

**The United States Information Agency and Italy during the
Johnson Presidency
1963-1969**

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations

INTRODUCTION

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1 US Public Diplomacy between the fifties and the sixties. Continuity and Change. | <i>p. 34</i> |
| 2 Lyndon Johnson and the limits of the centre-left formula in Italy (1964-1966) | <i>p. 90</i> |
| 3. Adapting Public Diplomacy to a changing world | <i>p. 118</i> |
| 4. Foreign policy activism vs domestic <i>immobilismo</i>: fueling Italian international prestige | <i>p. 167</i> |
| 5. Presenting American policies to the Italians: From selling to <i>justifying</i> | <i>p. 192</i> |
| 6. Explaining Vietnam to the Italians: anti-Americanism, Americanization and the power of dissent | <i>p. 238</i> |
| 7. From Johnson to Nixon: USIA conservative turn | <i>p. 279</i> |

CONCLUSION

Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this dissertation

CCF: Congress for Cultural Freedom
CGIL: Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
CISL: Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
DC: Democrazia Cristiana
ECA: Economic Cooperation Administration
EEC: European Economic Community
ENI: Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi
ENEL: Ente Nazionale Energia Elettrica
ERP: European Recovery Program
MLF: Multilateral Force
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTP: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSC: National Security Council
OWI: Office of War Information
PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano
PSI: Partito Socialista Italiano
PSIUP: Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria
PSLI: Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiano
PWB: Psychological Warfare Branch
RAI: Radio Televisione Italiana
SIFAR: Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare
UIL: Unione Italiana del Lavoro
USIA: United States Information Agency
USIS: United States Information Service
VOA: Voice of America

Introduction

In the summer of 1954, during a meeting held in Washington among key members of the United States Information Agency (USIA), the official propaganda agency of the American government, the new director of the USIA branch in Rome, Neville E. Nordness, argued that only one country in Europe was worthy of a concentrated effort by the agency. That country was Italy. Ten years later, at the time of the election of President Lyndon B. Johnson, despite the considerable shift of resources from Western Europe to the developing world, the USIA programme in Italy, with an annual operating budget of over \$1 million, was still among the largest in the world, second in Europe only to West Germany.¹

This dissertation examines the USIA Italian programme between 1963 and 1969, and places it within the larger context of American policy towards Italy at this crucial juncture in the history of both countries. Created in 1953 by President Dwight Eisenhower, the main goal of the USIA, as stated in its founding charter, was to project a 'positive image of the United States abroad.'² The core idea behind the creation of the agency was that, with the heightening of tensions with the Soviet Union, America needed a permanent apparatus to

¹ Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Special Information Project for Italy, 9th July 1954, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/7-954, box 2466, p. 1.

² U.S. Information Agency Strategic Principles, 2nd March 1954, NARA, RG 59, National Security Council Policy and Guidance Staff, Entry 1392, box 1, p. 3.

explain its views, culture, politics and society to the post-war world.

Dramatically downsized by 1989, and finally shut down in 1999 by the Clinton Administration, the arc of its existence shows the nature of the USIA as a Cold War tool.³

Termed the 'least of the Great Powers', Italy hosted the largest Communist Party in the "free world", the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI), for the entire duration of the Cold War. It also saw more than twenty governments and two different political formulations, from *centrismo* to a centre-left coalition, alternate in the first two decades of the post-war period, signifying an inability to ensure the country's stability. The government's inability to 'keep Italy on track' and effectively oppose the Communist threat, as well as what was perceived by the US as the country's endemic instability, led to the deployment of such an extensive USIA program in Italy.

Beginning in the 1950s, following the traumatic experience of World War II and the unthinkable implications of nuclear warfare, the bipolar conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was progressively channelled into non-military means of combat. In addition to the better-known methods of traditional diplomacy, the threat of force and economic aid, the United States

³ On the closure of the USIA see Nicholas Cull, *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency. American Public Diplomacy, 1989-2001* (New York 2012).

deployed new instruments to further its foreign policy goals and win the 'battle for the hearts and minds' against the Soviet Union.⁴

These new instruments included overt and covert propaganda operations, international broadcasting, influencing local media abroad, fostering personal contacts and cultural exchanges. Except for covert operations, all these means fall under the category of public diplomacy, and were carried out by the USIA worldwide through the widest network of local posts that any US governmental body has ever had abroad.

Public diplomacy was key instrument in waging the Cold War against the Soviet Union, and its origins and evolution will be further analysed in depth. A preliminary definition, however, can be made by identifying public diplomacy as the attempt by an international actor, in this case the American government through the USIA, to establish a dialogue with foreign public opinion designed to inform and more importantly to influence. Supporting a country's foreign policy goals is, therefore, the *raison d'être* of public diplomacy. The difference with traditional diplomacy, is that instead of relying on government-to-government contacts, public diplomacy seeks to further such foreign policy goals by engaging directly with the public opinion abroad. In my work, I will deal specifically with USIA efforts to influence Italian public opinion and

⁴ Kenneth Osgood, 'Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:2 (2002) 85-107.

thereby the politics and actions of its government, through a wide range of propaganda and cultural activities.⁵

Public diplomacy, is a crucial element of another concept developed at the outset of the Cold War, that of political warfare. Defined by US diplomat and containment strategy architect, George Kennan, in 1948 as ‘the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives’, the term political warfare meant the application of diplomatic, economic, cultural, ideological, and covert tools in foreign policy.⁶ Italy, in particular, proves to be a very interesting case study in political warfare waged by the American government in Western Europe. As Kaeten Mistry shows in detail in his account of Washington’s intervention in the Italian elections of 1948, the event marked the first ‘inauguration’ in the field of this series of techniques, ranging from support for local actors to secret

⁵ For a definition of public diplomacy see Nicholas J. Cull, Nicholas J. Cull, “‘Public Diplomacy’ Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase”, USC Center on Public Diplomacy; *ibid.*, *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency*; Brian C. Etheridge (ed.) *The United States and Public Diplomacy. New Directions in Cultural and International History* (Leiden, 2010); Jarol B. Manheim, *Strategic Public Diplomacy and America Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Influence*, (Oxford, 1994); Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age* (New York, 1989); Critchlow James, “Public Diplomacy during the Cold War, The Records and Its Implications”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 5:1 (Winter 2004) pp. 75-89; Leo Bogart, L., *Premises for Propaganda: The United States Information Agency's Operating Assumptions in the Cold War* (New York, 1976).

⁶ A document of the Policy Planning Staff entitled “The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare” describes it as ‘the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives’ ranging from ‘such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures and “white” propaganda, to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black” psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.’ Policy Planning Staff Memo, “The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare”, April 30, 1948, RG 59, Box 11A, Lot File 64 D 563, NARA. Incorporated in a subsequent version of May 4, 1948, “The Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment”, FRUS, 1945-1950, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/intel/index.html, Document 269. On the concept of political warfare, see also See William Daugherty and Morris Janowitz, eds., *A Psychological Warfare Casebook* (Baltimore, 1958); Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The U.S. Crusade against the Soviet Union, 1945–1956* (New York, 1999).

funding for rightist organizations, in order to influence a country's internal politics.⁷

While there is a rich literature on the role of the United States in influencing the Italian elections in 1948, and several references can be found on various aspects of American political warfare in Italy during the fifties, no scholar has ever carried out an in-depth study on the role of public diplomacy in Western Europe, and more specifically in Italy, during the Johnson administration.⁸

Italian historians Luigi Bruti Liberati and Simona Tobia have investigated, respectively, the evolution of propaganda in Italy in the immediate post-war period, and the USIA's first operations. Alessandro Brogi in his analysis of US overt and covert propaganda efforts to weaken the French

⁷ Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 8.

⁸ On Italian 1948 political elections see David W. Ellwood, "The 1948 Elections in Italy: A Cold War Propaganda Battle", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 13:1 (1993) 19-33; Ennio Di Nolfo, *Le paure e le speranze degli italiani 1943-1953*, (Milano, 1986); Novelli, *Le elezioni del Quarantotto. Storia, strategie e immagini della prima campagna elettorale repubblicana* (Rome 2008); Elena Aga Rossi, *Italia e Stati Uniti durante l'amministrazione Truman*, (Milan, 1977). On the crucial role of the 'Italian case' in the development and implementation of American political warfare strategy between 1948 and 1950 see Kaeten Mistry, 'The Case for Political Warfare: Strategy, Organization and US Involvement in the 1948 Italian Election', *Cold War History* 6:3 (August 2006) 31-329; *ibid.*, 'Re-thinkin American Intervention in the 1948 Italian Election: Beyond a Success-Failure Dichotomy', *Modern Italy*, 16:2 (2011) 179-194; *ibid.*, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge, 2014). On US influence in Italy during the fifties see David W. Ellwood, *L'alleato nemico: la politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia 1943-1946*, (Milan, 1977); *ibid.* *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction*, (London, 1992); Romero, Federico, "La scelta atlantica e Americana", in *Nazione, interdipendenza, e integrazione. Le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia (1917-1989)*, F. Romero, A. Varsori (eds.) Vol. 1 (Rome, 2005); *ibid.*, Gli Stati Uniti in Italia: Il Piano Marshall e il Patto Atlantico', in Barbagallo, ed., *Storia dell'Italia Repubblicana I*, pp. 233-89; *ibid.*, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951*, Chapel Hill, 1992. Mario Del Pero, *L'alleato scomodo*: *ibid.*, "The United States and 'Psychological Warfare' in Italy, 1948-1955", *Journal of American History*, 87, March 2001, (1304-1334); Maria Eleonora Guasconi, *L'altra faccia della medaglia: Guerra psicologica e diplomazia sindacale nelle relazioni Italia-Stati Uniti durante la prima fase della Guerra fredda, 1947-1955*, Catanzaro, 2004; *ibid.*, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951*, Chapel Hill, 1992.

and Italian Communist Parties during the Cold War does discuss several aspects of the sixties. The wide arc of time covered in his book, and the vast amount of actors and topics examined, however, does not leave room for a detailed reconstruction of USIA activities.⁹

At the level of diplomatic history, detailed historiographical reconstructions of US policy towards Italy exists for both the Kennedy and the Nixon administrations, respectively by Italian scholars Leopoldo Nuti and Valerio Bosco. Nothing, however, has been written about the Johnson administration, a period when the image of the United States abroad was tarnished by growing internal social struggles and the escalation of the Vietnam War.¹⁰

This period also saw Italy experience one of the most acute political and economic crises in its history, marked on the social level by widespread revolts and on the political level by an extreme polarization that opened the way to a decade of violence and terrorism known as the “Years of Lead” (*Anni di Piombo*). The growing fragility of the government and the increasing grip of communism on students, workers and intellectuals was a source of growing concern for the US Government, which found itself in the uncomfortable position of trying to weaken the Italian Communist Party without feeding the

⁹ Simona Tobia, *Advertising America, The United State Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)*, Milan, 2009; Luigi Bruti Liberati, “Words, Words, Words”. *La guerra fredda dell’USIS in Italia*, Milan, 2004; Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*, (Chapel Hill, 2011).

¹⁰ Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia* (Roma-Bari, 1999); Valerio Bosco, *L’amministrazione Nixon e L’Italia. Tra distensione europea e crisi mediterranee 1968-1975* (Rome, 2009).

ambition of the extreme right, which by the mid-sixties, was responsible for several attempted *coups d'état*, culminated in the December 1969 bombing in Milan.

The explosive internal situation in Italy was the result of a rapid and uneven industrialization, which in less than ten years had transformed the country into an industrial economy driven by the well-established industry of the north, with increasing pressure for modernization in the primarily agrarian south. This was exacerbated by a fragile government coalition lacking a consensus to implement needed structural reforms. Hidden behind what external observers called, the 'Italian economic miracle', the Italian population was confronted with its first problems as a nation that had achieved an advanced stage of economic development, while lacking adequate administrative and financial structures. Industrial wages rose much less than productivity and capitalism began to project 'the spectre of inequality' on Italian society.¹¹

Protests were directed not only towards the Italian government, perceived as distant and detached from the problems of ordinary people, but also towards the capitalistic system, widely propagandized since the years of the Marshall plan, which was the representation of America. This disorderly and unexpected boom, coupled with America's growing internal disorders and

¹¹ CIA Memorandum, Italian Economic Development, 16 September, 1964, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (1 of 2), National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

the escalation in Vietnam, offered material for an effective Communist propaganda which skilfully exploited what in Italy was perceived as a sort of “Freudian crisis”. ‘The anti-American feeling’, wrote US columnist Leo Wollemborg, ‘could in fact be seen as a loss of respect in the same way that a child is shaken when he discovers that his parents are fallible.’¹² This situation could not fail to affect the agency in charge of projecting a positive image of America to the world. From the society of consensus of the 1950’s, popularized abroad through the image of the American middle-class family living in the suburbs surrounded by an endless variety of consumer goods, the agency now had to deal with the picture of a struggling society, victim of its own contradictions.

Public diplomacy: History and Definition

Historiography has been slow in grasping the centrality of public diplomacy in Cold War history, and the subject has only received systematic and considerable attention in the past 10 years. It is no coincidence that the first definition of public diplomacy goes back only to 1965, when Edmund Gullion, a career diplomat and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, used the term in connection with the

¹² Leo J. Wollemborg, *Stars, Stripes, and Italian Tricolor: the United States and Italy, 1946-1989*, (New York, 1990); p. 99.

foundation of the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy. The brochure for the new centre described public diplomacy as a practice that 'deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.'¹³

Bypassing the elitist government-to-government practice of traditional diplomacy, public diplomats, therefore, aim at reaching the wider public through the media, cultural activities and personal exchanges. Despite the late formal development of the concept, the practice of public diplomacy has been key to the conduct of foreign relations since the advent of the modern mass society in the late nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century. At its core is the awareness of the centrality of public opinion in influencing government policies in modern societies. The fast growing industrialization and urbanization, which occurred in America in the second half of the nineteenth century, was combined with rapid development in mass communication and a rising demand on the part of an increasingly well-informed public for

¹³ Nicholas J. Cull, "'Public Diplomacy' Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase".

accountability from its leaders. The centrality of the masses became even clearer with the advent of the First World War. Aware of such development, in 1917 President Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the first government agency charged with mobilizing US public support for American entry into the European conflict.¹⁴

The CPI used all the newly developed advertising techniques: pamphlets, movies, radio shows and fundraising campaigns, including the use of Hollywood stars as sponsors of US war efforts. It was US government sponsored propaganda at its height. Fearful that Wilson could use such a sophisticated apparatus to advance his peacetime goals, Congress immediately ordered the closure of the agency, as soon as the war ended.¹⁵

The experience with wartime propaganda, combined with the increasingly violent use of propaganda made by European totalitarian regimes, made Americans extremely anxious about the power of propaganda in manipulating people's minds.¹⁶ The immense potential of propaganda in managing the masses in the fast-growing American democracy, however, attracted the attention of a class of American scholars, journalist and political scientists who began to theorize the relevance of propaganda as a crucial element in the conduct of US domestic and foreign policy. In his work

¹⁴ Lyn Godman e David McLean, *Media and Society in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Malden, 2003, pp. 15-17.

¹⁵ On the CPI David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Robert Jackall e Janice M. Hirota, *Image Makers: Advertising, Public Relations, and the Ethos of Advocacy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000;

¹⁶ Gary Brett, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 24.

Propaganda Technique in the World War, Harold Lasswell emphasized how propaganda, intended as the practice or technique aimed at influencing and directing attitudes and behaviours towards pre-determined goals, had now become an invaluable means for the American government to accomplish its objectives. 'It is expected,' Lasswell prophesized, 'that governments will rely increasingly upon the professional propagandists for advice and aid.'¹⁷

Later events did not disprove Lasswell's predictions. The worldwide expansion of Nazi and Fascist propaganda during the thirties, and the subsequent outbreak of the Second World War, forced Americans to overcome their distrust towards government's sponsored propaganda. In 1942 Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI), with an operative network of offices all around the world, charged with promoting, at home and abroad, understanding of the status of the war efforts and aims of the US government, and coordinating all the government information activities.¹⁸ When the war was over, the rising tension with the Soviet Union prevented the OWI from meeting the same fate as the CPI in 1919. Roosevelt's successor, President Harry Truman, was quickly convinced of the necessity of a peacetime propaganda apparatus to 'counter Soviet lies' and 'explain America to the world'. This new governmental body was named

¹⁷ Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf 1927, p. 34; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, pp26-27..

¹⁸ For the history of the Office of War Information see Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information 1942-1945*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978; Elmer Davis, 'OWI has a job', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7:1 (1943) 5-14

the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC) and was placed under the control of the State Department. The OIC also kept control of the OWI's former network of local posts abroad, named United States Information Services (USIS). During the years of the Truman administration, the OIC changed names and directors a number of times, until Truman's successor, President Dwight Eisenhower, decided to separate the propaganda function from the State Department, and create an independent agency: the United States Information Agency (USIA).¹⁹ The increasing fear of the spread of communism, served to overcome the last reservations of those in Congress who believed that American democracy did not need a governmental body to promote truths that were self-evident, around the world. Given the US public's discomfort with propaganda, the USIA was created with a clause in its founding treaty establishing that it should turn its activities only towards foreign targets, so as to avoid that American citizens became the objects of propaganda activities.²⁰

Moreover, while in the internal communications and documents USIA officers always referred to their activity as propaganda, in the external outputs

¹⁹ For the evolution of the US information program from the State Department to the USIA see: Wilson P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the United States Information Service*, (Washington, 1961); Robert E. Elder, *The Information Machine: The USIA and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse, 1968); John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, New York, Praeger, 1969; Thomas C. Sorensen, *The World War: The Story of American Propaganda*, New York, Harper & Row, 1968; Cull, *The Cold War and the USIA*; David W. Garth, "From OWI to USIA: the Jackson Committee's Search for the Real 'Voice' of America", *American Journalism*, 19:1 (Winter 2002) pp. 13-37; Parry-Giles, Shawn J., "The Eisenhower Administration's Conceptualization of the USIA: The Development of Overt and Covert Propaganda Strategies", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24:2 (Spring 2004) pp. 263-276.

²⁰ Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age* (New York, 1989) p. 93.

they were extremely careful not to use the “P-word”, preferring instead the word “information”. An evidence of this can be found in the name of the agency itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the definition of public diplomacy was coined in 1965, it was enthusiastically welcomed within the agency, finally saving them from this endless series of semantic dances.

In my work, I will often use the words propaganda and public diplomacy interchangeably. Although with time it has acquired a number of meanings, here I will refer specifically to institutional public diplomacy, namely that carried out by a government, in this case the United States through the USIA , to influence public opinion abroad. I have identified the main functions of US public diplomacy as:

- Spokesman - acting as press agency for the American government abroad through disseminating information, news stories, press report, speeches, pictures and through influencing local media. In several cases, the agency produced the content itself by sponsoring international broadcasting through short wave radio stations, documentaries, television, and internet channels.
- Advisor – conducting field research, surveys, polls and interviews in the field and reporting to the US government on local public opinion and government views on certain policies or events.
- Cultural manager - administering the export of culture to serve US foreign policy goals through sponsoring the teaching of English and American history and literature overseas, supporting academic and students exchanges, and organizing conferences and book translations. This function, denominated Cultural Diplomacy, was carried out by cultural

attachés, often academics, and was a frequent source of friction with the more advertising-driven wing of the agency.²¹

- Showcase: filtering news and cultural products coming from the United States, from news, to movies, to advertising; in order to convey the best possible picture of the United States abroad. Examples are balancing news of the racial struggle in America with success stories of African American integration, or sponsoring art exhibitions or concerts in order to balance the spontaneous overflow of US popular culture and products. The latter can be seen as a cross-sectorial function, which acted as a bridge between all the others.

Issues, Arguments and Historical Narrative

This research aims therefore at pushing the field of US public diplomacy out of what USIA historian Nicholas Cull defined as ‘its 1950s comfort zone’ and into the next decade, where US policy towards Italy, and more specifically US public diplomacy strategies in the peninsula, have not yet been explored. Far from being a detailed reconstruction of US-Italian relations during the Johnson years, this research aims instead at offering a portrayal of Italian

²¹ Richard Arndt, former USIA cultural officer, defines cultural diplomacy as the branch of diplomacy ‘dedicated solely to the educational and cultural relations between nations.’ Starting from the assumption that ‘there has always been spontaneous cultural relations between states through trade and tourism, students flows, book and media circulation, migration and all sort of cross-cultural encounters’, Arndt explain how ‘cultural diplomacy can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national government, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests.’ Richard Arndt, *The first Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington D.C., 2006), p. xviii. For an account of the origins of US Cultural Diplomacy see also Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (Cambridge, 1981); Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *Cultural Relations and US Foreign Policy* (Bloomington, 1963).

affairs seen through American eyes, emphasizing how the US reading of the Italian political and social situation, often misunderstood or instrumentally manipulated by Italian actors to increase US engagement, justified or even demanded greater US public diplomacy involvement. In addition to USIA reports and documents, I make extensive use of documents from the US State Department, the US Embassy and its consulates in Italy, the NSC, the CIA and the White House; in order to reconstruct the Johnson administration's view of Italy, as a premise to analyse its public diplomacy strategy on the peninsula. In terms of existing literature on US-Italian relations in the post-war years, the research draws on that strand of historiography (in particular the aforementioned works of Romero, Duggan, Ellwood, Di Nolfo, Nuti, Del Pero, Guasconi, Mistry and Brogi) showing that there was a much more sophisticated strategic vision behind Italian foreign policy,²² than highlighted by traditional accounts, presenting Italy as completely subordinated to its European and Atlantic partners.²³

²² Beside the ones already mentioned works, see also Di Nolfo, "Italia e Stati Uniti: Un'alleanza diseguale," *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1990), pp. 3-28; Pietro Pastorelli, *La politica estera italiana del secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna, 1987); David W. Ellwood "Italy, Europe and the Cold War: The Politics and Economics of Limited Sovereignty," in Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, eds., *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), pp. 25-46; Antonio Varsori, "Italy's Policy towards European Integration, 1947-58," in Duggan and Wagstaff, eds., *Italy in the Cold War*, 47-66; Alessandro Brogi, *L'Italia e l'egemonia americana nel Mediterraneo* (Florence, 1996).

²³ Norman Kogan, *The Politics of Italian Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1963); Frederic Spotts and Theodore Wieser, *Italy, A Difficult Democracy: A Survey of Italian Politics* (Cambridge, 1986); Primo Vannicelli, *Italy, NATO and the European Community: The Interplay of Foreign and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge MA, 1974).

This research will also stress how Italian DC leaders instrumentally over-emphasized the internal communist threat in order to obtain greater support and funding from the United States. This attitude, labelled by Di Nolfo as the “tyranny of the weak”, anticipated an element which will recur over the entire dissertation: the great complexity of Italian internal politics and society, with its contrasting views and divisions, not just along party lines, but also within each party. This complexity made it extremely difficult for the United States to read the situation, using the Cold War dichotomic lens of communism versus democracy. In terms of public diplomacy, this ‘misunderstanding’ not only justified growing involvement of the USIA within Italian affairs, but it also limited the agency’s ability to effectively influence the domestic politics of the country.²⁴

In tracing the history of the USIA in Italy, this work draws on three main categories of sources: USIA, State Department and National Security Council (NSC) archival material, memoirs of former USIA officers, and the vast

²⁴ On the concept of the “tyranny of the weak” see: Ennio Di Nolfo, “Italia e Stati Uniti: Un’alleanza diseguale,” *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 6:1 (1990), pp. 3–28.

literature on US public diplomacy.²⁵ In analysing my sources, however, it is important to be aware of several factors.

First, there is an issue of reliability of some of the USIA reports. Friction existed between the USIA and the State Department, because the later saw a threat from a government agency whose role was to bypass traditional, elitist, State-to-State conventions in order to appeal *directly* to public opinion abroad. To this tension was added the continuous conflict between the agency and the Republicans in the US Congress, for what was perceived as the overly liberal and internationalist tilt of its staff, which for the most part had been trained within the war propaganda agencies established during the Roosevelt years. For these reasons, the agency had to spend a great deal of time trying to justify its existence, in several instances leading USIA officials to inflate data and figures in their reports to show the effectiveness of the agency's activities in order to prevent budget reductions.

In addition, most of the books on the USIA were written either by former agency officers with the intent of demonstrating the Agency's irreplaceable role in winning the Cold War, or by opponents of the USIA, determined to paint

²⁵ A wide collection of USIA material (RG 306) is stored at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. This includes textual records on agency policy and planning, pamphlets, leaflets, and films and other propaganda materials. Along with the State Department documents (RG 59), NSC documents, and Italian Embassy and Consulates documents (RG 84), the dissertation is based on detailed research in the Johnson and Nixon libraries respectively located in Austin (Texas) and in Yorba Linda (California). On the Italian side, in addition to analysing the main Italian media targeted by the agency, I have also carried oral interviews with former USIA officers in the field as well as Italian intellectuals who had contacts with the agency.

a picture of the agency as a den of liberals and socialists, using taxpayer money to promote their distorted vision of reality.²⁶

Furthermore, texts produced by former USIA officers, differ depending on the author's experience and his or her task within the agency. The history of the USIA written by Richard Arndt, an academic and Cultural Affairs Officer for more than 30 years, places an emphasis on cultural activities. In his memoir he underlined that academic and cultural exchanges, as well as the Agency's circuit of libraries, were the only activities that gave positive results.²⁷ In contrast, the work of Wilson Dizard, a telecommunications expert, insists that media activities, and in particular the Voice of America, movies, and documentaries, were the most effective tools to spread the American model in Europe. Both officers, in any case, assert that the Cold War would have been impossible to win without the contribution of the USIA.²⁸ These contrasting views highlight a fracture which would characterize the agency for his entire existence, exposing the two internal souls of the agency: the "culturalist" and

²⁶There are more than 80 books written by former USIA officials. It is possible to find a complete list on the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association web site. Of these books, only a few are about the whole history of the agency. The majority, instead, are related to particular anecdotes or experiences of these USIA officials while they were on duty abroad. The most exhaustive books from a chronological point of view, as they deal with the entire history of the Agency life, and also because of the variety of the subjects are: Wilson P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the United States Information Service*, Washington D.C., Public Affairs Press, 1961; Allen C. Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*; Robert E. Elder, *The Information Machine: The USIA and American Foreign Policy*, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1968. The most famous book portraying the USIA in a negative light was written by Eugene Castle, a famous Hollywood producer. The book created several controversies during the 1950s. Castle, based his broad and poorly documented investigation on inaccurate sources, complaining mainly about the waste of funds and about the socialist tendencies of USIA staff. Eugene Castle *Billions, Blunders and Baloney: The Fantastic Story of How Uncle Sam Is Squandering Your Money Overseas*, New York, Devin-Adair, 1955.

²⁷ Arndt, R., *The first Resort of Kings*.

²⁸Wilson Dizard Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder, 2006).

the “advertising” souls. This fracture emerges also in USIA outputs in Italy, which constantly swing between a more hard hitting tone and a more academic propaganda tone.

In regard to the wider historiography, this work can be placed within the recent, ever-growing debate on public diplomacy. A major subject of historiographical debate is the extent to which there was continuity or change in the strategy for US public diplomacy between the administrations, and particularly between the fifties and the sixties. Additionally, the question of how much of the change in strategy was part of a coherent effort dictated by the top, and how much instead, as Nuti and Mistry argue, was the result of conflicts and collaborations among ‘mid-level’ American and Italian field officials and local actors such as leaders of political parties, intellectuals and media representatives.²⁹ Another important topic is the choice of the right target and communication strategy in each specific context. Last but not least, a key issue is the role of US public diplomacy within the much debated process of the Americanisation of Europe, strictly linked to the thorny issue of the reception of USIA inputs in the targeted countries.

Justin Hart in his book *The Empire of Ideas*, traces the origins of U.S. public diplomacy, identifying the continuities between pre- and post-war programs.³⁰

Nicholas J. Cull, in what is the most complete historical reconstruction of the

²⁹ Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge, 2014); Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra*.

³⁰ Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 2013).

origins and activities of the USIA to date, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency 1945-1989*, poses the issue of continuity of USIA strategy between the different administrations in close connection with the agency's struggle to be regarded as a recognised actor within US foreign policy structure. He shows how US presidents, who were aware of the crucial importance of US public diplomacy (first and foremost Eisenhower and Kennedy), allowed for the selection of directors for the agency who were capable, and gave them greater power, permitting them to participate in meetings of the National Security Council. This ensured that the USIA would be able to develop more effective and coherent programmes.³¹ This struggle, as well as Eisenhower's commitment to public diplomacy, emerges clearly also from Kenneth Osgood's detailed account on the first decade of agency's existence, *Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*.³² Giles Scott Smith, David Snyder and Hallvard Notaker, in their edited book, *Reasserting America in the 1970s U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad*, deal with the adaptation of US public diplomacy to a decade of uncertainty and perceived decline in global American prestige.³³ None of these works, however, focus specifically on the sixties, and in particular on the shift from the society of consensus of the fifties to a decade of fractures and protests.

³¹ Nicholas J. Cull, , *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008

³² Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, 2006).

³³ Giles Scott Smith, David Snyder, Hallvard Notaker (eds.) *Reasserting America in the 1970s U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad* (Manchester, 2016).

With regard to Italy, Alessandro Brogi, in his work, *Confronting America*, identifies a distinct change, dictated by the top, in US strategy in Italy between the two decades. Mistry and Nuti, argue instead that US public diplomacy strategies in the peninsula were often more fragmented and confused than described by Brogi, with officers in the field playing a crucial role in shaping day-by-day strategies. The choice of time-period in my research (1963-1969) was made to address the issue of continuity by covering the transitions between Johnson's presidency and the administrations that preceded and followed it, respectively Eisenhower, Kennedy and Nixon. This approach allows for a comparison of the two decades, as well as a means of contextualizing the evolution of the policy and public diplomacy strategy of the Johnson administration towards Italy. The outcome of the analysis provides a middle-ground between these two views, by showing how there is a distinct change in the agency's outputs between the two decades. This shift, however, was not entirely solicited from the top, nor was it as sharp as Brogi describes it. Rather, it happened gradually, and was the result of pressures from the field as emphasized by Mistry and Nuti.³⁴

This leads to the issue of the relevance of local actors and specific context in determining the approach of US public diplomacy in each targeted country. Since the mid-nineties, a strand of historiography has developed on US public diplomacy in various contexts. Very useful in this respect is Walter Hixson book, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*. The

³⁴ H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews, Vol. XIII, No. 16 (2012) on Alessandro Brogi. *Confronting America: the Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill, 2011.)

author highlights the techniques, methods, and tools of American propaganda inside the Soviet Block in the first decade of the Cold War.³⁵ With regard to Western Europe, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, with her book, *Transmission Impossible*, offers a provocative account of the limitations faced by the United States in its attempt to 'Americanize' Germany in the decade after the war.³⁶ Reinhold Wagnleitner, in his work, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*, analyzes both levels of American influence in postwar Europe: the popular culture more readily accepted by the wide public, and the more difficult attempt to publicize American 'high culture' products.³⁷

Concerning US public diplomacy in Italy, the only work is the aforementioned book by Simona Tobia, *Advertising America, The United State Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)*. As are Gienow-Hecht and Wagnleitner, she focuses on the first postwar decade, analyzing, in particular, the origins of the USIA Italian programme and its attempts at influencing local newspapers and radio broadcasting. She also focuses on the relationship between USIA officers and the Italian cultural elite, setting out a very

³⁵Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, 1997).

³⁶ Gienow-Hecht, Jessica, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism As Cultural Diplomacy in Post War Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge, 1999).

³⁷ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapell Hill, 1994).

interesting analysis of the shift of the American propaganda target, from workers to intellectuals, which occurred in Italy in the mid-fifties.³⁸

My research brings the analysis of the activities of the agency into the next decade, where, as Laura Belmonte notes, it is much harder to find sources on USIA activities in each country, as much of the effort, and therefore of the agency material, was focused on Vietnam.³⁹ In addition to analyzing USIA activities to influence Italian media as well as Italian cultural elite, I give space to USIA efforts at engaging with a new actor, “youth”, which by the mid-sixties had become more and more active in the political sphere both in the United States and in Italy. I will also focus on the agency’s main propaganda campaigns on specific themes, from the campaigns to advertise the Great Society and the Apollo project, to the efforts at contextualizing and justifying US domestic racial struggle and the protests of students and women.

Larger attention, of course, will be given to the USIA strategy to ‘explain the Vietnam war to the Italians’, showing how Vietnam represented a watershed not only in the perception and image of the US by the Italian public, but also in the way in which the United States communicated and projected itself to Italians. Particularly by 1966, the capacity of public diplomacy to project a positive image of the United States abroad was seriously limited by

³⁸ Tobia, *Advertising America*. On the topic of radio broadcasting see also Tobia, ‘Did the RAI buy it? The role and limits of American broadcasting in Italy in the Cold War’, *Cold War History*, 13: 2 (May 2013) 171-191.

³⁹ Belmonte, L., ‘USIA Responds to the Women’s Movement 1960-1975’ in *Reasserting America in the 1970s U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America’s Image Abroad*, Notaker, H., Scott Smith, G., Snyder, D., (eds.) (Manchester, 2016).

the Johnson Administration's escalation of the conflict in Indochina. In Italy, the presence of the strongest Communist Party west of the Iron Curtain, a new left in the making, and a socialist party traditionally neutralist as a partner in the government coalition, all offered fertile ground for anti-war Communist propaganda. This mixture soon transformed Vietnam into a domestic politics issue threatening to split the government in view of the 1968 elections.

Several of the factors analysed so far converged within the Vietnam anti-war movement in Italy: discontent with the centre-left government, the rapid economic and cultural transformations affecting Italy in the sixties, growing aversion to the capitalistic model that America embodied, and the attraction felt by a large number of Italian intellectuals and youth for the American culture of dissent. All these elements have been analysed by the historiography in different degrees of depth. What has not been sufficiently analysed, although Brogi in his aforementioned work, *Confronting America*, does partially look at it, is the role that the USIA had in channelling and presenting such dissent to the Italians, and the way that the reactions of the Italian anti-war movement ultimately determined a change in the strategy of US public diplomacy towards Italy.⁴⁰

One common denominator of the case studies on public diplomacy in different European countries is the issue of Americanisation. A rather complex phenomenon which has attracted vast attention and scholarship over the past

⁴⁰ Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*, (Chapell Hill, 2011).

30 years, Americanisation has been attributed a variety of meanings, depending on the historical context and on the particular interpretation of the scholar.⁴¹ Volker Berghahn identifies three distinct waves of academic writing on Americanisation, with the first occurring before 1914, the second in the interwar period and the third after the Second World War.⁴²

My work will take into account the third wave of studies, analysing Americanisation as the transmission of American culture into Western Europe as the direct result of US intervention in post-war reconstruction. A large part of the recent historiography, including the studies on public diplomacy by Gienow-Hecht, Wagnleitner and Tobia, oppose the concept of Americanisation as a unilateral process where recipient countries passively absorbed US inputs. Instead, they emphasized how populations selected, adapted, and transformed what America sent them.⁴³ As Ellwood wrote in 2003, 'We now know that European audiences always adopted whatever America was offering as far as

⁴¹ On Americanisation in Europe see Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall: European and American Mass Culture* (Urbana, 1996); Volker R. Berghahn, 'West German Reconstruction and American Industrial Culture, 1945-1960' in Reiner Pommerin (ed.) *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (New York) 1995, pp. 65-82; Scrivano, P. "Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life", *Journal of Contemporary History* 40 (2005) 317-340; De Grazia, V. *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); Ellwood, 'Un Americano a Roma: A 1950s' Satire of Americanization', *Modern Italy*, 1:2, (1996) 93-102; D'Atorre P.P., *Nemici per la pelle: sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea* (Milan, 1991), Rishard Kuisel, Commentary: Americanization for Historians, *Diplomatic History*, 24:3 (Dec 2002) 509-515.

⁴² Volker R. Berghahn, The debate on 'Americanization among economic and cultural historians, *Cold War History*, 10:1, (2010), 107-130, p. 108.

⁴³ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York, 1997); Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible*; *ibid.*, 'Shame on Us.? Academics, Cultural Transfer, and the Cold War: A Critical Review', *Diplomatic History* 24 (Summer 2000) 465-494, Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*; Wilford, Hugh, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations*, 2012.

this corresponded to their needs and no further.’⁴⁴ This filtering process emerges clearly by the observation of USIA activities in Italy, where local actors, particularly political leaders, media, intellectuals and students, reacted, deconstructed, adapted and revised the inputs coming from the United States.

In contrast, my research shows how such two-way processes should not be exaggerated, leading to ‘discount American political, economic, and military dominance and to explain the success of American mass culture or consumer products simply by their inherent appeal.’⁴⁵ The study of USIA activities in Italy shows how the agency’s officers were extremely active in promoting not only the American economic system and domestic and foreign policy choices, but also American popular as well as “high” culture, both to the general public as well as to intellectuals. Public diplomacy was therefore the operating arm of the Americanisation process in post-war Europe. To put it in other words; public diplomacy was a key to the institutionalization of American soft power.⁴⁶

Ultimately, the great, unresolved issue when it comes to scholarship on US Cold War public diplomacy remains the question of reception. There is a

⁴⁴ David W. Ellwood, ‘The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context’ in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* in Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (eds.) (London, 2003), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Rishard Kuisel, ‘Commentary: Americanization for Historians’, p. 510.

⁴⁶ A country’s soft power is ‘the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion.’ As Nye explains ‘soft power rests on the appeal of one’s ideas or culture or the ability to set the agenda through standards and institutions that shape the preferences of others.’ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence in the Information Age,” *Foreign Affairs*, 77:5, (Sept–Oct 1998), p. 86. The best treatment of this thesis is in Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, 1990);. *ibid.*, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2005).

certain difficulty in understanding how the foreign audience received American propaganda and whether it was effective. As Cull notes, 'the issue of foreign reception is a bit like the weather; everyone talks about it, but nobody does much about it.'⁴⁷ The main reason is that it is extremely difficult to measure the effect of propaganda, especially in the short to medium term, since it deals with factors that are tricky to quantify such as values, attitudes, and psychology. Despite surveys and various attempts at evaluating the effectiveness of USIA activities, the agency's officers were always struggling to grasp the actual outcome of their efforts.

In my research, I will try to assess a first level of reception, by analyzing the main newspapers, radio and TV shows, as well as the cultural production of intellectuals targeted by the agency. The very fact, however, that certain Italian media and opinion molders welcomed some of the media and cultural outputs produced by the USIA does not mean that they were actually effective in influencing Italian public opinion or behavior in the direction desired by the US.

My work, however, is not able to fill the gap on the issue of broader reception, and whether Italian public opinion actually responded to USIA efforts. This lacunae comes partly from the difficulty in identifying the right

⁴⁷ H-Diplo Reviews, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (2011) on Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia, 2008).

Italian sources that could give answers to this question, and partly as a consequence of the choice to focus on the US side, and how the US view and interpretation of the Italian situation influenced the public diplomacy strategy. This becomes evident through my use of exclusively American sources, with the exception of major Italian media and several interviews with Italian opinion leaders.

Structure of the dissertation

In terms of structure, the dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter provides the necessary background for understanding the USIA and its role in Italy in the sixties. It highlights the main political, economic and social transformations affecting the United States and Italy during that decade. It then takes a step back to analyse the evolution of the United States Information program in Italy from the creation of the USIA in 1953 until the advent of the Johnson administration in 1963.

The second chapter focuses more on Italian domestic and foreign policy issues between 1964 and 1966 and on the way they were perceived by the newly installed US administration. The main issues for US-Italian relations, along with Italian internal stability and the implementation of reforms, were

the Italian role in the Euro-Atlantic context, the negotiations for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NTP), and Italian policy in the Middle East.

The third chapter analyses the change in US public diplomacy strategy in Italy by the mid-sixties, as part of a broader change in the agency's European strategy, stemming from both a changing domestic and international environment as well as budget constraints. The last part of this chapter will explore in detail the relationship between USIA and Italian intellectuals and media, as well as the need, despite the cut, to maintain a sound public diplomacy program in Italy during the Johnson years.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters analyse, in depth, USIA goals in Italy during the Johnson years, and particularly by the end of 1966, when the agency further defined its objectives in Italy in view of the approaching national elections in May 1968. These goals were: stimulating public opinion in support of the centre-left, thereby reducing the influence of the Communists; reinforcing continued government and public opinion support for the Atlantic Alliance; seeking confidence and respect for the United States and its institutions; and last but not least, explaining and justifying the US position on Vietnam to the Italians.

The final chapter of the dissertation, chapter seven, is devoted to 1969. This choice not only allows us to contextualize the Johnson years by surveying Nixon's first year in office but also to end the dissertation with the last year of the sixties. This was a decade in which the economic and social fabric of both

Italy and the United States was dramatically altered, and growing discontent was catalysed in both countries around the anti-war movement, with profound implications for US diplomacy in the peninsula.

Chapter 1

US Public Diplomacy between the fifties and the sixties. Continuity and Change.

This first chapter provides the necessary background for understanding the United States Information Agency and its role in Italy during the years of the Johnson presidency. It begins by setting out the overall context for the United States and Italy, highlighting the main political, economic and social transformations affecting both countries during this period. It then takes a step back to analyse the evolution of the United States Information program in Italy from the creation of the USIA in 1953 until the advent of the Johnson administration in 1963.

This will allow for a brief comparison of the difference in US public diplomacy strategy between the fifties and the sixties, and particularly between three successive administrations: those of Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. A long section is also devoted to the transition between Kennedy and Johnson, and the way it was perceived in Italy. This period is relevant, given the tragic circumstances under which this transition occurred, because it required significant efforts in public diplomacy in Italy to manage the shock of Kennedy's death and to present Johnson to the Italians. This section will also discuss how the USIA was able to show the new administration's backing for the first ever centre-left government in Italy, born with the strong support of the Kennedy establishment. The final part of the chapter will be devoted to

Johnson's general approach to the USIA during the first year of his presidency, in order to set the background for an in-depth analysis of the role of the agency in Italy throughout the entire duration of his administration.

Public Diplomacy in the 1960s: projecting a society in transition.

As noted by USIA Historian Murray Lawson, the two issues that 'dominated the psychological landscape' during the Johnson years, acting as 'magnets for foreign attention' were America's policy in Vietnam and the internal racial struggle. In the latter case, 'despite the enactment of more civil rights legislation than ever before' and the mounting government effort to end poverty and discrimination, 'the increasing racial violence and protests captured the headlines everywhere.' Vietnam, as the 'first war to be covered daily by omnipresent television cameras and reporters', made an unprecedented impression on American and foreign audiences, more than any other recent development. Johnson's efforts to end discrimination and include as many Americans as possible within his 'Great Society', along with the resistance encountered and the violence generated, brought to the audience abroad an increased awareness of the contradictions and fractures which characterized American society. The more pleasant practice of 'advertising the American dream' and persuading foreigners of the superiority of

the *American way of life*, thus gave the way to the need to justify and explain internal conflicts and unpopular foreign policy choices.⁴⁸

The reality of the United States, and the way it was perceived abroad during the Johnson's years, could not have been be more different from that of the previous decade. 'In the context of world public opinion', observed USIA historian Murray Lawson, 'the US increasingly found itself in the unpalatable role of a nation on trial for perpetrating violence at home and abroad.'⁴⁹ This situation could not fail to affect the agency in charge of projecting a positive image of America to the world. From the society of consensus of the 1950's, popularized abroad through the image of the American middle-class family living in the suburbs surrounded by an endless variety of consumer goods, the agency had now to deal with the picture of a struggling society, victim of its own contradictions.

According to Mark Hamilton, the years between 1964 and 1968 marked the period during which most of phenomena popularly associated with the sixties emerged. 'In 1964 America discovered the Beatles, and Bob Dylan established himself as the poet laureate of his generation. Lyndon Johnson steered his civil rights bill through Congress. But as the reforms of his Great Society rolled into high gear, Johnson escalated the war in Vietnam.' Parallel the civil rights movement, 'having gained ground in the South with nonviolence, adopted a more

⁴⁸ Murray Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 1, pp. 2-10.

