano: Garzanti, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> S. Jacomuzzi, *Gli sport*, in Lellia Cracco Ruggini e Giorgio Cracco, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. V/I, *I documenti*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1973).

Young champions such as Primo Carnera, Luigi Beccali or Tazio Nuvolari seemed to be emblems of social unity in a country able to overcome any possible class issue. And in fact, back then, any image of friction between social classes was banned.<sup>13</sup> This reverberates in many films of the time, especially comedies, in which characters are always bound to fail when they try to climb the ladder of society. Two examples above all are *Il signor Max* (1937) by Mario Camerini and *Seconda B* (1934) by Goffredo Alessandrini.

With the Ethiopian war looming, some of the lyrics of the fascist anthems became more direct. They start revolving around the idea of war, spurring young people to participate and to do their duty. War is presented as a sure victory and young men should be happy and proud to take part in it, also in the case of losing their lives. The song *Ciao biondina* (1934) goes: ‘L'alba spunta già e se devi andar per le vie del mondo non tardar. / Ogni studentin gaio soldatin lascia i libri e l'università’ because ‘vincere o morir / questo è l'avvenir della più gagliarda gioventù.’ In like manner is *Ti saluto vado in Abissinia* (1936) composed by Nichi: ‘Il treno parte e ad ogni finestrin ripete allegramente il soldatin: / Io ti saluto vado in Abissinia cara Virginia, ma tornerò.’ In the text, later on, very interestingly, the attention is focused on a comparison between the fortunate young man who could go to Abissinia, the experienced soldier who sang with him the ‘inni alla giovinezza’ and the old infantryman who is not able to fight anymore ‘Quel giovane soldato tutto ardor / c'è chi sul petto ha i segni del valor / ma vanno insieme pieni di gaiezza cantando inni alla giovinezza. / Il vecchio fante che non può partir rimpiange in cuor di non poter dir: / Io ti saluto, vado in Abissinia...’ Through this device, the author wants to unite together various generations in order to create a bond of belonging between the older soldiers and the young ‘ardito.’ The only legacy that could be passed on through generations is that of war and fidelity to the cause of the nation.

As seen, the anthems abound with references to the ‘being young’, although in an idealised fashion. The same does not happen when it comes to the other kind of popular music, “la canzone leggera,” which was, in many cases, inspired in its musical form and arrangement by American jazz music.<sup>14</sup> Even if radio played a very important part in the construction of ‘fabbrica del consenso’ – as Philip V. Cannistraro would put it – transmitting Mussolini’s voice, this appliance was still rare in the houses of the Italians, especially for the ones who did not live in towns or cities.<sup>15</sup> The same slowness also characterized the spread of the

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed, although partisan, article on sport heroes during the Fascism: Marcello Veneziani, *Così l'Italia fascio-sportiva stregò anche gli Stati Uniti* in *Il Giornale*, 21st February 2012.

<sup>14</sup> The presence of jazz in fascist Italy is controversial. On the one hand it had been subjected to censorship; on the other it represented a source of inspiration for many composers of “musica leggera.” Paradoxically, Benito Mussolini’s son Romano would become an affirmed jazz pianist.

<sup>15</sup> Philip V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso. Fascismo e mass media* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).

gramophone and the record industry. For example, there were 10,458 records sold in Italy in 1924, whereas in the United Kingdom there were circa 30 million. In 1948 the scenario would begin to change and the number of records sold would be around 3 million<sup>16</sup>. However, we have to wait until the 1950s, when a proper youth culture would arrive in Italy, to see a real growth. The data reported here do not suggest the presence of a thriving music industry but the charts of the time demonstrate that a popular music scene existed.<sup>17</sup> What is peculiar is that, in the many “canzoni leggere” which came out, by contrast with what would happen in the late 1950s, when the music business would become youth-centred, there were no particular references to the condition of being young. It seems that young men are mentioned as part of a generation only when they are involved in a proto-military activity, in the anthems for instance.

The lyrics of the “canzone leggera” are characterised by a quest for evasion, for example: ‘il certo è che mi fa' scordar di tutti i guai / tu pure se ti vuoi distrar che afflitto stai / canta quel motivetto che ti piace tanto e che fa' du... du... du... du... du...’ as we can hear in *Quel motivetto che mi piace tanto*, a song written by Dan Caslar and Michele Galdieri in 1932<sup>18</sup> – in which love and courtship played a main role. A possible reason for the lack of references to the youth could be the absence of a mass youth market and – more evidently – the fascist attempt to create a popular culture suitable for all Italians in which the various social categories resembled stereotypes more than actual characters.

Our short review of the relationships between Fascism and youth was necessary to understand how the regime was able to develop its own popular culture in which young people seemed to play a leading role, in appearance. This role is embodied by youth as a patriotic group of people with idealistic and abstract features, and not by them as individuals and members of a concrete society. This process emerges clearly from the analysis of the “inni.” The regime, in fact, understood the importance of creating a common code of communication (the anthems, for instance) and a set of shared habits (sport, for example) among the youth. That was indispensable to maintain the status quo and to constitute a unity of purpose among the Italian youth, starting that process of “inquadramento” that goes “dalla culla alla bara” (from the cradle to the grave).<sup>19</sup> The parties after 1945 would attempt at recreating the same process, without the same success.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society*, pp. 178-194.

<sup>17</sup> A very accurate website about music charts in Italy is <http://www.hitparadeitalia.it>.

<sup>18</sup> A song used in a completely frightful way by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*.

<sup>19</sup> For an exhaustive analysis of this process: Edoardo Novelli, *La turbopolitica. Sessant'anni di comunicazione politica e di scena pubblica in Italia: 1945-2005* (Rizzoli: Milano, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> See, David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society*, pp. 234-247.

### 3.2 Youth Between “lo scudo crociato” and “la falce e il martello”

In this part, we will look at some of the dynamics concerning the youth in the immediate post-war period. We will linger on the effort of the two main parties of the political spectrum, the PCI and the DC, in placing young people in their strategy. It is important to look at this process as, with the advent of Americanisation and therefore of a set of new inputs for the Italian youth, the parties would begin losing part of their hegemony over the younger generations. In this respect, they had to renew their communicational approach in order to meet the needs of modern society. This effort was carried out in different ways. For the PCI, for instance, one of the modalities was the creation of magazines targeted at variegated strata of society, youth included, that could compete with the popularity of mainstream “rotocalchi.” This topic will be discussed in detail in chapter 6. Besides the press, for both parties, another way to involve the youth was the promotion of associations (some pre-existent, some brand new) for the leisure time of the activists, from this point of view their plans were not dissimilar from those of the fascists. In the equation another factor should be included, the role of the Church in backing up the DC in its efforts.

In 1947 the British diplomat John Ward comments:

Entrambi i partiti fanno grandi sforzi per avere l'appoggio dei giovani, ma mentre i comunisti impiegano i loro soldi a costruire sale da ballo per il popolo, concorsi di bellezza e simili iniziative di stampo hollywoodiano, i democristiani sono stati più furbi egemonizzando il mondo sportivo, specialmente quello del calcio e del ciclismo, le due grandi passioni degli italiani<sup>21</sup>

From WWII onwards the approach of the PCI and DC towards modernisation has always been contradictory. In fact, it swung between an acceptance of certain sides of it and a pronounced refusal of those that concerned fringes of the individual sphere. The motivations were often shared: the threat of secular mores, the dangers of Americanisation and so on. This attitude comes out when we take into account their approach towards youth. In fact, to realise the project of creating a party that could be present in the life of the Italians from the cradle to the grave, the PCI and DC, without any doubt, required the support of young people. However, the parties in question did not succeed in the endeavour of having a mass youth base in the way that the fascists did. This happened for two main

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<sup>21</sup> Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, fondo P. Noel Baker, 4/410 in P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, notes p. 154.

reasons. First, because of the natural differences between a regime and a democracy, second, because mass culture itself, in terms of Americanisation at the beginning and later as an original Italian element, was far more appealing than the rural and pre-industrialised society which the intelligentsia of both parties idealised. Throughout the 1940s, the PCI and the DC imagined Italy would remain a rural country in the long term and for many years, they were ‘unable to grasp fully the implications of the transformation or go beyond a limited evolution.’<sup>22</sup> However, a compromise was necessary especially because capitalism had been the pathway that Western countries had chosen. Modern capitalism, then, was able to blend in its development different factors: industrialisation, production, but also fashion, pop artefacts and so on. In short, it was able to create a market and a demand for any element, including innovations.<sup>23</sup> For many Italians, capitalist society was appealing.

As far as Italy is concerned, the country saw the dawn of its national identity and mass culture under Fascism, however at the end of the Second World War, the nation must re-invent and re-elaborate a big part of its symbols and habits. Nevertheless, on the other hand, in many areas of the public life, continuity with the Fascist period was kept. After the WWII, with the collapse of the regime, there was a lack of places left for sporting activities and quickly institutions like the “oratori” became the ideal environment for these.<sup>24</sup> Oratories were ‘a major attraction for the young and often their only real place for entertainment,’ especially in the suburbs and in the underdeveloped areas of the big cities.<sup>25</sup> The Church and the DC followed what Fascism had started, bringing sports to all classes, and choosing to direct their efforts on football and cycling. Both sports became relevant symbols to the nation’s identity. Quickly elevated to the status of catalysts for the passions of many people, they allowed Italians to identify with the athletes who often had emerged from a poor background. Soon heroes were created and sports also became the field of political sympathies.<sup>26</sup> For example a life without scandals and his activism in the Azione Cattolica gave Gino Bartali even the endorsement of Pius XII while, Fausto Coppi, thanks to his unconventional private life, was considered a champion close to an idealistic and liberal left wing. In reality, as Andrea Bartali explains, ‘mio padre era di Azione

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> This happened also with ‘rebellious’ codes, in terms of fashion or subcultural expressions and soon capitalism learned how to transform “revolt into style”, to quote the title of George Melly’s book *Revolt Into Style. Pop Arts in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1972).

<sup>24</sup> The oratorio is often a place built by the Christian community and dedicated to recreational activities for the youth.

<sup>25</sup> Fabien Archambault, *Il calcio e l’oratorio: Football, Catholic Movement and Politics in Italian Post-War Society, 1944-1960*, Historical Social Research, Vol. 31, 2006, No. 1, pp. 134-150, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> In this respect, it is worth reading John Foot, *Pedalare, Pedalare. A History of Italian Cycling* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).



Cattolica da quando aveva 10 anni, e ha sempre portato il distintivo di AC ma non ha mai avuto la tessera della DC. Coppi, invece, aveva la tessera della DC!’<sup>27</sup> Cycling became very popular, in a still poor country it embodied the redemption of the common person who could become “campione” relying only on his strength. In short, cycling triggered a powerful way for conveying symbols of belonging that are, for cultural studies scholars, the favourite way to interpret societies. Besides cycling, for the DC – and to a certain degree for the Church – the other favourite sport was football. It was so important that, in the early 1980s, even Giulio Andreotti would say that he had faith only in God and in the A.S. Roma.<sup>28</sup> Football was considered a good instrument of sociability that could bring young people to oratories and parishes. From the end of the 1940s onwards, it ‘became a shared and a national culture,’ an element of union and a very good way to gain the sympathies of young people.<sup>29</sup> The oratorio, in fact, usually belonged to a specific parish and became a meeting place for the youth, a centre for various activities including sports, film screenings and so on, which were often followed by prayers. This process of turning the oratorio into a place where praying could meet also recreation, had started with Giovanni Bosco in the Ninetenth century and, from that moment onwards, the North, and later but to a lesser extent also the South of the country, saw the flourishing of such institutions. As Umberto Eco reminds us, the oratorio ‘establishes a moral and religious code for those who attend it’ and at the same time ‘accommodates those who do not follow that code.’<sup>30</sup> Football was included at the end of the Nineteenth century and it was promoted for its characteristics of honesty and team game. As seen, the DC decided to seize the sphere of sport. What about the left-wing then?

Although focused more on other types of recreations, the left wing too had its sporting associations, the most important was Unione Italiana Sport Popolare. In regions such as Emilia Romagna and Tuscany where the Communist Party was strong, the amateur football matches between the ‘oratorio’ and the ‘casa del popolo’ teams became the battlefield for political clashes. However, sport was not the main focus of the left wing associations. While the oratorio was the centre of the recreational activities of the DC, recreation for the left wing and the PCI had its core in the party’s section and in the “case del popolo.” In fact, as Togliatti stated in 1944, these places must become ‘centres of popular life’ and the citizens, the nonaligned too, ‘must know that they will find there

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<sup>27</sup> *Vi racconto mio padre Gino Bartali, un angelo di uomo*, Luigi Crema interviews Andrea Bartali, in [www.ilsussidiario.net](http://www.ilsussidiario.net), (5 September 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Giulio Andreotti in Walter Veltroni, *Il calcio è una scienza da amare: 38 dichiarazioni d’amore al gioco più bello del mondo* (Milano: SavelliEditori, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> Fabien Archambault, *Il calcio e l’oratorio*, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> Umberto Eco, *A lezione di don Bosco*, in *L’Espresso* (15 November 1981), p. 9.

someone who can lead them, advise them, and if necessary offer them the possibility of entertainment.’<sup>31</sup> This followed the strategy of Togliatti aimed at creating a dialogue also with the non-Communists and with society as a whole. As far as young Communists are concerned, the FGCI was the main communist association, but it was rather a training school for future politicians than an organisation that dealt with the needs of young people. We will look into the FGCI later on.

The one above is a synthesis of the Italian context in which parties tried to fortify national and local pastimes. However, if we include the consequence of Americanisation in our analysis the scenario becomes more complex. With the arrival of the Americans during WWII, Italy saw the explosion of a plethora of new objects: DDT, v-discs, American cigarettes, boogie-woogie, swing, jazz, and later rock and roll. Some of the symbols brought by it were already part of the collective imagination, crystallised especially in films. The Americanisation was massive and followed diverse paths. Its influence offered an image of a possible, urban and modern life in which the poverty of the war was just a distant memory. Other two important elements in this realm were music and dancing. In big cities the “sale da ballo” had existed also during Fascism but we must wait for the end of the war to see the spread of an actual dance craze. As mentioned, since the PCI was less able to seize sport activities, it decided to concentrate its post-war efforts on other pastimes. As Augusto C. from the province of Bologna reminds us in *Mass Culture and Italian Society*: ‘The *Casa del Popolo* was the place you went to dance [...] where youngsters and women could go [...] In those days there was a lot of dancing and there were even competitions.’<sup>32</sup> Through dancing events, the PCI contributed to develop a way of being together among peers and it is possible to affirm that young people found a place where to dance mainly thanks to the PCI and its “case del popolo” and “feste de l’Unità.” The latter was an annual celebration organised by the PCI to finance its newspaper *l’Unità*. It was successful everywhere throughout Italy but, in Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, it became an enormously important event.<sup>33</sup> A vivid description of a festa de l’Unità in Villa Glori in Rome, has been provided also by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *Una polemica in versi*. In a passage of it, the poet underlines the joyful vitality of the youth who flocked to the festival

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<sup>31</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *I compiti del partito nella situazione attuale*, in *La politica di Salerno*, 35, in S. Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> In D. Forgacs and S. Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society*, p. 262. The discussion around the dichotomy political commitment/ pastimes would represent a constant topic in the party’s communique.

<sup>33</sup> The Festa de l’Unità changed its shape throughout the years and through an analysis of it, it is possible to see how the PCI was in some respects capable of finding a thriving compromise with pop culture. To have an image of this festival through time, see films such as: *Dramma della gelosia. Tutti i particolari in cronaca* (1970) by Ettore Scola; *La patata bollente* (1979) by and Zitti e mosca (1991) by Alessandro Benvenuti.

in comparison with the despair of the mature men, the ‘uomini, già perduti in un’abbietta ubriachezza, nascosta come un dolore.’ ‘I ragazzi,’ instead,

dentro i panni festivi, ricchi di panni, fazzoletti, sono come pazzi di pregustata gioia sotto I cappelli messicani, rossi come sangue [...] masticando gomma americana nella loro generosità senza pudore<sup>34</sup>

Dancing was one of the fields where the tension between modernisation and conservatism was played. It was rejected because immoral and lascivious by the DC, which decided instead to focus its efforts on sports, and on light activities such as the screenings of mainstream and sometimes shallow films. Part of the PCI, conversely, embraced dancing, while powerfully deploring the spread of superficial – often American – cinema. The party in fact tried its best to include young Italian directors and writers under its wing. However, for part of the young intelligentsia linked to the PCI, Americanisation and mass culture in general was a demon to stem. Pasolini, for example, would frequently condemn mass culture as the cause behind the death of the “popolo” and of an over-idealised rural past. In his words, two decades later, the new power and the mass culture that comes with it was a new form of fascism:

questo nuovo Potere [...] ha anche "omologato" culturalmente l'Italia: si tratta dunque di un'omologazione repressiva, pur se ottenuta attraverso l'imposizione dell'edonismo e della joie de vivre [...] il nuovo fascismo non distingue più: non è umanisticamente retorico, è americanamente pragmatico.<sup>35</sup>

For a radical wing of the PCI ‘the hostility to passive entertainment and in particular to anaemic light music was so strong that some intellectuals decided to take it upon themselves to provide an alternative.’<sup>36</sup> In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, at the end of the 1950s some young artists and intellectuals would start a song-writing school called Cantacronache. However, in the very same period mass culture showed that ‘a younger generation preferred to invent its own leisure through informal activities’ and the dancing nights provided by many ‘case del popolo’ to which everyone could participate, represented a reasonable meeting point between the moderate wing of the party and pop culture.<sup>37</sup> From this perspective, the PCI was able to create a bridge between the needs of the intellectuals and the needs of the wider audience. This encounter was translated into

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<sup>34</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (Milano: Garzanti, 2007), p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il potere senza volto*, in *Corriere della sera* (24 June 1974), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p. 100-101.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

Saturday evening dances, amateur theatres, distribution of books in front of the factories, festivals, journals like *Vie nuove* or *Nuova generazione* and even “concorsi di bellezza” like Miss Vie Nuove.

### 3.3 “Teppismo,” *Teddy Boys and the Bars’ Neon Lights*

*La felicità costa un gettone  
per i ragazzi del juke box  
la gioventù la gioventù la compra per  
cinquanta lire e nulla di più*  
(Adriano Celentano, *I ragazzi del juke box*, 1959)

For the young generations from the late 1950s onwards, music, along with cinema and fashion, started to represent a thriving passion. It is now necessary to look at the Italian music scene of those years and to the culture industry in general, but also at one of the first expression of post-war youth: rock and roll. We will also look at the media and their way of interpreting the protagonists of this subculture that was coming to the fore, trying to label them under inappropriate definitions such as teddy boys or “teppisti.” The analysis of the first wave of rock and roll is relevant because the generation who lived its teenage and post-teenage years between 1957 and the early 1960s maybe was not the first to take possession of a foreign subculture, American in this case, but surely, it was the first to turn it into something nationally prominent. They also represented a new market niche that contributed to the flourishing of an original cultural industry able to create a set of artefacts, songs and music, specifically for the youth: the pop music industry. From our perspective, this industry produces music which is recorded and whose aim is to be sold. It is included in the realm of popular culture and its importance overcomes the mere market. Through an interaction between the artists and the public’s reception it is able to create style, fandom, peer-to-peer relationships and a collective imagination. It is part of ‘Popular culture’ which is spread ‘also via direct contact,’ and not only ‘via technical means.’ In fact ‘we can actively participate in popular culture.’<sup>38</sup> The songs produced by the Italian pop market were vaguely rock and roll or rhythm and blues, and the lyrics very often dealt with usual themes such as love and romance but also with topics related to modern society, with a particular reference to the new consumer products brought by the economic boom, for example. Simultaneously, the industry managed to build a market in which young idols were promoted. Despite their emulation of American rockers, these icons embodied some

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<sup>38</sup> Marek Sokołowski, *Mass Culture Versus Popular Culture* (Olsztyn: University of Warmia and Mazury, 2011), p.1.

prototypical traits of the Italians. For instance, Celentano was the good-hearted – but with a tough attitude – son of Southern immigrants, Mina was the fresh and curvy daughter of the Lombard middle-class, Gianni Morandi was the eternal clean kid of the scene, Little Tony was ‘il ragazzo col ciuffo’, the real rocker, and so on. At this point, the Italian market began to widen its spectrum including these bold young artists who brought with them a dose of freshness and novelty that broke the standards set previously.

In *I padri miei* (1978) Giorgio Gaber would sing that people from the older generation: ‘non ispiravano allegria/ chiudevano le porte a tutto/ e per i giovani vivaci, esuberanti/ non avevano nessun rispetto.’<sup>39</sup> The quotation from Gaber is not incidental, in fact the artist, before becoming a songwriter, along with musicians such as Enzo Jannacci, Adriano Celentano, Mina, Little Tony and so on, played a pivotal part in the first wave of Italian rockers or “urlatori”, as the mass media started to name them.<sup>40</sup> Neither the past generation, nor the majority of the mass media and nor the institutions, were able to understand completely the extent of the social change brought by pop music. The market, on the other hand, fully comprehended it, and started the same process of creating teenage idols that in the late 1950s was taking place in the United States and in the United Kingdom. Concurrently, from the very early 1960s onwards, new schools of committed or introspective songwriters (Cantacronache, the Scuola genovese) would emerge as well, demonstrating the eclecticism of the capitalist market, which is able to create a niche for every taste.<sup>41</sup> We will analyse these dynamics later.

To have an idea of the presence of Italian “urlatori” in the pop market of the time we can take a look at the many music films (musicarelli) released between the late 1950s and early 1960s, in which they had a main role: *I frenetici* (1958); *I ragazzi del juke-box* (1959); *Juke-Box. Urli d'amore*; *Sanremo: la grande sfida* and *Urlatori alla sbarra* (1960). In the latter the jazz trumpeter Chet Baker played a small part too. As Edmondo Berselli evokes, in a still rural Italy ‘occorreva insomma che nel grigiore della fine degli anni Cinquanta apparisse il colore squillante di Adriano Celentano, il molleggiato, e si imprimevano nella disponibile fantasia di massa le invenzioni *optical* di Mina Mazzini, la Tigre.’<sup>42</sup>

Mina had started her career in Milan and her first stage name was Baby Gate. She sang rock and roll tunes such as *Be bop a lula* by Gene Vincent and the Italians were initially struck by her curvaceous and tall body, her clothes, her energy and her insolence. She was one of those girls ‘che si potevano incontrare nei luna park, con il rossetto *hard* e alle prese

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<sup>39</sup> Giorgio Gaber, *I padri miei* (1978).

<sup>40</sup> Probably, Italy had its first taste of rock and roll when in 1956 the Quartetto Cetra released a shallow cover of Bill Haley and His Comets’ *Rock around the clock* called *L’orologio matto*.

<sup>41</sup> Many of the musicians involved in the first rock and roll wave would become cantautori in the 1960s.

<sup>42</sup> Edmondo Berselli, *Canzoni. Storie dell’Italia leggera* (Bologna: 2007) p. 17.

con bastoncini di zucchero filato dai colori artificiali.’<sup>43</sup> In short, as Berselli would underline, Mina embodied “l’America” as the Italians imagined it, where “l’America” meant the exotic image of an ideal emancipation conveyed by Hollywood cinema and fashion magazines: an element which both frightened and attracted the Italians. Apart from her perceived glamour and aggressiveness, Mina appeared to a partisan Pasolini as a *petite bourgeoise*, and to Moravia as a typical young Italian woman.<sup>44</sup>

The other main character of the Italian music of the time was Adriano Celentano, an artist with whom many young people could identify. He started his career in 1956 emulating the American rockers but soon ‘aveva saputo creare un tipo di cantante assolutamente nuovo e tutto italiano in cui il milanese felicemente si fonde con il meridionale.’<sup>45</sup> During the 1960s, Celentano chose not to follow the trend of the new music explosion (beat, psychedelic rock and so on). His attitude would later become reactionary and patronising, for example in *Tre passi avanti* (1967) ‘Caro Beat mi piaci tanto, sei forte perché oltre alla musica dei bellissimi colori... Però se i ragazzi che non si lavano, quelli che scappano di casa, e altri che si drogano e dimenticano Dio fanno parte del tuo mondo, o cambi nome o presto finirai’<sup>46</sup> or in *Torno sui miei passi* (1960) ‘io scandalizzavo quando mi muovevo/ oggi me lo dici tu chi si scandalizza più/ tutte marionette col cuore di stracci senza amore e pietà.’ However, only few years earlier, in the late 1950s, during the rock and roll golden era, “il molleggiato” scandalised and seduced Italy with his savagery and his frenetic body movements. He was also intelligent enough to understand where the wind of the market blew, aligning himself with the young generations who were under the attack of the media:

secondo me non sono i blue jeans o i jukebox che spiegano i teddy boys. Se ci sono dei teppisti tra i ragazzi sotto i vent’anni, probabilmente portano i blue jeans e gli piace la musica dei jukebox proprio perché questo piace a tutti i giovani. Ma perché bisogna confondere le due cose? [...] Non dovrebbero chiamarli teddy boys perché questo confonde le idee della gente.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. P. 20.

<sup>44</sup> In Massimo Emanuelli, *50 anni: storia della televisione attraverso la stampa settimanale* (Genova: Greco E Greco, 2004) p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> Camilla Cederna, *Nostra Italia del miracolo* (Milano: Mondadori, 1983) p. 171.

<sup>46</sup> In 2005 Celentano would change his mind on the point of view expressed in *Tre passi avanti* ‘Adriano ha detto di aver sbagliato, che non aveva capito che quei ragazzi [...] indicavano [...] l’istinto primordiale del bisogno della natura. Quei ribelli [...] che al proletario della via Gluck all’epoca ispiravano solo sfiducia e sospetto’ in Ranieri Polese, *Celentano e l’autocritica sulla canzone contro i beat* in *Corriere della sera*, (29 October 2005), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> A. Celentano in *Novella 2000* (6 September 1959). In <http://www.acfans.it/blog/pensieri/gli-80-anni-di-adriano-le-tappe-salienti-della-carriera-di-un-mito>.

At least for the press, rock and roll music and style were often connected with deviant behaviours and usually the media would use terms like teddy boys or “teppisti” (hooligans) as synonyms, in a confusing manner.

Young “teppismo” was indeed a trend during the economic miracle and could be interpreted in various ways. Although limited to a very small part of the youth and confined to big cities, it was for sure a response to the desire for the new goods brought by the boom, especially when the ritual of “furto d’uso” (joyride) is concerned. The mass media took advantage of the situation to unleash a surge of alarmism. The years between 1957 and 1959, in fact, seemed to be the years of “teppisti” and their joyride which was, in short, a temporary theft of a means of transport (motorbike, scooter, car, and so on).<sup>48</sup> The term hooligan was, however, used broadly, to indicate any form of deviant behaviour exhibited by young people, including extreme pop fandom, as we will see in a later section. In one of the many articles on the topic, the *Corriere della Sera* recounted ‘I ladruncoli, tutti sotto i vent’anni, si impadroniscono di automobili incustodite e scorrazzano di notte per la città, infrangendo vetrine di negozi e rubando quel che potevano.’<sup>49</sup> These acts of bravado were characterised by the urgency felt by young people to participate in the modernisation of Italy and the desire to possess the iconic artefacts of their times.<sup>50</sup> Among those, cars and motorcycles represented appealing goods for the youth, embodying the same concepts of freedom already present in rock and roll music and in the narratives of 1950s American cinema.<sup>51</sup> According to Simonetta Piccone Stella: ‘L’automobile, la motocicletta, la velocità si sono prestati come interpreti meccanici ma esaltanti ad un’energia vitale [...] al punto di divenire essi stessi una forma di comunicazione, in questo simili alla musica rock.’<sup>52</sup> The car market would flourish during the boom, and as Mariano D’Antonio underlines, private cars between 1950 and 1964 would rise from

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<sup>48</sup> In 1960, Gian Rocco e Pino Serpi, shot a film with the script by Pier Paolo Pasolini. It is called *Milano nera* and it deals with a gang of “teppisti” from Milan. They met in a loft in order to program a series of bravado to spend the New Year’s Eve, among those: steal jewellery from a church, ride stolen cars, annoy a young couple and so on. Unfortunately, the film would be released only in 1964, too late to be up-to-date. A line pronounced by a homosexual, another target of the young hooligans goes like this ‘...vigliacchi! Siete degli infelici! Scontenti di voi stessi! Così dovete sfogarvi contro qualcuno. Odiare il mondo, cioè la società, ma non la odiate abbastanza, perché in fondo siete come gli altri.’

<sup>49</sup> Unsigned, *Aggiornata la tecnica del mattone da una banda di giovani malviventi* in *Corriere della Sera* (1 May 1957), p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> A beautiful essay on the symbolic meaning of modern artefacts is *Mythologies* (1957) by Roland Barthes. In the Italian edition of the book we can read: ‘Credo che oggi l’automobile sia l’equivalente abbastanza esatto delle grandi cattedrali gotiche: voglio dire una creazione d’epoca, concepita appassionatamente da artisti ignoti, consumata [...] da tutto un popolo che si appropria con essa di un oggetto perfettamente magico.’ Roland Barthes, *Miti d’oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005) p. 147.

<sup>51</sup> Aris Accornero would write that too easily ‘si passa dal “cibo-igiene-casa” al “casa-frigorifero-tv-auto”’, reaffirming their position towards modernisation which could represent a sort of left-wing puritanism, *Si risparmia sul vitto per i consumi nuovi* in *l’Unità* (31 May 1960) p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Simonetta Piccone Stella, *La prima generazione*, p. 250.

342,000 to 4,670,000.<sup>53</sup> Means of transport appear in many songs of the time, for example Gianni Morandi would sing ‘Andavo a cento all'ora per trovar la bimba mia’ or ‘Se puoi uscire una domenica sola con me/ mi porterò la Cinquecento di papa.’<sup>54</sup> Modern goods were closely interconnected with a plethora of symbols and icons brought by the market: they were bricks in the construction of youth identity that affected part of that generation. In 1958, in an article in *L'Espresso*, Camilla Cederna tells us more about a youth gang. The members wore checked shirts, jeans, sneakers and many of them had a motorbike trying to emulate Marlon Brando.<sup>55</sup> In brief, they followed the example of their European and American counterparts. Along with cars and motorbikes, also the price of records had dropped and music had become one of young people's main passions. Bars with pinball and jukeboxes came to be the centre of their social activity. In cities like Padua or Genoa the pinball had also been forbidden for a while because it could have had ‘conseguenze eticamente nocive per chi pratica il gioco,’ as we can read in *Il Giorno*.<sup>56</sup> In the same year, in several schools, blue jeans too had been forbidden too, while the French film *Les tricheurs*, by Marcel Carné, had been opportunistically translated as *Peccatori in blue jeans*.<sup>57</sup> The jukebox was introduced at the end of 1956 and, according to Attilio Mangano, the ‘modello associativo dell'oratorio in cui si gioca a ping pong ed è possibile far parte di una squadraccia calcistica,’ was going to fall into a crisis.<sup>58</sup> It was clear that some young people wanted something more exciting and rock and roll music was the answer. In 1958, *Il Giorno* described a crowded bar in which young boys invited girls to dance without the formalisms that had been mandatory just a few years before. In places like that, in fact, class differences seemed to disappear and girls wore jeans. Despite their paternalistic approach, *Il Giorno* and *Corriere della sera* tried to investigate young people's habits, following them into bars and venues. The attention was mainly focused on Milan, the city where the two newspapers were based. It is interesting to see how bars, for example, responded to a necessity of finding a place in which they could be among peers without the

<sup>53</sup> M. D'Antonio, *Sviluppo e crisi del capitalismo italiano 1951-1972*, in P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia*, p. 325.

<sup>54</sup> Gianni Morandi, *Andavo a cento all'ora*, 1962 (Dori - Migliacci); *Se puoi uscire una domenica sola con me*, 1964 (Guardabassi – Zambrini). Connected to transports, another important industry, which flourished enormously, was seaside tourism. Also in this case, a brief list of song titles written in the early 1960s, could witness its explosion. For instance *Pinne, fucile ed occhiali* (1962) by Edoardo Vianello or the superb *Sapore di sale* (1963) by Gino Paoli, arranged by Ennio Morricone. If in the film *Una domenica d'agosto* (1950) by Luciano Emmer we could still see a poor Italy that goes to an overcrowded and proletarian beach by tram, only seven years later in *Souvenir d'Italie* (1957) by Antonio Pietrangeli we see a different country in which the three foreign young girls could travel on their own without any problem. And, at the end, one of the British tourists goes back to London by a TWA flight.

<sup>55</sup> Camilla Cederna, *I fusti di Milano* in *L'Espresso* (1 June 1958), pp. 12-13.

<sup>56</sup> Luigi Locatelli, *Tre potenti catene controllano i flippers* in *Il Giorno* (30 August 1958), p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> *Les tricheurs* boasts of a splendid soundtrack which includes Chet Baker, Fats Domino and many more.

<sup>58</sup> Attilio Mangano in AA.VV., *Il lungo decennio. L'Italia prima del '68* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 1999), p. 37.



pressure of parents and political institutions, places where the young males could invite girls to dance with ‘un fischio’, as *Il Giorno* pointed out.<sup>59</sup> Although to a lesser extent if compared to other Western countries, the same thing happened with night venues where young artists could perform rock and roll music, for instance.

The wave of “teppismo” suggested that despite the new wealth brought by the economic boom many young people were unsatisfied, however cinema and music pop fandom, on the other hand, gave solace to a generation who seemed to be sometimes confused by the rapid changes in action. As the writer of one of the letters to magazines collected by Gabriella Parca in 1959 puts it:

ho quindici anni frequento il secondo magistrale e conduco una vita senza sogni [...] a volte vado avanti e indietro con una fotografia di James Dean in mano e parlo con lui [...] mio padre dice che la gioventù di oggi non combina niente di buono [...] Eppure io vedo che non sono la sola ad agire così! Tante ragazze come me oggi conducono la mia stessa vita, si chiedono perché fanno questo o quello.<sup>60</sup>

In the passage here above fandom is expressed through the affection towards the ‘fotografia di James Dean’ which assumed almost the connotation of a religious icon, a ‘santino.’

Like in other countries, also in Italy youth started to become a definite category with its own rules and fashion that were elements in the jigsaw of their collective imagination. Gradually, young people began to be more active in society trying to gain the freedom of creating their own identity and following the new trends brought by the spread of mass communication. Among them, it is possible to identify the appearance of modern youth subcultures. One of the first youth cultures to touch the Italian ground was, as the media defined it, the teddy boys craze. It must be said, however, that the newspapers of the time used the category ‘teddy boy’ vaguely, often including in it all the rock and roll lovers and linking the latter to the realm of hooliganism. If we look at some archive films shot in 1959/1960 and released by Rai Storia later, under the label *I giovani e il tempo libero* we could see that the people called teddy boys were just young rock and roll lovers sporting striped t-shirts and quiffs.<sup>61</sup> Alternatively, to get a more concise idea of what the press meant by teddy boy, it is worth watching another short clip called *Teddy Boy italiani* (1960) in which a member of an Italian gang of teddy boys recounts his bravados. Looking at the

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<sup>59</sup> Alfonso Madeo, *La repubblica degli adolescenti* in *Il Giorno* (6 August 1958), pp. 10-11.

<sup>60</sup> Gabriella Parca, *Le italiane si confessano* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973) p. 77-79.

<sup>61</sup> You can find some clips here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oKGB0CD2X0> and here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36QpsU7kYws>.

outfit, we could see a leather jacket and a striped t-shirt, very far from the classic teddy boy's clothing and closer to the outfit of the rockers, in case.<sup>62</sup> However, the striped t-shirt would be iconic during the revolts of 1960, as we will see.

It is unclear, in fact, whether in Italy there were actual teddy boys or not, but some phenomena of hooliganism which took place in the country seemed to recall the deviance expressed by the British teddy boys just few years before. The *Teds* were born in the United Kingdom and came from working class neighbourhoods of cities such as London, Manchester or Glasgow. In contrast with what had happened with the teenage gangs before them, they heralded a new kind of 'deviance' based not only on hooliganism for its own sake. Their 'deviance', instead, had at its core a series of symbols and codes in which music and fashion played a main part. They were the protagonists of one of the first waves of moral panic that spread in 1953. Ironically mixed, their style was inspired by the Edwardian and by the American rockabilly fashion. During the decade, British newspapers reported their exploits repeatedly, with an apex in 1956, when they almost destroyed a cinema in Lambeth during the screening of *Blackboard jungle* by Richard Brooks in which *Rock around the clock* by Bill Haley and his Comets stood as soundtrack.<sup>63</sup> Teddy boys' favourite genre was rockabilly, a white American blend of rhythm and blues and country music and their musical idols were Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran.<sup>64</sup> The British market had its own rockers too, Bill Fury for example. The teds were also alleged to have taken part in the racial clashes during the Notting Hill Carnival of 1958.<sup>65</sup>

In Italy, the political and economic context was different and it is likely that an actual teddy boys' subculture never existed. For the Italian newspapers, which very seldom tried to analyse the situation from a deeper perspective, teddy boys were just the equivalent of hooligans who committed 'gesti di violenza gratuita, atti di vandalismo improvviso, aggressione di pacifici cittadini.'<sup>66</sup> Or as Clem Sacco would sing in 1959 'se sei nervoso, o capriccioso o noioso/ o rabbioso, o furioso sai cosa devi far: spacca, rompi, spingi, al tempo di rock and roll.'<sup>67</sup> For the press, they seemed to be either lost souls to redeem or delinquents to repress. The various causes of their behaviour were judged to be, according

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<sup>62</sup> The clip could be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZYkd-RSZLU>.

<sup>63</sup> For a splendid portrait of the young Londoners from Lambeth: *We're the Lambeth boys*, by Karel Reisz (1959).

<sup>64</sup> When we use the term rock and roll, essentially, we are referring to this genre.

<sup>65</sup> To know more about the *Teddy boys* subculture: <http://www.edwardianteddyboy.com>. For an account about Notting Hill Carnival of 1958: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/notting-hill-riots-1958>.

<sup>66</sup> G. Russo, *La protervia dei "Teddy Boys" frutto di famiglie sbagliate* in *Corriere della Sera* (8 August 1959), p.3.

<sup>67</sup> *Spacca, rompi, spingi*, Clem Sacco (1959).

to the many articles in *Corriere della Sera*: ‘il malinteso modernismo educativo che suscita ribellione anziché affetto,’<sup>68</sup> ‘il relativo benessere raggiunto’<sup>69</sup> and the fact that ‘senza dubbio se in questo dopoguerra non avessimo ricevuto dall’America tanti western e tanti gialli avremmo ora meno vandalismi.’<sup>70</sup> However, the appearance of the so-called teddy boys is very relevant for our research. They exhibited a rage that could not easily be explained by the media and society; a general restlessness towards society that would be at the core of both the revolts of 1960, and to a lesser extent, those of July 1962, as we will see in the last part of the thesis. First, let us return to Milan and to the first wailing of Italian rock and roll.

### 3.4 Explosion of Rock and Roll and its First Italian Festival

*La botta di energia del rock nessuno sa cos’ è [...]  
E ci porta ad abbandonare i libri, e ci spinge  
a preferire i dischi*  
(Diaframma, La botta d’energia del rock, 2014)

In the following pages we are going to give a brief insight into the first rock and roll festival held in Milan in 1957. We will also see how mainstream press reacted to it soon relying on definitions close to the realm of hooliganism in describing the young people involved.

As mentioned before, the Italian recording industry grew steadily during the late 1950s, helped, moreover, by the introduction of the 45rpm around 1953.<sup>71</sup> Shortly after the war, the Americans had imported the boogie-woogie craze which had lasted just for few seasons. After that, for a long while, the Italian market seemed to be dominated only by the sugary “canzone leggera” in which ‘son tutte belle le mamme del mondo/ quando un bambino si stringono al cuor’<sup>72</sup> or ‘Io non sapevo lusinghe d’amore, canzoni d’amore, veleni d’amore/ Quando in un bacio le chiedi un cuore, mi diede un cuore, perdetti un cuore.’<sup>73</sup> While this was the Italian panorama, the American mainstream market from the 1940s onwards had also been dominated by the belcanto of Mario Lanza, Perry Como or Doris Day. In 1951, a radio disc-jockey, Alan Freed, realised that many white teenagers loved to buy rhythm and

<sup>68</sup> *La protervia* in *Corriere della Sera* (8 August 1959), p.3.

<sup>69</sup> Unsigned, *Tramortito a pugni e calci un guardiano da un bandito* in *Corriere della Sera* (23 March 1959), p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Unsigned, *Cinque rivoltelle della polizia diedero il buongiorno al capobanda* in *Corriere della Sera* (19 September 1959), p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> M. Di Meglio in *45mania*. <http://www.45mania.it/cenni.html>.

<sup>72</sup> *Tutte le mamme* (Umberto Bertini - Eduardo Falcocchio) brought to the Sanremo festival, in 1954, by Gino Latilla.

<sup>73</sup> *Buongiorno Tristezza* (M.Ruccione - G.Fiorelli) sung by Claudio Villa in 1955.

blues records which were, until then, relegated to the category of ‘race music.’ Freed also understood that there was considerable business potential and he started to play rhythm and blues music on WJW radio calling it rock and roll. The name was changed in order to avoid troubles in a country where the segregation was still strong. It was 11 July 1951 and his show was called *Moondog rock ‘n’ roll party* where Moondog was Freed’s stage name.

<sup>74</sup> The term rock and roll derives from the expressions “rocking” and “rolling” used, probably with a sexual meaning, in many rhythm and blues songs. From the second half of the 1950s the whole world would witness the explosion of the new music. As Enzo Cioffi points out ‘L’avanzata del rock and roll non si fermò al mercato americano, ma costituì anche in Europa delle vaste teste di ponte servendosi del cavallo di troia britannico.’<sup>75</sup> Music and the English language, in its American variation, succeeded in creating a synergy that soon also spread in Italy. As Enzo Cioffi states again, referring to the universe of symbols conveyed by rock and roll: ‘L’Italia del dopoguerra assistette alla penetrazione sempre più intensa e arretrante di modi e di stili musicali fortemente ritmati, che conferivano una percezione intensa di libertà e di sprigionamento (erotico-sessuale) del corpo attraverso i passi, le posture e le figure del ballo.’<sup>76</sup> As said, in Italy too, music became along with fashion, scooters, cars, one of the codes in the building of a sub-cultural identity. Together with the pinball machines, jukeboxes, leather jackets it was one of the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of Americanisation: a series of images and attitudes often learnt also from the American cinema. In fact, as we read in *Il cinema americano classico* by G. Alonge and G. Carluccio: ‘Dalle star americane intere generazioni hanno imparato come pettinarsi, come baciare, come fumare.’<sup>77</sup>

At the end of the 1950s, Milan was the capital of economic growth; therefore it is not surprising that it had become one of the first Italian cities in which these tendencies of modernisation became evident. On 18 May 1957, the Palaghiaccio of via Piranesi hosted the first rock and roll festival that would end after only half an hour because of a massive brawl among the audience. Among the competitors, there were artists who would become famous later, some of them as songwriters: Little Tony, Tony Renis, Betty Curtis, Enzo Jannacci, Giorgi Gaber, Luigi Tenco and Adriano Celentano and his Rock Boys. The festival was the brainchild of two dancers: Umberto Gallone and Bruno Dossena. As Adriano Celentano recounts: ‘Un giorno arrivò Bruno Dossena e mi disse: “Sto

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<sup>74</sup> James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin: The Rise of Rock and Roll, 1947-1977* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), pp. 57-61. A further and seminal text on the history of rock and roll is Carl Belz, *The History of Rock* (Oxford: Univeristy Press, 1972).

<sup>75</sup> E. Cioffi, *Cambia la musica nell’Italia che decolla*, p. 97.

<sup>76</sup> E. Cioffi, *Cambia la musica nell’Italia che decolla*, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> Giaime Alonge and Giulia Carluccio, *Il cinema americano classico* (Bari: laterza, 2006), backcover.

organizzando il primo Festival del rock. Ci sono sette orchestre, ma non c'è un cantante rock. Se tu partecipassi sarebbe bellissimo.”<sup>78</sup> The aim of the event was to introduce the “capitale del Nord” to American rock and roll that, as Adriano declares in the same article, ‘come un fulmine a ciel sereno, ci pioveva addosso come grandine liberatrice.’<sup>79</sup> The festival seemed to attract a big crowd, with many young people from Milan and from the rest of Italy. The police forces, who had never been involved in a such event, decided to block the entrances of the “palaghiaccio” shortly after the beginning, provoking the rage of the people outside, as *Corriere della Sera* would recount few days later:

Sabato sera la polizia ha dovuto intervenire con dure cariche per evitare gli eccessi alle porte del palaghiaccio dove qualche migliaio di ragazzi con vistose casacche a fiorami, teste acconciate alla Marlon Brando e chewingum fra i denti, in attesa dei deliri del ritmo, cercavano di far esplodere altri germi di violenza’ [...] ‘certe esaltazioni collettive, certi invasamenti sono perniciosi perché esercitano una costante suggestione che comincia dal rock and roll e finisce nei riformatori’<sup>80</sup>

In the same article *Corriere della Sera* underlines that in the same evening, instead, ‘a Milano si sono visti migliaia di altri giovani sfilare da piazza Sant’Ambrogio al Duomo seguendo, alla processione della Notte Santa, il simulacro della Madonna Pellegrina’<sup>81</sup> which, a few lines later would be defined a “baluardo sicuro” against the debauchery brought by rock and roll.

Also inside the “palaghiaccio” the atmosphere soon became hot and people began to shout and to tear off the seats. The unprepared organisers were forced to call Celentano on stage. He had just one song in his repertoire and he had to play it repeatedly, in order to calm down the crowd. In Italy, such a collective act of rebellion, very similar to what had happened in London, in 1956, had never taken place before. Therefore, shortly after the Festival, for part of the media, rock and roll became the vehicle of deviance, along with some other sides of pop culture in general. In fact, as *Corriere della Sera* concludes in the article ‘Non vi sono ideali o esempi accettabili per questi giovani tranne il solo mito che gli si va proponendo senza posa nelle innumerevoli sale cinematografiche dove si proiettano le stesse storie banali, intrise di sangue e di perverse passioni, eccone i frutti.’<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Adriano Celentano, *Milano è brutta per il cemento, la colpa non è di Pisapia*, 7 April 2012 in <http://www.acfans.it/blog/news-e-segnalazioni/milano-e-brutta-per-il-cemento-la-colpa-non-e-di-pisapia/>

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Enzo Grazzini, *Colonne di pellegrini salgono alla “casetta rosa del miracolo”* in *Corriere della Sera*, (25 May 1957), p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Rock and roll music and the consequent dancing were seen at the time, by a section of public opinion, as dangerous forms of rebellion, as the worst side of Americanisation that – instead – was totally embraced in other spheres. In fact, following this concert, city mayors and police forces would do their utmost to prevent the holding of any kind of future rock and roll event and such festivals were often cancelled at the last minute. Fortunately, this attitude did not prevail in the long term, in fact touring rock and roll festivals continued throughout the first half of the 1960s. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1957 festival, a cynical Enzo Jannacci would state in *Corriere della Sera*:

Fu una sera e basta, dopo era tutto finito. Certo, Adriano era uno che quando saliva sul palco scatenava un tifo da curva sud, la gente impazziva [...] Ma il rock italiano non esiste, non erano nostre le basi musicali, si faceva un pò il verso agli americani.<sup>83</sup>

Jannacci would minimise the relevance of the event. Nevertheless, from our analytical perspective it was a small revolution. Italy had never witnessed a demonstrative act of violence linked to the world of pop fandom, an episode in which young people seemed to share a universe of signs and symbols, which appeared diverse and obscure to the older people and to the institutions. It can be considered a blueprint of what would happen in July 1960 and we can include this event in the realm of the sub-cultural expressions. In fact, paraphrasing Dick Hebdige, a subculture has very often traits based on criticism towards the prevailing standards of society and therefore it is perceived as a negative and unintelligible element by the rest of society. Moreover, subcultures gather together like-minded individuals who feel rejected by the majority of the social order, allowing them to develop a sense of identity.<sup>84</sup> From this perspective, the inclusion is surely possible. It must be also emphasised that, for the first time in Italy, a subculture founded on shared tastes in terms of pop music emerged, creating scandals and becoming the start of a generational battle which would be fought, in the years to come, in various fields: politics, personal freedom, aspirations, and so on. It is another symbol of the clash between modernisation and reaction, which would be a leitmotiv of Italian history until the late 1970s. The same kind of shared symbols and signs are at the core of the revolt that would happen in Genoa just three years later in which the same generation of rock and roll fans will take part. We will look at this event in chapter 7.

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<sup>83</sup> Sandra Cesareale, *Il Primo Maggio celebra i 50 anni del rock italiano* in *Corriere della Sera* (19 April 2007), p.15.

<sup>84</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture*.