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 1-23.

confrontational style as it turned to the North and West. There, the entrenched patterns of the factio segregation and white resistance prove more formidable. Frustration turned increasingly to rage. In the summer of 1964, American cities began to burn as small, racially charged incidents exploded into outbreaks of rioting, arson, and looting.’⁵⁰

On college campuses, in the meantime, students had began questioning the very foundations of American society though organized groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or the Student Non violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), or simply by rejecting such society in *toto* and embracing alternative lifestyles such as the hippie movement. Common denominator of this generation of baby boomers, was the quest for a radical redefinition of American values. ‘Whether expressed superficially in slogans and cultural icons or systematically as sustained cultural and political analysis, those ideas helped dissenters define their opposition to the cold war consensus and the establishment that defended it.’ As Hamilton wonders, how could young Americans ‘celebrate a culture that seemed all too willing to plunge the world into nuclear Armageddon in order to make the American way of life safe from godless Communism?’⁵¹

The anti-war movement will end up catalysing all the different manifestations of discontent. As noted by student activist Pau Potter in April

⁵⁰ Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars. The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 7-8.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 44.

1965 'Vietnam war as a manifestation of the deficiencies of the American political system. . . If the people of this country are to end the war in Vietnam, and to change the institutions which create it, then the people of this country must create a massive social movement.'⁵²

During these years, America's internal consensus broke not only at the social level – with the civil rights, students and women protests – but also at the intellectual and ideological level. By 1964, a year symbolically marked by the death of C.D. Jackson, one of the main architects of US psychological warfare strategy, American intellectuals began to increasingly abandon the 'political and aesthetic ideals that had previously sustained the social order' subjecting the cold war consensus and 'social conformity to a penetrating critique.'⁵³

As Francis Stonor Saunders notes, in her pioneering study of the cultural cold war waged by the United States in Europe, 1964 marked the year in which *The Spy* by Le Carrè and Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* – deeply questioning to the point of mockery the ideology and rhetoric of cold warriors – both became great successes in the US. At the same time, the newborn *New York Review of Books* became the flagship of American intellectual dissent against US cold war policy, particularly Vietnam. To further complicate things, in April 1966, the *New York Times* carried an editorial exposing CIA funding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an organization of intellectuals aimed at countering communism

⁵² Gerard DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 97.

⁵³ Brian Balogh, *Integrating the Sixties: The Origins, Structures, and Legitimacy of Public Policy in a Turbulent Decade* (Pensylvania, 1996), p. 107; Hamilton, *America's Uncivil Wars*, p. 7.

in Europe, and its popular newspapers such as *Encounter* and its Italian equivalent *Tempo Presente*. Hard-core cold war intellectuals such as Sidney Hook and Malvin Lasky, whose articles often appeared on such magazines, suddenly appeared anachronistic while poets and writers previously at the margins of US society such as Joseph Heller and Allen Ginsborg, had now become part of mainstream culture.⁵⁴

Even American historians had now lost their pro-Cold War consensus when writing in the 1960s about America's story. As noted by John Robert Green, a historian of that decade, not only were social historians with their emphasis on class, gender and racial difference challenging the 'expansive and implicit . . . consensus reading of American history'. Diplomatic historians such as William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber during those years even argued that 'rather than moulding a foreign policy designed to make the world safe for democracy, America had in reality pursued a foreign policy driven by paranoia, imperialism . . . and naked economic self-interest.'⁵⁵ But those who more than anyone influenced and shaped public opinion with their increasingly critical stand toward American government policies were the US mass media.

Investigative journalists began digging into the reality of US government actions at home and abroad, and exposing the enormous gulf between official explanation and the actual facts, soon dubbed as 'credibility gap'. In sum, as Green

⁵⁴ Francis Stonor Saunders, *Gli Intellettuali, la CIA e la strategia della Guerra Fredda Culturale* (Roma, 2007), pp. 321-322.

⁵⁵ John Robert Green, *America in the Sixties* (New York, 2010), p. 129.

explains the 'Vietnam war created a new type of American discourse: those who had come to believe that in virtually every action, their own government was wrong.' The mid-sixties, therefore, 'saw a seismic shift in the ability of the president to use his 'bully pulpit' in order to convince the American people that his actions, particularly in foreign policy, were justified'.⁵⁶ If the US government had such a hard time in persuading American public opinion of the rightness of its foreign policy choices, it was certainly not easier for the USIA to convince public opinion abroad.

Other forces were also at work during the 1960's to give the mission and strategies of the USIA new connotations. First among all, further advances in communication technology multiplied the form and speed of the exchange of information between countries and people. This made the agency's task easier and more difficult of at the same time.⁵⁷ On the one hand, the potential of American influence on foreign publics through the media was without modern precedent. The number of households owning a radio multiplied, not to mention the spread of a new, revolutionary medium, television, whose effects will be analysed later. The literacy rate increased dramatically everywhere, facilitating the dissemination of USIA journals and magazines, and thanks to the development of satellite communications officials could send news and reports from the headquarters to the posts around the world much faster. On the other hand, however, greater dissemination of information did not always facilitate

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 129-131.

⁵⁷ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, pp. 1-11.

USIA's task which was not to spread information *per se* but, as stated by the original charter, 'to advance US foreign policy objectives by creating a climate of comprehension and sympathy for American policies and society.'⁵⁸ This meant that the agency did not have to present *all the facts all the time*, but, when possible, try to privilege the ones useful to put the US in a good light.

In this era of instant worldwide communication, however, any event in one part of the globe travelled within hours to the rest of the world, making it extremely difficult for the agency to select the information about the US to project abroad. This inevitably caused a much greater interdependence between propaganda and American government policy. 'If we don't broadcast events which cast an unfavourable light on the US', said Marks in the rebuttal to the usual congressmen asking why the US had to waste taxpayers money to spread its mistakes abroad, 'you can be sure the Communists and all those who don't agree with us, will!' ⁵⁹

Presenting all the facts, although uncomfortable, had become more and more an imperative in the sixties, and whenever the agency tried to avoid such function, it was immediately accused of falling into a 'credibility gap.' This was particularly true in a country like Italy, where the Communist Party was legally recognized and politically potent with its propaganda organs and widely-read newspapers. Communist newspapers such as *l'Unita'*, as well as the popular

⁵⁸ *U.S. Information Agency Strategic Principles*, 2nd March 1954, RG 59, National Security Council Policy and Guidance Staff, Entry 1392, Box 1, NARA, p. 5.

⁵⁹ L. Marks, *Magazine USIA World*, July 1968, p. 7, LBJ Archives, Papers of Leonard Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 33.

socialist newspaper *l'Avanti*, never missed a chance to expose, often with exaggeration, any US policy and actions that would embarrass and open up the US government to criticism.⁶⁰

Another factor influencing USIA operations during the 1960s was a growing awareness of the limitations of official propaganda as an instrument for influencing foreign attitudes. In the 1940's, when the apparatus of American Cold War propaganda was first conceived, it was still in the wake of works such as Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1927), where the American journalist, as Kenneth Osgood noted, 'lamented the irruption on the political scene of masses of 'absolutely illiterate, feeble-minded, grossly neurotic, undernourished and frustrated individuals' and invoked a 'class of specialists to master words, symbols, images, and emotive modes of communication.'⁶¹

Promptly answering this call, the political scientist Harold Lasswell published his famous work *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), in which the scientist announced the birth of a new profession – 'Propaganda' – which was 'developing its practitioners, its professors, its teachers and its theories.'⁶²

In the early 1950's when the USIA was created, the grip of 1930s models of communication, such as 'The Magic Bullet Theory', was still strong among Eisenhower and his advisers. The first USIA documents shows in fact great

⁶⁰ Reaching the Italian Audience Vol. I, "The Press, the magazines and the movies", Report prepared by the Research Office, USIS Italy, and the Istituto Italiano dell'Opinione Pubblica Milano, July 1956, RG 306, Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Office of Research, Country Project Files 1951-1964, Entry 1015, box 52, NARA, pp. 2-3.

⁶¹ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, 2006), p. 18.

⁶² Ibid, p. 15.

confidence on the part of the psychological warfare experts within the Eisenhower administration, such as Nelson Rockefeller and C. D. Jackson, in the idea of a passive audience unable to escape the influence of the media.⁶³

The accumulating evidence of academic research and the popularization of the studies of Lazarsfeld and Katz in the late 1950s and early 1960s showing that the public was in fact able to select and process media outputs, had begun to make clear that the psychological processes of international communication were more complicated and more difficult than had been previously assumed. As Public Relations founder Edward Bernays wrote in 1970, 'USIA's job to influence public attitudes in other nations . . . is unrealistic as it was conceived at the time of the agency creation, in view of what social scientists have learned about attitudes during the past 30 years. He added that 'when a predisposition already exists, communication can sometimes whip up greater enthusiasm; it can also occasionally affect weak attitudes. But when important attitudes are concerned, one can blast away 24 hours a day and still achieve very little'"⁶⁴

During the Johnson years the USIA had, therefore, to adapt to all these rapid changes. The agency's contribution to national security now involved much more than the Cold War assignments of an earlier, less complex era. As Marks noted, 'the world could not anymore be divided among those *for* and those *against* the United States.' Communist propaganda initiatives had still to be combated, but in

⁶³ "Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy", Panel Report, November 1955, RG 59, Central Decimal File 511.65, NARA, pp. xi; 19.

⁶⁴ Edward L Bernays, Burnet Hershey, *The Case for Reappraisal of U.S. Overseas Information Policies and Programs* (New York, 1970), p. 87.

its overall job of providing psychological support of American foreign policy, USIA had now to deal with a rising tide of popular participation, influencing foreign governments, whose attitudes could no longer be defined in simple ideological terms. in the mid- 1960s the bright promise of postwar capitalism began to to show its dark sides in several foreign countries. 'The revolution of rising expectations threatens to give way to a revolution of rising frustrations', explained Marks in 1965. 'To encourage the first without setting off the second calls for extreme sensitivity and skill: reality, such as a nation's resources and its development timetable, must determine the degree of encouragement.'⁶⁵

Italy, between rising expectations and rising frustrations.

At the time of Johnson's presidency, Italy provides a striking case in Western Europe of growing tension between rising expectations, which American propaganda had helped fuel since the immediate post-war years, and growing frustrations, which USIA officers were now called to address. The sixties were in fact a time of profound change in the peninsula both at the economic, political

⁶⁵ Folder Speech by Leonard Marks LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA , 1964-1967, box 21.

and social level thus determining a change in US propaganda priorities and strategy.

Since the mid-fifties, Italy had rapidly shifted from a prevalently agricultural country to an industrial economy, competitive in the international market. Such a dramatic change, which in less than a decade had transformed Italy from a country prostrated by the war and twenty years of dictatorship into an affluent society, had happened so quickly that external observers, (mindful of West Germany's earlier transformation), referred to it as 'the Italian miracle'. During this decade per capita income doubled, migrants from the southern farms crowded the cities and the country's traditional unemployment gave way to a tight labour market. Italy became a leading producer in natural gas, automobiles, petrochemicals and consumer durables. *Made in Italy*, thanks to brands such as Olivetti, Edison and FIAT became well known and increasingly sought after label abroad. It seemed that the promises of growing 'prosperity for all' made by US propaganda in Italy since the Marshall Plan had finally come true. Thanks to the raising wages combined with stable prices, most Italians could now afford goods that they did not even know existed before. Between 1959 and 1963, the four years of maximum growth, the number of cars in circulation tripled reaching nearly four million and the percentage of households owning a refrigerator went

from 13 to 55 percent. By 1963, 75 people out of 100 had a TV set at home and *Vespa Piaggio* and *Fiat 500* becoming prime symbols of the new wellbeing.⁶⁶

Industrial progress brought cultural changes as well. The average Italian now ate more, took better care of himself and his home, and had more spare time to read and go to the movie. The publishing market grew exponentially, touching in the mid-sixties a historic peak of readership in relation to the population; university enrolment tripled and eating, and fashion habits changed dramatically. The famous Italian author Luciano Bianciardi, writing in socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, talked about a 'Saturday epidemic' plaguing the Milanese women showing with the 'tic of the purse': a sort of craze to buy everything, emptying supermarkets.⁶⁷

Such a rapid boom, however, was not without risks. As noted by Leo Wollemberg, Italian correspondent for the *Washington Post* and contributor for a number of Italian influential newspapers, '[t]he use and abuse of the word miracle made it harder to perceive the real nature of the economic expansion, as well as the new problems and dangers bound to surface as soon as such boom sapped some of the basic conditions which had helped to spark it -notably the low level of wages and mass consumption'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ On the Italian economic miracle see Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (London, 1990); Duggan Christopher, *La forza del destino, storia d'Italia dal 1796 a oggi*, (London, 2007); Valerio Castronovo, *1960: Il Miracolo Economico* (Milan, 2012); Guido Cranz, *Storia del miracolo italiano: culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni cinquanta e sessanta*, (Rome, 2005).

⁶⁷ Alberto Papuzzi, '1959: L'Italia Scopre il Boom', *La Stampa*, 4 Jan, 2009.

⁶⁸ Leo J. Wollemberg, *Stars, Stripes, and Italian tricolor: the United States and Italy, 1946-1989* (New York, 1990) p. 99.

In fact, already by 1963 the Italian 'economic miracle' was beginning to fade. As the industrialization progressed, the scarcity of trained manpower and technicians, due largely to the country's backward and inadequate educational structures, forced a rise in wages that far exceeded the increase in productivity. Moreover, the massive internal migrations and an increase of three million in the population – mostly in the four largest cities of Rome, Milan, Turin and Naples – created new problems and needs, reflected in the lack of sufficient schools, hospitals, modern roads, and ports. Major structural reforms were required to adjust a traditional society to the forms demanded by its new economic levels.⁶⁹

The Italian government was thus called to impose wage discipline via deflation and to allow a growth in unemployment, thereby risking a grave social and political unrest which could be exploited by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to further increase its support. This caused grave alarm in Washington considering Italy's 'peculiar' situation. The country hosted, since the immediate post-war years, the largest communist party of Western Europe – regularly garnering around 30% of the electoral vote. In the other Western European democracies, France included, the main alternative to the democratic and conservative coalitions was represented in fact by socialists, with the communist parties confined to third or fourth place. In Italy by contrast the Italian Communist Party (PCI) – closely aligned with Moscow through its leader Palmiro

⁶⁹ The Italian Internal Situation, Memorandum of Conversation between Thomas C. Mann, Undersecretary for Economic Affairs and Giovanni Pieraccini, Minister of the Budget, July 15, 1965, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (2 of 2), National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

Togliatti – was the second strongest party after the Christian Democracy (DC), followed by the Socialist Party (PSI).

The DC, at the core of all government coalitions since 1944, was a centrist catchall party, which integrated conservative as well as social democratic and liberal elements under the principle of the ‘political unity of Catholics’ against the extreme left. Between 1947 and 1963 the so called *stagione del centrismo* (era of centrism) saw the exclusion of the Communist and Socialist parties from government coalitions (formed by Christian Democrats, Republicans, Monarchist and Liberals). By the end of 1963, however, as the result of a long and difficult process that will be analysed in more detail later, the Italian Socialist Party entered the government coalition giving birth to the first centre-left government.⁷⁰

Intended to guide and promote the Italian process of modernization through a radical plan of reforms, the new political formula soon appeared excessively slow and tentative in the US eyes. Paralyzed by its internal divisions and concerned that the implementation of restricting measures would have shaken its already fragile electoral support, the newborn centre-left government failed to take timely action, much to Washington’s concern. ‘Italy poses a classic

⁷⁰ The Italian Socialist Party (PSI), initially aligned with the PCI, after the 1956 Soviet repression in Hungary distanced itself from Moscow and, therefore, from the PCI, progressively approaching the centre forces. In 1963, at the end of a process started in the late fifties and strongly encouraged by the Kennedy administration, the PSI finally entered the government coalition giving birth to the first centre-left government in alliance with the DC, the Italian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI) and the Italian Republican Party (PRI). On the birth of the Italian centre-left government see Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra*; Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*; Duggan Christopher, *La forza del destino*; F. Perfetti, A. Ungari, D. Caviglia, D. de Luca (eds.) *Aldo Moro nell’Italia contemporanea* (Firenze, 2011).

dangerous example of stabilization-development dilemma', commented Wal Rostow, a leading American theorist of economic modernization and later Johnson's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, in June 1964: 'Deflation has begun, but the foundation had not yet been laid for the expansion needed to avoid social and political rupture. With the Communists dominating the most crucial trade union in Italy, the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), the situation is extremely critical'. The stability of Italy, and Europe, in the months and years ahead will be significantly affected by how these issues are handled. If the communists would succeed in imposing wage increases in excess of the productivity, Italy was likely to experience the same phenomenon occurred in Latin America, with the simultaneous existence of inflation and unemployment.'⁷¹

Comparisons between the situations in Italy and in South America were frequently made at that time by American officials. In the summer of 1965 Thomas C. Mann, a State Department officer who was an expert in Latin American affairs, noted the similarity between the 'Italian case' and countries like Argentina and Brazil, where 'a great disproportion existed between economic growth and the lack of modernization of the state apparatus'.⁷² Italy and in the most advanced South American countries were both characterized, though to differing

⁷¹ Memorandum from W. Rostow to Tyler, Mayor conclusions of my two-day intense education in Rome, June 25, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

⁷² Memorandum of Conversation between Thomas C. Mann and Giovanni Pieraccini, The Italian Internal Situation, July 15, 1965, National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (2 of 2).

extents, by rapid economic development combined with political instability, widespread poverty and illiteracy. The main causes of social unrest, both in were 'disillusionment and frustration resulting from slow implementation of reforms, and demands of the masses for a greater share of the wealth'.⁷³

The failure of redistributive reforms was highlighted by the US Embassy in Rome as the main cause of communist electoral strength in Italy. 'Under the communist banners converged all groups that felt excluded from the economic boom' commented Frederick Reinhardt, US ambassador in Italy between 1961 and 1968, noting how many people felt the desire to protest 'because they had not shared, at least sufficiently in their view, in economic progress.' In fact the highest popular support for the Communists was in central and southern Italy where poverty, especially in the south, was still extreme. This discontent, therefore 'reflected rising expectations rather than revolutionary fervour'.⁷⁴

Reinhardt's reading of the situation reflected a particular view of the causes of Communist support in Italy that characterized to a varying extent the democratic administrations that have followed in the postwar years. Namely, the liberal/reformist approach that had guided the Marshall Plan, which saw communism as a consequence of poverty and social unrest to be fought through reforms that would stimulate the economy and productivity. By the 1950s, this view was counterposed by a vision that framed Italian communism 'within a

⁷³ The illiteracy rate in Italy was still as high as 8,3% in contrast with 1% in Germany and England, and 3% in France. Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 255.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 255.

larger global conspiracy centred in Moscow', which had in culture and propaganda its main means of attraction. This viewpoint, prevalent during the Eisenhower administration, gave greater importance to communism as an ideology and cultural model. A model whose hold on the 'hearts and minds' of the people was mainly due to the ability of Soviet propaganda and its affiliated organizations to 'infiltrate the social and cultural fabric of a country.'⁷⁵ Both visions, as we shall see, would coexist in USIA operations in Italy during the Johnson years.

The USIA program in Italy, with an annual operating budget of over \$1million and around 30 staff members including both American and local officers, was the second largest in Western Europe for the entire duration of the Johnson administration.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the closing of three USIS operations in Italy in 1965 as a result of the overall agency budget cuts which affected the agency's European missions in the first half of the Sixties provoked harsh criticism from American Embassy staff in Rome, agency officers, and even some members of Congress. 'In the last national election, held in April 1963, the Communist party in Italy gained 1,050,091 votes', wrote congressman Dante Fascell to LBJ in February 1965, 'this represented an 11% increase over the previous election in the popular vote cast for Communist candidates. Right now,

⁷⁵ Mario Del Pero, *L'alleato scomodo: Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo 1948-1955* (Rome, 2001), p. 19; Kenneth Osgood, 'Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4:2 (2002) 85-107, p. 85.

⁷⁶ USIA, Employment by Country, 12/31/1967, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 24.

the centre left coalition between the Christian Democrats and the Socialists is in a state of near collapse. There is a strong possibility that this coalition may fall apart in the near future. There is also a fair possibility that if this happens, a popular front government, in which the Communist Party could be the largest single party, may come to power in that country'.⁷⁷

Ambassador Reinhardt backed Fascell's view by emphasizing that, given the 'critical political and economic situation in Italy', a curtailment of USIS installations would be 'harmful to the advancement of US foreign policy objectives in the country'. Moreover, he argued, there was a 'good possibility that the US, within a relatively short time, may find itself in the position of seeking rapidly to expand USIS and related operations in Italy. And that the facilities which are now proposed to be closed may have to be reopened, while the personnel who are now proposed to be fired may have to be rehired.'⁷⁸ In fact, the US information program in Italy had a long history, started during the Second World War, and which is worth briefly retracing in order to fully understand the scope and strategy of the USIA in Italy between 1963 and 1968.

⁷⁷ Letter to President Johnson from Dante B. Fascell, Chairman Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movement, House of Representatives, February 8, 1965, Folder 11/21/63-3/10/64, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, Ex FG 296 3/20/68, box 316.

⁷⁸ Cable from American Embassy in Rome to the White House, February 15, 1965, Folder 1, Italy Cables, Vol. III, 1/65 – 10/65, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196.

History and evolution of the United States information program in Italy

The first United States Information Services (USIS) reached the southern coast of Italy in 1943 with the arrival of Allied troops. As Simona Tobia notes, following the path of liberation they established branches in Palermo (1943), Rome (1944) and Milan (1945). After the creation of two additional posts in Naples and Florence in 1946, Italy had five USIS offices. During the war, the USIS network worked under the auspices of the Office of War Information (OWI) and of the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB). Afterwards, they came under the control of the State Department, which dealt with both information and cultural activities overseas and by 1948, with the implementation of the Marshall Plan in Italy, the USIS network actively cooperated in promoting US model of democracy and prosperity in Italy.⁷⁹

In August 1953, when the USIA was created as an independent agency, the State Department retained control of cultural and educational activities, while the USIS network came under the control of USIA, charged with information activities. From 1953 the USIS thus became the overseas branches of the US propaganda agency, while retaining their original name for reasons of convenience since the people abroad were already familiar with the offices and its activities.

⁷⁹ Simona Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 54.

State Departments actions plans for the first year of the agency operations in Western Europe, identified Italy as the main target right after Western Germany. This was due not only to the actual strength of the Communist Party but also because the Christian Democrats (DC) – although emerging after 1945 as America’s privileged, and indeed only possible, interlocutor – was far from aligned with the United States conception of capitalism. The Christian Democrats – a traditional catholic party, moderately conservative on cultural and social issues, and advocating for a social market economy with substantial state intervention – by its very nature never fully embraced American values.⁸⁰

As David Ellwood writes, reporting the words of the *New York Times* correspondent in Rome in June 1949, ‘the key question in Italy’ besides ‘the defeat of Communism’, was ‘whether the country could develop its own authentic’ viable form of capitalism. Ellwood notes the contrast between American ideology and Italian reality: ‘As the Marshall Plan propaganda was purveying a vision of life which was economic, private, consumerist, limitless and available for emulation; the Vatican and Christian Democrat politicians were encouraging the emergence of a strong state which was socially-oriented, collective and welfarist.’⁸¹

⁸⁰ Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Special Information Project for Italy, 9th July 1954, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/7-954, box 2466, NARA, p. 1. Quoted also in Tobia, *Advertising America*, cit. p. 128.

⁸¹ David W. Ellwood, ‘The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context’ in Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (eds.) *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* (London, 2003), p. 226.

Despite Italy's adherence to the Western Alliance and its active role in the European integration process – strongly endorsed by the American government – the DC's reluctance to embrace the American way, as well as the presence of communists as recognized and accepted actors in the political arena was cause of great concern for the United States. This sense of urgency is illustrated by the fact that in 1950 the State Department, when dividing the world into what it called 'Areas of Concern', placed Italy within the 'Danger Zone' together with only France and Germany in Europe; and several other foreign countries such as India, Japan, Pakistan and the Philippines.⁸²

As noted by Simona Tobia, 'these countries were grouped together not only for their strategic value, but also taking into account what, following Eisenhower, would later be known as the domino effect. 'The fall of one of these countries', explained the State Department report 'would be a severe blow to the American public and to U.S. prestige abroad.'⁸³ The strengthening of the US Information Program was thus considered an absolute priority to prevent the spread of communism within the areas deemed to be at risk. Between 1950 and 1952, as part of the 'Campaign of Truth' launched by Truman to counter Soviet 'lies' and

⁸² Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 130; Division of World Into Areas of Concern, Revision March 31, 1950, RG 59, Bureau of Public Affairs Policy Plans and Guidance Staff, Records Relating to the National Security Council 1947-1954, Entry 1392, box 2, NARA.

⁸³ Ibid.

present a 'full and fair picture' of the United States abroad, new USIS offices were opened in Turin, Genoa, Bologna, and Bari.⁸⁴

This happened in the framework of the previously mentioned process of revision, within the US administration, of the liberal post-war view that considered communism as a consequence of poverty and social unrest to be fought solely through reforms and economic aid. If the millions of dollars invested in Italy via the Marshall Plan, combined with promises of a future of prosperity and abundance for all, did not succeed in distracting the people from the 'spell of communism,' a new, more sophisticated strategy was needed, centred on subtler and indirect means. In retaliation, between September 1951 and May 1952, the Psychological Strategy Board (PWB) developed two psychological warfare plans to destabilize the communist parties in Italy and France, named respectively *Demagnetize-Clydesdale* and *Cloven*. In Italy, the plan included discriminatory measures against members and supporters of the PCI, especially public sector employees, in order to remove the communists from positions of 'responsibility in public administration and the national economy'. A series of measures were also aimed at encouraging the development of free unions, along the lines of the American trade unions.⁸⁵

In the summer of 1953, with the creation of the USIA, all the measures contained within the *Demagnetize-Clydesdale* plan were retained in Italy. The

⁸⁴ Country Paper for Italy, August 16, 1950, RG 59, Records Relating to International Information Activities 1938-1953, Entry 1559, Box 41, NARA.

⁸⁵ Guasconi, *L'altra faccia della medaglia*, pp. 45-47.

main shift in U.S. Government policy was a greater willingness on the part of the Eisenhower administration, and above all the new U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Claire Booth Luce, to resort to extreme measures against the PCI and the CGIL, the main communist-leaning trade union.⁸⁶In this framework, USIS Italy elaborated two successive Propaganda Country Plans, in 1953 and 1955, setting out the agency's propaganda objectives in Italy, which remained substantially unchanged for the next fifteen years.:

1. Build confidence in the United States as a mature and capable free world leader, a champion of peace and social justice, political and spiritual freedom.

2. Win support for United States policies particularly:

- a) Promoting European Integration by convincing Italians that integration will improve their personal and national situation;
- b) Encouraging Italian participation in collective defense efforts and discouraging neutralism by demonstrating that NATO approach is the only way to peace and security while neutralism and appeasement represent the road to war and enslavement.

3. Help Italians strengthen their own democracy by:

- a) Showing the benefits democracy brings to the individual;
- b) Encouraging pro democratic Italian organizations and helping them to become more effective;
- c) Convincing Italians to adopt the concepts of 'dynamic democracy' in Italy.

4. Persuade Italians to reject communism.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Kaeten Mistry, 'The Case for Political Warfare, p. 317; Del Pero, 'American Pressures and Their Containment in Italy during the Ambassadorship of Clare Boothe Luce 1953–1956', *Diplomatic History* 28:3 (2004) 407-439.

⁸⁷ From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, USIS Italy Country Action Plan 1955, From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, August 30, 1955, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8, NARA.

In short, the main aims were building confidence in US leadership, promoting European integration in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, strengthening democratic government and isolating the communists. These goals of American propaganda in Italy set out in the first half of the fifties, as we shall see, would remain essentially the same throughout the next fifteen years. What changed instead, were the people to whom the message was directed.

Shifting the Target: From the Masses to the Opinion Moulders

Following substantial reductions in USIS funds due to Congressional budget cuts in 1953 and 'because of increasing sensitivity among Italians to U.S. propaganda interference', the USIA's Italian Public Affairs Officer, Lloyd A. Free, called for 'a sharp curtailment in direct mass communications operations' in Italy.⁸⁸ The mass' propaganda strategy modelled on the Marshall Plan years, aimed at reaching all sectors of public opinion through direct means – pamphlets, leaflets, movies, documentaries, radio programs, exhibitions, and so on – had proved very expensive and was not delivering the desired results. The outcome of the June 1953 elections showed a further decline for the Christian Democrats, while the communist and socialist parties improved their positions.

⁸⁸ From American Embassy in Rome- Lloyd A. Free- to the Department of State, IIA Prospectus, 13th May 1953, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511.65/5-1353, box 2467, NARA, Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 229.

Radio, newspapers and libraries, Free claimed, had 'little hold' on a population that, for the most part, was illiterate and too poor to afford a radio. In addition, Italians had become resistant to Cold War propaganda, after what historian David Ellwood calls the 'tremendous ideological confrontation of the April 1948 elections, with the propaganda of both sides heavily subsidized by their super-power sponsors', followed by the Marshall Plan publicity and another three years of relentless propaganda during the so-called "Campaign of the Truth" launched by President Truman in 1950. After such a battering, Italian public opinion showed growing intolerance for any propaganda from abroad.⁸⁹

To further complicate things, there was the peculiar Italian (and French) situation in which the American propaganda was directed against an actor, the PCI, which was legally constituted and accepted within the political sphere. This posed clear limitations on what the USIA as a governmental agency was allowed to do in a foreign country. As further explained in a USIS document, 'USIS operates under more limitations in this field than in any other. As a foreign information service, guest of the Italian government, we may not openly attack a legally constituted Italian party. Some of the most effective anti-communist operations are barred to us because they fall outside our charter. Above all, we

⁸⁹ Ellwood, *The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy*, p. 227. It is worth noting that the Marshall Plan is not celebrated every ten years in Italy as it is in nations like Austria and Germany.

*must tell our story through Italian voices, they, better than Americans, will convince Italians.*⁹⁰

This report suggests a step towards what Simona Tobia has defined an 'Italianization of the intervention'. Having realized that the strategy of appealing directly to the masses was ineffective in Italy, USIA decided to dramatically reduce 'direct mass communications operations, in favor of activities designed to stimulate and assist key Italian leaders' to act indirectly as channels for American propaganda. USIS officers made thus a concerted effort to win over intellectuals, media representatives and members of the cultural and political elites as a means of carrying US message to the wider population. The opinion formers, it was hoped, would do the propaganda on behalf of Washington.⁹¹

My assessment of this shift in target adds something to the ongoing historiographical debate on the continuity in US public diplomacy strategy between the administrations, on the extent to which such change in strategy was dictated from the top, and about how much instead depended on the officials in the field. Alessandro Brogi, in his thorough analysis of US overt and covert propaganda efforts to weaken French and Italian Communist Parties during the Cold War, identifies two distinct changes in US strategy toward Italy. One in the mid-fifties, when 'after the failure of the economic/reformist approach of the early postwar years, as well as of the aggressive repression of the first half of the

⁹⁰ USIS Italy Country Operating Plan, April 1956, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce 1955-1957, Entry 2783, box 8, NARA.

⁹¹ Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 229.

1950s', the Eisenhower administration 'learned to project a more sophisticated image of itself', and the other one in 1960, with the advent of the Kennedy administration. Kaeten Mistry and Leopoldo Nuti, argue instead that changes in US political warfare strategy were not as sharp as Brogi describes, and that they were more the result of inputs from the field and of a 'protracted diplomatic and bureaucratic wrangling, rather than the implementation of a coherent strategy decided from above.'⁹²

With regard to public diplomacy, analysis of the USIA documents for this dissertation provides a middle ground between these two theses. On the one hand it is true that, by 1955 there was a distinct change in agency strategy, as well as in the propaganda outputs, towards greater sophistication. Such a change, as suggested above, occurred both parallel to and as a consequence of a shift in the target of USIA's propaganda from the mass of the workers to Italian leaders, intellectuals and, more generally what the agency's officers referred as 'Public Opinion Molders' (POM's). The new emphasis on the intellectuals, required USIA to elevate the tone of its outputs in order to meet a more sophisticated audience. On the other hand, it is also true that this shift in target was not proposed from the top, nor was it as sharp as Brogi describes. In fact, it happened gradually and was the result of pressures from the field. The archives show that, since 1953, USIS officers from various posts in Italy, had been sending reports to the agency's

⁹² H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews, Vol. XIII, No. 16 (2012) on Alessandro Brogi. *Confronting America: the Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill, 2011) p.15.

headquarters in Washington and to the State Department lamenting the ineffectiveness of the strategy of appealing directly to the masses in Italy.

Already in 1953, a telegram from a USIS officer in Rome to the State Department urged a shift in the agency library's strategy:

Any devotion to few on the labor side in our library activities simply detracts from the number of intellectuals that we can attempt to reach. We cannot hope to make a real dent in this mass group with books; we do not have enough books, enough man-hours at our disposal. We simply would be nibbling away at the edges. The time is too short, the issues too critical, to deceive ourselves by this approach. But there is a group which can and must be reached through the libraries and their services. This group, as you all know, we call by the name of 'Public Opinion Molders': People who in any town, large or small, make their opinion respected and listened to by their occupation and, in most instances, by the force of their personalities.⁹³

In the same year, a report of the USIS Italian press section suggested, 'in view of increasing Italian sensitivity to U.S. intervention' that 'propaganda activities be carried out so far as possible on a seemingly indigenous basis, without attribution to the U.S.'⁹⁴ These and other similar observations were upheld by the Embassy in Rome and found staunch supporters from the new ambassador Claire Booth Luce as well as Eisenhower's Special Advisor on propaganda, C.D. Jackson. One of the main architects of US psychological warfare

⁹³ From American Embassy in Rome to the Department of State, USIS-Italy Policy on Target Groups to be Reached by Information Center, February 19, 1953 RG 59, Decimal Files 511.65/1-352 to 511.65/3-1453, Europe Cultural Affairs, box 2466, NARA.

⁹⁴ From American Embassy in Rome to Department of State to, September 1953, USIS Italy: a Progress Report, RG 59, Central Decimal Files 1950-1954, Folder 511.943/1-51, box 2466, NARA.

strategy, Jackson believed that in order for the propaganda to be effective the US government's hand had to be as invisible as possible.⁹⁵

As explained in the final report of the Committee on Foreign Information Activities, known as Jackson Committee, which guided the creation and structure of the USIA, the general public in foreign countries would have been 'more receptive to the American message' if this had been conveyed by seemingly independent sources. Years of hammering propaganda 'overtly' managed by the government under the Truman administration did nothing but alienate the audience, making people wary about anything that they perceived as an attempt at persuasion coming from abroad. USIA therefore, as the official voice of the American government, should 'take credit' for its outputs only when strictly necessary. Otherwise, it was preferable to have local outlets spread US message to the general public.⁹⁶

In Italy, this trend was formalized in the 1955 Country Plan. Here the 'Public Opinion Moulders' replaced the mass of workers as the agency's primary target group. However, mass operations directed to a wide audience were not completely abandoned and continued to coexist in the fifties with more selective programs targeting intellectuals. An example was the 1956 'People's Capitalism'

⁹⁵ Shawn Parry-Giles, 'The Eisenhower Administration's Conceptualization of the USIA: The Development of Overt and Covert Propaganda Strategies', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24:2 (2004) 263-276.

⁹⁶ Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p. 92.

campaign, one of the largest mass propaganda operations ever carried out by the agency to promote the American model to the world.⁹⁷

In this campaign, private and public actors were involved by the USIA in a massive effort to show that a new system had been created in America in which *everyone* had access to decent earnings, education, a nice home, and a nice car. In order to spread this message worldwide, the USIA prepared 'Feature Packets' containing articles, photos, pamphlets, and articles. The Bureau of Labor Statistics was called to develop new indicators for calculating workers' purchasing power in the US and in the Soviet Union. In this way, the whole world learned that after 8 hours of work, an American laborer could buy 54 kg of flour, 57 liters of milk, and 52 eggs, while his Soviet counterpart could only afford 6, 9, and 12 respectively. Tip of iceberg of this huge propaganda effort, was the exhibition travelling the entire world, in which the main attraction was the reconstruction of a typical middle-class house, complete with electrical appliances and furnished in the style popular at that time. Next to it, there was also a model showing the yard and garage, complete with a new car. The description provided for visitors read, 'This is not a rich man's house' but the type of house which the average American worker can afford to buy or rent.'⁹⁸

⁹⁷ From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, USIS Italy Country Action Plan 1955, From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, August 30, 1955, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8; 'People's Capitalism', 1956, RG 306, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, USIA Historical Collection, Entry 1055, box 34, NARA.

⁹⁸ Exhibit and Fairs, People's Capitalism 1956, RG 306, Subject Files 1953-2000, People's Capitalism 1955-1994, USIA Historical Collection, Entry A1 1066, box 129, NARA.

It is thus unquestionable that by the mid-fifties there was a change in US propaganda outputs in the direction of greater sophistication and focus – as argued by Brogi. However I generally agree with Mistry and Nuti that US public diplomacy strategies in Italy were often more fragmented and confused than described by Brogi, with officers in the field playing a crucial role in shaping day-by-day strategies.

USIA goals and propaganda campaigns in Italy 1953-1963

With regard to USIA goals, what kept America's propaganda objectives in Italy substantially unchanged between the fifties and the sixties was the constant uncertainty that characterized the Italian political scene. Besides the Communist threat, the issue was the fragility of democratic mechanisms in Italy and the growing divisions within the Christian Democratic governing coalition itself. Every election campaign plunged the country into chaos, causing serious alarm in the United States. In fact, besides the 1948 election – which saw a massive overt and covert propaganda measures by the United States to ensure the defeat of the Communists by the DC – each subsequent vote that took place in Italy was source of great concern in Washington, regularly involving the intervention of US propaganda, and more specifically of the USIA.

At the start of the 1956 political elections, USIS Italy launched a massive propaganda campaign to stimulate support for the government coalition.

Determined to avoid the crusade-like climate of the 1948 elections, American propagandists saw the celebration of the Italian Republic's tenth anniversary on 2 June 1956 as a perfect occasion to show public opinion 'Italian government's numerous achievements from the post-war period to date' without resorting to an overt propaganda campaign in support of the Christian Democratic Party. Pamphlet and documentaries were produced and 'The Ten Year Progress Theme', as the USIA officials called it, monopolized newspapers and radio broadcasts starting one month before the actual celebration.⁹⁹ The convergence of a number of factors, both domestic and international, endowed the 1956 elections with great significance. Khrushchev's famed 'de-Stalinization speech' of February 1956, with his call for a Popular Front between left-wing forces in governments abroad and his acceptance of the theory of "different roads to socialism", stirred up much alarm in the United States because of its potential application to the Italian case.¹⁰⁰

Moscow's new emphasis on 'popular-front politics' shed sinister light on the coalition between communists and socialists in Italy, helped remove one of the main obstacles that had hindered the PCI up to that moment. Previously, the

⁹⁹ Memorandum to the Ambassador from Ned E. Nordness, Italian Ten Year Celebration: A Progress Report by USIS, March 29, 1956, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 7; Ten Years of Progress, March 1956, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Propaganda Country Files, 1953-1991, Italy to Italy, box 13.

¹⁰⁰ Italian's vision of the international context, Report of the USIA Office of Research and Intelligence, October 1 1956, NARA, RG 306, Entry A1 1022, box 9.

Soviets' hard line – through their ties with Cominform – had kept the moderate-left voters away from the Communist Party, but now new opportunities were opened for the PCI-PSI front in advance of the June 1956 elections. Likewise, the concept of 'different roads' – with its corollary that Communism could, under certain circumstances, come into power legally through parliamentary procedures – seemed to endorse the parliamentary strategy invoked in Italy by the PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti. Over the previous three years the PCI had been searching for a way out of isolation by seeking a dialogue with the Social Democrats, and even with certain segments close to the Catholic Church.¹⁰¹

The concern of US officials was exacerbated by their tendency to view the Italian case through the lens of the Cold War. In a report by the USIA Office of Research Intelligence, the agency defined Italy's political scene as 'a microcosm' of the international confrontation between the US and the USSR where 'the rivalry between the Italian pro and anti-communist forces had closely paralleled the various stages of the East-West struggle, from Stalin Cold War to Khrushchev's Peaceful but competitive coexistence.'¹⁰² Corresponding to the Soviets' softer line abroad, there was the soft line followed by the PCI within the country. 'These tactics', concluded the 1956 Italy Country Plan, 'are much more difficult to counter than the aggressive line driven in years prior.' Thus from

¹⁰¹ The potential for Communist-Socialist United Front in Western Europe, April 1956, RG 306, U.S. Information Agency Office of Research and Intelligence, Entry A1 1022, box 8, NARA. (my emphasis)

¹⁰² Italian's vision of the international context, Report of the USIA Office of Research and Intelligence, October 1 1956, NARA, RG 306, Entry A1 1022, box 9, p. 32.

Washington came the order to all USIS posts to do 'everything possible to avoid the entry of the leftist forces within the Italian parliament.'¹⁰³

This dreaded event was, however, not long in coming. By the end of 1959 the Italian socialists were progressively moving away from the PCI towards more moderate positions both in domestic and foreign policy. The result was increasing participation of the socialists in government, first through external support of the ruling coalition in 1962 and then by formally entering government in December 1963. The Kennedy Administration, taking office in January 1961, had a key role in encouraging the socialists' evolution from opposition to power, and this needs to be examined more closely.

Italy's centre-left government and the transition from Kennedy to Johnson

Leopoldo Nuti, in his detailed work on the role of the US government in Italy's opening to the left, shows how Kennedy's special advisors Averell Harriman and Arthur M. Schlesinger supported such a process both by accelerating the gradual detachment of the socialists and their leader Pietro Nenni from the Communist Party, ongoing since the mid-fifties, and by ensuring the party's adherence to the principles of Atlanticism. Through a combination of propaganda and diplomatic flexibility, they helped overcome the socialists' view of Americans as a county of

¹⁰³ From USIA Washington to USIS Rome, March 15, 1956, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 7.

‘fat, happy idiots, who had reached a position of world leadership more out of luck than from sacrifice, intelligence and determination’.¹⁰⁴

US endorsement of the ‘opening to the left’, however, should not be interpreted as a sign that the Kennedy administration was softening its anticommunism in Italy. On the contrary, the reduction of strength and influence of the Italian Communist Party was still designated as the primary objective of American propaganda in Italy. Opening a dialogue with the socialists must be seen within a broader effort to make American diplomatic strategy more flexible. It was, indeed, the results of the Kennedy administration’s willingness to abandon the ideological rigidity of the fifties, which limited the search of allies within the right and centre forces, and bring into the American orbit also non-communist and progressive leftist forces. Instead of relying on the carrot and stick policy, as during Clare Booth Luce’s years, Kennedy’s advisors aimed at reducing social, political and economic tensions which, in their view, fuelled the discontent of the lower classes and pushed them into the arms of PCI. The idea was that the best way to curb communist influence over Italian public opinion was to widen the centre coalition and strengthen socialists’ hold on the left.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963 prevented him from seeing the fruits of all these efforts. After giving its external support in February 1962, the Socialist Party finally entered the government coalition only on December 1963,

¹⁰⁴ Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra*. p. 29; Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 239

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed account of the role of the Kennedy administration in favouring the process of opening to the left see Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra*.

giving birth to Italy's first "Centre-Left" government, guided by DC leader Aldo Moro.