In the next chapter, instead, we will look at Cantacronache, a group of young artists linked to the PCI and formed in Turin during the late 1950s. In our analysis, they represent the other side of the emerging pop music that we have discussed above and they would become a blueprint for the Italian song writing tradition to come. In this respect, they were also absolute beginners, as the title of this research reads. Although scholars so far have focused on their socio-political engagement especially we want to demonstrate how, on the other hand, they were able to sing the economic boom with irony, sarcasm and intelligence and yet relying on interesting and innovative musical forms. We want to show that, although they refused the blandness of the “canzonetta,” they were – at least in part – vital elements of the emerging pop music market, which they contributed to enrich through a series of 45s singles released in that period. Their music, published by a label connected to the PCI (Italia canta), can be included in the strategy of the “partito nuovo” whose aim was to open towards society as a whole also through the development of cultural activities.

#### ***4. Cantacronache. The Other Side of the Pop-Market***

##### *4.1 Cantacronache: Pioneers of “cantautorato”*

As anticipated in the last chapter, Cantacronache could be related to the strategy of the new party as they were produced by Italia canta, a label linked to the PCI. They emerged from Turin that in the years of the boom went through a series of very important changes. Apart from the industrial sector, it had a vibrant cultural life, with the publisher Einaudi, for example, and a robust anti-fascist tradition, centred on a strong Communist Party. The group of singers, musicians, intellectuals was set up in 1957 and comprised women and men in their twenties who belonged to the generation of the so-called teddy boys. In our opinion, they represented the other side of mainstream Italian pop and were the embryos of the future songwriters' tradition. We have included Cantacronache in the realm of pop because, although their target was more restricted than that of mainstream artists, they recorded albums whose purpose was to sell. In this respect, they represented a starting point for a market niche that would eventually derive and expand from it: that of “cantautorato.” From the 1960s onwards, “cantautorato” would start to be a prominent thread in the Italian music landscape and it is undeniable that it finds its roots in two important experiences that happened between the late 1950s and the early 1960s when the artists and intellectuals involved in Cantacronache and the Scuola Genovese took their first steps. As far as Cantacronache is concerned, we could agree with Umberto Eco – an intellectual very close to the group and to one of the founding members, Michele Straniero – who in 2001 would say:

Se non ci fossero stati i Cantacronache e quindi se non ci fosse stata anche l'azione poi prolungata, oltre che dai Cantacronache, da Michele L. Straniero, la storia della canzone italiana sarebbe stata diversa. Poi, Michele non è stato famoso come De André o Guccini, ma dietro questa rivoluzione c'è stata l'opera di Michele: questo vorrei ricordare<sup>1</sup>

Milan was the city where rock and roll had its first festival, the other two cities of the industrial triangle, Turin and Genoa instead, will play a role in the development of Italian song writing in the years of the boom. The name Cantacronache comes from the juxtaposition of the verb “cantare” (to sing) with the noun “cronaca” (chronicle, account), in short: to sing the chronicle, to sing the events of the time. The name worked as an

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<sup>1</sup> U. Eco in Giovanni Straniero and Carlo Rovello, *Cantacronache*, p. 8.



obvious statement distancing itself from the rhetoric of mass parties, mass media and so on. It was a way to give new power to words and music in a market dominated by the craze of the “urlatori” on the one hand, and by “belcanto” on the other.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as epitomised in 1958 by their *Canzone dei fiori e del silenzio*, (words by Emiliano Jona, music by Sergio Liberovici) and interpreted by Margot Garrone:

Ci dicono cantate svenevoli e amorosi  
 Siate i ritmici giullari dell'era industriale  
 [...]  
 Ci dicono tacete perché il silenzio è d'oro  
 su miseria e lavoro  
 tacete della vita  
 se ha giorni grigi e duri  
 tacete degli amori  
 se sono tristi e oscuri  
 [...]  
 Ma se la ruota gira non lasciamola girare  
 se l'uomo s'addormenta non lasciamolo dormire  
 se la terra scompare facciamola riapparire  
 e se qualcuno muore non lasciamolo morire.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from being an explicit reference to Bertolt Brecht's *Die Ballade vom Wasserrad*, the song is a declaration of what they did not want to sing about and of what they did not want to be. In the expressions ‘svenevoli e amorosi,’ ‘i ritmici giullari dell'era industriale’ and ‘mercanti di piccola illusione’ the reference to rock and roll and belcanto of the time is clear. Their aim instead was to awaken the modern man from his torpor, as said in the last verse. Although their songs were distant from pop music's intention, composed ‘sia per allontanare e dimenticare i problemi quotidiani, sia per diffondere sentimenti di tranquillità e di rassicurazione’, as Stefano Pivato would put it, it must be added that, in stylistic terms, Cantacronache often applied the pop music verse-chorus structure to their compositions.<sup>4</sup> And moreover, they could be considered pop artists since they produced records aimed to sell. As Fausto Amodei, one of the founders, states ‘ci interessava risolvere, con tanto di strofa e ritornello (o con dispositive analoghi), un oggetto cantato che durasse due minuti, due minuti e mezzo e poi finisse,’ but in doing this they managed to compose arrangements that were rich in hues and were never superficial. Francesco Guccini points out: ‘Amodei

<sup>2</sup> According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) belcanto is a style of singing ‘characterized by full, even tones and a brilliant display of vocal technique.’ For more on belcanto: Rodolfo Celletti, *Storia del Belcanto* (Venezia: Discanto, 1983); Antonio Juvarrà, *I segreti del belcanto. Storia delle tecniche e dei metodi vocali dal '700 ai nostri giorni* (Napoli: Curci, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> *Canzone dei fiori e del silenzio* (1958). The website <https://www.antiwarsongs.org/> has been used as main source for the lyrics throughout the chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Stefano Pivato, *Bella ciao. Canto e politica nella storia d'Italia* (Bari: Laterza), p. 206.

usava degli schemi che erano assolutamente insuonabili. Roba che uno si affanna a cercare e che poi, quando vede lo spartito, dice “ma guarda dove va a finire.”<sup>5</sup> They succeeded therefore in combining the simplicity of a strophe-and-refrain structure based on catchy melodies with sophisticated and complex harmonic arrangements. By combining a verse-chorus classic structure to lyrics that could interpret the complexity of post-war society, they brought into the market a breath of fresh air. Behind their initiative lay a clear project, which took its inspiration from young intellectuals such as Michele L. Straniero or Emiliano Jona, singers and musicians such as Margherita Margot Galante Garrone, Fausto Amodei or Sergio Liberovici and developed also with the help of very well-known writers such as Italo Calvino and Franco Fortini. As we can read in *I nostri cantautori*, finally, with Cantacronache ‘appare una canzone nuova, destinata a condizionare, in seguito, la produzione musicale colta in Italia e a offrire un contributo fondamentale alla canzone d’autore.’<sup>6</sup> Or as Chiara Ferrari writes, Cantacronache were ‘giovani che raccontavano il Paese da una prospettiva critica e anticonformista [...] riconsegnando alla memoria fatti e momenti di storia sociale e politica’ by drawing ‘un’immagine alternativa a quella di un’Italia smagliante e spensierata proposta, per esempio, dalla canzone leggera.’<sup>7</sup> In the efforts of Cantacronache lay many of the seeds that the future songwriters would bring to maturity: they were in fact able to write songs that narrated reality in its intricacy, describing everyday life without sublimated feelings. Besides that, they also worked as amateur ethnomusicologists conducting significant research on the heritage of Italian and foreign political songs, which they rediscovered, brought to new life and recorded, in many cases for the first time.<sup>8</sup> They also released songs in dialect, like *Polesine*, written few years after the Polesine flood of 1951. Despite their importance in the Italian panorama, it must be said that until very recently, unlike the copious bibliography on Italian cantautorato, the scholarly analysis of Cantacronache has been scarce. Apart from the books edited by Straniero himself there have been no studies which aimed to cast light on the five years of Cantacronache. Cantacronache itself was often consigned to short paragraphs in volumes on the history of Italian music. Finally, after the year 2000, Giovanni Straniero carried out some studies on it, comprising a couple of books, mostly

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<sup>5</sup> Fausto Amodei and Francesco Guccini in Giovanni Straniero and Mauro Barletta, *La rivolta in musica. Michele L. Straniero e il Cantacronache nella storia della musica italiana* (Torino: Lindau, 2003) p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> From Gianfranco Baldazzi, Luisella Clarotti, Alessandra Rocco *I nostri cantautori* (Bologna: Thelma editore, 1990) in G. Straniero and M. Barletta, *La rivolta in musica*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962*.

<sup>8</sup> In this regard it must be added that this tendency would be accentuated when Cantacronache would split up. In the early 1960s, some of the members would give birth to the Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, a company of musicians and intellectuals who will collect, record and work on the heritage of the political song, both Italian and foreign.

centred on the influence of Michele L. Straniero upon the Italian songwriters. They are: *La rivolta in musica. Michele L. Straniero e il Cantacronache nella storia della musica italiana* (2003) and, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the movement, *Cantacronache. I cinquant'anni della canzone ribelle. L'eredità di Michele L. Straniero* (2008). In 2011, students from the masters in Comunicazione Storica at Bologna University filmed a documentary called *Cantacronache 1958-1962: politica e protesta in musica*, and two years later, in 2013, Chiara Ferrari would publish an extensive article called *Cantacronache 1958-1962: politica e protesta in musica*, published in *Storicamente*, a periodical of the department of Storia, Culture, Civiltà of Bologna University. In the existing accounts of Cantacronache cited thus far, there is valid historical and political analysis, but there is a lack of actual insight into their lyrics and music. The aim of the following chapter is to see how the non-strictly political lyrics narrate their era, what point of view about their time they express, and to look at the musical material, which is something that no one has done so far. The lack of a music analysis applied to songwriters is a typical feature of the Italian scholarship that focuses especially on textuality.

The *Enciclopedia Treccani*, defines ‘cantautore’ as ‘cantante di musica leggera che interpreta brani scritti o musicati da lui stesso.’<sup>9</sup> As Enzo Gentile tells us, the word was coined in 1959 by two well-known Italian record producers: Vincenzo Micocci and Ennio Melis who used it to describe and launch a young songwriter, Gianni Meccia.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after, from the early 1960s onwards, in the Italian context and collective imagination, ‘cantautore’ would start to delineate – and still does in some cases – a writer and performer of songs which also deal with matters of social importance, giving a deeper insight into the problems and joy of life. From the late 1960s, the Italian “cantautore” would be perceived as someone who heralded a politically defined set of values very often in the realm of the left-wing.<sup>11</sup> However, the songwriter was also someone who produced records, which were sold and distributed by the music market, and in this respect, Cantacronache were pioneers. For them the refusal of the “canzonetta” did not coincide with a general refusal of the market dynamics since they released a fistful of EPs. Nevertheless, according to Michele Straniero: ‘Queste nostre canzoni, a dire il vero, non ebbero mai un grande successo: stavano troppo fuori dalla norma di mercato.’ Their songs were different and ‘non

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cantautore/>

<sup>10</sup> In Enzo Gentile, *Guida critica ai cantautori italiani* (Roma: Gammalibri, 1979), Vincenzo Micocci was also the founder of the record label It. See: Vincenzo Micocci, *Vincenzo io ti ammazzerò. Biografia di Vincenzo Micocci, un creativo nell'industria discografica* (Roma: Coniglio Editore, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> A different landscape characterizes the right-wing. The artists who had explicitly embraced that set of ideas did not manage to gain a success in the music market. On this: Cristina Di Giorgi, *Note alternative. La musica emergente dei giovani di destra* (Roma: Edizioni Trecento, 2008).

cercavano di vendersi al miglior offerente, ma di cambiare la nostra vita e la faccia del mondo.’<sup>12</sup> As Chiara Ferrari affirms, in fact: ‘Cantacronache, invece, era la canzone “diversa”. [...] controcorrente, priva del seguito del pubblico dei giovani, i nuovi consumatori musicali. Decisamente fuori moda’<sup>13</sup>

Although their efforts were recognised mainly by a small niche that was cultured and socially conscious, although they were produced by a financially limited record label, it is clear that their records enriched and broadened the range of possible music choices. As the songwriter and musician Gianfranco Manfredi affirms: ‘i Cantacronache si sono segnalati proprio grazie al mercato, reso più aperto e di più facile accesso dalla comparsa del 45 giri. Quando io ero ragazzino ascoltavo indifferentemente Michele Straniero e Fausto Amodei (Cantacronache) quanto Harry Belafonte Sinatra ed Elvis.’ Manfredi, in fact, does not consider ‘merceologicamente differenti i diversi repertori.’<sup>14</sup>

Before Cantacronache, songs that narrated life in a non-stereotypical canon were of course present. Domenico Modugno, for example, a prominent pop singer of the 1950s, was a proto-songwriter able to describe certain situations with irony, empathy and intensity.<sup>15</sup> However, it is only with Cantacronache first, and then in the early 1960s with other artists, that the ‘canzone d’autore’ would embrace a civil engagement, holding a clear position towards the dynamics of society. If, instead, we looked at the music market before the 1950s we could observe a different situation with the Italian recording industry at its dawn. A corpus of music pervaded by a critical approach and based on activism which we could call ‘canzone politico-sociale’ (socio-political songs) or folk existed. It had a very long tradition and it is possible to retrace it to the post-French Revolution esprit but it was not considered by the Italian record industry and therefore seldom recorded. Its sharing was passed down orally, taking place inside a group of peers united by the same experiences, set of ideas and political orientations. As far as these types of songs are concerned, we can identify in fact several sub-genres: patriotic songs, which used an elevated and high register, circulated amongst intellectuals and written between the late 1700s and the nineteenth century (some of these would be re-used by the Fascist regime, which would eventually alter their original meaning); the songs of the emigrants that described, with

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<sup>12</sup> Michele Straniero in *Cento canti politici & sociali* (Milano Gammalibri, 1984), statement found in <http://www.pasolini.net/ideologia09.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962*.

<sup>14</sup> Gianfranco Manfredi in G. Straniero and C. Rovello, *Cantacronache*, p. 75. In the same interview he would also state: ‘Il vero medium per la diffusione della canzone popolare, in Italia è stato il 45 giri [...] a partire dalla fine dei cinquanta,’ in a market that, from the late 1950s until the late 1960s, was ‘più sociale e molto meno governato dall’alto’ in G. Straniero and C. Rovello, *Cantacronache*, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> Domenico Modugno is one of the first singers to write songs inspired by the news, this is the case of *Vecchio Frack*, dedicated to the prince Raimondo Lanza di Trabia who had killed himself in 1954.

rage and grief, the vicissitudes of many poor Italians who left the country in order to look for a more decent life abroad; the songs of the workers, often sung in dialect, which frequently dealt with the hardness of toil; and songs that we could define socialist-anarchic, illegal during Fascism, and aimed to sing the epic of the workers and their struggles. To these ones, we must add the corpus linked to the First and Second World War, both pro-war and anti-war, and those that celebrated the colonial adventure in Libya.<sup>16</sup> Part of the corpus above mentioned, especially the anarchic-socialist protest songs, would influence and inspire Cantacronache who would also record a large portion of that material which had not been recorded before.<sup>17</sup>

To conclude: the Italian historical context and the advent of a medium like the 45s, made Cantacronache possible.

#### 4.2 The Italian Music Market and Cantacronache

*Ciò che ci proponiamo al di là della polemica e della rottura, è di evadere dall'evasione, ritornando a cantare storie, accadimenti, favole, che riguardino la gente nella sua realtà terrena e quotidiana*<sup>18</sup> (Cantacronache, 1958)

In the 1950s, Italy was still trying to heal its moral and material wounds and the reconstruction of the country was often a painful and difficult process. In this context, the 'canzonetta', along with cinema and the new medium, television, was the sign of the Italians' quest for evasion. At the Sanremo festival, belcanto still reigned and Claudio Villa, the 'reuccio,' was without doubt its main interpreter. In those years, the importance given to the virtuosity of the 'canto' (the singing) was so pronounced that Villa himself was harshly criticised for having sung a wrong note during the festival of 1957. As Marcello Giannotti explains:

Villa [...] viene accusato di aver steccato in modo clamoroso durante 'Cancello tra le rose'. Soprattutto questo [...] infortunio scatena la reazione di tutti gli avversari che in Villa vedono il simbolo di uno strapotere difficile da

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed research on Italian folk songs, S. Pivato, *Bella ciao*.

<sup>17</sup> In the United States and in Germany, the recording of what we would today call folk music had started long before, thanks to the effort of people such Carl Stumpf, one of the founders of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in 1900, and Alan Lomax who would eventually travel to Italy in 1954-1955 to record the still quite diverse musical styles of the peninsula. Besides members of Cantacronache like Michele Straniero, among the Italian ethnomusicologists we must, at least, mention Ernesto De Martino, Diego Carpitella and Roberto Leydi. Essential works on Italian folk music are Ernesto De Martino, *La terra del rimorso. Contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1961). Alan Lomax, *L'anno più felice della mia vita. Un viaggio in Italia (1954-55)* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Manifesto of Cantacronache in E. Jona - M.L. Straniero, *Cantacronache. Un'avventura politico musicale degli anni '50* (Torino: Paravia, 1995) p. 21-22

sopportare: giornalisti, spettatori e osservatori si inviperiscono e Villa viene fischiato sonoramente dopo l'esibizione<sup>19</sup>

Despite the criticism, the tenor would win the festival with *Corde della mia chitarra*, a song with a Spanish flavour and a marked vocal virtuosity. Although the lyrics were quite superficial, they were funnily prophetic of what would happen to the belcanto in a very short time: 'Corde della mia chitarra / perché vi fermate/ perché non suonate voi sole per me? Oh... com'era dolce questa musica/ Oh... e come adesso sembra inutile.'<sup>20</sup>

The period between 1955 and 1957 was in many ways fundamental for popular music in Italy. As we have seen, around 1957, the country discovered rock and roll. Alongside American artists who were already known – Harry Belafonte and Ella Fitzgerald for example – names such as Bill Haley or Gene Vincent started to appear in the hit parade. However, until 1955 the best-selling singles were often Italian. In 1954, for example, the best-selling single of the year was *Te voglio bene (tanto tanto)* by Renato Rascel. In 1955, instead, the best-selling single was a song that would become very successful in the years to come: *Scapricciatiello*, by Aurelio Fierro, followed by *Arrivederci Roma* interpreted by Renato Rascel and *La Pansè* by Renato Carosone, a musician whose influence on Italian music is enormous. In 1956, Carosone and Fierro were still at the top of the charts, with *Maruzzella* and *Guaglione* respectively but, in the third position we find an American song: *Love is a many splendored thing* by The Four Aces and Al Alberts. 1957 finally saw the explosion of American music: in fact, at the top of the best-selling singles list of the year we have *Only you* by The Platters and, in the third position, the rock and roll anthem *Rock around the clock* by Bill Haley and the Comets. The second position, instead, is still held by a Neapolitan style song, *Chella llà* sung by Marino Marini.<sup>21</sup> From this year onwards, the influence of American music in the Italian hit parade became significant. This is still true when, in 1958, *Nel blu dipinto di blu* by Domenico Modugno was released, becoming the number one August single on Billboard's 1958 Year-End Chart of Pop Singles.<sup>22</sup> This tune would represent the image of Italy all over the world, winning the San Remo festival and becoming an unofficial national anthem, especially for the Italians abroad.<sup>23</sup> Modugno

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<sup>19</sup> Marcello Giannotti in

<http://www.galleriadellacanzone.it/canzoni/anni50/schede/cordechitarra/cordechitarra.htm>

<sup>20</sup> M.Ruccion-G.Fiorelli, *Corde della mia chitarra* (1957).

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/hp\\_yends/index.html](http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/hp_yends/index.html).

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.billboard.com/archive/charts/1958/hot-100>.

<sup>23</sup> With *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, the already existing stereotype of the elegant Italian singer embodied before by Italo-Americans like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin or Luis Prima finally reaches its apex. Besides this, a new trend in the – let us call it – Italo-American music, or music about being Italo-Americans, begins. A cluster of new songs were composed between the late 1950s and early 1960s and they added to the already known narration of the sunny/happy peninsula new elements: Italy turns out to be a renewed and vibrant place, its citizens want to 'twist', have fun and enjoy the new wealth. As before, these songs were written in a pseudo

would eventually also be invited to one the most popular American TV variety shows: The Ed Sullivan Show.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, in Italy the best-selling record that year was, again, an American song, a twist style tune with a splendid saxophone accompaniment, *Diana*, performed by the baby-faced teenage idol Paul Anka.<sup>25</sup> The lyrics were quite audacious for the time: 'I'm so young and you're so old this, my darling I've been told / I don't care just what they say 'cause forever I will pray/ you and I will be as free as the birds up in the trees/ oh, please, stay by me, Diana.' The song would be reinterpreted by Adriano Celentano, featuring Paul Anka himself, in 2006 and the lyrics re-written by Mogol, with terrible results. Besides white rock and roll, the other American genre which seems to gain success in the Italian hit parades of the late 1950s is white doo-wop à la The Diamonds and The Fraternity Brothers. There is, on the other hand, a rare presence of black rhythm and blues artists such as Chuck Berry or Little Richard, who – when present – usually ended up at the bottom of the charts. This phenomenon could be interpreted in countless ways, and so far a valid study on it has not been made. A possible interpretation could take into account the tradition of the Italian mainstream musical background, founded on a way of singing which is far from the raw power of Afro-American rock and roll. Very often songs originally recorded by black artists were covered by white artists who smoothed the edges of their vitality. This is the case of Pat Boone, for example, who re-sung Little Richard or Fats Domino. Usually these covers were those that appeared in the Italian charts. In addition, soul artists like Sam Cooke or James Brown do not seem to be present and, apart from Harry Belafonte, the only black act who earned a prominent position is The Platters, whose ballad 'Only You' would be the best selling single of 1957.<sup>26</sup>

From 1957 onwards, the appearance of American white rock and roll and 'urlatori' in the hit parades could represent, according to Gianni Borgna, 'lo specchio di un paese che, gradualmente ma rapidamente, usciva dagli orizzonti angusti del provincialismo e del ruralismo.'<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, taking a brief look at same hit parades we can still see a significant presence of Italian music, and the first thing which captures our attention is the massive success of Neapolitan style songs, it is enough to see how often names such as

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Italo-American jargon, a blend of dialects from the more prominent Italo-American communities (siciliano, napoletano and so on) and English. An example above all is Lou Monte's *Twist Italiano* (1962) which goes like this: 'ehi paesano twist italiano/ ehi calabrese twist like a crazy(e) / around around like a pizza pie gira e gira you and I' and so on.

<sup>24</sup> 'Con "Nel blu dipinto di blu", Modugno riscosse un clamoroso successo internazionale, (dove è più nota come "Volare") [...] rimase per 13 settimane al primo posto delle classifiche statunitensi (ed all'epoca, l'unica canzone che nel mondo aveva venduto più dei ventidue milioni di dischi della canzone di Modugno era "White Christmas" di Bing Crosby).' [http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/schede/n/nel\\_blu\\_dipinto\\_di\\_blu.htm](http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/schede/n/nel_blu_dipinto_di_blu.htm)

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed insight into the topic: [http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/indici/per\\_anno/hpy1957.htm](http://www.hitparadeitalia.it/indici/per_anno/hpy1957.htm).

<sup>26</sup> My source has been <http://www.hitparadeitalia.it>

<sup>27</sup> Gianni Borgna, *L'Italia di San Remo. Cinquant'anni di canzoni, cinquant'anni della nostra storia* (Milano: Mondadori, 1998) p.83.

Renato Carosone and Aurelio Fierro recur. In those years, in fact, Naples seems to play an important role in shaping Italy's identity, embodying the paradigm of a city which approached modernity in its own way, a place which lived continuously on the verge of a compromise between the necessary modernisation and its sometimes cumbersome past and life-style. In short, a stereotype corroborated by an incredible musical heritage and built on the characteristic mannerisms of its citizens that were perfectly embodied by the acting of actors such as Totò or Peppino De Filippo. Throughout the 1950s, the images of Naples, Rome and to a certain extent Florence presented in cinema and music became the stock images of the whole country, building the myth of the carefree and spontaneous Belpaese as experienced through postcards and tourism. A place in which the welcoming yet provincial manners of its population, rooted in a legendary past, married modernisation, often with clumsy results. In the collective narrative of the world, Italy became an innocuous country in its naive wildness, a ready-made artefact for tourists.<sup>28</sup> Or, alternatively, the place where an imaginative and more fictional than real high class experienced the *dolce vita*. In this respect, it is interesting how the journalist Aldo Cazzullo in his *L'Italia de noantri* opens a discussion on the South-centric image of Italy by writing about his youth in Piedmont. He recounts, for example, that pizza – another main ingredient of the jigsaw puzzle of the Italian identity – was very uncommon in the North at least up to the mid-1960s but, eventually, would end up being a symbol of the country tout court.<sup>29</sup>

Another recurrent factor in the hit parades before the arrival of rock and roll is the place occupied by songs in languages which are neither English nor Italian: often in Spanish or Portuguese/Brasilian. For instance: Flo Sandon's *El Negro Zumbon* (1953) – soundtrack of the film *Anna* (1951) starring an extremely sensual Silvana Mangano –, or '*O Cangaceiro* (*Mulher rendeira*) by Henry Leca (1954). These elements seem to suggest a desire and a quest for exoticism, which easily fitted with the need for evasion of the post war. Rome and Naples themselves, at least from the descriptions given by films and songs of the period, appeared like beautiful and exotic places in which tourists' souls could rejoice and where cupid lurked around every corner, ready to shoot his arrow.<sup>30</sup> As Renato Rascel

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<sup>28</sup> This way of stereotyping Italy has a very long history. Gabriele D'Annunzio would describe the country 'a museum, an inn, a holiday destination, a horizon touched up with Prussian blue for international honeymoons' in Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike. Gabriele D'Annunzio, Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013), p.48.

<sup>29</sup> Aldo Cazzullo, *L'Italia de noantri. Come siamo diventati tutti meridionali* (Milano: Mondadori, 2009), a well written book on the equation of Southern Italy as paradigm for the entire peninsula.

<sup>30</sup> Besides few exceptions, these songs circulated mainly in the Italian market, so it is presumable that the stereotypes were created by the Italians for the Italians.



sings in *Arrivederci Roma* (1955) 'T'invidio, turista che arrivi/ t'imbevi de fori e de scavi/ poi tutto d'un colpo te trovi Fontana de Trevi tutta pe' te!' and later on:

Stasera la vecchia fontana  
racconta alla solita luna  
la storia vicina e lontana  
di quella inglesina col  
naso all'insù.  
Io proprio qui l'ho incontrata  
e qui, proprio qui l'ho  
baciata. Lei qui con la  
voce smarrita m'ha  
detto: "E' finita,  
ritorno lassù!"<sup>31</sup>

The song would inspire also an American director, Roy Rowland, who in 1958 would shoot a film with the same title. If we briefly consider cinema, in fact, the 1950s witnessed a growing collaboration between the American media system and its European counterpart. According to Scarpellini and Schnapp, 'nessun settore della cultura italiano è stato tanto influenzato dal mondo americano come quello dei mass media,' and cinema in particular was placed at the core of this mediation. As far as cinema is concerned 'gli anni Cinquanta furono un periodo di interazione e collaborazione particolarmente intense tra l'Europa e Hollywood,' Italy included.<sup>32</sup> The results of this constant interaction can be seen in many 1950s American movies filmed in Italy which often employed a crew composed of Italian and American people. Besides the economic benefits, that collaboration was also very useful in helping to set up a new image of the country. Very shortly, 'si capì che le star di stanza nella capitale italiana potevano essere impiegate, insieme alle bellezze della città contemporanea' to promote, for example, 'la Roma vissuta dal turista moderno, in particolare americano' a city where the cultural divide between the two peoples could be overcome 'sullo sfondo della Fontana di Trevi' or on the 'scalinata di piazza di Spagna'.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, thanks to a law aimed to protect Italian cinematography promulgated by Giulio Andreotti in 1949, many Hollywood producers and directors began to move to Italy to shoot films at Cinecittà studios.<sup>34</sup> In 1953, for example, William Wyler had shot a film

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<sup>31</sup> It is worth noticing the usage of the term 'inglesina,' which expresses a sort of patronizing and chauvinist attitude. This factor prevails in many of the 'canzonette' and it is also a common trait of American music of the time: a component of the 1950s society in general.

<sup>32</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *ItaliAmerica. Il mondo dei media* (Milano: Mondadori, 2012), p. 7-12.

<sup>33</sup> Scarpellini and Schnapp, *ItaliAmerica*, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> On the one hand, the law protected the national film industry against American competition, taxing imported films and imposing compulsory screening of Italian films for eighty days a year in every theatre. On the other hand, it reintroduced a strict pre-censorship, aimed to control the industry. Only the films that

which would become a classic and showed to the whole world the façade of modern Rome, *Roman Holiday* with a very young, talented and charming Audrey Hepburn.<sup>35</sup>

This brief digression wanted to outline the context in which Cantacronache took place. On the one hand – supported by pop culture, in its haste to heal the still sore wounds of war – Italy aimed to create a renewed image of wealth, exoticism and modernity, holding great appeal for foreign tourists flocking to the country's beaches and cities. On the other, the experiences of Cantacronache harshly bring us back to the cruel reality of the era, to a different country that was still poor and precarious. In the quest for modernity and freedom, we can also include rock and roll, which, for many scholars, was ideologically different from what Cantacronache wanted to pursue. In fact, as said by Marco Peroni: it was evident that rock and roll, for example 'venisse caricato dai giovani italiani di una fortissima valenza simbolica' channelling 'le nuove ansie di libertà' and embracing 'un'idea di modernità assai diversa da quella rivendicata dalle canzoni dei primi cantautori.'<sup>36</sup> The aims and the structural elements of the two music forms are dissimilar, one based on the importance of words, the other on the pounding rhythm of music. In Cantacronache the quest for freedom of the 'urlatori' gives way to another kind of sensibility aimed at singing the problems of reality in a more controlled way and their arrival symbolised a breakthrough in the Italian music scene. They are modern in their way, opening up to an analysis of society made in a different manner. As 1957 welcomed a proliferation of American music in the charts, it also welcomed the birth of Cantacronache, although we do not find their names in the hit parade. As Michele Straniero recalled: 'era l'estate del 1957. Liberovici era andato a Berlino con Pestalozza e Sergio Segre. Avevano visto al lavoro i Berliner Ensemble. Ci chiedemmo: perché non tentare di lanciare canzoni politiche anche noi?' The first attempts were submitted to the PCI: 'Piacquero. Così il Pci mise a disposizione una casa editrice, Italia Canta.'<sup>37</sup> As Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni point out Cantacronache had 'infatti scelto come interlocutore privilegiato il PCI [...] sperando di potere in tal modo usufruire di una rete commerciale e di una promozione

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'followed the neo-realist style in a manner "suitable... to the best interests of Italy"' were granted production loans. In <http://www.greencine.com/static/primers/neorealism2.jsp>. On Italian cinema of the 1940s and 1950s: Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano. Dal 1945 agli anni ottanta* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1982); Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>35</sup> On Italian cinema of the 1950s, Gian Piero Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano vol.2. Dal 1945 ai giorni nostri* (Bari: Laterza, 2004); Pierre Sorlin, *Gli italiani al cinema. Immaginario ed identità di una nazione* (Matova: Trelune, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Here Marco Peroni refers to people like Luigi Tenco, Fabrizio De Andrè, Cantacronache, Cantacronache and so on, in Marco Peroni, *Il nostro concerto. La storia contemporanea tra musica leggera e canzone popolare* (Milano: Mondadori, 2005) p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Mario Luzzato Fegiz, *Il Sessessantotto. Il ritmo della contestazione* in *Corriere della sera* (5 February 1998), p. 31. The label which produced them, Italia Canta – CEDI from 1966 onwards – was founded in Turin in 1956. On the Italian record industry see: Mario De Luigi, *Storia dell'industria fonografica in Italia*.

pubblicitaria.<sup>38</sup> In 1957 Straniero was only 21 years old, but he already had a considerable experience working in the newly-born RAI TV, with the future cream of Turin intellectuals, Umberto Eco, Furio Colombo and Gianni Vattimo, for example. Straniero came from a catholic milieu and studied in a catholic school run by the Salesians. After a short period in Azione Cattolica he decided to embrace a Catholicism which was inspired by the experience of ‘prêtres ouvriers’ and the philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier.<sup>39</sup> Cantacronache was founded with the collaboration of Sergio Liberovici, Emilio Jona, Fausto Amodei, Giorgio De Maria, Margot Galante Garrone and Mario Pogliotti. The movement was composed of musicians and intellectuals and its aim was clear. As Straniero would recount: ‘La prima idea di Cantacronache ci venne in mente perché eravamo sinceramente stupefatti e delusi dalla pessima qualità delle canzonette presentate al festival di San Remo, della ripetitività dei loro testi (le rime amore/cuore) e dalla banalità delle loro musiche.’<sup>40</sup> This purpose was accomplished through a marked attention given to the writing and, although they did not reject writing about love or emotions, their lyrics dealt with these topics without idealisation. Despite their closeness to the PCI, the songs tended to avoid any type of formal activism, even when, in some of the lyrics, references to socialist values are present. In Cantacronache, in fact, heterodox left wing political orientations lived together: anarchy, unorthodox communism, Catholic inspired socialism and so on. As Margot Galante Garrone affirms, when interviewed in January 2015: ‘Alcuni di noi, non legati al PCI di allora, erano dichiaratamente anarchici. Io lo sono tuttora.’<sup>41</sup> As we will see shortly, there are other elements which pervade their corpus of songs. Among those, a strong sense of irony in singing the neurosis of the modern world, a compassionate, never patronising, but often bitter look on the vicissitudes of the lower classes and of the misfortunate, an anti-militaristic and nonviolent position, and a mixture of language in which low and high registers coexist. In singing new Italians’ vices and obsessions, the songwriters often make use of the first – or third – person singular, adding vigour and credibility to the description created. When the first person is used, she/he

<sup>38</sup> Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni, *L’orda d’oro 1968-1977*, p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> Worker-priests were priests who decided to live only by full-time work in factories or other work places. More in Gregor Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society. A Survey of the Worker-Priest Movement and its Implications for the Christian mission* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964)

<sup>40</sup> G. Straniero and M. Barletta, *La rivolta in musica*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Margot Galante Garrone (25 January 2015). In the same interview, to my question ‘Dando una personalissima interpretazione ai vostri testi, se si può parlare di atteggiamento politico, mi sembra che la vostra “linea” sia più vicina all’eredità di esperienze quali Giustizia e libertà / Partito d’Azione che al dogmatismo di una parte della sinistra di quegli anni. E’ una interpretazione sbagliata?’ Margot replies ‘E’ un’interpretazione “giusta”. Io ero figlia di un partigiano di Giustizia e Libertà, quindi per me era naturale attingere a quell’esperienza che mi era stata inculcata fin dalla nascita. Liberovici era in qualche modo (ma anche criticamente) legato al PCI, se non altro perché firmava sull’Unità di allora, come vice di Massimo Mila, le recensioni musicali torinesi e non. Non era ammissibile non essere neanche lontanamente “di sinistra.” (25 January 2015).

becomes the character of whom she/he sings the adventures. Among the protagonists, we find a plethora of disguises which includes the tragicomic consumer of *Ero un consumatore* or the censorship obsessed public figure of *Il censore*. This sub-repertoire could be ascribed to Fausto Amodei's compositions. However, in some specific songs, the first person plural is used and usually these songs deal with peace and similar topics. In some other songs, instead, the second person singular is used, in order to create a contact with the listener. A further element of their repertoire is the unforgiving iconoclasm, which characterizes their songs against power and profiteers. They aimed at spurring their audience to a reflection about society by using a language far from any compromise with triviality.

Cantacronache belonged to Turin highest cultural elite, being part of that environment which ideally united the publisher Einaudi to the Communist Party. Therefore, it is not by chance, as said, that other intellectuals close to Einaudi and PCI, Fortini and Calvino for example, wrote material for Cantacronache. Clearly, the working class of whom they sung was far from the song-writers' milieu who, instead, had knowledge of its institutional ceremonies, especially as far as *Feste de l'Unità* or events at *Casa del popolo* were concerned. As Fausto Amodei affirms in 2010: 'All'inizio, le esibizioni le facevamo nei salotti bene di sinistra di Torino, ci avevano mandato addirittura a Roma per uno spettacolo. Poi prendemmo l'indirizzo di andare a cantare ai festival dell'Unità o nelle case del popolo.'<sup>42</sup> Margot Galante Garrone similarly states: 'Il nostro pubblico era formato da intellettuali e da operai. Da chi capiva magari i riferimenti letterari o musicali (a volte un po' criptici) espressi nelle nostre canzoni, e da chi nelle nostre canzoni sentiva accendersi la ribellione al conformismo imperante dell'epoca. Non moltissimi i giovani. Cantavamo nelle piazze, nelle sezioni di partito.'<sup>43</sup> Being from a higher class could have led to a more ideological or maybe populist description of the proletariat. However, Cantacronache was able to portray the lives of the common worker with a bittersweet sympathetic touch, succeeding in putting ideologies aside, and creating a very sober repertoire. Despite their young age (they were all in their twenties, the same generation of Celentano and Mina), in their songs the reference to youth culture seldom appears. It is inferable that the teenage market was scarcely relevant for Cantacronache and, strangely, as in the fascist hymns seen in an earlier section, young people appear only when war is mentioned. The only time this happens is in their micro-corpus which deals with the legacy of the Resistance, we will see this later.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview in Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962*.

<sup>43</sup> Intervista a Margot, 20 January 2015.

Cantacronache was active from 1957 to 1963 and recorded a number of EPs for Italia Canta. In 1971, a record label called Albatros grouped their whole production in four LPs. Along with writing original material, some members of Cantacronache conducted, in Italy and abroad, extensive research into the tradition of political and protest songs. In July 1961, Straniero, together with Margot Galante Garrone, Sergio Liberovici and other intellectuals, went to Spain to gather a compendium of songs which would lead to the recording of *Canti della Resistenza in Spagna* and for this recording they would be eventually legally prosecuted.<sup>44</sup> In 1962 Liberovici and Straniero would eventually release a book called *I Canti della nuova Resistenza spagnola 1939-1961*.<sup>45</sup> From an ethnological perspective, their efforts were aligned with what Italo Calvino was doing just few years before, collecting folk tales and fables from many regions of Italy.<sup>46</sup> Calvino and Cantacronache were indeed very close and the author also wrote some lyrics for them, among which *Dove vola l'avvoltoio* and *Oltre il ponte*. And in regard to fables they also recorded three *Cantafavole* with lyrics by Calvino, Rodari, Fortini, Jona. Their production is broad and it encompasses various experiments and projects, but a unique one which is worth mentioning is a record of nineteenth century Hungarian songs dedicated to Giuseppe Garibaldi called *Viva Garibaldi*.

#### 4.3 *Between Peace, Antimilitarism and the Resistance*

On 1st May 1958, during a CGIL demonstration in Turin, songs from Cantacronache were aired publicly for the first time: they were *Viva la pace*, *Dove vola l'avvoltoio* and *La gelida manina*. The first two contain a call for peace which revolves around an anti-militaristic feeling present also in other lyrics of their corpus. Let us give an insight into this topic. *Dove vola l'avvoltoio* was composed by Italo Calvino and Sergio Liberovici and sung and recorded by Pietro Buttarelli. It is a seminal piece of music and probably one of the first Italian pacifist songs to be recorded. In fact, it is not by chance that in 1961 it would be used as the soundtrack for a short film that documented the peace walk Perugia to Assisi organised by Aldo Capitini.<sup>47</sup> Its structure is simple and it follows the paradigm

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<sup>44</sup> Gli autori e l'editore (Einaudi) vennero accusati di vilipendio di Capo di Stato estero (si menzionava la figura di Franco, definito come cabron) e per oscenità. Per questo andò incontro a censura, provocando una lunga serie di dibattiti, ma soprattutto di scontri anche violenti che avvennero durante i giorni del processo che si tenne a Torino.' In Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962*.

<sup>45</sup> Sergio Liberovici and Michele L. Straniero, *I Canti della nuova Resistenza spagnola 1939-1961* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962). They conducted investigations also into the songs and music of the Algerian revolution.

<sup>46</sup> Italo Calvino, *Fiabe italiane* (Torino: Einaudi, 1956).

<sup>47</sup> The first Perugia-Assisi peace march was organized by the Italian philosopher Aldo Capitini which would found the Movimento Nonviolento shortly after.

of the forma-canzone (strophe-refrain). It is introduced by a “recitative”: ‘Un giorno nel mondo finita fu l'ultima guerra / il cupo cannone si tacque e più non sparò / e privo del tristo suo cibo dall'arida terra / un branco di neri avvoltoi si levò.’ The register of the language is clearly high and solemn, and the metaphor of the black vultures works well in describing the ‘master of wars’, as Bob Dylan would name them a few years later. Musically, it is centred on a series of simple chords played by a piano which succeeds in creating an interesting progression and a remarkable background for Buttarelli’s voice. The piano is inspired by Kurt Weil’s style, but it is included in a well-crafted pop structure. The refrain is underlined by a chorus of male voices. From a comparative point of view, the initial strophe is very interesting:

L'avvoltorio andò dal fiume  
ed il fiume disse: "No!  
avvoltoio vola via, avvoltoio vola via.  
Nella limpida corrente  
ora scendon carpe e trote  
non più i corpi dei soldati  
che la fanno insanguinar

The same image, in fact, could be identified in one of the early songs written by Fabrizio De André in 1964, *La Guerra di Piero*.

lungo le sponde del mio torrente  
voglio che scendano i lucci argentati  
non più i cadaveri dei soldati  
portati in braccio dalla corrente

This comparison is useful to show how Cantacronache was an inspiration for the songwriters who would come after and, although De André differs in terms of style and genre, it is not rare to recognise their influence in parts of his repertoire. And moreover, it is also well known that Luigi Tenco, another cantautore of the so called ‘Genoa school’ was deeply influenced by Cantacronache.<sup>48</sup> It is worth noticing that the first two lines of the fourth verse are intentionally ungrammatical and rely on a poetic licence in order to match the words to the music. In fact: ‘L'avvoltoio andò ai tedeschi/ e i tedeschi disse: "No!"’ The subject is plural but the verb is third-person singular.

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<sup>48</sup> Another song by De André with an anti-militaristic flavour which was probably inspired by the effort of Cantacronache is *La ballata dell'eroe*. It was written in 1961 and reinterpreted by Luigi Tenco in 1962 when the artist starred as a conscientious objector in Luciano Salce’s film *La cuccagna*. In those years, conscientious objection was still illegal and people such as Pietro Pinna, co-founder of the Italian nonviolent movement with Aldo Capitini, had been involved since the late 1940s in a resilient campaign to oppose military service.

In *Viva la pace*, the arms race is described through the lens of irony which is directed towards the hypocrisy of heads of state and their values. In the lyrics, a colloquial register is accompanied by a higher one, in fact, the ‘capi venerabili /circondati di notabili e di spie, che discorrono con grosse espressioni, chiose, glosse, omelie’ are defined as ‘teste di cemento’ who believe that ‘se la pace vuoi godere/ tante bombe devi avere nel cassetto.’

As far as the absurdity of war is concerned, there is a subsequent song that deals with this through the use of a bitter and subtle wit. *La ballata del soldato Adeodato* (1960) composed by Sergio Liberovici with lyrics written by Michele Straniero. As Fausto Amodei would explain, the song is ‘una fiaba antimilitarista, un apologo classico di un povero diavolo, capitato senza volerlo in un mondo di conformismi religiosi e di pseudo valori patriottici ed autoritari, con l’unica modesta ambizione di vedere le stelle, il quale, spedito al fronte, impara a sparare e finisce ucciso, senza poter vedere le stelle quell’ultima notte.’<sup>49</sup> The song is performed by Edmonda Aldini and its arrangement is particularly refined, thanks also to a trombone and a drum which serve to make the material sound like an encounter between a military and funeral march to which a piano is added. The verses, in which the military life of the protagonist is described, revolves on a progression of minor chords inspired, again, by Kurt Weill. The chorus instead opens towards a melodic solution sweetened by Aldini’s voice in a major key to which a piano is added. The adventures of Adeodato who ‘era nato sfortunato, di famiglia contadina: dalla madre, una beghina fu educato’ recalls the description given elsewhere by Amodei of Elia, in the song *Il povero Elia* (1959). The latter recounts the story of an unlucky man ‘un campione di nulla tenente /all’anagrafe sanno chi sia ma del resto nessuno sa niente /fin dal giorno che al mondo egli venne /non si sa che mammella succhiò /il suo padre era un certo N.N.’ In its lyrics, the coexistence of high and low registers is present more than ever, especially in depicting sexual impulses which seem to be totally missing in Elia’s life:

anche al settimo comandamento  
si tramanda che non trasgredi  
E le donne, persin le puttane,  
che di solito son generose  
si curavan men che di un cane  
delle sue prestazioni amorose

The sexual ‘incompetence’ of Elia is the product of his useless and unfortunate life and the lyrics are soaked in a bitter cynicism. The gaze of Amodei is pitiless. Elia comes out as a

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<sup>49</sup> [http://www.gliargomentumani.com/012/doc/04\\_amodei.htm](http://www.gliargomentumani.com/012/doc/04_amodei.htm).

completely inept human being who, at the end of the song, is sent to war. Also in this situation he fails and he is accused of desertion.

a nessuno potè far del male  
Perché di diserzione accusato  
lo spedirono in corte marziale  
Quando uscì per la fucilazione  
- Così almeno la storia ci dice -  
solo un tale da dentro il plotone  
gli sorrise con aria infelice [...]  
ed adesso ch'è ben sotterrato  
non avrà da temere l'inferno  
non aveva mai fatto peccato  
lo terrà ben con sé il Padreterno

The reference to 'diserzione' could easily be an echo of Boris Vian's *Le déserteur* (1954). Although laced with irony, the last verse casts a light of benevolent compassion over the misfortunes of the protagonist, and this is an element that we can identify in many other songs by Cantacronache. The arrangement relies only on a guitar and Amodei's voice that progresses at a fast pace. It is an example of Amodei's style, in which the guitar enriches the singing with a succession of chords and arpeggios.

Antimilitarism is also present in *Raffaele*, written in 1958 by Dario Baraldi who was, apparently, 'un oscuro impiegato dell'Olivetti il cui testo venne preferito a i testi letterari di ben più insigni personaggi, come Giovanni Arpino, Franco Parenti, Folco Portinari o Ignazio Buttitta'.<sup>50</sup> The lyrics are concise in explaining the question that Raffaele, a young Mexican rebel who embraces the revolution, puts to his mother 'Mamma: dimmi è proprio male impiccare un generale uno solo a testa in giù /poi non chiederei di più.' The question is left unanswered until the last part of the song, in which Raffaele ends up hung upside-down on a plum tree, executed by a general: 'Fu così che il ribelle Raffale fu giustiziato/ e con l'ultimo suo fiato sospirò verso le stelle/ ora so che non è male impiccare un generale/ impiccarlo a testa in giù ma non posso farlo più.' The 'testa in giù' could be a clear reference to Mussolini's execution. The music was composed by Fausto Amodei and it is both fresh and compelling. *Raffaele*, in fact, sounds like a rock and roll tune played by an acoustic guitar with a South-American twist, stressed by Amodei's pronunciation of the word 'mamma' before the refrain. It seems likely that Amodei was influenced by pop music of the time or he was, at least, aware of what was going on outside his 'elite.' In fact,

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<sup>50</sup> Emilio Jona and Michele Straniero, *Cantacronache. Un'avventura politico-musicale degli anni Cinquanta* (Torino: Paravia, 1995), p. 89



the stripped-down sequence of chords played swiftly has almost a similar vigour to a rock and roll song.

Along with *Raffaele*, also the *Ballata dei dittatori* (1963) is very explicit in its antimilitarism, which here becomes verbal violence. Like *Raffaele*, the lyrics do not deal with antimilitarism in a peaceful way. In five almost cruel quatrains, Amodei gives vent to a verbal fury that almost leaves an aftertaste bordering on gory. However, the harshness of his word is confined to the fixed structure of the ballad. In the lyrics the anger broadens out, reaching a bigger target and so hitting the dictators who become a symbol of the world's injustices. For example the dictator's corpse, that is defined as 'carogna' (carrion), 'è cosa certa, la lasceranno all'aria aperta, e il suo valore andrà stimato meno di un bue scannato.' Finally the day will come and 'tutti gli oppressi di 'sto mondo, un dì faranno un girotondo/ e suoneran tamburi e trombe sopra le vostre(the dictators') tombe.' Here, antimilitarism is far from the allegories of *Dove vola l'avvoltoio*, and it is not a cry for peace as much as a call to action. In fact, the dictators 'faran la parte, prima o dopo, /non più del gatto, ma del topo, /con una corda al collo stretta, come una marionetta.' Musically, the beating of the drum, the penny-whistle and trumpet give a warlike flavour to the ballad, not dissimilar from the *Ballata del soldato Adeodato*. The musical arrangement is a clear reference to the Medieval ballad genre which seems to influence part of Cantacronache's repertoire.