Johnson and his advisers made clear from the outset their faith in the centre-left as the 'only viable option' to weaken the Italian Communist Party. USIA's reports however, highlight widespread concern within the Italian press about the effects of the new US leadership upon the centre-left experiment, seen as Kennedy's most visible legacy in Italy. Turin's influential liberal paper *La Stampa* described the new Italian centre-left government as 'made possible by a new international atmosphere' and expressed doubts about Johnson's ability to maintain it. Sent as Italian representative at Kennedy's funeral, President of the Senate Cesare Merzagora emphasized his hope that the 'openness, vigilance and generosity which had been pursued in Italy by President Kennedy, would be continued in the period ahead.'¹⁰⁶

Kennedy's death in fact came as a huge shock in Italy, as in the rest of the world. 'In all my experience' wrote Ambassador Reinhardt to Mrs Kennedy on March 1964:

I have never seen such an immediate, spontaneous and genuine outpouring of grief and concern from the part of the people as occurred here in Roma when the news of the President's assassination became known. Within less than one

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum for the President from Dean Rusk, December 5, 1963, Folder Italy Moro Correspondence, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Special Head of State; USIA Daily Reaction Report, Jan 13, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum of conversation between Pres Johnson and Senator Cesare Merzagora, President of Italian Senate, 25 Nov, 1963, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

hour after the announcement was made, the embassy halls were filled with government officials, political leaders, and above all, ordinary Italians from all walks of life who wanted to pay homage to his memoir. The procession of people continued by the thousands for the next several days.¹⁰⁷

The Christian Democratic Party dedicated its new headquarters in Sicily to Kennedy and in Turin a *Piazza JFK* was inaugurated in July 1966; likewise several other streets and schools around Italy were named after the late president. In Italy, as well as in the rest of Europe, the sudden and unexpected ending of Kennedy's presidency had the effect of bringing into sharp focus his popularity, as well as the expectations that most Europeans had attached to his administration. As noted Tom Sorensen, USIA veteran (for a time its deputy director) and brother of Ted Sorensen, Kennedy's chief speechwriter: 'In the months preceding November 1963, it had become increasingly apparent that USIA's greatest asset in building foreign confidence in the United States was President Kennedy himself. Programs, policies, and statements that could be identified with the president personally found a much more receptive audience than run-of-the-mill USIA output.'¹⁰⁸

European anxiety was due to a variety of factors: the comparatively unknown or untested qualities of President Johnson, the anticipated impact of the change of administration on US-European relations and on American policies

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Reinhardt to Mrs. Kennedy, March 3, 1964, NARA, RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Italy/US Embassy Rome 1964-1975, Entry P387, box 4, Folder Pol. 1964.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas C. Sorensen, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, New York, 1968, p. 215.

abroad, and the unsolved questions pertaining to the assassination. While Johnson's experience and his ability as a political leader were widely recognized among Americans because of his long and fruitful activity in the Senate, most Europeans knew nothing about the new American leader, beyond the fact that he had been Kennedy's Vice-President. Moreover, while American public opinion was politically divided over Kennedy's policies, domestic clashes between Democrats and Republicans had no resonance overseas. During the first six months of Johnson's presidency, all of USIA's efforts were concentrated on 'reporting and interpreting the transition from one president to another, with the aim of building foreign confidence in LBJ', and countering the impression of lawlessness left by the killing of President Kennedy.¹⁰⁹

This was an enormous public relations task, for which the agency requested almost ten million dollars of additional funding. In the week 'following Kennedy's death, the USIA's press service sent out an unprecedented stream of stories, photographs, and briefing papers designed to aid understanding and reassurance' to its posts around the world. The agency also mounted a live mass translation of Johnson's inaugural address in 38 languages. His performance was transmitted worldwide to TV stations and through newsreels. Within two weeks of Johnson taking office, the USIA had mounted and shipped 2,000 copies of a panel exhibition on his life. It also issued more than a million copies of an illustrated pamphlet introducing Johnson in eighteen different languages and created a short

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 214.

biographical piece for newsreel and TV around the world, plus a longer TV programme about him called *Let Us Continue*. By the end of 1963, the film was on its way to 74 foreign countries with television and 32 without TV, with dialogue in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian.¹¹⁰

Less than two months after Kennedy's assassination, the USIA released a full-scale movie, *The President*, presenting Johnson as 'a man of God, freedom and peace' and emphasising his commitment to civil rights, education, and space technology. The aim of the movie, as stated by Murrow, was to show that even in the times of greatest tragedy 'there is a continuity in the tradition of the democracy of the United States'. He elaborated: 'We were able to communicate this message to the widest possible audiences at a time when the most serious doubts and deep questions had been raised in the minds of people everywhere. As a stirring conclusion to this film the audience is vividly reminded of the attitude of our Nation: "Let us Continue"'.¹¹¹

Despite this huge campaign, however, by the spring of 1964 USIA reports noted a growing global conviction, fomented by communist propaganda, that Kennedy had been victim of a right-wing conspiracy. Lee Harvey Oswald, identified by the FBI as the President's assassin, was described by newspapers such as *L'Avanti* in Italy and *L'Humanité* in France, as a mere player in a mysterious plot, rightist and racist in nature. Non-communist media in Europe

¹¹⁰ Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy 1945-1989* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 227-228.

¹¹¹ USIA Memorandum for the President, Weekly Report, August 4, 1964, USIA Vol. I, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, box 73.

also made similar allegations. 'If the enquiry were to end with the affirmation that Oswald acted alone and independently, no one would believe it,' reported *La Nation*, the Gaullist party organ, in December 1963. Governments and public opinion in Germany, Britain, France and Italy increasingly complained about the delays in releasing the results of the Warren commission investigation and the presence of a former CIA director in the commission.¹¹²

Propaganda experts seemed particularly concerned about the long-term effect of the Dallas killing on America's image abroad. USIA outputs at first tried to stress Oswald's links to the Soviet Union and Cuba, but the idea that the assumed conspiracy could possibly be linked to the radical left was denied by the communists and virtually ignored by European media. The agency then focused on providing evidence that the assassination had been the act of a 'lone gunman.' In order to do that, it was necessary to dampen the sense of mystery surrounding the entire affair. The USIA was thus instructed to send daily information updates on any development regarding the investigation to all its missions abroad, and to make sure that European media was provided with all the facts available on the public record.

In September 1964 the Warren commission report was finally published. The agency arranged the international transmission of a two-hour CBS documentary on the commission's findings, and each USIS post received a copy of

¹¹² European Media Comments on Kennedy's Assassination, December 1963-December 1964, Folder White House Bi-weekly reports, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 33.

all 26 volumes of the report. A 'Special Packet on the Warren Commission' was also created to send to each post abroad, containing printed commentaries, reprints of daily articles from the major national newspapers and special film and TV materials.¹¹³

The following month, the entire transmission capability of the USIA, both radio and press, was used to spread to the world the results of the November 1964 election, in which LBJ won a landslide victory. The agency's efforts were soon repaid as, according to USIA surveys, foreign uncertainty appeared to be recovering quickly from the sudden change in US leadership, impressed by LBJ's vigorous takeover, by the orderliness of the transition and the validating effect of the 1964 election.¹¹⁴ USIA reports noted that Italian press, both left and right, highlighted remarkable 'continuity in responsible American leadership' under his administration. Even Rome's most influential socialist newspaper, *l'Avanti*, usually highly critical about the United States, in the final hours of the US presidential election accorded to Johnson the accolade of 'granter of equilibrium in the international scene.'¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Folder White House Bi-weekly reports, Library Jan- Dec 1966, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 33.

¹¹⁴ Worldwide Reaction to the First Month of the Johnson Administration, USIA Research and Reference Service, December 24, 1963. LBJ Library, Papers of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, United States Information Agency, Vol. 1, box 73; USIA Memorandum for the President, World Opinion on Your Administration, February 19, 1964, Folder 11/22/63 – 1/31/64, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, White House Central Files (WHCF), Federal Government, box 314.

¹¹⁵ Memo for the President, Weekly Report, Oct 27, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 2. box 73.

Struggling with Kennedy's myth

The delicate moment of the transition had passed, but the process of building Johnson image abroad had only just begun because of the power of the Kennedy myth. 'The USIA worked hard to introduce Lyndon Johnson to the world', writes historian Nicholas Cull. 'He understood that image played an important part in politics at home and abroad. Unfortunately, he clearly lacked Kennedy's natural assets as a focus for such image making.' LBJ was not photogenic and was even less comfortable talking on TV. In 1964 he refused a televised debate with Barry Goldwater, because he was too intimidated by the medium. This constituted a serious problem considering that in the first half of the 1960's, television had emerged as the primary means of communication with the wider public, both in the US and Europe. As shown by the outcome of the first-ever presidential debate between Kennedy and Nixon on 26 September 1960, which drew millions of viewers in the US and abroad, it was the beginning of a 'new era in which crafting a public image and taking advantage of media exposure became essential ingredients of a successful political' leadership.

In its effort to stimulate support for the new president abroad, the USIA functioned both as a propaganda agency and an 'image consultant.' On several occasions the agency's officers had to give Johnson advice on his physical appearance and on what to say – and not say – during an interview or an official visit abroad. His brash Southern manner, combined with an overwhelming

personality and irrepressible energy, were not always understood or appreciated in Europe.¹¹⁶ Johnson's alleged lack of style, won him the epithet of 'tacky-texan' within Italian intellectual circles. The austere Prime Minister Aldo Moro, recalling his first meeting with the President at the White House, defined it as 'carnevalesco!'. Descriptions of the new president in Italian media inevitably contained comparisons with his predecessor, admitting that it was difficult for anyone to match the image of the dynamic and brilliant Jack Kennedy. His Irish origins, Harvard education, and Catholic background had made him attractive to Italian intellectuals as no other US president before him. One report on foreign reaction to his death summed up Kennedy as the first 'modern man' to become a world leader, whose style was 'an inimitable compound of youth and grace, with candour and Irish charm.'¹¹⁷

In October 1964, in time for the first anniversary of his death, the USIA released a documentary on Kennedy's presidency: *Years of Lightning, Days of Drums*. This did include a ten-minute profile of LBJ to emphasize the long-range continuity in American foreign and domestic policy but the star of the show was JFK. A propaganda masterpiece, narrated by Gregory Peck and directed by George Stevens Jr, the movie soon became the most widely seen and acclaimed of any of the agency's productions up to that point, distributed commercially in 67 countries and shown without charge in 50 others. Besides its propagandistic

¹¹⁶ Memorandum for Jack Valenti, Johnson's Overseas Image, April 5, 1965; LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 1/1/65– 6/1/65.

¹¹⁷ Foreign Reaction to the Presidential Succession, USIA Research and Reference Service, December 6, 1963, Office Files of Frederick Panzer, LBJ Library, Papers of LBJ President, 1963-1969, box 423.

value, the movie represented also the celebration by the USIA of a President with whom the agency had a special connection from the beginning.¹¹⁸

Kennedy's progressive outlook and his attention to the developing world chimed in well with the well-known liberal and international tilt of USIA staff. Furthermore, his charisma, his abilities as a communicator and his image were a gift to an agency charged with projecting a favourable picture of the US abroad. Kennedy was, as a veteran officer of the agency, Wilson Dizard, put it, 'an easy guy to sell.'¹¹⁹ The young President, for his part, was aware of the importance of a sound international information effort and did his best to raise the morale of the agency, weakened by budget cuts and the effects of years of investigations by Senator Joseph McCarthy. His first move had been the appointment of the popular CBS Journalist Edward R. Murrow as Director of the USIA and the Murrow legacy would shape USIA policy throughout the Johnson years.

Famous for his radio and TV shows, *Hear it Now* and *See it Now*, followed by millions of people in the United States, Murrow was also highly respected in Europe for his role as London correspondent during the war. A provocative reporter known for his sharp criticism of any political attempt to censor the free

¹¹⁸ Following the première in Washington, several newspaper critics suggested that the film be shown to the American public. USIA also received a communication from 90 members of Congress requesting that the film be made available domestically. USIA Motion Picture Service, *Years of Lightening, Days of Drums*, October 1964, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 33, NARA; Memo for the President, Weekly Report, Dec 1, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, box 73, United States Information Agency, Vol. 1.

¹¹⁹ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, p. 83.

flow of information, he was reluctant to accept a position in the government's propaganda agency. At the same time, offering Murrow the position was a bold move on Kennedy's part. On several occasions the reporter had been critical of the President and his family, and his commitment to truth and objectivity might prove risky for an agency in charge of projecting a positive image of the US abroad. As Maureen Lynn Wyllie notes, 'Offering Murrow the job, and for him accepting it, was thus a two-way compromise for both him and Kennedy.' The compromise, however, proved worthwhile. 'Murrow did not lose his objectivity and commitment to the truth, and Kennedy obtained that the agency... regained tenure and consideration under the guide of a popular figure as Murrow.'¹²⁰

Murrow made clear from the beginning that propaganda had to be based on policy, rather than substituting propaganda for the implementation of policy. Building confidence in the United States abroad required projecting a picture of America, "warts and all", without attempts at concealing the truth. 'To be persuasive' he stated in March 1963 in a syllogism that then became famous 'we must be believable. To be believable we must be credible. To be credible we must be truthful. It is simple as that.'¹²¹

Murrow's widely recognized status as an objective, straightforward newsman became an asset for the agency, both at home and abroad. His emphasis on the truth as 'the best form of propaganda' rescued the agency from its image

¹²⁰ Maureen Lynn Wyllie, *A comparative analysis of the communication flow between the USIA and the administration during the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson*, MA Dissertation University of Delaware (June 1976), p. 69.

¹²¹ E. Murrow, quoted in Sorensen, *World War*, p. 4.

overseas as a United States government tool aimed at selling its policies regardless of their validity. At home, his popularity and prestige allowed his voice to be heard by congressmen, and it secured for the USIA a level of integration within the US government foreign policymaking structure that was unrivalled in previous and succeeding administrations. As a condition for accepting the agency's directorship, Murrow proposed that the voice of the USIA be heard during the formulation of foreign policy, and not only after. USIA, he explained, should be 'in on the take offs and not just in the crash landings.' Under President Eisenhower, Theodore Streibert was the first Director of the USIA to attend a NSC meeting, but more in the role of an observer rather than as an actual advisor. During the Kennedy years, Murrow instead was given a full seat on the NSC as the Psychological Advisor of the Executive Branch.¹²²

The issue of USIA participation in the formulation of foreign policy at the NSC level had been at the centre of debate since the agency's creation. However, in spite of several declarations of intent, the USIA had always been denied the opportunity for a systematic impact on foreign decision-making at the highest level. The reason was to be found, on the one hand, in the aversion of the CIA and Defense Department towards an agency whose main role was that of communicating to a foreign audience information they strove to keep secret and, on the other hand, in the State Department's traditional scepticism about public diplomacy. Such scepticism was rooted in an elitist conception of diplomacy as

¹²² Cull, *The Cold War and the USIA*, p. 190

secret government-to-government dialogue, as opposed to reaching out publicly to foreign audiences, and through them, to their governments.¹²³ Alwyn Snyder, future director of the USIA Television and Film Service under the Reagan administration, noted how the State Department was 'slow in grasping the expanding role that communications was playing in shaping public opinion and underestimated its impact on the relationships between nations.'¹²⁴

Kennedy, by contrast, was well aware of the influence of public opinion on the formulation of government policy, and from the beginning he 'envisioned a reciprocal relation between the USIA and the administration, intending the agency as a bridge between the White House and foreign public opinion.' During the 1960 presidential election campaign, Kennedy's advisors got access to classified USIA overseas polling data disproving Nixon's claim that as a result of Eisenhower Republican policies, US prestige abroad 'had never been higher'. The polls were made public undermining Nixon's credibility and triggering strong reactions against the agency by the Republicans. This marked the beginning of a systematic use of opinion polls during the Kennedy years, which had no precedent during previous administrations. In 1963 the agency initiated a running world opinion survey under Leo Crespi, the director of the USIA Office of Research, which the President consulted regularly. Such attention to public opinion abroad reflected a greater understanding of international communication

¹²³ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, p. 17.

¹²⁴ Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, p. 16.

as a two-way flow, necessitating deeper knowledge and understanding of the selected audience America was addressing.¹²⁵

As an information agency the USIA's task was not only that of presenting US policies in a good light and trying to influence foreign audiences, but also trying to understand and interpret current public moods and trends in the countries where which it operated. The agency's officers working in the field, through daily contact with government officials, journalists, students and intellectuals, could get a better sense of a country's general attitude to certain policies and issues and could advise the President both before and during the formulation of foreign policy. Kennedy decided to reformulate the USIA's mission statement by adding to the traditional goal of 'influencing public attitude in other nations' that of 'advising the President, his representatives abroad, and the various department and agencies on the implications of foreign opinion for present and contemplated US policies, programs and official statements.'¹²⁶ The ratification of such advisory function left to Johnson a much stronger USIA in terms of integration within the US government apparatus of foreign policy making.

In foreign propaganda, as in so many other aspects of policy, Kennedy's legacy for his successor was profound. In terms of personal image, LBJ struggled to escape from the shadow of America's modern martyr. Institutionally, he inherited an information agency far better equipped to deal with the challenges

¹²⁵ Maureen Lynn Wyllie, *A comparative analysis*, p. 62.

¹²⁶ Maureen Lynn Wyllie, *A comparative analysis*, p. 62-67; Mark Hafele, 'John F. Kennedy, USIA, and World Public Opinion', *Diplomatic History*, 25:1 (2001) 63-84.

of a new era in global communications and Cold War confrontation. But in both areas he was determined to put his own stamp on USIA operations.

Lyndon Johnson and the USIA

Given the vagueness of the USIA's mission statement and the delicate role of an agency that tried to influence foreign attitudes and behaviour, US propaganda officers could not rely on a clear set of directions when trying to 'tell America's story to the world'. In such situations, as shown by Murrow, the US President and USIA Director had special responsibility in setting priorities and developing a sense of mission for the agency. Lyndon Johnson's choices of Carl T. Rowan (1964-63) and then Leonard Marks (1965-68) as USIA's Directors, suggest a different conception of the agency's mission and its role within his administration.

In January 1964, after Murrow's resignation on grounds of ill health, Johnson appointed Rowan to lead the agency. The former Ambassador to Finland and a brilliant journalist, Rowan made his reputation in the 1950's with a series of articles and a book on segregation in the South. In 1961 he joined the Kennedy Administration serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. His brilliant curriculum vitae was, however, less striking than a more visible factor: Rowan was the first African-American to direct a government agency. This was undoubtedly a masterful propaganda move at a moment when the relentless

racial strife in the United States was capturing headlines worldwide. Johnson needed to show the world his commitment to civil rights, and Rowan was the right man in the right place. 'I want a nigras in the cabinet' he had said earlier to the Democratic congressman, Louis Martin, 'but I haven't got a place!'¹²⁷ The USIA offered the perfect place.

As Cull notes, 'not only did Rowan project the image of civil rights reform around the world, but also personally embodied the opportunities available within the US.'¹²⁸ Reactions abroad were enthusiastic, in the developing world as well as in Europe. 'President Johnson has just given a lesson of liberty, honesty, democracy, and justice by appointing Carl Rowan as director of the USIA', declared a South American radio station in January 1964.¹²⁹ This is just one example of the attention and praise given by the foreign media to Johnson's appointment. Most European newspapers carried the news on the front-page. West Germany's national independent newspaper, *Die Welt*, under the headline 'America News Voice' stressed that Rowan 'will be the first Negro to attend cabinet meetings, and what is more, the discussions of the National Security Council.'¹³⁰

The initial enthusiasm for the new appointment, however, evaporated rather quickly when Rowan realized that his nomination had more of a symbolic

¹²⁷ LBJL tape WH6401.15, PNO 13, Lyndon Johnson /Louis Martin, 17 January 1964, LBJ Library.

¹²⁸ Cull, *The Cold War and USIA*, p. 228

¹²⁹ The Redemption of the Negroes, Radio Lima America Network, 24 January 1964, Folder 11/22/63 – 1/31/64, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314.

¹³⁰ Cull, *The Cold War and USIA*, p. 228

than practical value. Rowan shared with Murrow the idea that USIA should be an active participant in the making of foreign policy; unfortunately he did not get the support from the White House that had worked to Murrow's advantage.¹³¹ On several occasions, Rowan voiced his frustration over USIA exclusion from top-level policy making. In December 1964, for instance, he told Johnson 'When you asked me to take over direction of USIA, you emphasized that I was to sit with the NSC and the Cabinet, a clear indication that you viewed USIA as an integral part of the policy-making and policy-execution process. I was heartened by this. Now I can only be distressed by the fact that on the issue that really matter, USIA is still being treated as mere appendage'.¹³²

Johnson left little autonomy to the information agency, and Rowan lacked interest and skill in the intricacies of administration. The tensions between them soon came to a head. In the summer of 1965, less than a year and a half after his appointment, Rowan told the President that he would rather return to journalism, unless USIA could play the meaningful role in foreign affairs. Johnson, no man to take threats lightly, interpreted this as an ultimatum and began casting around for a replacement.¹³³

The replacement was soon found in Leonard Marks, a highly successful attorney whose clients included many of the leading US media companies, among

¹³¹ Memorandum for the President from Carl T. Rowan, July 13, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314.

¹³² Memorandum for the President from Rowan Dec 2, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, box 73, USIA, Vol. 3.

¹³³ Sorensen, *World War*, pp. 250, 270.

them the Johnson family broadcasting's interests in Texas. Senior partner in one of the main firms in Washington, representing more than four hundred broadcast licenses, Marks managed the USIA as if it were a law firm. From the beginning he put emphasis on efficiency and on strict correlation between targets and results in planning the agency's operations. He surrounded himself with only top-level figures from media and television, such as John Chancellor, a famous journalist for the NBC network, who later became the new Director of the Voice of America, bringing radical changes to the radio station's programming. 'As a lawyer', Marks declared after accepting the appointment, 'I have the best client in the world, US Government, and I got the best case for fair-minded people, Freedom and Democracy. I am trying to present the facts. And truth is the best propaganda.' ¹³⁴

Despite Marks's public commitment to the truth, criticism of his appointment was not long in coming. Unlike Kennedy, Johnson had chosen an old, trusted friend to direct the USIA and this cronyism turned out to be both an advantage and a drawback for the agency. Marks' direct access to the president often allowed him to impose USIA's issues on the political agenda. He also strove to keep the President updated on the agency's activities, drawing his attention to reports and outputs that could be of interest.¹³⁵ At the same time, LBJ required the presence of Marks at most of the top policy level meetings, providing a level

¹³⁴ Chancellor inaugurated the "New Sound" for Radio VOA, suitable for a younger audience, with shorter features and news stories, and more music also improved links with the BBC World Service and began a series of regular meetings to share experiences and coordinate responses. Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, March 30, 1966, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 34; 'The Lawyer who Runs USIA like a Business', *Kansas City Star*, Feb 2, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 21.

¹³⁵ Maureen Lynn Wyllie, *A comparative analysis*, pp. 104-105.

of integration for the agency within the foreign policy making structure that only Edward R. Murrow had reached up to that time. Marks' connection with LBJ, however, did not produce the results that many had hoped in terms of USIA's outputs and objectivity. 'Although Marks was closer to the White House than any of his predecessors', writes Tom Sorensen, 'there was little substantive impact on the agency from this intimacy'. He rarely took counsel with his subordinates, 'preferring to play his cards close to the chest'. This, according to Sorensen, resulted in a 'less professional consideration of psychological factors in making and carrying out policy than there had been since Eisenhower and Dulles.'¹³⁶

By 1965, several Republicans in Congress, together with nostalgic Kennedy partisans within the administration, charged Johnson of muzzling the USIA to prevent domestic complications. They claimed he had urged Marks to keep the agency 'quiet, out of trouble, and on good terms with Congress.' Under his direction', noted a USIA officer, 'the agency had lost all the excitement and sense of purpose Kennedy and Murrow gave it; becoming tame and dull. The feeling now was like walking on eggs.'¹³⁷

Johnson was renowned for his poor tolerance of criticism, which resulted in a fractious relationship with journalists and media in general. The impression – noted Texan journalist and playwright Larry L. King – was that, given his difficulty at managing the free press, LBJ sought to use the USIA as a 'huge,

¹³⁶ Sorensen, *World War*, p. 276.

¹³⁷ Kiker, USIA, p. 8, June 1965, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 31, NARA.

worldwide, personal propaganda tool to portraying him as the lovable old Populist from the Pedernales who desires to 'hep the po' folks all over the world' while continuing to do only what's right in Vietnam.'¹³⁸

It is true that flattering biographies of LBJ were translated made available in USIS libraries abroad for people to borrow through a regular membership subscription, while chances to use less admiring studies were passed up. In 1963 the USIA bought and distributed to its libraries worldwide more than two thousand copies of a book by 'an ex LBJ staffer and long-time intimate, Booth Mooney.' Mooney's book *The Lyndon Johnson Story*, observed one commentator 'was a hymn of praise from invocation to benediction.' Yet, at the same time, USIA had 'made it known that it would not stock for its shelves *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power*, a more balanced political biography by the columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak.'¹³⁹

Such criticism reached its peak in 1966, when Marks announced the suspension of USIA's Public Opinion Polls abroad, claiming that they were 'too expensive and had little value'. Several voices within the agency, however, claimed that the real reason for the cancellation was that surveys of LBJ's first full year in office showed American prestige falling fast. Mindful of the political damage done to Nixon in 1960, LBJ was wary of polling's harmful potential. Republican Senator Thurston Morton, a strong advocate of such view, emphasized the irony of the fact that the drop actually occurred 'right after the

¹³⁸ Larry L. King, 'Lyndon Johnson as Literary Critic', *The New Republic*, 12 Nov 1966, p. 33.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Dominican Republic intervention and before US bombing of North Vietnam.' To prove that, Morton ordered a crash survey of Western European public opinion and the results showed that in Britain, France, West Germany and Italy more than 70% of the people believed that America's world prestige was higher under Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations than in the present time.¹⁴⁰ 'Marks devoted his three-years stewardship to keeping Johnson happy, or at least unbothered by any unseemly bad news', commented the newly born magazine *Washingtonian*, one way was to suspending USIA's traditional function of conducting surveys on US popularity and prestige abroad.'¹⁴¹

Trying to please the president, however, was not Marks' sole occupation as USIA director. During his three-year tenure, not only did he oversee a distinct change in the agency operations and management style, but he also left some important legacies to the USIA. These will be explored in the next chapters.

¹⁴⁰ Author and title not visible, *Newsweek*, Nov 7, 1966, pp. 19-20, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 31, NARA.

¹⁴¹ Dowling, 'Selling America', *Washingtonian*, March 71, p. 82.

Chapter 2:

LBJ and the limits of the centre-left formula in Italy (1964-1966)

This second chapter focuses more on Italian domestic and foreign policy issues between 1964 and 1966 - from the 1964 right-wing coup d'état attempt, to the internal changes within the PCI, to the efforts to overcome the economic recession, to the Euro-Atlantic policy - and on the way they were perceived by the newly installed US administration. The new centre-left coalition had been established in December 1963, only one month after Johnson's inauguration, and by early 1964, following the first weeks of transition, both actors began weighing each other up. The Italian government was determined to understand whether it could count on the same support enjoyed by the previous administration, while Johnson and his advisers wondered if the new coalition would show enough stability to carry out the needed reforms, especially in the face of the economic crisis and growing social unrest. A further and more sensitive objective in Italy, particularly in times of growing internal political polarization, was that of reducing the influence of the Communists, being careful not to feed the ambitions of the extreme right.

The means of achieving the objectives of the US administration, supported by public diplomacy, would be, on the one hand, encouraging the economic recovery

through promoting the American model of productivity and the offer of a considerable loan in the spring 1964, while on the other hand supporting a solid anchorage to the Atlantic Alliance. Moreover, in a period of NATO crisis, culminating with France's exit in 1966, the United States recognised that Italy had an important role as mediator in preventing an open split in the western camp.

The chapter ends with the announcement of substantial budget cuts in the US public diplomacy program for Italy as a result of growing concentration of resources in other areas of the world, particularly Southeast Asia.

The 'hot summer' of 1964

In Italy, alongside the efforts to ensure a smooth transition from one administration to the other, the USIA was called upon to persuade the Italian government and public opinion of the new president's firm intention to support the infant centre-left government. USIS officers in Rome, Milan and Sicily intensified their contacts with government officials, media representatives and intellectuals to ensure 'absolute continuity of US government support for the centre-left formula.'¹⁴²

¹⁴² Memorandum from Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Folder Pol. Affairs & Rel., Head of State Executive Branch, Mar-Dec 1964, NARA, RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Italy Unclassified Central Subject Files, 1964-1975.

Prime Minister Moro and the President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni, were promptly invited to the United States. Segni's visit on 14-15 January 1964 was widely publicized by the USIA in Italy. News stories were sent to the local newspapers emphasizing the high symbolic value of the visit as a 'confirmation of the close friendship between the two countries and of Johnson's faith in the new government.' USIS Rome also produced a short documentary about the visit that was shown in all USIS posts and offered to RAI – Italian national television – for transmission.¹⁴³

Johnson was also advised by the agency to meet with a group of journalists from *Corriere della Sera*, the most influential and widely sold Italian newspaper, who were in Washington as part of an organized tour in January 1964. On this occasion, he delivered a speech emphasizing his deep admiration for Italy, 'its culture and the progress made under the democratic government', hoping that they would bring home with them, 'information about America, and the feeling of warm understanding which existed between Italy and the United States.'¹⁴⁴

By the end of the year, the Italian government and public opinion seemed reassured about Johnson's intentions to continue with the policies of his predecessor. USIA reports noted that the Italian press, both left and right,

¹⁴³ Visit of President Segni of Rome, January 14-15, 1964, National Security File, Europe, USSR, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 198, folder Italy Segni Visit Briefing Books (1 of 2).

¹⁴⁴ Johnson Speech to Group Sponsored by *Corriere della Sera*, Jan 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, box 73.

highlighted remarkable 'continuity in responsible American leadership', under his administration. Even Rome's most influential Socialist newspaper, the *Avanti*, usually highly critical of the United States, accorded to Johnson the role of 'granter of equilibrium in the international scene,' in the final hours of the American presidential election.¹⁴⁵

Regrettably, the support of the Johnson administration was not enough to ensure Italian government stability. On 25 June the government fell due to a disagreement within the coalition combined with heavy external pressures, leaving the country in a situation of profound chaos and uncertainty. On 22 July a new government was formed, still guided by Moro and including the Socialists. This which remained in office until January 1966, but seemed to have lost a great part of its initial reformist impetus.

The coalition fell after a clash between Socialists and Christian Democrats on the principle of State aid to private schools, but this was only the tip of the iceberg of a much deeper crisis.¹⁴⁶ *La svolta del 1964* (the turning point of 1964) as some historians have defined it, had its roots in a reversal of the Italian economic boom, and in the determination of some prominent

¹⁴⁵ Memo for the President, Weekly Report, Oct 27, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol.2, box 73.

¹⁴⁶ The immediate issue was a minor appropriation for State aid to private intermediate schools, which became a question of principle on the delicate and historically explosive problem of church-state relations. The Socialists decided to abstain, followed by the Social Democrats and Republicans. The Christian Democrats were left in the minority and Moro decided to resign. Agostino Giovagnoli, *Il partito italiano: la Democrazia Cristiana dal 1942 al 1994* (Roma-Bari 1996).

political and military figures in Italy to block the centre-left experiment and bring about a conservative turn in the country.¹⁴⁷

In June, a secret telegram was sent from the American Consulate in Heidelberg, Germany, to the State Department warning of the possibility of a *coup d'état* in Italy. The telegram reported that General Giovanni De Lorenzo, former chief of the Italian Armed Forces Intelligence Service (SIFAR) and chief of the National Military Police of Italy (Carabinieri)¹⁴⁸ had assembled a handful of, 'political rightists, war veterans, Carabinieri and leaders of veterans associations', ready to intervene 'for ending current political trend in Italy and installing new order founded on the traditional moral and political values of the nation.'¹⁴⁹ Later known as *Piano Solo* (Solitary Plan), because its execution was to be entrusted only to the Carabinieri, excluding the army and police, the plan called for the occupation of the 'nerve centres' of the state (radio, newspapers, etc.) and for the arrest and deportation to the military shooting range of Capo Marrangiu in Sardinia of 731 people deemed 'dangerous to public order' including politicians of all political parties, trade unionists, intellectuals, and journalists.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Elena Cavalieri, 'I piani di liquidazione del centro-sinistra nel 1964', *Passato e Presente*, 79, 2010 (59-82).

¹⁴⁸ While the Police is a civil force under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, *Carabinieri* falls under the Ministry of Defence and parallel to the exercise of civil functions, it can also support the Italian Army in overseas operations.

¹⁴⁹ Secret telegram from Heidelberg Germany to the State Department, 28 June, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

The plan did not lack political support in Italy. President Segni, a strong opponent of the centre-left, went so far as to officially meet with De Lorenzo during the consultation process for the appointment of the new government on 15 July.¹⁵¹ The other political figure selected to coordinate these plans was Randolfo Pacciardi, former Defence Minister, 'known to oppose the current economical and political trend in Italy. . . Funds would be supplied by industrial and agricultural confederations. The Italian Social Movement (MSI), a post-fascist political party in Italy formed in 1946 by supporters of Mussolini, agreed to organize planned demonstrations', continued the telegram, 'If the demonstration should be opposed by counter-demonstrations of extreme leftists, Carabinieri would immediately be called to action. Armed force would then assume law and order maintenance in Italy.'¹⁵²

The crisis finally receded after the acceptance by the Socialists to give up on their intention of radically reforming the Italian social and economic system. Moro, along with Nenni, opted for a more comfortable and soft return to the previous government formula and the PSI issued cautious

¹⁵¹ Antonio Segni, together with Mariano Rumor, Paolo Emilio Taviani, Emilio Colombo and, albeit with a more autonomous position, Aldo Moro, was one of the exponents of the internal DC faction of the *dorotei*. By the end of the fifties, the *dorotei* faction emerged in opposition to Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani's manouvers to involve the socialists within the government. Segni was elected Prime Minister in 1959, with the clear mandate to oppose the opening to the left. While Aldo Moro and other members of the *dorotei* progressively accepted the necessity to open to the Socialists, Segni always remained a staunch opponent of the centre-left formation. On Segni's opposition to the centre-left see Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*; pp- 262–3, 276–9. On DC History and its internal divisions see Manlio Di Lalla, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana* (Torino, 1981); Giorgio Galli, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana* (Roma-Bari 1978); Giovagnoli, *Il partito italiano*; Francesco Malgeri, *La stagione del centrismo: politica e società nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra : 1945-1960* (Soveria Mannelli, 2002).

¹⁵² Secret telegram from Heidelberg Germany to the State Department, 28 June, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64; Gianni Flamini, *L'Italia dei colpi di Stato*, Roma, 2007 p. 82.

communications stepping back from the most revolutionary reforms.¹⁵³ Big projects such as the nationalization of electricity in Italy under ENEL (*Ente Nazionale per l'energia Elettrica*), the proliferation of state-owned companies such as the Italian Telecommunication Agency (SIP), and the implementation of redistributive policies were mainly implemented during the first years of the centre-left government under the pressure of the Socialist Party. Between 1965 and 1968, despite having a sufficient majority on paper to carry out substantial reforms, the government performed poorly. Without having been implemented in practice, the 'Solo Plan' achieved its goals.

Within Italian political circles, speculation abounded regarding the supposed support of the Johnson administration for De Lorenzo's plan in Italy. 'The American acceptance of the *coup d'état* in Brazil in March 1964' writes Arthur Schlesinger Jr. after his visit to Rome in April 1964, 'had encouraged the right to believe that American would accept a similar development in Italy.'¹⁵⁴ Analysis of the documents, however, shows that American officers, although aware of De Lorenzo's intentions, saw it as 'wishful and unrealistic'. They did not support it, nor did they intervene, favouring instead a political solution.¹⁵⁵

US strategy in Italy, as articulated by Wal Rostow, was 'to continue to neutralize the Italian left by splitting it in two and not repressing it by force

¹⁵³ Giorgio Galli, *Affari di Stato* (Milano, 1991) p. 94.

¹⁵⁴ Notes on Italian Situation from Arthur Schlesinger Jr., April 23, 1964, LBJ Library, Papers of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁵⁵ Memorandum for the President from Dean Rusk, December 5, 1963, Folder Italy Moro Correspondence, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Special Head of State.

and police.’¹⁵⁶ In other words, the idea was to continue supporting the centre-left formula as the only viable option. As noted by Thomas Hughes of the State Department Intelligence Bureau, ‘[t]he greatest strength of the Moro government lies in the lack of any likely or palatable alternative to it.’¹⁵⁷ This strategy was endorsed by influential Italian political figures such as the economist, Giovanni Pieraccini, former director of the *Avanti* and Italian Minister of Budget under the Moro government. Talking to an American officer in 1965, he noted that, ‘despite the fears of some that the centre-left would open the road to Communism, in fact the Communist Party campaigned more violently against the centre-left than against any previous government.’ The reason, according to Pieraccini, was the fear that the centre-left, if able to carry out its program of reforms, would have drained the Communist movement of all its remaining content.¹⁵⁸

Within this framework, ensuring the stability of the Italian centre-left government, reducing the influence of the Communists, and being careful not to feed the ambitions of the extreme right, were identified as the main

¹⁵⁶ From W. Rostow to Department of State, Report on My Trip to Rome, June 39, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁵⁷ The Moro Government: Prospects for Italian Political Stability, Memorandum from Bureau of Intelligence and Research to the State Department, January 11, 1964, NARA, RG 59.

¹⁵⁸ The Italian Internal Situation, Memorandum of Conversation between Thomas C. Mann, Undersecretary for Economic Affairs and Giovanni Pieraccini, Minister of the Budget, July 15, 1965, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (2 of 2), National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

objectives of US propaganda in Italy during the first three years of the Johnson administration.¹⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the 'basic reforms' indicated by Pieraccini and many others as the *raison d'être* of the centre-left government, were slow in coming. Most Christian Democratic leaders seemed more interested in using the 'opening to the left' as a tool to isolate the Communists, rather than a way to carry out the social and administrative reforms that were needed in Italy. At the same time, the economic recession that had threatened the Italian economic miracle since 1963, imposed a downsizing of the reform agenda of the government in favour of anti-inflation policies, increasing the discontent of the Socialists.

In an attempt to avert a crisis, but lacking a consistent programme, the Moro Government pursued a series of measures, some successful and others less so. Under the combined effect of wage increases and a decrease in profits and exports, a rapid flight of capital abroad began in 1963. Following the nationalization of electricity, with ENEL becoming the second largest Italian industry by revenue, most of the reimbursements paid to the former owners of the old plants had, in fact, ended up abroad. With the little capital remaining State companies began to proliferate in the steel, telecommunications, and automotive industries (SIP, Alfa Romeo). These companies often ran deficits.

On the US government's part, the emphasis on 'modernization', so widely

¹⁵⁹ Country Plan for Italy, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (1 of 2), National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

proclaimed by Kennedy at the time of the centre-left's formation, seemed to have degenerated almost immediately into a cautious preservation of the status quo. While frequently declaring its 'support for the liberal/ progressive program of the centre-left', the Johnson administration did not make any concrete effort to stimulate structural reforms, fearing that the Socialists would take over in the coalition and endanger the moderate line. From this perspective, the centre-left was seen more as a stabilizing factor than as a chance to produce substantial changes in the backward Italian structure. As noted by Italian historian and politician Roberto Gualtieri, the 'most attractive aspect of the centre-left was probably its broad parliamentary majority, which seemed to guarantee a less expensive and more self-sustaining way of containing Italian Communism.'¹⁶⁰

According to Gualtieri, the attitude of the Johnson administration was also moderate in the economic field, where the 'orthodox economic approach of American Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon prevailed almost immediately over the alleged reformist line of Rostow and Schlesinger with the moderate line of Bank of Italy's governor Guido Carli, finding crucial support in Washington.' Gualtieri was referring to the \$733 million loan granted by the United States to alleviate the Italian deficit of payments. He defines Carli's moderate line as identifying the roots of the crisis in the wage increases of 1960-62. He 'adopted a line of credit restriction resulting in a 'reduction in the

¹⁶⁰ Gualtieri, 'The Italian political system and détente', p. 431.

level of prices and wages, a substitution of internal with external demand and a dramatic decrease of investments.’¹⁶¹

It is difficult to say whether supporting Carli’s line actually meant favouring a ‘moderate’ line on the part of the United States. Given Carli’s tenure and his internationally recognized competencies, Johnson and his advisers saw in him the most reliable figure to carry out a plan of reforms to overcome the economic impasse. More importantly, however, Gualtieri’s analysis suffers from unilateralism by not taking into account the role of Italian actors, in this case Carli himself, in orienting American government choice. As the governor of the Bank of Italy beginning in 1960, he had repeatedly supported the position of the US dollar within the Bretton Woods’ system, and with the worsening of the economic crisis in Italy, he was soon convinced that there was a possibility to ask for a loan from the American authorities rather than from the Europeans.

He therefore presented himself as privileged interlocutor to Dillon, as well as to the Undersecretary for Monetary Affairs, Robert Roosa. Neither was initially persuaded that it was up to the American government to grant a loan to the Italians. They believed, instead, that it was the duty of the Europeans to support their neighbour. With that in mind, Carli planned his trip to Washington in March 1964 where he met with the Under Secretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs, George Ball, presenting him a ‘detailed

¹⁶¹ Guido Carli, *Cinquant’anni di vita Italiana* (Rome, 1996); Gualtieri, ‘The Italian political system and détente’, p. 431.

account of the Italian economic situation', and later with Roosa, with whom he negotiated an agreement for a total of '\$733 million of assistance in one form or another.'¹⁶²

In addition to Carli's determination and his assurances that the Italian government was doing everything possible to solve the crisis, what convinced American officials was the current intensification of a speculative attack on the lira. The loan, as notes Elena Cavalieri, also had a political significance as a demonstration of support and trust for the Italian centre-left government. In particular, it was an attempt to help them overcome the reform-stabilization dilemma which placed the Socialists in conflict with the Christian Democrats, threatening to cause an irreparable rift. In spite of the Socialist quest to prioritize social and structural reforms, requiring State funds which the stabilization plan required to cut instead, Carli proposed the so-called 'two times policy' (*politica a due tempi*): stabilization first, aimed at reducing the overall demand and encouraging the reconstruction of savings and the return of capital from abroad, and then a plan of structural reforms.¹⁶³

It is true that among Carli's aims when requesting the loan was that of weakening the position of the Socialists within the government. It is also true that the Johnson administration did not push hard enough in binding the loan

¹⁶² Memorandum of Conversation between Governor Carli and Under Secretary Ball, Washington, March 11, 1964, NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POLI T-US; Memorandum From Secretary of the Treasury Dillon to President Johnson on the Agreements Reached between Under Secretary Roosa and Governor Carli of the Bank of Italy, Subject: Financial Assistance for Italy, Washington, March 13, 1964, LBJ Library, National Security File, Country File, Italy, Vol. 1. Confidential.

¹⁶³ Elena Cavalieri, 'Un prestito al centro-sinistra. Gli Stati Uniti e il prestito all'Italia del Marzo 1964', *Rivista di Storia Economica*, 25: 2 (August 2009) p. 259.

concession to the realization of structural reforms along the lines desired by the Socialists. More than to block the Socialists, however, the American officers agreed to the loan because trusting Carli's line seemed to them the most rational way at the time; rational, in their view to ensure the survival of the government in the face of rising protests and the increasing pressures both from the Communists as well as from the extreme right.

In any event, Johnson's policy could be seen as moderate, not only on the economic, but also on the political front. Johnson's decision to keep Reinhardt, who had served in the country since 1961, as US Ambassador in Italy had actually been interpreted by many of Kennedy's devotees within the USIA as a reflection of his determination not to take any risk in a sensitive area like Italy, rather than mere continuity with the previous administration's 'progressive drive'. A longtime diplomat and moderate in thinking, Reinhardt was quite unpopular among the liberal and progressive Kennedy advisors for his old-fashioned 'cold war' outlook on Italian affairs. He was blamed by Schlesinger in his book, *A Thousand Days*, for having 'stubbornly opposed' the advent of the centre-left in Italy, while Averell Harriman, Undersecretary of State for Public Affairs in 1963, often lamented as obsolete the analyses from the US Embassy in Rome, advocating Reinhardt's replacement with someone more 'in line' with the New Frontier.¹⁶⁴

Although Reinhardt was not a conservative, his reports were often

¹⁶⁴ Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e L'apertura a Sinistra*, p. 622.

characterized by a certain degree of alarmism. Worried and confused by the continuous wrangling and reshuffling of Italian politics 'he tended to exaggerate the potential appeal of the Communists to left of centre groups' – an appeal which threatened to increase given the changes underway within the Communist Party at that time.¹⁶⁵

The Italian Communist Party and the doctrine of 'Unity within Diversity'

In the fall of 1964, two important events altered the world scenario with inevitable repercussions on Italy. On 15 October, Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, was deposed in favour of the younger Leonid Brezhnev. Next day, China successfully exploded its first atomic bomb. The change in Soviet leadership occurred in a moment of reflection within the Italian Communist Party, both at the national level and in its relationship with the CPSU. On 21 August, former PCI leader, Palmiro Togliatti, had died in Yalta leaving behind a memorandum – later known as the *Memoriale di Yalta* (the Yalta Memorial) – in which, alongside its plain critique of Kremlin domestic and foreign policy, he expressed his firm stand for the autonomy of the Italian Communist Party. He wrote: 'The movement's unity must be achieved in the diversity of the parties'

¹⁶⁵ Brogi, *Cofronting America*, p. 267

concrete political positions conforming to the degree of development in each country.’¹⁶⁶

Considering the progressive departure of the Italian Communist Party from Soviet orthodoxy, and its shift toward more moderate positions, there was a growing concern within the US administration that the Communists would increase their grip on Italian public opinion, and the centre-left would end up opening the road to the PCI. In the summer of 1965, US Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Thomas C. Mann expressed these concerns: ‘When the non-communist elements are weak and the communists begin to say they are independent from Moscow and ready to cooperate democratically, at that point liberty is in danger!’¹⁶⁷

The alarmist behavior of certain Italian politicians helped to fuel US fears. First among these politicians was President Segni who repeatedly emphasized the subversive aims of the PCI, seeking assurances that the US would provide military assistance to thwart a Communist coup attempt if the Italian Government should appeal for such help. During his official visit to the US in 1964, Segni conveyed to President Johnson his fears that the USSR would use détente to advance its purposes through foreign communist parties,

¹⁶⁶ Memorandum of Comrade Togliatti, Yalta, August 1964, *Rinascita*, September 5 1964, Preservation Copy, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, box 34, Italy 1964-1966; From Thomas L. Hughes Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) to the Secretary of State, Togliatti’s Memorandum: An Updating of Communism, September 9, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, box 34. Folder Italy 1964-1966.

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Thomas C. Mann and Italian Minister of the Budget Giovanni Pieraccini, Subject: The Italian Internal Situation, July 15, 1965, , National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

specifically meaning the Italian Communist Party.¹⁶⁸

Causing concern was also the decline in votes for the DC in the previous 1963 elections, while in the face of the recent economic recession, PCI consensus seemed to be on the increase.¹⁶⁹ Similarly however, there were a number of authoritative Italian voices ready to exclude the possibility of a communist coup in Italy. 'In our country', explained Pieraccini, 'one must distinguish between the electoral record of the Communist Party and its actual strength.'

The many economical and social changes have increased the general level of discontent, and people who are dissatisfied with their life or have grievances tend to vote communist without being communists. The problem of making people aware of freedom, though, no longer applies and the democratic tradition is firmly held by the great majority of people, including socialist forces.¹⁷⁰

Like Pieraccini, a growing number of intellectuals and politicians in Italy saw the PCI as a legitimate interlocutor with which to deal through regular institutional channels. Several influential Italian figures such as Ugo La Malfa and Altiero Spinelli, acknowledged in the US as democratic and liberal, conveyed to American officers the message that the various characteristics of

¹⁶⁸ Visit of President Segni of Rome, January 14-15, 1964, Folder Italy Segni Visit Briefing Books (1 of 2), National Security File, Europe, USSR, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 198, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (2 of 2).

¹⁶⁹ In the 1963 elections, the PCI increased its votes by approximately 3 points from 22.7 % to 25.3% (therefore reaching around 8 million voters), while the DC lost votes, going from 42% in 1958 to 38% in 1963.

¹⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation between Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Thomas C. Mann and Italian Minister of the Budget Giovanni Pieraccini, Subject: The Italian Internal Situation, July 15, 1965, , National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197.

the PCI made it different from other Communist parties, and reflected elements of rational and positive change.

From the US perspective, by the mid-sixties a more balanced view of Italian communism was slowly and cautiously beginning to emerge within certain sectors of the Administration. An NSC document prepared for Johnson in view of the visit of Prime Minister Moro in March 1965 recognized that although PCI policy was linked to Moscow, a 'substantial degree of autonomy existed and seemed to be on the increase.' The emerging question was whether, if the PCI was to achieve effective autonomy, 'democratic parties could or should consider cooperating with it on a limited basis, as some left-wing elements in the government already advocated.'¹⁷¹

The official line of the Administration, however, towards the PCI remained that of exclusion, stressing the necessity for the Italian government to 'reject any suggestions that it could safely cooperate with the Communists on a limited basis, even if the PCI would become effectively independent from Moscow and would adopt the trapping of a democratic party.'¹⁷² Given the international scenario, it was much too early for the American mindset to conceive the PCI as a suitable, legitimate coalition partner, without a parallel development among Communist parties elsewhere, including the Soviet Union.

Yet, the mere fact that the issue was starting to be discussed within certain

¹⁷¹ Talking Points, Visit of Prime Minister Moro, April 20-21, 1965, National Security File, Europe, USSR, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 198, Folder Italy Moro Visit (1 of 2).

¹⁷² Ibid.

sectors of the administration marked a significant change from previous years. Nonetheless, the first systematic contacts between US officers and members of the Italian Communist Party, would have to wait the autumn of 1969 when, as shall be seen in a later chapter, American diplomats were instructed by the Nixon administration to initiate some 'explorative contacts' with the Communist leadership.¹⁷³

Isolating the PCI and weakening the Communist grip on Italian public opinion remained, as in the previous decade, the main task of the USIA during the Johnson years.¹⁷⁴ In the current Italian situation, however, this proved to be an even more delicate task. Given the high polarization of the Italian political system, American officers had to be careful not to feed the ambitions of elements such as De Lorenzo, and in general, of the extreme right. Arthur Schlesinger, commenting on the gravity of the 1964 Italian economic crisis, noted that in the event of a bad recession and massive underemployment, the immediate beneficiaries would most likely be the right, and not the left.

Depression, most feel, would increase polarization in Italian politics, put the centre-left out of business, bring in the right, drive the democratic left toward the Communists, and prepare the way for a popular front movement in a few years. The pessimists think that the right will try to rule by

¹⁷³ Valerio Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia, Tra distensione europea e crisi mediterranea 1968-1975*, (Rome, 2009).

¹⁷⁴ Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, January 25, 1966, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency 1964-1967, LBJ Library, box 33.

violence and would provoke counter violence from the left.

175

In May 1965 at *Hotel Parco de' Principi* in Rome, a large group of military personnel, nostalgic fascists, journalists, MSI congressmen and exponents of extra-parliamentary groups of the extreme right gathered together for a meeting organized by the Institute for Military Studies *Alberto Polio* and funded by the SIFAR.¹⁷⁶ Object of the meeting was the coordination of the efforts to face the communist threat in Italy. 'We fight Marxism and express publicly our willingness to fight it, by giving back to the communists the same terror they imposed to the world' declared Enrico De Boccad, co-founder of the Polio Institute, when opening the meeting.¹⁷⁷ Among the participants were Renato Mieli, founded of ANSA – the main Italian press agency – a Jewish journalist, he left Italy during fascism and came back in 1944 with the allies' liberation as a PWB officer. Of communist faith, he became director of *l'Unita'* and then guided the PCI Propaganda Section until he changed camp completely after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. He then became a fierce anti-communist and created the Centre for Economic and Sociological Research of Eastern Countries (Ceses), in charge of organizing seminars and conferences to 'spread the truth' about the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Notes on Italian Situation from Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., April 23, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196 ,Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁷⁶ More specifically, according to Philip William, the meeting was funded by the Office for the Economic and Industrial Research (REI) within the SIFAR and directed by Colonnello Renzo Rocca.

¹⁷⁷ Philip Willam, *I burattinai. Stragi e complotti in Italia* (Naples, 1993).

¹⁷⁸ 'E' Morto a Milano Renato Mieli', *La Repubblica*, Archive, May 22, 1991.

Other participants were MSI Senator Giorgio Pisanò, Pino Rauti, founder of the neo-fascist organization *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order). Edgardo Sogno, fierce anti-Nazis and anti-Communist who during the resistance contributed to create the *Organizzazione Franchi* a monarchist military organization linked to the British Intelligence Service. In 1951, after entering the diplomatic career, he was named member of the NATO *Planning Coordination Group* and was awarded with the Bronze Star Medal by Eisenhower for his military achievements. In the same period he founded the anti-communist semi-clandestine organization *Pace e Libertà*' (Peace and Freedom) – affiliate of the French organization *Paix et Liberté*, supported by the CIA –with its journal of the same name, aimed at intimidating the communists, especially workers, through propaganda and psychological warfare operations. In 1974 Sogno was accused of being responsible, together with Randolfo Pacciardi of the so called *Golpe Bianco* (White Coup) – a new *coup d'état* attempt aimed at thwarting the rise of the Italian Communist Party and establish a semi-presidential republic modelled on the French.¹⁷⁹

The Conference of Parco de' Principi, which went quite unnoticed at the time, gains importance both in relation to the recent De Lorenzo coup attempt and in the light of what will happen in Italy in the next two decades. It testifies, in fact, to the atmosphere that characterized a certain part of the country in those years. When

¹⁷⁹ N. Bobbio; M. Viroli, *Dialogo intorno alla Repubblica* (Rome-Bari, 2001), p. 35; E. Sogno, (interviewed by A. Cazzullo) *Testamento di un anticomunista. Dalla Resistenza al Golpe Bianco: Storia di un Italiano*, (Milan, 2010); G. Flamini, *I pretoriani di Pace e Libertà. Storie di guerra fredda in Italia* (Rome, 2001).

interrogated by the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Terrorism, Giulio Andreotti, Minister of Defence at that time, said:

It is not a phenomenon but is part of a cultural trend matured in previous years and that will last until the early 70. We are facing not only the obsession for the communist threat, but also a real phobia for relaxing between East and West, largely perceived as a Trojan horse through which communism aimed to tear down the fortress of the West.¹⁸⁰

On a less extreme note, a few months earlier during a conversation with Schlesinger, Socialist leader Pietro Nenni shared his fear for the increasing polarization and for the possible drift to the right of Italian politics. ‘The spectre of De Gaulle is haunting in Italy, the right would gain now, the Communists three years from now’, explained Nenni, anticipating the possibility of what he called ‘soft-Gaullism’, marked by ‘a conservative domestic policy, and an independent foreign policy – following the French line with respect to the European integration and NATO.’¹⁸¹

Whether the threat came from the right or from the left, what caused great concern in the US was the lack of guarantee under the Italian political system that any government would have sufficient stability to carry out reforms, resulting in further deterioration of the economy and plunging the country into chaos. In only Johnson’s first two years in office, Italy experience

¹⁸⁰ Giovanni Fasanella, *Il Golpe Inglese. Da Matteotti a Moro: le prove della guerra segreta per il controllo del petrolio e dell’Italia* (Milan, 2011), p. 225.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

two governments and numerous cabinet reshuffles, making it difficult to maintain the necessary majority to pursue any programme.

‘In such a mess, we are giving much thought to what might be done, and how the US can contribute to ameliorate the situation’, wrote Ambassador Reinhardt.

It is, especially now, most necessary that the US continue to provide Italy with the firmest of leads in foreign affairs. Apparent slackening of interest or leadership on the part of the US, or apparent withdrawal from active policy towards Europe and Atlantic unity, would in fact serve to increase Italian disorientation and perhaps allow Italy to drift towards an alternative external power centre.¹⁸²

The instrument to prevent Italy from going in a direction hostile to the US, was thus identified in a solid anchorage to the Atlantic Alliance and in the advancement of the European integration process.

Italy in the Euro-Atlantic Context

Notwithstanding Italy’s active role in the first post-war decades in the European integration process, as well as in the initial stages of the Atlantic alliance, the government’s top priority during the Johnson years was still to secure its position

¹⁸² From Reinhardt to Department of State, January 14, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Cables, Vol. II, 7/64 – 12/64.

as a firm and stable ally in the Euro-Atlantic context , for both domestic and international policy reasons.

On the domestic side, when Italy was considered for the post of NATO Secretary General, which it obtained in the summer of 1964 in the person of Manlio Brosio, Reinhardt judged it as positive for Italy to be given a position of such prestige. He thought 'perhaps it would help raise sights of some Italian leaders above the humdrum of internal political bargaining which have been occupying their attention so much for so long'. He also saw it as an opportunity to stir the Socialists 'out of their super-cautiousness on things international and their sensitivity about military commitments.'¹⁸³

On the international side, following the recurring crisis caused by De Gaulle's attempts to disentangle Europe from American hegemony – which culminated with France's withdrawal from the integrated military structure of NATO in 1966 – the US Administration became gradually more aware of Italy's potential as a mediator. The Italian government played an important role throughout the 1960s to prevent an open split in the western camp, by supporting the prominence of the Atlantic Alliance not only as a system for ensuring US military protection in Europe, but also as a forum to debate international issues.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ An old exponent of the Italian Liberal Party, conservative in domestic politics and pro-American in his foreign policy views, Manlio Brosio seemed to perfectly meet US requirements. From Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, December 1, 1963, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 19, Folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

¹⁸⁴ CIA Memorandum: Political Trends in Western Europe, 9 February 1965, , LBJ Library, Paper of Lyndon Baines Johnson President 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Albania, Austria, box 163, Folder Europe Memos (1 of 2), Vol. III 8/66 – 8/67.

Italy's main concern, in the eventual case of France dropping out of NATO, was to be 'left out', because the centre of gravity of the alliance would swung to the north. The US knew they could count on Italian pressure on France not to abandon the organization. 'The request for Italian thinking about constructive action might elicit something,' commented the Department of State Counsellor in the spring of 1966, 'we know that Italians have been cogitating about this.'¹⁸⁵ In a conversation with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, during his visit to Rome in April 1966, Italian foreign minister Amintore Fanfani emphasized the risk represented by De Gaulle's anti-NATO policy, not only for the West but also for the entire world balance. A breakdown of NATO would remove important restraints on Germany, 'opening the door to independent and possible aggressive developments.' Fanfani depicted NATO 'as the base of security which permitted free and frank discussion to take place, impeding nationalistic forces to weaken the structure and upset the balance.'¹⁸⁶

The Italian government position on the Multilateral Force (MLF) was, instead, less clear; in Rostow's words, it had from the beginning 'the sound of an uncertain trumpet.'¹⁸⁷ Despite repeated private avowals of strong governmental interest for the US proposal to produce a fleet of submarines and warships armed with nuclear

¹⁸⁵ Memo for the President from Department of State Counselor and Chairman Policy Planning Council, May 21, 1966, National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (1 of 2).

¹⁸⁶ Gromyko visit to Italy, Memorandum of Conversation with Fanfani, 24 Apr, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 197, Folder 2, Italy Cables, Vol. IV, 12/65 – 12/66.

¹⁸⁷ Memo for the President from Walt Rostow, October 12, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of Lyndon Baines Johnson President 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Albania, Austria, box 163, Folder Europe Memos (2 of 2), Vol. II 7/64 – 7/66.

ballistic missiles to be supervised by NATO teams, official support never materialized. The main reason was that the Socialists, newly admitted to the government coalition, feared that acceptance of the MLF would cost them support among their rank and file. Italian ambassador in the US, Sergio Fenoaltea, suggested stressing its 'leftish' implications, in order to make the MLF case better understood in Italy. One way, according to Fenoaltea, was to make the point that 'if MLF failed, it would be a victory for Gaullism and for nuclear proliferation.'¹⁸⁸ Prime Minister Moro called for further pressures from the American government to change the stand of the British on this matter. The Italian Socialist Party continued to postpone its decision on MLF, because of the opposition of the British Labour Party, using it, in Reinhardt words, 'as a shield not to take a decision.'¹⁸⁹

Despite the uncertainty of the Italian government on the MLF issue, Italian officers reacted with some dismay when, in the spring of 1965, the US finally decided to abandon the project in order to facilitate a future agreement with the Soviets on the limitation of nuclear proliferation. US change of heart on the MLF was interpreted as a loosening of US leadership in Europe. The continuous will on the part of the Italians to see a strong American involvement and support, both in Italy's internal politics and in the process of European integration, along with their

¹⁸⁸ Memo of Conversation between Ambassador Sergio Fenoaltea and Gerard C. Smith, June 5, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64,

¹⁸⁹ Telegram from Rome Embassy to the State Department, June 21, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

fear of being 'abandoned' by the US were features of Italian-US relations in the second half of the sixties¹⁹⁰

On the domestic front, some progress had been made in the previous two years to lift Italy out of its economic impasse. In February 1965 the «Financial Times» rewarded the Italian lira with the "Oscar of the Coin" for the resilience demonstrated after the crisis of the winter of 1963-64. The government, through a plan of exceptional funding for Italian companies in crisis, had managed to avoid an economic meltdown. On the other side, however, this marked the beginning of the opaque interweaving between business and politics that would characterize Italy for years to come. As Brogi notes: 'The masses may have been captivated by the myths of capitalism and rapid industrialization, but under the paternalist, corporatist rule of the Christian Democrats' many aspects of the 'Italian leap towards capitalism had been mismanaged.' Structural reforms such as urban reform, school reform and the reform of the bureaucracy, which in some instances dated back to Napoleon, had been sacrificed for the sake of investments in consumer goods.¹⁹¹

Despite the talk of the need to introduce reforms that would alter the fabric of Italian society, change was disheartening slow, leading to a gradual downsizing of US government expectations in Italy. 'The centre-left had not yet proven to be a solution to the problem of Italian stability,' commented the 1967 US Embassy

¹⁹⁰ Recent Comment on Multilateral Nuclear Force, June-July, 1964, USIA Summary 10/11/1963, USIA, Office Files of Frederick Panzer, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, box 468, Folder Department of State (1 of 3).

¹⁹¹ Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 250.

annual policy assessment referring to the previous year. 'It is by no means clear if the problem is susceptible of a solution, or that the solution, if available, would not be worse than to live with the problem. What it is clear', the document ended pessimistically, 'is that the centre-left is not going to be able in the near future to put through the basic reforms in the structure of Italian society which were loudly proclaimed when the government was formed in 1963.'¹⁹²

USIA activities in support of the government between 1964 and 1966 were sporadic and inconsistent, and the same happened with the annual covert operation program, in place since 1948 to fund and support the 'democratic forces' in Italy –notably the DC and later also the Socialist Party. Such assistance had already been significantly cut down during the Kennedy administration, following the observation that the US were not getting their 'full money's worth,' because what the Italian political parties needed, was 'not so much U.S. money as energetic administrative leadership.'¹⁹³ In the summer of 1965, referring to a new Italian request for more money, LBJ's National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy, objected:

having begun with a sympathetic view that money might beat the Communists, I have been entirely converted by detailed accounts of the efforts we have made, to get the Italian parties to do better with the money we have already given them. This would put the responsibility with them, where it belongs. . . .It remains true that the anti-Communist

¹⁹² Airgram from Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, box 2238, Folder Pol. IT-US, Pol. and Def., p. 3.

¹⁹³ Letter from the Director of the Office of Western European Affairs Francis E. Meloy to the Deputy Chief of Mission in Italy Francis Williamson, FRUS, 1964 – 8, XII, p. 18.

battle in Italy is one of politics and resources; but simple hand-outs and intelligently applied resources are two entirely different things.¹⁹⁴

By 1965, the annual covert operation program was further reduced. In the same years, the funds for American open propaganda suffered a similar fate. Such reduction in funding, combined with other factors, forced the USIA to a substantial change of strategy in Italy which will be the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Mc George Bundy to President Johnson, Washington, August 4, 1965, Subject, Italian covert political assistance, FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. XII, Western Europe, doc 116.

Chapter 3:

Adapting Public Diplomacy to a changing world

This third chapter focuses on the change in US public diplomacy strategy in Italy by the mid-sixties, as part of a broader change in the agency's European strategy, stemming from both a changing domestic and international environment as well as budget constraints. The growing unpopularity of US policies, coupled with the flourishing of local media in the sixties and new studies on propaganda, generated in fact a rethinking of USIA means and targets. This was accelerated by the progressive shift in the agency's resources from Western Europe to the newly decolonized countries. The last part of this chapter will explore in detail the relationship between USIA and Italian media, as well as the need, despite the cut, to maintain a sound public diplomacy programme in Italy during the Johnson years.

Shifting USIA Propaganda Priorities

As previously mentioned, it has been a subject of historiographical debate as to whether there was a defined and identifiable change in US propaganda strategy between the fifties and the sixties. In commenting on Brogi's work, Nuti argues that there is little evidence that in the 1960s the Kennedy and later

the Johnson's administrations 'willingly displayed greater flexibility' in dealing with the Communists, and generally with the situation of political, economic and social instability that characterized Italy in that period.

With regard to Public Diplomacy only, the analysis of the documents does actually reveal a distinct shift in USIA strategy towards greater flexibility. This started with Kennedy and continued during the Johnson's years. Indeed, not only was US public diplomacy strategy in Italy in the 1960s affected; the shift was actually part of a planned broader change in the USIA's strategy in Western Europe, stemming from both a changing domestic and international environment as well as budget constraints.

To spell this out more fully, the growing unpopularity of US policies at home and abroad, coupled with the flourishing of local media and information sources abroad, and new studies exposing the ineffectiveness of direct propaganda as a mean to influence audiences, generated a rethinking of USIA public diplomacy's strategy in Europe as a whole, including Italy. This rethink was accelerated by a progressive shift in the agency's resources from Western Europe to the third world. With the process of decolonization fully completed, during the Kennedy years the competition of the two superpowers shifted to winning support of the newly decolonized countries.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ On the shift of cold war priorities from Western Europe to the newly decolonised countries see Robert Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York, 2012).

The dramatic reduction in staff and field installations across Europe by the beginning of the 1960s required the USIA to transform its European strategy – a transformation that, given the typical inertia of large, established bureaucratic institutions, would not have otherwise happened so quickly. This led, on the one hand, to an even greater emphasis on reaching smaller but more influential target groups (the so called Public Opinion Moulders), and, on the other hand, to a modification of propaganda programs in the direction of greater flexibility.¹⁹⁶

In fact, by the time of Johnson's presidency, Western Europe had fell from first to fourth place among USIA worldwide priorities after South America, Asia and Africa. The ten years between 1956 and 1966 saw indeed a progressive downgrading of Western Europe in the allocations of US government funds for international information and cultural efforts. With the rapid increase in the number of new nations emerging from the decolonization process, high priority was assigned to 'non-Western' areas, where explaining American policies and objectives was felt to be much more important than in the sophisticated and highly developed nations of Western Europe.¹⁹⁷

As the USIA expanded its operations in South East Asia, doubled its posts in Africa, and radio VOA began new programs in Vietnamese, Swahili and Amharic, the agency's activities in Europe were progressively reduced to the

¹⁹⁶ USIA Appropriation, FY 1966, 14 June 65, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 31, p. 263.

¹⁹⁷ A Report on the Strategic Importance of Western Europe by Walter Adams, Sept. 1964, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, box 66, p. 4.

bare minimum.¹⁹⁸ During the three years of the Kennedy administration (1961-1963) USIA's European budget was reduced by 20%. Sergio Era, USIS Italy officer since 1949 until the agency's closure in 1999, recalls that when he went to Washington for Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, at USIA headquarters he was shown a world map where the small flags pointing USIS posts had been repositioned from Europe to the Third World. This process continued under the Johnson administration, when the USIA's European budget was progressively cut back until it reached a low point of \$7.2 million in 1966 (compared to nearly \$10 million in 1960), before gradually increasing to \$8.4 million in 1968.

A decisive factor in this shift of resources was the attitude of Congress. US congressmen, especially Republicans, had never been strong supporters of American information efforts abroad. They feared that, given the openly liberal and progressive tendencies of its staff, which for the most part had been trained within the propaganda agencies established during the Roosevelt years – such as the Foreign Information Service (FIS), the Office of War Information (OWI) as well as the Radio VOA itself – the USIA would have end up 'selling' abroad *New Dealist* and liberal values as 'American values'.

Since its creation in 1953, the Agency had thus to fight hard in order to prevent increasing budget cuts at the dawn of every fiscal year. Already

¹⁹⁸ In 1959 the USIA had 24 posts in 13 African countries, ten of them newly independent, by 1963 the posts were 55 posts in 33 African countries. By the end of the fifties the USIA also expanded its operations in countries threatened by insurgencies such as Thailand, Philippines, Laos, Congo and increasingly Vietnam. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, p. 92.

skeptical about the necessity of investing taxpayers money in an information programme designed to spread abroad values such as “democracy” and “freedom”, whose rectitude they saw as ‘self evident’, Congressmen were even more dubious when it came to Western Europe. The emergence of a new battlefield in the Third World gave their argument greater prominence, leading to the downgrading of USIA Western European programmes.¹⁹⁹

But there were protests, both within and outside the agency, against the budget cuts in Western Europe. Among the first to raise concern over the reductions was former president and father of the USIA, Dwight Eisenhower, who publicly deplored congressional attitudes toward Europe, urging a ‘considerable strengthening of USIA activities in that area.’²⁰⁰ In 1964, Carl Rowan, called it a ‘calamitous mistake’ to neglect Europe. ‘I have observed in Europe, a lingering attitude’, he explained, ‘an attitude that our enemies try to foster, that we are sort of an upstart country with no particular culture and no fit to have a position of world leadership.’²⁰¹

Despite the critiques, the Congressional decision was not reversed and the dramatic cuts in USIA budget and number of operations called for a redefinition of the agency’s strategy in Western Europe. In this process of

¹⁹⁹ Congressional Attitude on European Budget, July 28, 1965; Budget Reduction Western Europe, July 20, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 27, Folder USIA briefing papers on major agency problems.

²⁰⁰ Conversation between Frank Stanton and general Eisenhower, October 15, 1965, Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, Folder White House Library 1965, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 34.

²⁰¹ Carl Rowan during USIA Congressional Appropriations Hearings, March 2 1965, USIA News Clippings, NARA, RG 306, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, Historical Collection, Box 35, p. 32.

reorganization a key role was played by Robert A. Lincoln, former Assistant Director for Near East and South Asia, chosen as new Assistant Director for Western Europe by Edward Murrow right before his resignation in 1964. Lincoln followed a series of unsuccessful assistant directors for Europe who did not last in charge more than few months. Tom Sorensen defines him a 'breath of fresh air for Europe'. Thanks to him, he adds 'old ways of doing things were questioned, and new faces brought in.'²⁰²

Selectivity and a more economical use of our resources became the new mantra for the USIA's European operations. This meant, on the one hand greater emphasis on reaching smaller but more influential target groups and, on the other hand, structural reorganization. These are the themes of the following sections.²⁰³

Selectivity and Flexibility: keywords for a changing USIA strategy

As previously noted, the trend of re-orienting USIA's resources from the masses to the public opinion moulders in Italy had already been formalized in the mid-1950s. However, for almost a decade, US propagandists constantly wavered between the desire to reach the masses in such a way as to obtain the

²⁰² Sorensen, *World War*, pp. 151-52.

²⁰³ USIA Senate Appropriation Hearings FY 1966, 14 June 65, NARA, RG 306, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, USIA Historical Collection, Box 31, p. 263.

broadest possible support network for American policies, and the need to orient agency operations toward selected targets given the limited resources. This debate, combined with the inertia typical of every large bureaucratic institution, retarded a shift of policy. By the 1960s, however, the dramatic budget cuts marked the definitive end of the era of European mass saturation programs that grew out of the postwar period. In order to understand the implications of this policy change, we need to examine what had been done before.

In the 1950s, besides the organization of massive worldwide propaganda campaigns – such as ‘Atoms for Peace’ and the ‘People’s Capitalism’ – lasting for months and involving movies, exhibitions and PR operations, smaller local campaigns were also organized in Italy on the occasion of nearly every national election to stimulate support for the democratic coalition. Such campaigns included the most disparate activities directed at the various target of US propaganda: workers, trade union leaders, academics, journalists. Activities included the publication and distribution within Italian factories and workplaces of magazines, of pamphlets and leaflets celebrating American capitalist model and the benefits of US trade unions system. For example, the cover of one pamphlet featured a picture of a factory parking lot with a caption stating that ‘workers, in the US, drove every day to work with *their own* car.’ The message was that workers under the American system, unlike any other system – especially the Soviet – earned enough money to actually afford a car.

The next pages showed a series of photos showing the recreational activities organized by US trade unions: workers holding tennis rackets, lying by the pool with their families or at the theatre attending a show.²⁰⁴

By the end of the 1950's the USIA became also a leading publisher of newspapers and magazines worldwide. Over 57 magazines were published and distributed by the agency in more than 20 languages, and 22 daily newspapers in over 15 languages. Since 1954 the agency published its own magazine in Italian for an intellectual audience, *Mondo Occidentale*, featuring contributors such as George Kennan and John Steinbeck, and took care of the Italian translation of journals such as *Problems of Communism*, *America in Figures*, and the *Illustrated History of the US* that were then distributed to schools, public libraries and cultural institutions across the country.²⁰⁵

Problems of Communism, one of the most influential USIA publications, was a bimonthly magazine featuring article by leading American experts on communist culture and societies. Addressed to a selected audience of scholars and experts, *PoC* was the only USIA publication to obtain congressional authorization to be distributed within the United States. British magazine *The Economist* defined it 'one of a handful of serious Western guides to what was going on in the recesses of the Marxist-Leninist mind.' Although, according to Wilson Dizard – a longtime USIA officer – one of the most important tributes to

²⁰⁴ USIS Special Labor Packet, October 1953, USIA Press and Publication Service, NARA, RG 306, Feature Packets with Recurring Subjects 1953-1959, Entry 1003, box 11- 12.

²⁰⁵ Hansen, *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, p. 92.

the magazine came from the Soviet newspaper *World Marxist Review* which called it 'the marshalling of the maximum of brains and energy to place anti-communism on some semblance of scientific footing!'²⁰⁶

One of the most powerful means of US propaganda, directed to a much wider audience, was movies and documentaries. The USIA acted both as a producer – as with the movies on Kennedy and on Little Rock – as well as a distributor for Hollywood movies abroad. Not only did each USIS post have a theatre room to show American movies, they even had special jeeps outfitted with projectors take Hollywood movies around to the most remote parts of Italy, from the mountains of Abruzzo to the seaside villages in Campania.²⁰⁷

By the sixties, however, these mass propaganda campaigns were definitively curtailed and activities became more selective. USIS officers were instructed to develop relationship with the local authorities and key leaders and persuade them to organize joint initiatives and activities of interest for both countries. An example was a big event on the state of Italian economy organized in 1965 at the *Banca Toscana* (Bank of Tuscany) in Florence, co-sponsored by USIS and the Italian bank and including big names such as Dick Arndt and Richard Gardner. More emphasis was also placed on the so-called binational centres, institutions jointly sponsored by American residents and

²⁰⁶ Dizard Jr, 'Telling America's Story', p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Sergio Era, USIS officer between 1948 and 1999, Oral Interview, June 11, 2013.

nationals of host countries such as the various Italo-American associations throughout Italy.²⁰⁸

On the other hand, many activities had to be reduced or terminated. By the mid-1960s, expenditure for pamphlets and publications were scaled down by 35%. Trade unionists, schools and democratic party organizations, which relied on Italian translations of American magazines, would now receive only a reduced numbers of copies, or none at all. Also the circulation of *Occidentale* was reduced from a national distribution of 30.000 to around 23.000 copies by 1968, still among the largest of the serious publications in the country.²⁰⁹

Several USIS officers lamented a decrease in the quality of USIA cultural offerings. Adalgisa Pedani, USIS librarian in Milan for nearly forty years, recalls the 1950's as 'USIA golden age'. The agency, in collaboration with the State Department had hosted big names such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, and promoted tour of musicals such as *Porgy and Bess*, and *Oklahoma* and *Porgy and Bess* – described by Italian critics as 'one of the most important theatrical events of the last twenty-five years in Europe.' In the Sixties, by contrast, no such celebrities came to Italy under the auspices of the USIA.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Adalgisa Pedani and Sergio Era, Oral Interviews, July 8, 2013, June 11, 2013.

²⁰⁹USIA 30th Review of Operations, Jan-June 1968, Paper of Leonard Marks, Paper, LBJ Library; Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

²¹⁰ Adalgisa Pedani, Oral interview, Florence, July 8, 2013. From USIS Rome to Department of state, Educational exchange: Oklahoma, June 15, 1955, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 511-653, 1955-1959,

The major consequence of the 1960s budget cuts, however, was the closure of several USIS posts. Between 1961 and 1966 out of 11 USIS posts and cultural centres in Italy, only four were maintained (Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo). With the first cuts during the Kennedy years the offices in Venice, Bologna and Bari were closed, followed in 1966 by Florence, Trieste, Genoa and Turin. Notwithstanding the cuts, Italy – with an annual operating budget of over \$1,300,000 – remained the second largest programs in Western Europe, after West Germany and above France. To give an idea of the proportions, the agency's budget for the United Kingdom in the sixties fluctuated around \$300,000.²¹¹

Despite the rationality of claims that the newly independent countries should be America's major concern, and despite the fact that cuts in Italy had been proportionally smaller than in the rest of Europe (20% compared to the slash of 50% slash in the UK or 40% in France), voices arose, both within and outside the agency, against budget reductions for Italy. Frank Gervasi, *Washington Post's* correspondent and Chief of Information for the Marshall Plan in Italy between 1950 to 1954, called such a decision 'extremely dangerous', because it left the agency 'facing a communist antagonist able to

box 2199, NARA; Semi Annual USIS Report for Italy, January-June, 1955, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8.

²¹¹ In 1963 Germany had a budget of \$1,220,885, Italy of \$1,220,885 and France of \$1,195,921. In 1968 the budget rose slightly to \$1,562,073 in Germany, \$1,013,100 in Italy and \$1,026,135 in France. Far behind were the United Kingdom, which in 1963 had a budget of \$377, 599 and in 1968 of \$314,216, and Austria with \$350,017 in 1963 and \$307,050 in 1968. *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, November 1963 - January 1969, Murray G. Lawson, Bruce N. Gregory, Hugh W. Olds, Jr., Irving R. Wechsler, USIA, Washington, D.C., 1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA 1964-1967, box 1.

spend \$540,000 a year only for printed material, while the US will spend nearly \$1,300,000 for all media.' He also noted the special difficulty of USIS's job since, 'as a guest of the Italian government', the agency could not frontally attack 'a legally constituted entity' such as the PCI. Maybe, Gervasi continued, expensive USIS libraries located on European equivalents of Park Avenue could be considered 'wasteful' in friendly countries such as Britain, Belgium and Holland. But Italy, in spite of the pro-western orientation of the majority of its people, could not be judged a completely friendly country while it continues to have the biggest communist party, with its effective propaganda apparatus, west of the iron curtain.²¹²

Congressman Dante Fascell, chairman of the House 'Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movement', after carrying out one of the most comprehensive studies of the agency operations in Europe in the 1960s, expressed concern over the fact that all three USIA field installations closed in 1964 – Genoa, Trieste and Turin – were located in the North 'where the PCI was strongest and where it has continued to make gains.'²¹³ In addressing Fascell's preoccupations, Rowan – USIA director at that time – made clear that, given 'the sensitivity of the situation in Italy', not only operations in Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo would remain fully intact, but they also intended to

²¹² Frank Gervasi, 'USIA is Hobbed in Election Year', 1964, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Europe, Newspaper Clippings, 1951-1999, box 211.

²¹³ Letter to President Johnson from Dante B. Fascell, Chairman Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movement, Feb 19, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, Ex FG 296 3/20/68, box 316, Folder 11/21/63-3/10/64. In addition, they would take care of continuing the existing arrangements under which local organizations will operate what once were USIS libraries in Genoa, Trieste and Turin.

‘strengthen field activities stemming from Milan to the north, Rome to the center, and Naples and Palermo to the south.’²¹⁴

The rationale behind the policy of cuts and restructuring was that in the centralized systems of countries like France and England, where influence on public opinion radiated out from the capitals to the rest of the country, it made sense to concentrate USIA operations in London and Paris. In the summer of 1966 the four branch offices outside Paris (Strasbourg, Tours, Bordeaux, and Marseille) were therefore closed. In United Kingdom, where there were no branch offices outside the capital, the closing of the USIS library in London left the USIS office as the only ‘bastion’ of US propaganda in the country. In West Germany and Italy, however, where the centres of influence were regional capitals, the USIA’s approach was to reduce the number of fixed installations to those identified as the ‘key regions’ in terms of political importance.²¹⁵

In Rome, for instance, USIS presence was reinforced with the opening of a branch of the main USIS cultural centre, in Tor Pignattara, a low-income residential neighbourhood with a strong communist presence, far from the glamour of Via Veneto. An idea of Edmund Scheechter, Deputy Public Affairs officer in Rome, this was a unique experiment. ‘A remarkable example’, he said, ‘of the kind of thing that can be done to communicate with the too many Italians who have had no real contact with things American and no

²¹⁴ Letter from Carl Rowan to Dante B. Fascell, Chairman Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movement, House of Representatives, Feb 19, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, Ex FG 296 3/20/68, box 316, Folder 11/21/63-3/10/64.

²¹⁵ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, p. 10.

understanding of what the US stands for.' According to Sergio Era, who ran the centre after the closure of USIS post in Florence, the experiment was a great success:

As many as 50,000 people per year were dropping in at the centre, and some 47,000 were lending books – actually there were more of those steady costumers than there were books in the library! People just found out one day that we were here. Curiosity led them in the first time and they came back often after experiencing our 'open house' policy. They found out that they can come and go as they please, read our papers and magazines, attend our movies, concerts, and English courses, look at our exhibits and take books home.²¹⁶

The possibility to access the centre to read or borrow foreign books translated in Italian for free, through a regular membership subscription, today we might take it for granted, but it was actually a novelty at that time in a neighborhood like Tor Pignattara. The Centre's greatest achievement, according to Era, was the respect it had gained in the neighbourhood. The people of Tor Pignattara considered it 'their centre' and showed this feeling through their truly exemplary behaviour. He remarked proudly: 'The place still looked new after more than 2 years and the tens of thousands people who had come in'..²¹⁷

Unfortunately, to damage the Centre, a bomb was detonated in September 1966, leading to its early closure. In the next two years

²¹⁶ Ibid. Leo Wollemborg, 'Red Bastion Learns of US'" *Washington Post*, 31 March 1963.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

demonstrations and further explosions followed in front of the USIS offices in Palermo, Naples and Milan.²¹⁸

Targeting Italian Intellectuals

The other effect of the budget cuts of the mid-1960s was a greater emphasis on reaching small but more influential target groups, in other words intellectuals and journalists.²¹⁹

This strategy targeting was, however, somewhat complicated by the fact that most Italian writers, academics, philosophers and political scientists were situated on the left or far left of the political spectrum. This prevented US officers from having official contacts with them in the immediate post-war decade. This situation gradually changed from in the mid-fifties, as analyzed in the previous chapter. And yet, many of these intellectuals, although highly critical of aspects of American society, such as the unrestrained materialism and excessive individualism, felt a strong attraction to the new cultural and artistic products of America. Particularly by the second half of the sixties, a parallel increase of left

²¹⁸ USIS Staffing Patterns, 1966-1967, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 29. On 1967, 14 posts in Europe were damaged through mob, violence, riots, for a total estimate cost of \$7.080.

²¹⁹ USIA Senate Appropriation Hearings for 1966, p. 263, 14 June 65, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 31, NARA

wing intellectual dissent towards US policy in Vietnam was coupled with a growing attraction towards the anti-war movement and other countercultural expressions in the United States.

This ambivalence was evident in renowned Italian left-wing intellectuals such as Umberto Eco, author of *The Name of the Rose* and still regarded today one of the most internationally acclaimed Italian intellectuals; Beneamino Placido, journalist and expert of American literature; and Alessandro Portelli, Italian scholar of American literature and culture, contributor for the communist sympathiser newspaper *Il Manifesto* and member of the PCI. All of them were often critical of US policies, yet also regulars at the USIS libraries. 'We went there to search for books, to attend conferences, to watch movies,' recalled Portelli. 'We all felt a strong attraction toward America. We were curious. We wanted to know more.'²²⁰ Placido, in his book *Sognando l'America* ('Dreaming about America') recalls the strong attraction for this country of contradictions, as well as the afternoons spent at the USIS library searching for classics of American democracy.²²¹ Sergio Era described the close relationship between the USIS officers and Italian left-wing intellectuals, not only in the 1960s when the appeal of American dissent and counterculture had profound impact on those aiming for a change within Italian society, but also during the previous decade.²²²

²²⁰ Oral interview with Alessandro Portelli, Rome, December 5, 2012. Portelli today is Professor of Anglo-American literature at the University of Rome *La Sapienza*, he is also an oral historian and a well known musicologist.

²²¹ Umberto Eco, Beneamino Placido, Gian Paolon Cesarani (eds.) *La ricoperta dell'America* (Rome, 1984).

²²² Sergio Era, Oral Interview, June 11, 2013

In fact, the practice of targeting intellectuals had started in the mid-fifties in Italy, with USIS officers in the field already identifying left-wing intellectuals as suitable interlocutors for US propaganda. USIS field officers actually had an important role by the end of the decade in helping overcoming the negative stereotypes put forward by the Socialists about America, thus preparing the cultural ground for the forthcoming opening to the left in Italy.²²³

The opening to the left has been presented, in past historiography, as the result of the willingness of the Kennedy administration to abandon the ideological rigidity of the fifties, which limited the search for allies to the forces of the right and center, to include in the American orbit also non-communist and progressive leftist forces.²²⁴ This 'line of dialogue' however, despite the official stand of the Eisenhower administration excluding any contact with socialist and communist forces, had already been taking place in the field by the mid-fifties. At that time, parallel to the 'unofficial' recruitment by the CIA of leftist *intelligenza* in Europe through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), USIS officers had started to look 'openly' at left-wing intellectuals and journalists as possible interlocutors.²²⁵

As an example, in the selection of Fulbright grant recipients USIS cultural attachés had great influence by virtue of their numerous contacts with local intellectuals. Yet they often clashed with the State Department because of their

²²³ Intellectuals are here understood as people whose occupations deals with ideas and culture. From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, USIS Italy Country Action Plan 1955, From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, August 30, 1955, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8.

²²⁴ Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a Sinistra*.

²²⁵ On the CCF and, more generally, the CIA role in the Cultural Cold War waged by the United States in Europe see Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who paid the piper?: The CIA and the cultural Cold War* (London, 1999).

tendency to see the non-Communist Italian left as the best alternative to DC in the fight against communism (a viewpoint that also characterized the CIA in those years). It is no coincidence that many left-wing intellectuals, such as Giorgio Spini – prominent antifascist and one of the fathers of American Studies in Italy – were selected for Fulbright grants at that time, thanks to USIS pressure. Spini, in the introduction to his book, *Autobiography of Early America*, a crucial volume on historical thinking about America, recalls that his Fulbright grant enabled him to begin in 1958 his exhaustive research into the historical literature of colonial America. The USIS Library in Florence, with its extensive collections in American humanistic and social science studies, was another aid to Spini, as was the establishment of a course in American History at the University of Florence in 1954 by James Mocer, a USIA Public Affairs Officer. Spini became Chair of this programme in 1959.²²⁶

The USIA also gave strong financial support to the magazine, *il Mulino*. Founded in Bologna, a communist city which not accidentally also saw the birth of the British Council and the Italian branch of Johns Hopkins University, the magazine brought together a variety of cultural and political points of view: liberals, catholics, socialists, and even former communists who saw themselves as the first post-fascist generation. The magazine soon turned into an important review of scholarly work, and launched its renowned publishing house, still one of the most influential in Italy. Thanks to a collaboration with USIS, the new-born

²²⁶ Professor Spini's American History, Magazine USIA WORLD, VOL 2, No 2, July 1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 14.

publishing house was able to translate into Italian the works of Turner, Schlesinger, Miller, and other pillars of American history. In 1959, *Il Mulino* in collaboration with USIS, published a Collection of American History (*Collezione di Storia Americana*).²²⁷

Many of *Il Mulino*'s founders had close contacts with USIS officers in Florence and Genoa, starting in 1953. These included Federico Mancini, judge and member of the PSI; Gino Giugni, the father of the Italian Statute of the Workers, legislation protecting workers rights; Fabio Luca Cavazza, renowned journalist and later director of the main Italian financial newspaper, *Il Sole 24 Ore*; and Nicola Matteucci, one of the leading theoreticians of liberal constitutionalism in Italy.. They were regulars of the agency's libraries, and most were also selected for Fulbright grants to study in the United States. These reformist, left-wing intellectuals gravitating around *Il Mulino* had a key role in introducing to Italy the modern and progressive outlook later advocated by Kennedy and Johnson. Starting with the reception of Anglo-American sociology and political science, this progressive group contributed to a cultural and political legitimization of the American model of capitalism in Italy. Along with Banca d'Italia and Bocconi University, *Il Mulino* became the laboratory to create a new Italian ruling class.²²⁸

With a consumerist society starting to take hold in Italy because of the rapid economic boom, these 'modern' intellectuals began investigating the socio-political

²²⁷ *Collezione di Storia Americana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1959 in Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 260.