In a different way, antimilitarism is present, to a certain extent, in *Oltre il ponte* (1959). In the song the experience of the Resistance is narrated through the eyes of a then young Italo Calvino, who is the author of the lyrics: 'O ragazza dalle guance di pesca /o ragazza dalle guance d'aurora /io spero che a narrarti riesca la mia vita all'età che tu hai ora.'<sup>51</sup> The liberation and the fight against the occupiers bring a state of happiness 'La speranza era nostra compagna /a assaltar caposaldi nemici /conquistandoci l'armi in battaglia scalzi e laceri eppure felici.'<sup>52</sup> It is interesting how this is one of the rare cases in which we find a reference to the condition of being young, 'Avevamo vent'anni e oltre il ponte /oltre il ponte ch'è in mano nemica /vedevam l'altra riva, la vita /tutto il bene del mondo oltre il ponte.' The war against the invaders is described as a necessary evil, a determinative passage, almost an initiation to adulthood. For Calvino and his comrades, the blooming of love coincided with the liberated city, across the bridge, the only action that could lead to a burst of new life.<sup>53</sup> The musical texture is very interesting. A piano characterises the whole

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<sup>51</sup> In order to get a better idea of Calvino's relationship with the resistance: Italo Calvino, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (Milano: Mondadori, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> An insightful investigation on Calvino songwriter has not appeared yet, however some news could be found in *Italo Calvino. Cantautore indie pop* in <http://lettura.corriere.it/italo-calvino-cantautore-indie-pop/>.

<sup>53</sup> The trope of the partisan who passes on his patrimony to the youth would be recurrent throughout the late 1950s. The partisans were often invited to conferences and debates in order to recount their experiences of

song and the progression between the major and minor tonality underlines the shifts between the recounting of the memory to the young girl and the identification of the singer with the tale he is narrating. The Resistance recurs in other songs too, for example in *Il partigiano sconosciuto* (1959) which sets a poem written by an anonymous author shortly after the liberation of Modena to music. Or, more interestingly, in *Partigiani fratelli maggiori* (1959) written by Straniero, in which the Resistance is considered a genuine quest for freedom and a formative experience for the past generation that young people should always relate to, a model which must be taken up by the younger ones. The song draws a comparison between the reality of the partisan war and the empty and formal celebrative rituals of institutions: ‘se cerchiamo sui libri di storia, se cerchiamo tra i grossi discorsi fatti d'aria / non troviamo la vostra memoria. Ma se invece spiamo sui volti dei fratelli, sui tratti sconvolti dell'Italia / riviviamo quegli anni trascorsi.’ As stated in the lyrics, the late 1950s youth, too young to fight with the partisans, must be the keeper and the bearer of that legacy. In fact: ‘Noi sapemmo di favole strane, noi ragazzi, e di guerre lontane per l'Italia, noi fratelli minori inesperti. / Una voce nell'ora dei morti ci ha chiamati alle vostre bandiere con l'Italia a vegliare la fiamma sui monti; / ma se un giorno tornasse quell'ora, per i morti che avete lasciato sulla montagna, partigiani, chiamateci ancora!’ This reference to the dead partisans, who here are not distant martyrs, as in the institutional celebration, but older brothers returns in one of their most popular songs *Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*, as we will see later. Musically, *Partigiani* is very complex and it is based on an unusual progression of chords which follows the singer's voice. Here, again, the composition is a fine example of Amodei's style which is clearly inspired by George Brassens.

The dream of peace, equality and freedom for everyone, instead, characterizes the last song we will examine in this section, a refined composition written by Fausto Amodei. *Il giorno dell'uguaglianza* (1963) is a beautifully crafted reflection on the experience of human beings. It is a song about us, living together, hopefully, with honesty and without judgement.

Ciascuno, tutt'a un tratto,  
sarà così capace  
di dirsi soddisfatto  
e vivere in pace.  
Sapremo tutti, da quella

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war and, therefore, keep the memory alive. These events would slowly lessen in the mid-1960s, especially as far as the PCI is concerned whose rituals and range of events often, though not overtly, clashed with the needs of the ANPI (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia).

mattina in avanti,  
e penseremo lo stesso  
di noi e di tutti,  
d'essere, in fondo, degli ottimi  
stinchi di santi,  
e, nello stesso momento,  
dei bei farabutti

It is a heartfelt call for a better world in which ‘faremo un girotondo / per le piazze del mondo, tenendoci per mano,’ a place where all the people would live their lives in peace, as John Lennon would put it. This is a very different image to the ‘girotondo’ over the dictators’ tomb. Apart from the lyrics, what strikes the listener is its sophisticated but catchy jazz arrangement, which recalls both the *chanson française* (the progression of the guitar and accordion) and the jazzy soundtrack to a noir film. This demonstrates once more that Cantacronache were drawing on a wide spectrum of the popular music tendencies of their epoch. It is now time to study other themes developed by Cantacronache: love, everyday life, stereotypes and characteristics of the modern society.

#### 4.4 *Love and Everyday Life*

In this section we will examine the way Cantacronache approached everyday situations such as love or day-to-day living. As far as these topics are concerned, we can see that their attitude is pervaded by a dry realism, far from the standards of Italian pop music of the time. As said above, they do not reject writing about love but in dealing with it they often emphasize the transience of the relationship, focusing on more complex facets: the impossibility of fulfilling love or the boredom of routine encounters. This is a feature of modernity in which the narration investigates the inner life and the relationship with the external world of the protagonists. Scholars who, often, have decided to focus on their political activism have overlooked this corpus of compositions. For our research instead, it is a very interesting strand as it is a marriage of social observation, social critique and situational humour.

An example is *Tutti gli amori* (1958) written by Franco Fortini and sung by Michele Straniero. The initial stress on the briefness of a romantic partnership ‘Io non avrei creduto mai che un giorno t'avrei vista senza gioia/ Tu non avresti mai creduto che un giorno avrei vissuto senza te’ gives way to a broader discourse on the impermanence of love applied to other contexts, drawing attention to the deep inevitability of failure:

Tutti gli amori cominciano bene:  
l'amore di una donna,  
l'amore di un lavoro,  
e anche l'amore per la libertà.  
Spesso gli amori finiscono male:  
la donna resta sola  
lavoro è servitù,  
la libertà diventa una parola...

In these lines Fortini focuses on the routine of the lived experience, which always brings the human being to a point of discontent, leading him to a sort of emptiness which often returns in Cantacronache's repertoire and appears as one of the main traits of the modern era. If seen from a historical perspective, this discourse on the sense of failure here carries echoes of existentialism and, as with other things in life, love turns into routine and ends up being taken for granted. The sense of disillusion follows an inward-outward trajectory. The loss also characterises situations that are more general, it is present in the work routine, which becomes servitude, and freedom that turns into a mere word. However, the feeling of defeat expressed above has its corollary in the acceptance of failures, and includes a broader perspective, which considers the cyclic nature of life:

Ma non si perde più  
quel che è stato vero  
un anno un giorno:  
altri nel mondo si vorranno bene,  
altri lavoreranno senza pene,  
altri vivranno in libertà

In these lines we can identify an approach to the matters of existence that resonates with principles which could have been influenced by Oriental doctrines: for example, the precepts of acceptance, the recognition of the cyclical nature of living and the consciousness of the impermanence of things that are at the very core of Buddhism. It is known, in fact, that Fortini was aware of those traditions, and, for example, in *Nuovi saggi Italiani* he describes some poetry by Vittorio Sereni from an almost Buddhist perspective: 'una delle ultime poesie di *Strumenti* ('una sera d'estate è una sera d'estate) va, mi pare, letta secondo modi buddisti e zen, già ben presenti in Saba (Debenedetti ne parlò) e ricomparsi fra noi sul finire degli anni Cinquanta.'<sup>54</sup>

Fortini's discourse on the fluctuating nature of life also embraces a critical take on the mutable state of political affairs, which is aligned with the effort of Cantacronache and

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<sup>54</sup> Franco Fortini, *Saggi italiani. Nuovi saggi italiani, Volume 2* (Milano: Garzanti, 1987) p. 207.

becomes the focus of the song: ‘Io non avrei creduto mai di rivedere il popolo ingannato. / Tu non avresti mai creduto che chi ci sfrutta insegni la virtù.’ However, inequalities and injustices as well are brought back into a broader frame and they will be redeemed one day, becoming part of the endless cycle of reality, in fact: ‘Ma ricomincia qui, quel che è stato vero un nostro giorno. / Tanti nel mondo già si voglion bene, tanti lavoran già senza più pene, tanti già ridon nella libertà.’

Musically, the structure of the song is minimalistic, and the material is based on the sound of an acoustic guitar to which, at some point and just for a short phrase, a mandolin is added. Both the arrangement – which is very refined although bare – and Straniero’s singing are clearly inspired by George Brassens. It is known that the French chansonnier played a pivotal role in stimulating the first wave of Italian songwriters. As the ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella states: ‘il realismo [...] di quegli anni è stato soprattutto un realismo urbano. [...] Questa delimitazione urbana c’è anche nei Cantacronache, piemontesi: non a caso Brassens, la sua curva melodica, la sua monotonia ritmica, il suo incedere nel fraseggio e nel timbro, sono stati il modello. Un cantante a portata di mano, dissacrante di qualsiasi musica maiuscola.’<sup>55</sup> Echoes of his songs can also be identified in the lyrics of another Cantacronache song: *Qualcosa da aspettare*. It was written and sung by Fausto Amodei in 1959 and it is a splendid portrayal of the urban assignations that take place at dusk, when the work is done: loves which are ‘sporchi ancora del sudore del lavoro appena smesso.’ Brassens’ influence over the track is explicit and pervades the lyrics, in fact the first strophe here below is an obvious reference to what Brassens had written in 1954 in *Les amoureux des bancs publics*: ‘Les amoureux qui se bécotent sur les bancs publics, [...] en se fouettant pas mal du regard oblique des passants honnêtes’.

Ogni sera, fra i rumori  
di serrande che si abbassano  
e gli scoppi dei motori  
delle macchine che passano,  
alla luce dei lampioni  
che si sono accesi appena,  
puoi assistere agli amori  
che si fan prima di cena...<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Cesare Bermani, *Una storia cantata 1962-1997: trentacinque anni di attività del Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano/Istituto Ernesto de Martino* (Milano: Jack, 1997), p.90.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Racconta Fausto Amodei che l’incontro con i futuri Cantacronache avvenne in modo abbastanza casuale. Era allora studente di architettura, strimpellava la chitarra, si interessava di musica e, soprattutto, amava profondamente (un amore di tutta la vita) George Brassens’ in <http://www.carnialibera1944.it/canti/cantacronache.html>.

Besides being a fine description of love in everyday life, *Qualcosa da aspettare* depicts the emptiness of a life that repeats itself over and over again. In this respect, the wait for a post-work, brief, love encounter becomes the only source of relief from the burden of repetition giving sense to the worker's life when he or she comes back in the evening. A melancholic, cold and industrial city is the perfect scenario for the autumnal spleen with which the song resonates and the protagonists are probably workers, as 'Sporchi ancora del sudore del lavoro appena smesso' suggests. The promise of seeing each other the following day seems to be 'la sola cosa che importa ed ha uno scopo: 'ci fa sembrare un po' meno noiosa la vita il giorno dopo...' The urban glumness is excellently described in these verses: 'Le domeniche che piove, guardi i vetri che si bagnano; /e la goccia che si muove, e le gocce che ristagnano/ quando il buio è poi venuto, nell'oscuro della stanza/ tu ti accorgi che hai perduto/ tutto un giorno di vacanza.' Amodei's lyrics create an image of loneliness and alienation, depicting a condition of boredom and desolation that symbolically encapsulate the black and white images of the post-war reconstruction. To extend this reflection to a different context, it is, for instance, possible to find the same descriptions in books and film about Britain of the late 1950s and those glimpses of life in the northern Italian cities could easily match the adventure of the young protagonist of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* by Allan Stillitoe for example.<sup>57</sup> The same tone resonates in the works of many Italian intellectuals and artists of the time too. In the same years, Michelangelo Antonioni would give birth to the trilogy of the incommunicability, filming: *L'avventura* (1960); *La notte* (1961) and *L'eclisse* (1962). Alberto Moravia, in 1960, would write a book with an emblematic title, *La noia*.<sup>58</sup> Another artist, Giorgio Gaber, who in the late 1950s had started playing rock and roll would, in 1963, write a song evoking the same melancholic atmosphere as *Qualcosa da aspettare*, appearing plausibly influenced by it. It is called *Le nostre serate* and it deals with a love partnership which has become repetitive and worn-out: 'Io penso alle nostre serate stupide e vuote... /le nove e un quarto, due passi al centro, destinazione al solito bar, televisione.' In this case the promise of seeing each other is not 'la sola cosa che importa' but it is, instead, something that leads to boredom and frustration.<sup>59</sup> In *Qualcosa da aspettare* the musical arrangement revolves on

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<sup>57</sup> Allan Stillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008). It was turned into a film by Tony Richardson in 1960.

<sup>58</sup> Alberto Moravia, *La noia* (Roma: Bompiani, 2001).

<sup>59</sup> In 1963, *Le nostre serate* would become the theme song of a show hosted by Gaber called *Il canzoniere minimo*. The show aimed to be an 'Antologia di canzoni popolari e di curiosità musicali.' (<http://www.giorgiogaber.org/index.php?page=rstampa-vediart&codArt=193>). *L'Unità* described it: 'Finalmente arriva sui teleschermi [...] ma confinato sul Secondo canale, a un'ora impossibile, il "Canzoniere minimo" di Gaber e Simonetta, il programma che ha dato tanto fastidio ai censori di via del Babuino. Gaber e Simonetta si erano infatti proposti di presentare sul video alcune canzoni più

Amodei's guitar which, as usual, follows the singing alternating pizzicato chords to arpeggios used as transitions.

Another song which portrays the ritual of carnal encounters is called *Novembre Lombardo-Veneto (Quella cosa in Lombardia)*. Here the set is the suburb of a big city, on a cold Sunday during the years of the boom. The material is filled with the same hazy images of grey sombreness which characterized *Qualcosa da aspettare*. Written in 1959 for Cantacronache by Franco Fortini and set to music by Fiorenzo Carpi, it became popular in 1964 when Enzo Jannacci sang it. For one of the first times, in the Italian 'canzoniere' the reference to the sexual act is explicit, specifying that 'amore' is also sex, channelled in the lyrics by the more acceptable expression 'Caro, dove si andrà, diciamo così, a fare all'amore?':

Sia ben chiaro che non penso alla casetta  
due locali più i servizi, tante rate, pochi vizi,  
che verrà quando verrà...  
penso invece a questo nostro pomeriggio di domenica  
[...]  
"Caro, dove si andrà, diciamo così, a fare all'amore?  
Dico proprio quella cosa che tu sai,  
e che a te piace, credo, quanto a me."

Once more, Fortini is able to convey a representation of love, which is crepuscular and melancholic, set in the squalid environment of the city and its suburbs. It is carnal love, infused with the glumness of the late autumn:

Vanno a coppie, i nostri simili, quest'oggi  
per le scale, nell'odore di penosi alberghi a ore,  
ma chissà l'amore c'è,  
vedi "amore" anche la fretta tutta fibbie, lacci e brividi  
nella nebbia gelata, sull'erbetta;  
un occhio alla lambretta, l'orecchio a quei rintocchi  
che suonano dal borgo, la novena e una radio lontana  
che alle nostre due vite dà i risultati delle ultime partite...

The lines above are a portrait of Italy of the boom, which comes out through some symbolic objects, the Lambretta scooter, the "albergo ad ore" and the radio.

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representative della nostra recente storia, accompagnandole da inserti filmati e parti recitate. Ciò comportava, ovviamente, anche la presentazione di canzoni anticonformiste che alla TV non andavano a genio. Vedremo come la TV ha cucinato un programma che si preannunciava interessante.' Unsigned, *Controcanales* (5 October 1963), p. 7. The fact that Gaber could host a show in RAI – although in the late evening – denotes that the market, and the political direction, was finally ready to cautiously absorb new proposals and tendencies.

Simultaneously, the rural context is still present in the “rintocchi” of the steeple and in the ancient tradition of the devotional “novena.”

In *Quella cosa in Lombardia*, as in *Tutti gli amori*, love brings the human being to failure and to a condition of bitter-sweetness, the same emptiness, as described by Bob Dylan, ‘to which people ‘just could not relate.’<sup>60</sup> The world does not need the two lovers, and to love each other is often very difficult.

Lo sai bene che io non sogno,  
questo mondo di noi due non ha bisogno.  
Caro, dove si andrà, diciamo così, a fare all’amore?  
Se volere bene è sempre più difficile, amore mio,  
non dar la colpa a me

The transience of love, together with a disenchanted view of the world around, is a recurrent theme of Cantacronache and it is also emphasized by *Valzer della credulità* (1960), written and sung by Margot: ‘Tu credi sia facile volersi del bene?/ Unire le pene, quel poco di azzurro/ tu credi la gente benevola e mite?/ se brava ti dice se le va un sorriso...’

The same take on love would return in another tune, *Le nostre domande*. The lyrics were written by Franco Fortini in 1961 for Margot who would record it a few years later in her first solo album: ‘s’è fatto tardi e devo salutarti/ e non so più se mi vuoi bene o no.’ Besides the similarity of the theme, the melody of the two songs sounds very alike. The element which differentiates the two songs is the arrangement: *Valzer della credulità* can count on a sophisticated introductory guitar solo accompanied by piano arpeggios – material which soon flows into a dream-like waltz. *Le nostre domande* is more stripped-down and based only on the sound of a guitar, but not less efficient in conveying the feelings evoked by the lyrics, giving space to Margot whose voice vibrates with a moving and almost nostalgic fragility. In 1963 her first solo album was released, with an introductory text written by Italo Calvino on the sleeve. From this record onwards, Margot would focus on the description of everyday situations with poignancy about human vicissitudes. As Calvino writes: Margot succeeds in singing the life ‘degli interni casalinghi, delle finestre cittadine, delle stanze d'albergo, con tutta la sua sensibilità per l'insoddisfazione nascosta sotto le ore apparentemente più tranquille e contente e dei nostri tranquilli e contenti contemporanei.’<sup>61</sup> Let us look at one of the songs on the record called

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<sup>60</sup> Bob Dylan, *A Simple Twist of Fate* (1975).

<sup>61</sup> Margot defines her lyrics crepuscular: ‘testi “crepuscolari” che furono molto apprezzati da Calvino (e che uscirono in un LP con la sua presentazione)’ Intervista a Margot, 25 January 2015.



*Una domenica pomeriggio.* Here Margot is able to sketch perfectly the slowness of an idle urban Sunday, characterized, as in Amodei's *Qualcosa da aspettare*, by a cloudy and bittersweet tone. The lyrics are a glimpse of the early 1960s, on a comfortably quiet and rainy day. The narration passes through the eyes of the female partner who describes the reality of her domestic life by starting with a brief glimpse around her. Outside, 'Sul davanzale c'è una mosca morta' and the balcony is still wet. In pronouncing these words Margot is accompanied by a flute which gives a dreamy and lulling tone to the material but shortly a new element, the radio, is introduced and in fact: 'si è accesa la radio dell'alloggio vicino.' When these lines are sung the material changes, the music gets shaped in a sort of twist-style refrain that works almost as a diegetic device. In fact, together with Margot's voice we hear a male voice in the background singing words such as 'amore che tu sei...', as if the refrain itself was a canzonetta played by the next-door neighbours' appliance. The style of the arrangement in this passage clearly recalls 1950s/early 1960s pop music and, in this context, it creates a light discrepancy. It is a process similar to what, for example, led Michelangelo Antonioni to introduce fast-paced songs by Mina in his 'slow' films of the early 1960s.<sup>62</sup> The radio is switched on and the male partner went out to buy cigarettes, whistling his boredom out, but in the house everything is still: 'I piatti sporchi sono ancora da lavare, le stanze sono ancora da scopare.' Time goes slow and 'sul comodino la sveglia si è fermata, la tua giacca è ancora da smacchiare' and the clothes hung outside are wet. It seems that the rituals of modern society and its commodities, radio, smoking and so on, are not able to fill the void of boredom or the loneliness of existence. Even in a city, Sundays are always characterized by stillness and melancholy, drenched in aboulia.

Let us consider one more song about an intimate relationship, *Canzone triste*, written by Italo Calvino in 1958 for – again – Margot Galante Garrone, the music was composed by Sergio Liberovici. The lyrics draw inspiration from a short story, *L'avventura di due sposi*, written by Calvino in the same year and included in *Gli amori difficili*.<sup>63</sup> The song narrates a working class tale, very common in those years of industrialism. 'Erano sposi. Lei s'alzava all'alba prendeva il tram, correva al suo lavoro./ Lui aveva il turno che finisce all'alba entrava in letto e lei n'era già fuori.' The two workers have different and incompatible shifts: he would come back home when her time to go comes, Calvino is capable of depicting the miserable existence of a couple exhausted by the rhythm of the city and work. A simple but very evocative refrain takes us straight to the gloom of the

<sup>62</sup> An example is *Eclisse twist* (1962), written by Antonioni himself as soundtrack to his film *L'Eclisse*.

<sup>63</sup> Italo Calvino, *Gli amori difficili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1960).

industrial city, probably Turin: ‘soltanto un bacio in fretta posso darti, bere un caffè tenendoti per mano/ Il tuo cappotto è umido di nebbia. Il nostro letto serba il tuo tepor.’ The image is evocative and it is not difficult to imagine the two protagonists. The warmth left in bed by the spouse is the only trace of a love that cannot be fulfilled, strangled by the hectic rhythm of modern society. It is similar to the incompleteness that we have found in Fortini’s lyrics above. Helped by the fine voice of the singer, the sketch here represented is poignant in describing the life of the couple:

Dopo il lavoro lei faceva spesa  
-buio era già - le scale risaliva.  
Lui in cucina con la stufa accesa,  
fanno da cena e poi già lui partiva.

The last verse throws a gray shadow over the whole text giving birth to a striking fragment of working class life. The feeling of a diffuse unhappiness seems to spread around, reverberating in every worker’s eyes, as depicted in the last strophe: ‘Mattina e sera i tram degli operai portano gente dagli sguardi tetri; /fissar la nebbia non si stancan mai cercando invano il sol fuori dai vetri.’<sup>64</sup> The tram becomes another emblematic means used by the working class to come and go to work while the city is still cold and dark. The gloominess of the lyrics is counterbalanced by the music which is constructed, instead, on a gentle guitar melody, accompanied by an accordion à la française in the refrain. The coloured cheerfulness of the years to come, the 1960s, appears still very far from here.

Another song written and sung by Fausto Amodei in 1959, entitled *Il giuramento* belongs to an ideal cluster of tunes written and interpreted by Amodei which have irony as key ingredient. On this occasion, love and the solemn nuptial vow is, in the first place, a means of satirising the hollowness of the pompous oaths taken in front of any kind of authority or institution and the absurdity of humans’ rituals.

si fa presto ad esclamare “lo giuro”,  
e a promettere sul proprio onore  
petto in fuori e lo sguardo sicuro  
e una mano poggiata sul cuore  
poi magari la donna alla quale hai promesso un amore esclusivo  
ti fa becco ed allor bene o male sei costretto a cambiar preventivo

In the second set of verses:

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<sup>64</sup> *Canzone triste*, 1958.

si fa presto a giurare davanti ai ministri e alle autorità  
[...]  
quando dopo ministri e governi si trasformano ahimè in dittatori  
puoi star certo che il Padre eterno ti permette di sbatterli fuori

The last two lines here reported are very similar to what expressed by Fortini in *Tutti gli amori*. In *Il giuramento*, the attention is focused on the weaknesses of human beings who take solemn oath of fidelity and loyalty but are easily tempted by infidelity and, as far as politics is concerned, power. In the song it is possible to identify some elements that recur in Cantacronache's repertoire, for example a reference to God (Padre eterno) which we find in other tunes, as we will see. While, in other lyrics, the eternal father is depicted as a benevolent and compassionate figure, in this case, although still benign, he seems completely distant from the ceremonial and stupidity of human beings, in fact: 'ma spesso al Padre eterno che è molto previdente/ di certi giuramenti non gliene frega niente [...]' In quanto al Padre eterno che è in fondo un bravo amico/ di certi giuramenti non gliene importa un fico' because 'chi ti fa giurare lo fa per star sicuro quando ti vuol fregar.' As far as the music form is concerned, *Il giuramento* is a simple waltz based only on Amodei's voice and his guitar.

In other occasions, the discourse about love is imbued with utter carefreeness, and almost resounds with a fairy-tale imagery, an example is *La cantata della donna nubile* (1957) in which a unmarried woman asks the moon what type of man she will marry. Written by Emilio Jona and Sergio Liberovici, it relies on an arrangement based on a piano, cymbals and horns, which play the main role, setting the tone of the sound. The song could be defined as a sort of swing-style lullaby and it is splendidly sung by Edmonda Aldini, who is able to craft a cheerful, dreamy and sometimes very sensual texture. The horns and the piano follow the lyrics in underlining the type of man the lyrics suggest: a heavier and almost martial sound when the athlete is described or a sensual arpeggio of the piano when the actor 'alto e passionale, tenero e pur sensuale nei giuochi dell'amore' comes onto the scene.

The last song about love here considered is Fausto Amodei's *Canzone della mia chitarra* (1963) in which the author expresses a different kind of unconditional love, that for his guitar

Ho trovato la vera amica mia  
che quando mi si chiude l'uscio in faccia  
Resta a lungo a farmi compagnia  
e fa l'amore qui tra le mie braccia

E quando l'altra gente a me vicina  
Non posso amarla più perchè m'inganna  
Mi viene in braccio come una bambina  
e si lascia cantar la ninna nanna

The song may as well represent a manifesto of Cantacronache's approach, restating their intention to 'evadere dall'evasione' and reaffirming their determination of being rooted in the realm of the factual world, however this does not prevent them from making use of irony. In a certain way the lyrics are a statement of the aims and beliefs of the collective, as already expressed in *Il giorno dell'eguaglianza* or *Canzone dei fiori e del silenzio*. Later in *Canzone della mia chitarra*, in fact, Amodei sings:

La mia chitarra canta  
senza darsi importanza  
se canta cose tristi  
lascia un po' di speranza  
se canta cose allegre  
le rende un poco tristi  
proprio come è la vita  
di noi poveri cristi

It is, moreover, a declaration of coherence and a claim for a better world where the enemies would be dead and gone. This concept is expressed in the last verse, which is embellished by a cruel metaphor that describes death:

La mia chitarra lei non se l'ha a male  
se il potente o il mercante di cannoni  
non la paga a cantar nelle fanfare  
le sue glorie con pifferi e tromboni  
Lei sa, la mia chitarra forte e scaltra  
che un giorno canterà canti felici  
per gente amica nostra, mentre l'altra  
le rape guarderà dalle radici

In the last verses the hope for a better world comes up but, again, as in *La ballatta dei dittatori*, the words are painted in black, as the enemies will be buried underground and will watch the turnips' roots. One more, the music material resonates with Brassens' influence, the brief introductory guitar phrasing sounds similar to *Le vent* (1954) and the phrasing, which adorns the singing, recalls *Brave Margot* (1954).

We will now move on and give an insight into the group of songs that – with great sarcasm – deal with stereotypes, vices and manias of the new Italians.

#### 4.5 Stereotypes and Sketches of Italian Society

The other group of songs we are going to look at is original for the standards of the era, and it might well represent the most enduring heritage of Cantacronache. This is the kind of narration in which they excelled, being able to characterise, describe and ironically exaggerate the features of their protagonists. The material in question, in fact, wittily depicts sketches of life during the boom and sheds light on many of the behaviours that a big section of Italy had begun to embrace. Moreover, to a listener today, the ironic approach of the lyrics can still sound fresh and gripping, thanks to a language which is sophisticated, cultured and which constantly plays on a shifting register that easily includes high-brow and low-brow terms in the same verse or strophe.<sup>65</sup> The comic sense, the open and harsh criticism of certain stereotypes and dynamics of society might sometimes lead into verbal aggressiveness but never into vulgarity. Many of the songs are a first-person narrative and this leads the listener to establish a bond with the protagonists whose affairs and vicissitudes are frequently, but not always, sung by Fausto Amodei.

Songs like *Ero un consumatore* (1960), *Una carriera* (1960) and *Il gallo* (1963), were unusual for the 1950s and early 1960s market and, although Cantacronache's singles were not as successful as other records, they succeeded in setting the pathway for many songwriters to come and for a proper sub-genre based on the bitter-ironic portrayal of clichés. Some examples of this tendency could be songs such as *Il sociale e l'antisociale* (1967) by Francesco Guccini, or *Borghesia* (1962) by Claudio Lolli.

Although through the lens of a subtle irony, the material we are going to consider is a mirror of the days of the boom, highlighting and caricaturing the reaction of part of the country to the new habits, ambitions and aspirations which the 'miracolo economico' had triggered. Sometimes, these elements along with others such as the will to power, the thirst for wealth, an almost morbid interest towards sex and a continuous and pronounced inferiority complex, contributed to creating several stereotypical masks worn consciously and unconsciously by many.<sup>66</sup> These are the same masks on which actors like Alberto Sordi, Vittorio Gassman or – to a certain extent – Totò based their comic qualities and their popularity.<sup>67</sup> The comedy films that featured those actors as protagonists were, in fact, as

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<sup>65</sup> This writing style would be an enormous influence on many songwriters, especially on Fabrizio De Andrè. The lyrics of his *Carlo Martello (ritorna dalla battaglia di Poitiers)* written in his early twenties with the long-time friend, the actor Paolo Villaggio, are a perfect example of it.

<sup>66</sup> Over the 1950s and 1960s, a plethora of films described the masks, the vices and the new habits of the new Italian, among the others: *Il vigile* (1960), *Il sorpasso* (1962), *I mostri* (1963) and so on

<sup>67</sup> Two good books on this topic are: Giacomo Manzoli, *Da Ercole a Fantozzi. Cinema popolare e società italiana dal boom economico alla neotelevisione (1958-1976)* (Roma: Carocci, 2012) and Sandro Bernardi, *Storia del cinema italiano 1954/1959* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2004).

Gian Piero Brunetta has pointed out, the first genre that posed the issue of national identity to the public at large.<sup>68</sup>

In short, between the 1950s and the early 1960s the archetype of the new Italian was created. On the one hand, a grotesque parody of his main characteristics found room in many films, for example in *Un americano a Roma* by Stefano Vanzina, or – but with more bitterness and without redemption – in *Un eroe dei nostri tempi* by Mario Monicelli or *I vitelloni* by Federico Fellini.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, no traces of criticism or, at least, of a more insightful approach in singing contemporary society interested the music market, which was stuck and lost in the paradigm of the ‘canzonetta’ and Italian rock and roll, at least until the arrival of Cantacronache.

The first song we want to consider is symbolic from this point of view and it is called *Nel mondo dei beati*. It is sung by Dullio Del Prete who would become a well-known actor of the so called ‘commedia all’italiana’ a few years later. The tune was recorded immediately after the disbandment of Cantacronache, in 1963, but it still reverberates with the approach and the style which characterized the collective. The musical arrangement sounds like a fanfare in which a brass ensemble accompanied by an organ and some woodwinds, plays the main part; the inspiration of Kurt Weill is here clear, especially in the use of the phrases of the organ. The song is an ironic but pungent reflection on life and death. It recounts the story of a common and honest man – someone who has ‘lavorato tanto’ and ‘mangiato del pane nero’ – who dies and discovers that, although in heaven everyone is admitted, in the material world his tomb is surrounded by the tombs of the shady, louche and corrupted ruling class. The latter is described with a striking aggressiveness through the powerful caricatures of its stereotypes. The incipit is remarkable and based on an oxymoron built on the contrast/juxtaposition of the verb to die and the verb to wake-up: ‘un mattino mi svegliai morto durante la nottata/ e nel nirvana mi involai a prendere la paga meritata/ poi dopo alcune ere che mi spassavo la bella vita/ volli scendere giù a vedere la spoglia mia dove fosse finita.’ The use of the word nirvana has an ironic connotation and the peaceful condition that it evokes does not coincide with the feeling of the protagonist in discovering the next-tomb neighbours. The first description we come across is that of a politician who had been buried in a mausoleum, ‘un arca gigantesca.’ His earthly existence, described as ‘più sporca di una fogna’ did not prevent him from being

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<sup>68</sup> G. P. Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano. Dal miracolo economico agli anni Novanta 1960-1993* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> Despite the apparent harsh portrayal of the vices of the Italians these comedies were not very critical if analysed in depth, and very often they reaffirmed the set of values they seemed to contrast. For more about this topic: Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices*.

buried in a magnificent sepulchre. Having had his image cleaned, the politician remained ‘ai posteri senza vergogna’. It is worth noting the use of the language and how elevated expressions like ‘che qui non nomo’ or the brief hint at the pompously adorned tomb, find their counterbalance in the word ‘fogna.’ The procedure of mixing high and low registers is present in the second strophe too. Also there, the use of the language (sulla manca, avea, sacripante) is notable. The refined idiom works as a parody of the pretentiousness of the ruling class which is rotten at its core, and verbs and phrases such as ‘fregare’ or the ‘vendere la moglie’ suggests it: ‘sulla manca avea la tomba militarissima di un sacripante/ che ne avea fatte tante comandando gli altri sempre a suon di tromba/ ordinando integrità ed onestà sotto mentite spoglie/ fregava amici ed ai suoi superiori per salir di grado vendeva la moglie.’ Sharp caricatures also characterize the last two strophes in which a powerful priest thirsty for power and a big industrialist thirsty for money are described. At the end of the song, the poor honest man, disgusted by his eternal-sleep companions, decides to remove his body from the tomb to look for a ‘sito meno fetente’. Duccio Del Prete’s voice is very expressive and it is able to emphasize the rage and desperation of the protagonist, especially in the last refrain: ‘ho lavorato tanto, ho mangiato del pane nero/ e mi ritrovo di fianco a chi... nel cimitero’. The ellipsis in this passage encloses effectively the rotten world above described. Stylistically, in saying ‘ho lavorato tanto, ho mangiato del pane nero’ Del Prete’s broken voice expresses the emotion of disappointment conveyed throughout the lyrics, whereas, in singing of the ruling classes his voice changes tone, becoming angrier and reproaching, almost violent.

A song which derides one of the long-lasting characteristics attributed to the Italian man, machismo, is *Il gallo*, and it was written and sung by Fausto Amodei in 1963. While on the one hand, in a large number of films of the era, this machismo ‘all’italiana’ is represented as a joyful and untroubled explosion of youth, in Cantacronache’s treatment – instead – it seems to become a vice that often hides a fascist and chauvinist mentality.<sup>70</sup> The stereotype of the vile and opportunist Italian turned into a vicious and petty fascist would constitute a trope in post-war arts. In cinema, for example, several films with Alberto Sordi as protagonist would explore it. One above all is *L’arte di arrangiarsi* (1954) by Luigi Zampa in which Rosario, the main protagonist, is ready to back up every party or institution in

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<sup>70</sup> The list of films which deal with this vice – often justified as a typical trait of the population – can be very long, a classic example can be *Poveri ma belli*, directed by Dino Risi. Also an intellectual such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, in the years to come, would almost feel sorry about the loss of vitality and masculinity of the Italian youth. A beautifully written portrait of an Italian ‘gallo’ could be found in Luigi Meneghello’s *Il dispatro*, a book about his years as a lecturer in Reading during the 1950s: ‘Raffaele, calabrese. Quattro figli e la donna, in Italia. [...] Anche lui piaceva alle donne. Non c’era biografia di italiano all’estero in quegli anni che non ruotasse quel verso.’ Luigi Meneghello, *Il dispatro* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1993) p. 76.

power in order to pursue his interests.<sup>71</sup> A similar vicissitude seems to inspire Cantacronache as well who make use of the same trope, this time applied to the fascist Italian womaniser. The stereotypical main character of the lyrics appears as nothing more than a social climber. As it is stated in the chorus:

L'amore è soprattutto  
l'orgoglio ed il prestigio  
di chi sa d'esser ligio  
a un mito nazional

His qualities as a social climber, instead, are stated in the third and last verse:

Sotto il ventennio non persi di vista  
di usare il mito del maschio fascista  
duci, gerarchi milizie ufficiali  
incrementarono i miei capitali  
Con questi soldi, che male c'è in fondo  
mi fu permesso di entrar nel gran mondo  
e proseguire i miei studi pratici  
sopra le mogli di quei diplomatici  
[...]  
Riorganizzai per innata missione  
qualche altra forma di prostituzione  
trovai appoggi con mossa maestra  
presso taluni partiti di destra  
Per la difesa che è sacra ed umana  
della potenza sessuale italiana

The language is interesting and this song is a fine example of that mixture of refined style applied to a very low, in this case also corporeal, topic already carried out elsewhere. For example, the rhyme 'innata missione/ prostituzione' gives almost a religious tone to the actions of the protagonist. This element is better explicated in the following lines where the 'difesa' of the 'potenza sessuale italiana' is defined as 'sacra.' The adventures of the "gallo" are not far from the Italian collective imagination. In fact, in Italy's narrations there has always been a micro-mythological branch dedicated to the adventures of well-known playboys. Throughout the 1960s and then in the 1980s, gossip newspapers would write about people like Gigi Rizzo or 'Zanza' Zanfati: contemporary "vitelloni" who would seize the various "riviere" seducing foreign female tourists.<sup>72</sup> The latter image, in a different

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<sup>71</sup> For more on the subject: Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices*, p. 216-226.

<sup>72</sup> As Michele Serra writes about Zanza: "E' uno dei maggiori esperti di contabilità mai visti: sostiene infatti di aver felicemente portato a termine atti sessuali con oltre mille turiste, alla media esorbitante di oltre 200 per stagione." [...] 'Qui non si tratta di gallismo, ma di mitologia pura.' In Michele Serra, *Tutti al mare* (Milano: Flettrini, 2003), p. 99.



context, comes back in the song as well, in the fourth strophe, as the popular myth of the supposed charm of the Italian man over Northern European girls, is pointed out

Dopo la guerra di liberazione  
per evitare di andare in prigione  
ebbi l'idea, in fondo assai savia,  
di rifugiarmi lassù in scandinavia  
ed in quel tempo fra genti stranieri  
ebbi da assolvere al grande dovere  
di dimostrare che la patria lontana  
era pur sempre virile italiana

The musical form gives a further flavour of stereotypical 'italianità' to the themes expressed by the lyrics.<sup>73</sup> The strophes sound like a tarantella based on a guitar, which is accompanied by a penny whistle. The chorus, on the other hand, recalls a typical, lively, merry saltarello. The practise of conveying narrations of hypothetical virility with traditional Southern Italian music found fertile ground in cinema too. A classic example can be the soundtrack of Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'Italiana* (1961).

The archetype of the parvenu, this time in a different way, appears again in another song written and sung by Amodei eloquently titled *Una carriera* (1960). The penchant for the usage of sophisticated and unusual terms is the perfect sign of the empty, pretentious and somewhat hypocritical Italian intelligentsia there depicted. It is a process not dissimilar to what happens in *Nel mondo dei beati*. The song reports, in first-person, the story of a young man who falls in love with a bourgeois bohemian. Amodei's perspective on the world to which they belong, a world not dissimilar from that of Cantacronache's, is pungently ironical, created through the choice of a language which includes also a continuous reference to several 1950s intellectual icons, as in the first strophe:

La vidi e la conobbi a un premio Strega  
con un fisico un po' da zuluaga  
indossava un tailleur di Balenciaga  
e al dito uno smeraldo di Cartier  
E quella sera invece di ballare  
[...] ce ne stemmo in un angolo appartati  
A parlar di libido e Sigmund Freud

The young woman is 'un'anticonformista' who reads Sartre, Musil, Montale and for whom Marx's *Capital* was 'da tempo il suo livre de chevet.' She is someone who knows by heart 'liriche di Prevert, antiche arie, vecchie canzoni rivoluzionarie', which are sung 'con voce

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<sup>73</sup> On 'italianità' and the building of the national character and identity: Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices*.

da contralto a la Edith Piaf.’ The nonconformist lady is – in truth – the daughter of a ‘ricco confindustriale’ who accepts her engagement to our protagonist only when he discovers the presence of a ‘zio che è un grosso cardinale’ in the family lineage, with whom the industrialist could easily do business. In fact: ‘mio suocero appoggiato da mio zio ora ha l’appalto di molti asili e chiese e mi dà per compenso un tanto al mese, trecentomila lire o giù di lì.’ The pseudo-intellectual and pseudo-revolutionary upper class environment is sarcastically unveiled, portrayed as elite in which the traditional dynamics of power persisted, despite the bohemian intentions.<sup>74</sup> The wealthy background of the two does not stop them from fantasising a possible but very mellow revolution, ‘ma non pensate solo che noi due si sia perso l’ardore di una volta/ non abbiamo rinunciato alla rivolta/ studiamo insieme il russo al Berlitz school.’ As far as the music is concerned, the tune is based on a sole guitar able to create a virtuoso jazzy progression, certainly a way to underline the refined but empty manners of the class described.

Another song that is worth examining is *Ero un consumatore* (1960), written and sung by Amodei. Its lyrics are a call for awareness among all the too moderate common people who dream of ‘un progresso senza l'ombra d'avventura’ often abandoning themselves to the demands of modernisation, without thinking too much. The song is an enjoyable ballad which succeeds in exaggeratedly depicting a moderate Italian conformist, a member of the “zona grigia,” to quote Primo Levi.<sup>75</sup> The song goes: ‘badavo solamente a cose mie:/ davo il voto a chi sedeva già al potere /per timor d'avere qualche dispiacere.’ In order to conduct a life without problems, the protagonist eradicates any possible critical sense by embracing a deaf and dumb conformism. By doing it, instead of living a tranquil life, he ends up undergoing a series of tragicomic misadventures which lead him to hopfully find consolation in religion ‘E così, per questa storia sfortunata, mi trovai colla salute rovinata, /e mia moglie mi privò del proprio affetto e restai senza famiglia e senza tetto; /immerso in una gran disperazione, cercai conforto nella religione.’ In the end, not even religion could provide any solace to the protagonist who, in despair, tries to commit suicide but this action too would lead to a further failure ‘Sono andato in farmacia una mattina, ho comprato mezzo chilo di stricnina, /poi mi son nascosto, presso il Cimitero, e ho mangiato il mezzo chilo, tutto intero. [...] la stricnina ingurgitata era stata adulterata e soltanto una diarrea mi procurò.’ The society of the boom, far from being on the side of the citizen turns out to be a complete nightmare where the food is ‘contraffatto e adulterato’, flats are ‘di speculazione’ and even in church ‘l’acqua benedetta era stata mescolata con dell’acqua

<sup>74</sup> It is well known that the belonging to the – frequently high – bourgeoisie was an element present in the biographies of many of the radical left-wing militants in the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>75</sup> Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986).

sconsacrata che, per sempre, la mia anima dannò.’ To a certain extent, the adventures of the lyrics seem to re-echo the vicissitudes of the cowardly conformist character played by Alberto Sordi in *Un eroe dei nostri tempi* (1954) who by being too cautious in his everyday life winds up in ambiguous, tragically detrimental situations. By using a caustic sarcasm, through the narration of the misadventures of a consumer, Amodei is able to convey an almost surrealistic sketch of the economic miracle in its most frightening but also humorous side. The same happens with another infamous curse of part of modern society: the low-quality housing and abusive urban speculation recounted in the third strophe, this topic would be vividly described three years later, in 1963, by Francesco Rosi’s *Le mani sulla città*. The musical arrangements follow Amodei’s typical style where guitar pizzicato chords and arpeggios play a leading role together with the singer’s voice whose Turinese accent is a trademark. The fast pace of the singing and guitar style contributes to the creation of a lively poignant tune. *Ero un consumatore* is a peak in Cantacronache’s repertoire, standard and refined registers are mixed with intense and colourful images which work as a grotesque, distorted mirror of the boom.

The last song of this category we want to look at is an exquisite compromise between a glitzy jazz-style arrangement and a writing drenched in dryness, irony and wit. It is a first-person narrative written and sung by – again – Fausto Amodei called *Il censore* (1963) and it is a superb description of the life of a censor obsessed by the filth of society who ‘vede il male anche dove non ce n’è’. As in *Ero un consumatore* the lyrics bring the conformism of the character to a paradoxical point. In 1950s and early 1960s Italy, censorship was – to say the least – very strict, influenced by the most conservative and unadventurous tendencies of the Church and main parties. It constantly reaffirmed the status quo of the ‘si fa e non si dice’, as a classic revue song of the fascist era recited and as the anthology film Boccaccio ’70 would splendidly mock.<sup>76</sup> In those years, in fact, politicians like Giulio Andreotti, Agostino Greggi and Oscar Luigi Scalfaro – who was alleged to have vehemently reproached a woman in a public restaurant in 1950 because she was showing her naked shoulders at her table – were among the strictest moralisers of the country.<sup>77</sup> It is no wonder, then, that the vicissitudes of the song sounded very up-to-date for the audience of the time. The protagonist is a censor, a defender of public morality, who lives a life of self-inflicted repression. He is overwhelmed by his taboo, especially as far as sex is concerned, in fact: ‘per lui sarebbe stata una vergogna esser nato come siete nati voi’ or

<sup>76</sup> Vittorio Mascheroni, *Si fa ma non si dice* (1935); Boccaccio ’70 was directed by Mario Monicelli, Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti and Vittorio De Sica, from an idea by Cesare Zavattini. It is a four episode film about different sides of morality and love in modern times, following the style of Boccaccio.

<sup>77</sup> The anecdote is recounted here:

[http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2012/01/29/visualizza\\_new.html\\_71071181.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2012/01/29/visualizza_new.html_71071181.html).

‘All'età di sette anni e quattro mesi /vide un giorno per la strada, con orrore, due formiche che facevano all'amore /ed allora, detto fatto, le schiacciò.’ He is described as someone who remains in a state of childhood for all his life:

A trent'anni, divenuto adolescente,  
non sofferse né di crisi né di dramma:  
gli bastava la sottana della mamma  
per godersi la sua bella gioventù.  
[...]  
Ed ancora lui leggeva Il Vittorioso  
nell'età che l'altra gente, anche se austera,  
legge almeno già Il Corriere della sera  
quando non arriva a legger L'Unità.

The protagonist is afraid of sex and love and hates anything that could be slightly impure but in the end he is forced to get married:

Prese in moglie una distinta signorina  
religiosa, possidente e molto brutta,  
ma la signorina ce la mise tutta  
e d'un colpo nove figli gli sfornò.  
[...]  
L'evidenza lo costrinse a rinnegare  
l'esperienza di quell'unico atto impuro  
e a promettere a se stesso che in futuro  
non l'avrebbe ripetuto proprio più.  
E scoperto finalmente il suo nemico  
intraprese una carriera di successo:  
dàgli e dàgli a far la guerra contro il sesso  
diventò procuratore generale

The musical form is interesting. Influenced by traditional jazz, the material sounds like a swing, rich in its arrangement and supported by a warm sax and piano. The lyrics would eventually influence an already mature Ivan Graziani who in 1994's *Maledette malelingue* would quote the verse ‘così la gente vede il male anche dove non ce n'è.’

#### *4.6 References to Pop Music and Political Discourses in Cantacronache*

As stated, the aim of Cantacronache was to ‘escape from escapism’ favouring an approach which opposed the banal way in which the ‘canzonetta’ dealt with the facts of life. As mentioned before, the fact that Cantacronache tried to write a set of more insightful types of lyrics does not mean they wanted to stay outside the market. From a broader perspective

their efforts belong, at least in part, to the pop market. It might be a high-brow side of pop music but it can be placed still under the same category. In this respect, for example, through the use of a medium like the 45s single, they wanted to bring into that market a specific side of popular or folk culture which had been banned for years and make it available to the whole society. Their intention of collecting and recording an extensive branch of political songs from all over the world serves this purpose.