²²⁸ Marzia Maccaferri, 'Intellettuali italiani fra società opulenta e democrazia del benessere: il caso de "Il Mulino 1958-1968"', *Mondo Contemporaneo* 1 (2009) 44-77.

aspects of consumption. After twenty years of fascism and five of war, after leaving autarchy behind and enjoying a freer market system, the welfare of the 1950s and 1960s brought a deeply changed society. The focus of this new type of intellectual discourse, reflected not only within *Il Mulino* but also in other magazines such as *Mondo Occidentale*, published by the USIA beginning in 1954, and *Tempo Presente*, the magazine of the Italian branch of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), was the challenge posed by the transformation of lifestyles and culture as a consequence of rising capitalism and modernity.²²⁹

The new standard of living, with its access to consumption and leisure time, not only called for a redefinition of the relation between citizens and government, but also for the conceptualization of a new form of political legitimacy. Sandwiched between the harsh condemnation of capitalism voiced by the PCI on the one hand, and the criticism of consumerism expressed by the most Catholic component of the DC on the other, Italy needed a change of mind-set in the direction of a political legitimisation of affluence.²³⁰

Italy at this time was characterized, as Stephen Gundle notes, by a 'lack of a genuine secular culture.' Unlike France, Germany and England, where a shared secular culture linked to the State asserted itself gradually, in Italy rapid industrialization 'created an enormous cultural gap that only ideas, themes,

²²⁹ For a thorough analysis of these magazines see Maccaferri, 'Intellettuali italiani fra società opulenta e democrazia del benessere'.

²³⁰ Ibid.

products and norms of an American origin seemed able to fill.'²³¹ In plugging this gap, the Italian left-wing progressive intellectual had a crucial role by acting as a bridge between the inputs coming from the United States and the Italian people.

The so called 'question of affluence', argues Marzia Maccaferri in her thorough analysis of the main reformist-progressive magazines of that time, became the main topic of Italian intellectual discourse. The magazines worked hard to overcome the idea of consumerism as a 'sin' by reinforcing the connection, already publicized in Italy by the Marshall plan and later by the USIA, between the freedom of choosing between a variety of different goods and democracy. They also introduced a strong element of 'welfarism', typical of European and Italian political culture, by embracing the idea of affluence as a democratizing force and often expressed the ambition of extending welfare to all sectors of Italian society. Intellectuals such as Matteucci and Cavazza, already in the mid-fifties, identified the centre-left as the only political formation capable of providing adequate answers to this new aspect of the modernization process.²³²

In their willingness to deploy the non-Communist left on the front line in the fight for the affirmation of an American-like democracy in Italy, USIS officers in Rome went even further, by trying to persuade the State Department to grant a visa to the renowned former communist writer Ignazio Silone for a US tour.

²³¹ Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture 1943-1991*, (Durham, 2000) pp. 76; 75; 78.

²³² Maccaferri, 'Intellettuai italiani fra società opulenta e democrazia del benessere', 44-77.

It has been recommended that Ignazio Silone be given a grant to enable him to visit the United States. He has long been active in socialist circles . . . Affording a man of Mr. Silone's status an opportunity to visit the United States would have a definite advantage for the United States in that it would stimulate discussion of American ideas in high Italian intellectual circle and would produce articles in Italian journals which would be widely read and given credence.²³³

USIS attempts at that time were not successful, and Silone had to wait ten years to obtain a visa to go to the United States but the famous pro-communist writer and journalist Alberto Moravia, close to the PCI, was somewhat luckier. In 1952 he was selected by the USIS for a two months trip to the US within the agency's Leader Program, a project that funded and organized US tours for foreign leaders and potential leaders. The State Department at first denied him the visa because of his political beliefs, but they reversed themselves in 1955 and granted it. Moravia later recalled, 'I couldn't go in 1952 because they did not give me a visa. The Russians didn't grant me a visa because they said I was too 'Atlanticist' and the Americans because I was not enough so.'²³⁴ During his trip he wrote a series of articles for *Corriere della Sera*, extremely critical of American mass culture and its capitalistic system, describing Americans as 'conformist and uncultured, small wheels of a gear and happy to be so.'²³⁵

²³³ From American Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Ignazio Silone, November 17 1953, RG 59 Central Decimal File 565.11.3, box 2569, NARA. Quoted also in Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 267.

²³⁴ Tobia, *Advertising America*, p. 261.

²³⁵ A. Moravia, 'Al fantasma dell'Uomo Medio è sottomessa l'intera produzione', *Corriere della Sera*, 12 Giugno 1955.

Nonetheless, a 1955 USIS report defines his 'lively, frequently critical articles' as an important 'literary event' in which he 'avoided the now stale, impressionistic type of articles, to which too many Italian Journalists are addicted.'²³⁶

This vision was quite farsighted on the part of an agency charged with 'selling the American model' abroad, at a time when the US administration prevented its officials from having any contact with leftists individuals. When such contacts were eventually encouraged by the Kennedy and later Johnson administrations, US officials could rely on a consolidated network of academics, journalists, businessmen and political leaders established in Rome, Milan, and other Italian cities by the USIS officers during the fifties. By 1955 the contacts were even organized in a list, named 'POM List' (Public Opinion Molders List), featuring most of the important names of in the Italian left-wing intellectual landscape.²³⁷

In addition to those who gravitated around *Il Mulino*, openly supported by the USIA, another important nucleolus of left wing, reformist thinkers revolved around the Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF), which counted among its ranks such writers as Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte, as well as Altiero Spinelli, one of the main ideologists of European integration, who was expelled by the PCI in 1937

²³⁶ Semi-annual USIS Repot for Italy, January-June 1955, July 20 1955, RG 84 Records of Claire Booth Luce 1955-1957, Entry 2783, box 8, NARA, p. 13.

²³⁷ Tobia, *Advertising America*, cit. p. 261; Gino Giugni, *La memoria di un riformista*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007, pp. 45-48, Operations Advisory Service Report on USIS Italy, September 20-November 16, 1956, RG 306, Inspection Reports and Related Records 1954-1962, Entry 1045, box 5, NARA.

for his harsh criticism of Stalin, and Ferruccio Parri, former partisan and head of the first Italian government of national unity in 1945. Springing from a conference of intellectuals in West Berlin in June 1950, the CCF gathered ‘some of the best minds of the West – representing a wide range of disciplines and political viewpoints — ‘determined to rebut the idea that Communism was ‘more congenial to culture in Europe than bourgeois democracy.’²³⁸

Through CIA agent Michael Jossensen, who acted as a liaison between the intellectuals and the agency, the CCF opened offices in 35 countries and organized exhibits, seminars, and conferences. It also funded over 20 magazines among which included *Encounter* in the UK, *Preuves* in France, and the previously mentioned *Tempo Presente*, founded by Silone and Chiaromonte in 1956. The CCF, along with the USIA, was at the forefront of the cultural cold war in Italy and had a crucial role in contrasting what was perceived as a communist cultural hegemony in Italy.²³⁹

According to a large part of Italian historiography, this communist cultural hegemony emerged in the immediate post-war years when the relation between politics and culture was re-established after twenty years of fascism and war. As Mariuccia Salvati explains, ‘a kind of mutual pact . . . was virtually signed after the Second World War by the DC and the PCI when they came from outside to occupy the spheres of power: the state (and its economic agencies) would be the land of

²³⁸ CIA Library website: <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/95unclass/Warner.html> URL consulted on 16 February 2014.

²³⁹ Saunders, *La Guerra Fredda Culturale*, p. XI

the DC, and civil society (culture, intelligentsia) the field of the PCI.²⁴⁰ Alessandro Pizzorno identified this virtual pact as representative of a consociational model in which, despite harsh ideological differences, the two parties provided each other with a mutual recognition and formed a sort of duopoly through which the Communists and Christian Democrats exercised influence over the country during the Cold War years.²⁴¹ This predominance of the PCI in the cultural sphere, along with the strong Catholic tradition of the DC, hindered the emergence of that progressive capitalism advocated by the United States. Therefore, these independent intellectuals, not linked to the DC nor the PCI, not only had a fundamental role as advocates of a 'new frontier' of reforms in Italy, but also in achieving a form of legitimization of capitalism in Italy.²⁴²

The apogee of the relationship between Italian, left-wing, reformist intellectuals and US government officials was reached during the Kennedy years, when the US began searching for forces willing to cooperate with the US in introducing the reforms needed for the modernization of Italy. During a conference in Bologna in April 1961, the group of *Il Mulino* advocated the birth of a 'European moderate left that could act as a shore of Kennedy's new frontier.' Cavazza, a great advocate of an American-style entrepreneurship culture in Italy, had a crucial role in connecting American supporters of the centre-left, such as Schlesinger, with

²⁴⁰ Mariuccia Salvati, 'Behind the Cold War: rethinking the left, the state and civil society in Italy, 1940s-1970s', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 8:4 (2000) 556-577.

²⁴¹ Alessandro Pizzorno, 'Categorie per una crisi', *Micromega*, 3, (1993) 81-96.

²⁴² Maccaferri, 'Intellettuali italiani fra società opulenta e democrazia del benessere', 44-77.

their Italian counterparts. The correspondence between Schlesinger and Cavazza, which began during the Kennedy administration, continued during the Johnson's first year of presidency, with Cavazza pushing for greater involvement of the American government in Italy to stimulate reforms and reduce communist influence.²⁴³

Subsequently, the departure of figures such as Schlesinger and Harriman from the White House, severed direct communications between Italian left-wing intellectuals and the US government. The centre-left government then became the most direct interlocutor with the Administration, while the dialogue with the intellectuals was left mainly to the CIA, with the more open facade being the CCF and the USIA.

As previously analysed, the budget cuts in 1965 led to an even greater emphasis on reaching this smaller but more influential target group, while the reduction in the number of fixed installations left more time for USIS officers to devote to this task. Free from the necessity of managing the posts, they could now travel around Italy, participate in conferences and seminars, create links with local universities, and cultivate personal relationship.

Throughout 1967 and 1968 the agency allocated nearly \$ 90, 000 for the International Visitor Program allowing 35 among politicians and professionals in different fields to visit America. Moreover, under the Department's of State Cultural

²⁴³ Letter from Fabio Luca Cavazza to Arthur Schlesinger, Subject: About the Political Crisis, July 14, 1964, NARA, RG 59; Letter from Fabio Luca Cavazza to Arthur Schlesinger, , Subject: Some Considerations on Italian Last Administrative Elections, Dec 9, 1964, NARA, RG 59.

Presentation Program, supervised by USIS in the field, between 1966 and 1968 performed in Italy artists from Marjorie Mitchell to the National Symphony Orchestra and the NY Philharmonic Orchestra.²⁴⁴

Greater attention was also given to the nature and quality of the material provided to Agency personnel in Italy. As Marks explained: 'To be able to persuade and "seduce" such a demanding audience, not only USIS officers have to be supplemented with better and more timely documentation and background material, which in the previous years had often been found inaccurate and deficient, but also they had to show a deep knowledge of the context they are dealing with.'²⁴⁵

Despite Marks' recommendations, criticisms related to USIA material did not stop, particularly in regard to the Wireless File, which was often found to be inaccurate and uninteresting, not only for an intellectual European audience, but for anyone who happened to read it. John Kenneth Galbraith, when Ambassador to India in 1961, reported in his diary:

The Washington USIA is horrible. Day after day it belches out dreary and boring attacks on the USSR and China in the most repulsive and stinking prose. Nothing could do more to promote neutralism, or anyhow total inattention . . . I can no longer read it for simple reasons of health; five minutes of this wireless file and one loses his breakfast and cannot eat the rest of the day. In two weeks it caused me to lose 20

²⁴⁴ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

²⁴⁵ Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, October 7, 1967, Folder White House Library 1965, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, Director of the United States Information Agency, 1964-1967, box 34.

pounds and I have prescribed it for the Saudi Arabian Ambassador who is badly overweight!²⁴⁶

‘Despite frequent cosmetic reassessment’, observed journalist Bruce J. Oudes on the *Washington Monthly* in 1970, ‘nothing in the intervening nine-plus years invalidates that description.’ According to USIS Italian officer Sergio Era, who also found USIA Wireless File anything but interesting and suitable for a sophisticated (or even for a standard) audience, the most effective means to make America understood by the Italians was through personal contacts. ‘I developed close relations, which in many cases became friendships, with several Italian journalists, academics and Intellectuals, and a great number of those influential personalities came from the left.’ Among these contacts, in addition to the aforementioned Eco and Placido, were influential leftist academics such as Ezio Raimondi, who once described himself as the ‘communist soul’ of *Il Mulino* and Gianfranco Pasquino, internationally renowned political scientist and later senator for the Independent Left. Pasquino was also linked to *Il Mulino*, which he directed in 1980-4, and to the Bologna Centre of the John Hopkins University, founded with strong USIA support, where he taught from 1976.²⁴⁷

To sum up, the role of intellectuals and the non-communist left in re-adapting and filtering the American message for Italians is important in order to understand the multidimensionality of what has been defined as the ‘Americanisation’ process

²⁴⁶ John Kenneth Galbraith, *A Life in Our Times: Memoirs* (Boston, 1981); Bruce J. Oudes, ‘Great Windmachine. One way to lower our voices: Abolish the U.S. Information Agency’, *The Washington Monthly* (June 1970) p. 33.

²⁴⁷ Sergio Era, Oral Interview, June 11, 2013.

in Italy. A large part of the previous historiography has presented Americanisation as an essentially unilateral process emanating from the United States and passively absorbed by the majority of the people, while stressing the cultural hegemony of the left in Italy, dominated by the Communists, which refused Americanisation *tout-court*. The research set out here refers, instead, to the successive strand of historiography which, particularly by the end of the nineties, explored the multidimensionality of the Americanisation process.²⁴⁸ This approach stresses the way Italian actors, in this case intellectuals, reacted, deconstructed, adapted and revised the “novelty” of the post-World War Two scenario, as well as the inputs coming from the United States.²⁴⁹

In fact, the process of dialogue between the USIA and those liberal Italian intellectuals was everything but unidirectional. On the contrary, by the mid-sixties, it was increasingly Italian intellectuals themselves who showed their willingness to act as channels and mediators. They were motivated partly by fascination with American modernity and its culture of dissent and partly by a desire not to lose their privileged role within Italian society, which they felt was threatened by the rapid changes and social unrest.

As previously analyzed, the POMs’ role was fundamental not only because it allowed the agency to channel its resources towards a well-defined

²⁴⁸ Tobia, *Advertising America*; Del Pero, *L’Alleato Scomodo*; Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra*, Guasconi, *L’altra faccia della medaglia*, Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement*; Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*; Pells, *Not Like Us*.

²⁴⁹ See Maccaferri, ‘Intellettuali italiani fra società opulenta e democrazia del benessere’, 44-77.

target but also because America's message would be accepted much more easily by people abroad if it were promoted by leading figures in local society. For this reason, the main recipients of the agency's propaganda were considered to be those who had not yet taken a stance with regard to the bipolar confrontation and those who had claimed to be 'in favor' of American policies as was the case with Italian reformist intellectuals. In the latter case, the purpose of the propaganda was to reinforce their position and offer them solid arguments with which to influence and lead the rest of the population.

American propagandists, for their part, were extremely farsighted, first in understanding the symbiotic relation between intellectuals, culture and politics in Italy and, second, in identifying and encouraging those influential figures who shared an American vision of progress and society to communicate that message to the larger population. Unlike England, France and Germany, where civil society had already reached an advanced stage of development, intellectuals in Italy often acted as a substitute for the public sphere: a sort of pre-modern condition in which they were perceived as mediators between the masses and political reality. This explains why the main target of USIA propaganda shifted from the masses to the intellectuals slightly earlier in Italy than in other Western European countries.

Even more important, existing historiography has not taken enough into account the crucial role that the liberal and left-wing intellectuals have had, not only in encouraging a pragmatic reformist path in Italy both at the political and cultural level, but also in infiltrating and modifying the Italian Communist Party

from within. As Italian investigative journalist Giovanni Fasanella pointed out in his introduction to F. Stonor Saunders' book, *Who Paid the Piper?*, the role of the non-communist left in Italy and its impact on Italian politics and culture have not been taken sufficiently into account by the existing literature. 'Beside a right wing anti-communism, represented by secret organs such as Gladio and P2', writes Fasanella, 'another form of anti-communism existed in Italy -just as tough and severe- but enlightened, progressive and even left-wing.'²⁵⁰

This left-wing '*partito Amerikano*' (American left-wing party) as Fasanella defined it, had two main implications for Italy. The first and more direct was to help spread and translate American values and vision in Italy by making them more 'digestible'. The second consequence, less direct, was the longer-term infiltration of liberal ideas within the Italian Marxist left. The fervent anti-communism of the intellectuals associated with *Il Mulino*, *Tempo Presente*, and the *CCF*, which was demonized in Italy in the fifties and early sixties, was progressively assimilated by the PCI to the point that elements of this critique were used to build its new identity. Reinventing its identity was necessary for the PCI because the party was losing its grip on the Italian people with the parallel advent of a more consumerist society and of a stronger internal dissent, particularly within the youth movement. The party, rooted in its traditional structure, struggled to respond to these significant changes. The PCI, therefore, consistent with its determination to act within established institutional tracks, used the non-Communist left as a channel

²⁵⁰ Introduction by Giovanni Fasanella of the Italian version of F. Stonors Saunders book: *La Guerra Fredda Culturale: La CIA e il mondo delle lettere e delle arti* (Rome, 2004).

for its democratic accreditation. Through this channel, the ideas of Silone, Chiaromonte, Croce and other Italian pro-American intellectuals progressively penetrated within the Italian Communist culture, facilitating processes such as euro-communism and the historic compromise between PCI and DC in the next decade.²⁵¹

Changing the media strategy: complementing local media

On the media front, the closure of several USIS posts around Italy, noted the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, ‘seriously restricted contacts with regional political organizations, youth, labor, and other elements long accustomed to getting information on US positions from these posts’. But, he added, on the other hand it resulted in an increased flexibility of USIA programmes. Overhead costs of fixed installations, according to USIA director Marks, were in fact depriving headquarters offices of funds that might be better used ‘to document US case with media and journalists.’²⁵²

Indeed, the increasing development and sophistication of the media in Italy led to dramatic change in USIA information strategy. U.S. public diplomats had to shift from providing finished material to the local media, to cooperating

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² USIA Appropriation 1966, 14 June 1965, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 31, p. 263; Sergio Era, Oral Interview, June 11, 2013.

with them. In the 1950s, with Italy still undergoing postwar reconstruction, there were little or no funds available to invest in the media sector. Italian correspondents abroad were scarce; likewise funds to cover international news stories. Radio, journals and magazines therefore welcomed finished articles, pictures and radio broadcasts offered for free by the USIA to fill the gaps in the programming. Reportage and articles on American domestic and foreign policy, as well as on more general international issues, were often accepted in full. The agency, for its part, was happy to spread US material through local media without having to reveal that it originated from the US government.²⁵³

In the 1960s, with the rapid economic growth, journals and radio could afford a greater number of journalists and correspondents without having to resort to US material. The local publishing market grew exponentially, touching in the mid-1960s a historic peak of readership in relation to the population, and journals such as *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *Il Messaggero* became increasingly influential. Moreover, the first of half of the sixties saw the rapid spread of the television with RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) having the state monopoly of the programming. In 1964 more than 75 people out of every 100 had a TV set at home and there were over 5 million RAI subscribers,

²⁵³ Semi-annual USIS Report for Italy, January-June 1955, NARA, RG 84, Records of Clare Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8, p. 24.

while by 1968 the audience was as high as 14 million viewers.²⁵⁴ So USIA became only one among many different source of information in Italy. As the Agency's vice director Henry Loomis pointed out few years after leaving office:

We have more competition and greater sophistication now. More newspapers are being put out, better Radio programs and local TV. This means that we cannot give them finished material like we always did, which is easier, cheaper and says what we want to say. Rather than that, we have to discuss with editors, we have to give clips that may or may not be included in program, may or may not be distorted.²⁵⁵

The emphasis thus shifted from distributing pre-confectioned news to providing background information useful to 'balance' sensitive news and events and 'put them in perspective'. The concept of putting into perspective, as we shall see when analysing USIA attempts to explain Vietnam and the racial issue to foreign audience, became a leitmotiv of the Agency propaganda strategy during the Johnson years.

The greater development of the media in the sixties, however, was not the only obstacle encountered by the agency in influencing the Italian press. Indeed, as emerges from various USIS reports, an even greater issue was actually the fragmentation of the Italian newspaper world and the

²⁵⁴ Monteleone, *Storia della Radio e della Televisione Italiana*; 'Noted Newsmen Join USIS Rome', *The USIA Correspondent*, 8:11 (Nov 1966), LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 14.

²⁵⁵ Talk by Henry Loomis to the Washington Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Jan 20, 1970, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, box 37.

subordination of the press to various political forces. With the end of the occupation, when Italian media were gradually released from the Allies' control, hundreds of different newspapers began to proliferate on the peninsula each tied to a different region, party and political movement. What continued to strike the agency's officials in the succeeding decades, was the absence of a newspaper that could properly be defined 'national'.

According to a USIS study by the end of the sixties there were 90 daily newspapers in Italy, with about two-thirds of them published in the north. Of the dailies, some ten could be said to be of national significance. Then there were hundreds of weekly and monthly magazines running the 'full gamut from serious intellectuals journals to the cheap quasi-pornographic variety'.²⁵⁶

The *Corriere della Sera* of Milan was the one that came closest to such definition of a national newspaper. Described by George Ball, Undersecretary of State for Agricultural and Economic Affairs under Kennedy and later Johnson, as 'the principal newspaper, spokesman for Italian industry and finance,' it was also seen as the 'closely approached a truly independent paper'.²⁵⁷ Owned by the Crispi's, an old, aristocratic family of liberal tradition, it was not linked to any political party and it always strove to maintain a moderate position. 'Then' explained a detailed USIA study on Italian press

²⁵⁶ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

²⁵⁷ Memo for the President from George Ball, Dec 18, 1963, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

'there was *Il Popolo*' 'funded by the DC and therefore presenting the government's position. *Il Mattino* was pro-monarchy and, despite a law prohibiting it, there were a number of neo-fascists newspapers such as *Il Secolo di Italia*', which in 1963 became the MSI's official organ. At the opposite side of the political spectrum were *l'Unità*', the official press organ of the Communist Party, and *l'Avanti*, mouthpiece of the leftist wing of the Socialist Party. Both of these, concluded the USIA report sternly, followed the line of Moscow in interpreting the news but having the best claim to influence outside of party members.²⁵⁸

The more receptive papers in terms of support for the Johnson administration policies were later identified by the agency as *La Nazione*, funded by the influential Italian National Fuel Trust (ENI) under the presidency of Enrico Mattei, and *Il Resto del Carlino*, directed by Giovanni Spadolini, a widely respected politician, journalist and leader of the Italian Republican Party.²⁵⁹

Although USIA reports offered an overly simplified picture of Italian press landscape, and made no mention to other relevant newspapers such as *Il Messaggero*, *La Stampa* and *Il Tempo*, it is hard to deny that Italy lacked a truly national newspaper and, most important, that the existing papers were closely

²⁵⁸ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

²⁵⁹ Cable to the President from Bess Abell, Aug 29, 1967; Memo to the White House press Office from Miss Mary Hunt, Jan 30, 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, box 44.

linked to the political forces. Paolo Murialdi, in his historical account defines Italian journals as 'mirrors of the opposite political alignments'.²⁶⁰

Such reality, according to the agency's studies, was also partially reflected in the contradictory views of the United States emerging from USIA surveys in Italy. From a pooled analysis of USIA survey results in 1964, it turned out that while more than 50% of the population expressed support for the United States, a similar percentage expressed faith – especially following the resolution of the Cuba crisis – that the Soviet Union was 'doing its best to preserve peace and achieve a relaxation of tensions'.²⁶¹ As a USIA study had already explained in the mid-1950s: 'Two sets of image either predominantly positive but also negative, or the obverse, regarding the two protagonists in the struggle between East and West exist side by side in the minds of many Italians.' US propaganda, in order to be effective, had to act where those images originated.²⁶²

As was explained by Charles Glock, an American sociologist expert on survey research, 'public opinion formation with regard to certain events depends on the interaction between three factors: the socio-cultural context – which influences individual perception of the news and events – the events

²⁶⁰ Murialdi, *La Stampa italiana*, cit. p. 85.

²⁶¹ Memorandum for the President, Public Opinion in Italy Prior to the Elections, Nov 1964, NARA, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, Special Reports 1953-1997, Entry P 160, Box 20,

²⁶² *Differential Images of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Italian Press*, Report Prepared for the USIA from the Bureau of Social Science Research (The American University), Oct 1954, NARA, RG 306, Country Project Files 1951-1964, Italy to Italy, Entry 1015, box 51.

themselves, and the way in which such events are presented'.²⁶³ Media in modern mass society express a dual relationship with both factors through the choice of presenting certain events rather than others, and especially through their choice of how to present it. In Italy, the conflicting views with respect to the two protagonists of the bipolar confrontation had led to a paradox whereby, despite a majority of the people declaring itself to be in favour of the United States, nearly 30% voted for a Communist party 'closely aligned with Moscow'. The structure of Italian press, according to a 1954 USIA study still strikingly current in the mid-1960s, had contributed significantly to this situation.²⁶⁴

In fact, an agency's comparative analysis of the 'images of the United States that emerged more frequently in the Italian press' showed that 'imperialist, aggressive and materialist' were those arising most often. This was partly due to the fact that in Italy the press organs of the socialist and communist parties, respectively *L'Unità* and *l'Avanti*, presented themselves as objective sources of news and were identified by the population as 'Italian newspapers' and not as 'propaganda' vehicles. This, according to the agency, created a situation of imbalance where 'the pro-communist press persisted in its presentation of predominant anti-American images *regardless of events*

²⁶³ Charles Y. Gloock, 'The Comparative Study of Communications and opinion Formation', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 16: 2 (1952), p. 521.

²⁶⁴ *Differential Images of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Italian Press*, Report Prepared for the U.S. Information Agency from the Bureau of Social Science Research (The American University), Oct 1954, NARA, RG 306, Records of the USIA Office of Research, Country Project Files 1951-1964, Italy to Italy, Entry 1015, box 51, p. 2.

while the non-communist press, on the other hand, reflected a greater sensitivity to events.’²⁶⁵

Prevented, for obvious reasons, from influencing the communist press, the agency’s efforts were thus directed at persuading newspapers such as *Il Corriere*, *Il Popolo*, *La Nazione* and *La Stampa* to avoid presenting America in a critical light. To counter the allegations of imperialism and ‘unipolarism’, the USIS press section sent to the Italian journals news stories that could highlight American efforts to cooperate with its allies within the frameworks of the United Nations and NATO, as well as its support to European integration. For what concerned Italy more specifically, emphasis had to be given to economic aid as well as official visits, exchanges and consultations, and more generally any occasion which could show that Italy was held in high esteem by the United States. Officers were also instructed that ‘it seems important to play up the fact that newspapers such as *l’Unità* and *Avanti* are, in fact, important cogs in the Soviet propaganda machine, although they purport to be solely concerned with the problems of Italy.’²⁶⁶

In fact, in the years following the opening to the left, Moro expressed more than once his preoccupation with the radical tone of *Avanti*, with its editor Riccardo Lombardi – head of the leftist wing of the PSI – adverse to the centre-left-often taking a line in direct opposition with the one supported by

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. vii.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. vii.

Nenni within the government.²⁶⁷ Further complicating the agency's mission was the fact that the newspapers, and the very idea of journalism in Italy, differed considerably from American norms.. In Italy, a report noted, 'journalists see themselves more as creative artists rather than as serious professionals'. This often led them to give more importance to the work of interpretation as opposed to objective narration of the facts.²⁶⁸

The most striking difference between the Italian and American press, pertains to their functions as conveyors of objective information. Italian newspapers do not pursue a code of journalistic ethics as American newspapers at least purport to do. Rather than attempting to reflect public opinion, it is well established that most Italian newspapers directly reflect the political, social and economic policies of the various political and religious factions they are aligned with.²⁶⁹

Besides cultivating personal contacts with journalists, editors and press agencies, a major USIA instrument to influence Italian news was the *Wireless file* – a 6-8,000 word bulletin containing all the most important news, official speeches, and anything related to US domestic and foreign policy – which was broadcasted six times a week via radio from USIA headquarters in Washington to all USIS offices around the world. Once in Rome, the Chief News Editor was in charge of selecting the relevant news, translating it into Italian and

²⁶⁷ Telegram from Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, March 21 1964 LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy cables, Vol. I, 11/63 – 6/64.

²⁶⁸ *Differential Images of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Italian Press*, Report Prepared for the U.S. Information Agency from the Bureau of Social Science Research (The American University), Oct 1954, NARA, RG 306, Entry 1015, Records of the USIA Office of Research, Country Project Files 1951-1964, Italy to Italy, box 51, p. vii.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

contacting the ANSA – the main Italian press agency – and various journals, as well as selected government officials to ask whether the news could be of interest to them. USIS staff was also in charge of monitoring the use that Italian newspapers made of the *Wireless file* material. Unlike the 1950s, when a consistent part of the foreign politics news were drawn directly by the file, in the mid-1960s, as previously mentioned, the file was used more as background material by journalists, agencies and free lancers from which to write their own stories. According to several USIA reports, however, a considerable body of material on American and international politics in Italian papers, magazines and scholarly journals still came from the file.²⁷⁰

American Embassy in Rome estimated that in 1968 USIS conveyed information on US policy and American life to some 22, 000 Italian opinion leaders. 'Due to the developed state of the communications media and the fact that USIS output is both useful and acceptable to that portion of this group made up of journalists and communications executives' explained the report 'our material reaches on a continuing basis a very mayor fraction of the Italian people.' The core of the program was composed of a daily press releases and photographs delivered to all the media, and a monthly news bulletins distributed not only to media representatives but also to the leaders in the governmental, professional, and academic fields. 'Program material and regular assistance' according to the USIS report was also 'regularly given to the State radio and television network RAI.' For

²⁷⁰ USIA Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA , 1964-1967, box 19.

what concerned movies, still recognised as one of the most effective means, USIS posts maintained a film library of 370 titles available for a projection throughout Italy. Small photo displays were also serviced monthly to a circuit of 20 sites nationally while numerous leaflets and pamphlets on various aspects of US policy were produced internally and widely distributed.²⁷¹

The increasing sophistication of the Italian media called also for a greater attention to the nature and quality of the personnel assigned to the area. 'Because of Italy's well developed communications media system, its sensitivities, and highly sophisticated cultural achievements' explained the Embassy report 'the USIS program must be of superior quality, unobtrusive and fast moving. While the USIS organization itself must be fluid (and able to) shift its operations geographically according to new requirements.'²⁷²

In 1967, Barrett McGurn, prize winning staff writer and correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* was selected for the position of USIS press attaché in Rome, where he established fruitful contacts with the staff and directors of the main journals, as well as with the ANSA. Given the regional circulation of most Italian journals, USIS officers travelled to the various headquarters throughout the country. Era recalls that he used to go weekly to the offices of *La Nazione* and *Il Resto del Carlino* 'per fare quattro chiacchiere' (to have a chat) about recent events and to bring material, saying 'look, we

²⁷¹ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

²⁷² Ibid.

have this material, check if that can be of interest for your journal'. Among others, he had close contact with Giovanni Spadolini – who also went to the United States thanks to a USIA grant – and Enzo Forcella, one of the founders in 1976 of *Repubblica*, destined to become the second most influential journal after the *Corriere*.²⁷³

One of the most fruitful areas of cooperation, however, was that established between the USIS officers and RAI. Since the immediate postwar year, Radio Voice of America had been using RAI frequencies to broadcast in Italy programmes such as *Cronache d'America*, which offered listeners a glimpse of everyday life in the United States, and *Ai Vostri Ordini*, the most popular one, where VOA radio hosts replied on air to listeners' letters.²⁷⁴ By 1953, in line with the new propagandistic address suggested by the Jackson Committee and with the arrival of Ambassador Luce in Italy, the VOA signature was removed from the broadcasts directed to Italy. USIS and VOA Italian desk continued to produce material in Italian which, upon acceptance and any subsequent changes, were then broadcasted by RAI as if originating from Italian sources. 'USIS-sponsored programmes could not be perceived as "propaganda" because there was no label linking them to their actual producers, the United States. Interference in the broadcasting field in Italy was

²⁷³ S. Era, Oral Interview, June 11, 2013.

²⁷⁴ Tobia, *Advertising America* p. 63; La Voce dell' America, Programmi in Italiano, Marzo-Aprile 1951, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files 1953-2000, Program Schedules 1951-1953, Entry A1 1066, box 107; La Voce dell' America, Programmi in Italiano, Settembre/Ottobre 1952, *ibid.*, Memorandum for the Department of State, USIS Broadcasting in Italy, Jan 26, 1954, NARA, RG 84, records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8.

limited by RAI managers', explains historian Simona Tobia, and the latter were able 'to keep tight control of Italian radio and the programmes it aired, and actively choosing what to accept'.²⁷⁵

Such cooperation continued in the sixties, with the spread of television. USIS provided political, scientific and cultural programmes material for use by Italian TV in regular and special programmes, and was often consulted on programmes and newscasts regarding America. Close contacts were developed between USIS officers in Rome and Milan and Ettore Bernabei, RAI general director between 1961 and 1974, as well as with Piero Forcella, head of the national news and expert in aerospace matters, who together with Tito Stagno would participate in the historic RAI live broadcast of the moon landing on July 1969.²⁷⁶

The RAI, as Tobia explains well, never engaged in passive reception, but actively adapted American ideas for an Italian audience, first with radio and then TV. The most striking example of such dual relationship was that the first (and most famous) RAI host Mike Buongiorno – an Italian-American who had been working for Radio VOA since 1945, when he arrived in New York after having been released from a Nazi prison.²⁷⁷ After seven years of service with

²⁷⁵ Tobia, 'Did the RAI buy it? The role and limits of American broadcasting in Italy in the Cold War', *Cold War History*, 13:2 (2013) 171-191.

²⁷⁶ USIA Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

²⁷⁷ Buongiorno was released from the Nazi prison thanks to a prisoner of war exchange arranged with the mediation of the Department of State and the Red Cross. 'Just a few days after his arrival in New York' tells Simona Tobia 'an officer from the Department of State appeared on his doorstep to ask him if he was willing to tell his story for the VOA's Italian audience.' At that time, Radio VOA was recruiting personnel for its

the radio, Buongiorno was offered a contract with the RAI and this marked his return to Italy and the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration. In 1955 he launched his TV show *Lascia e Raddoppia* which brought on the Italian screens an active readaptation of the famous American quiz shows reaching an immediate and long lasting success. In 1963 he hosted the first edition of the *Sanremo Festival*, still the most popular Italian music festival, then he hosted the quiz programs *Caccia al numero* (1962), *La Fiera dei Sogni* (1962–1965) and *Giochi in Famiglia* (1966–1969). All inspired by American products, but adapted so well to the Italian culture and way of communicating as to make people forget their origin.²⁷⁸ The strong impact of Mike Buongiorno's TV programs on the Italian public is shown in an essay written by Umberto Eco in 1963 entitled *Fenomenologia di Mike Bongiorno* (Phenomenology of Mike Buongiorno), analysing precisely the power and strength of his direct, simple and familiar way of communicating to the average Italian.²⁷⁹

Italian broadcasting activities. Buongiorno's professionalism and enthusiasm were noted, and he was offered a job. 'He was initially in charge of the *Rassegna sportiva* and later he contributed to the news team and to the programme, *Parla l'ospite*, a series of interviews with popular American personalities included in *L'ora italiana* between 1948 and 1952'. Beside working as radio announcer, he was also offered a steadier position as a 'special events officer'. In this capacity, he came into contact with RAI chief of radio news Vittorio Veltroni, and was later offered a contract in Italy. Tobia, 'Did the RAI buy it?', pp. 187-188.

²⁷⁸ Alessandra Vitali, 'E' morto Mike Buongiorno, Icona della Tv Italiana', *La Repubblica* (Roma, 8 Settembre 2009) URL consulted on April 23, 2014.

²⁷⁹ The essay *Fenomenologia di Mike Buongiorno* is part of the book *Diario Minimo* published by Umberto Eco in 1963.

Explaining America to the Italians in the sixties

The USIA's role in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, therefore became to 'complement' the local media and cooperate with local journalists and editors. This was a crucial role, 'noted Ed Murrow right before his resignation as USIA director in December 1963, because,

despite a widespread consensus on basic democratic values, Europeans do not always see world problems and national objectives as we see them, nor do they accept our policies and decision without question. Yet, the strength and influence of the west depends on the firmness and constancy with which the Western Europeans nations and the US work together.²⁸⁰

In the fragile Cold War balance, where words and perceptions mattered as much as deeds, it was as important to maintain a friend and avoid misunderstandings as it was to win over an enemy. The fact that European countries were advanced and cultured societies did not necessarily mean that they would *automatically* understand and support US policies. They would support a policy only if that policy appeared to be in their own interests. USIA's role as a propaganda agency was therefore to persuade Europeans of the validity of U.S. domestic and foreign policy choices, and to frame them within the American socio-cultural context in order to avoid misunderstanding and foster confidence in U.S. leadership. As USIA director Leonard Marks explained in 1967:

²⁸⁰ Edward Murrow Speech, Dec 1963, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 35, NARA.

USIA is engaged, in Western Europe as elsewhere, in support US government position and acts forcibly, persuasively and repeatedly, to those who need to hear it most. This is a responsibility that we cannot expect others to carry out for us. Especially we cannot rely on those to speak for us who, though generally friendly, may have serious reservations about individual US policies or actions. This is the heart of the problem in Western Europe, and the basis for our continuing and effective program there.²⁸¹

Another crucial reason to maintain a strong USIA programme in Western Europe was that Europeans had a tremendous influence on public opinion in the rest of the world. Major European newspapers, radio and wire services reached out around the globe. Likewise, European government officials, intellectuals, and businessman had links with people almost everywhere. 'I could be convinced that Europe is no longer important, if people in Washington, who are "under-developed area" conscious, would stop worrying about the effect of our non-European policies on the European people,' noted a USIA field officer in 1965. '[E]very time something happens in Panama or Venezuela, we are blasted with cables seeking European reaction. If Europe is not important, why should its reactions be regarded so importantly?'²⁸² Opinions expressed in the European media, were noted far beyond Europe, and had an impact on attitudes in scores of countries. 'As professional communicators', explained Marks in 1967, 'we strive to have a positive effect

²⁸¹ Leonard Marks 1966, USIA Congressional Appropriations Hearings for 1967, pp. 517-518, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History and Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 35.

²⁸² USIS Officer, June 14, 1965, USIA Senate Appropriations Hearings FY 1966, , Papers of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 34, Folder White House Library 1965, pp. 262-263,

not only on public opinion in Europe but also on World Opinion. For the major capitals of Europe, such as London, Paris and Rome, are centers of communication networks reaching to Africa, the Near East and Asia'.²⁸³

Reports on European media and government reactions to American domestic and foreign policies, were produced by the USIA and sent to the White House on a weekly basis, along with public opinion surveys and memorandum analysing the internal political and economic development of each European country. 'We cannot and we will not take any European ally for granted, and I hope no one in Europe would take us for granted either,' stated Johnson in 1964; 'for USIS in Western Europe, this meant an active and vigilant role.'²⁸⁴

Moreover, the need to explain US policies in Western Europe during the Johnson years seemed to be growing rather than diminishing. In addition to strong negative reactions to American policies in Vietnam and the civil rights struggle, several key issues were at stake involving the relationship with the European Allies. These included détente and the future shape of NATO, the deficit in the US balance of payments and its growing request to 'share the burden' with Europeans and, more generally, the redefinition of the whole transatlantic relationship. With regard to Italy in particular, USIA main objectives identified by the agency's Country plan were:

²⁸³ Marks Speech at the Meeting on the Problem of International Communication, Oct 4, 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 21, Folder Speech by Leonard Marks.

²⁸⁴ Excerpts from LBJ Public Statement on US Policy toward Europe, July 1964, Office Files of Frederick Panzer, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, box 460, Folder Department of State (1 of 3).

- 1) stimulating support among Italian public opinion for the centre-left formula and reducing the influence of the communists,
- 2) stimulating continued support for NATO and the Atlantic Alliance
- 3) reassuring Italian leaders that US attention and interest towards Italy had not diminished as a result of détente and of its growing commitments in South East Asia and other areas of the world,
- 4) seeking confidence and respect for the US, its institutions and culture,
- 5) explaining the US position on Vietnam and increase the placement in Italian media of material on Vietnam favourable to the US.²⁸⁵

Each of these goals was carried out by the USIA in Italy through different means. These will be examined in the next two chapters.

²⁸⁵ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

Chapter 4

Foreign policy activism vs domestic *immobilismo*: fueling Italian international prestige

By the end of 1966, the USIA further defined its goals in Italy, taking into account the approaching national elections in May 1968. This chapter analyses the first three propaganda objectives of USIA: stimulating public opinion in support of the centre-left, thereby reducing the influence of the Communists; reinforcing continued government and public opinion support for the Atlantic Alliance; and reassuring Italian leaders that US attention and interest towards Italy had not diminished as a result of détente and its growing commitments in Southeast Asia.²⁸⁶

The chapter highlights the strong correlation in Italy between domestic policy and the international context, and the main issues and points of convergence between the Italian centre-left government and the Johnson administration. It also shows the contrast in Italy between government activism along the traditional lines of reinforcing trans-Atlantic, European, and Mediterranean policy, and minimal public awareness with regard to those issue perceived by the United States as crucial to the survival of the western bloc.

²⁸⁶ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

The Johnson administration, for its part, supported such Italian activism recognizing the country's useful role as mediator in the Euro-Atlantic framework as well as its expertise in the Middle East, while at the same time exaggerating the importance attributed to Italy through purely cosmetic actions in the attempt to quench its thirst for international prestige and counteract the disenchantment at what was perceived as a lack of attention by the United States.

Stimulating support among Italian public opinion for the centre-left formula

Since its formation in 1963 and after the failure of *centrismo*, the centre-left had become, in the eyes of the US government, the one (and only) political formula to grant stability in Italy and reduce the influence of the Communists. However, from the outset the government itself seemed far from stable. It is not surprising then that 'stimulating support among Italian public opinion for the centre left formula' was identified as a USIA priority for the entire duration of the Johnson administration.²⁸⁷

In January 1966 the centre-left government fell for the second time due to a disagreement between Socialists and Christian Democrats on a minor issue. Moro was forced to form a new cabinet, which surprisingly stayed in

²⁸⁷ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

power for 871 days, until June 1968, a record for Italy's so-called 'First Republic'. The fragility of the government, however, combined with growing protests by the students' and workers' movements, increasingly worried the American embassy in Italy in view of the national elections scheduled in two years. Reinhardt, who had initially backed the cuts to funding in support of the 'democratic forces' in Italy, by the end of 1966 warned against a complete interruption of the program given the 'critical period for the political stability in Italy'. He particularly mentioned 'the growing social unrest and the unsettling factors of the Vietnam escalation, combined with the approaching of the general election in April 1968.'²⁸⁸

At the end of 1966 there was little for the Italian centre-left government to point to with pride for the next, vital, pre-election year. Given the fragile balance, Moro and his government's colleagues were reluctant to take any political risks. None of the coalition partners, however, wanted to go to the electorate with a record of *immobilismo* - meaning the active attempt at keeping things the same- open to criticism from both left and right. One way to give a semblance of activity while arousing a minimum of ire was in foreign affairs. For domestic political reasons, therefore, between 1966 and 1968 Italy played a much more active role in international affairs through its Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani. Fanfani was a tireless promoter of initiatives including his plan for a nuclear moratorium, his 'technological gap proposal',

²⁸⁸ Memorandum From Ambassador Reinhardt to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, September 12, 1966, NARA, RG 59.

his call for an EEC summit, and his efforts to mediate in Middle East and Vietnam. The American Embassy in Rome did not fail to note such activism commenting on how Italian international role in recent months had been 'marked by a series of initiatives by an energetic, free-wheeling and often unpredictable foreign minister.'²⁸⁹

The US administration, for its part, did not seek to hinder Fanfani's moves, as American objectives in the peninsula were not likely to be adversely affected by Italy's new activism. Italy would, in fact, continue to provide a base for the Sixth Fleet, be cooperative and responsive in NATO's detection and deterrence systems, and generally maintain the close ties that had bound her to the US since the war. There were, however, a few important exceptions where the two countries clashed, most notably over Italy's attitude toward US proposals for a nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Italian policy, particularly through ENI (the Italian National Fuel Trust), in the Middle East, and increasingly by the end of 1966, Vietnam.