In this section we will show how, on the one hand, the artists were able, in certain songs, to rely on musical forms which are not dissimilar from pop music of the time: they are complex in their arrangements and well-crafted in the singing style. The voice that interprets this sub-corpus is that of Mario Pogliotti which is similar to that of a crooner. Some of the themes in these tunes could belong to one of the sections above. However, we have decided to create a specific subsection for them, developing our analysis around the style of their music, their singing and their lyrics which represent further steps in the collective's production while their sound becomes richer and refined. Another category, instead, consists of songs about political awareness that made Cantacronache popular among the left-wing activists and in general. So far this is the corpus which has received more attention by the scholars. In these songs, some historical (recent and not very recent) episodes are narrated and in the lyrics, at times, there are inclusions of parts of texts from the left-wing folk music tradition that Cantacronache, as ethnomusicologists, studied. From our point of analysis, this process has the merit of bringing those events and those references to a broader public and therefore into the pop market. At the same time, these songs would become a new canon for the generations of activists and songwriters to come. As underlined by Chiara Ferrari, in Cantacronache, 'le parole si fanno carico di condensare il ricordo di fatti e sentimenti, diventano nucleo simbolico per una cerchia di persone che li vivono e li rivivono.'<sup>78</sup> And, according to Peter Burke, popular or folk culture 'is perhaps best defined initially in a negative way as unofficial culture, the culture of the non-elite', a prerogative of 'the "subordinate classes" as Gramsci has defined them.'<sup>79</sup> If this statement is true we can affirm that by recording and including a cluster of political songs in their own corpus, Cantacronache attempted to transfer the legacy of the left-wing tradition into the sphere of a more institutionalised culture and in the market, preserving that discourse from the oblivion of time. Moreover, their constant reference to a set of past or recent events, (in *La zolfara* for instance) or the use of tranches of old partisan songs in some other lyrics (in *Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*) show how this endeavour was a vital part of

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<sup>78</sup> Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962*.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Ashgate, 1978) p. xiii.

their scope. Their personal narratives, ideals, tastes and inclinations become a culture of reference on which new material could be built. It is not far, for example, from what Serge Gainsbourg does in the same years when he refers to Prévert et Kosma in *La Chanson De Prévert* (1961).<sup>80</sup> This is a characteristically pop procedure as the reflection on its own past, or on past in general (the left-wing folk music in this case), is one of the main elements of pop music, Simon Reynolds explains.<sup>81</sup> However, this discourse would need a much more extensive analysis which should include an investigation into the role of memory, also keeping in mind the political values that some songwriters or artists endorse. As Dave Haslam reminds us ‘histories are a ragbag of memories, secrets, well-worn tales, and distortions, all subject to myth-making [...] choosing what to forget or to recall.’<sup>82</sup>

Let us start from the first group of songs mentioned, those in which, in the musical form, we can identify a tendency to adopt certain stylistic features which the Italian mainstream music of the period was using. As seen in the previous sections, the jazzy arrangement of some tunes or the appropriation of some then current forms in others, declare that Amodei, Liberovici, Margot were composing in the context of the music of their time. This tendency appears, and reaches a higher point in composition, when we cast a glance at the tunes written for Pogliotti, not an effective member but a collaborator, whose voice recalls – in some cases – the timbre of a very famous Italian pop singer and composer of the early 1960s: Nico Fidenco. The approach of Pogliotti, in fact has something in common with ‘belcanto’ and for example, now and then, the texture of his singing emphasises the virtuosity of his voice, lingering on certain words or syllables, keeping and extending some specific notes. A good example could be the intro of *Tiro a segno* (1961), a song that perhaps could be included in our previous section on stereotypes about the new Italians. Nevertheless, we have decided to put it here, in order to show its affinity with pop music and pop imagery in general. In fact, the lines of the first strophe (‘è chiaro che è un giorno di festa/ ognuno va dove va/ amore, osteria, juke box, cinema/ ma non giudicatelò indegno/ il vecchio e un po' frusto mio tiro a segno’) include a musical highlighting of the words ‘chiaro’, ‘festa’, ‘va’ and ‘tiro a segno.’ Through a series of arpeggios, the guitar in the background helps to create a melodramatic atmosphere, an expectation finally released by

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Oh je voudrais tant que tu te souviennes/ Cette chanson était la tienne/ C'était ta préférée je crois/ Qu'elle est de Prévert et Kosma.’

<sup>81</sup> For more on this topic: Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to its Own Past* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Dave Haslam, *Not Abba. The Real Story of the 1970s* (London: Fourth Estate), p. 198. Or as Rod Stewart would put it in his autobiography speaking of his song-writing: ‘My lyrics often drew on experiences in my past. The experiences would frequently end up very altered by the process of writing the lyric’ Rod Stewart, *Rod. The Autobiography* (London: Random House, 2012), p.115. On the role of memory Meneghello writes: ‘Avvengono scambi, travasi; “io c’ero” non vuole dire più io c’ero,” ma “qui c’è stato.” *Libera nos a malo* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1975), p. 281.

the words 'tiro a segno' on which the voice lingers, accompanied by a minor chord that gives way to the beginning of the second strophe. The same melodic and lyrical scheme is repeated in the third strophe. With regard to lyrics, the song is interesting. In both the first and third strophe, a variety of ways to spend a day of holiday is enunciated: cinema, bars, love – which here probably means romance –, dance, football match, juke-box and shooting gallery. If it was not for the unique targets of the shooting, it could easily appear as a song about life and leisure in the years of modernisation, but, in reality, the victims of the 'tiro a segno' enumerated in the second and fourth strophe have nothing to do with amusement parks. They are, in fact: 'produttori ed ammiragli, autori e gente normal/ c'è un'abate, un ciambellano, un consigliere accanto sua maestà, un addetto, un capo gabinetto [...] c'è un ruffiano ed un potente, la mantenuta di un ricco industrial/ un censore intransigente e un principe omosessual [...] su sparate cittadini, sul servo sciocco e sul protettor/ sul mercante di bambini, sul boia e sul dittator/ sugli sbirri e i parrucconi, sui baciapile e i leccaltar/ sui fascisti ed i cialtroni, e sui capitani d'affar'. In the two strophes just mentioned above the melodic scheme changes, turning into a kind of medieval ballad built on a guitar and a flute. The reference to the Middle Ages also returns when we look at the inspirational horizon that the tune potentially bears. It seems to be influenced by the iconoclastic 'poesia goliardica,' and the massacre perpetrated on the ruling class 'dileguerà il fantasma della fame.' This will be the 'premio final' of the shooting contest.<sup>83</sup> As seen in other songs before analysed, this call to violence against power, together with a constant unorthodox irreverence, is a recurring element in Cantacronache's corpus and we could define it a cathartic and iconoclastic device. This nipping insolence is easily ascribable to the young age of the protagonists and it is imbued with a biting sarcasm that is placed far away from the rigidity attributed to the stereotype of the politically engaged youth of the time. The black humour of the main theme in the song is counterbalanced by the sweet melody of the verses. A fondness for pranks, jokes and rebellion seems to reside in some components of Cantacronache from a young age and this can be testified, for instance, by an episode involving a teenage Michele Straniero who was thrown out – together with the future philosopher Gianni Vattimo – from a catholic summer camp in Falzarego, after an episode of bravado. The event is depicted by Vattimo himself: 'In 1954 [...] I set out for Falzarego pass with a group of Catholic students of whom I was the leader. [...] a fine

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<sup>83</sup> Goliardia has been a common trait of the Italian student lifestyle at least up to the mid 1960s, when different dynamics would start to interest the majority of the cultured youth. It is denoted by an untroubled approach to life in which both irony and a developed love for pranks and humour coexist. Goliardia has its furthest origin in the efforts of the Goliards, a group of clerical students who – all over Europe – protested against the growing contradictions of the Church, expressing themselves through satirical songs, poetry and performances.

band of individuals, some smarter than me. Like Michele Straniero, for example. And there we started a *fronde*. We used the evening transmission over the camp radio to advertise “Clerodont toothpaste. Anticurial, the toothpaste of the clerical hierarchy.” Bad jokes really, but they hit the mark because they derided the new national presidency of the youth Catholic association ferociously. After three days they sent all us from Turin home, seventeen individuals out of 150.<sup>84</sup>

Another tune sung by Mario Pogliotti which, again, reaches a compromise with 'belcanto' is *Uno uguale a me* (1961). Set in Liguria, it is a quick sketch about the life of a building-site worker who spends the whole day 'con il muso in terra dieci ore a scavare i condotti di fogne ed acquedotti/ per non so quali alberghi e mille palazzi'. In the lyrics, the protagonist draws a parallel between himself and another man seen on an advertising poster for tourists who looks like him 'che sta contro il muro appiccicato [...] disegnato dalla pubblicità'. The only difference is that the protagonist works so much that he cannot even enjoy and appreciate the sea around him: in fact, 'Il mare lo vedo soltanto la domenica ci vado con l'Elvira, che non ci so che fare, perché segui a scavare tutto il santo giorno, succede che uno dimentica che attorno c'è pure il mare... il mare.' The song has the aspect of nothing more than a fleeting glimpse over the character's life, but, through a language register which is colloquial, and thanks to the sound of Pogliotti's voice, the quiet fashion of his singing, a hazy and melancholic atmosphere is created. The tune is a sketch of a day during the boom with its elements: the new buildings, the posters on the wall and so on. Moreover, in rendering the simple life profound, the tune seems to anticipate the song-writing manner of the Scuola genovese, in particular the style that Luigi Tenco and Gino Paoli would develop. The voice of Pogliotti, in fact, recalls the vocal sound of the latter. And apparently, the song is also set in Liguria, the region where the two came from, but also the region where the Sanremo festival, the cradle of “canzonetta,” is held. As said about Margot, this song as well could be defined ‘crepuscolare’ being part of an ideal thread vaguely inspired by 'crepuscolari' poets, an early twentieth century literary elite specialised in the bitter-sweet description of the small things in life or ‘le buone cose di pessimo gusto’ as Gozzano, a prominent member of that elite, would put it.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the vocal part, accompanied only by a guitar and a mouth organ, especially at the opening, would likely inspire Gino Paoli himself who two years later, in 1963, would record *Sapore di sale*,

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<sup>84</sup> Gianni Vattimo, Piergiorgio Paterlini, *Not Being God: A Collaborative Autobiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 42.

<sup>85</sup> Guido Gozzano, *L'amica di nonna Speranza* in *I colloqui* (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1911).



where he narrates the sea in a different but still slightly crepuscular manner.<sup>86</sup> Another song imbued with melancholy and still sung by Mario Pogliotti, is *Un paese vuol dire non essere soli*. Its incipit is built on a bittersweet phrasing of the guitar accompanied by a trombone and an organ, a small ensemble that plays minor chords giving the song a pace that makes it sound like a funeral march. This is no coincidence, since the song is dedicated to Cesare Pavese and inspired by his last novel before his suicide *La luna e i falò*.<sup>87</sup> The voice of Pogliotti comes in very soon, and also here the singer relies on his skills to give birth to a sombre and in some way nostalgic consideration on the protagonist's life, leading to a description of emotional states that find their manifestation in the geography of the surroundings. The material is pervaded by a stinging atmosphere of solitude, a quest for belonging, expressed by the continuous reference to the word 'silenzio' and reaffirmed by the dry landscape depicted. The protagonist travels from the city but, his provenance is not clarified or explained, although, from what he says 'riconosco le strade dalle buche rimaste [...] dalle cose sepolte che appartengono a me', the listener could infer that the 'paese' must be his birthplace, placing the material in the narrative of the comeback. The country around him is styled as a dried land of 'gialle colline', 'mare di stoppie', 'rocce scoperte' and 'sterilità'. Behind the hills lies the sea of which the protagonist is tired, preferring to contemplate the stillness of the country and immersing his persona in silence, which is the 'grande virtù' of the rural life. However, there is no bucolic mannerism in the author's words but solitude and realism. The toughness of the land makes any kind of work-effort useless: 'il lavoro non serve più [...] e le mani tenerle dietro la schiena, non fare più nulla, pensando al futuro.' And it also makes useless any attempt to escape from the place he has chosen: 'ci venni una volta quassù, e quassù son rimasto/ a rifarmi le forze, a cercarmi i compagni, a trovarmi una terra.'

All the songs analysed so far in this section have Mario Pogliotti as singer. Our intention was to show how these tunes combine a sensibility close to belcanto and pop music of the time to lyrics that represent a compromise between literary references and more low-brow elements. It is the case of *Tiro a segno*, for example, where a description of a Sunday in the years of the boom meets an imaginary cathartic shooting filtered through the lens of "poesia goliardica." The lyrics of *Uno uguale a me* and *Un paese vuol dire non essere soli*,

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<sup>86</sup> In point of fact, according to Robert Dimery's *1001 Songs You Must Hear Before You Die*, *Sapore di sale*, on the one hand, 'perfectly captures the lightness of summertime: the sun, sea, and days spent in love and lazing on the beach' but, on the other hand it 'also refers to the salty slightly bitter taste of lost things, of things left far away.' Robert Dimery, *1001 Songs You Have To Hear Before You Die* (London: Quintessence Book, 2010), p. 135.

<sup>87</sup> 'Un paese ci vuole, non fosse che per il gusto di andarsene via. Un paese vuol dire non essere soli, sapere che nella gente, nelle piante, nella terra c'è qualcosa di tuo, che anche quando non ci sei resta ad aspettarti' Cesare Pavese, *La luna e i falò* (Torino: Einaudi, 1950) p. 13.

instead, reach a degree of melancholy and estrangement for the protagonist that in both cases find himself in a position of stillness, although in two different context: in the city and in the countryside. His alienation becomes a symptom of the years of the miracle, already described by many films and books of the period. In the last song, the reference to Pavese is declared and the nature of the lyrics becomes indecipherable. However, the musical arrangement in the three songs is well-crafted, rich in its sound and perfectly melts with the expressive voice of the singer. This encounter between arrangements that are refined and more powerful in the sound – if compared for example to Amodei's guitar style – the voice of Pogliotti and the lyrics, makes these songs a blueprint for the intellectual branch of pop music of the years to come.

Another group of songs that made Cantacronache popular and well known among the ranks of the left wing and in its collective imagination is a sub-corpus which describes and takes a stance on some events, problems and tragedies that had happened and still happened in Italy. The songs here mentioned have the aim of 'cantare la cronaca' and some of them, for instance *Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*, succeeded in gaining an enormous popularity, becoming unofficial anthems for political demonstrations over the following years.<sup>88</sup>

The first song we want to focus on is called *La zolfara* (1958) and it was written by Michele L. Straniero for the voice of Piero Buttarelli. Although inspired by a tragedy that had happened in a sulphur mine in Gessolungo, Sicily, in 1881, it must have sounded up to date in the late 1950s too, when many similar accidents were still taking place, often caused by the greed of the employers and companies, and the lack of supervision and safety measures on the working sites.<sup>89</sup> In the lyrics, Straniero gives expression to his own view of Catholicism, in which God is a paternal and compassionate figure, ready to

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<sup>88</sup> *Per i morti...* became an anthem not only for the left-wing, but also for the supporters of the football team Reggiana who would adopt its melody changing the words in the 1970s, as Max Collini from the Italian band Offlaga Disco Pax points out in *Piccola storia ultrà*. The adapted lyrics go like this 'sangue nei popolari, sangue nei distinti, le abbiamo prese ma non siamo vinti/ è ora di rifarsi, è ora di sparare, il sangue dei compagni dobbiamo vendicare/ sangue nei distinti, sangue nel palazzetto, noi siamo tutti quanti ultras ghetto'.

<sup>89</sup> The dangerous world of the Sicilian 19th century sulphur mines was splendidly immortalised by Giovanni Verga and epitomised by Rosso Malpelo, the protagonist of one of his novellas who, in the end of the will walk towards his tragic destiny, victim of the . 'Prese gli arnesi di suo padre, il piccone, la zappa, la lanterna, il sacco col pane, il fiasco del vino, e se ne andò: né si seppe più nulla di lui.' Giovanni Verga, *Rosso Malpelo in Vita dei campi* (1880) in *Verga: I grandi romanzi e tutte le novelle* (Newton Compton, 1992) electronic edition by Stefano D'Urso in Liber Liber, 1996.

Traces of that tragedy could also be found in *Sonetti di la surfara*, a sonnet by the nineteenth century Sicilian poet Alessio Di Giovanni: 'vannu priannu: Gesùzzu, piatati!.../ Ma ddoppu, essennu sutta lu smaceddu, gridanu, vastimiannu a la canina,/ ca macari "ddu Cristu" l'abbannuna..' Translation by Antonino Taverna: the workers 'vanno pregando: Gesù mio, pietà!.../ ma dopo, essendo sotto quello sfracello, gridano, bestemmiando come cani,/ che anche "quel Cristo" li abbandona..' As far as Italy of the 1950s is concerned instead: 'La crescita impetuosa degli incidenti (e delle morti) ed il suo sostanziale successivo sostanziale stabilizzarsi (periodo 1951-1975) indica uno stretto rapporto tra sviluppo economico, aumento di produttività e incidenti.' In <http://www.webalice.it/seba.50/dati.doc>.

embrace the poor and misfortunate, avenging them against the covetous and dishonest. In this regard, Straniero's perspective could be defined closer to some progressive catholic theories, such as liberation theology or for example, rather than to the standards of Roman Catholicism. He stood for what pope John XXIII would define, a few years later, 'Chiesa dei poveri', based on action and on a set of values far away from the hierarchies of the traditional Church.<sup>90</sup> However, according to Giovanni Straniero and Mauro Barletta, this attitude in some cases, created problems among the "compagni" del PCI e del PSI' as well, who 'guardarono a Cantacronache con una punta di preoccupazione: certi riferimenti a Gesù o al Paradiso (presenti nella *Zolfara*) furono aspramente criticati.'<sup>91</sup> The lyrics describe a procession held in heaven in which the dead workers of the 'zolfara' walk together with the four evangelists 'con San Marco e San Matteo, con San Luca e San Giovanni' and all the other workers who died on workplaces. It is an image that could recall a typical patron saint procession. 'Dopo la dimostrazione' they are called and blessed by Jesus Christ who, in the end, destroys the mine. In fact, 'Cristo li ha chiamati, con la sua benedizione li ha raccolti fra i beati./ Poi levando poco poco la sua mano giustiziera con un fulmine di fuoco ha distrutto la miniera.' This representation of a merciful Christ who welcomes those who suffer could have inspired Fabrizio DeAndrè who, in *Preghiera in Gennaio* (1967) a song dedicated to Luigi Tenco who had killed himself in that year, would propose a very similar image:

Quando attraverserà l'ultimo vecchio ponte  
 ai suicidi dirà baciandoli alla fronte  
 venite in paradiso, là dove vado anch'io  
 perché non c'è l'inferno nel mondo del buon Dio

The use of the language in *La zolfara* is intriguing. Straniero is able to alternate a higher and almost formal register with a more colloquial language, for instance, a sentence like 'da quel trono dove è assiso, Gesù Cristo gli ha sorriso' is followed by a refrain in which we hear the colloquial expression uttered by the greedy employer: 'me n'infischio se rischio.' From the point of view of the music, the material is bare and minimal. Only a guitar and some beats of a drum in the refrain accompany Buttarelli's voice that sometimes sounds

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<sup>90</sup>On Liberation Theology: Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973). As John XIII sais on the radio: 'in faccia ai paesi sottosviluppati la Chiesa si presenta quale è, e vuol essere, come la Chiesa di tutti, e particolarmente la Chiesa dei poveri' (in *Radiomessaggio del Santo Padre Giovanni XXIII ai fedeli di tutto il mondo, a un mese dal Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II*, 11 September 1962). Source: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/speeches/1962/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_spe\\_19620911\\_ecumenical-council.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19620911_ecumenical-council.html).

<sup>91</sup> G. Straniero, M. Barletta, *La rivolta in musica*, p.35.

excessively dramatic. In this respect, this song is very different from the rich musical forms of the first group analysed.

An organically structured musical frame, instead, plays an important part and gives a choral intensity to *Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*, written and sung by Fausto Amodei shortly after the events of July 1960, when the police forces killed five protesters during a demonstration held in Reggio Emilia. The material is built on a solemn guitar introduction, accompanied by an accordion, which precedes the first verses. The refrain is played by the same instruments plus a chorus of voices which succeeds in underlining the sombre and almost funereal pace of the song. Here, Amodei's authorial skills reach a high peak of creativity and he is able to write very touching lyrics, although slightly rhetorical for the modern listener. In his words the value of the Resistance is something that walks together with the youth who had finally woken up, standing up against the reaction of Tambroni's government. Young people have to hold the hands of the older partisan brothers in order to resist and regard the old partisans as role models: 'Compagno cittadino fratello partigiano teniamoci per mano in questi giorni tristi / di nuovo a Reggio Emilia di nuovo là in Sicilia son morti dei compagni per mano dei fascisti. / Di nuovo come un tempo sopra l'Italia intera, fischia il vento infuria la bufera.' The discourse about the partisans' legacy characterises part of the generation born in the 1930s and, as Michela Nacci has underlined, for a section of the Italian young intelligentsia of the 1950s, 'la memoria della Resistenza è vissuta, soprattutto dagli intellettuali più giovani, come il punto di partenza di un rinnovamento culturale che viene ritenuto necessario e non rinviabile al futuro.'<sup>92</sup> The five young people killed by the police are compared to the partisans who fought for the freedom of the country more than a decade before: 'Son morti sui vent'anni per il nostro domani / Son morti come vecchi partigiani.' The names of the five young victims are mentioned along with some of the most important names of the Italian resistance such as Duccio Galimberti or the brothers Cervi. This scheme succeeds in inserting the events in a broader and epic layout. Further in the lyrics, the partisan remains the only friend on whom the rebels could rely, in fact 'Il solo vero amico che abbiamo al fianco adesso è sempre quello stesso che fu con noi in montagna.' And 'Uguale la canzone che abbiamo da cantare, scarpe rotte eppur bisogna andare.' This last sentence is a reference to *Fischia il vento* a song written in 1943 at the inception of the Resistance which goes 'Fischia il vento e infuria [urla] la bufera, scarpe rotte e pur bisogna andar...' As noticed before the reference to a well-known partisan song is used as a device to include that tradition in the realm of pop market. It is an attempt at widening the boundaries of the latter and also a statement of

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<sup>92</sup> Michela Nacci, *Storia culturale della Repubblica* (Milano: Mondadori, 2009), p. 19.

political belonging. In the last verse of *Per i morti*, the five dead people reach the status of martyrs, not understood, in this case, as distant symbolic figures but comrades listed by names whose blood is ‘sangue del nostro sangue’ and who ‘dovremo tutti quanti aver d’ora in avanti [...] al nostro fianco per non sentirci soli.’<sup>93</sup> In the last verse Amodei’s voice calls the dead comrades back to life to sing *Bandiera rossa* (another reference to a popular partisan song) with the living ones: ‘morti di Reggio Emilia uscite dalla fossa/ fuori a cantar con noi Bandiera Rossa!’<sup>94</sup>

The legacy of the Resistance in *Cantacronache* has a generational connotation as the songwriters were born in the 1930s. If on the one hand this means they were too young to take part in the fight, on the other, their age did not prevent them from being influenced by the partisan war and its consequences. Throughout the 1950s antifascism was somehow obfuscated by the needs of the Cold War and as a result, the narration of the Resistance in popular mass culture started going through a silent phase. As Michele Straniero affirmed, one of *Cantacronache*’s aims was to bring back to light a discourse that was essential in order to preserve its memory from the oblivion. It seemed that ‘in quei tardi anni Cinquanta parlare di Resistenza era [...] quasi un delitto.’<sup>95</sup> However, while the discourse on the Resistance did not have an echo in the mainstream media it must be highlighted how, instead, the same topic had an impact on the politically active youth, being a subject which would characterise the late 1950s and early 1960s political debate, as Philip Cooke clearly points out in *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*. The narrative about its legacy carried out by the parties led to the creation of a specific language based on the ‘idealisation’ of the partisan martyr which would be a constant theme in the late 1950s. It was a shared code aimed at commemorating the odyssey of the Resistance, especially at the formal functions held by parties such as Partito d’Azione, PCI, and to a lesser extent DC. As Cooke tells us: ‘there was, in other words, a common language, a kind of Resistance koiné, which circulated at the time. And Calamandrei (P d’A) was, without a doubt, the master practitioner of it.’<sup>96</sup> However, the institutionalisation of the Resistance emptied it of its radical power and this happened also in the communique of the PCI. As shown in the last pages, for part of the late 1950s youth the partisan war

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<sup>93</sup> The dead comrades are listed by name: ‘Compagno Ovidio Franchi, compagno Afro Tondelli e voi Marino Serri, Reverberi e Farioli...’

<sup>94</sup> The image of the left-wing comrades who leave the tomb would come back, this time as parody, in a comedy shot in early 1990s called – (not) very originally – *Anni 90*.

<sup>95</sup> Emilio Jona and Michele Straniero, *Cantacronache. Un’avventura politico musicale degli anni Cinquanta* (Torino: Paravia), p. 67.

<sup>96</sup> Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.42. We should not forget that, on the other hand, the radical right wing too had its martyrs. Echoes of those elements could be found in the lyrics of several neo-fascist songwriters and bands.

acquired a new meaning, and the same happened with Fascism, which starts to be an equivalent for reaction in more general terms.

The late 1950s were a period of transition for the main parties, especially for the PCI. As Eugenio Scalfari tells us, in 1956 ‘ci fu la repressione in Ungheria del tentativo di quel paese d'uscire dalla "tutela" sovietica. Intervenero le truppe sovietiche e i loro carri armati impedirono che quel tentativo avesse successo. Il Pci non era ancora nelle condizioni di rompere i suoi legami ideologici e politici con Mosca e fu dunque solidale con la repressione, ma molti intellettuali e dirigenti [...] uscirono dal partito.’<sup>97</sup> As Nello Ajello underlines: ‘Nei tardi anni Cinquanta, è come se il PCI ricominciasse da capo,’ the party witnessed a diaspora of part of the intellectuals however, still according to Ajello, ‘il disagio degli intellettuali non si riflette nella base.’<sup>98</sup> As mentioned, after 1956, several prominent figures, especially in Turin, left the party.<sup>99</sup> It must be also added that PCI always developed a controversial relationship with the intelligentsias, constantly trying to ‘riorganizzare gli intellettuali [...] per lo scopo di lungo periodo di creare una cultura di tipo nuovo,’<sup>100</sup> and such an attitude was not ideal for many literati. The PCI was therefore at a crossroads, trying to grasp the rapid social transformation and struggling in its attempt to read the new needs and of the intellectuals, the youth and the proletarians who, as seen later, in the late 1950s, gave birth to a new wave of strikes, which would change completely the direction of the country’s destiny.<sup>101</sup>

In conclusion, always keeping an ironic eye on the events, Cantacronache were able to sing and recount the 1950s with a calculated distance, which prevents them from being pathetic or sweetened but only compassionate or sharp when needed. Cantacronache represented a unique experience for the era going beyond the influences drawn from different elements, such as French or German music, and succeeding in developing an original way of composing which represents the root of Italian song writing. Their closeness to the PCI’s *Italia canta* did not stop them from progressing in their own pathway, creating a narration

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<sup>97</sup> Eugenio Scalfari, *I sogni e le fatiche di un Sisifo al Quirinale*, in *La Repubblica* (15 January 2015) in [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2015/01/14/news/i\\_sogni\\_e\\_le\\_fatiche\\_di\\_un\\_sisifo\\_al\\_quirinale](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2015/01/14/news/i_sogni_e_le_fatiche_di_un_sisifo_al_quirinale).

<sup>98</sup> Nello Ajello, *Il lungo addio*, pp. XI-8.

<sup>99</sup> For more about the relationship between the intellectuals, the PCI in general, and the events of Hungary: Albertina Vittoria, *La commissione culturale del Pci dal 1948 al 1956* in *Studi Storici*, Anno 31, No. 1, *Contributi alla storia del Pci (1945-1956)* (Jan. - Mar., 1990). According to Vittoria, among a big part of the intellectuals who remained connected to the party: ‘non si direbbe che l'elemento predominante fosse la condanna dell'intervento sovietico [...] anzi, caso mai prevalente era la giustificazione, seppur amara’. In *La commissione culturale*, p. 167.

<sup>100</sup> M. Nacci, *Storia della Repubblica*, p.19. It is useful to keep in mind that few years before there had been a harsh polemic between Elio Vittorini and his magazine *Politecnico* and Palmiro Togliatti on what role the intellectual should play. On this see: A. Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali* and Piero Lucia, *Intellettuali italiani del secondo dopoguerra*, pp. 81-92.

<sup>101</sup> An essential and comprehensive book on the Italian working class is AA. VV, *Tra fabbrica e società: Mondi operai nell'Italia del Novecento* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999).

which embraces diverse viewpoints but – at same time – remains coherent to certain values: peace, tolerance, antimilitarism and so on. However, their efforts are included in the strategy of the new party whereby the PCI tries to open up towards society in general and towards cultural activities. The label *Italia canta* surely belongs to this realm.

In the next chapter we will look at the Communist Party and its relation with young people through its young federation (FGCI) during the same years. The young people considered are part of Cantacronache's generation and are at the core of the implementation of the "partito nuovo" which tries to respond to certain themes and problems related to their generation. As underlined, this is carried out through formal communications and less formal communications (magazines such as *Nuova generazione* for example).

As far as Cantacronache is concerned our chapter has shown how their music represents a new trend in the pop market creating a bridge between intellectual references, political awareness and music that often draws on different forms, including belcanto. This process is very innovative being the starting point of the Italian song-writing to come. Cantacronache's effort enriched the music market and young collective imagination, the same imagination that would play an influence on the youth involved in the revolt of 1960 and 1962 (see chapter 7). It is symptomatic that Cantacronach took place in a vibrant city like Turin, where different tendencies met. This city will be the setting of the clashes of Piazza Statuto (1962) when a young generation, unreadable for the PCI and its Youth Federation, took the streets. Now it is time to look at the FGCI in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and then to its magazine *Nuova generazione*.

## ***5. The FGCI in transition between the late 1950s and early 1960s***

### ***5.1 What is the FGCI?***

The previous chapter has been an excursus into Cantacronache, an experience connected to the PCI that involved artists in their twenties. Cantacronache was to a certain extent part of Togliatti's strategy of the "partito nuovo," being produced by a record label connected to the PCI. Cantacronache recognised themselves in the values of the left-wing but were not active members of the party. We will now, instead, examine the Youth Federation of the PCI, looking at its formal communications in this chapter, and, in chapter 6, its magazine *Nuova generazione*. Our research encompasses the years that go from the late 1950s until 1962, a very important period for Italian society in general. The boom is at its height and a gigantic flock of young workers from the South of Italy migrates to industrial cities, which – often – are not ready to welcome such a big wave. Moreover, in factories, Fordism is an established reality and the skills of specialised workers are, to a certain extent, not necessary any more. The new labourers are de facto unskilled and underpaid. The neighbourhoods in which they live in are overcrowded and basic facilities like a decent bathroom, for example, are scarce. The newcomers are often less politically aware than their native and older counterparts, and the PCI struggles to find a way to communicate with them. In fact, as we will see, references to problems such internal migrations are absent from many of the formal communiques of the FGCI. This could be related to the way the Communist Party presents itself, a mass institution that wants to talk to the people as a whole, or to a deficiency in understanding the demands of the new social reality. However, the lack of 'institutional' political consciousness on the part of the new workers does not prevent them from being restless. On the contrary, they find a way of partaking in protests and, in the case of Piazza Statuto (1962) for instance, their approach leads to the eruption of what is seen by some as a cathartic violence towards the Unions (UIL, but also CIGL and CISL) whose reactions were seen as emblematic of the deafness of established institutions. Before we go into a more detailed analysis of the youth federation's rhetoric and its way of dealing with young people, we will give an outline of the FGCI.

Historically, the federation is the heir of the Federazione Giovanile Socialista Italiana, from which the FGCI sprung in the year of the Livorno secession (1921) when the PCI was born. The FGCI existed from 1921 until 1990 and, for obvious reasons, it was forced into exile in the early 1930s. Many of its members would compose the Fronte della gioventù during the Resistance. The FGCI reformed in 1949 and Enrico Berlinguer was appointed as



secretary. Despite the term “giovanile,” the ruling group were never especially young. For example, Enrico Berlinguer was still its secretary in 1956 when he was already thirty-four years old. Renzo Trivelli, who took over in the same year was thirty-one and Achille Occhetto, who became the secretary in 1962 after the brief parenthesis of Rino Serri (1960-1962), was already twenty-six. The leadership of the federation was in truth a springboard for the future PCI leaders and as a consequence the FGCI, despite its claims of independence from the party: ‘non riuscì mai ad essere davvero protagonista, neppure nel «decennio dei giovani», ossia gli anni Sessanta.’<sup>1</sup>

So far, as Andrea Carmine Marinelli has suggested, there is not a ‘consolidata tradizione di studi che riguardano la FGCI.’<sup>2</sup> A similar problem had been indicated by the federation’s former secretary Renzo Trivelli back in 1976, who stated that political groups, if included in the broader narrative of a specific organisation or party ‘non hanno quasi mai sufficiente autonomia da essere oggetto di storia propria.’<sup>3</sup> The communication between the federation and youth, instead, is our focus and point of originality, seen through an analysis of the themes that are most prominent in the formal papers and in its magazine *Nuova generazione*. Our intention is to give voice to an important institution, in a specific timeframe, which represented a significant experience for the people involved. However, before we get into the analysis of the elements mentioned above, we need to answer to the question posed in the heading: ‘what is the FGCI?’ In order to do this, let us see how the FGCI defined itself in its formal communication by analysing and comparing two of its statutes: one released in 1957, straight after the XV national congress of the FGCI (June 1957) which followed the one called by the PCI, when the new road to socialism was launched; and one published in 1962 at the end of the XVII national congress (October 1962), a key year for the FGCI and the PCI in general, as a new generation of members was finally making progress through the ranks. These two statutes work as a chronological delimitation of the period on which we intend to focus. Statutes were changed and updated at the times of the national congresses, so the first to be issued after the reformation of the federation is that of 1950. Between 1957 and 1962 another congress was held (1960) and a further statute was released with it. Both statutes are very similar except for some elements that we are going to analyse in the next pages which can tell us more about the context in which they were released.

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<sup>1</sup> Dino Messina, *Perché la FGCI non ballava il Rock’n’roll*, in *Corriere della sera* (17 February 2013), p.17.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Carmine Marinelli, *Giovani e comunisti*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Renzo Trivelli, *Gli anni delle grandi battaglie democratiche*, in Enrico Berlinguer, *Il ruolo dei giovani comunisti. Breve storia della FGCI* (Firenze: Guaraldi, 1976), p. 60-63.

In the 1957 statute it is stated that:

La Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana è un'organizzazione di massa che esprime e rappresenta gli interessi delle nuove generazioni; che combatte in tutti i campi a difesa della gioventù e per il suo avvenire<sup>4</sup>

The FGCI presents itself as a mass organisation, which works for young people's future. In the first words of the statute, the youth is not subject to any specific sub classification and the FGCI speaks to the whole category. The same concept comes back in 1962 but if we compare the part of the text above with the "statuto" written in 1962 we can identify some remarkable differences:

La Federazione Giovanile comunista è un'organizzazione di massa, rivoluzionaria, che, nella difesa dei diritti della gioventù e nell'azione per realizzarli, combatte per il rinnovamento democratico e socialista dell'Italia<sup>5</sup>

In the second statute an element catches our attention: the reference to the revolutionary component attributed to the FGCI. In this second document, the democratic renewal of Italy is associated with a possible socialist action. It could be overlooked as a nuance but, from a historical perspective, it denotes a change in terms and deserves a brief analysis. In 1962 the climate of anti-communism that had characterised the 1950s had finally lessened and in the language used by the PCI and FGCI an allusion to revolution could return. Moreover, the revolts of 1960 and 1962 (see chapter 7) had seen the involvement of a large portion of the youth and the PCI and the FGCI had not been able to position themselves at the vanguard of the uprisings. Presumably, then, the word "rivoluzionaria" is used as a means of appealing to that youth who in 1960 and 1962 took the streets showing a political engagement which seemed unexpected. However, if we consider the intention of the PCI of gaining sympathy from larger strata of voters, we can infer that the statement is more concerned with the attraction of the term revolutionary rather than a real intention of revolution. By contrast, the language of the 1957 statute is more composed and reflects the period of crisis that the party was facing.

Later in the text of the statute of 1957 it is indicated that the FGCI has an emancipatory function in society embodying the vanguard of the 'giovani lavoratori delle città e dei villaggi, degli studenti e delle ragazze.'<sup>6</sup> Here, the youth is subdivided into categories and the "ragazze" are located at the end of the list. The same happens in that of 1962 too, but

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<sup>4</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), 73/1229.3, Inv. 5107, IGT, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1962), 73/1281.2, Inv. 5110, IGT, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), p. 3.

with the inclusion of the agricultural workers. Both in 1957 and 1962, the “ragazze” are not defined in terms of their role in society and as in other official documents, they appear as a separate section of interest, as if their claims did not belong to the same sphere of their male counterparts. This separation will return repeatedly and we will discuss it more detail later. It represents an interesting factor, alongside a further notable element. In both statutes the communist youth is described as ‘autonoma,’ a term which reaffirms its independence from the main party. The debate about the autonomy of the juvenile section is a leitmotiv throughout the years of the boom, especially after the PCI congress of 1956. Nonetheless, the claimed independence, in official statements, is not matched by a shift in language that, instead, still relies on the rhetoric of the PCI. A similar language, in fact, characterises both the PCI and the FGCI in their formal communications, becoming a shared code of interchange between the two institutions and between them and the activists. Despite the shared language, at times the FGCI timidly reproached the PCI for not recognising their independence, showing a lack of interest towards them. In fact, as we read in a Turin-based document of 1962: ‘troppe volte i compagni del partito manifestano scarso interesse per la FGCI e non forniscono un reale contributo politico.’<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, we can presume that indifference could also show a lack of attempts to control the youth federation.

In the 1957 statute another pivotal element of the Communist Party jargon is brought to the fore: the reference to Antonio Gramsci and to the history of the PCI which is described as the light of rebellion in the days of fascism. This is a device which recurs often. The party, in fact, holds onto a strong narration of its past which is depicted as a fundamental part of the history of Italy. Its coherent and glorious past functions as a validation of its existence in the Republic. In the same way, the FGCI presents itself in epic terms as an organisation that had been with the youth since the ‘stesso giorno in cui il giovane entrò nella fabbrica e nella officina’ to be exploited by capitalism. This type of historical disquisition is not present in the statute of 1962 which is, instead, shorter and more concise. As we can see, in the section of the statute of 1957 transcribed there is no mention of other typologies of young employees; here the FGCI speaks for and to industrial workers only. The language is pompous, not very communicative and it is a fine example of communist formal rhetoric. In this respect, the martyrs of the communist cause are taken as an ‘esempio luminoso di dedizione alla causa del popolo e della libertà.’<sup>8</sup> In a previous chapter, we have seen how the martyr is a leitmotiv in the left and right wing post war political parties’ discourses

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<sup>7</sup> Congresso provinciale della FGCI di Torino, *Documento sull’organizzazione* (1962), in Fondo PCI/FGCI federazione di Torino, VI [VII] congresso provinciale federazione torinese FGCI, Busta 1, Fasc. 3, IGT, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), p. 4.

especially when they relate to the Resistance. However, its legacy is linked in the 1957 statute with the present and in fact, further on in the text, another element creeps in: the endorsement of the Italian road to socialism, a component which represents a further theme of interest for our research and which was harshly criticized by organs such as *Azione comunista*, for example. In the battle for communism ‘i giovani hanno fatto propria la prospettiva della via italiana al socialismo fissata dall’VIII congresso del Partito’ a year before, whose purpose it is to create ‘nel nostro paese un regime che non sia più quello capitalistico’ but ‘democratico, basato sulle classi lavoratrici e che avvii l’Italia, per volontà e decisione di popolo al socialismo.’<sup>9</sup> In 1962, there is a similar statement and we read that socialism would emancipate ‘definitivamente le nuove generazioni.’ However, in the same statute, there is no mention of how this process should take place, especially when it is clearly stated that the transition should happen inside the rules of the “Costituzione.”<sup>10</sup> A contradiction clearly characterises the latter passage as the rules set by the main political forces had excluded the Communists from power and would not allow a socialist drift of any sort. It is contradictory and yet tells us a lot about what the real intentions are: play the democratic game and walk the new road to socialism without losing a revolutionary twist to the language. However, as we can read in 1957, the main aim of the FGCI remains to fight against ‘la miseria e lo sfruttamento dei giovani e per il diritto della gioventù al lavoro, alla professione, ad un salario corrispondente al lavoro fatto.’ They also fought for ‘il diritto dei giovani allo studio, all’assistenza, allo svago, allo sport’ and for ‘l’emancipazione della donna’ and her ‘felice inserimento nella società.’<sup>11</sup> The reference to pastimes and sport is quite important, as it reaffirms Togliatti’s view of the new party where those elements acquire a powerful meaning, becoming tools to attract the youth. In the statute of 1962 the discourse is similar yet vaguer, but there is another important aspect that is emphasised, the need to ‘affermare i diritti della gioventù nelle lotte per la pace.’<sup>12</sup> The reference to peace is significant as this topic would be at the centre of the PCI’s narrative of the early 1960s, especially after the turmoil created by the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

In both statutes, the FGCI’s principles are progressive in their intentions but we do not find suggestions as to how they should be applied. For example, it is not explained how the right to work and the right to an appropriate salary could be achieved, nor an example of what type of concrete action could be taken. This is not surprising, since the statute

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<sup>9</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), pp. 4-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1962), p.3.

<sup>11</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), pp. 4-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1962), pp. 4-6.

represents the most formal piece of communication for a party, however there is no more clarity in other formal communications, as we will see. The same happens with women's emancipation, a topic that comes back habitually in the PCI and FGCI narrative but it seems to be a double edged weapon, as the reference to it is often at the end of the list and maintains a degree of vagueness. With this topic too, a concrete discourse on how to bring about emancipation is not defined, at least in the statutes and in the documents of the national federation. However, in those issued in a provincial context the topic acquires more profundity as we will discover soon.

In the last pages of the statutes the rights and duties of the members are reported. While in the statute of 1957 the age span goes from fourteen years to twenty five, in 1962 the limit is reduced to twenty one years of age.<sup>13</sup> In both documents it is stressed that the participants are free to criticise the executives, the party and the comrades, and when necessary formally report the complaints. It is a right seen as pivotal to the strategy of the "partito nuovo" which very often, however, is not applied. The expression used to describe the right to criticise is "centralismo democratico", which appears in both statutes. "Centralismo" is at the core of Leninist parties whereby the members have individual responsibilities inside the broader scenario of party unity and they can decide by vote the strategies to endorse. However, when a decision is made, all the members are expected to back it up. Theoretically, this must happen both in the FGCI and in the PCI. The "centralismo" is a small revolution and it is connected to the idea of "policentrismo" and therefore to the Italian road to socialism which is inspired by Leninism. In Togliatti's "policentrismo," the 1950s PCI is an institution which is allied yet independent from Moscow, hence it can structure its internal discussions as it pleases. However, "centralismo" is an ambiguous concept as it is not explained what degree of criticism could be tolerable and above all when criticism is acceptable. As will be discussed, this criticism is always directed to the "base" and the local sections and apparently it never goes from the "base" towards the top.

In both statutes a further important theme appears: "proselitismo," which forms the backbone of activism and of the federation. We will see soon how the same theme appears especially in the province-based documents. In the 1962 statute, the emphasis is on the 'opera di convinzione politica ed ideale verso tutta la gioventù.'<sup>14</sup> The word "ideale" here is used instead of "ideologica", which would be linguistically more appropriate in this context. From a linguistic perspective, the word "ideale" is the sign of a party that wants to

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<sup>13</sup> For Rifondazione Comunista, years later the limit would be extended to thirty years of age.

<sup>14</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1962), p. 7.

communicate to different social strata and a less threatening term which refers to a wider humanitarian context. In 1957 instead, it is said that young people, including the students, should be conquered and addressed towards the “ideologia” (not the ideals) of the working classes: the party must work for ‘la conquista degli studenti all’ideologia e alla politica della classe operaia e del suo partito.’ With the tone of a condescending paternal organ, the party will honour the most zealous members establishing prizes for “lotta e iniziativa” and “reclutamento.”<sup>15</sup>

A last point regards the way that young women are described: in both documents the female militants are called “ragazze” whereas the male militants are “giovani comunisti” or “giovani lavoratori.” In 1957 it is recommended that young women should create separate circles: ‘uno o più gruppi separati che si riuniscano periodicamente, nominano le proprie responsabili e sviluppano, sotto la direzione e con l’impegno di tutto il Circolo, iniziative volte a favorire la partecipazione delle giovani al dibattito.’<sup>16</sup> This concept returns in 1962 but with a larger decision-making power in fact: ‘le singole Federazioni possono decidere di costituire in tutto il loro territorio o in una parte di esso circoli separati di ragazze.’<sup>17</sup> Besides the disquisition about separate or not separate sub-circles, it is interesting to see how, although a certain independence is allowed, the main (male) group is at the top of the hierarchical ladder, and controls the action of women’s clubs. In this respect women are treated with a degree of detachment, diminished in their capabilities and power of decision. This is a tendency that would be kept alive in the years to come both on the right and left of politics. Institutions and parties, at least until the 1970s when new forms of political involvement finally developed, struggled to get rid of paternalism and chauvinism towards the female activists.

The focus on female activism is a backbone of the party during the late 1950s and early 1960s and if we look at FGCI formal documents issued in a provincial context, Turin in this case, we can see how the attention to the real lives of young women is more pronounced than in the statutes and bears closer relation to their activities. For example, a document called *Informazione e direttive*, from the FGCI-Comitato Centrale (8 November 1957) with special focus on the province of Turin, can be exemplary in demonstrating how the discourse around female voters and activists is carried out. In the document, a bulletin about the pro-peace demonstrations, which had taken place in the autumn of 1957 is put forward by the “Comitato Centrale” and is relevant to the perception of women. According to the writing, the pro-peace rallies were successful throughout the North of Italy and also

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<sup>15</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957), p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Statuto della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1962), p. 11.

the mainstream press gave space to the actions. Despite it, the FGCI is not happy about the situation in Turin as the preparatory organisation had not been ‘all’altezza della gravità della situazione e dei pericoli che minacciano la pace.’ However, apparently, the best results came from Emilia Romagna and Veneto whose female adherents wrote letters to the UN to ask for disarmament.<sup>18</sup> This statement leads to a reflection on the role of women in the federation. It is a duty of FGCI female members to fight ‘affinché i temi dell’emancipazione femminile [...] si traducano in azione’ it is moreover important to reinforce the propaganda of the federation among girls for ‘il peso specifico che essa è suscettibile di assumere,’ for this reason, their involvement must be at the centre of the action of proselytising. It is necessary to ‘individuare in ogni zona e provincia i settori fondamentali di lavoratrici da chiamare all’azione.’<sup>19</sup> The main aim is the gaining of better conditions in the workplace and an increase of the salary for female workers, which should shorten the gap with their male colleagues. In order to include more women in the ranks, the FGCI proposes organising celebrations specifically for female labourers such as the “festa nazionale delle caterinette” or “festa nazionale delle commesse.” It is also suggested that they should initiate a dialogue with young Catholic women: ‘più ampio deve farsi il contatto con le giovani cattoliche’ and ‘l’attacco e la denuncia delle responsabilità della Democrazia Cristiana’ must be stronger.<sup>20</sup>

Two important aspects of the Turin document are: first of all, unlike in the statutes and formal documents addressed to congresses, in this one, we can identify concrete solutions or proposals in order to get closer to female activists. Women, who had been briefly mentioned in the texts already examined, here assume more solid traits. In short, the document explains why the support of female sympathizers is important and how they should be involved. However, the fact that the struggle for better work conditions should aim only at an increase of salary rather than equality with men is a clear indication of the mentality of the time. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate once more how the Communist Party tried to offer a more progressive discussion of thorny topics often neglected by other parties. Another important aspect is the criticism and the encouragement to work better that we have seen earlier.<sup>21</sup> From what we have seen so far, the image that clearly emerges is

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<sup>18</sup> FGCI-Comitato Centrale, *Informazioni e direttive* (8 November 1957) in Fondo PCI/FGCI, *Organismi direttivi 1958-1964*, Busta 8, Fasc 1, IGT, p.1.

<sup>19</sup> *Informazioni e direttive*, p. 3

<sup>20</sup> *Informazioni e direttive*, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> This is a recurring theme throughout the documents of the late 1950s. In *Risoluzione del Comitato federale torinese della FGCI* (June 1958), in Fondo PCI/FGCI federazione di Torino, *Organismi direttivi 1958-1964*, busta 8, fasc. 1, issued after the elections, we can read that: ‘debbano destare motivo di allarme i risultati ottenuti tra i giovani nel complesso della provincia di Torino ed il rovesciamento delle tendenze del 1953.’ More young people voted DC in 1958 and, according to the text, this event could be linked to ‘la politica

that of the FGCI that – at least in formal communication, which is only one of the ways to look at the federation – seems to rely on the main jargon of the PCI. In the statutes analysed the institution addresses its effort to young male workers. At the same time, however, it does not exclude other categories from its agenda. However, categories such “studenti” or “ragazze” are still looked at as sub-categories, useful members to drive the wider cause of the dream of a proletarian society. These groups do not have a defined role and they do not find an actual space in the most formal and official narrative. On the other hand, when we look at the documents issued in a provincial context the situation changes slightly: the themes are the same (female activism, proselytisation and so on) but there is more attention towards activists’ reality and some ideas and solutions are put forward

## 5.2. *The guidelines inside the federation and a reflection on the “condizione giovanile”*

After this brief analysis of the FGCI’s understanding of its role in society, we now aim to broaden out our discussion of its approach to the “questione giovanile” to the way that it addresses the topic in other official documents, from the late 1950s until 1962. The year 1962 is fundamental for Italy, as the climax and the beginning of the end of the boom. Moreover, it is the year of the XXII congress of the CPUS, the beginning of détente and the eve of the first centre-left government, loaded with hopes that would be disappointed in the years to come. Moreover, the same year saw the reform of national education, which established the “scuola media unica.” From the point of view of activism and disobedience, 1962 witnessed the revolts of Piazza Statuto in Turin that symbolised and elicited a fresh direction in political approach of young people: an aspect that the PCI did not understand nor discuss and at times steadily opposed, as seen in 5.3 and chapter 7.

Having examined the FGCI statutes, and having looked at a provincial document to identify the differences in talking to female members, let us now see how the FGCI speaks to its members, a national context. In this section we will look at a document issued by the FGCI in the framework of its XV national congress (June 1957). As we have mentioned, in 1957 the strategy of the new party starts to be implemented. The PCI congress of 1956 had sketched a new trajectory of independence from Moscow: let us see to what extent the FGCI follows this line and how it tackles certain themes such as the “questione giovanile” in a text which is still formal and related to a national context but that wants to discuss specific topics. The document is the *Tesi della FGCI: Una più forte FGCI nella lotta per*

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clericale della DC, nei ricatti e nelle discriminazioni per il lavoro, nella propaganda’ but later in the document the FGCI reproach its members for not having established a better dialogue with the youth, pp. 1-3.



*la via italiana al socialismo: per l'educazione democratica delle nuove generazioni: Tesi approvate dal 15. Congresso Nazionale della Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana* (1957) and – in particular – it sheds light on the intentions of the youth federation after the changes of 1956.

After a brief summary of the history of the youth federation, expounded in glorifying terms, as in the statutes, the federation itself take responsibility for its past mistakes, noting that ‘non sempre la FGCI ha assolto a tutti i suoi compiti fra la gioventù’ as on many occasions ‘non seppe cogliere tutti gli elementi nuovi della situazione del mondo giovanile.’<sup>22</sup> The self-criticism responds to the climate of reconsideration already carried out by the main party, which is one of the pillars of Togliatti’s new strategy. However, while the FGCI subjects itself to criticism, the same does not happen within the ruling class of the PCI as Togliatti’s 1955 document, *Messaggio al XIV congresso nazionale della Fgci*, analysed earlier demonstrates. Like Ingrao and Togliatti (in 1958 and 1960 respectively), the FGCI admits that it has not succeeded in directing the energies of the youth towards a coherent political effort. Similar statements occur in the provincial documents mentioned above too. Nonetheless, the federation still claims its monopoly on a generation difficult to manage, different from the past. One interesting section of the document is an attempt to give a description of the ‘mondo giovanile italiano.’ For the FGCI, the ‘mondo giovanile italiano [...] presenta caratteristiche nuove’ and it is oriented towards living ‘una vita moderna, più felice e più libera,’ a statement that we will also find in *Vie nuove* and *Nuova generazione*, for instance. Here, again, more detail on these characteristics is not put forward. However, for the FGCI there is still an ‘adesione di larghe masse di giovani agli ideali della Resistenza’ which are not specified in concrete words, but in the meantime ‘la grande borghesia ha ricercato nuove forme di iniziative per mantenere in piedi il suo dominio’ and seduce the youth.<sup>23</sup> The latter is the usual recurring theme that we have seen above. These associations, according to the text, are based only on the exaltation of individualism, comments which apparently align the federation with the messages of the PCI leaders looked at before. Like the PCI, the FGCI is also predisposed to blame external factors for the decrease in youth involvement, without paying much attention to its own efforts and to the complexity of contemporary society and without understanding that, probably, the impatience of the young masses responds to different stimuli and cannot be easily channelled through the code of strict party-identity. In this respect, for the Youth Federation a new effort to gain the consideration of young masses is necessary and it has to

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<sup>22</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale* (1957), 149/2914, Bid. 1E10047411, Inv. 21408, IGT, pp. 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 8.

include, besides the workers, ‘i contadini, gli intellettuali, il ceto medio produttivo, le popolazioni del Mezzogiorno, le masse dei giovani e delle donne.’ In this way, the text represents Togliatti’s strategy of opening the party to different sections of society. Nevertheless, in the text, the Southerners are neither described by their role in society nor gender and the sub-categorization echoes the slight snobbery or detachment that the PCI often had towards the Southerners. Southern Italy appears to be a separate sphere, a different world. A similar labelling regards women, who are here placed together with young masses. It is the same attitude that characterises the statutes, for instance. Later in the document although it is recognised that, in the effort of renewal ‘sia pure in gradi e forme diverse sono partecipi anche le ragazze italiane’ on the other hand, there is ‘scarsamente presente fra le giovani un atteggiamento politico consapevole’ since the influence of the Church is stronger among them.<sup>24</sup> The statement is not backed-up by statistics or numbers whatsoever and nowadays it sounds patronising and maybe chauvinist to a certain degree, but we have to consider that in 1950s Italy, women in Italian society were still relegated to the role of mothers and wives. This was a persistent fact of women’s lives on which, for instance, the propaganda of main parties in 1948, DC specially, was played. It was not rare to read on posters from that year’s election statements where women, often termed ‘mamma’ or ‘donna d’Italia’, were supposed to save their children and families from the danger of bolshevism by voting for the Christian Democrats.<sup>25</sup> Although the terms used by the FGCI are slightly old-fashioned, it must be recognised that the Communists, at least, tried to include women in their action by encouraging the ‘rispetto della donna, e la comprensione della sua piena uguaglianza di diritti con l’uomo.’<sup>26</sup> In this respect, it is worth considering that in the same document under the heading “disoccupazione giovanile e analfabetismo” it is said that FCGI fights for an education ‘libera, formativa,’ orientated verso la ‘parità’ and energetically despises the ‘angusto concetto di economia domestica’ in schools, because women and girls must have access to all sectors of society. An element endorsed in the light of the ‘concetto gramsciano della difesa e dello sviluppo della personalità del giovane come produttore cosciente.’<sup>27</sup> The criticism of the ‘economia domestica’ is somewhat revolutionary if we consider that it was a well-established subject in Italian schools until 1977.

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<sup>24</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> On this topic: Paolo Mancini, *Il manifesto politico. Per una semiologia del consenso* (Torino: Eri, 1980); Paolo Mancini, *Manuale di comunicazione pubblica* (Bari: Laterza, 2002) and Gianpietro Mazzoleni, *La comunicazione politica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 43.

In the document other points are sketched as well, for example the support given by young Communists to the liberation movements in the middle-east, a topic which recurs very often in formal and less formal documents, and also in the ones released by *Azione comunista*. Close to the conclusion, a heading called “FGCI rinnovata e forte al servizio della causa della democrazia” demonstrates the support of the federation to the line stated at the 1956 PCI congress. In fact excessive bureaucracy must be eliminated as autonomy becomes a key word. In support of this argument and of that uttered by Togliatti previously reported, Lenin, again, is quoted: ‘le nuove generazioni giungono al socialismo per vie diverse da quelle dei padri e che di conseguenza è indispensabile la più ampia autonomia di iniziativa politica della organizzazione rivoluzionaria della gioventù.’<sup>28</sup> By writing these words, the FGCI appears totally aligned with Togliatti’s idea of new party, claiming its independence which would come in different ways. Then, the stress goes again on the monopoly of free time held by the Church: the “federazione,” in fact, must tackle ‘lo sforzo della chiesa’ that ‘è oggi essenzialmente diretto a conquistare i giovani andando incontro alla soddisfazione di certe loro esigenze sul piano associativo.’<sup>29</sup> This part is similar to what Ingrao would say a year later in the document we saw before. According to the FGCI, the Church wants to curb young people’s joy of living and revolutionary aspirations giving them innocent pastimes but a way to tackle the problem is only sketched and not indicated. The ‘tardivo arrivo del capitalismo’ and ‘nuovi strumenti’ potentially made the scope of ‘attività associative’ broader. And these are the ‘nuove esigenze di cui il movimento deve prendere coscienza.’ However, as far as recreation is concerned, television and cinema are stigmatised for their immorality, they are defined as non-educative and the attention is, instead, focused on other activities such as reading or the promotion of tourism, which is a crucial point also in *Nuova generazione*.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, a debate on “americanismo” in Italy is offered. In the heading “la penetrazione dell’americanismo tra i giovani italiani” it is explained that Americanisation is the product of an ‘azione ideologica delle classi dominanti.’ Although dangerous ‘non è giunto a conquistare, a dare un indirizzo generale, a distorcere la coscienza politica e sociale’ of the youth. This happened thanks to the effort of the PCI and its youth federation. So, if young people feel a ‘generica simpatia’ for the American way of life they reject ‘le manifestazioni più deteriori (il gangsterismo, il teppismo e la delinquenza giovanile).’<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, the FGCI understands that Americanisation was appealing for the youth because it

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<sup>28</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, pp. 63-66.

embodied an aspiration to a freer life, but it does not seem to grasp, or does not want to grasp, that for many young people Americanisation was much more. Through pop culture it gave them the chance to create an identity outside the institutions or restrictions of 1950s society. In the years of the boom, this aspiration is not supported by the FGCI and we are far away from the reality of the Feste dell'Unità developed from the 1970s onwards.<sup>32</sup> For many young people of the 1950s the creation of another kind of identity was, of course, also expressed through music, fashion and pop culture in general. It is not by chance that among the pastimes suggested by the FGCI, dancing and music are not included and cinema and television are overtly stigmatised. According to the federation, the Americanised approach to free time was not educational, and these forms of 'associazione spontanea dei giovani' were the factors 'che rendono più stentata la vita di tutti i movimenti giovanili.'<sup>33</sup> Thus, although in this official document the discussion of the "questione giovanile" is more attentive, the general approach is no different from that executed by the PCI and the spontaneous peer-to-peer grouping is, again, reproached. This is a patent undervaluation, as peer grouping is an element that would characterise young people's relationships in the years to come becoming the blueprint of the protests of 1960 and 1962. If we consider our analysis from a schematic standpoint, we could affirm that on the one hand there is the very general PCI discourse on youth problems, conveyed through official documents and main members' speeches. Then, in between, we find the effort of the FGCI's formal communication aiming to reach a compromise between the line indicated by the main party and a sincere determination to understand youth issues through a more profound analysis of the climate. This emerges especially in the province-based documents. At the other end of the scale, instead, we will find the approach of magazines such as *Nuova generazione* or *Vie nuove* whose aim it is to open a discussion with the readers and develop an understanding which is more independent and thoughtful (see chapter 6).

As seen in the documents analysed so far, in the late 1950s, the FGCI seems not to be able to decipher young people's lives and habits fully. The documents, in fact, show that the FGCI struggles to accept certain peer-to-peer dynamics that began to characterise young people's free time, discrediting, for example, the influence of Americanisation on young Italians. This will appear in informal communication too (see chapter 6).

In the next section, through the analysis of the attitude of the Turin FGCI after the revolts of Piazza Statuto in 1962 (see chapter 7 for a fuller analysis of the events) we will

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<sup>32</sup> A brilliant description of these events could be found in the incipit of S.Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*.

<sup>33</sup> *Tesi della FGCI approvata dal XV Congresso nazionale*, pp. 63-66.

demonstrate how this discrepancy reaches the point of no return, broadening the gap between the institution and the new social reality of the young “operaio massa” that characterises industrialism of the early 1960s. In this respect, the revolts of 1962 represent a watershed between the Communists and the younger generations, a first crack in their communication that would grow in the following years.

### 5.3 The FGCI in Turin in 1962

*Capo capo reparto/ rallenta la catena  
Che voglio restar vivo/ Prima che suoni la sirena [...]  
Come vorrei che fosse ieri/ Vorrei un fine settimana  
Ma oggi è lunedì/ Si ricomincia la catena  
(Statuto, In fabbrica 2005)*

*Ti ricordi a fine mese  
non ci arrivi con le spese  
hai buttato un paio d'ore per sognar  
e ti vesti in fretta in fretta  
corri in fabbrica e t'aspetta  
una sirena che non è quella del mar  
(Paolo Pietrangeli, Pensa un po' 1969)*

In this section we will focus on a case study of the city of Turin, based on a number of local documents released after July 1962. Our intention is to show how these FGCI texts ignored the massive presence of young people, especially migrant workers, in the revolt of Piazza Statuto which will be analysed in the last chapter in more detail. In fact, the documents completely avoided an analysis of the clashes embracing the same attitude of denial that we will see for the PCI.

The early 1960s are a pivotal period for Italian history. Besides being the apex of the boom, and the years of the first centre-left government, they epitomised the peak of the process of internal migrations directed towards Turin and other industrial cities. From this standpoint, it is peculiar to see how this hot topic is completely avoided in the communication of the Turin youth federations below. A well-structured discourse about migrants and their conditions does not appear in the FGCI formal texts of the time and the negation of the problem could denote an example of certain degree of detachment of the PCI towards the Southerners and the new workers in general that we have noted above. At the same time, it could also denote a lack of understanding by the Communist Party of the state of the affairs in the country. Prominent left wing intellectuals, like the philosopher Mario Tronti for example, also formulated statements in which the new workers were described as an

uncouth race without conscience that needed redemption and political education.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, internal migrations resonated for decades, as a leitmotiv for songwriters and artists close to the left-wing. For example, a song by Gianfranco Manfredi, *Quarto Oggiaro story*, written a decade after, in 1977, tackles the subject with irony.<sup>35</sup> The protagonist, a sophisticated left wing intellectual, meets a southern working class girl whose ‘la coscienza politica è proprio scarsa,’ a woman who he tries to educate with humorous results. Migration also finds a place in Lucio Dalla/Roberto Roversi’s *Un’auto targata TO* in which the singer utters ‘Mattoni su mattoni, sono condannati i terroni/ a costruire per gli altri appartamenti da cinquanta milioni,’<sup>36</sup> words that if applied to the context of late 1950s and early 1960s Turin sound particularly appropriate.

The other event that from a historical perspective marked Italian history, specifically the year 1962, is the riot of Piazza Statuto in Turin, in July, in which many young workers newly migrated from the South were involved. The event does not feature in the official FGCI narrative of that year, and coincidentally the PCI has always denied any responsibility, labelling the violence of the clashes as the product of infiltrators. They were investigated by other left-wing papers like *Quaderni piacentini* for example, but not by the PCI and the FGCI. While the revolts of two years earlier (July 1960) were included in the discourse of the Communist Party and the youth that took part was praised for its courage, the same does not happen with the events of 1962.

Before discussing these areas further, it is worth looking at how the FGCI perceived itself in that period and how it approached a drop in numbers of young members. More than before, in fact, between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s the Youth Federation of the Italian Communist Party started looking at its role in society in order to offer a qualitative judgment on its work among young people. Also in a place like Turin, then one of golden cities for the workers’ movement, the FGCI appeared preoccupied about the decline in young men and women among its ranks.<sup>37</sup> In a document on the organisation of Turin FGCI’s VI provincial congress (September 1962), it is stated that from 10,000 young members at the beginning of the 1950s the number had gone down to only 2,100 in 1960. However the causes of the fall were not attributed to the difficulty of the party in speaking with the new generations – and this is shown clearly by the lack of any mention of the

<sup>34</sup> Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Torino: einaudi, 1971).

<sup>35</sup> G. Manfredi, *Quarto Oggiaro story* (1977).

<sup>36</sup> R. Roversi and L. Dalla, *Un’auto targata TO* (1973).

<sup>37</sup> Or as Diego Novelli, PCI mayor of Turin between 1975 and 1985 would say that Torino was the city that had ‘la concentrazione della piu’ grande forza finanziaria economica e industriale e la più grande forza organizzata del movimento dei lavoratori’ in *La storia siamo noi. Torino violenta*. The documentary could be watched on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_oD7O5hpNT0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oD7O5hpNT0).

clashes of July. Instead they were traced to the climate of reaction created by conservative forces inside work places: the decrease, in fact, took place, it is said, ‘in conseguenza dell’offensiva che la FIAT e la DC avevano scatenato contro il movimento operaio e democratico,’ as declared in the *Documento sull’organizzazione* of the provincial congress already cited.<sup>38</sup> As often happened in official communications, and has been noted elsewhere in this thesis, the party was prompt to lay the blame on external factors rather than analysing itself. In this case it is of course possible to affirm that the mid-1950s and early 1960s clampdowns on Communists inside the factories had played a part in weakening the workers’ fighting spirit, but perhaps the scenario affected the old guard of workers rather more than the younger generations. In the mid-1950s, when FIAT ‘investì nella catena di produzione della “600” e della “500” and every year ‘si rendevano vacanti 30,000 posti di lavoro nell’industria,’ new migrants moved to the city.<sup>39</sup> Until that moment many of the internal immigrants had been unskilled labourers relegated to the building industry or to odd jobs of various types. With the new production line, instead, they were finally allowed to enter the gates of the factory. This fresh flood of labourers from Southern Italy was different from the skilled and politically more conscious veterans of the factory. Soon they became the subject for intellectuals like Renato Panzieri to develop theoretical strands such as “operaismo” in order to give ‘a particular focus on actual class struggles in factories, as opposed to political parties’ manoeuvrings within the established institutions’ and spur the new workers to a revolt.<sup>40</sup> What was, on the other hand, the position of PCI in dealing with those first arrivals? At that stage, the PCI was in an ‘oggettiva debolezza’ and according to Michelangela Di Giacomo this is a useful lens to ‘leggere l’atteggiamento che assunse nei loro confronti, improntato ad una certa discontinuità e vaghezza.’<sup>41</sup> Over the same years, newspapers and journals linked to the party were torn on the issue of migration developing an actual reflection about it only later on. Some prominent communist theorists judged migration as a product of the distorted development of the country’s economy, and they would propose a policy of job opportunities in the South.<sup>42</sup> Others, instead, blamed the party for not being able to understand the migrants’ mentality. As Raffaele Pastore a member of the Turin board

<sup>38</sup> Congresso provinciale della FGCI di Torino, *Documento sull’organizzazione* (1962), p.1.

<sup>39</sup> In Stefano Musso, *Il lungo miracolo economico, Industria, economia e società (1950-1970)*, in Nicola Tranfaglia (a cura di), *Storia di Torino, vol. 9 Gli anni della Repubblica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> Jan-Werner Muller, *Contesting Democracy: Political ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Yale University: 2011), p.191.

<sup>41</sup> Michelangela Di Giacomo, *Pci e migrazioni interne nella Torino del “miracolo”* in *Diacronie: Studi di Storia Contemporanea* n.9 (January 2012), pp. 2-4.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Gerardo Chiaromonte, *L’immigrazione dal mezzogiorno al consiglio provinciale di Torino*, in *Cronache meridionali*, (1 gennaio 1958), pp. 7-15.

would affirm: I have ‘l’impressione che i nostri compagni non vogliono e soprattutto non sanno parlare a costoro, perché non ne conoscono la mentalità e le idee.’<sup>43</sup>

The social change was getting more and more complicated and like the PCI, the FGCI leaders too, at least in the official documents, were not capable of putting forward a broad discourse about the modernisation of customs and identities which was taking place. This happened especially in Turin, a social environment that was facing a time of complexity, a city that until 1955 ‘si presentava come una piccola città di provincia,’ where in less than ten years ‘sono immigrate oltre trecentomila persone nella sola città.’<sup>44</sup> It is worth keeping in mind that Turin had become the most industrialised place of the peninsula; a process symbolised also by events such as the 1961 industrial exhibition, Italia ‘61. However, despite its prominent role, the city was still not ready to welcome and give accommodation to the large numbers of labourers who – until the late 1970s – would often live in utter alienation, lodging in run down council flats.<sup>45</sup> It is enough to look at documentaries like Ugo Zatterin’s *Meridionali a Torino* (1961) or *I bambini e noi* (1970) by Luigi Comencini, to get an idea of the complete squalor in which some of those people lived. In short, an immense change was happening and it is likely that the drop in membership in the Youth Federation could not be attributed solely to the conservative power that seized free time, healthcare, school education and social services, as the FGCI document cited affirms. It was rather a structural problem related to a fast-paced generation almost impossible to read through the habitual lens that had been used until then. Nevertheless, until 1955, at least 17% of Turin working class youth was still part of the FGCI, as Stephen Gundle highlights, decreasing at a fast pace in the following years.<sup>46</sup> The datum indicates that after 1955 a real shift in the texture of the city in general and amongst the youth in particular had taken place. As Gundle tells us the Communists were ‘unable to grasp fully the implications of the transformation or go beyond a limited evolution for many years,’ at least as far as reading societal fluctuations was concerned.<sup>47</sup> However, in 1956 the FGCI gave birth to the magazine *Nuova generazione*, which was an attempt to improve its ability to speak to young members and to broaden its readership, using a language which was far from the

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<sup>43</sup> In Michelangela Di Giacomo, *Pci e migrazioni interne nella Torino del “miracolo,”* p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Michelangela Di Giacomo, *Pci e migrazioni interne nella Torino del “miracolo,”* p. 1.

For more about migration in Turin: Goffredo Fofi, *L’immigrazione meridionale a Torino* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1961).

<sup>45</sup> To get an image of the precarious conditions of immigrants in Turin: AA. VV. *Lotte operaie a Torino. L’esperienza dei Cub, Comitati Unitari di base* (Milano: Punto Rosso, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> S. Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p.66.

<sup>47</sup> S. Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p. 76.



formal rhetoric (see chapter 6).<sup>48</sup> Conversely, in the official documents analysed (statutes, relations, messages of elder leaders and so on) actual youth problems were seldom discussed. Even when this did occur, there was no real attempt to elucidate the details of their origins. Amongst the issues we could refer to, two, for example, are paramount in demonstrating slowness in accepting the concrete conditions of the country: a debate on internal young migration fluxes and one on the influence of pop culture on youth's individualities. To this, as far as 1962 is concerned, a supplementary bizarre omission must be added which is the denial of a discussion around a thorny question such as the revolts of piazza Statuto.

The topics discussed in the documents of 1962 instead, encompass a series of analyses about the working conditions of young people in factories after which, a scrutiny of their participation in politics, usually follows. Young people's life was – therefore – linked to their role in the factory as activists. This, usually, does not apply to young women. Their role in the association is a constant point of interest but they appear to be considered more as a gender category than a work-related category. Besides these clusters of debate, we always find a condemnation, at times purely formulaic, of the 'padronato', a focus that ends up being the rhetorical spine. The discourse about peace usually crops up as well, in general terms and with reference to liberation movements throughout the world. As far as young factory workers are concerned, let us take a further look at the *Documento sull'organizzazione* in which is debated the difficulty of creating a factory nucleus that could be steady, politically committed and active. It is said that young workers get together only on the occasion of strikes, and, at the same time, the quality of their exchanges with activist students is also discussed. Apparently, the nature of these exchanges must have been weak as a 'divisione tra base operativa and elite collaborativa' seemed to grow. It was the year 1962 and from the beginning of the decade more students had begun to approach the PCI.<sup>49</sup> As seen, this was a staple of Togliatti's strategy, whereby the intellectuals must take part in the party's growth. This is a tendency that would reach its apex in the following decades. The aforementioned *Documento* also offers a critical point of view on some other important themes already encountered, such as the free time of young workers. In the view of the provincial headquarters, throughout the previous years, the city

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<sup>48</sup> In that period the federation made an attempt to understand the reading preferences of communist boys and girls realising that the majority of them bought magazines or 'rotocalchi' such as *Intrepido*, *Annabella* and *Grand Hotel*, items that actually sold way more than publications like *Avanguardia* or *Noi donne*. S. Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow*, p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> To get an idea of the impact of PCI on students it is worth looking at FGCI, *L'azione politica e l'impegno culturale degli studenti comunisti* (Direzione nazionale della FGCI: 1962), F.D.PCI Op. 1208, Inv. 000122892 / 1 op, BFG.

federations focused their attention ‘soltanto alcune questioni, sovente marginali’ like ‘lo sport, la sala da ballo’ without debating real problems.<sup>50</sup> This understanding of the matter signals a schism between the guidelines of the main federation and the *modus operandi* of the local branches which had surely more knowledge of young people’s needs. The branches were aware that free time was a matter of no secondary importance and thus it was also a useful tool to attract the youth. A similar condescending approach could be found in the *Mozione conclusiva* attached to *Documento sull’organizzazione* but released straight after the provincial congress of September 1962. In the text the provincial FGCI headquarters stated that of course Turin youth federation fights for the forty hours contract, implying an endorsement of the possibility of ‘usufruire di una libertà di tempo più grande.’ However, this must be directed towards the ‘elevamento culturale delle masse operaie’ from which leisure pastimes such as dancing or sport are implicitly excluded. As in many PCI documents, the Youth Federation expresses itself in a patronising fashion also averring that it must be avoided that in his free time ‘il giovane si trovi immerso in una realtà alienante senza avere strumenti e possibilità di agire.’<sup>51</sup> It is a clear message that could be reconnected to the historical roots of socialist parties whose first purpose was represented by the education of the masses and that here shows also reluctance in accepting young people’s reality and pastimes. Another important theme is the way in which the line taken by unions such as UIL or CISL in the previous months is criticised, and this is very important for our research. Their action is censured along with ‘le pratiche scissionistiche condotte dai sindacati padronali e in particolare l’indegno atteggiamento della UIL torinese in questi ultimi tempi.’<sup>52</sup> The criticism implicitly refers to the position of the UIL in the days of the agreement between unions and FIAT, a failure which would lead to the clashes of Piazza Statuto (see chapter 7). What interests us here is the lack of clear references to a pivotal watershed for the workers’ movement in which a considerable number of young people had taken part, many of them Southerners. The FGCI compromises a little, blaming the UIL but avoiding a single word on what had happened in July. According to the majority of newspapers, *l’Unità* included, the young rioters were mainly Southerners and were soon labelled in the same way as 1950s teddy boys: hooligans, “teppisti.” The revolt had been violent, almost wild, and, as said, the PCI always denied any connection with the ferocious clashes, affirming that the young people engaged were infiltrators.<sup>53</sup> A few scholars and journalists, instead, offered a different point of view. For instance, Umberto

<sup>50</sup> *Documento sull’organizzazione* (1962), pp.1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Congresso provinciale della FGCI di Torino, *Mozione conclusiva* (1962), in Fondo PCI/FGCI federazione di Torino in VI [VII] congresso provinciale federazione torinese FGCI, Busta 1, Fasc. 3, IGT, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Mozione conclusiva*, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> See the description that Diego Novelli gives of the revolt in chapter 7.

Segre in *il Giorno* clarifies the point put forward here, saying that: ‘I fermati di Torino sono quasi tutti giovani tra i 17 e 25 anni, niente affatto teppisti professionali, anzi per lo più incensurati; più immigrati che torinesi ma non per questo disoccupati bensì lavoratori già ingranati,’ according to Segre the revolt was ‘un tipo di associazione spontanea [...] sono i giovani che a Torino si affacciano alle soglie di una società industriale.’<sup>54</sup> Segre is not aiming to criticise, but rather tries to suggest a more profound understanding of the facts. In another article in *il Ponte* he goes back to the same topic explaining that those workers were exhausted by the policy of procrastination of the FIOM and the PCI, in fact: those ‘gruppi di operai già ricercano metodi più netti, consapevolzze meno lamentose, aggiornamenti più risoluti e decisi alla lotta.’ In the end of the text Segre also affirms: ‘l’esistenza di gruppi come questo, misto di giovani socialisti e comunisti, è un avvertimento’ in order to spur the two left wing parties, and unions, to a more resolute action.<sup>55</sup> In the same wavelength another left-wing journal like *Quaderni piacentini* puts forward a similar point: young people ‘manifestano soprattutto il proprio sdegno, la propria insofferenza nei confronti delle istituzioni da cui sono intrappolati e limitati [...] le manifestazioni di piazza [...] tengono desta l’esigenza di una nuova definizione di democrazia come partecipazione diretta.’<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, the silence in official documents of the FGCI clearly shows how it mutely followed the line dictated by the PCI. In fact, a real reflection on the event could have been a weak spot for the party as it would have demonstrated the PCI’s incapability of communicating with the young ‘meridionali’ and contemporary youth in general. Moreover, their silence could also show that the Communist Party did not have any real intention of starting an effective counter offence. If we take, for instance, another “comunicato” of autumn 1962 *Note sulla gioventù operaia torinese* issued by the local FGCI, we can easily see how the federation was able to report statistics about the number of young people working in various categories of productions. It includes their age or past curriculum but, on the other hand, a discourse on provenance and life conditions of the new workers is not even outlined. It is stated that ‘divenire una forza produttiva, essere auto-sufficiente sono gli obbiettivi del giovane’ together with ‘la conquista della libertà dalla soggezione familiare ed una esperienza nuova,’ but it is explained neither where these young people came from nor what complexities in life forced them to work in a

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<sup>54</sup> U. Segre, *Ma chi sono gli arrabbiati di Torino?* in *Il Giorno* (13 July 1962), in G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 204.

<sup>55</sup> U. Segre, *Piazza Statuto e altre* in *il Ponte* (July 1962), in G. Craiz, *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Piergiorgio Bellocchio, Cerchi Grazia, *Appunti per un bilancio delle recenti manifestazioni di piazza*, in *Quaderni piacentini* n. 6 (1962)

factory.<sup>57</sup> The description of young people's purposes sounds idealistic and rooted in an image which is clear-cut and far from reality. The lure of a new life had an influence on that choice, but the scenario was multi-faceted and the reasons more intricate, especially when the sordid life conditions of many of them are considered.

A different description of the uprising can be found in another text written by the national federation about the preparation of the FGCI XVII national congress (October 1962) that succeeds in shining light on the way the official communications of the Youth Federation treated the "questione giovanile," the youth and its revolt. It is called *L'unità della nuova generazione per lo sviluppo democratico e socialista d'Italia*. In it we can find a reference to a further document issued after the XVI national congress, held straight after the Genoa clashes (1960). This is an opportunity to describe that uprising in epic terms: the riot that 'dalle Alpi alla Sicilia aveva scosso nelle giornate di luglio grande masse di giovani.'<sup>58</sup> The national federation stresses how the generation who participated in the riot was an original grouping of people who came out of the blue and showed an unexpected political awareness. The point about their originality is nonetheless debatable. As one of the main focuses of our research shows, that generation already existed previously and the rage of Italian teddy boys throughout the late 1950s, for example, was one of the symptoms of discomfort which would explode in July 1960. However, in this document, the clashes of 1960 acquire positive value. The same does not happen, on the other hand, with the revolts of Piazza Statuto which are neither analysed nor considered as another turning point – and probably more important for the workers' movement – in the approach of politicised youth. They are, in fact subtly stigmatised: as 'l'assenza dei giovani da taluni aspetti della battaglia ideale e politica [...] contrasta con lo slancio impetuoso di tipo nuovo nelle battaglie rivendicative' which could turn into a symptom of an 'esaltazione della "modernità" fine a se stessa.' The Youth Federation lingers, instead, on the revolt of 1960, and through a dose of self-criticism takes responsibility for having exalted 'il momento della spontaneità di certe lotte, di certe ribellioni piuttosto che sviluppare [...] una vasta azione di propaganda, di agitazione, di organizzazione.'<sup>59</sup> Although the self-reproach refers to the events of 1960, from our point of view it can be easily applied to the party's reaction after July 1962. Nevertheless, regardless of the praise for the courage of the youth revolt of 1960 the FGCI does not interpret that spontaneous uprising as a fresh breath in young disobedience. The generational "spontaneismo" is not endorsed nor understood, it is not

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<sup>57</sup> *Note sulla gioventù operaia torinese* (1962) in Fondo PCI/FGCI federazione di Torino, Busta 28, Fasc. 1, IGT, pp. 1-3.

<sup>58</sup> *L'unità della nuova generazione per lo sviluppo democratico e socialista d'Italia* (1962), 73/1281.1, Inv. 5109, IGT, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> *L'unità della nuova generazione* p. 15.

read as a symbolic momentum for young people who claimed peer-to-peer unity but in a context of individual and generational change. In fact the headquarters state: ‘sebbene i giovani siano per loro natura meno integrati negli interessi concreti di una classe sociale, la loro unità non può essere concepita in modo mitico.’ This last passage puts into words the contradiction of the federation’s approach: on the one hand it is conscious of its loss of power in a society which was progressing quickly but on the other it holds firmly to the interpretative lens of Marxism and class struggle. And, from this perspective, the overlooking of the 1962 clashes is even more absurd, that being a pure worker’s revolt. The importance of the Genoa clashes, instead, was rooted in the varied class backgrounds of the participants. It was in fact an uprising that targeted reactionary trends and the taking part of different strata of society indicates that a part of the late 1950s youth considered itself less in terms of social classes. It was a generation which saw in the arrogance of MSI an open attack on their world built on an identity also based on pop passions, dress codes and so on.

The narrative of *L’unità della nuova generazione* moves along two different tracks. On the one hand, we have the FGCI self-analysis of its approach to the revolt of 1960; on the other the document subtly reproaches the rioters of 1962 without including any type of reflection on it. For example, the text does not take into account that, inside factories, among the politically organised young people and in the country in general, things had changed swiftly and workers also relied on new shared codes and values. While the proposed analysis of the youth succeeds in identifying some factors of disquiet in young workers’ lives that could bring them to rebellion – among them, the factory line of production for example which sapped young people’s energy and the brainwashing carried out ‘attraverso la scuola, l’organizzazione del tempo libero’ – contrastingly it does not carry out a deeper inquiry, which might view the rebellion in a broader epoch-changing context and at least mention the clashes that had taken place a few months before. As in the aforementioned documents, all responsibilities for the unhappiness are attributed to the ‘padronato’ and to the ‘clericalismo operaio.’ Of course, it is affirmed that the restlessness is linked to the uncertain condition of youth in modern society but an examination of this condition from which the revolts of 1960 and 1962 had ensued is not discussed. And again, the constant condemnation of power and the system becomes a trite rhetorical device. However, the suspicion that those clashes had shaken the FGCI supremacy over the youth organisation of protests creeps in. The youth agitation, according to the federation, must be reabsorbed and readdressed in a more constructive way as the ‘concezioni tecnicistiche economicistiche proprie del capitalismo’ could lead the youth to fill its voids with false

ideals.<sup>60</sup> Spontaneity in protest is a factor that the Italian Communists never accepted; we will meet it again in the next chapter when we will look at the analysis of the revolts of Hungary carried out by *Nuova generazione*. Keeping an eye on the omission of an actual analysis of the Piazza Statuto events it is worth looking at a last document: the final “relazione” released after the VII congress of Turin FGCI in September 1962. In the first lines a weak reference to what happened few months earlier shows up but, again, it is characterised by a degree of vagueness – even if less than in the previous texts – which is after all a trait of the communist jargon. Being produced in an industrial milieu like Turin the discourse on the condition of young people in factories is better expounded and all the writing seems to revolve around this topic. It is stated that ‘il tentativo di ingabbiare la spinta operaia’ failed and that “spinta” in Turin ‘ha raggiunto il suo punto più alto con la lotta dei metallurgici.’ The local FGCI wants to regain its position as guide to the young workers and acknowledges ‘Il significato e il valore della presenza dei giovani alla testa di queste lotte’ shows ‘le capacità, proprie delle masse giovanili, di essere avanguardia [...] che provoca la rottura [...] e la limitazione del problema padronale.’ In a very optimistic tone, the federation admits that the youth could be a force ‘per cementare una nuova e più avanzata unità delle giovani generazioni torinesi.’<sup>61</sup> However, the statement sounds nebulous with no definite basis in tangible reality – see the lack of real analysis of the past clashes – and very hypothetical as the young working class, and the youth in general, does not assume a specific character in terms either of provenance or of other characteristics. A further important point which is a signal of the mutation of the Communist Party in the early 1960s is the clear reference to proselytising students, the FGCI must work ‘estendendo il carattere di massa’ launching an ‘immediata e vigorosa campagna per il proselitismo volta a superare il 100/100 degli iscritti,’ especially ‘nella scuola’ where ‘il padronato vuole garantirsi un controllo preventivo, determinandone le scelte, sulla formazione del mercato della forza lavoro.’<sup>62</sup> The mention of students is a sign of the times and of the implementing of Togliatti’s new party strategy, but here too, the focus on external factors, the power, the “padronato,” is not counterbalanced with a remedy or at least a proposal for contrasting it. Ultimately, the words of the last document considered resonate with the same jargon and haziness of those of the national federation. Being a text released by the local board one could expect a much crisper debate on the problems of the city but, also here, the expectations are not met.

<sup>60</sup> *L'unità della nuova generazione* p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> *Relazione del VII congresso provinciale della Federazione torinese della Fgci* (September 1962), in Fondo PCI/FGCI federazione di Torino, VI [VI] congresso provinciale federazione torinese FGCI, Busta 1, Fasc. 3, pp. 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> *Relazione del VII congresso* (1962), pp. 4-5.

As mentioned before, 1962 is an arrival point of certain tendencies and stands as the beginning of other youth dynamics (the era of university occupations and the arrival of “capelloni”) which were also triggered by the fresh approach to riot prefigured both in 1960 and above all in 1962 (see chapter 7). They also were the products of a new social make-up in which inner migrations brought young people from peripheral sides of Italy to bigger cities such as Turin, Milan, Rome and so on.

In this chapter we have seen that in its formal communications, the FGCI’s jargon does not really differ from the language of the PCI that, for example, we have found in chapter 2. Moreover, we have also seen how the FGCI, at least in its formal communique, starts to lose touch with young people’s reality and pastimes. In 1962 then, it embraces the same attitude of denial towards the revolt of July that characterises the PCI, missing the chance of being at the forefront of the modalities of protest of a new social reality.

In the light of what has been said so far, it is time now to consider the effort of the FGCI and the PCI in talking to the youth and society in a less formal way through their press. We want to see if at least in magazines the party and its Youth Federation are able to find a more concise way to tackle youth-related problems and topics, and if they are able to analyse society in a more original way.

## 6. *Nuova generazione in the late 1950s*

In this chapter we are going to look at the FGCI's official magazine, *Nuova generazione*, to see how it positions itself in the strategy of the new party. We will analyse some of the themes we have encountered before. We will pause to consider the journal's interpretation of the events of Hungary (1956) in the light of that given by *Azione comunista* in chapter 2 and then we will see how, in 1957, the magazine tackles some of the issues which featured in the official documents from both the PCI and the FGCI investigated above: women's emancipation, the "questione giovanile" and "americanismo." While doing this, we will keep an eye on the same topics in *Vie nuove* (another journal of the PCI) during the same year, in order to make a comparison.<sup>1</sup> As will be seen, *Nuova generazione*, together with other magazines, such as *Vie nuove* or *Noi donne* for example, represents an attempt to communicate with a wider section of society, including non-members, seeking a compromise between political activism and every day matters. In the case of *Nuova generazione* the targets are young Communists and friends of Communists and, from the polls and letters in the journal, we can get an idea of the ideal reader: a young, progressive and to a certain extent optimistic person, possibly member of the FGCI.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the age factor, the characteristics of the readers are not very different from those of *Vie nuove*, or *Noi donne* as far as female readers are concerned. However, it is possible that young progressive people would read the three magazines, but it is less likely that an elder reader of *Vie nuove*, for example, would buy *Nuova generazione*. As seen, the opening towards non-activists is at the heart of Togliatti's idea of "partito nuovo." By carrying out research on *Nuova generazione* we would like to sketch a more complete picture of the communication between the Communists and young people, also filling a gap in scholarship to date. As with the FGCI material in general, scholars have overlooked its main magazine and also in books like Nello Ajello's *Intellettuali e PCI* and *Il lungo addio* or Sandro Bellassai's *La morale comunista* we do not find any trace of reference to NG. More strikingly, we do not find any reference to this journal in studies on the PCI and its press such as Albertina Vittoria's *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, or in Piero Lucia's *Intellettuali italiani del secondo dopoguerra* in which the same topic is amply discussed. The same happens in books about Italy's mass culture and its relationship with the PCI by Stephen Gundle and David Forgacs, and in studies about the party by Donald Sassoon and Grant Amyot. In the following pages we aim to analyse, for the first time, *Nuova generazione*, in

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<sup>1</sup> *Vie nuove* was founded in 1946 by Luigi Longo and its main aim was to get the masses closer to the claims and themes of the left-wing.

<sup>2</sup> The ideal target to which the journal is directed is clarified in *Nuova generazione* (23 December 1957).



order to understand more about the lives of the late 1950s' generation of activists – and readers of *NG* – and, at the same time, we want to see how the FGCI was able to communicate with that generation.

In July 1956, the FGCI decided to stop publishing its weekly periodical *Avanguardia* which had been, since 1953, the main cultural-political organ for the promotion of the federation. For three years, its director had been the prominent writer Gianni Rodari. The reasons behind the choice resided in the climate of changing times: Italy was finally exiting from post-war difficulties to enter the joys and pains of the economic boom. As written in *Avanguardia*: 'la mutata situazione interna e internazionale [...] il più elevato grado di maturità dei giovani comunisti pongono alla Federazione giovanile responsabilità nuove [...] la Direzione della FGCI ha ritenuto di porsi immediatamente al lavoro per dare alla FGCI un organo di stampa, un giornale di battaglia politica e ideale [...] utilizzando le migliori esperienze di *Pattuglia* e *Avanguardia*.'<sup>3</sup> Our intention is to see to what extent and how the new "giornale di battaglia" was able to relate to the changing climate and to what degree it was capable of speaking to the youth who – in its own view – had acquired new maturity. We want to see if the magazine felt the effect of the highly co-dependent relationship of the FGCI with the PCI, as some scholars have defined it, or if it was able to find a more original way to communicate with, and tackle the problems and issues of the modern youth.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the party's official communications, *Nuova generazione* relied a lot on the participation of the readers through letters, queries, surveys and so on. Besides the political and more 'serious' topics, a notable element is the attention paid to youth problems and juvenile passions. These topics do not find much space in the formal documents of the FGCI and PCI and when they do, they are usually mentioned in the light of general arguments or guidelines concerning the 'right' behaviour of young activists and their leisure time. In *NG*, instead, the activists and young people in general have the chance to take part in the debate, sharing – of course – different opinions and viewpoints.

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<sup>3</sup> Comunicato stampa della Direzione FGCI in *Avanguardia* (29 July 1956), p. 1-2. *Pattuglia* had been the periodical of a political formation, *Alleanza Giovanile*, created by young Communists, Socialists and independent supporters connected to the *World Federation of Democratic Youth*. The publishing had been on from 1948 to 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Among the scholars who underlined that factor: Donatella Ronci, *I giovani comunisti: dalla Liberazione al 1957* and Gianmario Leoni, *I giovani comunisti e "il partito."*

## 6.1 Turmoil in Hungary and Discussions around the VIII Congress of the PCI

*Mi ricordo le fotografie dei carri armati  
io passavo i pomeriggi a ritagliarle  
a incollarle sopra pezzi di cartone [...]  
(Francesco De Gregori, Il '56, 1974)*

In 1956 a renewal of the PCI started to be implemented and this certainly contributed to the birth of a magazine like *Nuova generazione*. In this section we will look at some issues of *Nuova generazione* released between two pivotal events for the Italian Communist party: the tragedy of Hungary and the PCI's VIII congress. Although the discourses on autonomy inside the PCI and the FGCI around the VIII congress seemed to set out a possible new pathway to follow, the FGCI renounced to any real independence in order to follow the PCI line in many of the decisions which would characterise the history of the late 1950s. This sort of reticence would last until the 1960s when external factors would lead a new group of leaders, who joined the FGCI in the mid-1950s, to reopen the debate about the federation's autonomy. In the 1960s, the monolithic structure of the PCI itself would start to creak and, as affirmed by Luciana Castellina, between the 1950s and 1960s it had become, despite the debate about renewal, 'un partito immobile.'<sup>5</sup> In this scenario, during the late 1950s, the FGCI basically still followed what Enrico Berlinguer had asserted as early as 1950: the federation's aim was to absorb the rebellion of all the 'giovani operai, disoccupati, contadini, studenti e ragazze' under the wing of the PCI.<sup>6</sup> Or as Renzo Trivelli, the FGCI secretary (1956-1960) stated: the purpose of the federation at the end of the 1950s was to monopolise the 'partecipazione delle giovani generazioni alle lotte politiche generali.'<sup>7</sup>

In this section, we aim to assess to what degree this dependence of the FGCI on the PCI, influenced the stance of *Nuova generazione* on the important events of 1956 and understand if the magazine was able to slightly distance itself from the party's positions.

In an article written on November 4 in a "supplemento anticipato" of *Nuova generazione*, a statement stresses the importance of the 'legittime aspirazioni dei popoli arabi alla loro libertà ed indipendenza.' It is a clear reference to the 'predatoria aggressione anglo-

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<sup>5</sup> Unsigned, Luciana Castellina: *i ricordi, le passioni, la politica di una 'inossidabile comunista'* in *Repubblica* (12 January 2014) in

[http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/01/12/news/luciana\\_castellina\\_i\\_ricordi\\_le\\_passioni\\_la\\_politica\\_di\\_una\\_inossidabile\\_comunistaccia-75758590/](http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/01/12/news/luciana_castellina_i_ricordi_le_passioni_la_politica_di_una_inossidabile_comunistaccia-75758590/). On the fractures inside the PCI see also Rossana Rossanda, *La ragazza del secolo scorso* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005) and Massimiliano Marzillo, *L'opposizione bloccata. PCI e centro-sinistra (1960-1968)* (Catanzaro: Rubbettino, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Enrico Berlinguer, *I compiti della gioventù comunista*, p. 16. As seen before "studenti" and "ragazze" are still placed at the bottom of the list.

<sup>7</sup> Renzo Trivelli in Enrico Berlinguer, *Il ruolo dei giovani comunisti*, pp. 60-68.

francese contro il popolo egiziano’ as it is described, concerning the Suez affair.<sup>8</sup> In the same issue, another text deals, instead, with the events of Budapest which are labelled ‘la prima grande prova attraverso cui passa una nuova generazione di comunisti.’ The event becomes a generational challenge that young Communists have to confront. Nonetheless, in order to talk of this brand new trial, the tone cautiously differs from that about Suez and the invasion is certainly not described as an aggression. The article neither delves into an historical analysis of the rebellion nor of the consequences of the Soviet invasion. Instead, it revolves on a series of judgements aimed at discrediting the uprising and to reaffirm the necessity of the USSR behaviour. In this case, the journalist appears to be immune to doubts: the Soviet raid worked for ‘la difesa del potere popolare’ against ‘il ritorno di un passato fosco e reazionario.’ The uprising of Budapest is not considered in its complexity: the initial discontent is defined as licit but stigmatised in its application as it turned it into an ‘attacco armato al potere popolare.’ In short, for the journal, the target of the revolt was wrong. This reading of the facts will characterise, as we will see, a vast part of the texts and exchanges of ideas about Hungary, becoming a recurring motif in the communication both of the PCI and the FGCI. A large space is given to the Hungarian youth who took part in the movement of October. *NG* bases its writing around a number of implications not aimed at tainting the young participants per se, but at discrediting their activism which, for *NG*, had no direction. In fact, the Italian young Communists define themselves as not ‘cultori della spontaneità.’<sup>9</sup> The FGCI disapproved of the spontaneity of the rebellion and maintained that the restlessness of the youth must be absorbed and controlled by the solid structure of the party. This is a relevant datum for our analysis as the criticism of free-form rebellion sets the tone for part of the discussions inside *NG*. As seen, affirmations like that above are frequent in the public declarations of Italian Communists of the period who consider some of the new directions in terms of protest taken by young people to be fragile and basically ‘wrong:’ a prejudice that would be fatal in the 1960s.

In the same number, another text written by Carlo Meana sheds further light on the topic. Meana had lived in Hungary for three years and through his words he tries to give a vivid depiction of the days of the tragedy. The dose of pathos used has the purpose of validating the Soviet intervention. He lingers – in fact – on images of violence (carried out by the agitators) which give the narration an almost apocalyptic zest, corroborating a version of the facts promoted by the PCI. In this narrative, Budapest witnessed a real “caccia al

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<sup>8</sup>FGCI, *Appello ai giovani* in *Nuova generazione* (4 November 1956), p. 1. This “supplemento” of the journal - whose first number would be released on 2 December 1956 – was issued “sotto l’urgenza dei gravi avvenimenti” of the period. In its four pages, a discussion about Hungary and the Suez affair is put forward, with different tones.