As the sixties continued, Italian government and public opinion became increasingly critical towards the United States. This change stemmed partly from internal political and economic considerations, partly from real and serious opposition and concern about the escalation in Vietnam, and partly

²⁸⁹ Post's Effectiveness in Dealing wit Political Reporting, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box 13, Folder 3 of 3.

from a desire to demonstrate political independence from America the US, which many Italians believed their post-war experience had won for them.²⁹⁰

Towards the 1968 elections: a new Italian foreign policy activism

‘We are going to sign’, the newly nominated Italian Foreign Minister Gaetano Martino stated firmly in the summer of 1968, on the issue of the NPT. ‘There is no point in worrying. After marriage, there is always divorce!’²⁹¹ The levity in De Martino words, however, did not reflect the agonizing length of the Non-Proliferation Treaty’s negotiations in Italy. Proposed to the Italian government in 1966, the Soviet-American joint project, aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear technology and weapons, was not signed until January 1969. Subsequently, the proposal was the object of endless discussion in Italy, with the Communist, Socialist and Republican parties in favor, the DC internally divided on the issue, and the MSI (Italian Social Movement), a post-fascist party formed in 1946 by Mussolini’s supporters, openly opposing the treaty.

High officials and newspaper editorials made clear that Italy’s main fear, like that of the other European non-nuclear countries, was that the American draft would permanently put Western Europe in a second-class status vis-à-vis the US

²⁹⁰ Airgram from Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, box 2238, Folder Pol. IT-US, Political and Defense, p. 3.

²⁹¹ Ortona, *Anni D’America*, p. 98.

and USSR, and would seriously inhibit, because of the special position the French would enjoy, progress towards European unity. During the negotiations, Italy had an active role in proposing amendments to the treaty, especially concerning the relationship with Euratom (the European Atomic Energy Community) and the inspection mechanism.²⁹² Fanfani pushed for inspections to be carried out by Euratom rather than by the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the Treaty seemed to envisage, in order to give greater voice to the Europeans. Italy also contested the number of ratifications necessary to bring into force the treaty, as proposed by Washington. Italy recommended to raise the number from forty to more than eighty.²⁹³

What Italians had not entirely grasped, however, was the urgency assigned by the Johnson administration to bringing home the conclusion of the treaty negotiations. In fact, in addition to meeting one of its foreign policy goals through the recognition of the relevance of the NPT, obtaining the allies' signatures also had a symbolic value. In a moment of profound difficulty for the Administration, both at home and abroad, this step would mark a much needed foreign policy success.²⁹⁴ The USIA, therefore, was instructed to facilitate the signing of the treaty by presenting it, both in news stories for the media, as well as through personal contacts with government officials and opinion molders, as the main instrument to

²⁹² Leopoldo Nuti, *La sfida nucleare. La politica estera italiana e le armi atomiche 1945-1991* (Bologna, 2009), p. 331.

²⁹³ Ibid., p.331; Airgram from Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, box 2238, Folder Pol. IT-US, Political and Defense, p. 3.

²⁹⁴ Nuti, *La sfida nucleare*, pp. 331-332; Egidio Ortona, *Anni d'America 1967-1975, La cooperazione* (Bologna, 1989) vol. III, pp. 96-98.

re-launch the process of détente. They knew that this argument would be extremely attractive, not only for Italian public opinion which was eager to move forward in the process of international relaxation, but also for the Socialists within the government who advocated a relaxation of tensions and the abandonment of the division of the world into two rigid blocs. Not coincidentally, it was Pietro Nenni, the historical leader of the Italian Socialists, who opened his second mandate as Italian Foreign Minister in December 1968 with the signing of the NTP, presenting it as a contribution by the Italian government to international détente.²⁹⁵

The fear of being treated as a second-class power also stimulated Italian government activism in relation to another issue. Sharing other European countries' growing concern about the technological disparity between the Old and New Worlds, in 1966 Fanfani launched a proposal for a study by NATO of what he called 'the technological gap' problem. A Commission, appointed by Fanfani himself, composed of the most qualified researchers and experts in Italian science, presented a report indicating the reasons why Europe was not developing fast enough along the scientific and technological frontiers, and calling for greater attention to the problem. The report was then distributed to the fourteen NATO Member States for consideration.²⁹⁶ The proposal was also presented by Fanfani as a possible way to attract France back into the NATO orbit. Should NATO actively

²⁹⁵ Italy will definitively sign the TNP on 28 January 1969; L.V. Ferraris, *Manuale della politica estera Italiana 1947-1993* (Roma-Bari, 1996), p. 168.

²⁹⁶ Achille Albonetti, 'The technological gap: Proposal and documents', *Lo Spettatore Internazionale*, 2:2, (1967), p. 139.

attempt to close the technological gap, De Gaulle would not want French industry to be excluded. In this regard, *Corriere della Sera* talked about a 'faint glimmer of hope for France's eventual return to the fold in view of Fanfani's technological gap proposal.'²⁹⁷

The proposal had considerable resonance in the Italian press. The regional daily, *La Nazione*, described it as a first step for a, 'unified scientific policy within the European community, an indispensable condition for achieving effective cooperation with the US.' The director of the Socialist newspaper *l'Avanti*, Francesco Gozzano, cited the Italian technological gap proposal as an initiative directed at producing, 'a more positive and dynamic role for European members of NATO'.²⁹⁸

US reaction was less enthusiastic. Ambassador Reinhardt commented that, 'not very rich in specific contents, the proposal appeared to have been motivated only by Fanfani's campaign to show flair and initiative on the international scene.'²⁹⁹

Despite the apparent novelty of the individual proposals, the boundaries within which Italy performed its activism between 1966 and 1968 were nonetheless the traditional pillars that had characterized Italian foreign policy since the post-war years: the Atlantic Alliance, European Integration, and the

²⁹⁷ Report From Rome Embassy to Department of State, Press Reaction to NAC Removal Decision October 27, 1966, NARA, RG 84, box 14, Entry P 387, Folder Def. 4.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Airgram from Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, Pol. IT-US, Folder Political and Defense, box 2238, p. 3.

Middle East. To these key areas was added an increased effort at the opening of relations with Eastern Europe, in the framework of Johnson's recent policy of 'building bridges', a series of economic and political initiatives to improve relations between the West and the countries beyond the iron curtain.³⁰⁰

All these pillars found their roots in Italy's need for security, and its search for domestic stability and enlarged trade and economic opportunities. Conscious of being a small power, Italy relied on multilateralism -aiming for a stronger position within the emerging European Economic Community (EEC) and NATO- and on US hegemony, while at the same time trying to pursue independent action within that hegemony.³⁰¹

Concerned about achieving a parity of status with the other major European powers, Italy saw the Atlantic Alliance as a multilateral framework in which its foreign policy goals could be developed and achieved, and as the instrument to prevent the excessive power of France and Germany in continental Europe.³⁰² This position was noted by a USIS report, which stated that the Italian government had come out of the NATO crisis that culminated with French withdrawal in March 1966 with its commitment to the Alliance reinforced. 'Indeed,' the report observed,

³⁰⁰ Santoro, C. M., *La politica estera di una media Potenza. L'Italia, dall'Unità a oggi* (Bologna, 1991); R. J. B. Bosworth, Sergio Romano (eds.) *La politica estera italiana 1860-1985* (Bologna 1991); Federico Romero, 'La scelta atlantica e americana' in Federico Romero, Antonio Varsori (eds.) *Nazione, interdipendenza, integrazione. Le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia (1917-1989)*, pp. 155-171; L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa: identità, politiche, alleanze in Federico Romero, Antonio Varsori (eds.) *Nazione, interdipendenza, integrazione. Le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia (1917-1989)* 155-171; p. 206.

³⁰¹ Alessandro Brogi, 'Ike and Italy: The Eisenhower Administration and Italy's "Neo-Atlanticist" Agenda', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4:3 (Summer 2002) p. 7

³⁰² Gualdesi, L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa: identità, politiche, alleanze in Federico Romero, Antonio Varsori (eds.) *Nazione, interdipendenza, p. 206.*

'the fear that as a consequence of the crisis, the US might downgrade its interest in NATO, had perhaps increased Italian attachment to the alliance.' For the same reason, during the crisis the Italians pressed hard to prevent a complete break with the French.³⁰³ Exactly as president Eisenhower had done in the fifties, when the so-called Italian 'Neo Atlanticist' policy had gained its momentum, the Johnson administration 'calibrated its concessions of rank or role to Italy in order to affect Italian domestic politics and to stabilize NATO.'³⁰⁴

On 20 April 1966, in an address to the Parliament, Fanfani stressed that the Italian government, 'would not take disagreement over NATO to mean a cooling off of cordial and close friendship between Italy and France.' This declaration was confirmed, when Fanfani pushed to postpone the transfer of the NATO Defence College (NDC) to Rome following France's withdrawal, so that the 'door to France's eventual return would be left open.'³⁰⁵ US reaction to the France withdrawal was also one of cautious moderation. LBJ's speech on NATO in March 1966, received strong, prominent play in the Italian press. Comments applauded the flexibility shown by LBJ in the face of the crisis, and his willingness to leave a door open to France without further dramatizing the break, thus reaffirming US determination to preserve and strengthen NATO.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Summary of European Press Reactions to De Gaulle NATO Policy, March 17, 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 34.

³⁰⁴ Brogi, *Ike and Italy*, p. 7.

³⁰⁵ From Rome Embassy to Department of State, Subject: France-NATO, June 7, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 315, Folder 3/25/66– 6/24/66.

³⁰⁶ Memo for the President, March 25, 1966, LBJ Library, WHCF, Federal Government, box 315, Folder 3/25/66– 6/24/66, Mariella Neri Gualdesi, *L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa*, p. 206.

The American and Italian positions also coincided on another crucial issue related to the European integration process: De Gaulle's veto of the British quest to enter the European Economic Community (EEC).³⁰⁷ The US government, which had supported the integration process from the outset, was, at the same time, extremely anxious not to lose its influence on Europe. Britain's participation in a 'new, more Anglo-Saxon Europe', was thus seen as one of the best insurances that this Europe would not turn against the US and inward economically. The USIA, therefore, was called to emphasize through 'any means possible' the importance for Britain to be part of a process that otherwise would never be completed. News stories and pamphlets were put out, as well as documentaries and seminars emphasizing the importance of UK role for a more integrated Europe.³⁰⁸ USIS Rome even praised and reprinted an editorial from *l'Avanti*, a newspaper usually in open opposition with the agency. In the editorial, Socialist, Mario Zagari, pointed out that Europe was at a crossroad that could, 'either slowly decline or initiate a true renewal.' 'The main measure for such renewal,' according to Zagari, 'was UK entry into the EEC'.³⁰⁹

Such material found a responsive audience in Italy, anxious to prevent the emergence of a Franco-German axis in Europe and also concerned that, in the event that the British would decide not to join Europe, the U.S. would lose interest

³⁰⁷ For an overview on Italy's attitude towards Britain's bid to enter the EEC see also L. Nuti, 'Italy, the British Application to the EEC and the January Debate' in R. Griffiths, S. Wards (eds.) *Courting the Common Market: The First Attempt to Enlarge the EEC 1961-1963* (London, 1996) pp. 101-109.

³⁰⁸ Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 13.

³⁰⁹ From Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Subject: Editorial Statement by Zagari on Renewal of Europe, January 19, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Pol and Def IT, box 2236.

in continuing steps toward Western European unity.³¹⁰ European integration was perhaps the only idea which all the Italian democratic political parties were in full agreement. Indeed, agreement was so universal, that even the PCI did not consider it wise to frontally attack the concept of European unity. Italian intellectuals such as Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi had crucial roles as ideologues and proponents of the integration process. Avoiding the development of 'two Europes' was, thus for different reasons, both an Italian and American priority.³¹¹

In the quest for a solution to the deadlock that De Gaulle's position had caused, the U.S. often turned to Italy for suggestions. At the same time, Italy was frequently encouraging American intervention in favour of an integrated Europe. At Rusk's inquiry in 1964 about what should be US role in the European integration process, Giuseppe Saragat, President of the Italian Republic since 1964 and member of the Socialist Party, replied that they, 'simply could not stay outside.' The question was 'where the US should intervene' and the best place, in Saragat's view, was the UK by, 'doing everything in their power to avoid British consideration of a triumvirate with Germany and France.' Rusk immediately reassured him that Italians 'could dismiss this point from their mind.'³¹² Often, in European discussion forums, Italy defended the United States position from De

³¹⁰ Mariella Neri Gualdesi, L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa, p. 206; M. Neri Gualdesi, *Il cuore a Bruxelles, la mente a Roma. Storia della partecipazione italiana alla costruzione dell'unità europea* (Pisa, 2004); British EEC Bid, May 5, 1967, USIA Media Reaction Analysis, April-June 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 37.

³¹¹ Telegram from Rome Embassy to Department of State, June 24, 1964, National Security File - Country File: Italy, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, box 196, Folder 1: Italy Cables.

³¹² Memorandum of Conversation Between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and President of the Italian Republic Giuseppe Saragat, January 14, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Italy, box 196, Folder 1, Italy Memos, Vol. I, 11/63 - 6/64.

Gaulle's allegations of excessive American hegemony in Europe. 'The U.S. does not count on a divided Europe to dominate,' stated Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in 1965, 'but rather on an economically and politically united Europe with which to share the responsibilities of freedom, security and peace. It is therefore natural and desirable', concluded Moro, 'that a United Europe be built within the framework of the Atlantic community.'³¹³

Italy, therefore, acted as a mediator in this situation, supporting the bid of the UK to enter the EEC, and at the same time, trying to avoid an open split within the alliance. The fear of losing the economic advantages provided by the present Community arrangements led the Italian government to the conclusion that it could not take the lead in fighting for British entry, nor did it wish the issue to stimulate a fundamental conflict between France and the other EEC members.³¹⁴ Italian government leaders therefore resigned themselves to waiting for a post Gaullist era in which they hoped it would be possible to make progress in the direction of a wider membership. 'In the meantime,' commented a Rome Embassy report, 'they will mark the time and try to avoid rocking the boat so violently that it sinks.'³¹⁵

³¹³ Excerpt from Prime Minister Moro's address to the Chamber of Deputies, May 5, 1965, LBJ Library, National Security File, Special Head of the State Correspondence, Italy Presidential Correspondence, box 27, Folder 2.

³¹⁴ Italy's conciliatory approach, and its ability not to break up with Gaullist France while keeping its relationship with Britain, is seen by many historians, such as Gualdesi and Varsori, as the main success of Italian foreign policy in the sixties. Gualdesi, *L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa*: p. 206; Varsori, 'Italy and the Chair Crisis, 1965-1966,' in *ibid.* (ed.) *Crisis and Compromises: The European Project, 1963-1969*, (Nomos, 2001) pp. 215-226.

³¹⁵ British EEC Bid, May 5, 1967, USIA, Media Reaction Analysis, April-June 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 37.

Stimulating Italian support for the Atlantic Alliance

The activism of Fanfani did not create a sufficient shift in public opinion in Italy when it came to the NATO and Europe. For this reason, the USIA also set a goal of 'stimulating Italians support for the Atlantic Alliance'.³¹⁶

The agency's public opinion surveys in Italy during the Johnson years showed limited support and weak awareness of the importance of NATO for the security of the Western World. In 1967, nearly half of the population showed no awareness of the existence of NATO. Members of the Italian Government themselves expressed concern about the lack of public support towards NATO, the EEC, and other issues related to integration.³¹⁷

Since the previous decade, USIA officers had lamented a 'dangerous gap' in Italy between the members of the government, who, albeit with due reservation, tended to support US policy, and public opinion which often appeared uninterested, confused and dominated by neutralist sentiments. The risk was that the public's tendencies towards neutralism and non-commitment would end up solidifying, thus generating pressure on the government until they changed policies in such a way as to direct them away from America's interests.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

³¹⁷ USIA Survey on Western European Views on Atlantic Alliance, December 1967, NARA, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, Research Reports 1960-1999, Entry P 142, box 29. In 1967 slightly more than 40% of the population in Germany, Great Britain and Sweden felt that NATO remained indispensable for Western European Security.

³¹⁸ Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p. 109.

Despite the agency's efforts to promote awareness of NATO beginning in the 1950s, not only was widespread public ignorance about the alliance still an issue at the time of Johnson's inauguration, but also USIA officers registered a general decrease in support for the Alliance amongst those who were informed. The main reason for this decline was to be found in the changing nature of the bipolar confrontation during the first half of the 1960s, and in the way in which this change was perceived in Europe, and therefore in Italy.³¹⁹

The resolution of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 was interpreted in Europe as proof of the determination on both sides to avoid a nuclear catastrophe. In this new framework, Khrushchev's continuous appeals for disarmament and peaceful coexistence began to gain greater credibility among public opinion abroad. The Soviet Union appeared, for the first time, as a rational interlocutor with whom to deal through normal diplomatic channels. This change of perception was reinforced, in the years before the 1968 coup in Czechoslovakia, by a number of small signs of openness on the part of the Soviet Union, such as ending the jamming of Radio VOA and the BBC, allowing Soviet citizens to travel abroad, and increasing diplomatic contacts. The major validation of these impressions, however, was the action of the United States itself. Johnson's policy of 'building bridges', a consular agreement with USSR, and increased cultural and educational

³¹⁹ Summary of meeting on NATO of PAO western Europe, May 16, 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 35.

exchanges were all interpreted in Western Europe as signs of an improving international atmosphere.³²⁰

The most striking effect for the European allies of the diminished tensions between the US and USSR, however, was the easing of the fear of a Soviet military attack in Western Europe, which in turn resulted in a relaxation of support for NATO as a military instrument. The NATO 'crisis' was heightened by De Gaulle's nationalist policies, and by the presence of the Socialists within Italian government coalitions. Both were opposed to the Cold War logic and sought a policy of the 'third force' (Europe) between the US and the Soviet Union.³²¹

In Italy, therefore, the consequences of international détente gave the issue of the reinforcement of the Atlantic Alliance a new sense of urgency. The link between international détente and leftist leanings in Italy had preoccupied US psychological war experts since the previous decade. Already in 1955, following the Geneva Conference, the first post-war international conference which saw the participation of the Soviets, a USIS report highlighted a dramatic drop in public support for NATO and growing confidence in the Soviet Union's good intentions. The report noted that the Communists' continued calls for disarmament and détente were strongly appealing in a country like Italy, whose desire for peace after years of war and deprivation had monopolized the hearts and minds of its citizens. 'A Communist line of rapprochement and sweet reason,' ended the report,

³²⁰ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, pp. 2/6-2/8.

³²¹ Summary of European Press Reactions to De Gaulle NATO Policy, March 17, 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 34.

'is far more difficult to combat in Italy than outright aggressiveness. Propaganda for the democratic side will face an even more challenging task than in the past.'³²²

The prediction turned out correct, and the first signs of détente between the USSR and US in the first half of the sixties were so well received in Italy that it ended up turning against US propaganda efforts. As notes USIA historian Murray Lawson, by generating a climate of rising expectations for further cooperation between the two powers, any US action that seemed to threaten this cooperation was judged much more harshly than in the past, prompting tides of unprecedented criticism by European and Italian media, government and public opinion.³²³

Communist propaganda exploited this climate by presenting the aggressive nature of NATO as a military alliance and the escalation of the Vietnam war as the main obstacles towards a more enlarged détente. USIA propagandists, for their part, were instructed to downplay Soviets calls for disarmament as pure propaganda manoeuvres, and to present Johnson as taking the lead in the dialogue with the USSR on issues such as arms control and economic and cultural agreements. They were also instructed to highlight the defensive nature of NATO and its crucial role for the security of the Western World, downplay and justify events such as the 1966 incident of an American bomber carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of Spain, and of course, the Vietnam escalation.³²⁴

³²² Opinion Trends in the Aftermath of Geneva, September 23, 1955, Material Prepared by Department of State and USIA, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce 1955-1957, Entry 2783, box 4, p. 8.

³²³ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, pp. 2/3.

³²⁴ Ibid.

The 20th anniversary of NATO in 1969 was seen by the USIA as the right occasion to promote the Alliance in all of Europe. 'The anniversary provides a unique opportunity to carry out appropriate observances and activities which will help demonstrate the accomplishments of NATO and its present and future importance to all of the people of the North Atlantic area.'³²⁵ The agency, therefore, started to advertise the event two years in advance. Exhibitions, seminars, conferences, and documentary screenings were organized in each European USIS post, and the agency's officers were instructed to stimulate media coverage and activities by interested local organizations. Movies like 'Commitment to Freedom', a one-reel black and white treatment of Kennedy's and Johnson's best addresses on NATO was shown in local movie theatres. USIA also encouraged European governments to arrange appropriate observances in their countries, offering to provide material and background information.³²⁶

The idea was to use the twentieth anniversary celebrations to coordinate propaganda efforts with those of other Western European USIS posts, especially Italy, France and Germany. All other USIS offices in Europe were, in fact, carrying out campaigns aimed at promoting integration and stimulating greater support for the Atlantic Alliance. 'Such participation', noted a USIS Rome officer in 1967, 'would prove to Italians that many other Europeans were devoted to the purposes

³²⁵ Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance, Policy Program Directive No. 2-3-66, USIA Office of Policy and Research, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 24.

³²⁶ A Plan for Information Program on NATO in Western Europe, April 15, 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, box 34; New Film Released, March 1967, box. 154, Folder Motion Pictures 1967.

of the North Atlantic Community.’³²⁷ The agency's efforts, however, failed to stimulate much interest and public support for issues such as European integration and the strengthening of a Western Alliance: these always remained on the edge of the concerns of the Italian people. The roots of this lack of interest were clearly identified in a USIS report of 1956, still strikingly accurate ten years later:

Italian attitudes and opinion about the international scene and Italy's own role therein reflect the fact that Italy is not a major international power – despite occasional wishful thinking to the contrary – and that most of its energies are directed toward solving its difficult political and economic problems. They likewise reflect the fact that, despite a basic and instinctive orientation to the West, the presumed advantages of non involvement in the rivalry of the American and Soviet bloc are extremely attractive to a substantial proportion of Italian. The more progress there is in the direction of international détente, the more will the bulk of Italians become increasingly inclined to accommodations with the Communist world outside their borders.³²⁸

This persistent attitude was also reflected in the substantial failure of the so-called ‘pump-priming’ strategy, meaning the technique of persuading journalists and local media to spread material developed by the American propagandists.³²⁹ In fact, the articles written by the USIA only appeared in publications of secondary importance, which had a negligible impact on both the public and government

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Italians vision of the international context, Report of the USIA Office of Research and Intelligence, October 1st 1956, NARA, Entry A1 1022, box 9, p. 32.

³²⁹ The pump priming strategy is consistently defined in 1955 on the USIA Country Plan for Italy. From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, USIS Italy Country Action Plan 1955, From USIS Rome to USIA Washington, August 30, 1955, NARA, RG 84, Records of Claire Booth Luce, Entry 2783, box 8.

officials.³³⁰ As for the leading newspapers including *Il Popolo*, *l'Unità*, and *Corriere della Sera*, the USIS officials were shocked on more than one occasion by how little attention was given to international events. They expected, for example, that events such as the US presidential election or the revolt in the Dominican Republic would have merited an editorial in the main newspapers. In both these cases, however, the leading article was dedicated to internal Italian affairs. By the same token, the urgency of political and economic issues in the national arena was sufficient enough to explain the lesser amount of attention reserved for international events, which for the general public, were only seen as significant in relation to the impact they would have on national scenarios.³³¹

More fertile ground in Italy for USIA, in the framework of more positive Italian attitude towards détente, was the effort to publicize Johnson's policy of 'building bridges'. In a public speech in May 1964, Johnson declared his determination to encourage the development of more independent regimes in Eastern Europe through increased trade and cultural relations policies with the US, while simultaneously encouraging them to loosen their ties with the Soviet Union. The Italian government, seeking to expand its market, seized the opportunity offered by Johnson's new policy, welcoming the opportunity of building bridges itself.

President Saragat's trip to Warsaw in 1964 marked the first visit from a western Head of State beyond the Iron Curtain. This visit was followed by an

³³⁰ From American Embassy Rome to Department of State, European Integration and NATO Press Campaign, February 25 1966, NARA, RG 59, box 2467.

³³¹ Report of the USIA Office of Research and Intelligence, October 1, 1966, NARA, Entry A1 1022, box 9, p. 4.

exchange of visits between Moro and Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Prime Minister, and an invitation to Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to visit Rome in 1966.³³² This 'opening to the east' must be viewed within a larger effort, ongoing also in France and Germany, to build a European version of détente. One may see this in France with its emphasis on the *'force de frappe'* and the consolidation of a Europe of Nations, autonomous and detached from the United States, and in West Germany with the creation of the Grand Coalition between Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU) as a first step towards what would become the future Ostpolitik.

On the economic side, the Moro government assisted Italian industry in the search for opportunities east of the Iron Curtain by financing many of these ventures and tying up a considerable block of contracts. In 1961, Italy had also signed an agreement with the USSR to import 12 million tons of Soviet crude oil in 4 years, and in 1964, the Italian government was negotiating an agreement to share the costs of a giant gas pipeline from the URSS to purchase large quantities of Soviet natural gas. The agreement was a source of great concern in Washington, where the fact that Italy and Western Europe more generally would depend on Soviet energy supplies was seen as too great a risk. Under US pressure, a

³³² Building Bridges to the East, Main Elements of US Foreign Policy, July 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 32; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian 96/08/12, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-1968, (FRUS) Vol. XVII, Eastern Europe.

commission was created within NATO to assess the potential dangers of the agreement 'for the safety of democratic Europe.'³³³

Italy, for its part, supported Johnson's initial policy, yet remained concerned that the US might go too far, too fast, and without consulting its European allies, in building bridges (perhaps at their expense) with the Soviet bloc.

This leads us into the third USIA propaganda objective indicated in the agency country plan: 'reassuring Italian leaders and public opinion that US attention and interest towards Italy had not diminished as a result of détente and of its growing commitments in Southeast Asia and other areas of the world'³³⁴

Growing Malaise in US-Italian Relations

Such concern must be viewed in the context of the growing disenchantment, not only in Italy but across Western Europe, at what was perceived to be a lack of attention on the part of the United States.³³⁵

In 1966, a USIA survey showed that around 40% of the population in all European countries thought that the President was giving little or no attention to Europe. As previously analysed, the first signs of cooperation between the two superpowers were applauded in Europe as a welcome necessity which should be encouraged. As

³³³ Fasanella, *Il Golpe Inglese*, p. 171

³³⁴ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*.

³³⁵ Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge MA: 2003); Ballini, Varsori (eds.) *L'Italia e L'Europa 1947-1979*, Vol. II (Soveria Mannelli, 2005).

the process progressed, however, this optimism was accompanied by the fear that the US, 'in its enthusiasm for détente, would be led to settle US -Soviet differences at the expense of Western Europe.'³³⁶

It is difficult to attest the veracity of USIA polls. With regard to Italy, however, by the end of 1966 most media and government officials increasingly voiced concern that America's lack of attention towards Europe could be 'the beginning of a trend that, if continued, would not only impair NATO but eventually lead to a reversal of alliances.'³³⁷ These concerns reflected a number of developments that the Italians found unpalatable: the growing importance the Administration attributed to its commitments in other parts of the world – notably southeast Asia – with consequent downgrading of its commitment to Europe; repeated calls by US Senators for a substantial withdrawal of American troops from Europe; US government abandonment of its proposal for MLF right after the Italian government finally decided to lend it its full support; and US proposals for NPT which they feared would permanently put Western Europe in 'second class power' status.³³⁸

The State Department announcement in the spring of 1967 of a plan of US troop withdrawal from West Germany and Italy was received with great alarm in

³³⁶ Public Opinion Digest, Western Europe, Vol. 1 n. 3, USIA Office of Research, Special Reports 1953-1997, NARA, RG 306, Entry P. 106, box 24.

³³⁷ Airgram from Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, Pol. IT-US, Political and Defense, box 2238.

³³⁸ On Italian fear of US downgrading its commitment in Europe see Ballini, Varsori (eds.) *L'Italia e L'Europa*, Vol. II, p. 748; Mariella Neri Gualdesi, *L'ancoraggio dell'Italia all'Europa: identità, politiche, alleanze*, p. 209-210.; on Italian reaction to US abandonment of MLF and TNP see Nuti, *La sfida nucleare*; B. Curli, 'L'Italia e la scelta nucleare europea,' *Storia delle Relazioni internazionali*, XIV:I, p. 310.

Italy. Scheduled for January 1968, in view of the harsh government and public opinion reaction, the withdrawal was further postponed becoming crucial point in US-Italian relations during the Nixon administration. Strong Italian opposition found roots not only in the fact that the country already had the lowest level of military expenditure in Western Europe, but also because it would mean the dismissal of hundreds of Italians at a time of profound social tension. This situation would become clear in the summer of 1969, when the promulgation of the 'Nixon doctrine', along with progressive American withdrawal from Vietnam, called for the rebalancing of military commitments with the European allies.³³⁹ In Italy, aside from the cut of 4,000 US personnel, 1,600 Italian nationals were also dismissed. By appealing for reconsideration, Mariano Rumor -Italian prime minister at that time- urged that there would 'not only be economic consequences in the affected areas, but psychological and political repercussions in Italy. The Communists would exploit the withdrawals, and the dismissals would cause problems in negotiating new labor unions contracts.'³⁴⁰

The USIA, for its part, recognized immediately the deleterious impact this would have at the psychological level in Italy and proposed the administration to freeze the operation for two more years. In view of the extreme sensitivity of the

³³⁹ Articulated by President Nixon in July 1969, the Nixon Doctrine established the basis not only for the subsequent American withdrawal from Vietnam, but also, for a rebalancing of military commitment with the European allies. Given the growing deficit in American balance of payments coupled with the parallel recovery of European economies, the United States was no longer willing to take all the responsibility for the defence of the free world, despite maintaining its nuclear umbrella. Robert S. Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon doctrine: American foreign policy and the pursuit of stability, 1969-1976* (Cambridge, 1984).

³⁴⁰ Memo from Kissinger to Nixon, Political Problems in our relations with Italy, Nov 12, 1969, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Files, Country Files, Europe, Folder Italy, Jan 31 69- Jan 70, Vol. I.

situation, Rumor's insistence for a delay in the execution of the withdrawal finally prevailed.³⁴¹ This event showed once again, how the relations between the United States and its smaller ally, Italy, was complex and multifaceted, not allowing for unilateral decisions on the part of the US. This circumstance was also one of the few instances in which the USIA regained the advisory role it had during previous administrations.

Going back to the NTP negotiations launched by Johnson, the agency's strategy was that of presenting the treaty as an intermediate step toward complete world disarmament. The underlying idea was to stress disarmament and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in order to overshadow the crystallization of the asymmetry between nuclear and non-nuclear powers sanctioned by the treaty.³⁴²

By the mid-sixties, the sense of disenchantment affected not only the Italian radical left and post-fascist and their French counterparts, but it was prevalent across the whole of Western Europe and shared by all political forces expressing, in the words of historian Piers Ludlow, 'scepticism about the reliability of America's security guarantee and dissatisfaction with the unequal nature of NATO.' In this context, the NPT marked not only the definitive formalization of the nuclear gap between the European countries and the superpowers but, being the result of

³⁴¹ Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, pp 152, 160-61.

³⁴² USIA Area Notes: Western Europe and NTP, April 1967, Media Reaction Analysis, July-Sept, 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 38.

a 'purely bilateral dialogue between the US and USSR, it helped fuel Europeans' sense of marginalisation in Cold War affairs'.³⁴³

US foreign policy actions and European reactions in the second half of the sixties, therefore, must be interpreted in the framework of the double, often contradictory, nature of détente; on the one hand the progressive relaxation of the rigid Cold War scheme and the shift towards a more multipolar international system, and on the other hand, a US government 'foreign policy strategy based on dialogue with the Soviet Union' and aimed at protecting bipolarism and its international hegemonic role. The first development was welcomed by most Italians, whereas the second aroused concern and even alarm.³⁴⁴

Rapid economic growth and the advancement of the integration process in Europe in the decade between 1956 and 1966 made obsolete the international order as conceived by the US in the immediate post war years, resting on the unquestioned subordination of its European allies. Although recognizing American predominance, Europe was no longer willing to act only as 'comprimaria' and was exploring new possibilities to gain greater independence on the international scene.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ N. Piers Ludlow, 'Transatlantic relations in the Johnson and Nixon eras: The crisis that didn't happen and what it suggests about the one that did', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 8:1 (2010) 44-55.

³⁴⁴ Roberto Gualtieri, 'The Italian political system and détente 1963 – 1981', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9:4 (2004) p. 428.

³⁴⁵ France's withdrawal from the integrated military structure of NATO in 1966, it has been suggested, can thus be seen as the culmination of a process of confrontation between the two 'Western visions' of the Cold War which started in the late 1950s, increased throughout the Kennedy years, and exploded during the Johnson presidency. A watershed in transatlantic relations, the 1966 NATO crisis marked European rejection of the traditional post-war bipolar system and its determination to stand as a 'third force' in the international context. This led to a reassessment of the transatlantic relationship on both sides. A. Schwartz, *Lyndon*

The Johnson administration, for its part, faced with an increasing deficit in the American balance of payments aggravated by its growing commitment in Vietnam, saw its economic leverage, and consequentially its hegemonic strength, increasingly reduced in Europe 'while its political priorities were significantly reoriented.'³⁴⁶ Johnson's policy in Europe, therefore, had two main objectives: the stabilization of the European theatre in order to focus on Vietnam and non-proliferation, and the so-called policy of 'burden sharing' calling for a greater contribution of European allies in shouldering the economic and military responsibilities of the Cold War. While pushing for greater economic and military independence on the part of the European allies to alleviate its balance of payment deficit, the US government was thus trying to prevent their departure from a structure that was functional to the survival of the bipolar system.³⁴⁷

This constant tension between US support for economic and political development in Western Europe, and its attempts to preserve the international status quo emerged also in its relations with Italy and its centre-left government. According to Roberto Gualtieri, by not stimulating structural reforms for fear of leaving too much room to manoeuvre for the Socialists, the Johnson administration lost the opportunity to promote the modernization that had accompanied the

Johnson and Europe, pp. 223-237; Andreas Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity: NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Detente, 1966-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6:1 (2004) 22-74; Gaetano Quagliariello, 'Prospettiva atlantica e prospettiva europea nel pensiero e nell'azione di de Gaulle', in Piero Craveri, Gaetano Quagliariello (eds.) *Atlantismo ed europeismo* (Catanzaro, 2003), p. 111.

³⁴⁶ Gualtieri, *The Italian political system and détente*, p. 431.

³⁴⁷ T.A. Schwartz, 'Victories and defeats in the long twilight struggle: the United States and Western Europe in the 1960s' in D. B. Kunz (ed.) *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade. American Foreign Relations During the 1960s* (New York, 1994), p. 136; D. B. Kunz, 'Cold War dollar diplomacy', in D. B. Kunz (ed.) *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*, pp. 101-3.

initial project of the centre-left in Italy. From 1966 onward, Italian economic growth resumed, but on the basis of what some historians have defined as 'growth with no development' - as Gualteri describes it 'an 'export-led' model based on a labour-intensive increase in productivity, wage restraint, and an equilibrium in the balance of payments based on a surplus on current accounts and a deficit on capital movements, which rendered Italy 'one of the main suppliers of resources to the rest of the world'.³⁴⁸

The slow demand for employment, while serving to reduce inflation, also increased social tension especially when combined with the lack of effective planning and organization to overcome problems such as urbanization, poor education, and the chronic disparity between the less developed Southern areas and the North. 'Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the New Frontier', US support for that formula proved to be more, the outcome of 'its greater usefulness for reassessing containment in Europe, which promised to reduce the burden on the American budget, than the result of a coherent strategy of modernization of Italy.' 'As a consequence' concludes Gualtieri 'while international détente had favored the new centre-left coalition, the concrete US 'strategy of detente' contributed to scaling down its ambitions and its results.'³⁴⁹

By the end of 1966, the US embassy reported a shift in sentiment in Italy towards its American ally described by Reinhardt as, 'a widespread malaise and

³⁴⁸ Gualtieri, 'The Italian political system and détente', p. 431.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 431.

increasingly critical attitude toward us.' The US ambassador also emphasized the risk that would come 'to deny the psychological reality of the fear and resentment that such malaise expresses':

With 1967 being a pre-election year in Italy, it is likely that these attitudes will be expressed publicly in the course of the political campaign. But it will be more than just a domestic political show if underlying attitudes continue to develop in the direction they have the past year. The implications for US policy could become serious. The fundamental point is that there is slowly developing in Italy a certain lack of conviction in the permanence and fullness of the US commitment to Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance.³⁵⁰

Further fuelling this malaise were several of Johnson's moves, interpreted in Italy as lack of interest for his Western allies. To begin with, the absence of any reference to Europe in his State of the Union Speech in January 1967 was widely reported by the Italian press as 'an overt confirmation of US disinterest.'³⁵¹ Secondly, Johnson erred in his decision to send his Vice-President, Hubert H. Humphrey, on a two-week trip around Europe in April 1967. The trip was widely propagandized by the USIA, in an attempt to improve the atmosphere. The outcome, instead, was quite the opposite of that intended. After the visit, most European officials and editors conveyed their impression that, far from being a scout for the President, Humphrey had come to Europe in his stead. European diplomats, as reported by the *New York Times*, were clear to point out that the

³⁵⁰ From Embassy Rome to Department of State, Annual US Policy Assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, General Records of the Department of States, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Folder Pol. Aff, and Rel, IT.

³⁵¹ *New York Times*, 10 April 1967, p. 1-5, Visit meetings Humphrey March 1967, NARA, RG 84, Unclassified Central Subject Files, 1964-1975, box 19, Folder Pol. & Def.

warmth shown to Humphrey on the occasion of the official ceremonies should not be mistaken for a sign that there had been an improvement in European attitudes towards the US. His visit was defined a 'ripple of goodwill on a ground swell of disaffection' and they continued to see the Johnson Administration as 'obsessed with Vietnam and therefore unwilling to exert leadership in Europe.' Negotiation of a treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons was cited as 'the latest American miscalculation.'³⁵²

In Italy, both the plaudits and the protests around the visit were mild. 'Although Hubert tries harder,' wrote a correspondent from Rome, 'he is only N. 2, and this fact conditioned everything about the Italian reaction to him.' Moreover, Humphrey's visit left the American government a potentially embarrassing legacy. A young Italian who threw a plastic bag of yellow paint at Humphrey at the opera was worked over brutally by American secret servicemen before being taken away. This incident of maltreatment of an Italian citizen by foreign security guards became one of the main Communist propaganda topics over the next few weeks.

Humphrey later said that he was surprised at the firmness with which the Italians voiced their reservations about the treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. Similarly, beneath the uneasy Italian comprehension for American difficulties in Vietnam could be sensed a growing political embarrassment over the continuation of the war. 'The war', Humphrey noted, 'was popular with almost

³⁵² Ibid.

none and could become an awkward issue for the government in the election that is scheduled for next year.’³⁵³

In the meantime, the growing conflict between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East, an area of traditional strategic interest for Italy, culminating with the Six-Day war of June 1967, relegated Vietnam temporarily to the background. It also had, as was the case with Vietnam, a significant impact not only on Italian foreign policy, but also on its domestic political scene.

Italian Middle Eastern policy and the search for international prestige

Perhaps alone among the larger Western powers, Italy maintained relations with both Israel and the Arabs for almost the entire duration of the crisis through the so-called ‘equidistance’ policy launched by Foreign Minister Fanfani. ‘Good in the former case, tolerable-to-good in the latter’ as Ambassador Reinhardt defined it, Italy’s policy of equidistance reflected the country’s attempt to protect its economic interests in the Arab countries, while at the same time not openly opposing the Western allies’ pro-Israeli line.³⁵⁴

The Middle East had always represented an area of particular strategic interest for Italy. Limited in its expansion to the north by the Central European

³⁵³ Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, Vice President Humphrey Trip to Europe May 8, 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 32, Folder White House Library 1967.

³⁵⁴ From Am Embassy Rome to State Department, June 1967, NARA, RG 84, Italy US Embassy Rome, Unclassified Central Subject Files, 1964-1975, box 4, folder Pol e Def.

empires and in the Balkans by the competition between Austria and Russia, Italy had, since Unification, looked at the Mediterranean basin and Middle East to expand its economic and political interests, compatibly with the hegemonic presence of Great Britain and France in the area. Over the years, Italy's Mediterranean policy found its roots not only in the necessity to secure the country's access to new resources, but also in its aspiration to gain a place within the 'concert of Western powers'.³⁵⁵ In the 1960s American policy, and consequently USIA propaganda, levered on such aspiration emphasizing the recognition of a crucial role for Italy in the Middle East, to compensate for the lack of attention given to Italy in other areas of foreign policy, and more generally, in the international context. At the same time, the Six-Day war, given Italian public support for Israel, offered a chance to US propaganda in Italy to expose communist contradictions of opposing alleged aggression in Vietnam while condoning Soviet-backed Arab threats in Middle East.