<sup>9</sup>Unsigned, *La pace per andare avanti* in *NG* (4 November 1956), pp. 1-2.

comunista” by the reactionary forces that infiltrated the uprising.<sup>10</sup> In the end Meana condemns some of the young people involved who grew up with the myth of USSR (‘esempio e modello in tutto’), for assaulting Budapest libraries and burning ‘l’immagine di Lenin che parla agli operai.’<sup>11</sup> In an article by Lucio Magri, in the first official number of *NG*, the Soviet intervention will be finally fully justified as it was ‘chiaro che il movimento di rivoluzione mirava a sovvertire lo stato socialista.’<sup>12</sup>

Until the end of 1956, the events of Hungary appear to set the agenda of *Nuova generazione*, and on December 16 it is explained why: ‘Fin ora abbiamo dato molto peso ai problemi internazionali,’ and this was not a ‘scelta arbitraria’ as ‘i fatti di Ungheria e di Egitto restano il fulcro di ogni problema.’<sup>13</sup> However, in writing about Hungary, again no attempt at understanding the situation in depth is made and the words about the events seem to be almost an obligatory editorial choice. The article is broad and less severe than the ones we have encountered so far, but this is significant: a substantial amount of time had passed and a non-specific reflection on the events could easily give way to a wider ideological discourse focused on the victory of socialism. The contradictions of the scenario are reduced to a glorification of the Soviet Union which preserved socialism and guaranteed its victory over Reaction. The Soviet invasion is endorsed, but not as explicitly as it had happened other times, and as a result: ‘in tutti noi c’è la certezza che, con questo, il socialismo avanzerà poi fino a trionfare.’<sup>14</sup> The element that is striking is the link between the Soviet action and the victory of Socialism, a typical syllogism for the Communists of the period which here stands as a passe-partout to shift the focus from the historical facts to the realm of ideology.<sup>15</sup> In fact, without specifying its line of action, the magazine abides by the guidelines put forward by the PCI and, therefore, the USSR is presented as the bearer of peace; the revolts of October, instead, are not even discredited: they are just ignored. In the same style, Giancarlo Pajetta, for example, writing in *L’Unità*

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<sup>10</sup> As the secretary of Pietralata’s FGCI section in Rome states, in the beginning of the events members were divided on the stand to take but as soon as the news reported that Communists were killed everybody condemned the uprising. Delio Monari, *Il tesseramento a Roma* in *NG* (30 December 1956), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Meana, *Il gelo del disgelo operazione impossibile* in *NG* (4 November 1956), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Lucio Magri, *Errori o costi?* In *NG* (2 December 1956), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> The possible connection between the tragedy of Hungary and the Suez crisis in Egypt had been already anticipated by Palmiro Togliatti on 31 October 1956. In a letter to Paolo Spriano he wrote: ‘E il piano non poteva essere che di provocazione e reazione.’ There was a ‘stranissimo legame tra i fatti di Budapest e lo scoppio del conflitto armato in Egitto’ on which ‘c’è però da rifletterci.’ From Paolo Spriano, *Le passioni di un decennio 1946-1956* (Milano: Garzanti, 1986) in Alessandro Frigerio, *Budapest 1956. La macchina del fango*, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Unsigned, *La svolta del ’56* in *NG* (16 December 1956), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> As François Furet explains Communism ‘ha cercato di restare un’utopia pur diventando uno Stato. Per questo si trova in dovere di nascondere la propria realtà per restare un’idea; per questo l’ideologia svolge un ruolo fondamentale nel funzionamento e nella propaganda del comunismo.’ In François Furet, *Il passato di un’illusione. L’idea comunista nel XX secolo* (Milano: Mondadori, 1995), p. 371.

more than a month before, had also stated that the invasion responded to a necessity of history, a 'tributo doloroso che l'umanità [...] paga anche per liberarsi dalla miseria e dalle ingiustizie.'<sup>16</sup>

In a later number, the journal returns to the Hungarian tragedy through a message written two days before Christmas (*Messaggio di Natale*) which is a justification of the USSR intervention and a lecture on the value of peace as a whole that young socialists are called to preserve. It is stated that 'due mesi fa la pace fu salvata quando mancava un nonnulla alla tragica esplosione di un conflitto. Fu in gran parte merito dell'Urss.'<sup>17</sup> Here, the USSR definitely becomes the saviour which intervened on the verge of the tragedy, the legitimate mother of real socialism. The revolt is described as a petty bourgeois occurrence in which the Soviets saved the nation, and socialism, from the dangers of a possible return of fascism. This interpretation becomes the backbone of the FGCI's (and PCI's) reading of the events. In fact, as Federico Argentieri points out, in the PCI narrative, the revolution of Budapest soon became a "rivoluzione calunniata."<sup>18</sup> Despite the fact that not the whole Youth Federation approved of what Soviet Union had done, we can infer that at least the main narrative of the organisation was aligned with that of the PCI and so it was that *NG* minimised the consequences of both the uprising and of the invasion. By browsing the periodical's articles we can identify a specific pattern in the discourses on that topic. It moves from an initial condemnation of the revolts to a vague analysis which denies historical disquisitions and emphasises the role of Soviet Union as saviour of peace, a barrier against the restoration of a reactionary government. A similar view may be found in Lucio Magri's *Il sarto di Ulm*, where he traces the differences between the events of Poland (1956) and those of Hungary. While the first succeeded in finding a compromise with Moscow, the second did not. According to Magri, this derived from the different Soviet perception of the two states: Poland was seen as a socialist and reliable nation while Hungary was considered a former fascist country. And for the writer, in the revolt 'via via si inseriva l'antica pancia reazionaria della capitale.'<sup>19</sup>

In a later article (30 December), the events of Hungary are seen from another viewpoint which goes back to one of the topoi already seen. In the previous two articles they were seen through the lens of the Soviet Union intervention which, according to the magazine, served to save peace. In this article, instead, the point of attention is the reconstruction after the tragedy. The tone is different from that of the texts above. The population of Budapest

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<sup>16</sup> Giancarlo Pajetta, *La tragedia dell'Ungheria* in *L'Unità* (28 October 1956), p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Unsigned, *Messaggio di Natale* in *NG* (23 December 1956), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Federico Argentieri, *Budapest 1956. La rivoluzione calunniata* (Roma: L'Arca, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Lucio Magri, *Il sarto di Ulm. Una possibile storia del Pci* (Milano: Il saggiatore, 2011), p.128.

is described as a ‘popolo generoso’ and the emphasis is on the ‘gioventù che ha avuto tanta parte nei fatti del 23 ottobre.’<sup>20</sup> As in one of the first articles considered, youth involvement is not seen in negative terms, and their demands are judged legitimate. However, soon after, it is explained how the young rebels have been co-opted by the old Hungarian ruling class which is responsible for the consequent invasion. It is a well-oiled trope, already identified in Longo and Togliatti and in the PCI narrative at large, based on the assumption that young people’s intentions are basically pure but naive so they often risk manipulation by the system. A similar quality had characterised an editorial by Pietro Ingrao written on 26 October 1956. In *Il coraggio di prendere posizione* the leader explains that many of the students, workers and young people who took part in the revolt were led by genuine motives, but: ‘il regime contro cui si è scatenata la rivolta è quello che ha cacciato i capitalisti dalle fabbriche e i feudatari dalle campagne.’ It is the regime that beat the ‘forze fasciste e reazionarie’ which had ruled Hungary for decades.<sup>21</sup> His words clearly imply that although the claims were virtuous they should have been silenced soon as they were raised against the infallible mother of socialist freedom: the Soviet Union. In the case of *Nuova generazione* the same trope is, once more, a way to transfer the attention from the historical facts to a broader discourse on the industriousness of the youth that after the Soviet intervention volunteered in order to rebuild the city. Nevertheless, in its last part, the article remarks: ‘questi movimenti (giovani) si richiamano al 23 ottobre e ai giorni seguenti come ad un tempo positivo e non riescono ancora a comprendere per intero il pericolo corso di ritornare a un regime fascista ed alla restaurazione dei vecchi privilegi dei padroni.’<sup>22</sup> In this last part the periodical is putting forward a well-crafted expedient that completely fits in the PCI communication. The naivety of the youth, the candour of their claims is – to a certain extent – justified for its genuineness. On the other hand, the emphasis goes on the Hungarian government’s action which is described as oriented towards the return of a fascist regime, as Ingrao had anticipated. This assigning of blame allows the PCI and FGCI to release young Hungarians from their responsibilities, fix the attention on their ingenuousness and bring their claims back to a steadier ideological framework. It is, in short, a way to sully the endeavours of the autumn of 1956 with a tactical mixture of vagueness and patronisation, conveyed by a strategic terminology aimed to discredit. It is a change in style but not in intentions if we compare it to the first articles of *L’Unità* soon after the starting of the uprising. The party had minimised the extent of the revolt depicting a section of the young people who took part in it as

<sup>20</sup> Enrico Gualandi, *Budapest pian piano si riprende* in *NG* (30 December 1956), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Il coraggio di prendere posizione* in *L’Unità* (27 October 1956), p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Gualandi, *Ibid.*

“scalmanati,” “facinorosi,” not far from the way the rebels of Piazza Statuto in 1962 would be described.<sup>23</sup> However, as is deductible from Ingrao’s editorial, the leadership of the party had soon opted for a more cautious approach. It was necessary, then, to find a scapegoat (the government) and not to show the whole population, young in particular, in a bad light. And, of course, it was also necessary to make clear that spontaneity in revolts is never endorsed by the FGCI.

Besides Hungary, 1956 is also the year of the PCI’s VIII congress. Let us see how *NG* deals with the themes discussed at the national meeting, first examined in the issue of 16 December. The connection between Hungary and the VIII congress is subtle but present. At the assembly the Italian road to socialism was officially proposed and, with it, the PCI also sanctioned the starting of its slow and contradictory detachment from Moscow. In this respect, the new line justified the intentional intellectual impasse of the PCI/FGCI headquarters in regard to the invasion. The lack of clarity about the stand to take usually emerged through a shifting of focuses in articles and communications, which never led to an impartial debate on the events. In the following article, for example, there is no clear mention of the tragedy. The only mention, unclear in its aim, reads: at the congress ‘non erano però presenti i compagni ungheresi: un vuoto doloroso. In Ungheria maturavano [...] altri dolorosi avvenimenti, si aprivano altre profonde fratture.’<sup>24</sup> The discussion, in fact, drifts towards national affairs and the new road to socialism is described in terms of continuity with the PCI past. The omission is blatant and striking: the reader could expect that what had happened in Hungary would be an important topic of debate at the assembly of December 1956 but, at least in the articles, that matter is completely overlooked. The text, in fact, is a formal communication in disguise designed to glorify the PCI decisions and, of course, its secretary’s strategy. According to the periodical, the directives given by the PCI’s headquarters at the congress are in tune with the rules set by the Constitution. In fact, as reported in another article, the attitude of the PCI towards the democratic institutions should not be mistaken to be a tactical pose but considered a real attempt to renew the organisation and integrate socialism in democracy. The stress goes on the youth: the PCI ‘chiama i giovani per svecchiare il partito’ and young Communists must be at the forefront of the process, in fact: ‘dobbiamo e dovremo essere dei protagonisti di questo momento storico.’<sup>25</sup> The journal would go back to the same theme a week after, focusing its reflection on the party’s openness towards constructive criticism amongst the members

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<sup>23</sup> Adriana Castellani, *Scontri nelle vie dei Budapest provocati da gruppi armati di contro-rivoluzionari* in *L’Unità* (24 October 1956), p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Unsigned, *La svolta del '56* in *NG* (16 December 1956), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Unsigned, *Discutiamo sui temi dell’VIII congresso del PCI* in *Nuova generazione* (16 December 1956), pp. 6-7.

which is considered a symptom of progress inside the institution. The article focuses on this aspect rather than discussing the problematic of the whole framework, in fact: ‘si è chiuso il periodo in cui [...] le riserve, aperte o palesi, sulla politica del Partito frenavano lo slancio.’ As seen before in other documents, by affirming that the period in which inner criticism was frowned upon is over, the magazine structures its narration on almost apodictic sentences, similar to the key words of the formal communications (‘si è chiuso il periodo’ in this case, for example). These elements must have given an impression of seriousness to the readers. The periodical proposes some further key words based on actions that the party would take towards renewal from which a consequent, positive aftermath would spring, such as the new policy of discussion inside the ranks as a tool for the improvement of the party. The description is again vague and one could expect more insight into the topic, especially from a magazine which wants to talk to young readers. However, the style built on formality gives the statements a solemn tone of credibility. In the same article another theme from the new party’s strategy is tackled: the call to unity between the progressive forces of democracy which ‘richiede un grande sforzo di azione politica e conquista dei giovani’ by the FGCI. Here again, a recurring term (conquest) is proposed, linked to the usual theme of proselytization through ‘la campagna di tesseramento.’<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned, the encouragement of internal criticism and debate was one of the main topics at the congress and a pillar of Togliatti’s strategy. However, this openness is somewhat contradictory as various elements in articles in *NG* released before and around congress time suggest a cautious approach to the matter. For example, on December 9 a reflection about the congress by Romano Ledda clarified: ‘guai se [...] avessimo come unica guida il malcontento, la rivendicazione immediata, la lotta particolare.’<sup>27</sup> Although these words are not a direct reference to Hungary they can easily apply to that situation as the revolt had been condemned by the PCI and FGCI for having been extemporaneous and targeted against the ‘potere popolare’ as Ingrao described it. Through its congress, the leadership of PCI wants to reaffirm the importance of its strategy and the rightfulness of the mass party model under which all the rebellious tendencies should converge. On the other hand, it gives broad space to letters from provincial members aimed at exalting the upcoming congress, the party and its strategy. The headquarters in Pietralata, in Rome, for

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<sup>26</sup> Unsigned, *La linea di rinnovamento* in *NG* (23 December 1956), p. 5. A week before, *NG* had stressed the importance of the unity among the progressive youth already. An article by Delio Monari (16 December 1956), *A Perugia non più burle ma propositi di democrazia* refers to the congress of the Unione Goliardi Italiana, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> R. Ledda, *Noi che veniamo dopo la Resistenza* in *Nuova generazione* (9 December 1956), p. 4.



example, brag about the achievement of ‘il cento per cento degli iscritti’ in preparation for the congress.<sup>28</sup>

From what we have seen so far, at least as far as Hungary and the VIII congress are concerned, the journal blindly follows the approach dictated by the party. Also in its style and jargon, the journal does not really offer a fresher take on the events. Of course, *NG* is the official periodical of the FGCI so a true detachment from the party’s line would have been impossible. However, this lack of novelty in that field is counterbalanced by its ability to deal with other topics that are directly related to the youth sphere. Let us give an insight into some of them in order to see to what degree its approach is newer and more independent.

## 6.2 Women and Youth

In *Nuova generazione*, serious topics of discussion are interrelated with everyday problems. Also in dealing with young people’s problems, the magazine embraces some features of the PCI’s take on modern society. In this respect, for example, in an article about the creation of a “Consulta per i problemi giovanili” set up in Turin in that year, *NG* is eager to demonstrate how that particular association embodies the good sides of democracy sanctioned by the Constitution ‘nella quale i giovani trovano tutti i principi che corrispondono alle loro aspirazioni più profonde.’ In the PCI narrative, the “Costituzione” bears a positive value and becomes a tool to encompass ‘una coscienza nuova che anima i giovani’ who more than before feel the ‘necessità di inserirsi nella vita civica.’<sup>29</sup> The “coscienza nuova” of young people becomes itself a leitmotif scattered throughout the pages of *NG*: a topic which is examined in several situations and offers a springboard for reflection also when it comes to looking at the news sections. For example, an article written on December 23 retraces the suicide attempt of two young girls after being reproached by their parents. The occurrence is taken as an opportunity to analyse – at least to some degree – the problems of young people and to criticise the contemporary world that seems to be deaf to young people’s demands and – of course – consciousness. These are the occasions when the magazine is more attentive to concrete juvenile issues, although preserving a certain accusatory rhetoric which echoes the PCI’s jargon. As far as the suicide attempt is concerned, the magazine is ready to discuss what types of factors inside modern Italy could have led to such gesture which, according to the editors, is an extreme

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<sup>28</sup> Unsigned, *Ai nostri compagni di tutta Italia* in *Nuova generazione* (9 December 1956), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Dante Bondi, *L’esempio di Torino* in *Nuova generazione* (16 December 1956), p. 4.

reaction to the instability of contemporary young people. For the magazine, there are many factors at the core of that instability, among them cinema and comics. In short, the suicide attempt is also the consequence of the superficiality of pop culture that clashes with real life and its problems, incommunicability inside families, for example. It is – obliquely – implied that the media offer a vision of the world which does not match young people’s real lives and this could lead to a serious discrepancy. For the periodical it is ‘difficile sapere se fosse un’idea maturata sui giornali a fumetti o nelle sale cinematografiche’ and with a twist of pathos it is also stated that the two girls ‘un’idea della vita ce l’avevano e ciò che le ha offese è forse proprio il fatto che quel rimprovero sembrava non tenerne conto.’ In this passage, the magazine tries to take the side of young people, laying the blame on part of society for corrupting the youth but it also proposes once more a naive interpretation of 1950’s youth that is depicted as fragile and insecure. This is an attitude that we have already seen, in the formal pamphlets and in an article discussed above concerning Hungary. The attempted suicide is read as a ‘protesta contro il mondo, che si ritiene ostile e nemico’ and the two in question ‘hanno rinunciato ad essere giovani in questo mondo che discute di andare nella luna con i razzi.’<sup>30</sup>

The news about the attempted suicide gives way to a series of investigations into the behaviour of young women and to a broader analysis of emancipation in society. And here lies the originality of magazines like *NG*, *Vie nuove* or *Noi donne*. These periodicals take inspiration from a particular piece of news in order to begin exploring a specific topic in diverse ways, also asking opinions of readers and intellectuals.

From this point of view, it is interesting to look at the weekly column written by the neorealist screenwriter Gianni Puccini in which he addresses aspects of modern society. His argument very often takes a jaundiced view of the times. In the late 1950s Puccini was already in his forties, a well-established writer who had co-written films such as *Ossessione* or *Caccia tragica*. His approach to the topics he talks about is nostalgic and blasé, among them we can find television, cinema, music and portraits of common people, especially women. This latter topic is very relevant to our research as it is a main theme in the PCI’s and FGCI’s strategy of the “partito nuovo.” Along with the youth, the 1950s see a notable attention of the party towards women’s emancipation and young female activism which is carried out often through surveys and interviews. We will get an extensive insight into this matter soon. For now it is worth focusing our attention on Puccini’s article *Donatella* published in *Nuova generazione* in December 1956. Here the writer purports to

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<sup>30</sup> Unsigned, *Due suicidi* in *NG* (23 December 1956), p. 8. The young person who protests against a world that neither listens nor understands is a long-lasting trope in Western pop culture and provides fertile inspiration to many Italian pop songs of the 1960s, for instance.

depict an average young woman and her teenage dreams, including a broader discussion based on a comparison between the old times and the present. His criticism (although not open) of young mores seems bland, characterised by an obsolete reading of their cultural references. His article gives the readers a chance to engage in a brief debate through their letters. In *Donatella* Puccini affirms that ‘cinquanta o anche trenta o venti anni fa’ girls had a greater control on their dreams because they ‘leggevano più libri.’ The piece is an invective against modern media and criticises modern society which imposes dreams on young girls. The premises from which the criticisms springs are based on a nostalgic praise of an undefined past in which young women supposedly read more books than comics or photo stories. However, this seems to be far from reality: in 1951 the level of illiteracy was still very high and even in the most developed regions of the peninsula it varied between the 2% and 8%.<sup>31</sup> We can easily infer that the level was much higher twenty or thirty years before, especially when women are taken into account. According to Puccini, the 1950s is instead the time when young women watch and listen rather than read, and the process occurs ‘senza criterio,’ ‘ingozzando con furia.’<sup>32</sup> In this way the young spectator is subjected to a process of identification which creates dreams that do not match reality. The writer clearly underestimates the critical abilities of the new generations and we could easily lay Puccini’s thinking in a well-known sociological perspective by affirming that he is an apocalittico, borrowing Umberto Eco’s definition of few years later.<sup>33</sup> Two weeks later, a young female reader, replies to Puccini with a letter in which she tries to bring the writer back to reality. The exchange of correspondence is characteristic of the journal and offers an interesting perspective for the analysis of everyday life of young people in the boom. In the letter, Angela C, a worker, writes: ‘vieni a vedere all’uscita della nostra fabbrica abbiamo il rossetto e ci mordiamo le unghie [...] siamo una bella sui venti’ and others ‘decisamente brutte. Abbiamo fatto chi la quarta elementare, chi la prima o la seconda avviamento’ The girl then ironically accuses Puccini of inventing “i sogni” because reality is different. And she describes it: on the tram they kick ‘chi ci dà fastidio. E anche ginocchiate se è il caso.’ Later she admits to not being particularly smart but ‘più intelligente di quello che tu immagini quando scrivi “i sogni” e pensi di scrivere per noi ragazze e per farci capire la realtà.’ Here the reader claims her right to have a solid opinion as far as her reality is concerned and with a certain touch of sarcasm and humour she

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<sup>31</sup> For more about this specific topic: Roberto Sani, *Maestri e istruzione popolare in Italia tra Otto e Novecento. Interpretazioni, prospettive di ricerca, esperienze in Sardegna* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero 2003).

<sup>32</sup> G. Puccini, *I sogni* in *NG* (2 December 1956), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati* (Milano: Bompiani, 2001). The late 1950s and early 1960s witness, in fact, a broad debate on the rightfulness or wrongness of new media in society, among the intellectuals who took part in it: Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Marshall McLuhan and later on Pier Paolo Pasolini too.

deflates Puccini's presumptions of being an objective reader of youth behaviour. Angela concludes by saying 'vorrei che tu ci conoscessi caro Gianni Puccini' because they do not let cinema and television charm them. Angela then writes in the last line, joyfully and flirtatiously 'sei un tipo giovane e bello?' In that case, the meeting could be a 'pericolo'.<sup>34</sup> The letter could seem insignificant but, in its candour, it says something about part of the generation coming to the fore. It can be seen as a symbol of the quest for agency on the part of young people wanting to create their own narrative and establish their own set of values. A similar portrait is present in *VN* when another worker, in an interview with Cesare Zavattini, speaks of her free time: on a Sunday 'di solito vado a ballare insieme alle mie amiche [...] siamo molto affiatate e ognuna paga per sé.' Here too, the girl proudly reaffirms her independence and her right to spend her free time as she wants.<sup>35</sup> The excerpt from *NG* also indicates the ability of young people to negotiate the new media, despite the lack of institutional culture and, above all, *NG*'s intention of publishing certain letters in order to reflect on the gap between generations, giving space to the independent voice of a young woman.

However, a week later, Puccini replies with a tale about a young woman he allegedly knows, one of the many narrations that characterize his contribution to the journal, in which he wants to shed light on the dangers of the media for the youth. The result shows his utter lack of comprehension towards contemporary society, making him look obsolete and sexist. The article opens with a question: 'Ma quante ragazze sono come voi? [...] che comprano tutte le settimane i giornali a fumetti e hanno preso il vizio di vedere il mondo a quel modo?' The writer focuses on a complaint about modern women who might prefer solitude to a stable engagement. He speaks to an abstract prototype of woman who 'non è ancora fidanzata, e non perché sia una brutta ragazza.' From his standpoint it seems that engagement and marriage still had to be the sole aims for a woman, and the final remark about the 'not ugly girl' gives us an idea of his lack of sensibility and open-mindedness. The chauvinism of the writer is placed inside the framework of a reproach towards contemporary frivolity but – in reality – displays the conservative mentality of a man attached to values that are not of crucial importance for part of the newer generations: a generational gap is, again, clearly evident.<sup>36</sup> Keeping the focus on the stereotype of the young girl who does not want to get married, Puccini goes into a criticism of media icons.

<sup>34</sup> Angela C., *Donatella, il conte ...E chi ci pensa?* in *NG* (16 December 1956), p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> L.B., *Domande agli uomini* in *Vie nuove* (23 February 1957), p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> In a survey in *VN* (1957) we could see that marriage continues being an aspiration only for one out of four girls interviewed, and the majority of them have as core values the quest for an 'autonomia e soprattutto una personalità che ha il bisogno di affermarsi in nuove maniere.' Gaetano Tumati, *L'italiana del '57* in *VN* (9 March 1957), pp. 4-11.

He affirms that such a girl ‘non è libera nonostante sembri esserlo’ as she is addicted to icons of the likes of ‘Mike Bongiorno casalingo e scipito’ or ‘Franco Fabrizi, mondano e brutale.’ According to Puccini, in fact, the market takes advantage of girls’ weaknesses and personalities like Mike Bongiorno owe their fame ‘ai poteri occulti della televisione’ which appears as the root of all evil. Puccini adds that pop culture is ‘come un vizio,’ and a young girl could become an ‘inconsapevole e timidissima schiava’ of male media stars. Absurdly enough, he says that the latter factor is not bad per se as there is nothing wrong with being ‘ombra fedele e servizievole dell’uomo,’ but when it comes to mass culture the problem arises because ‘i mercanti dei sogni imbrogliano la gente’ and television kills words.<sup>37</sup>

From today’s angle, one could ask how statements like those above could find a place in a youth-target magazine under the wing of the self-proclaimed most progressive force of the country. In truth, Puccini fully fits the features of a communist, and man, of the old guard who keeps an attitude of detachment and disdain towards the lures of society. Traces of the same outlook can be found in the documents released by Longo and Togliatti, but in that case the discourse assumes different traits, as seen, and for political reasons many elements of modern society are accepted as good factors. Moreover, these statements are featured in the journal with the intention of provoking debate around the gap between generations, as mentioned above. However, apart from Puccini’s shallow reflections, in the wake of the debate springing from the suicide attempt, the periodical continued to carry out surveys on contemporary youth, including themes such as women’s emancipation or divorce, starting a trend which would become a trademark of the magazine’s editorial line.

On December 2 1956 the periodical had already launched a first survey called *Alla ricerca del giovane d’oggi* composed of a set of Yes or No questions. The response to the experiment was considered to be encouraging. The survey is relevant to us as it gives us an idea of the views of those readers who chose to respond to it. Although it is a fixed answer questionnaire, the idea seemed to intrigue the young readers and many of them attached letters in order to explain and justify their responses. In the text that introduces the survey we read that its aim is to investigate contemporary society through young people’s eyes in a period when the ‘aspirazioni tradizionali si sono perse, sono state erose dalla loro stessa insufficienza.’ What these aspirations are is not specified, however – from what we see – such a statement is far removed from Puccini’s view on contemporary society, for

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<sup>37</sup> G. Puccini, *Mike perché è divorziato* in *NG* (23 December 1956), p. 8.

example.<sup>38</sup> The journalist continues: ‘certe domande non avranno senso per i giovani della Lombardia e ne avranno uno invece per i giovani della Calabria e viceversa.’

Let us now take a look at the thirty questions. Several of them concern the private sphere of young people, for example: ‘Ritieni necessario per il matrimonio che la giovane sia illibata;’ ‘ritieni possibile la pura amicizia tra un ragazzo e una ragazza,’ others instead refers to a broader sphere: ‘credi alla emancipazione della donna;’ ‘pensi che la politica possa risolvere i tuoi problemi.’ Some others are very simple and almost banal for today’s readers: ‘pensi che possa esistere un paese più bello dell’Italia’ or ‘hai mai visto il mare,’ for instance.<sup>39</sup> In the 1950s, however, few young people had the opportunity to travel and for many from rural Italy military service represented the only occasion to travel across their country. On December 16, the first responses start to arrive, and the journalist explains that the purpose of the survey is to find ‘tra noi e i lettori un terreno di reciproco aiuto’ and grasp ‘il senso di un costume’ of an era. In the same issue, as a comment on his answers, there is a letter written by a 21-year-old man, Giuseppe Barnabini, who describes the joy of being communist. He talks about his activism and the conflicts with his family because of his willingness to discover and read. He also describes his feeling of loneliness and explains that he would find ‘molto interessanti le conversazioni con i miei genitori se essi mi comprendessero.’ A generational gap appears here, again, and as we have seen so far, appears as a constant for part of the 1950s generation. Giuseppe’s mother considers culture unimportant, for her it is useless to ‘gettarle (1000 lire) via per un libro.’ The young reader explains his response to the questions about “case chiuse” with a very insightful opinion on the matter. He describes brothels as the ‘gran vergogna di questa ipocrita Italia cattolica.’ His criticism does not refer to prostitution per se but to the hypocrisy of society. In fact, he states, ‘io non voglio proibire a una donna di darsi a chi vuole, ma quello che offende è il metodo.’ He explains his animosity towards prostitution through the lens of communism, his attitude is ‘suggerita dalla mia coscienza di comunista’ because ‘un uomo non deve sfruttare un altro uomo.’<sup>40</sup> The answers continue to arrive, often with a letter attached, and the journal proudly suggests that youth is ‘avanzata e pensosa,’ the detailed breakdown of results would be published in the 3 March 1957 edition. For *NG*, young people who took part in the poll are progressive and ‘l’unica domanda a cui nessuno,

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<sup>38</sup> Puccini wrote also for *VN*, in those cases though he shared a less patronising view on modern society. In an article, speaking of the Resistance, he states: ‘quei fermenti non esistono per le nuove generazioni che vivono in un ambiente frigido e ipocrita’ and ‘ragazzi ‘si staccan dal nido della casa e dall’infanzia e tentano di mettere le ali’ but ‘invece di lottare frontalmente’ they choose ‘sovente strade incongrue e morbose per gridare il proprio diritto alla vita.’ G. Puccini, *Un piccolo orfano selvaggio* in *VN* (30 March 1957), pp. 24-27.

<sup>39</sup> Unsigned, *Alla ricerca del giovane d’oggi* in *NG* (2 December 1956), p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> G. Barnabini, *Il mio più grande problema* in *NG* (16 December 1956), p. 9.

proprio nessuno, ha risposto con un no è quella sull'emancipazione della donna.' Interestingly, this article appears in the same issue as Puccini's response previously considered. Many of the readers are pro-divorce 'purché non si faccia come gli attori americani' and against the existence of brothels.<sup>41</sup> The reference to American actors is very similar to some statements that we can find in *Vie nuove* or other PCI-related magazines.<sup>42</sup> Evidently, Hollywood – to which the communist press dedicates numerous articles – must have been seen as a fascinating world but also an unsafe place in which normal rules did not apply. Other answers include a profound patriotic love for the nation which, according to a reader, 'una volta raggiunto il comunismo diventerà una delle più belle del mondo.'<sup>43</sup> To a similar question 'Che pensi se senti parlar di amor di patria?' in *VN* older interviewees answer differently: 'Non lo capisco. E' una convenzione!' says a waiter in his seventies.<sup>44</sup> 'Qui andiamo male perché mi sento cittadino del mondo' answers a thirty-year-old man.<sup>45</sup>

From what has emerged so far we can see that the FGCI is aware of the generational gap that characterises the late 1950s and it builds a dialogue around this contrast, juxtaposing the opinions of journalists like Puccini and letters from the generation that might be regarded as 'avanzata'. This is also evident in the answers of older interviewees in *VN* who are more cautious about their opinions on topics like "amor di patria," for example. The FGCI, in this context, is trying to keep up with the new demands of society including in its consideration a discourse on "questione giovanile" and women's emancipation that represents a leitmotiv throughout the first half of 1957, as we can see in the next section.

### 6.3 Youth and Women in 1957

As outlined at the beginning of the thesis, 1957 is a crucial year for Italy. The economic boom is underway and society is changing at fast pace. In its second year of existence, *NG* extends the scope of its research, investigating the lives of young people more intensely. The themes discussed are many and varied; we will focus in particular on the surveys regarding contemporary youth and women's emancipation, pastimes, and the discussion around Americanisation. In doing this, we will follow a chronological structure that goes

<sup>41</sup> Unsigned, *Una gioventù avanzata e pensosa* in *NG* (23 December 1956), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> Two young men from Milan in *VN* contest the idea of divorce, nonetheless they seek una 'ragazza istruita, emancipata ma non troppo [...] che non abbia troppe iniziative all'americana' L.B., *Domande agli uomini* in *Vie nuove* (15 June 1957), p. 30.

<sup>43</sup> Unsigned, *Una gioventù* (23 December 1956), p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> L.B., *Domande agli uomini* in *VN* (5 January 1957), p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> L.B., *Domande agli uomini* in *VN* (12 January 195), p. 18.

from January 1957 to the summer, when the FGCI's congress is called. In this timeframe we can see that the journal gives more space to surveys and to young women and young people's opinions.

An article written on 6 January 1957 deals with young female activists and it is called *Perché proprio ora*. It is a piece of investigative journalism based on interviews with young female peasants from Tuscany. It is clear that the article's intention is to praise the party for its attempt to give more space to female members. A young day labourer affirms 'siamo tutti comunisti in casa: il babbo e i fratelli,' in these times 'dobbiamo essere molti di più [...] si deve prendere la tessera, impegnarsi.' The woman speaks about the 'battaglia per la terra,' affirming that the landowners are now worried as they find many female peasants also take part in the revolts. Her tone is resolute and it is aligned with the intense membership drive promoted by the Youth Federation. She praises the FGCI, recognising that the young female peasants' activism is due to the commitment of the party in involving women, in fact 'sono stati i comunisti, è stata la federazione giovanile a farci diventare così.' Implicitly, she affirms that Communism is a stairway to emancipation and desire fulfilment: a map to read 'la vita moderna' itself. In fact 'noi tutte sentiamo il bisogno di vestirci bene' and to have a better life. This very last part could seem irrelevant; it is instead the crystallisation of the new party strategy in which elements of modern capitalism coexist with a more profound aspiration to a more meaningful life. In the article, the journalist adds that 'tra le caratteristiche più importanti del movimento giovanile in questi ultimi dieci anni' there is the 'ingresso nella vita politica e sociale delle ragazze italiane.' In the conclusion he talks about 'femminismo,' using the term differently from the meaning it would acquire in the years to come. The journalist opposes that word because it creates inner divisions whereas Communists must respect 'la ragazza così com'è, con le sue passioni, le sue speranze, anche i suoi miti.'<sup>46</sup> The latter passage demonstrates the magazine's endorsement of the new party strategy and a clear promotion of it. The elements through which this process takes shape are the reference to the passions, hopes and icons of young girls that in this specific text are not condemned, unlike what Puccini does; the strategy is also validated by the words of the interviewee herself who stresses the importance of proselytising and being united through the membership recruitment. This marks a change of strategy in the magazine at this point that seems to start paying more attention to the lives of young people in the months to come.

Nevertheless, in the same issue (6 January) a male reader responds to the letter of Angela C. to Puccini, discussed earlier. His tone is accusatory and he contests Angela's response

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<sup>46</sup> D. Monari, *Perché proprio ora* in *NG* (30 December 1956), p. 3.



from which – he says – emerges that many women see emancipation ‘solo come la propria, verso il tipo giovane e bello.’ His accusation is a way to talk about brothels that appear to enmesh the ‘figlie del popolo messe là dentro dalle chimere borghesi.’<sup>47</sup> The writer’s name is Bruno Bertini but besides this the reader is told nothing else. However, he may well have been the Bruno Bertini who had been a partisan and was ‘responsabile dei giovani comunisti della federazione di Genova, poi segretario del Fronte della gioventù fino al settembre 1946.’<sup>48</sup> If so, then Bruno was neither young nor a common reader, and represents a further example, like Puccini, of where the journal juxtaposes the thoughts of older and high profile members with those of young readers in order to create a discussion between the generations.

Maintaining our attention on the discussion around contemporary society, let us see how the attention towards young people and women grew throughout 1957. In this respect, it is worth considering a text written by a journalist (G.P.), a woman, a reflection on some letters attached by young female readers to the survey we encountered previously. One of the readers says: ‘si dice che i giovani d’oggi sono così e così son le ragazze’ but each time the news considers only certain cases ‘c’è la gioventù bruciata? Certo che c’è, ma non rappresenta davvero la media.’ For the correspondent ‘ogni generazione è migliore della precedente’ and the journalist, in fact, adds that the “rudezza” of the younger generation hides “germi vitali.”<sup>49</sup> The journalist admits that next to some “banalità,” in the letters, we find an unexpected maturity, ‘casi umani, modi di esser sorprendenti,’ in fact: ‘e tu volti il foglio e la realtà, malgrado tutto, ti viene addosso.’ Another letter is transcribed ‘Ho trent’anni e faccio la cameriera [...] ho avuto una giovinezza di dolori e umiliazioni [...] Da mia madre non ho avuto né un bacio né una carezza ...Neppure ora che è morta posso perdonarla.’ After that, another testimony is reported in which a former model recounts her experience in the world of fashion where ‘gli occhi degli uomini, sfacciati, che rivelano chiaramente il nessun interesse per l’abito.’ A place where ‘ci si sente come animali esposti alla Fiera.’<sup>50</sup> As we can see, the stories recounted are different from each other and they can be considered as an attempt at giving voice to young women from various walks of life. It is worth observing that many female journalists worked on the main publications of the PCI, especially with those targeted at a broader audience: *Vie nuove*, *Noi donne* and

<sup>47</sup> Bruno Bertini, *Alla ricerca della sincerità* in *NG* (30 December 1956), p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> <http://catalogo.archividelnovecento.it/>

<sup>49</sup> On the same topic, the two young interviewees from Milan encountered before affirm in *VN*: our generation is ‘la migliore’ because it is ‘né troppo antica, né troppo moderna.’ *Le domande agli uomini* (20 June 1957), p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> G.P., *Cinque casi strani* in *NG* (3 February 1957), p. 9.

*Nuova generazione*.<sup>51</sup> As we will see, the weeks to come would see a new survey on today's girls, as it was soon labelled, and almost every issue would host a special page for women as we will see shortly.

On March 3 *Nuova generazione* published the results of the first survey we met above; let us take a closer look at them. The title of the article speaks clearly *La maggioranza all'ottimismo* and it is cleverly built around a comparison between the responses of the communist youth and another survey launched by *la Stampa* in the previous weeks which had brought to light a certain pessimism amongst middle-class eighteen-year-old girls in the city of Turin. The poll had suggested that girls' unhappiness 'non nasce dalla distanza tra i sogni e la realtà' but arose from the 'estrema difficoltà a integrarsi nella società, a sentirsi parte di qualcosa di organico.' This statement is the springboard for the comparison: it is pointed out that in fact there has been a 'risposta diversa' to the survey of *NG* readers who are 'in massima parte operai e contadini, ma anche studenti e impiegati.' They 'tendono piuttosto all'ottimismo' because 'aderiscono in genere ad una grande organizzazione, la FGCI' and they feel connected with 'i giovani e le ragazze che in altre nazioni [...] hanno gli stessi obiettivi, nutrono le stesse speranze.'<sup>52</sup> The comparison leads to a conclusion, a 'conferma di una vecchia verità marxista' for which human awareness is the product of 'proprie esperienze di vita sociale.' The journalist, here, puts forward a classist discourse by tracing a clear-cut line which divides the enthusiasm of the less privileged classes – the readers of *NG* –, from the loneliness of the wealthier ones. With a discourse full of pathos, the writer focuses on the hard life of their readers, and writes 'chissà se,' one of the middle-class girls 'assistendo a una manifestazione operaia, guardando passare il giovane edile sporco di calcina' or 'la mondina' with callous hands 'abbia provato un senso di paura.' Nonetheless, these masses, he adds, are able to express themselves, although through letters 'scritte spesso con calligrafia impossibile, zeppe di errori di lingua.' The journalist bases the analysis on a rhetorical device typical of the PCI: the purity of the less advantaged. It is a similar concept to that of the PCI and its image of the young person as always pure and led by noble ideals. However, besides the rhetoric and the jargon that appears rather contrived in eulogising some stereotypical features of the activists, the polls actually show an open-minded youth that despite its economic limits ('dodici su cento non hanno visto [...] neanche il mare,' for example) has clear ideas on society. Its attitude is progressive, and 78% of the readers are against the war and 80% are

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<sup>51</sup> In *NG* we could often find articles signed by Giglia Tedesco, Rorò Argenta or Serena D'Arbela, and *Noi donne* was completely edited by women. The directress of *VN* was Maria Antonietta Macciocchi.

<sup>52</sup> In this respect, every week, a small column at the right of the page reports addresses of possible pen pals spread around Europe and beyond.

conscious of the role of Unions in their working life. Many are pro-divorce (more than 50%), many believe in pure friendship between man and woman (more than 60%) and – surprisingly for Italy of the time – more than 60% do not consider woman’s virginity as an important pre-nuptial factor. Furthermore, in the years of very substantial internal and external migrations ‘only’ 44% of them would like to emigrate. As stressed by the journalist, in the responses there is ‘nessun ombra di razzismo, niente nazionalismo’ and that youth overcame ‘l’ipocrisia sessuale, il culto dei divi del cinema e dello sport.’ The latter is a gratuitous remark as there is no specific question on this “culto,” there are two questions on the ‘guadagno dei calciatori e dei divi’ which 77% find unfair, but there is no reference to the iconic sphere of cinema and football, nor to fandom. It is a way to bring attention back to the suggested solidity of young Communists who keep their feet on the ground. They are represented as a generation of activists that want to overcome ‘gli schemi mentali arretrati,’ who are comfortable with ‘il costume democratico, l’abitudine alla discussione’ and – above all – with the responsibilities that ‘partecipare a questa organizzazione comportano.’ In short, the journalist’s comments are aimed at exalting the merits of the FGCI and PCI in contributing to young people’s learning of democratic customs. The merits are, in part, recognisable.<sup>53</sup> The description of their enthusiasm is counterbalanced by an excerpt from *la Stampa* in which the young middle-class girls confess their emotional distance from parents who ‘non mi capiscono [...] se confido qualcosa mi criticano [...] ridono di tutti i miei progetti,’ and to the question ‘ti sei mai sentita sola?’ one girl replies ‘sì, sempre’ another one said to have tried to commit suicide and a third one admits ‘sento una atmosfera opprimente, di angoscia in cui ognuno ruota chiuso nel suo mondo.’ From an analytical viewpoint these words are interesting because they seem to shed dark shadows on the upper middle-classes of the late 1950s, recounting a scenario not very different from the atmosphere of incommunicability in Marco Bellocchio and Michelangelo Antonioni’s early films but, of course, they are quoted in the article in order to put the working classes and the FGCI in a good light. A further theme returns in the words of one of the girls, the response to the comments of adults toward the emerging generation: ‘sono delusa dalla realtà della vita, e ho paura’ she rejects the definition ‘gioventù bruciata’ because it is ‘banale e ingiusta.’ She affirms that her generation is ‘più spregiudicata, meno ipocrita, più matura, cioè adeguata ai tempi,’ and concludes with a question: ‘quando la società si libererà dai pregiudizi circa la nostra età?’<sup>54</sup> The statements of the girls sound like an anticipation of the restlessness that would spread in the 1960s and

<sup>53</sup> Mario Spinella, *La maggioranza all’ottimismo* in *NG* (3 March 1957), pp. 6-7.

<sup>54</sup> Unsigned, *Pessimismo?* In *NG* (3 March 1957), p. 7.

– in this respect – it should not be forgotten that the young middle-class played a main part in the youth revolts in the following two decades.<sup>55</sup> Despite their pessimism, the girls interrogated show a very clear point of view on their love life and among them only a small percentage considers marriage their sole ambition in life. For young female readers, the overcoming of marriage as their only aim in life appears to be a cross-class factor.<sup>56</sup>

The poll gives start to a reflection on young people, and young women especially, in society. On March 10, a missive from a reader comments on the results. The writer affirms that society sees the young as marginal but, the survey has instead showed that the young person is ‘un individuo profondamente immerso nel corpo sociale.’<sup>57</sup> There follows an article on ‘giornaletti di istituto’ considered tools for the advance of progress. The statement could sound unimportant but the 1960s would witness an intense debate around the importance of school journals.<sup>58</sup> In the same issue in the “pagina femminile,” there is discussed the role of woman workers in trade-union struggles which led to a victory over time limited contracts. A brief article connects the latter to the situation of peasants again, this time focusing on migration and the abandonment of rural areas which affects women too. However, it is neither a data based analysis nor a way to investigate the reasons behind such exodus; it is – instead – a piece that wants to preach at young militants comparing the relationships between the newer generations and the older to that between the FGCI and the PCI. The words of the old leader Emilio Sereni are conveyed: with a generalisation on young people’s mores he affirms that often the latter do not respect their older fathers and – of course – this is a mistake as the older are the depository of wisdom. So the FGCI ‘allieva di partito’ must respect the PCI which is ‘espressione della coscienza e della esperienza storica della classe operaia.’<sup>59</sup> Beside the words of Sereni we find, a very interesting interview with a sixteen-year-old student that casts light on the newer generation mentioned by Sereni. It is the first of a series of testimonies gathered by the female journalist Rorò Argenta aiming to give an insight into the world of female readers. The first interviewee is Paola who struggles in her relationship with a contradictory father who ‘non vuole che telefonino ragazzi a casa’ and ‘che vada a ballare’ but ‘le lascia leggere quello che vuole e anche portare i calzoni.’ He also does not want her to listen to

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<sup>55</sup> Paradoxically, they would somewhat realise Togliatti’s plan of getting closer to intellectuals but, at the end of the 1960s, they would eventually overcome it. Furthermore, not few scholars have described the revolution of 1968 as a bourgeois revolt.

<sup>56</sup> In an early footnote, we have mentioned a similar survey on women’s emancipation in VN. In introducing it the journalist states that ‘nel vedere una donna di settant’anni accanto a una di venticinque’ seems that ‘fra l’una e l’altra intercorrono secoli e secoli.’ G. Tumiatì, *L’italiana del ’57* in VN (9 March 1957), pp. 4-11.

<sup>57</sup> L.M., *Giovani non uomini marginali* in NG (10 March 1957), p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Michelangelo Notarianni, *La democrazia bussa alla porta* in NG (10 March 1957), p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Unsigned, *Una prima vittoria* and *I ruvidi fidanzati* in NG (10 March 1957), p. 9.

the radio ‘ma lei la sente di nascosto.’ She has always seen older boys and ‘in genere [...] sempre brutti, però interessanti.’ Paola defines herself ‘vagamente fascista’ and ‘le sarebbe molto piaciuto studiare danza classica’ and ‘le piace ballare il rock and roll.’ She has tried ‘due volte a predere la sbornia per vedere che effetto che fa [...] e le piacerebbe provare gli stupefacenti, ma senza prendere il vizio.’<sup>60</sup> Paola’s narration gives a portrait of a young, probably upper middle-class woman in which different, and apparently clashing, elements coexist. These elements are symbolic from an analytical point of view as they speak of modernity, a place where opposite tendencies could be together without contradicting each other. And in fact her “fascismo” does not prevent her from dreaming of a modern life or from listening to rock and roll and thinking about trying drugs. Her depiction speaks of Italy of the boom better than a data-based analysis as it shows us glimpses of a stratum of young people from a precise class of society. It is not very far from some testimonies of young men from the Parioli quarter in Rome we will come across in the next chapter. On the one hand, the article speaks of the intentions of the journal to extend its scope, involving other classes in the debate; on the other it is a tendentious choice of testimony so that the readers may enjoy criticising her.

A second interview on the issue of March 17 tells us another story. The protagonist is Marina, a peasant from the Abruzzo region who has ‘il tipico aspetto da contadina.’ The text shows a piece of reality far from that of Paola above. Marina appears to be hard-working and ‘a lei piace lavorare in campagna, tranne zappare.’ She went to school until ‘terza elementare’ but regardless of this ‘le piacerebbe anche leggere ma ha poco tempo.’ However, sometimes she reads *Grand Hotel* and *Bolero Film*. She loves singing ‘sia quando è sola in casa, sia con le amiche.’ They had a radio in the house but one day her father broke it, so she learns the songs from the ‘canzonieri.’ Her father lives in Bolzano, where he works in a mine, and this is a common story among people from inner Abruzzo who, due to the aridity of the land, would migrate to mines in Belgium and in the North of Italy. Marina has never been anywhere and ‘il suo divertimento più grande è andare a ballare’ in the summer she goes to ballrooms in hotels where there are also ‘i forestieri’ but she socialises only with the people from her village, Scanno, in fact she has never talked to a foreigner. Marina is engaged with a man from Scanno who works in the mines of Bolzano like her father, they write each other many letters and she often sends him ‘caciocavalli.’ The two would get married soon but they would not go for a honeymoon due to the lack of time and money. If Marina were rich she would buy a ‘palazzo’ in Scanno. She wants to have only a couple of children because ‘non averne niente è brutto’

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<sup>60</sup> Unsigned, *L'intervista numero uno* in *NG* (10 March 1957), p. 9.

and she wants them to study. Marina regards tourists who go to Scanno lake during the summer with diffidence. She would not wear a Montgomery and ‘neanche i calzonni. Si vergognerebbe troppo. E il fidanzato non vorrebbe.’ ‘La politica non sa neanche cosa sia, in famiglia nessuno se ne occupa’ and anyway ‘non sono affari da donne.’<sup>61</sup> The interview is relevant to our research because it seems that the periodical chooses to publish it the week after that with Paola for a specific aim. They want to play on contrasts between two different realities and the portrait of Marina that emerges is tender. It is possible that the journal’s main purpose was to raise sympathy in the urban reader and create a tight closeness to the rural one. Although Marina lives in a very rural area the pastimes of the time have penetrated her life as well; the radio, for example. On the other hand, the mentality of her place still permeates her behaviour. However, Marina also looks for a better life for her future children.<sup>62</sup> Here, the interviewer does not give a personal judgment appearing to behave impartially towards the narration, letting the interviewee speak. This is the realm in which the FGCI’s magazine works best as its insights into the reality of the boom are very original and interesting. In a broader context, we have to consider these interviews as an attempt to portray young women of the late 1950s, giving room to their stories and words but also to brief hints of their physical features and family background. The depictions are placed in the framework of the new party strategy which aims at communicating with different strata and juxtaposing political discussion with daily life tales. Nonetheless, even if the testimonies are entirely genuine, they are clearly designed to provoke a specific reaction in the readers suggesting a particular interpretation of society. In this respect, on March 24 another interview is reported, this time the protagonist is Marisa, an eighteen-year-old typist, a very common profession among women back then. Marisa is different from Marina and belongs to an urban milieu, she is ‘molto carina anche se poco truccata’ and wears a dress ‘molto castigato.’ Her father works for a far right-wing newspaper but he defines himself communist. Marisa has a stable job in a press office where only four people work and there is a friendly atmosphere. Marisa ‘legge moltissimo, ma non romanzi moderni’ to which she prefers Nineteenth century classics. She likes to go out dancing and she loves cinema but ‘vuole film seri, che dicano qualcosa.’ She gets along with her parents but they are not very close since she is a ‘tipo chiuso,’ they do not

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<sup>61</sup> Rorò Argenta, *L'intervista numero due* in *NG* (17 March 1957), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> A similar statement about the children’s future is given by a young factory worker in *VN*: she wants her daughter to study ‘...cose però che la leghino veramente con la società,’ she would like her to be a ‘medico, infermiere.’ L. B., *Le domande agli uomini* in *VN* (9 March 1957), p. 32. A completely different ambition is provided, instead, by an older mother from Rome who would like that ‘mia figlia trovasse un bravo ragazzo [...] e che possibilmente possa mantenerla. L.B., *Le domande agli uomini* in *VN* (27 April 1957), p. 34. A generational gap clearly emerges here.

argue because she ‘non adopera rossetto o cose del genere.’ She is ‘quasi fidanzata con un professore di lettere che ha quindici anni più di lei’ but ‘i genitori non ne sanno niente.’ When with him, she likes going for long strolls rather than going to the cinema or out dancing. She would like to get married but she wants to keep working because ‘lo ritiene molto utile per la riuscita del matrimonio.’ Talking about adultery she says that ‘dipende dalle circostanze’ and if it happens only once she could forgive it. She would like to avoid sexual intercourse before the marriage but ‘non è tassativo.’ If she were rich she would like to travel the world because – like Marina – she has never been anywhere. Marisa strongly supports woman’s emancipation.<sup>63</sup> As we can see, Marisa is different from both Paola and Marina. In fact, Marisa seems to be an urban young woman, independent and solid. She keeps her feet on the ground and she seems to have a clear idea of what she wants in her future. We could define her as progressive and her responses about love life and relationships denote open-mindedness. With the other young women interviewed she shares pastimes such as cinema or dancing. Although Marisa comes from a wealthier stratum of society than Marina we could see that some things are not very different. Also Marisa, in fact, has not been anywhere. This detail tells us a lot about Italy of the 1950s, where low-cost traveling was still far to come and also people from wealthier classes were not used to travelling a lot. However, looking at magazines of the time, *L’Espresso* for example, we could notice an increase of travel-related ads promoting tourism, those about intercontinental flights and trains for example. And it is in that very same period, as we highlighted in the beginning of the research, that mass tourism explodes. In the wake of it, as summer approaches, *Nuova generazione* would spend many articles about holidays among the youth and the working class in particular.

#### 6.4 Investigating Young Women

From a media point of view, since the end of the war, Italy witnessed an intensification of publications that discussed the role of women in society, with a special focus on the role of women in the family. However, society was changing quickly hence magazines like *Grazia* (founded in 1938) or to a lesser extent *Famiglia Cristiana* (founded in 1931) had to enrich their discussions about women/wives/mothers with other debates that a part of contemporary womanhood required. We can see the experience of a journal like *Noi donne* (founded in 1944) from this perspective, for example. As Penelope Morris underlines, the magazine was ‘theoretically open to all readers’ but ‘it was aimed above all at women on

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<sup>63</sup> Rorò Argenta, *L’intervista numero tre* in *NG* (24 March 1957), p. 9.

the left.’ The magazine was connected with the Communist Party, edited by women and it ‘represents an attempt to combine some of the familiar elements of other women’s publications with serious political comment and debate.’<sup>64</sup> Other journals linked to the PCI did the same, investigating society in general, including women, and calling the readers to contribute. From this viewpoint in the spring of 1957, *Nuova generazione* intensified its social surveys, which tried to analyse diverse spheres of young people’s lives. Many of them are very interesting as they are insights into life in factories, work places, everyday lives, hopes and dreams of the newer generation providing us a picture of youth of the time. However, here we will consider only two single strands: the discourse around woman readers and women in general, and that about Americanisation and rock and roll. The first, as seen already, is a backbone in the new party’s policy and it is a way for the PCI and FGCI to discuss the nature of young people’s interactions during the boom, which sees an improvement of peer-to-peer relationships. Primarily in urban contexts, and slowly also in more provincial milieus, peers of both sexes started to develop more equal relationships. The attention on young women should be included in this frame of analysis and in a broader one related to their activism. On the same level, we find many articles on Americanisation and rock and roll, which become almost a way to look at their role in young people’s relationships (see 6.5)

In March, *Ragazze d’oggi*, a poll targeted at young female readers is launched. The majority of questions deal with emancipation revolving around a set of pivotal topics. For example: marriage, work life, study, politics and so on. Others are imbued with involuntary irony, for example one reads: ‘ti fidanzeresti con un ragazzo democristiano?’ And others are about pastimes and leisure. On March 31 a first response is published, and it is a letter from a female student from Florence who wants to remain anonymous. The student affirms ‘io non sono comunista, leggo il vostro giornale perché arriva al circolo culturale che frequento.’ The student is concise in her statements and in regard to the importance of having a profession and getting married she replies: ‘non sto studiando per sport, ma proprio perché non ho assoluto bisogno di sposarmi.’ Then she affirms she does not make distinctions between civil and religious marriage. On the question about the ‘ragazzo democristiano’ she replies that the question ‘mi è sembrata sciocca’ but although she would not have problems to get engaged with a ‘democristiano,’ or communist, or liberal,

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<sup>64</sup> Penelope Morris, *A window on the private sphere: Advice columns, marriage, and the evolving family in 1950s Italy* in *the Italianist* (n. 27, 2007), p. 3. For further reading about this topic: Michael Seymour, *Debating Divorce in Italy: Marriage and the Making of Modern Italians, 1860-1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); P. Morris, *From Private to Public: Alba de Céspedes’ Agony Column in 1950s Italy* in *Modern Italy* (n. 1, 2004); Lesley Caldwell, *Italian Family Matters: Women, Politics and Legal Reform* (London, Macmillan, 1991).



problems would arise with a fascist because: ‘tutti i missini che ho conosciuto e che conosco, sono tutti imbecilli, o quasi.’ About her freedom of choice the student is straightforward and admits she would not be able to be with someone who would prevent her from pursuing her dreams. The same concision returns again when she speaks about her future: ‘non mi piacerebbe fare la vita di mia madre’ who came from a poor village and soon got married to a worker who ‘ha rinunciato a tante cose pur di far studiare mio fratello e me.’ Talking about personal freedom she states: ‘non vorrei che la donna avesse la libertà dell’uomo, ma che quest’ultimo si sentisse almeno rimordere la coscienza quando è infedele.’<sup>65</sup> In terms of tastes, instead, she does not like i ‘giornali femminili’ because they are not able to deepen issues, and where music is concerned, she prefers foreign artists (Greco, Montand, Sinatra) since she finds Italian music boring and repetitive.<sup>66</sup> The portrait that emerges from the text is that of a young woman maturing: culturally and as a human being. She is representative of the social leap that part of the lower classes was attempting, mainly through sending their children to universities. The assertiveness of her freedom of choice is stern and it is interesting to see how, as for other testimonies already seen, profession becomes for her one of the most important ambitions. Nonetheless, the response to the question about the ‘libertà’ between men and women brings us back to the historical period.

By giving voice to letters like the one above, the magazine gives space to a generation which conveys fresh values somewhat different from those of the older generations. On the other hand, though, other values remain unchanged. Furthermore, the readers come from different strata and the journal wants to give the impression of establishing contact also with non-Communists, like the student of the first missive.

In the issue of April 7 the letter attached to the survey’s answers comes from a female teacher from Milan. In this case, again, we are dealing with a woman who lives in an urban milieu. The letter boasts a very powerful title: *Sì, sono soddisfatta di essere donna* to which a picture of happy children playing in a courtyard is attached. The protagonist is a nineteen-year-old teacher in a ‘scuola elementare.’ Unlike the student from Florence, the teacher affirms that ‘spero anch’io di sposarmi perché amo tanto i bambini e desidererei tanto scaricare questo amore sui figli miei.’ The latter words imply an almost traditional position towards marriage, which takes place in order to procreate; however she admits ‘penso di poter essere felice anche non sposandomi’ because the job ‘mi soddisfa e

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<sup>65</sup> A similar statement is given by a male tailor in VN: ‘E’ possibile, un adulterio naturale non dà nessun danno: naturale dico per l’uomo. Quando la donna avrà proprio gli stessi diritti dell’uomo sarà naturale anche per la donna. Adesso no!’ L.B., *Le domande agli uomini* in VN (19 January 1957), p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> Una studentessa fiorentina, *La prima risposta* in NG (31 March 1957), p. 9.

soprattutto lo amo.’ In a latter passage she declares herself traditionalist, although ‘non trovo nulla di male nel matrimonio civile’ she defines herself ‘troppo attaccata alla tradizione e al mio sogno di vedermi sposa in chiesa.’ She would get engaged with a ‘democristiano’ but she thinks that in that case ideological divergences would affect the partnership. From this statement we could infer that the teacher is probably communist or surely left-wing. Like the interviewee before, she affirms ‘non vorrei rifare la vita di mia madre’ because it has been full of grief and hard work. She strongly believes in individual personalities and she does not want to follow any iconic model as ‘ognuno ha una propria personalità’ that should not be imprisoned ‘dentro gli schemi.’ She does not think that political interest is ‘antifemminile’ since ‘noi donne formiamo lo Stato, è giusto sapere cosa fanno i nostri rappresentanti, è giusto discuterne i loro atteggiamenti e le loro idee.’ Contrarily to what is implied in the previous letter, and despite the opposite ideas of her female friends, the teacher thinks that ‘il dovere di fedeltà debba essere uguale per l’uomo e per la donna.’ And in case her husband went with another woman ‘farei anch’io queste scappatelle, per mostrare a mio marito che esse non sono [...] un piacere per gli altri.’ Although many of her friends say that ‘gli uomini bisogna capirli e via dicendo’ she has never changed her mind in regard to it. Speaking of social climbing she is not attracted to higher classes because ‘sono figlia di operai. Il mio è un ambiente sano, buono e simpatico.’<sup>67</sup> The latter statement, perhaps involuntarily, is totally aligned with the rhetoric of the party we came across before for which the classes that are less wealthy are the bearer of genuine values. We can find similar assertions scattered through other PCI linked magazines of the period. If we compare the letter of the student to that of the teacher we could notice two different approaches to life. The affirmations of the student seem to be slightly more upfront and denote an opening towards foreign cultures (her taste in music and literature). Her response is interesting from an historical perspective as it anticipates the prototype of the university student that would come to the fore in the restlessness of the 1960s. The second letter, instead, despite its ‘conformity,’ indicates more maturity in the response. Although the young teacher seems to stick to the rules of tradition (religious marriage, children and so on) she is more aware of what she wants. The text is almost touching in showing her enthusiasm for her job and she is very clear about what she does not want from a relationship, adultery for example. Certainly, the two missives are the sign of a world that is changing, in its rituals and habits. In the same page of the teacher’s letter there is a tale/testimony about young women from the countryside around Venice. It is written by Serena D’Arbela and its aim is to display how modernisation has modified life

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<sup>67</sup> Una maestra milanese, *Sì, sono soddisfatta di essere una donna* in *NG* (7 April 1957), p. 9.

in the country too: ‘erano allegre, parlavano, ridevano, e appena fu possibile, scostarono le sedie e i tavoli per ballare.’ New pastimes entered rural areas as well and ‘i parroci nemmeno ci provano più a predicare che quelle “cose” son peccato. Il mondo cambia, anche in campagna.’ However, cinema and television ‘diffondono [...] immagini di vita civile, comoda e moderna,’ but ‘le ragazze [...] a casa non trovano che le cose vecchie e decrepite.’ As a consequence, ‘le ragazze hanno raggiunto una certezza: non vogliono vivere come le loro madri.’ Those girls, even if unprivileged ‘credono nell’emancipazione della donna.’ The sketch of rural life finishes with a bitter reflection inspired by the view of ‘osterie’ where young men play bocce: ‘Mi han fatto pensare alla Domenica della donna contadina che [...] una volta sposata se ne resta in casa, nella bassa cucina fumosa o quando è bello seduta sulla porta.’ Her only pastime is ‘il cesto della biancheria da rammentare.’ Nonetheless ‘anche le ragazze della campagna cominciano a sentirsi diverse’ as they wish ‘una vita più moderna ed evoluta.’

This tale together with the letters and portraits we have seen above offer a glimpse into Italy of the boom in which the gap between rural areas and cities is clear-cut. In recounting the two realities *NG* applies two diverse styles: for the cities the journal lets women speak more, for the country instead it lingers on description of hardship and poverty. The tales about those milieus insist on a sentimentality translating into words the slightly patronising point of view of the party towards rural classes. Another gap that it is shown is that between South and North of the country, also in rurality. The poverty of life in the country is similar but political engagement differs. The peasant from Abruzzo we met before, in fact, is not involved in politics because it is a male passion, the girls from near Venice, instead ‘manderanno una delegazione a Venezia [...] al Convegno delle Ragazze Contadine.’<sup>68</sup> The same happens with the peasants from Tuscany who are enrolled in the FGCI. The investigation on women continues until May as in that month the journal would start to dedicate its attention to upcoming FGCI congress held in June. On April 28 the results of the survey about young women we have mentioned before is published. Let us take a look at what the statistics say. For example only 28% of them consider marriage as the sole aim of their life and 78% agree on the importance of having a profession rather than having a dowry. Moreover, 72% find ‘rispettabile sposarsi con il matrimonio civile.’ 80% show a remarkable self-confidence and respect for their own political opinions, in fact they will not change their mind on the matter to please their boyfriends and 54% say they are not in a relationship in which boyfriends forbid them to be involved in political activities. This datum could be misleading though, since 41% responded with a neutral

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<sup>68</sup> Serena D’arbela, *Le ragazze di Ca’ Corniani* in *NG* (7 April 1957), p. 9.

answer. We can infer that this proportion may have some issues with their partners as far as activism is concerned. However, 85% also think that being politically involved is not something ‘contrario alla femminilità.’ A very relevant datum is that 74% are ‘soddisfatta di essere donna,’ and this is remarkable as 1950s Italy, like – to a certain extent – the Western world in general, was still a chauvinist society based on ‘si fa, ma non si dice,’ as a 1920s song said. In regard to intimate relationships then, 56% state that they would not give ‘un bacio senza amore’ but only 30% would crave to give birth to a child soon after their marriage. Furthermore, and it is a significant percentage, 74% believe that ‘il dovere di fedeltà dell’uomo sia pari a quello della donna.’ 68% read books regularly and 74% reads the first pages of newspapers, however just 38% prefer the ‘giornali femminili’ to the regular ones. Only 26% are attracted by the higher ranks of society, and 52% still like Italian songs more than those from other countries. However, and this is symptomatic, only a meagre 14% agree with the victory of Claudio Villa’s *Corde della mia chitarra* at Sanremo Festival. This latter percentage suggests that the atmosphere of mutation involved pop music too. The women who took part in the surveys were 3,250, according to the journalist Giglia Tedesco, and they seem to subvert common stereotypes. Of course, the selection of specific letters among others shows the journal’s intention of portraying women in that precise way. Those women do not find in marriage the solution to their problems and are not fascinated by the classes up the ladder of society. They believe in work and are interested in culture. The poll seems to show a ‘ventata di aria pura [...] nello sconcertante clima delle inchieste sui giovani.’ Through this statement, the journal tries, again, to take young people’s side, freeing them from generalisations about their disinterest or apathy. Moreover, it wants to glorify the FGCI and its healthy youth which is walking ‘la strada di un profondo rinnovamento del costume quale indicato da Gramsci.’ Nonetheless they are aware that those readers ‘costituiscono una avanguardia ancora ben ristretta’ but through their responses they reaffirm that the ‘idee liberatrici del comunismo fa della FGCI la portatrice di una morale.’ Predictably, the journal places the open-mindedness of those women in the frame of communism, excluding other prominent factors such as the general modernisation of society and the input of pop culture. However it is also true what it stated, the FGCI is ‘l’unica forza politica organizzata tra le ragazze’ – this merit should be acknowledged – and it is their duty to turn ‘le conquiste della società moderna’ into ‘una esistenza nuova per tutte le famiglie.’ Their ‘inchiesta’ gives a glimpse into a ‘rottura con la rassegnazione secolare della donna.’<sup>69</sup> From what we have seen, the PCI and its youth association regard the discourse around women’s emancipation as a core

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<sup>69</sup> Giglia Tedesco, *Ragazze d’oggi* in NG (28 April 1957), p. 12.

topic for their strategy of advancement. In this light we could also notice how the style of *Nuova generazione* changes, becoming more original in its language, when it deals with youth oriented issues. It is a step forward that displays almost a clear-cut gap between the ideological articles about topics such as the events of 1956 and those around surveys. The insight into young people's life becomes deeper and objective also, giving space to their voices.<sup>70</sup>

In order to conclude our analysis of the relationship between the journal and female readers it is worth looking at two comments on the survey released by Giuliana Dal Pozzo, editor of *Noi donne* and the writer Joyce Lussu. Dal Pozzo affirms that 'le giovani che hanno risposto alle vostre domande sono quelle che noi sogniamo' and like *NG*, *Noi donne* fights for women emancipation. However, she claims, it has been right to specify that those women are an 'avanguardia' but asks would they be able to educate those women who write to *Noi donne* to ask for Gina Lollobrigida's address or 'raccontano di come il loro ragazzo non permetta loro di uscire alla sera?' Women who read comic novels but do not 'comprendono il linguaggio delle prime pagine dei giornali.' The editor states that 'i giovani più avanzati' are those who are ready for radical judgements towards less advanced youth. This latter point would, unfortunately, represent a truth in the following years when the fissure between the working classes and intellectual elites inside the party would greatly grow. Dal Pozzo affirms in the end that the distance between the two youth strands seems so big that 'sembra di trovarsi di fronte al salto di una generazione.' Historically speaking, we could affirm that the divide to take into account emerged in modern society as a whole and modern commodities, cultural and material, did not succeed in involving all the citizens. We cannot know the social stratum from which every single reader of *NG* comes from but from what we have seen, among them, the members of the unprivileged classes are not few. In this respect the importance of the Communist Party and its media in educating citizens and providing them maps for their orientation in the modern world must be recognised, regardless of their – somewhat – patronising approach. The words of Dal Pozzo are an acute take on the matter, but from another perspective the slight 'demonization' of pop-culture she puts forward responds to a certain bias without understanding that mass culture goes alongside the advancement of modern society. Joyce Lussu, instead, provides us a very interesting take on the situation, underlining how for many young women 'le aspirazioni nuove coesistono molto spesso in loro stesse con

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<sup>70</sup> In regard to political journalism of the 1950s and the jargon used in ideological articles of the PCI-related magazines: Marcello Venturi, *Sdraiati sulla linea* (Milano: Lampi di stampa, 2011) and Fidia Gambetti, *Comunista perché, come. Dalla morte di Stalin alla morte di Togliatti. L'anello mancante di una storia autobiografica* (Roma: Vecchiarelli, 1992).

vecchie concezioni e tradizioni,' this sentence could be applied to Italy of the boom in general, where new habits and commodities coexist with backward rituals and social frictions.<sup>71</sup> This coexistence creates often a schism which revolves on a gap between the desire (often impossible to fulfil) and reality, especially in young people. The Communist Party is aware of it and in fact it often warns the youth about the dangers of fascination with cinema or television. It is not by chance that a question of the survey above candidly reads: 'ritieni giusto prendere a modello un'attrice cinematografica?' The journal would proudly boast that the 83% of the women responded negatively.<sup>72</sup>

### 6.5 Youth in 1957: Youngsters and Americanisation

1957 sees young people as protagonists. Looking at *Nuova generazione*, we notice an extraordinary increment in articles on the subject of youth, from discussion of the FGCI congress in June to the Moscow Festival of Youth in July/August; from the analysis of the impact of Americanisation on young people to the role of young women in society. This last topic has been examined already; we will now investigate the debate on Americanisation and on the impact of pop culture on youth in general.

On January 13, 1957, Puccini's column has the radio as its topic; the medium that also reaches the 'abituri dei braccianti del sud' bringing to those remote parts of the country new songs that 'escono ogni mese (e non c'è da stupirsi che siano raffarzonate e tutte uguali.)' As we have noted before, Puccini is very critical, indeed scornful, about the impact of mass culture on youth. Here he talks about music and – with his well-known bias – about young women and their fascination for modern 'canzonette' in which the music is predominant, shifting the importance of words into the background. For Puccini, words should be the most important constituent in a song, reaffirming a prejudice that would become a typical leitmotiv amongst Italian intellectuals, artists and musicians too, at least until the 1980s.<sup>73</sup> He provides a stereotype of the average female consumer of pop music describing the cover of a 'canzoniere-book' for example 'su cui è raffigurata una ragazza che ascolta un disco, un po' scaruffata di capelli e con gli occhi persi nel vuoto,' as if she

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<sup>71</sup> Giuliana Dal Pozzo and Joyce Lussu, *Due pareri sulle ragazze d'oggi* in *Nuova generazione* (5 May 1957), p.11. Moreover, Joyce Lussu in 1957 edited *Donne come te. Inchieste di: L. Della Mea, C. Zavattini, G. Tumiatì, M. D'Arsago, M. Giacobbe e altri* (Roma: Avanti, 1957).

<sup>72</sup> *Ragazze d'oggi* in *NG* (28 April 1957), p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> It is no wonder that Italy throughout the years has witnessed a flourishing school of songwriters. In this respect it is worth looking at the sound compendium of testimonies edited by Fernanda Pivano: *Complice la musica. 30+1 cantautori italiani si raccontano a Fernanda Pivano* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2008).

was possessed. In his typical apocalyptic tone he defines young women as slaves to music, a remark similar to that about comic books and cinema that we have already seen.<sup>74</sup>

Far from Puccini's trite account of modernisation, 1957 would prove to be a turning point in Italian pop culture and that year, in pop music, stands as a symbolic caesura. The predominance of standardised pop compositions gives way to new and more refined forms of pop songs. It is in fact the year of the birth of Cantacronache but also the year of the first rock and roll festival in Milan and the apex in popularity for the "urlatori." It is indeed a flourishing period for youth culture and, in the press, young people's role in society is investigated and questioned constantly. In the light of this interest we will give an insight into the topic and into the way *NG* deals with the so called "questione giovanile," a topic that for the journal is often connected to the discussion of the influence of Americanisation on young people.

On February 17, a comic strip of a series called 'Gli italiani' drawn by Pino Zac depicts a group of young Italians with Teddy boy's quiffs and leather jacket.<sup>75</sup> Over the same period – as seen – the country's youth arouses the interest of the press and very often this attention goes along with discourses around youth restlessness, their love for American music and their emulation of characters from American films. On 24 March an article on juvenile delinquency by Maria Luisa Piazza connects the possible life steps of an archetypal wrongdoer to the flaws of American society, pointing to factors such as poverty, disrupted family and a culture of violence: 'tua madre aveva fame e tuo padre era ubriaco' or 'sei andato per le strade' where the gang leader 'che ti insegava a picchiare, che ti diceva ruba, che più tardi ti indicò la prima ragazza.' The journalist concludes: 'questa in generale è la storia della delinquenza giovanile.' The text is presented as a brief disquisition on the relationship between juvenile delinquency and society which is unable to find a solution to the problem. However, the text becomes an occasion to criticise the American system: the United States – in fact – is described as the place where 'il fenomeno (of young violence) [...] andava assumendo proporzioni sempre più vaste' as shown by films like *Blackboard Jungle*. The article is a piece on the importance of values such as honesty and, consequently, about the falsity of symbols of wealth that belong only to the 'furbo, che ha saputo scavalcare i gradini sociali sui cadaveri dei più deboli.'<sup>76</sup>

The text is predictable but tells us an important thing about the communication strategy of the "partito nuovo:" the attention towards youth culture and also to its less acceptable

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<sup>74</sup> Gianni Puccini, *La radio in NG* (13 January 1957), p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> It is possible to find the complete series of comic strips published in *Nuova generazione* in Pino Zac, *Italiani un popolo di...* (Roma: Carucci 1961). Another enthralling book on Zac's life and oeuvre is Valter Vecellio, *Pino Zac - Una vita contro* (Roma: Stampa Alternativa, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> Maria Luisa Piazza, *Giovani delinquenti in NG* (24 March 1957), p. 9.

manifestations interests the PCI and therefore its press too. However, this topic is often placed in the framework of a discourse around Americanisation. Americanisation it is not criticised as a whole, some elements are accepted (especially when it comes to discussing progressive ground-breaking art) as Togliatti suggested often, but the capitalist system is regarded as at fault and Americanisation seems to be a direct product of it. In short, Americanisation triggers a discussion on its influence on young people which will continue throughout 1957.

In the mainstream media the behaviour of young people is often described through their acts of bravado which set the agenda of many newspapers, especially between 1957 and 1959 (see chapter 3). *NG* instead of holding to the common narrative of the ‘gioventù bruciata,’ tries to investigate the reality of youth on a more thought-provoking level. Although sometimes sentimental (like in the text above), its articles attempt to read youth restlessness through the lenses of psychology and sociology to which a dose of Marxism is applied. The topics are discussed by a rank of journalists in their twenties and in their analysis young people are not demonised as in part of the mainstream press. On the contrary, a justification for their action is always sought, becoming a way to free them of their responsibilities which are put onto society and the system. We have come across a similar attitude before and it is part of the PCI’s strategy of the 1950s. However, the use of means such as surveys and analysis makes *NG* able to deal with the situation in an original way.

A very brief article on April 21, *Non sono selvaggi come sembrano*, is a commentary on a picture of young people riding their motorbikes down the stairs of a public place. Even if the text is quite short, it is worth looking at the rhetorical devices that are used which can be reconnected to the communication framework mentioned above. For example, the title itself is characterised by a component we have observed already: here too purity and genuineness of young people are underlined and the ride down the stairs becomes an act of exuberance. The adolescents in the picture in fact ‘sono troppo italiani per somigliare ai banditi del noto e bellissimo film (*The Outlaw*).’ They are ‘allegri mentre il selvaggio è cupo, minaccioso, crudele.’ ‘Non sono bruciati, non sono in crisi: sono solo giovani esuberanti.’<sup>77</sup> In these words the journalist makes a comparison between the cheerfulness of Italian young people in the picture, and the young American bandits portrayed in *The Outlaw*. It is an implicit assertion of Italy’s health and the reaffirmation of the stereotypical

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<sup>77</sup> Unsigned, *Non sono selvaggi come sembrano* in *NG* (21 April 1957). P.9. Similarly, a letter published in January, by a Swedish reader who travelled Italy, serves the same purpose. He describes ‘un’Italia’ where the youth is healthier and far from what happens in Sweden where some young people on a Saturday have ‘scoperchiato le tombe della cattedrale’ and have ‘scassato a sassate le più belle vetrine del centro’ after ‘aver ballato come forsennati.’ Olaf Gustaffson, *Svedesi mattacchioni* in *NG* (20 January 1957), p. 3.



Italian exuberance. It is also a way to show that Americanisation, in its detrimental sides, did not have an impact on young Italians, this is an element that we have found in official documents of the FGCI or in the messages of older PCI leaders (see chapters 2 and 5). Moreover it is a response to the alarmism of conservative media.<sup>78</sup>

Discussions around young people's passions would proliferate after the month of May 1957, when Milan hosted the first Italian Rock and Roll Festival. The event is a way to begin a deeper debate on Americanisation to which young readers take part. On June 2 *NG* publishes its first article about rock and roll and its impact written by the director Sandro Curzi. The first lines suggest its aim of diluting the alarmism triggered by the other newspapers concerning the few clashes during the Milan festival which are defined 'niente di particolarmente notevole.' What interests us instead is the reflection that follows. The journal tries to examine the events through a perception founded on a non-condemnation of the pastimes of the rock and roll youth: 'in realtà non abbiamo niente contro il rock and roll' as it belongs to 'privata sfera dei gusti soggettivi [...] insindacabili.' What the magazine aims to point out is the reason why rock and roll becomes the vehicle for young people's vitality but also for their rebelliousness. Rock and roll is read interestingly as something that could spur young people's spirit of competition which in the ballroom 'li spinge a far meglio e più degli altri.' However, rock and roll events worldwide are the set for 'tafferugli,' 'why?' asks the journalist. In a patronising fashion it is said that 'i giovani amano farsi protagonisti di episodi clamorosi' and that often they want to emulate the characters of American cinema. The text indulges in a long tirade about the dangers in American society where 'bande giovanili' thrive and their brawls 'finiscono spesso in coltellate o orgie collettive.' While this is what happens across the Ocean – and it is implied that youth violence and rebelliousness is ingrained in American society– why does something similar happen in Italy too? Evidently, rock and roll is a 'pretesto.' In fact young people follow trends, wear blue jeans and the FGCI has 'niente contro i blue jeans [...] e nulla contro le Vespe' and other young passions but 'tutte queste cose [...] non sono che il risultato di una penetrazione lenta ed efficace' of 'americanismo.' The latter finds a fertile soil created by 'coloro che ai giovani non hanno voluto dare importanza' and 'li hanno messi da parte' without offering to youth 'la possibilità concreta di integrarsi [...] nella vita produttiva e sociale.' The denunciation is driven by a propensity we came across often whereby the party and its media would blame the capitalist system for the 'malessere' of youth in general, while young people themselves are freed from any responsibilities. However, an article supposedly written to criticise the patronising and co-opting of young

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<sup>78</sup> Analogous tones could be found in certain articles of *VN* for example.

people by the system becomes patronising itself too. According to Curzi, the youth have fallen into the trap of abandoning political activism because sedated by ‘risultati sportivi [...] films di Sophia [...] rock and roll.’<sup>79</sup> It is not very different from Puccini’s reading of the vulnerability of the youth in the end: For Curzi too, young people appear not to have the ability to discern and therefore they become manipulable. What Curzi does not grasp here or – more likely – does not want to see, is that the habits listed above are symbolic signs of peer-to-peer grouping for many, being the characteristics of a newly born shared culture spreading worldwide. Another flaw of the PCI affects the FGCI too: instead of finding a sounder way to engage with the youth, the party keeps criticising the capitalist system in general terms, regarding young people as immature and defenceless. Also in *NG* there is no concrete reflection on the relationship between the Youth Federation and the younger generation and the episodes of youth restlessness of 1950s Italy are read in flawed terms. From the point of view of this thesis, they can be seen to foreshadow the uprising of Genoa and the revolts to come. However, the party does not seem to grasp the entity of that agitation which stands beyond the dichotomy between the system and the youth, missing an opportunity to develop a more solid rapport with the young generation. Despite its intention to explore some aspects behind Americanisation and youth culture, the article soon becomes a piece on the flaws of society which does not really hit the target. On the other hand, the director embraces again a straddling rhetoric, which preserves some elements of Americanisation, and discharges the youth of its responsibilities. Nonetheless, the article sows the seeds for an imminent survey on Americanisation, *L’americanismo*, calling on the readers to participate. On June 9, the survey questions are released after many people wrote letters in response to Curzi’s article: ‘la diversità di giudizi espressi è stata notevole,’ the reader is told ‘a commento ora favorevole, ora contrario.’ The tone and aims of the questions posed suggest they intend to discuss the matter very seriously. They revolve around two main streams of opinions expressed by the youth federations around the country that ask if the embracing of Americanisation by young people could reflect ‘il manifestarsi di una sostanziale adesione ideologica’ to values like individualism, success and so on; or it could represent a reaction against ‘l’arretratezza della società italiana’ and an aspiration to ‘forme di vita più civili e spregiudicate.’ The ten questions require a Yes or No answer. The questions revolve around key topics: the reason for the fascination with American films, considered in the light of the images of comfortable lives they project; the possibility that a better life could extinguish the revolutionary spirit in favour of ‘ideali piccolo-borghesi;’ the eccentric American dress style of the youth as a sign of an

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<sup>79</sup> Alessandro Curzi, *Rock and roll* in *NG* (2 June 1957), p. 12.

instinctual revolt or as the symptom of a 'scarsa serietà morale.' The system of American anti-conformist symbols is interrogated too: does it coincide with 'un serio impegno politico' or is it a way to camouflage conservative ideologies? The last two questions then deal with the fascination of women with America and the characteristics of the American construction of femininity are examined: are American woman paragons of emancipation or not?<sup>80</sup> This set of questions is based on many of the leitmotifs previously encountered, which strongly interest the Communists in that period. They have the merit of encouraging the reader to take part in a broader debate over the real meaning behind American products, models and artefacts included in a Marxist framework. The implicit questions are easy to detect: are the symbols of American non-conformism (rock and roll, youth fashion and so on) really revolutionary? And if so, could this 'subculture' exist alongside more mature political action?

On June 20, the PCI leader Mario Alicata, writes: 'i giovani di oggi mi appaiono profondamente diversi da quelli della mia generazione,' they appear 'più moderni' and 'meno soffocati dai complessi e dai pregiudizi.' They embody 'una carica istintiva' but this vitality often is not transformed in 'carica ideale.' However, in a full communist rhetoric the blame for this disinterest is put on 'le classi dirigenti' who have repressed in the youth 'l'interesse politico per seminare nei loro animi sfiducia nei grandi ideali di libertà, di giustizia, di progresso' which spread during and immediately after the Resistance. The new generations 'vanno sotto aspetti riconquistate,' he concludes. In his official and slightly old-fashioned style the leader synthesizes the view of the party quite well. His words are not different from what Curzi had said before. However, in his speech, there is neither self-criticism nor a reflection on the party's communication with a generation that is moving forward and appears unreadable.<sup>81</sup> In the same number of the journal a first letter of a reader (Gianni Damiani) about the survey is presented, followed by a text written by Gianni Rodari about the same theme. The reader admits that Curzi's hypothesis is 'molto suggestiva' but some affirmations are doubtful, for example those that see the young persons disconnected from concrete interests and 'finirebbero per dedicare l'entusiasmo [...] a motivi casuali, superficiali.' If this were true how would it be possible that rock and roll had produced the same bursts of rebellion in England where a stable democracy is present and young people are 'avvezzi a stimare le cose della vita secondo il loro giusto valore?' The writer gives other example of nations who have fallen in love with rock and roll, including Poland and Czechoslovakia, and concludes with a

<sup>80</sup> Unsigned, *L'americanismo* in *NG* (9 June 1957), p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Mario Alicata, *Quelli che oggi hanno vent'anni* in *NG* (20 June 1957), p. 1.

nihilistic assumption, maybe ‘oggi, sotto ogni cielo ed ogni regime, i giovani sono davvero la generazione scettica, bruciata che tanti sostengono.’ Very interesting then is the brief article by Rodari that follows in which the writer speaks about the journal and its relationship with the reader. He subtly criticises the dogmatism of the journal, pointing out that he appreciated the note about the readers’ participation but he does not endorse the Yes or No configuration. In fact, for him, it has ‘il difetto di svolgersi in uno schema già fissato dalla propaganda’ where ‘questa o quella manifestazione, questo o quel mutamento del costume sono senz’altro da attribuirsi all’influenza americanistica.’ Cleverly, Rodari destroys the stereotypes affirming that all the expressions of Americanisation listed in the questions hide ‘i lati peggiori della vita Americana,’ such as racism, ‘anticomunismo patologico,’ and that of ‘conformismo assoluto’ which sedates citizens who silently accept the American way of life without contestation.<sup>82</sup> We can say that Rodari poses a profound argument: by structuring the survey around elements which seem neutral the journal unconsciously reaffirms the ‘propaganda’ of Americanisation. Moreover, from an historical perspective, the three components that the writer tackles and appraises would be the drivers of young America’s revolts of a few years later in post-McCarthyism.

On July 7 ‘duecentoventi lettere sono già pervenute’ and one of them is reported. The missive goes straight to the target which Curzi’s article missed. The director’s attempt is praised as young people are finally scrutinised ‘nel suo intimo’ and according to the reader this is the only way to ‘fare una politica più adeguata.’ The reader gives an acute analysis of the reality of youth which opposes the rhetoric put forward both by the conservative press and by the patronising approach of the left-wing forces. He contests Curzi’s excessive attention for the spectacular gestures of young people as it could be misleading and cause everything to fall into the trite stereotype of boys interested only in futile topics and girls ‘in preda ai sogni prodotti da *Grand Hotel*.’ According to the writer, the real problem is the superficiality of the analysis of juvenile tendencies. And from an historical perspective this is correct, as we have to wait until the 1970s for more debates on it. Later in the letter he lists some main points that young people need: ‘un contenuto ideale’ in order to work on a unique ‘formazione della personalità’ denied by ‘la falsità morale della società’ and ‘le convenzioni tradizionali.’ Since older generations, institutions and parties put a halt to the development of identities, the youth feel an urge to change. Their ‘disgiunta protesta’ also conveyed through violent acts then becomes a way to release that desire but – according to the writer – this does not mean that young people are uninterested. On the contrary ‘i giovani’ are ‘rivoluzionari’ by nature. In this respect, the writer backs up

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<sup>82</sup> Gianni Damiani and Gianni Rodari, *L’americanismo* in *NG* (20 June 1957), p. 2.

one the cores of our analysis. In his letter he grasps the emerging of a contrast that would characterise the years to come founded on the 'us' (the youth) against 'you' (society/older people/parties and so on). This is important because his words suggest a spontaneous and horizontal peer based form of interaction that surely focuses on the party's flaws. As seen, the FGCI's aim was to associate any form of youth agitation with other causes, such as ideology or class, but this attempt failed as the federation was not able to renegotiate its approach. At the same time the writer could read the generational bravado and love of rock and roll as symbols of a profound dissatisfaction which gives vent to a 'desiderio di vivere presto.' As seen, the same dissatisfaction will explode in the summer of 1960, but in a more developed way.<sup>83</sup>

As the summer proceeds, the journal centres on a few main topics, an enquiry into young people's holidays; a discourse on 'questione meridionale' – a topic which does not seem to find space in the official communications analysed; the Youth Festival held in Moscow and an insight into the FGCI's national congress held in June. The debate on passions of youth and Americanisation reaches its zenith in July and then reduces in August. In the wake of Rodari's contribution, from July onwards the discourse reaches a more serious level. On 21 July, a letter from a contributor to the journal, Giglia Tedesco, talks about the civil rights situation in the U.S.A. Her letter stresses the dark side of America. For her, racism is the 'parte inseparabile del modo di vita americano' and in this light should be taken into consideration. Tedesco is quite straightforward in her criticism and seems not to understand the symbolic value of Americanisation for a generation in the way that another reader (Pino Sanvincenzo) does. He suggests that the youth that emerges from the letters is mature and holds 'la coscienza della necessità di un giudizio sui problemi della nuova generazione.' Nonetheless, the same writer subtly brings back the attention of the reader to the flaws in the party's strategy. In fact, he supposes that the danger of Americanisation has been inflated as the avant-garde of the party suffers from what Gramsci called "cadornismo." He is able to see that Americanisation has become a source of moral panic for the PCI and the FGCI too. The institutions have 'la tendenza di addossare alle masse (in questo caso ai giovani, con la loro tendenza all'evasione dalla lotta e alla ricerca di soluzioni individuali) quelle che erano debolezze dell'avanguardia.' The writer is implying that the discourse around young people's disengagement is a way of denying the responsibility of the party in talking with his generation. However, he does not take his criticism any further and in the end he reassures the reader that 'questo momento di incertezza si avvia ad essere superato [...] questa sembra essere la strada del XV

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<sup>83</sup> Unsigned, *L'americanismo* in *NG* (7 July 1957), p. 2.

Congresso.’ The ‘problema dei giovani’ is in truth a ‘problema educativo’ and it is the federation’s responsibility to play an educational role, he affirms in full communist rhetoric.<sup>84</sup> A last discussion on Americanisation appears in the issue of August 4 in which letters from readers approach it in a very different manner under the heading, *L’americanismo è anche protesta*. A very interesting contribution to the discussion is given by a reader (Alberto Fontana) who tries to overcome the usual debates. He thinks, in fact, that some aspects of Americanisation could constitute a form of protest: ‘proprio quelli che portano i blue-jeans e le camicie sgargianti, che masticano la gomma’ could represent a paradigm of protest, read as ‘la ribellione dei giovani a vecchi schemi, a pregiudizi, a tradizioni che non hanno più ragione di essere.’ By saying that, the reader, perhaps involuntarily, borrows the concept of subculture which is often built on ‘subversive values’ as David Riesman affirmed in the early 1950s.<sup>85</sup> In this scenario, the dress code taken from American subcultures becomes a symbol of refusal of the old society. From our perspective, this interpretation is paramount, we will discuss the proximity in terms of style and way of revolt between the ‘teppisti’ and the striped t-shirt kids in the next chapter, for instance. For the letter-writer, however, this rebellious vitality could go along with ‘una seria coscienza morale e un serio impegno politico,’ as the youth feel trapped in the ‘barriere di una società logora.’ In any case, this disobedient energy should be embraced by ‘giovani comunisti’ who have to ‘raccolgere e indirizzare quest’esigenza’ following one of the first aims of the FGCI. Another reader, in the same page, responding to the survey’s questions, expresses the same idea yet differently. She affirms that the ‘manifestazioni’ of rebelliousness should be backed up by a democratic education. She adds, ‘i giovani oggi sono assenti’ and do not care about social and political problems, nonetheless the youth cannot be blamed as the real culprits are politicians, ‘i clericali e i monopoli,’ she concludes automatically borrowing the PCI jargon.<sup>86</sup> From that moment onwards the discussion on Americanisation does not seem to find space anymore and new topics take over.

Our analysis of elements such as the “questione giovanile,” women’s emancipation, Americanisation and the impact of pop culture on the youth discussed in *Nuova generazione* has tried to gain an insight into young people in the boom and how they are

<sup>84</sup> Giglia Tedesco and Pino Sanvincenzo, *America giorno per giorno* in *NG* (20 July 1957), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002) p. 155.

<sup>86</sup> Alberto Fontana, *L’americanismo è anche protesta* in *NG* (4 August 1957), p. 2. One of the readers/writers (Amalia Bellini) also thinks that the fascination towards American cinema comes from the adventurous side of it. In this respect, I cannot help quoting Francesco Guccini, an Italian songwriter in his adolescence during the late 1950s: ‘Gli occhi guardavano voi ma sognavano gli eroi, le armi e la bilia/ correva la fantasia verso la prateria, fra la Via Emilia e il West/ Sciocca adolescenza, falsa e stupida innocenza, continenza/ vuoto mito Americano di terza mano.’

represented by the magazine. Society is changing and the FGCI tries its best to keep up with it: sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. The idea of involving the readers in the process helps us to see in what direction a part of that generation was moving and in this respect, we have noted that *NG*, in addressing phenomena related to the youth, takes a more independent approach if compared to the way they interpreted the invasion of Hungary, for instance. Moreover, from what we have seen, the readers display positive values such as optimism and progressiveness. Very often, they are more able than the journal to interpret social phenomena such as Americanisation, for example. Something analogous appears in the comparison with *Vie nuove*, which – over the same period – treats similar topics using surveys as in *NG*. A main factor that emerges is young people's desires for a change that should not be solely political but also of lifestyles and freedom. However, young people in *VN*, for example, show less open-mindedness and they are more cautious in general than those in *NG* who are, often, younger. The young people we looked at are oriented towards a sort of 'libertarianism' built around a series of shared rituals, habits, pop culture and desire for emancipation. Nevertheless, due to its history and ideology, the FGCI is not able to open up completely towards the demands of this youth that wants combine a quest for revision of society to political activism, missing the chance to reconstruct a healthier dialogue with it. It seems that in 1957 the germs of the discrepancy are already there and, as we will see, they would reach a point of no return in the early 1960s when the generational restlessness would acquire more mature forms. Moreover, as said, so far an analysis of *NG* has not found space in studies on the PCI nor in studies on young people during the Italian boom, through our investigation we hope to have opened the road to a more accurate examination of 1950s young tendencies which should take into account the influence of pop culture and the discussion around important topics such as women's emancipation among progressive youth.

In the light of what has been said so far, in the next chapter we will look at two important revolts, that of 1960 and that of 1962, in which the youth that we have described took part. In both cases, spontaneity plays a pivotal role and we can see how these young people slowly detach themselves from the party's rhetoric finding in peer-to-peer grouping their ideal organisational form.

## 7. From Pop to Protest: 1960 and 1962

### 7.1 Genoa: June and July 1960. Rebels with a Cause

*Genova e' una citta' di mare  
e sugli scambi ha costruito un'intera esistenza<sup>1</sup>*

In this part we look at two important protests that happened for different reasons yet share some similarities: that of June/July 1960 in Genoa and that of July 1962 in Turin.<sup>2</sup> They were started in the other two cities of the industrial and they involved the same generation we have encountered chapter 3, that of teddy boys and rock and roll fans – this is especially true for that of summer 1960. In the two cases, the media reacted in different ways. In the first one, after an initial discrediting of the uprising, newspapers more or less praised the youth who participated in it. In the second case, instead, the press, and also the PCI for example, condemned it as an act of hooliganism. However, in both cases neither the parties nor the media understood that for part of the younger generation the method of protest had changed, moving towards a peer-to-peer organisation rather than relying on institutions such as the party or the unions. We have highlighted this emerging discrepancy between the PCI and young people in the last subchapter of chapter 6, showing how – for example – Americanisation and its symbols were not considered as vital elements of youth's identity by the Communists. This denial will create a fracture that will grow throughout the 1960s.

As anticipated in the first chapter, in 1960 a new DC government was formed backed up by the Movimento Sociale Italiano. In June 1960 the MSI (the ex-fascists), sure of its position at the heart of Italian politics, announced its intention of organising its annual congress in Genoa. This choice was provocative: Genoa had been one of the capitals of the Resistance, awarded the “Medaglia d'oro per la Resistenza” at the end of the WWII, and ‘fu letteralmente occupata da ex partigiani e operai armati in 48 ore nei giorni dell’attentato a Togliatti (14 luglio 1948) [...] un porto in cui le lotte hanno spesso scavalcato le indicazioni delle direzioni sindacali.’<sup>3</sup> Much more provocative sounded the proposal of inviting Carlo Emanuele Basile to the congress: Basile had been Genoa's prefect during the days of Salò Republic and, as a collaborationist with the Nazi regime, he had been guilty of the deportations of many anti-fascists and innocent workers. The response of the

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<sup>1</sup> Marzio Angiolani, *Genova. Canzoni in salita* (Arezzo: Zona, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> For an exhaustive perspective on July 1960: P.G. Murgia, *Il luglio 1960* (Milano: SugarCo, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Danilo Montaldi, *Il significato dei fatti di luglio* in *Quaderni di unità proletaria*, n. 1 (1960). The article can be read in <http://www.infonodo.org/node/7767>.



citizens was sudden and firm. There was a very strong reaction in the city and for the first time since the Resistance, a part of a generation publicly reacted together to a provocation which came from the consequences of misgovernment. As Dalmasso explains:

Per il 2, 3 e 4 luglio, il MSI convoca il suo congresso nazionale. Per la prima volta [...] è scelta Genova, la città che si è liberata da sola, addirittura il 24 aprile 1945. Anche il luogo fa pensare ad una provocazione, ad un oltraggio: il teatro Margherita, in via XX settembre, è a pochi metri dal sacrario dei partigiani caduti [...] È una delle cambiali che Tambroni paga all'appoggio missino.<sup>4</sup>

It is now time to retrace the events of that hot July. On the afternoon of 30 June 1960, a peaceful demonstration walked through the streets of Genoa to raise its voice against the MSI congress and to pay its tribute to the 'monumento alla Resistenza.' The evening saw the beginning of the clashes between the demonstrators and the police, some jeeps were burnt and barricades were erected. The next day, more patrols were sent to the city centre and fights started again, the situation was tense and a committee of ex-partisans decided to create a new Comitato di Liberazione in order to take control of the city. Finally, the prefect, in accordance with Tambroni, decided to postpone the congress, but it was too late: the tension had already spread throughout the country.