What happened in 1967 reflected longer-term changes in Italy's position in the region. The rising decolonization process and the power vacuum left in the Middle East by France and Britain after the Suez crisis in 1956 had opened up new

³⁵⁵ For an extended analysis of the Mediterranean "vocation," see Brogi, *L'Italia e l'egemonia americana nel Mediterraneo* (Florence, 1996); Bruna Bagnato, *Vincoli europei, echi mediterranei: L'Italia e la crisi francese in Marocco e Tunisia* (Florence 1991), pp. 27–38; Varsori, *Europeismo e mediterraneità nella politica estera italiana*, in Massimo De Leonardis (ed.), *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana del dopoguerra* (Bologna, 2003), pp. 27-28; Santoro, *La politica estera di una media potenza: L'Italia dall'Unità ad oggi* (Bologna, 1991).

economic and political opportunities for Italy in the area. A key actor in this process was Enrico Mattei, founder of *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (ENI) –the Italian National Fuel Trust – who thanks to his remarkable entrepreneurial spirit, a clear vision of the role of ENI in the international oil market, and the right dose of ambition, revolutionized Italian policy in the Middle East and succeeded in a short time in competing with global giants such as Esso and Shell. Between 1953 and 1962, Mattei negotiated important oil concessions in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Libya. The loss of all Italy's colonial possession in Africa –Libya, Eritrea and Somalia – after the defeat in the Second World War, allowed Mattei to make great use of anti-imperialist rhetoric. Although received as a serious blow by Italians at the time, the dismantling of Italy's small empire allowed Mattei to present his country as 'equal', favouring the establishment of a fruitful dialogue with the Middle Eastern states. Consistent with this view, he also supported the Algerian war of independence against France.³⁵⁶

His challenge to the balance of the international system went even further. In 1960, he negotiated an agreement with the USSR for the import of 12 million tons of crude oil into Italy, thus breaking the oligopoly of the 'Seven Sisters', the dominant companies controlling the world oil market at that time. The violation of the so-called fifty-fifty rule, combined with the 'proximate inundation' of Soviet

³⁵⁶ On Mattei and its role at ENI see Maugeri, *L'arma del petrolio. Questione petrolifera globale, guerra fredda e politica interna nella vicenda di Enrico Mattei* (Florence, 1994); Geroge Meyr, Enrico Mattei e la politica neoatlantica dell'Italia, nella percezione degli Stati Uniti d'America, pp. 157-173 in Massimo De Leonardi (ed.) *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana del secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna, 2003).

crude oil at low cost in a Western European country, caused great concern and irritation within the US and British governments and corporations.³⁵⁷ Various attempts followed to dissuade Mattei from continuing to pursue his policy. In June 1961, Washington pushed for the creation of a commission within NATO to evaluate the 'potential dangers for the security of the democratic Europe'. Mattei, on his part, was not intimidated and was determined to continue until he was able to obtain recognition of Italy's role as an international power in the Middle East.³⁵⁸

Unfortunately, his path was broken by a dreadful event. In October 1962, he died in what was officially declared a plane accident close to the village of Bascapè in Lombardy. With Mattei's death, an era ended, although the centre-left government, consistent with its aspiration to play a more active role in the international arena, did try to further emphasize Italy's role as a bridge between the Middle East and the Western world. ENI's previous activism was thus paralleled by a number of political and diplomatic initiatives such as Fanfani's trips to Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon, aimed at reinforcing an Italian policy of 'comprehension' towards the newly independent countries launched in the second half of the fifties.³⁵⁹

Once again, the Italian opening towards the Arab world responded not only to foreign policy interests, but also to domestic concerns. More precisely, the

³⁵⁷ In negotiating new oil concessions in the Middle East, Mattei ensured advantageous terms for his counterparts. He offered 75% of the profits to the country owning the oil reserves with the remaining 25% going to Italy, thus violating the 'fifty-fifty rule' that, up to that point, had been applied by the Western companies.

³⁵⁸ Fasanella, *Il Golpe Inglese*, p. 171

³⁵⁹ *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana. Atti del convegno di studi tenuto a Roma il 3 e 4 febbraio 2009*, Venezia, 2010, Giovagnoli and Tosi (eds).

Christian Democratic leadership aspired to test, on the terrain of international politics, the possibility of a convergence with the Socialists and other influential social forces within the country. As we shall see, to some extent, Italy's Middle Eastern policy represented for the DC, in view of the 1968 elections, what Vietnam was for the Communist Party; 'the opportunity to rally around one theme, the various and heterogeneous fronts of Italian politics and society.'³⁶⁰

The idea of a greater role for Italy in the Middle East fuelled the nationalist dreams of expansion of those who, especially on the right, aspired to a role of greater power for Italy. At the same time, it appealed to the Socialists and left-wing groups who aspired to a more independent foreign policy, detached from Cold War logic and inspired by third-force principles.

Italy's role in the Middle East was also important to certain areas of the Catholic Church following the religious influence of Giorgio La Pira, who had theorized the Mediterranean as a 'space of confrontation between the major monotheistic religions – Christian, Jewish and Islamic.' He was thus persuaded of the necessity to facilitate, as much as possible, the process of reconciliation in the area. With this goal, he took numerous trips to the Middle East and flooded the

³⁶⁰ The Mediterranean Basin, Memorandum of Conversation between Saragat, Fanfani and LBJ, September 19, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, Political and Defence, box 2237, Folder Pol Affairs and Rel. IT-AUS, 1/1/67; Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 265

leaders of Israel and the Arab countries with letters, urging his friend Fanfani, at the same time, to help the reconciliation process.³⁶¹

The US government, while on the one hand fearing that Italy's policy of equidistance would end up favouring neutralism in the Middle East, on the other hand recognized Italian understanding of the area. For this reason, the US tried to encourage greater Italian government efforts to find a solution to the conflict. US diplomats were instructed to keep Italian counterparts updated on any new developments, and Italian ministers were regularly consulted during the crisis. In June 1967, Moro and Fanfani were invited to the White House to further discuss the matter. During the meeting, Walt Rostow went so far as to assert that, given their geopolitical position, the countries in the area, particularly Italy, should guide the action while the US should act as 'junior partner'.³⁶²

US efforts to involve the Italian government in the decision-making process, besides meeting a real need to dilute its responsibilities amid its growing commitment in Vietnam, also showed American awareness of Italy's continual need for confirmation of its 'special' role in the Middle East. 'Emphasizing the Italian privileged position in the Middle East', explained a USIA document in May 1967, 'was connected to the wider theme of Italian obsession for international prestige.' The Italians, perhaps more than most countries given their glorious past and the traumatic experiences of fascism and the war, were motivated by

³⁶¹ Francesco Paolo Fulci, 'Fanfani: il nuovo nella continuità della politica estera italiana', p. 30; *Quaderni della Fondazione Amintore Fanfani, Fanfani alle Nazioni Unite, Atti del Convegno sulla Presidenza della XX Assemblea dell'ONU*, pp. 27-34.

³⁶² Ortona, *Anni D'America*, p. 24.

considerations of prestige. The document continues, 'Seeming indifference by the US toward the parties in Italy which support our policies will then be assessed more severely than might be the case elsewhere. It is important that we support our friends. It can be useful to our own interests. The failure to do so may well be taken as a shift of American policy.'³⁶³

As Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser have observed, 'Italians have a keen sense of national pride and are extremely sensitive about the status accorded their country by others.'³⁶⁴ However, as argued by Massimo Santoro, the gap between this aspiration to international recognition and the actual capacity to exert influence at the summits of the great powers', and more in general, on the global political stage, was wider in Italy than in other West European countries. Santoro thus identifies Italian pursuit of prestige as an end in itself, without adequate international policy implications and consequences.³⁶⁵

Although recognising Italy's search of 'parity of status with the other major NATO European allies' as a priority for the country, Brogi, instead, does not see it as an end in itself, but as a prerequisite for reaching the country's foreign policy goals. In particular, Italy sought 'détente in the Mediterranean region, which could produce commercial opportunities for trade with the Near East', and increased cooperation with the EEC and the NATO. Brogi ends by stating that, 'Gaining acceptance and respect from the other powers, Italian leaders believed, would

³⁶³ USIA Memorandum, Office and Research, May 1967, RG 306, NARA.

³⁶⁴ Frederic Spotts and Theodore Wieser, *Italy: A Difficult Democracy: A Survey of Italian Politics* (Cambridge, 1986) pp. 263–268.

³⁶⁵ Santoro, *La politica estera di una media potenza: L'Italia dall'Unità ad oggi* (Bologna, 1991), pp. 73–95.

allow Italy to advance its international agenda.’³⁶⁶ US post-war administrations, on their part, calibrated their ‘concessions of rank (...) to Italy in order to affect Italian domestic politics and to stabilize NATO.’³⁶⁷

American propaganda officers had long understood the importance of appealing to Italian ‘concern for appearances’. They were perfectly conscious of Italian leaders reliance on Italian intellectual and cultural traditions as ‘substitutes for military and economic strength, or “hard power.”’ As Borgi notes, ‘their craving for image, or *bella figura*, was not always casual and hollow. Appearances did matter and helped to increase Italy’s international leverage.’³⁶⁸

In a document of the early 1950s, addressing Italians’ sense of nationalism ‘by portraying American indebtedness to their ancient and pervasive cultures’ was cited as the best way of ‘stressing the links’ between the two countries, in order to ‘indirectly convince them of the non-imperialistic motives behind US foreign policy.’³⁶⁹

The theme of ‘Italian International Prestige’ was thus recurrent in the agency outputs over the years: ‘Our most useful tools are cosmetics,’ explained a USIS officer in Rome in May 1967, ‘since in Italy appearances counts for nearly as much as reality’. President Johnson was therefore invited to ‘demonstrate confidence in the centre-left leaders’ foreign policy, arrange exchange of visits with appropriate

³⁶⁶ Alessandro Brogi, ‘Ike and Italy: The Eisenhower Administration and Italy’s “Neo-Atlanticist” Agenda’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4.3 (2002), p. 7

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁶⁹ Assignment of Countries to Areas of Concern, Definitions of Areas and USIE Objectives Therein, September 6, 1950, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Public Affairs Policy Plans and Guidance Staff, Records Relating to the National Security Council, 1947-1954, Entry 1392, box 2.

Italian leaders and their American counterparts,' and to make sure '*to be seen to* value the Italian government and people as an ally of the first rank'. The USIA thus played on Italy's need to rehabilitate its international prestige in order to obtain support for US policies. In this framework, according the status of a Mediterranean power to Italy was perceived as relevant in view of the 1968 elections, especially given the internal embarrassment caused by growing Arab-Israeli hostility to the government.

In June 1967, however, the Italian policy of 'comprehension' was definitively undermined by the outbreak of the Six-Day War. Since its creation, Israel had been looked upon with favour by Italian diplomacy and public opinion, and this position coexisted with the pro-Arab policy carried out by the government and by ENI. The worsening of the crisis thus placed the Italian government in the rather uncomfortable position of having to satisfy Italian public's sympathy for Israel, while at the same time protecting Italy's economic interests in the Arab world.³⁷⁰

The Six-Day War began with the Italian public virtually unanimous in its sympathy for Israel, the Communist Party reluctantly following the Soviet line, and the Italian government position swaying painfully between Israel and the Arab countries. In such a mess, the only positive factor foreseen by the US Embassy in Italy was the chance that the government had to benefit from public support for Israel while exposing Communist contradictions. The conflict made obvious the

³⁷⁰ From Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Effects of ME crisis on Italian Politics, June 28, 1967, NARA; RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Political and Defense, box 2236, Folder 15-1 IT.

inconsistency in the Communist line of opposing alleged aggression in Vietnam, while condoning Soviet-backed Arab threats in Middle East. This caused embarrassment to PCI officials, preventing them, at least for the moment, from using Vietnam as much as formerly, to gain support from the Italian public. 'The government,' noted Reinhardt, 'might have profited more from Communist discomfiture had Fanfani not espoused his equidistance line.' Promulgated at the onset of the crisis, Fanfani's policy, while at first earning him a grudging acceptance from the Cabinet, and a favorable vote by the Communists, left him in isolation when the Israeli victory relieved tension and still further raised pro-Israeli sentiment in Italy.³⁷¹ 'Criticism of the Government's policy continued to mount until the Israeli military victory became inevitable.' By the end of June, when Moro moved to change the official Italian position closer to that of its NATO allies, it was already too late.³⁷²

Because of the pressure of public opinion, the Communist Party was not able to maintain the Soviet line in its entirety, and the official stand of the Italian government was similarly eroded. The only party which seemed to benefit from the crisis was the Socialist Party, who found a new sense of unity in their opposition to Fanfani's policy of 'equidistance'. Led by Nenni, the PSU took from the outset, a strong pro-Israeli stand. 'Comprehension' towards US policy in Vietnam and 'equidistance' with respect to the conflict in the Middle East, thus

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Airgram from Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, Pol. IT-US, Political and Defense, box 2238.

damaged government unity in view of the elections, demonstrating once again the 'permeability of Italian domestic politics to foreign influence'.³⁷³

The chapter has analyzed three of the main USIA propaganda objectives in Italy between 1966 and 1968. In doing so, it has highlighted the strong correlation between Italian domestic policy and the international context, with the centre-left government growing foreign policy activism as a way to compensate for scarce domestic policy achievements in view of the 1968 national elections, and to regain space of manoeuvre in the Mediterranean.

The chapter has also investigated USIA efforts to counteract the lack of public awareness, based on the conviction that scarce public support could lead to a weakening of Italian government commitments for issues crucial to the survival of the western bloc. Public diplomacy, therefore, served United States government policy by, on the one hand, trying bridging the gap between the overt Europeanism and Atlanticism of the Italian government and the substantial indifference and apathy of the Italian people, while on the other hand seeking to boost Italians support for the center-left government inside by showing to valorize its international role in the western bloc as well as in the Mediterranean.

The next chapter, instead, by analysing the third objective identified by USIA country plan in Italy, which attain to creating understanding and respect United States institutions, culture and achievements, will focus on US public diplomacy

³⁷³ D. J. Forsyth, 'The peculiarities of Italian – American relations in historical perspective', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 4: 3 (1998) 1-21)

strategy to present to the Italians the strengths and weakness of American domestic and foreign policy of those years: from the great society to the civil rights movement, to project Apollo.

Chapter 5:

Presenting American policies to the Italians: From selling to justifying

Seek confidence and respect for the United States, its institutions, culture and achievements, as well as explain US position on Vietnam to the Italians: these were the two last, but by no means least, propaganda objectives identified by the USIA in Italy during the Johnson years.³⁷⁴ This chapter will be devoted to the first, while Vietnam will be covered in the next chapter.

Deeply intertwined, both goals appertain to the deep heart of public diplomacy, that is projecting 'the right' image of the United States abroad. 'Building' in other words 'understanding of the American model, its institutions, culture and ideas as necessary basis for interpreting US actions and intentions throughout the world'³⁷⁵. The same America that in the Sixties was presented as the beacon of modern capitalism, democracy and freedom while denying basic rights to its own Afro-American citizens. A country that sent the first man to the moon while sending its young citizens to fight a war in Vietnam of which none could see the end. This chapter seeks therefore to analyse how public diplomacy presented such complexities and contradictions to Italians by emphasizing the

³⁷⁴ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 19.

³⁷⁵ USIA Worldwide Priority Themes, July 30, 1968, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1968, box 24.

strengths of US politics and society while filtering, balancing and putting into perspective their weaknesses.

To this end, USIA engaged in a variety of activities such as art exhibitions – from the Abstract expressionism to the recently-born pop art – shows, concerts, academic exchanges and the spread of self-celebrating material such as pamphlets on “Democracy in America”, a cartoon story of the “Bill of Rights” for kids, or a booklet named “Inventions that changed the world” from the steamboat, to the airplane, all rigorously American. More generally, there were four themes that inevitably monopolized US propaganda outputs in Italy, and elsewhere, during the Johnson years: the Great Society and American space achievements on the positive side, and the Civil Rights struggle and Vietnam, which progressively became more and more predominant.³⁷⁶

In fact, two years prior to the 1968 national elections, news and TV images of US direct military involvement in Vietnam were added to the potentially explosive Italian domestic situation. The anti-war protests in Italy, which up to that time had been sporadic, intensified in late 1965. In October of that year, the Communist newspaper, *l'Unità*, reported numerous ‘demonstrations in Italian cities matching the marches of thousands of young people in the US.’³⁷⁷ The American Embassy in Rome feared that communist organizations would exploit the increasing anti-war

³⁷⁶ Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 11-12

³⁷⁷ Memorandum for the President, Daily Reaction Report, Oct 18, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 5, box 74.

sentiments in Italy to turn youth and public opinion against the United States.³⁷⁸

On top of all that, in March 1965, a bloody African-American uprising broke out in Los Angeles, and the Black Panthers Party, a revolutionary socialist organization invoking violence in opposition to the moderate movement of Martin Luther King, appeared on the scene. The appointment by Johnson of the first black Cabinet Secretary, Robert Weaver, widely publicized by the USIA, was not enough to erase the news of the riots spreading to Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit. Suddenly, it seemed that the two Achilles heels of America were front-page news, simultaneously invading the media everywhere and fuelling the chaos and instability in Italy. This could not fail to affect the work of an agency in charge of projecting a positive image of the United States abroad, as a bulwark of freedom and democracy.

When the USIA was first created in 1953, US propagandists described American society as the definitive affirmation of the capitalist consumer culture in which the American middle class was rapidly expanding, and most workers were gradually improving their condition. It was a society in which easier and wider access to consumer goods was presented as a projection of democracy that would have ultimately end up eliminating class disparities, leading to a 'classless society.'³⁷⁹ The story told by the USIA in the fifties was, therefore, a story of success, where social tensions were gradually disappearing. Men and women had

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ "People's Capitalism - This is America", *Colliers*, Jan 6, 1956, Exhibits and Fairs, People's Capitalism 1956, NARA, RG 306, Subject Files 1953-1994, USIA Historical Collection, Entry A1 1066, box 129.

clear and defined role, and they felt entirely fulfilled. Minorities were struggling, but slowly finding their place in the wide, diverse, all encompassing, dynamic US democracy. It was the *American dream* coming true.

Unlike the previous decade, when the USIA used a positive tone in selling the American society of consensus, epitomized by the middle-class family living in the suburbs surrounded by commodities, by the mid-sixties the agency found itself more and more often having to justify, explain and contextualise US government domestic and foreign policy choices that were being criticized abroad. The only positive, partly self-celebrating outputs were those to promote Johnson's Great Society program, as well as US achievements in space, culminating with the Apollo mission.

Selling the Great Society

'There may exist a unique, psychological advantage in explaining the Great Society abroad', explained a USIA circular to all posts in 1965, 'at a time when the country is subject to the current degree of criticism for our support of the South Vietnamese and other American actions which do not meet universal approval'.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ Joint USIA-State circular to all posts, Subject: The Great Society, (day and month are not visible) 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, USIA Director, 1964-1967, box 33.

The Great Society, Johnson's set of reforms and measures aimed at eliminating domestic poverty and racial discrimination, was the showpiece of the administration, and represented an irresistible weapon for American propagandists. By the end of 1965, Marks indicated that a new priority for USIA media output would be to advertise the president's 'War on Poverty', not only for its domestic value but as a model for the rest of the world to follow. 'The Great Society program is the most ambitious domestic goal ever established by this nation. The efforts and accomplishments of the Great Society program are specifically important and impressive to foreign audiences, just as President Roosevelt's domestic programs caught the imagination of peoples and nations throughout the world. Understanding the Great Society', ended the USIA circular, 'is fundamental to an understanding of the United States of today and of the future.'³⁸¹

For this purpose, by the midsixties the agency mounted one of the few propaganda campaigns on the model of the previous decade. Johnson's commencement address of May 1964 was transmitted on the wireless file to all posts. The Press service in Washington created a series of special packets named 'The Great Society – New Goals for the US', which included news stories, pictures and pamphlets to be sent to all field posts abroad.³⁸² The

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Memorandum from Leonard Marks to Douglass Carter, Sept. 13, 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 1/1/65– 6/1/65.

agency even launched an exhibit on the Great Society for display in Western European countries.³⁸³

In Italy, as an agency memorandum noted, this theme was expected to be well received, given the country's strong socialist tradition and the faith that both leftist and center forces placed in the idea of the welfare state. Italian USIS posts therefore spread news stories such as 'Great Society Seeks Share of Nation's Bounty For All' or 'AFL-CIO Calls Administration and Labor Goals Identical', to be placed within Italian media. The agency's Motion Picture Service produced documentaries on the benefits that the Great Society program would bring to American citizens in every field of life, from 'Architecture USA' to 'Public Health' and 'Bridge of Tomorrow' on college education in the US.³⁸⁴ An example of the success of the campaign was a two-hour long program on the Great Society including a filmed interview with Johnson, as well as the publication of a series of fourteen articles on the Great Society entirely supplied by USIS Rome which appeared in *Il Popolo*, the main newspaper of the DC, with a circulation of 80,000 copies..³⁸⁵

In line with its traditional, universalistic tone, the main aim of US propaganda was to present the Great Society as a model that was, to a certain extent, reproducible worldwide. This aim was epitomized by the exhibit

³⁸³ Memorandum for the President from Leonard Marks, Weekly Report, Oct 26, 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 33.

³⁸⁴ USIA Memorandum for Mr. Rowan, Major Media Products on the Great Society, April 7, 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967.

³⁸⁵ Memorandum for the President from Leonard Marks, Weekly Report, Nov 17, 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 33.

'Toward a Universal Great Society', which toured a number of the world's capitals, including Rome. 'This nation's dream of a Great Society does not stop at the water's edge' appeared on the first of the twenty-six exhibit panels. 'It is not just an American dream. Its origins are ancient, its architects are of all ages, its essence is the unity of man with the world he has wrought. All are welcome to share. All are welcome to contribute to it.'³⁸⁶

The goals of the Great Society, as explained in a USIA document describing the exhibition, 'are shown as the universal aspiration of man expressed by leaders of thought over the centuries.' A series of pictures of outstanding figures followed, starting with Leonardo Da Vinci and Galileo Galilei, and ending with Abraham Lincoln, suggesting the idea of human progress as a path started in the 'old world' but now realizing its full potential in the United States. The exhibition continued with images accompanied by captions explaining that at 'the beginning of time ... toil and poverty were the common lot of man', but then, 'progress and technology liberated man from basic needs.' The subtext of the exhibit is that society had achieved the most advanced state of industrialization and technological progress in the United States, and had reached the highest stage of human development, therefore, representing a model for the rest of the world.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Toward a Universal Great Society, USIA Exhibit Project, 1965, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 33.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Among the material spread abroad to advertise the Great Society was the movie 'A President's Country', produced by the USIA Motion Picture Service. Shot in Texas, where Johnson grew up, it featured the President looking over his cattle, talking with a ranch hand, and inspecting his herd and other living stock. The main goal of the movie, explained the director Charles Guggenheim, was to show that 'through education, democratic procedures and hard work, a hard, lean countryside has been transformed into an area of plenty'. The movie was distributed worldwide, not only in developing countries, but also in Italy where the agricultural south was still undergoing a process of modernization. The idea, as Marks explained to Johnson, was to help people, 'associating sympathetically with the United States in general and you in particular; presenting America as a country that in order to become a great power, had to struggle the same way as they were doing now.'³⁸⁸

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the 1968, the USIA Country Plan for Italy identified a new goal for US propaganda in Italy that was not present in the other Western European country plans. This goal was, 'to support the Italian modernization process' and 'to *share* with Italians, American thought and experience in certain fields that may help to solve current Italian problems.'³⁸⁹ This objective calls attention to the fact that 'National Development' was considered for the first time by Leonard Marks in

³⁸⁸ USIA Memorandum for the President, April 23, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 1/1/65– 6/1/65.

³⁸⁹ USIA Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, February 1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

1967, as one of the roles of USIA in underdeveloped countries. The task of the USIA was, in the words of the agency's director, that of 'sharing relevant thought and experience that the developing countries can apply to their own problems; helping build understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process and acting as a catalyst in the circulation of ideas and helping building new attitudes that must underlie modernization.'³⁹⁰

As highlighted in the first chapter, comparisons between the situation in Italy and some developing countries, particularly in South America where a great disequilibrium existed between economic growth and the lack of modernization of the state apparatus, were frequent at that time among American officials. 'The operations of the USIS are influenced by another situation, in that in terms of cultural and communication development, Italy is one of the most sophisticated and advanced countries in the world, but in its socio-economic development parts of the country have standards of living roughly comparable to those in developing countries.'³⁹¹

This perception inevitably influenced the US public diplomacy strategy in Italy, which often ended up being closer to the one adopted in the developing countries rather than in Western Europe. In terms of content up to that point, a much greater emphasis was put on supporting the democratic

³⁹⁰ USIA Role In National Development of Underdeveloped Countries, June 8, 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 24, Folder USIA National Development, pp. I, II-2.

³⁹¹ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, 1969, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

process and, more precisely, the 'democratic forces' within the government and civil society. In fact, the democratic process was considered to be much more at risk in Italy than in the rest of Europe, including France, despite the fact that it also had a big Communist Party, because of the fragility of the Italian institutional structure. Also in terms of strategy, the USIA's shift of target from the masses to the public opinion moulders was much more defined in Italy, than for instance in Germany or England, due to a much less developed civil society, and the much stronger role of the opinion leaders as mediators between political events and the masses.

Moreover, because rapid development in Italy had affected only certain areas of the country and large parts of the population were still living in conditions of great difficulty, especially in the south, much more emphasis was given in the propaganda outputs to concepts such as modernization and the development of the rural south. Ultimately, the illiteracy rate in the mid-sixties was still significantly higher in Italy than in the rest of Western Europe; 8.3% in Italy compared to 1% in Germany and England, and 3% in France. Furthermore, large numbers of Italians still could not afford a radio or TV. Therefore, the role of personal contacts and organized movie screening at USIS posts was still crucial in Italy, especially in the south.³⁹² It was also considered important that USIA propaganda not create too wide a gap between the

³⁹² Memorandum of Conversation between Thomas C. Mann and Giovanni Pieraccini, The Italian Internal Situation, July 15, 1965, National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (2 of 2).

American people and the Italians by projecting an image of a country so advanced as to be unreachable. The concept of reproducibility of the American model, therefore, had to be constantly part of the message to the Italian public, reminding them that by adopting the proposed model of reforms, democracy and productivity, Italy could successfully complete its pattern of modernization and sit, in its own right, at the table of the great western powers. The *American Dream*, in sum, should not feel too overwhelming or remote.

For that reason, in presenting Project Apollo – its most spectacular, costly, and extraordinary project – to the Italians, the USIA shifted its propaganda tone from the purely self-celebratory to emphasizing the value of the achievement for the whole of humanity.

The Sky is not the limit: Selling US Space Achievements

Proposed by President Kennedy in May 1961 as a response to the Soviet launch of the world's first human into space, Project Apollo, with its goal of landing the first man on the moon, was conceived from its beginnings as a space program that would stir the world's imagination. American public diplomats exploited in full its propagandistic potential, not only to show the technological superiority of the United States but also as an expression of American values and virtues in open contrast with those of the Soviet Union.

Following the widely publicized first American in space in May 1961, the USIA, in concert with NASA and the Department of Defense, put on display at the International Science Fair in Rome the original US spacecraft as a symbol of the 'openness' of American society and science achievements, in stark contrast with the proverbial Soviet closure and secrecy. At the same time, the Kennedy administration refused to send US astronauts abroad 'like trained seals' for goodwill tours as the Soviets had been doing, claiming that this would have given the mission an overly 'propagandistic tone', and thereby impairing its scientific value. Hundreds of thousands of people in Italy rushed to the show, standing in line to touch the US spacecraft as pilgrims would do with a relic. Despite the great success of the capsule exhibit in Rome and Paris, however, USIA polls still reported Western European's conviction of the superiority of the Soviet space program.³⁹³

With the advent of the Johnson administration, the US space program was more and more perceived as the strongest propaganda asset to counterbalance the negative image of America abroad. At first, space exploration was advertised abroad within the framework of the Great Society, as a metaphor not only of technological progress but also of the overall progress of American society toward a new and more just system.

³⁹³ Teasel Muir Harmony, 'Selling Space Capsules, Moon Rocks and America: Spaceflights in US Public Diplomacy 1961-1979' in Hallvard Notaker, Giles Scott Smith, David J. Snyder, (eds.) *Reasserting America in the 1970s U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad* (Manchester, 2016).

By 1965, as the news of the domestic anti-war movement grew, bringing to the world the claims of those groups who felt excluded from the American dream, public diplomats shifted from celebrating American technological superiority to emphasizing the 'inclusiveness' of US space program.³⁹⁴ Up to that point, USIA material had focused on presenting the space program as a sign of American technological and scientific prominence compared to the Soviet Union and the rest of the world. In the second half of the sixties, focus shifted towards presenting it as an achievement '*at the service of all mankind.*' US propagandists, explained USIA officer Edward Savage, were asked to highlight that 'the benefit ensuing from the new American scientific discoveries may be shared by all countries and all peoples of this earth in the cause of human progress'.³⁹⁵ To quote historian Teasel Muir Harmony: 'Taking on an increasingly humble tone, USIA and State Department information efforts proactively cultivated the idea that the United States "shared" its successes and failures with the rest of the world; an attempt to encourage empathy and identification with US interests.'³⁹⁶

In Italy, this message had a particular appeal, because it was one of the first countries, in December 1964, to launch a satellite in orbit (*Satellite San Marco*) thanks to carriers provided for free by the United States under an agreement for

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 130.

³⁹⁵ Memorandum from Edward Savage, Director of USIA Office of Public Information, for Mr. Hayes Redmon, Oct 22, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 9/28/65– 1/3/66.

³⁹⁶ Harmony, 'Selling Space Capsules, Moon Rocks and America', p. 131.

cooperation in space between the two countries. American propaganda presented the project as a common effort of the United States and Italy towards a new frontier of scientific knowledge and progress. The subtext of the message, however, was that this achievement never would have been possible for a small ally such as Italy, without the help of advanced, generous America. Reciprocal declarations of enthusiasm and celebration populated the American and Italian media before and after the launch, with the United States expressing support and pride for the success of the Italian project. Johnson's message of congratulations to the Italian government was quoted by most Italian national newspapers.³⁹⁷

In the same year, the first successful flight of the US space probe, Ranger VII, was carried out, reaching the lunar surface on 28 July. This news was received in Italy with enthusiasm and high expectation of greater things to come. Laudatory comments populated liberal papers such as *Il Resto del Carlino*, which defined it as, 'a technological and scientific miracle', noting how American conquest of the moon now seemed 'no longer improbable'. Even the Communist paper, *l'Unità*, described Ranger VII as a 'turning point in US space developments'.³⁹⁸ The USIA, on its side, exploited the success of Ranger VII by any means available. Footage for commercial newsreels was shipped by air to all countries, and the USIA press service supplied overseas posts with 20,000 words on the mission. Within a few

³⁹⁷ Telegram from President Johnson to Prime Minister Aldo Moro, Dec 19, 1964, LBJ Library, National Security File, Special Head of the State Correspondence, Italy Presidential Correspondence, Box 27, Folder 2.

³⁹⁸ Memorandum for the President, Daily Reaction Report, Aug 3, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File USIA, box 73.

hours of the successful impact, a poster exhibit on Ranger was already on display in Rome, as well as in other European capitals.³⁹⁹

By October 1965, all the media of the agency were geared up to provide maximum coverage of the Gemini VI space launch (NASA human spaceflight program). The Gemini mission was presented as a 'further step *for the benefit of all mankind* leading to manned exploration of the moon.'⁴⁰⁰ To stress the human aspect of the program, Johnson even decided to reverse the policy of the Kennedy administration, by sending American astronauts on goodwill tours abroad. From 12 to 16 October, astronaut John H. Glenn Jr. toured three cities in Italy, Genoa, Rome and Naples, and was welcomed everywhere like a star. He was received by the mayors of all three cities, the Prime Minister of Italy and even the Pope. He held two press conferences, had a 30 minute interview for RAI, and gave talks to scientists, cadets and students. The visit received extensive radio and TV coverage and, according to USIA estimates, more than 4,500 inches of newspaper articles were written about him.⁴⁰¹

The campaign seemed to work well in Italy, because local media and political leaders showed a greater confidence in American capabilities than their European counterparts. After the failure of the first Gemini shot, *La Stampa* of Turin commented, 'We're sure the test will be repeated. American

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Memorandum from Director of USIA Office of Public Information Edward Savage for Mr. Hayes Redmon, Oct 22, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 9/28/65– 1/3/66.

⁴⁰¹ From Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Visit of Astronaut John H. Glenn Jr. to Italy, November 9 1965, Joint USIA-State Message, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964-1966, Box 3153.

space technology – enormously powerful and complex – cannot be stopped by one or two failures’. The centre-left paper, *Il Messaggero*, had no doubt that ‘a new rendezvous attempt was going to be made in January’, while the liberal *Corriere della Sera* reported the NASA statement that the Gemini VI cancellation ‘will not cause any delay in launching Gemini VII’.⁴⁰² In March 1965, the President of the Italian Republic, Socialist Giuseppe Saragat, sent a note to Johnson expressing gratitude to the American ‘scientists, technicians, and pilots who once again have shown a knowledge and a courage that gives all mankind cause for enthusiasm and confidence.’⁴⁰³ The American propaganda message of inclusiveness, therefore, seemed to have broken through to the Italian media and political leaders, no matter where they sat on the political spectrum.

By 1966, most of the efforts of the USIA were focused on preparing world public opinion for the Apollo 8 mission, the lunar orbital flight scheduled for December 1968. With the worsening of the situation in Vietnam, paralleled by the growing protests at home and abroad, the political value of space exploration increased dramatically, eventually coming to represent the ‘ace in the hole’ of the Johnson administration. Given the growing suspiciousness of foreign public opinion for any attempt at persuasion coming from the United States, the idea that

⁴⁰² Memorandum for the President, Daily Reaction Report, Oct 18, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, box 74.

⁴⁰³ Cable from President Saragat to President Johnson, March 23, 1965, LBJ Library, National Security File, Special Head of the State Correspondence File, Box 27.

scientific programs could have political potential, precisely because foreign audiences would interpret them as politically neutral, was a powerful idea.⁴⁰⁴

USIA headquarters produced material for every target and sent it out in Italy as everywhere else. Products included a cartoon named 'Man and Outer Space' and a TV show titled 'Beyond the Sky' on the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo projects.⁴⁰⁵ Space exhibitions were organized by the agency throughout Western Europe, including Rome, again displaying a full size Apollo spacecraft, an operating weather satellite receiving station, and hundreds of models, photographs, slides, and films of the US space program. These exhibitions registered high levels of attendance everywhere.

Right before the end of his mandate, in January 1969, Johnson gave a speech emphasizing how the forthcoming lunar flight dramatically illustrated the oneness and interdependence of all the inhabitants of this planet was transmitted live by the RAI via radio and TV. The message seemed to have an impact on both the Italian media and its politicians. In a farewell message to President Johnson, Prime Minister Mariano Rumor defined the upcoming Apollo mission as a 'significant step toward a broader understanding of our universe for the benefit of all mankind'.⁴⁰⁶ In his reply, Johnson took his last chance to remind to the Italians how in a time of lunar travel, mankind could no longer think in terms of being separated by mere

⁴⁰⁴ Harmony, 'Selling Space Capsules, Moon Rocks and America', p. 131.

⁴⁰⁵ Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 13; The USIA Correspondent Magazine, Vol 8, No 11, Nov 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 14.

⁴⁰⁶ Letter from Mariano Rumor to President Johnson, Jan (day not visible) 1969, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Special Head of State Correspondence File, box 28, Folder Italy 5/1/68 – 1/20/69.

oceans. 'It has therefore become incumbent on us all to develop systems of international cooperation which reflect this new reality.'⁴⁰⁷

However, despite the success of the American space programme as a tool for propaganda, as well as the publicity surrounding the unprecedented efforts devoted by the Johnson administration to end poverty and discrimination within the US, none of these endeavors managed, except for rare moments, to distract worldwide public attention from Vietnam and the growing domestic civil rights struggle.

The 'Negro Problem'

'There is one single shadow in the picture and that's a major one,' commented the Paris newspaper, *L'Aurore* in 1964, 'the Negro problem. For the Americans, it dominates all others, including foreign policy problems'.⁴⁰⁸ The 'racial question' had been, since the beginning, the weak spot of American propaganda. Every USIA effort to present the United States to the world as the land of freedom and progress where everyone had access to the same rights and to a high standard of living inevitably clashed, increasingly so by the mid-fifties, with news of segregation and violence against Blacks in the South.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from President Johnson to Mariano Rumor, Jan 18, 1969, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Special Head of State Correspondence File, box 28, Folder Italy 5/1/68 – 1/20/69.

⁴⁰⁸ Memorandum for the President, USIA Daily reaction Report, Aug 24, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 1, box 73.

In addition to casting doubt on the democratic nature of American society, the denial of basic constitutional rights to a substantial group of US citizens offered a powerful weapon to the Soviets, who did not hesitate to exploit this whenever they had a chance. Immediately after World War Two, in response to criticism by Truman's Secretary of State, James Byrnes, that the Soviet Union had denied the right to vote to people in the Balkans, the Soviets responded that, 'Negroes of Mr Byrnes' own state of South Carolina, were denied the same right.'⁴⁰⁹

At the time of Johnson inauguration in November 1963, the racial struggle was no longer a southern issue, but had turned national. News of the humiliations suffered by African Americans all over the country, as well as their increasingly organized and widespread protests, appeared daily in the Italian press. In view of the American presidential elections in 1964, the Communist, *l'Unità*, noted that 'racial integration was the main issue at stake' while according to liberal newspaper *Il Tempo*, 'the racial issue worried the Democrats more than was thought.'⁴¹⁰

In line with Soviet propaganda, Italian Communist outputs tried to get the most out of the situation by highlighting any episode of violence against African Americans and presenting segregation as the revelation of the 'real nature' of American capitalism; a system based on the oppression of the weak and the exploitation of minorities, which, by its same nature, was bound to fail.

⁴⁰⁹ Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain. Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War 1945-1961* (New York, 1998), p. 129.

⁴¹⁰ Memorandum for the President, USIA Daily reaction Report, Aug 24 , 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 1, box 73.

The increasing racial struggle in the sixties was identified as the beginning of the decline of American capitalism. 'A fascist type reactionary wave is sweeping the US', commented the Soviet paper *Pravda* in the summer of 1964 – a consequence of the fact that 'capitalism was facing enormous and increasing difficulty in every field', leading 'frenzied reactionaries' to look for salvation in 'war preparation' and in the 'fascistization of US life.'⁴¹¹

In addition to the obvious exploitation by Communist propaganda of the racial issue, by the mid-sixties interest in the situation of African Americans in the United States had become increasingly widespread, in Italy and everywhere else, intertwining with the student and the rising anti-war movements. 'In all Europe' explained a USIA report, 'the state of racial relationships within the US is a matter of local human interest, often with emotional self-identification.'⁴¹² Given that a satisfactory solution to the racial issue appeared far off, American propagandists needed a strategy to present it in such a way as to limit the negative impact on world public opinion.

The first systematic articulation of a propaganda strategy to present the racial issue dates back to 1958, right after the *Little Rock* incident, when the USIA drafted a 'Basic Planning Paper on Minorities'. This paper suggested that while 'Soviet propaganda mills exacerbated emotions on both sides, and its

⁴¹¹ Memorandum for the President, Recent Communist Comments on US Policies and Actions, Aug 3, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 1, box 73.

⁴¹² Western European Opinions of Race Relations in America, Nov 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, Office Files of Frederick Panzer, box 190, Folder Research and Reference Service (Foreign Pools).

agents were busy stirring up or publicizing incidents', the agency had to find the means 'to *place in perspective* those instances which the Communists tried to exploit.'⁴¹³ Placing the issue in the right perspective, according to the report, meant presenting lynching, riots and episodes of violence as 'sporadic incidents' within the path of progress which characterized racial relations in the United States. The task of US propagandists was, therefore, to 'provide constructive background material to convince the people of other nations of the real progress being made throughout the United States. 'Segregated situations', the document explained, 'should be shown *only when the evidence of progress clearly outweighs any adverse impact of segregation*. We should identify, but without too much obviousness, each newsworthy instance of achievement by Negro Americans'.⁴¹⁴

The strategy indicated in the 1958 paper remained unchanged for the next ten years. In 1964, a solid basis for the propaganda was created through Johnson's approval of the Civil Rights Act followed by the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Both acts received massive worldwide coverage and were preceded and followed by an intense global propaganda campaign involving all available means: radio, TV, newspapers, documentaries, and press conferences. In the summer of 1964 the USIA organized a global campaign in preparation for Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act in July, explaining the

⁴¹³ U.S. Information Agency Basic Guidance and Planning Paper n. 5, Dec 4, 1958, Basic Planning Paper on Minorities, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Agency History Program Subject Files, Mission Statements, 1945-1967, Entry A1 1072, box 5.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

meaning of the act and including a 30-minute TV roundtable featuring Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and other African American leaders.⁴¹⁵ USIA European public opinion polls showed progress in Italy after the signing of the Act, but the reality of the obstacles still in place to African-American voting in several states, and the new wave of protests that culminated with the killing of civil right activist, Jimmie Lee Jackson, in Alabama several days after the assassination of Malcolm X, inevitably monopolized the news and represented new setbacks. The same pattern emerged with the signing of the Voting Right Act in April 1965. In the immediate aftermath, the agency registered a new softening of public opinion, which deteriorated again with news of the riots and renewed violence in Los Angeles in the summer of 1965.⁴¹⁶

As part of the campaign to explain the racial issue abroad, the agency produced two very successful documentaries, *The March*, about the 1963 civil rights March on Washington, and *Nine from Little Rock*, on the nine African-American students who in 1957, after been accepted to attend an all-white Arkansas high school, were prevented from entering by the Arkansas National Guard. The film, narrated by Jefferson Thomas, one of the Little Rock nine who died in 2010, was highly acclaimed in Europe and won the Academy Award for best documentary in 1965. It was the first time that any USIA film, in competition

⁴¹⁵ Memorandum for the President, Foreign Reaction to Senate Passage of Civil Rights Bill, June 29, 1964, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 5, box 74.

⁴¹⁶ European Reaction to Senate Passage of Voting Rights Bill, May 30 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 5, box 74.

with commercial documentaries and films, ever won such critical praise. Johnson praised George Stevens, director of the USIA Motion picture service and multiple award-winning director, for having been able to 'mingle quality and results to the benefit of the United States and its information program overseas'.⁴¹⁷

Despite the public success, however, there was some criticism from some members of Congress who thought that the USIA, as the propaganda agency of the US government funded with American citizens' money, should not make products which could in any way harm the image of the country abroad. In January 1964 the Advisory Commission on Information, in charge of supervising the agency's activities, claimed that the documentary could lead to 'erroneous and negative impressions abroad about the US (...) merely confirming the communist propaganda on oppression of American negroes.' Some congressmen demanded the suppression of the film on the grounds that, 'it would air US dirty linen abroad and not tell the full story.'⁴¹⁸

The issue of whether or not the USIA should cover racist violence in the United States dominated the Johnson years. The process of reforms inaugurated by the administration with the Civil Rights and Voting Right acts, as well as with the Great Society, was like uncorking a bottle. It had the perverse effect of freeing all the instances repressed until then, generating growing impatience and frustration.

⁴¹⁷ Letter from President Johnson to Carl Rowan, April 6, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314, Folder 1/1/65- 6/1/65.

⁴¹⁸ *Evening Star*, (author and title not visible) Jan 22, 1964; *Chicago Defender*, 9 November 1964, p. 17, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 33.

Protests broke out everywhere with even more violence, and news of the riots captured the headlines in Italy, as well as in the rest of the world; first with the riots in Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland in the summer of 1965, and later with the so called long hot summer of 1967 when riots exploded in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, New York, Birmingham and Chicago. There was no point in the USIA trying to cover up these events, and in February 1967 Marks declared that the only way for the agency address the situation was 'to present such news abroad in affirmative and objective tones, realistically reflecting existing obstacles to integration, but maintaining a note of confidence in continued progress.'⁴¹⁹

US propagandists were therefore instructed to not ignore any unfavorable activity, but to balance it with news showing the progress of African Americans in every field. Marks explained:

When the riots took place in Watts in 1965, we reported that because if we're going to maintain credibility we've got to tell the truth, but at the same time we try to put in perspective what's happening in the US: The fact that there are Negroes elected to high positions in state, city and federal government, that there's a Negro in the cabinet, that a Negro today sits in the senate of the US, that there are Negro businessmen who have been successful. We don't avoid the unpleasantness, but we try to keep it in balance.⁴²⁰

USIS officials began therefore looking for 'news stories' that would show the progress made by African Americans in any field, from education to employment to sports and politics. Titles such as 'The Negro Moves Forward to New Positions of

⁴¹⁹ US News and World Report, 2/20/67, pp. 78-89, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard Marks, 1964-1968.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Leadership in the US', 'The Challenge of Universal Education' and 'Enlarging the Meaning of Freedom' figured among USIA-produced material.⁴²¹ The appointment of Robert Weaver as the first black Cabinet Member in January 1966 was widely publicized by the USIA. Through the *Wireless file* each post abroad was updated with daily data concerning the increase of African American students enrolled in universities, or the increase in the literacy rate among Blacks. Packets were sent to the USIS posts with pamphlets on the 'War on Poverty' and news stories such as 'The Quiet Marchers toward Integration'.⁴²²

News of the successes of African-American artists, such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, were used abroad as examples of the advancement of Black people in the United States. In 1968, Armstrong's participation in the *Sanremo Festival*, the most famous Italian music competition and a national flagship, was widely publicized by the agency and had a large echo in RAI newsbroadcasts. African American jazz musician, Lionel Hampton, and singer, Eartha Kitt, were also present at the *Sanremo Festival* that year, offering to the Italian public an impressive sample of successful African Americans.⁴²³

Another aspect of USIA propaganda strategy was to highlight racist incidents that occurred in other countries, for instance in Singapore, Indonesia

⁴²¹ Memorandum for the President from Leonard Marks, Weekly Report, Nov 17, 1965, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 33.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ RAI website: http://www.sanremo.rai.it/dl/portali/site/articolo/ContentItem-ddfff183-4fbe-4910-931a-f140a60bdda1.html?refresh_ce URL consulted on March 23, 2015.

and Tanzania between 1964 and 1965. The Soviet Union, of course, did not escape this treatment either. The USIA distributed abroad a book by Jan Carew, 'Green Winter – a Novel about a Negro Student in Moscow Today' to show that racism was not a problem limited to the United States alone.⁴²⁴ In fact, America, unlike other nations, was originally born as a melting pot of races and cultures within which, with time and proper adjustments, it would always be possible to create new balances. The approach of the Planning Paper on Minorities was still being used by the agency 'show the picture of an America of many racial origins, colours, and creeds in which traditional prejudices and the irritations of every-day life are diminishing steadily through the dynamic process of education and experience, despite occasional set-backs.'⁴²⁵

Framing the 'racial issue' within the normal dynamics of a democratic state, where different minorities coexist, allowed American propagandists to justify, to some extent, the obstacles in advancing the integration process. The US government could not respond immediately to the needs expressed by the civil rights movement, because it was determined to resolve the issue within the institutional and democratic channels which inevitably required more time. However, the agency portrayed a full confidence in the ability of

⁴²⁴ Jan Carew, *Green Winter - a Novel about a Negro Student in Moscow Today*, Avon, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA , 1964-1967, box 9. The novel was part of the Ladder Series Books: special editions of American books spread by the USIA abroad and made easier to read for non native English speakers. LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA , 1964-1967, box 9.