After what happened in Genoa, the prime minister gave the security forces permission to use firearms if deemed necessary. It was a move which would have tragic consequences, in fact, on 5 July, during a demonstration in Licata, Sicily, police opened fire killing a 25-year-old worker, Vincenzo Napoli. On 6 July, in Rome, a legal demonstration was stopped at the last minute. In Porta San Paolo, one of the bulwarks of the Roman Resistance, the security force violently assaulted the protesters. On the next day, in Reggio Emilia, police again opened fire on a crowded anti-fascist demonstration killing five young people, the event would be put in music by Cantacronache, as seen.

The behaviour of the security forces was very aggressive and the clashes continued for a few more days. The prefect condemned the demonstrators as 'teppaglia rossa', 'massa di centinaia di ragazzi invasati e spavaldi', or 'teppa cittadina.'<sup>5</sup> However, the excessive force ordered by the politicians and perpetrated by the police, eventually created a crisis, a trauma, within both the DC and public at large. The consequence was the dissolution of Tambroni's government.

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<sup>4</sup> Sergio Dalmasso, *Giugno-luglio 1960: no a Tambroni e ai fascisti*, in *Il calendario del popolo*, n. 644 (July 2000), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> In G. Crainz, *Il Paese mancato, dal miracolo economico agli anni '80* (Roma: Donzelli, 2005), p. 170.

The events of July 1960 are often interpreted as the backbone of the movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Attilio Mangano in *Le radici del presente* sees in the clashes of July the roots of the 1968 explosion, and the birth of a new prototype of youth. Young people, in fact, moved outside the boundaries set by the formal parties, looking for an autonomous form of collective action.<sup>6</sup> For our analysis, it is important noticing that the events of July are connected with the spontaneity of youth exuberance of the late 1950s. In fact, the young people involved in the clashes were part of the same generations of the so called teddy boys that, in the late 1950s – as seen – had become one of the first examples of moral threat in the nation. The protesters of 1960 were soon named “i ragazzi con le magliette a strisce” after the striped t-shirts they wore. From our perspective, the outfit denoted a generational belonging and a link to rock and roll/ American iconography of the period. For example, Lee Marvin wears a similar item in *The Wild One* (1953), James Dean wears it in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and Elvis too in the film *Jailhouse Rock* (1957).<sup>7</sup> In fact as Primo Moroni recounted: ‘Eravamo tutti giovani, generosi e intransigenti, portavamo i jeans, avevamo il mito dell’America e siccome i soldi in tasca erano pochi ci vestimmo con delle magliette comprate per trecento lire nei grandi magazzini.’<sup>8</sup> The students – this is one of their initial appearances in the streets – and the workers involved, looked for a new type of protest that the traditional parties could not offer, resorting also to the use of violence, as it happened with the bravados of the so called teddy boys few years before. According to a witness: ‘vidi, vicinissimo a me, un ragazzo brandire la sedia d’acciaio di un bar e lanciarsi contro il parabrezza di una macchina. Un altro giovane, quasi un adolescente con quella sua maglina di cotone a righe vivaci [...] si avventò, mulinando un asse, contro i due agenti.’<sup>9</sup> The mobilisation of a cohort of youth which seemed to display a generational identity, wore the same outfit and protested without relying on parties was remarkable: ‘Erano riconoscibili, questi ragazzi, dalla maglietta a strisce, una specie di divisa di categoria dato che si servono quasi tutti dallo stesso merciaio ambulante’ underlines M. Grispigni.<sup>10</sup> In all probability, the media stressed the style of their clothing to underline ‘l’impossibilità di definirli.’<sup>11</sup> As Danilo

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<sup>6</sup> Attilio Mangano, *Le radici del presente*.

<sup>7</sup> The story of the striped t-shirt could be traced back to the Mid-nineteenth-century France. More information could be found here: [http://wikifashion.com/wiki/Breton\\_stripes](http://wikifashion.com/wiki/Breton_stripes).

<sup>8</sup> In Marco Philopat, *La strada bruciata dalle magliette a strisce* in <https://www.carmillaonline.com/2010/06/29/la-strada-bruciata-delle-magliette-a-strisce/>. The same elements: “mito dell’America,” jeans and striped t-shirt would come back in early punk rock iconography, in the mid-1970s.

<sup>9</sup> Silvio Micheli, *Nemici vecchi, unità nuova*, in *Vie Nuove* (9 July 1960), pp. 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Marco Grispigni in AA. VV, *Ragazzi senza tempo. Immagini, musica, conflitti delle culture giovanili* (Genova: Costa e Nolan, 1993), pp. 32-35.

<sup>11</sup> Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni, *L’orda d’oro*, p. 25.

Montaldi pointed out, unlike before ‘gli studenti si rivolgono agli operai in prima persona, ignorando del tutto la struttura sindacale ufficiale’. This is a new element because ‘giovani e lavoratori sono coinvolti in un’azione comune,’ an event that seemed unpredictable, and ‘tra i manifestanti, i più decisi, i più violenti sono i giovani.’<sup>12</sup> It seemed to be a sudden and conscious rebellion, far from the ‘hooliganism without a cause’ of the 1950s teddy boys. On closer analysis, however, it is possible to trace some similarities with the behaviours and the spontaneous rage exhibited by part of the late 1950s youth. In the article *Genova 1960: la strada bruciata dalle magliette a strisce* Marco Philopat, a prominent figure of Italian political punk, wonders: ‘Cosa portò alcuni ragazzi a scegliere un indumento come simbolo di una rivolta contro l'autorità costituita?’<sup>13</sup> In our analysis – as mentioned – the item of clothing becomes an actual code of recognition, an item of belonging to a shared culture, as it happened with other items among the Italian rock and roll kids such as quiffs or motorbikes. However, it also goes beyond the unmotivated rage expressed years before, the same energy is in fact channeled against a specific enemy. Furthermore, it symbolises an apex for the detachment of part of the youth from the parties, this had been a factor that had worried the left wing since the mid-1950s as seen. Unlike their older brothers, this generation – which is, again, the same one of the Italian teddy boys – started to develop a different set of values. They were certainly more socially aware and many of them consumed more pop culture than their older siblings. This is easily explained when we look at what they bought. They were quite selective in terms of consumption and, throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s books and records would be the goods at the top of the list.<sup>14</sup> As Idor Gatti explains ‘oggi sono i diciottenni a far salire le vendite dei dischi a 24 miliardi l’anno.’<sup>15</sup> For part of this generation, the pursuit of the three Ms (moglie, macchina, mestiere) – perfectly depicted with subtle irony by Ermanno Olmi in *Il Posto* (1961) – had ceased to be the main aspiration. It could be affirmed that they refused ‘l’etica del sacrificio’ and among their main desires, there was ‘la ricerca di un’autonomia e affermazione personale.’<sup>16</sup> Or as Primo Moroni, again, explains: ‘Non ci interessava una vita passata solo lavorando, preferivamo guadagnare meno ma avere più tempo libero, però quando ci fu da protestare non ci tirammo certo indietro.’<sup>17</sup> This is true for the students and for the workers, in fact, over those years ‘nelle fabbriche’ there was ‘un terremoto

<sup>12</sup> Danilo Montaldi, *Il significato* in *Quaderni*.

<sup>13</sup> Marco Philopat, *Genova 1960: la strada bruciata dalle magliette a strisce* in <http://talpalab.blogspot.co.uk/2010/11/genova-1960-la-strada-bruciata-dalle.html>.

<sup>14</sup> See Marta Boneschi, *La grande illusione. I nostri anni sessanta* (Milano: Mondadori, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Idor Gatti, *I ragazzi italiani spendono 150 miliardi l’anno* in *Il Tempo* (13 October 1959), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> A. Cavalli e C. Leccardi, *Le culture giovanili* in A.A. V.V., *Storia dell’Italia repubblicana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996) p.738.

<sup>17</sup> In *La strada bruciata dalle magliette a strisce*.

silenzioso, con degli sconvolgimenti che riguardano la manodopera, la sua età la sua provenienza.’<sup>18</sup>

Now, some questions arise spontaneously: who were these young people? And, how was the youth more generally speaking? An investigation held by *L'Espresso* at the end of 1959 into the young inhabitants of the wealthy “quartiere Parioli” in Rome, depicted a generation which seemed materialistic, empty and apparently conformist. The ‘pariolini [...] vanno in chiesa, guidano spider, si ossigenano i capelli, amano il jazz’. To the question ‘cosa ti piace di più?’ some of them answered ‘i soldi di papà’; ‘picchiare le donne’; ‘bere vodka’ or ‘investire un poliziotto con la macchina.’<sup>19</sup> It was 1959 and Italy was living the apex of its boom. Domenico Modugno, in the year before had sung *Nel blu dipinto di blu* at the Sanremo festival and, as Edmondo Berselli pointed out, ‘si intuì subito che l’emozione sarebbe stata irrefrenabile: a Sanremo la gente singhiozzava e agitava i fazzoletti, come se all’improvviso il grigiore del dopoguerra fosse stato spazzato via...’<sup>20</sup>

The answers of the young people interviewed were utterly provocative. Of course, the “quartiere Parioli” was another world if compared to the working class city of Genoa, a rich neighbourhood where the ruling class lived. If we take their words as symbols of the state of the Italian youth of the time, we could not identify any signal of awareness or change, but only the image of a generation without passion or enthusiasm. Although the statements here quoted would not suggest anything interesting, the 1960s would turn out to be – throughout the world – a decade in which young people stepped to the fore and made themselves visible taking further what started at the end of the 1950s. In fact, many of the kids, fortunate enough to grow up in the first period of prosperity and peace after a long time, became the catalysts of an approach to modernisation based on a radical re-appropriation of politics – considered as an organic part of the lived experience and often practiced outside formal party associations. The 1950s, according to Jon Savage, had seen the establishment of the teenager as a new social actor with its own niche in the market, and the 1960s would see the consecration of youth as a powerful force able to influence society, orientating it towards new pathways. In this respect, the events of July 1960 were among the agents of the shift, which would lead Italy to a first step of social modernisation and pushed politics towards the necessary formation of Centro-Sinistra.<sup>21</sup> Also the writer

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<sup>18</sup> Attilio Mangano, *Le radici del presente*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Mino Guerrini, *Gli ossigenati dei Parioli*, “Casco d’oro” di papà in *L'Espresso* (20 December 1959), p15.

<sup>20</sup> Edmondo Berselli, *Adulti con riserva*, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> A period during which many of the programmed reforms did not see the light, but some of them were successful and contributed to renew Italian society.

Carlo Levi wrote some important words, defining the situation as a ‘momento positivo, come una delle affermazioni di una realtà nuova che prende forma.’<sup>22</sup>

It is time now to look at the presence of young people during the days of July 1960, which left everyone surprised, especially the media. According to an article in *il Manifesto*, 4 July 2010, the public opinion of the time was ‘quasi incredula nei confronti della rivelazione di cosa era maturato nelle pieghe profonde di una gioventù che semmai si credeva orientata più verso i valori della destra,’<sup>23</sup> similarly, as *l'Unità* had written on 1 July 1960, ‘ai margini delle strade migliaia di giovani si tenevano per mano formando una catena lunga almeno due chilometri [...] almeno metà delle 100.000 persone affluite era rappresentata da giovani fra i 17 e 25 anni’.<sup>24</sup> This is, in fact, the initial appearance of ‘gruppi di giovani che, anziché chiudersi in cerchie ristrette e discutere di teoria, cercano da un lato di mettere in comune con i lavoratori l’esperienza accumulate in questi ultimi anni sia nei partiti che nei sindacati [...] e dall’altro di intervenire efficacemente nelle lotte.’<sup>25</sup> Although from 1948 onwards an anti-communist attitude predominated within large strata of Italy, the events of July showed to the entire country that the values of the Resistance, at least for the people involved in the events, was still important and, above all that, ‘l’antifascismo era divenuto parte integrante dell’ideologia egemone, specialmente nel Nord e nel Centro Italia’.<sup>26</sup> However, for a fringe of this generation, the concept of anti-fascism did not have the same meaning that had had for the left-wing of the Resistance or for the PCI. For these young people anti-fascism was regarded, perhaps, as a contemporary and living value at the base of a modern and liberal society. Also the word “fascism” assumed a broader sense: it did not mean only the empty dead ghost of the ‘Ventennio’ but also a sum of reactionary behaviours, biases, inclinations to the attitude of compromises. As Guido Crainz has explained, fascism was also: ‘l’insolente furfanteria dei politici, la corruzione del sottogoverno, la grettezza bigotta della censura, la tracotanza padronale nella fabbrica, l’avvilimento della scuola, l’istituto della raccomandazione sostituito al diritto al lavoro’.<sup>27</sup>

As usual, *L'Espresso* held an investigation into the events of July stating that ‘il paese sembrava addormentato nel benessere così evidente specialmente nell’Italia del nord’ but

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<sup>22</sup> In G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> Giovanni De Luna, *L’insurrezione legale della gioventù del «miracolo»* in *Il Manifesto* (4 July 2010), in <https://www.nuovaresistenza.org/2010/07/luglio-60-senza-il-boom-non-ci-sarebbero-stati-%C2%ABi-giovani-delle-magliette-a-striscie%C2%BB-2/>.

<sup>24</sup> Unsigned, *100 mila antifascisti manifestano a Genova. Decisa risposta a un grave attacco poliziesco* in *l'Unità* (1 July 1960), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Danilo Montaldi in *Il significato in Quaderni*.

<sup>26</sup> P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia*, p. 348.

<sup>27</sup> In G. Crainz, *Il paese mancato*, p. 181. In this respect: Annibale Paloscia, *Al tempo di Tambroni*.

‘sciami di giovani la scorsa settimana sono scesi in piazza a Genova e hanno dato un contenuto potenzialmente insurrezionale alla protesta dei vecchi capi dell’antifascismo’. The young Italians of 1960 were aware of the country’s state of affairs and did not accept that ‘un paese così operoso abbia una classe dirigente così goffa.’<sup>28</sup> Many of them regarded Italy as a provincial and not liberal country in which ‘per corruzione si intende solo fare l’amore,’ as a young Italian would declare few years later in the *Almanacco letterario Bompiani* of 1964, a place with a mentality far away from the other Western counterparts.<sup>29</sup> In fact, according to the interpretation of the *L’Espresso* ‘le nuove generazioni quando scendono in piazza lo fanno perché stanche e vergognose di vivere in un paese governato da un ceto corrotto e ipocrita’.<sup>30</sup> The media, now commodities for many families, brought images and inspiration from all over the world and they seemed to reduce the distance between countries. ‘La massiccia importazione di film americani’ that spread after WWII, for instance, ‘aveva sedimentato immaginari di società diverse e di vissuti generazionali affascinanti’ and films like *Il selvaggio* (*The Wild One*) with Marlon Brando had represented ‘un possibile stereotipo di trasgressione’ along with ‘la musica rock di Elvis Presley.’<sup>31</sup> This new collective imagination, as underlined by Primo Moroni and Nanni Balestrini, is very important as it represents a key for our analysis. In fact, as said, we consider that revolt in broader terms. It was a political uprising for sure but it was carried out outside the boundaries of the parties and relied on original codes present beyond their horizon (striped t-shirts, the use of violence etc.). Furthermore, it involved a generation who recognised itself as such and transcended also the class identity.<sup>32</sup> As written, the main protagonists of the insurrection were students, factory workers and other people who had jobs in other fields, such as the catering for example. We do not have to forget that a new generation of workers was present and involved in the clashes too, many of them were the product of the big wave of migration from the South of the country. These young workers were not skilled like their northern counterparts and they were located, according to Balestrini and Moroni, ‘al livello più basso della struttura produttiva’ living ‘per la gran parte nei vasti hinterland metropolitani, le famose “Coree”’, a new element which ‘rompeva e apriva contraddizioni nel tessuto sociale locale.’<sup>33</sup> What is relevant is that for the first time young Italians from various strata fought together side by

<sup>28</sup> Unsigned, *Perché così giovani* in *L’Espresso* (10 July 1960), p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Extract from *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1964* in Marta Boneschi, *La grande illusione. I nostri anni sessanta* (Milano: Mondadori, 1996), p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Unsigned, *Violenza di Stato. Lo spettro della Rivoluzione* in *L’Espresso* (17 July 1960), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> N. Balestrini, P. Moroni, *L’orda d’oro*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>32</sup> As similar interpretation has been given by Philip Cooke in *Luglio 1960*.

<sup>33</sup> N. Balestrini, P. Moroni, *L’orda d’oro*, p. 26.

side with the old anti-fascist generation, particularly those who could not accept the boundaries of the formal and institutionalised parties like the PCI. As Danilo Montaldi emphasised in *Quaderni di unità proletaria* ‘una forza del tutto nuova ha fatto la sua comparsa in queste giornate’ the unexpected ‘massa giovanile operaia e studentesca’, composed of ‘gruppi che si sono staccati dalle organizzazioni politiche tradizionali per applicare e diffondere una concezione realmente socialista della lotta politica.’<sup>34</sup> They were the members of a generation ‘che esprimeva [...] un evidente disagio e insofferenza per la rigida canalizzazione della vita quotidiana.’<sup>35</sup> This shift is crucial in fact, as we saw, the Italian Communists were reluctant to accept that young protesters changed their modality of organisation. In taking this stance, between the late 1950s and early 1960s, the PCI missed the chance to acquire a position at the forefront of revolt, creating a gap almost impossible to fill.<sup>36</sup> To conclude, we can state that the consequences of July 1960 were various. For example, after a decade of oblivion for part of the society, the heritage of the “Resistenza” finally made a comeback, becoming more present in conferences, discussions and in popular culture in general. In fact, films such as *Una vita difficile* (1961) by Dino Risi; *Tutti a casa* (1960) by Luigi Comencini; *Il gobbo* (1960) by Carlo Lizzani; *Un giorno da leoni* (1961) and *Le quattro giornate di Napoli* (1962) by Nanni Loy are clear examples of this return. Besides that, the revolt of 1960 opened towards a new way of experiencing protest drawing from the same restlessness that had appeared already in the late 1950s. Moreover, that protest, involved the same generation that was stigmatised by the media, both on the left and on the right, for its excessive love for American pop culture and modern artefacts. It showed that Americanisation and a conscious rebellion towards reaction could coexist, also in the name of the values of the Resistance, finally answering to the survey launched by *Nuova generazione* in Spring/Summer 1957 (see chapter 6). In this respect, considering the outfit and the approach of the young protesters, we could define the revolt of 1960 as a “pop” revolt in which the symbols exhibited come from outside the political horizon. They come in fact from a shared culture built on the peer-to-peer relationship and based on new behaviours, artefacts, codes which seemed unreadable to the majority of the political class.

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<sup>34</sup> Danilo Montaldi, *Il significato* in *Quaderni*.

<sup>35</sup> N. Balestrini, P. Moroni, *L'orda d'oro*, p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> We have seen in chapter 5 how the PCI often condemned the “spontaneismo.”

## 7.2 Turin, Fiat, tensions and Piazza Statuto. July 1962

In this section we look at another protest that happened two years after that of 1960. It took place in Turin, the other city of the triangle, and saw mainly the presence of the young working class who protested against a different but still specific target. We could define it a class struggle and the violence exhibited brought to the surface a restlessness as powerful as that of 1960. Also in this case, the participants decided not to rely on the supervision of the party and got organised spontaneously. The press, also that of the left-wing, condemned the act and drew on a stock of discrediting terminologies already used in the late 1950s, “teppisti” for instance and from the description of the youth outfit, we could identify a depiction not dissimilar from that of 1960. Nevertheless, here the newspapers found a new object of demonization in the urbanised “meridionale.” Before we go into that, we will give a brief insight into the situation in Turin and in factories and look at a series of events that anticipate the revolt of 1962.

At the end of the 1950s Turin was caught into a whirlwind of modernisation, experiencing a turmoil which affected the city changing its rhythm and pace. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, Turin would become the paradigm of Italian industrialism, a Fordist capital par excellence, and the place where one of the biggest factories in the world, Fiat, developed. In less than two decades Turin would experience a shocking transformation in terms of population, habits and geography, due mainly to the high level of migration which first brought to the city people from the poor areas of the North and then from the South. In fact, as Arnaldo Bagnasco tells us: ‘nel 1951, la popolazione residente supera di poco i 700 mila abitanti; dieci anni dopo ha superato il milione.’<sup>37</sup> This vast growth led to a complex scenario in which the limited jobs on offer affected the quality of life of the new comers whose prospects were restricted only to the possibilities given by the factory. As Bagnasco, again, points out, in those decades, while ‘per i piemontesi Torino ha costituito uno scenario particolarmente ricco di posti di lavoro impiegatizio, ai quali sono approdati sia i figli delle famiglie operaie, che quelli delle famiglie di lavoratori autonomi [...] per chi era meridionale di nascita, il mondo trovato a Torino è stato particolarmente ricco di posti di lavoro operaio.’<sup>38</sup>

If we cast a glance at the history of Northern Italy in the late 1950s, we can see how a considerable part of the historiography affirms that in this period, stimulated by the growth and by the new demands of the country, a significant change in terms of production took

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<sup>37</sup> Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Torino. Un profilo sociologico* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> A. Bagnasco, *Torino*, p. 47.



place. Italian factories – Fiat in primis – finally introduced a Fordism-based production line, which principally relied on the labour of unskilled workers or mass workers: an innovation that would obviously affect the profile of the working class. It is not by chance that around the mid-1960s the expression ‘operaio massa’ (mass worker) would start to circulate.<sup>39</sup> In order to contrast this image of the non-class-conscious worker without particular skills who is a piece in the assembly line, folk narrative developed a proliferation of legends about a mythic past, lost sometime before the war and before the advent of Fordism. In this narrative, the older working class is depicted as a monolith, rooted in a defined neighbourhood, Borgo San Paolo in Turin for example, very often composed by natives who were politically conscious. As underlined by several researchers, this clear-cut view of a golden past was contrived; in fact, as John Foot writes: ‘la classe operaia tradizionale, nelle sue roccaforti, non era né stabile né socialmente immobile. I livelli di socializzazione non erano particolarmente alti [...] La politicizzazione era molto più debole di quanto poteva apparire ed era basata soprattutto su forme discorsive e rituali.’<sup>40</sup> On the other hand instead, according to other scholars it seemed that that golden past indeed existed and the identity of those Turin workers was a mixture of political integrity, class awareness, neighbourhood loyalty and high skills; a fabled native elite of workers which had been toughened during the ‘biennio rosso’ and had survived through Nazi-Fascism without giving up.<sup>41</sup> As Diego Novelli, the director of Piedmont *L’Unità* (1961-1975) and Turin mayor in the late 1970s, puts it:

Nel volgere di pochi anni (late Nineteenth early Twentieth Century), Torino ha visto sorgere, come funghi, una miriade di piccolo ‘boite’, con migliaia di operai. Qui nacquero le prime fabbriche di automobile [...] Qui si creò quella che venne definita ‘l’aristocrazia’ operaia, cioè gli *ouvriers* altamente specializzati, tanto bravi da essere in grado di ‘fare i baffi alle mosche’<sup>42</sup>

For this narrative, Turin workers were those who occupied Fiat after the attempted assassination of Palmiro Togliatti in July 1948; the same ones who held Vittorio Valletta in hostage for several days after the event and the ones who Valletta would eventually get rid

<sup>39</sup> In <http://www.istitutodipolitica.it/wordpress/2014/01/08/la-teoria-la-destra-e-la-sinistra-del-movimento-opere-operaio/>.

<sup>40</sup> John Foot, *Milano dopo il miracolo. Biografia Di Una Città* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2003), p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> A very short bibliography about the Italian working class in the industrial cities of the North should include at least these titles: Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in popular memory: the cultural experience of the Turin working class* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987); Paolo Spriano, *Torino operaia nella grande guerra (1914-1918)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1960); Tom Behan, *The long awaited moment: the working class and the Italian Communist Party in Milan, 1943-1948* (Bern: Peter Lang publisher, 1997) and this article, Luise A. Tilly, *Structure and Action in the Making of Milan's Working Class* in *Social Science History* 19:2 (Summer 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Diego Novelli, *Com'era bello il mio Pci* (Milano: Melampo, 2006) p. 29.

of between the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>43</sup> It is in fact Valletta, the chairman of Fiat from 1946 to 1966, who would turn Fiat into a Fordist factory, changing its image and its productive horizons and modifying its inner equilibrium deeply. With the introduction of Fordism, the abilities of the old workers were no longer necessary, and Valletta could eventually eradicate the power held by the skilled, radical left wing workers and their unions (FIOM-CGIL), replacing them with an enormous flood of new labourers. As Bagnasco highlights, the aim of Fordism was to ‘adeguare i tempi di lavoro a quelli della macchina’, that hid ‘alla vista degli operai i pezzi che prima erano chiamati a saldare, avvitare e spostare.’<sup>44</sup> This leap would open the doors of Fiat to many untrained migrants from the poor regions of Italy (Veneto and the South), with the consequence of creating what has been defined ‘operaio massa.’ A worker that Cazzullo depicts as ‘apolitico’ who ‘giudica i sindacalisti una genia di burocrati privilegiati, il partito un’entità lontana, la militanza un pericolo o una perdita di tempo.’<sup>45</sup>

The crusade that Valletta and other entrepreneurs conducted against the old guard of workers was translated into an extensive wave of collective redundancies in which it is possible to read an attempt at ‘chiudere la partita con un’intera esperienza storica di lotte operaie che avevano raggiunto vertici di intensità prorompenti e incompatibili con i progetti di sviluppo’ as Antonio Ghibelli points out.<sup>46</sup> This move was also useful to reassure the United States, which were worried about the high number of communist workers in the biggest factories of Italy. As G. G. Migone wrote: ‘il 4 febbraio 1954 l’ambasciatrice americana Claire Booth Luce [...] proclamò il suo disappunto perché “a lato dei larghi sacrifici fatti dagli Usa [...] la situazione del comunismo in Italia in luogo di retrocedere parrebbe in continuo progresso.”’<sup>47</sup> The ‘repressione antioperaia’ of the 1950s was the leitmotiv of Valletta’s Fiat and aimed at excluding the majority of left wing workers from the heart of the factory. Many of them were dismissed, others were sent to special departments, like the infamous Officina sussidiaria ricambi, renamed Officina stella rossa for the massive presence of communist workers. In these departments, the former expert workers were downgraded and forced to do unqualified labour, such as chopping wood outside or sweeping warehouses. Ultimately, some of them would end up working

<sup>43</sup> ‘Io ho visto i fucili negli spogliatoi, parlo dell’immediato dopoguerra [...] poi li hanno nascosti e li hanno ritirati fuori nel 1948’ as recounted by a Fiat worker in Vito Vita, *Chiesa e mondo operaio. Torino 1943-1948* (Torino: Effatà, 2003), p. 396.

<sup>44</sup> A. Bagnasco in Aldo Cazzullo, *I ragazzi di via Po. 1950-1961: quando e perché Torino ritornò capitale* (Milano: Mondadori, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> A. Cazzullo, *I ragazzi di via Po*, p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> Antonio Ghibelli in Alfredo Micheli, *Ansaldo 1950. Etica del lavoro e lotte operaie a Genova* (Torino: Einaudi, 1981) p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Gian Giacomo Migone, *Stati Uniti, Fiat e repressione antioperaia negli anni cinquanta*, in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 1974, n. 2. In P. Ginsborg, *Storia d’Italia*, p. 258.

for the PCI, as Giuseppe Dozzo, a communist worker, recalls in his book *La scatola di cemento*.<sup>48</sup> From the mid-1950s, as Elémire Zolla would write in his first novel *Minuetto all'inferno* (1956), it seemed that Turin and Fiat were the same things.<sup>49</sup> Valletta was able to turn Turin into a factory-city in which the role of Fiat was conspicuous yet appealing, and many were the investments and bonuses with which the factory helped and rewarded the “good” workers, those not involved with politics and left-wing unionism. As a Turin writer, Gianni Milano, remembers in *La moneta sotto al sasso* (2004): ‘Le fabbriche grandi erano come castelli attorno ai quali si sviluppava il villaggio e gli operai erano i servi della gleba che già si ritenevano fortunati perché avevano un lavoro, perché il parroco aveva certificato il loro buon comportamento e che, Dio ci scampi, non erano comunisti!’<sup>50</sup>

A mix of condescending paternalism and socialism for the keen workers was the trademark of the Valletta’s policy, put into practice also through the efforts of the “scuola allievi Fiat,” founded by Giovanni Agnelli in 1922. In 1950s Turin, often Fiat stood in for the State and accompanied the life of the workers from the cradle to the grave. For example, in 1957 the factory healthcare system spent ‘in medicine 6500 lire per ogni assistito, il doppio di quella statale. L’azienda stipendia settecento medici per curare i propri dipendenti [...] si mandano i bambini alle colonie marine e montane e agli asili nido Fiat, [...] si fa la spesa allo spaccio Mirafiori [...] si invita la fidanzata allo spettacolo teatrale del sabato e al ballo della domenica organizzati dall’azienda.’<sup>51</sup> In Valletta’s strategy were also included anti-strike bonuses and the foundation of a company union (Sida), ‘un sindacato giallo’ which, according to Novelli, would finance ‘un’organizzazione eversiva sul piano ideologico (Pace e Libertà), guidata da due professionisti della provocazione come Edgardo Sogno e Luigi Cavallo.’ At the same time ‘gli operai iscritti alla Fiom e, in modo particolare i militanti del PCI’ were ‘perseguitati, confinati e licenziati.’<sup>52</sup> In those days, due to the fear of collective redundancies, many workers started to step back from any closeness to the left wing, leading the labour union FIOM-CGIL to lose its power inside the factory. As G. Crainz reports, in 1955 ‘la Fiom crolla al 36%: la Cisl addirittura la supera, col 40% e la Uil raddoppia passando al 22%, E’ la punta più alta e simbolica di un arretramento generale, talora drammatico, che avviene in un clima di grandissima tensione tra la Cgil e le altre organizzazioni.’<sup>53</sup> However, this atmosphere of silence and repression could not

<sup>48</sup> Aris Accornero, Giovanni Alasia, Giuseppe Dozzo and Domenico Tarizzo, *La scatola di cemento. Una documentazione drammatica della resistenza operaia contro lo strapotere del monopolio* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1960).

<sup>49</sup> Elémire Zolla, *Minuetto all'inferno* (Torino: Einaudi, 1956).

<sup>50</sup> Gianni Milano, *La moneta sotto al sasso* (San Mauro Torinese: Avicenna, 2004), p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> A. Cazzullo, *I ragazzi di via Po*, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> D. Novelli, *Com'era bello il mio Pci*, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 36.

last forever and the condition of solitude, alienation and sometimes poverty experienced by the newcomers – especially by the young workers – gave rise to tensions, which were not understood and not addressed by the unions. In short, the face of the factory was changing together with the face of the working class; and the rage of the mass workers, often young and from the South, would start to be vented out by demonstrations and sometimes acts of violence that did not receive the comprehension either of the left-wing parties or of the unions. From 1959, in the factories of the North, firstly in Milan, part of the working class started to strike again for the renewal of the contracts. In the same period, for one of the first times, some female workers started to take part in the demonstrations as well, and in 1959, in Piedmont, the women of the Cotonificio Val di Susa went on strike. The claims concerned the right to work without the pressure of arbitrary lay-offs and the enlargement of the vacation period. As Ninetta Zandegiacomi would write in 1961, those young workers 'rifiutavano la sottomissione al sacrificio delle loro madri' they wanted time to spend for themselves and 'il diritto di godere integralmente di quindici giorni da passare in montagna o al mare.'<sup>54</sup> In these claims we can recognise an element that typifies the youth of the late 1950s: the attention paid to free time, which was more than that given to pay rises. The ethic of silence and sacrifice at all costs carried out by the older generations slowly started to be replaced by an ethic based on freedom and on the fulfilment of new needs. Simultaneously, a fringe of university students also supported the protests. A year later, in 1960, 400 young workers of Milan Alfa Romeo, of whom only four were trade union members, went on strike to protest against the exhausting rhythms of the shifts; they also contested the proposal made by the unions of 'aumenti salariali che giustificasse in qualche modo la crescita del carico di lavoro.'<sup>55</sup> Also for those young people, the raise in salaries was not as important as less tiring shifts which would enable them to go out in the evening without feeling like 'stracci.'<sup>56</sup>

As had happened before, police forces tried to repress the wave of strikes through the use of violence, and on 11 May 1961 the unemployed worker Mario Savoldi got killed by the Carabinieri in Sarnico, near Bergamo, during a demonstration. The following year, 1962, near Frosinone, the workers of the soap factory Scala, started a strike that would last for thirty-four days. The demand, in this case, concerned a pay raise. The police decided to intervene and the consequence was the death of a worker, Luigi Mastrogiacomo. In Milan,

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<sup>54</sup> Ninetta Zandegiacomi, *La donna in Italia* in *Rinascita* (March 1961), in G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*, p. 198.

<sup>55</sup> Silvia Casilio, *Una generazione d'emergenza. L'Italia della controcultura (1965-1969)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2013) p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> Vittorio Foa, *Questo Novecento. Un secolo di passione civile. La politica come responsabilità* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996) p. 267.

a demonstration against the policy of Siemens would end with an intense hail of stones, – a way of protesting which we would see again in Turin few months later – in this occasion, as *Il Giorno* points out, the white collar workers expressed their solidarity with the blue collar workers.<sup>57</sup>

The vanguard of those demonstrations throughout the country was composed of a new generation, socially aware but distant from the rhetoric of the party's institution. And according to the newspapers of the period, both in Milan and Turin, the new young workers who had migrated from the South got involved too. Turin as well, in 1962, saw an extensive rush of agitation, and here too, the demonstrations of the first part of the year witnessed, together with the workers, the engagement of the university and secondary school students. The rallies targeted the authoritarianism of factories such as Michelin and Lancia. No signs of discontent, instead, came from Fiat until 19 June 1962 when the biggest Italian factory's workers started participating in the strikes. It is a symbolic caesura: finally, after years of stillness, the tension and the rage of the Fiat workers appeared. Concurrently, something cracked inside the equilibrium of the unions. A demonstration for the renewal of contracts for certain categories of workers was scheduled for the first days of July, but Sida and the UIL (the Catholic Union) decided to sign a separate agreement with the company in which the important points concerning workers' rights were hardly mentioned.

Despite the agreement, on Saturday 7 July the demonstration started. After the morning pickets, in the late afternoon, some workers reached piazza Statuto to protest in front of the UIL headquarters and at 3 o'clock the clashes began. The riot would last until the late evening only to break out again, more fervently, on Monday the 9th, invigorated by the violence of the police. As *Il Giorno* would comment 'la riottosità, di fronte all'energia degli agenti, è sfociata in aperta ribellione.'<sup>58</sup> Inside the parliament, numerous politicians tried their best to blame the PCI that, however, had nothing to do with the events. On the contrary, several members of the Communist Party discredited the uprising following a narrative for which the violent behaviours had been triggered by infiltrators. This is what Diego Novelli has stated:

Ci avvertono che c'è un casino in piazza Statuto. Decidiamo di andare a vedere. Un gruppo di manifestanti ci viene incontro. Davanti a noi cammina Pajetta. [...] Quelli lo prendono a sassate [...] noi scappiamo via. [...] Giancarlo (Pajetta) sente un dolore alla gamba destra, ci passa una mano, la ritrae piena di sangue. Dice che quelli che l'hanno ferito non sono operai, ma provocatori. Lo

<sup>57</sup> Unsigned, *I metalmeccanici per l'uguaglianza con gli impiegati* in *Il Giorno* (9 February 1962), p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> Ettore Masina, *1000 fermati a Torino – Assalto a un giornale* in *Il Giorno* (10 July 1962), p. 1 and p. 14.

dice anche il brigadier Rizzo della Squadra Mobile. “In piazza Statuto è pieno di magnaccia e altri veterani della malavita.”<sup>59</sup>

The newspapers of the time would focus their attention on the origin and the age of the young people involved in the clashes, underlining the fact that the majority of the people held by the police were ‘meridionali’. The way in which *Corriere della sera* described the situation is very similar to what the same newspaper wrote about the events of July 1960, ‘Piazza Statuto è diventata una specie di guerriglia [...] drappelletti di giovinastri, molti tra essi sono immigrati delle ultime leve, vestono magliette a vivaci colori, indossano pantaloni logori, vecchie scarpe e urlano’ and later on, ‘giovannissimi tra i 15 e i 23 anni, in buona parte immigrati dal Meridione, 32 sono noti e 17 pregiudicati.’ Here again it can be seen how the newspaper lingers on the look of the youngsters who were depicted like people who came ‘dalla periferia,’ ‘teppisti [...] squadrette di giovanotti e ragazze sfaccendati.’<sup>60</sup> The same newspaper, a few days later would portray them in a similar way: they had ‘visi giovanissimi ma spesso torvi, capigliature fluenti e imbrillantinate, lunghe basette presuntuose e magliette scalciate.’<sup>61</sup> Besides the media's approach, it is quite clear that the uneasiness of part of this generation, especially in the industrial cities of the North like Turin, walked hand in hand with the turbulent vicissitudes of the country. The scenario had changed tremendously in less than five years, re-shaping the cities, the collective imagination and the habits of the people. From a sociological perspective, this restlessness reveals a spontaneous reaction to the attitude of the institutions, media and parties included, which did not grasp the extent of the transformation that was taking place. The uneasiness of the youth could be surely related to a deafness of the parties on both the left and right. Piazza Statuto could be placed as the cornerstone of a process that would develop during the 1960s and 1970s when, many young people politically engaged, would transform their disaffection for the traditional parties into new (often dangerous and violent) form of protest. It is not by chance that few days after the events in Rome, a trial of six students was held. They had tried to re-establish the Partito Fascista (Avanguardia Nazionale) and they were accused of having attacked the local PCI and PSI headquarters. Stefano Delle Chiaie, one of the members who would become an infamous name later, clearly stated that

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<sup>59</sup> D. Novelli in A. Cazzullo, *I ragazzi di via Po*, p. 20. On this see how the FGCI completely ignored the revolt (Chapter 5.3).

<sup>60</sup> A.A., *Polemica a Roma per i fatti di Torino* in *Corriere della sera*, (10 July 1962), p.2.

<sup>61</sup> Mario Cervi, *A giudizio quarentasei arrestati per i fatti di Piazza Statuto* in *Corriere della sera* (15 July 1962), p. 11.

their association 'si rivolge ai giovani verso i quali i partiti non dimostrano la necessaria preoccupazione,' the *Corriere* clarifies.<sup>62</sup>

To conclude, the years between 1957 and 1962 are pivotal for the Italian youth and many of the dynamics, which would blossom shortly after, have their roots in this period. Here we can identify the seeds of the counter-cultural revolution which would transform the identities of the Italian youth in the season to come. And on further inspection we can also observe the birth of a discontent towards the main parties' policies which would explode at the end of the 1960s. From our perspective the rage that had characterised the so-called teddy boys was the same that would brand the revolts of 1960 and 1962, although with a different and more concise target. The left wing saw a resurrection of the spirit of the Resistance in the revolts of July 1960 but it was not able – instead – to recognise the young new subject that emerged in the clashes of two years after. At the same time, it was unwilling to decipher its symbols (music, fashion and so) and modality of protest.

The protests of 1960 and 1962 are an apex of a distancing process between the youth and the parties that had started in the mid-1950s and that would characterise the revolts of the 1960s to come.

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<sup>62</sup> Unsigned, *Cominciato a Roma il processo contro i giovani neo-fascisti* in *Corriere della sera*, (17 July 1962), p. 2.

## Conclusion

My thesis has sought to investigate generational attitudes of the pre-baby boomers in Italy during the economic miracle. Although many studies have been carried out on Italian history of that time, among the more extensive those of Guido Crainz and Paul Ginsborg, scholarship so far has not analysed youth inclinations in a systematic way.<sup>1</sup> As we demonstrate in the thesis, in the years of the boom, for the first time, part of the youth started to develop a way of socialising based on a peer-to-peer approach which fell outside of the standards set by the institutions. Often, expressions of youth culture of the period have been seen as an anticipation of the politicisation of the 1960s and a bridge with the experience of the Resistance: this is the case of Annibale Paloscia or others, for example, as far as the protests of the early 1960s are concerned.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, recently, non-academic accounts have looked at specific youth pop trends of those years: the arrival of rock and roll for instance or the appearance of first “capelloni” in the streets of Italy.<sup>3</sup> However, up to this moment, the realm of political protest and the analysis of those trends have not been brought together in an integrated investigation which considers peer-to-peer relationships also as the product of the explosion of an Anglo-American inspired pop culture that shaped young people’s political experiences and trends. This factor impacted Italian pop culture but also the modality of youth political protest and the interrelations between youth and political institutions such as parties.

The thesis has aimed to investigate salient events or situations in which part of that youth took part, highlighting similarities between aspects that could be perceived as different but, in our opinion, are parts of the same process: the desire for renewal expressed by youth.

The Italian Communist Party implemented the idea of the “partito nuovo” in the late 1950s seeking to gain the sympathies of the voters as a whole, a choice not endorsed by *Azione comunista* for example, and young people and women became an indispensable target for its strategy and an object of examination. In the early 1950s, before the boom of pop culture, youth had started to become an important element for the stability of political parties, especially as far as the Christian Democrats and the Communists are concerned. They tried, in fact, to group young people in associations in which leisure played a pivotal role. Young people were essential in the strategy of the new party together with a pronounced attention to culture and communication. In this respect, our analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> Guigo Crainz, *Il paese mancato*; Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*; Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia*.

<sup>2</sup> Annibale Paloscia, *Al tempo di Tambroni*; AA. VV., *Le radici del '68. I testi fondamentali che prepararono la rivolta di una generazione* (Milano: Baldini e Castoldi, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Tiziano Tarli, *La felicità costa un gettone*.



documents issued by older leaders of the PCI between the late 1950s and early 1960s and addressed to members of the FGCI in which different topics are treated provides a prism through which the leaders' reading of modern society and its impact on youth can be better understood. Modern society is promoted to a certain extent but still interpreted through Marxism. However, the influence of Americanisation and the expansion of an Italian pop market changed the habits, the hobbies and the modalities of aggregation for part of the youth. These factors gave the youth a sense of freedom and the opportunity to build their own identities without being coerced by institutional role models. This is a core in our thesis and represents a revolution in a country that up to a decade before was rural and had faced the drama of dictatorship and war. Nevertheless, despite the economic growth, Italian institutions were advancing slowly, often clinging to a position of conservatism. This created not a few frictions in the relationship with part of young people who saw the globalised world advancing but felt often stuck in a country which resisted social modernisation. This restlessness appears in the late 1950s through the acts of bravado of the so-called "teddy boys" and "teppisti," as the press soon labelled them. The latter often linked their behaviours to Americanisation in general and to the spread of rock and roll music which a growing section of that generation began to follow. We have seen that rock and roll with its subsequent craze of "urlatori" became a tool of liberation and protest: it was music made by young people for young people that allowed them to release their energy through dancing and playing. In this context, youth of Italy started to create the code of peer-to-peer communication above mentioned which was disconnected from the codes imposed by the parties that began to be detached from young people's demands and worlds. Concurrently, in order to gain also the sympathies of the more educated strata of society, the PCI invested a lot of energy in its media and in this realm we place the experience of Cantacronache, a group of young Turinese left-wing intellectuals who would ultimately revolutionise the destiny of Italian music. They were produced by a label linked to the PCI, Italia canta, and they epitomised the eclectic nature of the new party on one hand and of the pop market on the other, which started to include more serious acts in its range. Cantacronache belonged to the same generation as the "teddy boys," they lived in an industrial milieu and they sang of their times in a new, poignant and refined way. They anticipated the song-writing to come and, according to our analysis, they succeeded in laying the base for future developments of the pop music market. We have seen that previous scholars have mainly focused on Cantacronache's activism and their refusal of "canzonetta." We demonstrate instead that this experience belongs to the pop market in full, in the same way as "canzonetta," and they also relied on the same medium of promotion,

the 45s record, that saw its boom in the late 1950s. From this viewpoint Cantacronache are quite far removed from Italian rock and roll and “canzonetta” but they belong to the same realm. They are, we might say, the “flipside” of the pop market. The songs we consider both musically and textually are a depiction of the boom through an ironic take on its symbols and habits. Although conveyed in a quieter way, some of their lyrics express the same rebelliousness of the teddy boys. Through them, the development of the Italian pop market opens up toward new niches of listeners in which also serious reflections on reality could find room. Moreover, the connection between the artists and Italia canta gives us an idea of the policy of “partito nuovo” and leads us to chapters 5 and 6 in which we discuss this strategy in detail, filtered in particular through a close look at the FGCI.

Focusing on the FGCI more specifically the documents analysed have shed light on the federation’s understanding of itself and of its role in modern society and on the extent to which the FGCI manages to find a fresher approach to issues such as women’s emancipation and “questione giovanile.” We have seen that ultimately, in its formal documents, the federation does not succeed in finding an original mode of communication with the youth, holding a position of vagueness towards the themes above mentioned. However, in province-based documents these themes are tackled differently and a solution is proposed. Nevertheless even in provincial contexts (Turin in our case) the federation follows the PCI in dealing with more political matters, denying, for example, the importance of the uprising of Piazza Statuto. In the documents considered, issued after July 1962, we have seen that the problematic around youth participation in the clashes is completely overlooked, and their spontaneity subtly reproached.

In examining the FGCI magazine *Nuova generazione* we have seen that the institution’s approach becomes in part more original. This happens at least when women’s emancipation and youth problems are treated but it does not happen when political problems like the invasion of Hungary are discussed. In this regard the position adopted is very similar to that of the PCI journals and the spontaneity of the young uprising is stigmatised, although in an indirect way. However, in dealing with emancipation and youth-related problems we have seen that the attitude changes as the magazine leaves space to readers’ opinions, letters and interviews, creating a platform to discuss generational trends. The same more or less happens in *Vie nuove*, as we can see, a magazine of the PCI that seeks to create a bridge between the party and society. *NG* and *VN* respond to the new party strategy fully, they are a way to open the party to voters and provide a friendlier image of the PCI as a force inside democracy. However, in our analysis of PCI-related magazines of the late 1950s we have been able to identify the seeds

of disquiet which would characterise the revolts of the early 1960s and the actions of “teppisti.” The young people who contributed to the journal are often members of the party or communist sympathisers, but in discussing, for instance, the “questione giovanile” or Americanisation we could see how their mentality proceeds often on a different pathway if compared with that of the party’s mainstream. Through this we have highlighted the appearance of a discrepancy whereby it seems that already in 1957 the party could not keep up with the pace of society remaining stalled in its immobility which is reflected in the formal communications we had looked at earlier.

By reading the material related to the PCI and the FGCI we have learned that already in the late 1950s a divergence emerges: on the one hand we have the self-proclaimed progressive force of the country that wants to open up towards society, including young people and women, becoming voter friendly; and on the other, the youth itself. The latter, when asked to contribute, especially in journals, demonstrates an ability to comprehend the phenomena of their time by claiming the agency of building their own individualities. Especially in *NG* we can see that, as far as youth problems or Americanisation is concerned, young people provide a take which is frequently different from that of the journalists. These people are FGCI members or sympathisers, and in fact they often conclude their contributions by exalting the FGCI, however they seize the opportunity to discuss the topics put forward in mature and original ways, quite far from the assumptions of the party’s mainstream journalists. In short they grasp the extent of the revolution that pop culture has brought which includes music, new habits and new rituals.

We will never know if the underplaying of this phenomenon by the Communists is involuntary or not, and this question could lead to further research or remain unanswered, nevertheless we can see that already then a gap starts to appear between the institution and the progressive youth, a distance which would grow in the 1960s and in the 1970s. On the contrary, part of the youth begins relying, as seen in the actions of “teppisti” or in the protests of the early 1960s in which young people – the same generation of the “teddy boys” – were a dominant presence, on spontaneity and on different modalities and codes borrowed from the horizon of pop culture. In this perspective, they are aligned with Western youth as we have mentioned in the introduction, being part of a new, modern, and more globalised world which started to take shape during that period. Revolutionary tendencies and pop culture met, and this would come out clearly in 1968 when portraits of Che Guevara, Mao and Ho Chi Minh would materialise on t-shirts and banners in youth demonstrations throughout the Western world. Research on the rapport between pop culture, youth and revolutionary tendencies in Italy, together with a discussion on the

relationship between the FGCI and young people have been, so far, scarce. By investing energy in these topics, we may achieve a better grasp on the discrepancy that started in the 1950s and led to a schism between progressive left-wing forces and young people. Only recently Italian studies have taken interest in pop culture as a “scientific” topic, we hope that this strand could move forward, finally freed from the ideologies that have characterised the studies on political trends in the country.

In Italy, in the late 1950s and early 1960s progressive forces like the PCI missed the chance to establish a communication with the first generation which aimed to create its own identity and individuality relying on new inputs also brought by pop culture: fashion, music, peer-to-peer aggregation and so on. When dealing with protests, they rewrote the rules, detaching themselves from the schemes set by the parties which struggled to read a fast-paced youth culture different from the previous generations. They anticipated the political youth trends that would mature in the 1960s and in the 1970s being ‘absolute beginners of the “belpaese.”’

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