⁴²⁵ USIA Basic Guidance and Planning Paper n. 5, December 4, 1958, Basic Planning Paper on Minorities, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Agency History Program Subject Files, Mission Statements, 1945-1967, Entry A1 1072, box 5, p. 4.

American democracy to regenerate itself and progress. 'We do not deny that prejudice does exist', ended the Planning Paper, 'but by straightforward presentations of fact, through the perspective of historical experience and often by discreet analogies within the other country which evidence the slowness with which a democracy persuades one aggressive minority to be truly tolerant towards another, we hope substantially to diminish our propaganda handicap.'⁴²⁶

In the USIA's worldwide priority themes in 1968, the first goal of the agency was identified as the need to project, 'contemporary America as a society in transition.' The United States, explained the document, 'was the first country fully to enter the twentieth century. It continues to be the first to confront multiple challenges of the new age. Intellectual and social ferment reflect the response to those challenges and the search for new solutions. As the first society to experience the future, America is a vast experimental laboratory in human relations which, in a sense, is defining the twentieth century for much of the world.'⁴²⁷ Apparently embracing this reading of events, Italian Ambassador to the United States, Egidio Ortona commented in his memoirs on the growing violence of the riots in 1967, and defined it as,

⁴²⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

⁴²⁷ USIA Worldwide Priority Themes, July 30, 1968, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1968, box 24.

'seismic shocks in the process of adjustment towards an America finally and fully bi-racial.'⁴²⁸

Another propaganda handicap which both Kennedy and later Johnson sought to address was the lack of representation of American diversity within USIA itself. 'You'd be amazed and appalled,' Chuck Stone, an African-American journalist and professor wrote in 1958, 'at the large number of white southerners and bigoted white officials in charge of the USIA programs overseas. If you take a red-neck out of Mississippi, who's been endorsing the White Citizen's Council, and send him overseas as a cultural ambassador, do you expect him suddenly to get religion?'. Stone uses Italy as an example, where the USIS Following strong criticism of Little Rock in the media, the USIS reluctantly organized a press conference at the Rome Embassy with American singer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte condemning governor Faubus for his 'miserable actions.' USIS officers in the field, according to Stone, were forced to organize the event because, 'Italian newspapers had been stoning the United States with the little rocks of American stupidity.' Stone also expressed scepticism that journalists in Italy, or anywhere else in the world, could be distracted by the reality of segregation in the United States, 'by putting out weekly a kind of quick digest about how successful we colored folks are, how

⁴²⁸ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 90.

many judicial appointments we're getting, how many homes we're buying and how many Cadillacs are in our garage!'⁴²⁹

In the first half of the sixties, following the great attention to the racial conflicts abroad, the USIA staff underwent dramatic personnel changes with the number of Black Americans nearly doubling, most of them assigned to the agency's posts in Africa.⁴³⁰ As an example of the importance of staff diversity for successful public diplomacy, in 1965 George Stevens, head of USIA Motion Picture Service, hired William Greaves, an Emmy award winning African American filmmaker and author of documentaries on Ralph Bunche, Booker T. Washington and Muhammad Ali.

In April 1966, for instance, the USIA sent a crew to film the 'First Film Festival of Negro Arts' in Dakar. Organized by Leopold Senghor, the president of Senegal, along with Amiee Cesaire, a public intellectual from Martinique and philosopher and politician Alioune Dip. It was the first entirely African festival featuring black literature, theater, visual arts and music. The USIA crew was headed by Greaves. 'If you see that film you'd never know that it was U.S. government propaganda, because it wasn't', recalls Greaves. 'From my point of view, it talked about our heritage as a people and it traded on the concept of Negritude.' He then recounted that while the Russians were there with a large film crew of more than twenty people, the USIA only sent a three-man crew.

⁴²⁹ Chuck Stone's, 'A Stones Throw: USIA For White Folks Only', *New York Age* (Oct.11) 1958, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Media Comment, 1954-1963, Entry A1 1066.

⁴³⁰ Cull, *The Cold War and the USIA*, p. 212.

Notwithstanding that the movie, which was supposed to be a news clip for a USIA magazine, ended up being chosen by the organizers as the official record of the festival.' The appointment of Greaves as well as the decision to film the festival, proved to be wise moves ⁴³¹

'Margaret Mead does not look like an anthropologist'

Given the major attention to civil rights outputs by the USIA during the Johnson years, a period virtually monopolized by the race issue, very little attention was given to the American women's movement. This fact emerges also from the lack of USIA materials covering women's activities until the early seventies.

The reason for this lack of attention was the absence of internal and external public opinion pressure as compared with the racial issue. As Laura Belmonte notes, while 'US policymakers were gravely concerned about global condemnations of US racism and were facing intense pressure from the domestic civil rights movement, they encountered no comparable international outrage about sexism in the United States, and US women's rights organizations of the time lacked the power to compel policy change.'⁴³² From

⁴³¹ George Alexander, *Why We Make Movies: Black Filmmakers Talk About the Magic of Cinema* (New York, 2003), p. 33.

⁴³² Laura Belmonte, 'USIA Responds to the Women's Movement 1960-1975', in *Reassessing American in the 1970s*, p. 83.

the scarce material available, however, it is possible to identify a distinct change from the previous decade in the image of women conveyed by US propagandists abroad. Such shift was a consequence of the changing role of women within society in the 1960s and their rising claims which, although less noisily than the civil right movement, forced USIA to modify their outputs directed at a female audience.

In the 1950s, domesticity and family were embraced by America, in part as a way to fight the anxiety of nuclear destruction. In this picture of the middle class suburban family, the woman had a central role as wife, mother and housekeeper. With her freedom to choose between thousands of different goods, as well as her reassuring, domestic presence, the American housewife embodied the democratic and orderly nature of the US model, while at the same time 'consumerism and capitalism represented the pinnacle of women's achievements'.⁴³³ To the image of this happy, self-fulfilling lifestyle, the USIA counterposed several articles emphasizing the difficult lives of women in the Soviet Union. In December 1954, the agency spread among Italian media the report of a UN commission concluding that the practices of communist regimes 'deprived women of their basic rights as wives and mothers.'⁴³⁴

Consistently during these years, American women were often represented in USIA outputs either at the grocery store happily pushing their shopping carts, or at

⁴³³ Belmonte, 'USIA Responds to the Women's Movement', pp. 79-80.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., box 18, December 1954, 'Communist Persecution of Women'; 'Soviet Practices Refute on Equality of Sexes', 'East German Women Tell of Privations'.

home tidying, cooking or taking care of the kids. In an Italian society known for its attention to the healthy home-cooked meals, USIA pamphlets were at pains to explain that the incredible variety of appliances and kitchen gadgets available to American housewives had not made them 'lazier and keen to use tinned food'. On the contrary, it left them with more spare time to take care of the kids and their community. Judging from the material spread by USIA, it seemed that there was no woman in the United States who was not part of at least one, and often more than one, civil or religious philanthropic organization.⁴³⁵

In the late fifties, as USIA officers slowly began recognising the growing importance of women as a target for propaganda, Virginia Geiger was appointed in 1958 to a new position as the 'first-ever Women's Activities Adviser'. Her role was to help formulate a new strategy in March 1959 for targeting the female audience abroad.⁴³⁶ The 'Basic Guidance and Planning Paper on Women's Activities', while on the one hand stressing the need for acknowledging the greater participation of women in the economic and political life of the country, on the other hand recommended prudence and careful observation of women's positions in each targeted country in order to avoid provoking social fractures. As an example, as Italy was known for being a

⁴³⁵ USIS Special Women's Packet, USIA Press and Publication Service, RG 306, Feature Packets with Recurring Subjects 1953-1959, Entry 1003, box 18, NARA.

⁴³⁶ Belmonte, 'USIA Responds to the Women's Movement', pp. 80-81; USIA, Basic Guidance and Planning Paper N. 12, "Women's Activities" Part II, August 13, 1959, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection.

highly patriarchal society, US propagandists had to be cautious in portraying women working outside the house.⁴³⁷

This tension could be seen in a news story spread by the USIA in Italy in 1959. 'Margaret Mead does not look like an anthropologist' began the article on this renowned American scholar and writer; as if an anthropologist is expected to look in any particular way. 'Small and with long brown hair', the article continued, 'Margaret found it extremely annoying when a woman tried to hide her femininity.' This opening was then followed by a long description of her enviable cooking skills, her happy marriage, the great relationship with her daughter and her unbreakable religious faith.⁴³⁸ No mention was made of her controversial studies on youth sexual behaviour in primitive societies, nor the fact that her marriage was actually the third in a series of less than happy marriages. This information was considered to be counterproductive to the image of American women that the USIA intended to project abroad. This image was clearly identified in the 1959 planning paper. 'The typical American woman has to be depicted as thoroughly human, devoted to family, hard-working and feminine — qualities which foreign audiences can identify with sympathy.'⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ USIA, Basic Guidance and Planning Paper N. 12, "Women's Activities" Part II, August 13, 1959, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection.

⁴³⁸ USIS Special Women's Packet, USIA Press and Publication Service, RG 306, Feature Packets with Recurring Subjects 1953-1959, Entry 1003, box 17, NARA.

⁴³⁹USIA, Basic Guidance and Planning Paper N. 12, "Women's Activities" Part II, August 13, 1959, USIA Historical Collection, NARA.

No mention was therefore made to the women's movement, or any 'disturbing' activity of this type. Instead, another goal identified in the paper was that of encouraging 'a community of interest among women of the free world by stressing common outlooks and problems.'⁴⁴⁰ The USIA gave great publicity in Italy to the 'Women's International Exchange Program', launched in December 1954 by the US Labor Department to promote 'mutual understanding among American and Italian housewives.' Eighty women from Italy and France were invited to spend two months in the United States, hosted by American families. 'They will see our homes, our churches, our schools, our hospitals and observe the wide variety of things that can be accomplished by community cooperation', announced Mrs. Alice Leopold, Assistant to the Secretary of Labor. 'In short, they will see the heart of America which all too many visitors miss. French and Italian women' ended Mrs Leopold 'have a belief in the ability and responsibility of women to make this a peaceful world, just as Americans do.'⁴⁴¹ On the same note, the USIA disseminated the results of a survey launched by the *Christian Science Monitor* to the branches of the USIS in Italy, in which ten foreign women were asked their impressions of American women. According to the Italian woman interviewed, what struck her about American women was their 'positive attitude' and 'free and confident

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ "Women's International Exchange Program", December 1954, USIS Special Women's Packet, USIA Press and Publication Service, RG 306, Feature Packets with Recurring Subjects 1953-1959, Entry 1003, box 19, NARA.

mindset' which let them think that 'it was never too late to do the things they wanted to do in life'. ⁴⁴²

Then in 1963 Betty Friedan published her best-seller, *The Feminine Mystique*, telling Americans and the world that US women might not be as positive, free and fulfilled with their role in society as was commonly believed. At the end of that year, the final report of a committee created by President Kennedy to investigate the condition of women within the US came out. The report highlighted discrimination in every field of American life, from education to employment to civil service. At the time of Johnson's inauguration, such documented disparity became another stain on the USIA characterization of America abroad as champion of freedom and democracy. Increasingly by the mid-sixties, parallel to the rise of the anti-war and student movements, women had begun to publicly question their role in society, offering abroad a different image of American women from the one projected by the USIA during the previous decade.

Speaking from his global vantage point, Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the UN, observed: 'Among all the achievements of the past decades, including those discoveries that have transformed the lives of men. . . it may be doubted whether any is so profoundly significant. . . as the liberation of women.' 'Everyone concerned with public attitudes', noted USIA Women Activities Advisor Mildred Marcy, 'can perceive the connection between Hammarskjöld's statement

⁴⁴² 'How do American Women appear to women from other Countries who visit the United States?', *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec 1955, box 17.

and USIA's business'.⁴⁴³ In other words, both as citizens, as well as individuals moving into positions of leadership, women had moved from the private to the public sphere, taking a direct part in shaping government decisions. Willing or not, the USIA had to deal with this changing situation.

The lack of documents during the Johnson years, however, testifies to the absence of a clear strategy to target the rising women's movement. Mrs. Mildred Marcy, who had joined the USIA as Women Activities Advisor in March 1961 with the goal of helping the agency to reach women in developing countries, admitted that the USIA in the mid-sixties had 'not yet found a defined strategy to address them in Western Europe.'⁴⁴⁴ She did, however, note that there was evidence from various posts of 'an increasing sensitivity to the role women are playing in articulating needs and modifying attitudes'. By 1967, in a report named 'The role of women and USIA' she highlighted USIS progress in reflecting this awareness. More women, for instance, were included on the various regular exchange programs, and special exchange projects had been arranged for potential women leaders in fields related to communications, voluntary organizations, education, and social welfare. In 1967 a USIA officer in Britain arranged a trip for a young Conservative woman to go to the United States. Margaret Thatcher had never been to America

⁴⁴³ Mildred K. Marcy, Women Activities Adviser, The Role of Women and USIA, 1967 (Day and month not visible), *USIA World Magazine*, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Women, Committee of Correspondence, 1957-1970.

⁴⁴⁴ May 14 1973, *USIA World*, Sep 1973, p. 2; Post 1953 Staffing Patterns, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, Historical Collection, Box 29, NARA.

before, but her visit was the beginning of a lifelong regard. Her good impressions were reported in Italy by *Corriere della Sera*.⁴⁴⁵

The media services, on their part, were trying to include more material presumed to be of interest to a female audience, 'being careful' as Marcy specified, 'not to fall into the trap of specialized, segregated programming for women.' In presenting international events, for example, USIA focused on news highlighting the US commitment to weak and disadvantaged groups. Articles such as 'American government helps the world's children', and 'New life opened to refugees family' were written and distributed. Great publicity was given in regard to Johnson's appointment of 50 women to relevant government positions. The reporting of this event was accompanied in USIA news stories by comments made by American politicians who declared that they were satisfied with the choice and 'had faith in the advantages that a female approach would bring to the conduct of the international politics.' At the same time, however, the agency was forced to acknowledge that (as had emerged from the report) the road to equality for the sexes was still long. 'Women can hardly be said to have used their hard-won vote to take over American political life' painfully admitted the USIA booklet, *American Women*, in 1964. It went on to explain that there were only thirteen women in congress, salaries were unequal, and very few women reached managerial positions and were more likely to be 'teachers, nurses or librarians rather than

⁴⁴⁵ Mildred K. Marcy, Women Activities Adviser, The Role of Women and USIA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Women, Committee of Correspondence, 1957-1970, NARA.

doctors, lawyers, or engineers'. The reason, according to the pamphlet, was their 'overwhelming commitment to marriage and family, and to an image of themselves which is as distinctively feminine as any in history'.⁴⁴⁶

In Italy, where the society was well known as being strongly conservative and Catholic, and where the Women's Movement did not take hold until the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, such explanations have credibility. US propaganda, however, also found itself having to make contrasts to the image of 'eccentric and charming woman' spread by certain Hollywood movies. In order to avoid social fractures and be able to appeal to both middle-aged and young women, US propagandists had the idea that they should promote a vision of a woman who occupied an increasingly important role within the social, economic and political life of the country, while maintaining at the same time, her role of devoted mother and wife.

Communist propaganda, instead, had begun to address the issue of disparity between women and men much earlier. Along with traditional Communist magazines and newspapers, propaganda was spread through a number of women's organizations aligned with the Communist Party in Italy, the most important being the *Unione donne italiane (UDI)*, which already in 1949 claimed

⁴⁴⁶ 'American Women', NARA, RG 306, Press and Publications Service, Copies of Magazine and Publications, 1953-1993, box 118. Quoted also in Belmonte, 'USIA Responds to the Women's Movement', pp. 83-84.

around 1 million members. It organised conferences, gatherings and all sorts of social and welfare activities and had its own voice in the newspaper, *Noi donne*.⁴⁴⁷

In traditional Communist propaganda, the Soviet model was generally presented as one in which women had been allowed to work outside the house since the beginning. Women were involved in physically challenging, typically masculine jobs, such as construction work and coal mining. In Italy, however, the Communist message was adapted to a society that was still deeply patriarchal. Therefore, most of the outputs focused on parity in terms of political and civil rights, and not on questioning the role of women as mother and wife, nor their image of femininity. As an example, women from the Communist Party who campaigned for the Italian parliament in the first post-war electoral rounds were all highly educated and determined to advance women's rights, and many of them held key positions in CPI affiliated organizations. They still preferred, however, to build their electoral image on respectable femininity and non-threatening ambition. Despite this, once elected, they had a crucial role, in the first postwar decade, in proposing and getting approved several laws addressing discrimination against women in the workplace and society. This was possible, as shown by Molly Tambor in her book *The Lost Wave: Women and Democracy in Post-war Italy*, thanks to a strong and fruitful cooperation with other women parliamentarians from the Christian Democratic party.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Molly Tambor, 'Red Saints: Gendering the Cold War, Italy 1943–1953', *Cold War History*, 10:3 (2010), p. 433.

⁴⁴⁸ Molly Tambor, *The Lost Wave: Women and Democracy in Postwar Italy* (New York, 2014)

Many of them had been active in the Resistance against the Nazi in Italy, and Communist Propaganda elevated the image of these female partisan to a role model for all women citizens. *Noi Donne*, in May 1953, was dominated by a 'full-page headshot of Gina Borellini, the incumbent Communist Party member of the Chamber of Deputies, with the headline, 'La Santa Rossa' (the 'Red Saint'). The accompanying article emphasised 'Borellini's heroic service as a partisan in the Resistance which led to her 'sublime sacrifice' of a leg in battle against Nazi attackers; her simultaneous leadership of the women's association and veterans' league groups in Modena; and her political activism as an act of unending thanksgiving dedicated to the souls of the women of Modena.' Later articles were on the same note, with Giuliana Nenni (the daughter of Pietro Nenni, leader of the Socialist Party) identified as 'the sister of all Romagna's women', who is tireless in her dedication to that ultimate and universal maternal desire for peace'.⁴⁴⁹

This was not well received by American observers who, as Tambor notes 'saw every use of the word 'peace' as code for Soviet propaganda'.⁴⁵⁰ Italian Catholic leaders, on the contrary, both Christian Democrats and Communists, cooperated in celebrating the image of the female Resistance partisan 'who, in her shouldering of the responsibility to sacrifice (...) in order to birth a new future for her people, was (...) completely resonant with more easily accepted feminine qualities and Catholic values such as maternal sacrifice, reconstruction of home life, and a civil society

⁴⁴⁹ Molly Tambor, *Red Saints: Gendering the Cold War*, p. 430.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 432-433.

marked by volunteerism, social work, and a discourse of responsibility rather than privilege.’⁴⁵¹

As Tambor shows, these parliamentarians brought not only a message of unity within the parliament, but also among all women, despite their party affiliation. This unity was ‘in honour of the ‘heroines of the Resistance’ who had undergone struggle, sacrifice, and risk in ‘proof of the power of the feminine.’ PCI deputies Teresa Noce and Nadia Spanom, together with DC representative Maria Federici, sponsored what would become the first women’s rights law in Italy, for the protection of working mothers. ‘They thus established a pattern that would hold throughout the postwar period whereby any women’s rights bills were co-authored by multiple women from both parties.’ This showed once again how antifascism in Italy was still more appealing as a basis for a new national unity than anticommunism.⁴⁵²

The situation in Italy in regard to the rising Women’s Movement was too complex and multifaceted to be understood by Americans using cold war lenses. American suspicion towards the Red Saints combined with a lack of understanding of cooperation between Communists and Christian Democrats on women’s issues. Furthermore, the communist message itself was constantly readapted to Italy’s particular situation, as seen by the progressive changes within the women’s associations linked to the PCI, due to the cooperation between women of the PCI and DC. By 1953, the UDI itself ‘began showing dissatisfaction

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 432-433.

⁴⁵² Ibid., pp. 441; 445.

with party discipline' and 'marked a new direction in its politics by electing Marisa Rodano (...) founder of a Christian-inspired group allied with the PCI known as "Catholic communists".' She characterised her vision of UDI as an organisation not 'for women, but of women' committed to 'democratic renewal'.⁴⁵³

Starting in the mid-sixties, the Women's Movement catalyzed around the pacifist movement against the war in Vietnam. The Rome Embassy gave particular attention to a three-day international seminar on 'participation of Women in Public Life', organized by UDI from 12 to 15 October 1966 in Rome. The last session was presided over by Marisa Rodano, who had now become Vice-President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The Embassy was unable to obtain a copy of the conference's final document. According to the crypto-communist newspaper, *Paese Sera*, however, the document expressed the conviction that 'the objectives of the emancipation of women' could not be realized 'as long as wars imposed on men, women, and children, paralysed the creative force that we seek to liberate.'⁴⁵⁴

Despite the enthusiasm of the new left for the burgeoning Women's Movement, however, the issue of gender equality would not be at the centre of public debate until the seventies in Italy, and even then, it struggled to emerge. US propaganda strategy had to find a way to present the issue without provoking social fractures. The solution was found, again, in the old strategy of stressing the progress already made. The idea was to bring together data showing the

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 445.

⁴⁵⁴ From Am Embassy in Rome to Departemnt of State, International Seminar on Participation of Women in Public Life, Rome, Oct 12-13, 1966, Dec 13, 1966, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964-1966, box 366, Folder Education & Cultre 1/1/64.

achievements of women in every field, and to highlight personal stories about how even the most successful women had managed to find the 'right balance' between family and work commitments. Much emphasis was placed on women's commitments in their local communities. 'Visitors in the US have often expressed surprise at the many worthwhile activities American women pursue outside their homes', began the USIA pamphlet *Women's Organizations in the USA*. 'Far from being frivolous as they are sometimes said to be, American women devote their time generously to unpaid tasks for community betterment.' The pamphlet continued, 'If paid for in money, the work of women volunteers would run into millions of dollars; but most of these workers do not want or expect financial reward. They enjoy working with others toward community objectives', as 'home to American women volunteers reaches far beyond the walls of the house in which the family lives.'⁴⁵⁵ Another USIA booklet on American youth organizations went as far as to say that the founders of the 'Camp Fire Girls' at the beginning of the century had 'anticipated the changing role of women, namely her emergence from home to play a larger part in the community and national scene, but without scarifying basic feminine qualities.'⁴⁵⁶

The booklet on women organizations provided a long list of examples of these spiritually rewarding activities from working with local schools to the American Women's Voluntary Services. It warned readers, however, that they

⁴⁵⁵ *Women's Organization in the USA*, Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 12, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁶ *American Youth Organizations*, Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 12.

should not be left with the impression that 'every American woman devotes her life only to voluntary work. Such is far from the truth. About one-third of American women are regularly employed for wages and salaries.' Then, to qualify the statement, the pamphlet went on to explain how 'American women placed homemaking first in their lives, but with the advent of labor-saving home devices, many of them found more time for activities outside their homes.' A later section celebrated the virtues of part-time jobs, emphasizing the growing number of women choosing this option.⁴⁵⁷

In 1964, USIA director Carl Rowan launched a worldwide exhibition on women which reflected the same conflicting attitude of stressing progress but without much emphasis. The exhibit, 'Distinguished American Women', showed the female contribution to the progress of society through images of famous woman in different fields from science to education and politics. Before opening it to the public, Rowan invited the various USIA desk officers to assist and give comments, including Mildred Marcy, who found it quite unrepresentative. Instead of photographs, there were drawings, and Marcy commented that she found it difficult to see how contemporary women would find inspiration in 'drawings of dead women!'⁴⁵⁸

Another example of the different emphasis of USIA in stressing the progress of the civil rights and women's movements was the fact that, as

⁴⁵⁷ *Women's Organization in the USA*, Pamphlet published and distributed by the USIA, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 12, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁸ Letter from Mildred Macy to Anderson, February 5, 1965, NARA, RG 306, USIA Subject Files, 1949-1970, box 286; quoted also in Belmonte, *USIA Responds to the Women's Movement*, p. 85.

Belmonte noted, the agency promoted the idea that US women 'were progressing but not in ways that would upend traditional gender norms or necessitate significant . . . legal change.' In fact, while the agency gave great publicity in Italy as elsewhere, to Johnson's passage of the Civil Right Act, no mention was made in USIA outputs to the significance of the amendment adding sex to the categories protected under Title VII towards the path towards gender equality.⁴⁵⁹

At the same time, however, USIA was forced to address internally the issue of gender inequality. As had happened with African Americans, women within the agency, as well as in the State Department, increasingly by the mid-sixties raised the issue of underrepresentation as well as inequality of salaries and conditions. This, according to Mrs. Marcy, was also detrimental to the effectiveness of USIA's propaganda strategy. 'On the side of personal contacts, always the most effective, it has usually remained for the women members of the official community (whether they be women members of the officer staff or wives of US personnel) to make the special efforts often required to reach the feminine members of the key audiences.' However, the small number of female employees created difficulties in fostering such contacts. At that time USIA had two full-time women's activities officers, who were recruited respectively in 1961 and 1963, plus nine temporary officers in the cultural affairs and press departments of USIA in Washington. 'The agency' explained Mrs. Marcy, 'will continue to recruit in response to field request.

⁴⁵⁹ Belmonte, 'USIA Responds to the Women's Movement', p. 83.

However' she continued 'greater attention should be given to training programs to develop new awareness on the part of all personnel of the contribution women can make to world progress and development.'⁴⁶⁰

In line with Mrs. Marcy's advice, a 1967 report of the US Advisory Commission on Information urged the agency 'to set in motion a recruiting and training program for women's activities officers to serve in countries where women are actively seeking information and education materials.' According to the report, evidence showed that where such officers have served 'their activities have redounded to the mutual interests of the US and the host country.'⁴⁶¹ The process, however, was slow and did not give the expected results. In 1973 George Haley was appointed Assistant Director for Equal Employment Opportunity at the USIA. Later, in announcing the appointment of Mrs. Marcy, in view of her past experience, to the new full-time job as head of the Federal Women's Programme, explained that he found it 'surprising and almost embarrassing' that in an organization such as USIA there was 'a need for such a program'. 'As far as I am concerned' he ended 'there should be no toleration of discrimination within the agency entitled to project abroad the image of the US abroad as the bulwark of

⁴⁶⁰ Mildred K. Marcy, Women Activities Adviser, 'The Role of Women and USIA', NARA, RG 306, , Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Women, Committee of Correspondence, 1957-1970, box 203.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

freedom and democracy'.⁴⁶² A few years later, in 1979, a Federal Judge agreed with him by ruling that the USIA discriminated against women in hiring.⁴⁶³

As happened with the civil rights movement, in presenting the burgeoning women's movement, the USIA was trapped in its own contradiction as an agency that was called to explain abroad issues that the country itself had not yet resolved. The fundamental dilemma that US propagandists had to face throughout the Sixties, was how to portray a dynamic society in rapid transition to other societies such as Italy that were also rapidly changing. What were the limits within which US progress and dissent could be presented, without risk of altering the social order and alienating conservative forces abroad?

The African-American struggle, although deeply embarrassing to the United States, was easier to present in Italy as it was perceived as taking place far away and did not touch Italians directly. Italy in the sixties was not a country of immigration and did not have problems of large minority groups claiming rights. The women's issue, on the other hand, was extremely delicate as it touched on established social norms and a hierarchy of roles deeply rooted in Italian society. For this reason, US propagandists had to be more careful, and the movement for gender equality, therefore, did not find much space in USIA output in Italy until the Seventies. At that point, the feminist movement gained much space on the Italian

⁴⁶² Henry Trehwitt, 'Diplomacy still holds back women', 1976, *The Baltimore Sun*, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Women, Committee of Correspondence, 1957-1970, box 203.

⁴⁶³ Tom Diaz, 'USIA found guilty of sex discrimination', 1979, *Washington Times*, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Women, Committee of Correspondence, 1957-1970, NARA.

peninsula, and it slowly began to be recognised by the media and public opinion as a legitimate issue of concern.

During the sixties, US public diplomacy was forced to shift from portraying the United States in an entirely self-celebrating tone, to present American society in a more nuanced manner. To highlight the inclusiveness of America's technological achievements, the depiction of US space missions went from an acknowledgment of American superiority to an achievement for all humanity. The neat picture of the middle class suburban family had to accommodate the violent entrance of African Americans and, more subtly, the claims of women, forcing US propagandists to add elements of complexities to the image. Old ways of doing things were questioned and staffing pattern also underwent changes to include more ethnic and gender diversity.

Unfortunately, however, in a time of instant worldwide communication, although public diplomacy could strive to explain and put things in the right perspective, it could not replace nor conceal the reality of American policies, the 'independent variable', to use Loomis words.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁴ During a meeting of the Public Relations Society of America in January 1970, USIA Veteran Henry Loomis noted: 'By the sixties the USIA increasingly became a dependent variable. We were dependent on the facts of life (...) When Apollo actually got to the moon, of course it was a great story, and we couldn't

Therefore while Apollo was an indisputable triumph, providing USIA in Italy and elsewhere with a powerful propaganda weapon, the contradiction between America presenting itself to the world as the champion of freedom and democracy and the denial to its own citizens of the same rights of self-determination that they strove to export abroad, was a fault for which the outside world could never forgive the United States. This despite Johnson's unparalleled legislative efforts on the matter,

In Italy, as we shall see, the issue would become even more crucial at the peak of the antiwar movement in 1967 and 1968. This leads us to the final important propaganda objective identified by the USIA in Italy during the Johnson years which will be object of the next chapter of this dissertation.⁴⁶⁵

have killed it if we tried. But if that thing had not made it to the moon, obviously the propaganda results would have been totally different. And that was terribly true when it came to Vietnam.' Talk by Henry Loomis to the Washington Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Jan 20, 1970, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 37, NARA.

⁴⁶⁵ Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 19.

Chapter 6

Explaining Vietnam to the Italians: anti-Americanism, Americanization and the power of dissent

In the second half of the sixties, the capacity of public diplomacy to project a positive image of the United States abroad was seriously limited by the Johnson Administration's escalation of the conflict in Vietnam. In fact, the Vietnam War dominated the psychological landscape worldwide, acting as a magnet for foreign attention. As the first war to be covered daily by television cameras and reporters, Vietnam made an unprecedented impression on public opinion worldwide, more than any other contemporary development. The images of US troops fighting the North Vietnamese, as well as of the anti-war protests generated within the US, brought to the audience abroad an increased awareness of the contradictions and fractures within American society, offering endless material for Communist propaganda against 'US aggressive imperialism'.⁴⁶⁶ 'In the context of world public opinion, America thus increasingly found itself in the role of a nation at war at home and abroad. This situation inevitably provoked a massive counter-effort on the part of the USIA to explain and justify the Administration's policy in Vietnam to foreign media, governments and public opinion.'⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Lawson, *The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson*, 1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 1.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

Suddenly, the agency found itself having to counteract a new, rising wave of anti-Americanism in Europe. As Elwood notes, since the first post-war period, when the expression anti-Americanism began to be officially used by the Europeans, it was mainly limited to the elite and used to express strong critique, or rejection, for the full range of ways in which America manifested itself within European newborn mass-societies, through the challenge of modernization.⁴⁶⁸ With the outset of the Cold War, when projecting American power and 'selling' the US model had become priorities for the US government, anti-Americanism grew alongside, as a reaction to America's growing power and widespread presence. In this context, the Vietnam war, with its images of violence and the strong ideological emphasis put forward by the US, became the catalyst for many the different expressions of anti-Americanism that, up to

⁴⁶⁸ There is no unique definition for the concept of anti-Americanism. Historically, Elwood identifies three waves of anti-Americanism in Europe. The first took place right after US independence in 1776 when the new-born nation was the object of harsh criticism on the part of the 'Old Continent' for what was perceived as a materialistic viewpoint, lacking history and high culture. At this time, however, none of these critiques was labelled as anti-Americanism. The second wave dates back to the first post-war period, when US intervention in the war and Wilsonian internationalism, combined with the definitive advent in Europe of the US style mass production and mass communication, provoked anxiety and rejection among European elites. At this stage the term anti-Americanism began to be explicitly used. The term covered any critique towards the different manifestations of modernization identified as coming from America. The third wave came in the second post-war period, and particularly with the outset of the Cold War, when the US government officially began to sponsor the systematic exportation of the American model worldwide, as the main weapon to win the battle for hearts and mind against the Soviet Union. Particularly by the mid-sixties, Europeans were searching for a new balance between Americanisation and anti-Americanism, as the enthusiastic adoption on the part of large sectors of the society for many aspects of US lifestyle, were counterbalanced by a growing opposition towards its government foreign policy actions. Ellwood, 'Gli Antiamericanismi in Europa nel Novecento: fasi e temi', in *L'antiamericanismo in Italia e in Europa nel secondo dopoguerra*, Piero Cravieri; Gaetano Quagliariello (eds) pp. 76-79. Rob Kroes, in his analysis of the phenomena, offers two different readings of anti-Americanism: 'It could refer to a general rejection of things American', or it can also be seen as 'a set of feelings against something called *Americanism*' seen as US 'exceptionalist' perception of itself as new model of democracy, different and superior to the rest of the world. 'In that sense', according to Kroes, 'Americanism can usefully be compared to nationalism' therefore Anti-americanism would be a sort of reaction against what was perceived as US pervasive power and arrogant presence worldwide. Rob Kroes; 'Anti-Americanism: A Revisit', *Contemporary Conflict SSRC* (March, 2004); *ibid.*, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall*.

that moment, had been scattered and directed against the various aspects of the American model and society. The growing opposition of the people to the very logic of the Cold War was catalyzed around dissent for the war. In addition, the more the Johnson administration insisted on the fact that the free world was playing its decisive game in Vietnam, the more US credibility as a model and system of values was questioned abroad.⁴⁶⁹ European anti-Americanism of the sixties, therefore, merged with the anti-war movement and ended up encompassing everything: US domestic and foreign policy choices, as well as the American way of life, its products, and symbols. These were the same products and symbols that, by that time, had been enthusiastically adopted by a large part of US society, thus generating, as we shall see, deeply ambivalent reactions. Communist propaganda, for its part, tried to get the most out of this situation.

In Italy, the presence of the strongest Communist Party west of the Iron Curtain, a New Left in the making, and a Socialist party which was traditionally neutral as a partner in the government coalition all offered fertile ground for anti-war Communist propaganda, which soon transformed Vietnam into an issue in domestic politics. From workers slogans such as *'l'Indocina ce l'hai nell'officina'* (Indochina is happening in the factory) to Italian political leaders attempts at finding an early settlement to the war, the degree of 'domestication' of the conflict in Italy was evident both at the social and institutional level. Vietnam, as we shall

⁴⁶⁹ Ellwood, 'Gli Antiamericanismi in Europa nel Novecento: fasi e temi', in Piero Craveri; Gaetano Quagliariello (eds.) *L'antiamericanismo in Italia e in Europa nel secondo dopoguerra*, pp.78-80.

see, represented a watershed not only in the perception and image of the US by the Italian public, but also in the way in which the United States communicated and projected itself to Italians, in particular to the newly rising student movement.

Several of the factors analyzed so far converged within the Vietnam anti-war movement in Italy: discontent with the center-left government, the rapid economic and cultural transformations affecting Italy in the sixties, growing aversion to the capitalistic model that America represented, and the attraction felt by a large number of Italian intellectuals and youth for the American culture of dissent. All those elements have been analyzed by the historiography with different degrees of depth. What has not been sufficiently analyzed, although Alessandro Brogi in his work *Confronting America* does partially look at it, is the role that the USIA had in channeling and presenting such dissent to Italians, and how the reactions of the Italian anti-war movement ultimately determined a change in the strategy of US public diplomacy towards Italy in the mid-sixties. From a strategy aimed at downplaying news of the war and minimizing American internal anti-war dissent, by 1967 US propaganda began to project Vietnam, and US internal dissent for what it was.

1965-6: Vietnam, a domestic political issue

As extensively analyzed in previous chapters, starting in 1965, newspaper and TV images of US direct military involvement in Vietnam reacted on an increasingly 'explosive' domestic situation in Italy, which was the result of rapid and uneven industrialization combined with a fragile government coalition, unable to implement the necessary structural reforms.

Protests in the second half of the 1960s were therefore directed not only towards the Italian government, perceived as distant and detached from the problems of ordinary people, but also towards the American model so widely propagandized in Italy since the post-war years. Rising expectations, generated by two decades of American propaganda celebrating capitalism and the *American way of life* in Italy, eventually came back to haunt the United States. The inequality that came with such a quick and disorderly boom was coupled with the growing unpopularity of the war in Vietnam and the spontaneous sympathy of people towards an economically disadvantaged population, suddenly upended by the impact of modern warfare. This mix offered material for effective Communist propaganda, which skillfully exploited what in Italy was perceived as a sort of 'Freudian crisis'. The 'anti-American feeling', writes Leo Wollemborg, 'could be seen as a loss of respect in the same way that a child is shaken when he discovers

that his parents are fallible.’⁴⁷⁰ In questioning the very foundations of Western society, Italian youth had fixated on the United States and the Vietnam War as symbols of their parents’ generation with which they wanted to break.

The war in Vietnam and the strident opposition that it triggered in Italy, must thus be read within the context of dashed hopes generated by the centre-left experiment across the country, and especially among young people, who had recently established themselves as an autonomous subject in the political arena. Interestingly, the DC-PSI coalition, born to lead the rapid industrialization and modernization of the country, proved unable to cope with internal and external pressures, weakening progressively, and finally crumbling in 1968, replaced by an entirely DC government, following the trajectory of US defeat in Vietnam.⁴⁷¹

Widespread anti-war protests did not start until the end of 1966. During the first years of the conflict, Vietnam primarily represented a governmental struggle in Italy. The concern of the government was due to several factors related to both domestic and foreign policy concerns. One factor was the fear, linked to the malaise analyzed in the previous chapter, that the growing military and economic commitment of the US in Vietnam would lead it to overlook the interests of its European allies. This fear was heightened by continuous calls by the US for greater commitments from its NATO allies to contribute to the war. Given the weakness of its economy and its dependence on the America for its defense, the Italian

⁴⁷⁰ Wollemborg, *Stars, stripes, and Italian tricolor*, p. 76

⁴⁷¹ L. Nuti, ‘The Center-Left Government in Italy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War’ in A.W. Daum, L.C. Gardner and W. Mausbauch (eds.), *America’s War and the World. Vietnam in International and Comparative Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 259-278.

government was particularly worried by the growing deficit in the US balance of payments, as a consequence of the conflict.

Another important factor was the presence of the Vatican in Rome, and its strong influence on Italian politics and society. By 1965, Pope Paul VI changed the public position of the Church, which until that point had been openly aligned with the position of the 'free world'. From 1965 onwards, the Church openly condemn the war in Vietnam, wishing for a peaceful settlement. This change of policy was not limited to words, however. In October 1966, he sent an apostolic delegate to Saigon for an official religious visit, which had as an underlying goal, a push for a peace dialogue between the parties.⁴⁷²

The most critical element, however, was the presence of the Socialists Party, traditionally neutral, pacifist and strong advocate people's right of self-determination, as a partner in the already fragile government coalition. Indeed, the more US escalation continued, the more difficult it was for the Socialists to justify in the eyes of their electorate, their position within a government that was supporting US policy.⁴⁷³ As Reinhardt explained in July 1966:

To date, PSI leader Pietro Nenni, as well as the other Socialist members of the government, have understood our policy and have believed in the sincerity of our efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement. However the Socialist Party has

⁴⁷² Mario Sica, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam 1965-68. Operazione Marigold* (Rome, 2012), p. 22. On the role of the Vatican and of Italian Catholicism see also F. Imperato, 'Aldo Moro e la guerra del Vietnam negli anni del centro-sinistra, 1963-1968' in F. Perfetti, A. Ungari, D. Caviglia, D. de Luca (eds.) *Aldo Moro nell'Italia contemporanea* (Firenze, 2011) pp. 423-446.

⁴⁷³ Moreover, a large part of the Christian Democrats themselves were not comfortable with the war, which was openly supported within Italian parliament only by the PLI, the PRI and the rightist parties, in view of their aprioristic anticommunism. Ibid., p. 36; L. Nuti, 'The Center-Left Government in Italy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War', pp. 259-278.

moved away from the US in recent months and has been increasingly vocal in favor of unconditional suspension of bombing. A resolution in favor of a line more critical of US policy would make it difficult for the government to maintain even a semblance of unity on this issue.⁴⁷⁴

The Italian Communist Party, for its part, took the opportunity to heighten its campaign against American actions in Vietnam, relying on the Socialists' traditional neutrality. The idea of the Communists was to break out of their political isolationism and disrupt the already fragile balance between the PSI and DC. Due to the Socialists' growing uneasiness with the government's official endorsement of US policy in Vietnam, the war soon became one of the main issues undermining the recently achieved unity of the centre-left. The importance of this issue is highlighted by the fact that between 1965 and 1968, the Vietnam was debated in Parliament more than 25 times. As these debates continued over time, a growing difficulty emerged at reconciling the alliance's policy with the United States, with the growing concerns about the conflict. The Christian Democrats, on their part, were also increasingly uncomfortable with the war because of the controversies it caused not only within the coalition, but also within its own party, where the most catholic wing of the DC was deeply opposed to the growing escalation of the US. The Vietnam issue, therefore, had gained considerable domestic political significance in Italy by the end of 1966, and explained the

⁴⁷⁴ Airgram from Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Annual US policy assessment, July 14, 1966, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign policy files, 1967-69, Pol. IT-US, Political and Defense, box 2238, p. 10.

government's active role, through its Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani, in seeking a peaceful settlement to the conflict.⁴⁷⁵

Italy's active involvement in the search for a peaceful solution in Vietnam happened gradually, starting with a trip to Hanoi by the Mayor of Florence, Giorgio La Pira in November 1965. It continued to develop between June 1966 and March 1967 in a complex, protracted and sophisticated negotiation to which the Americans gave the code name of Marigold. The Italian Ambassador in Saigon, Giovanni D'Orlandi, one of the protagonists of the Marigold peace initiative, after meeting Fanfani as soon as he took office, noted, how for the Italian Foreign Minister 'Vietnam, despite the geographical distance from Italy' was undoubtedly 'the main preoccupation of all'.⁴⁷⁶ When therefore Giorgio La Pira informed Fanfani that he was in contact with the North Vietnamese government, and he intended to visit Hanoi, Fanfani gave him his quick and full support.

On the front lines of the Catholic pacifist movement, La Pira had carefully followed the development of the conflict since its outset. Persuaded of the strength of Vietnamese nationalism and its autonomy from the international Communist movement, La Pira believed that the US tendency to place the conflict within the global Cold War's 'communism versus capitalism' framework was a mistake. He believed that the solution was to be found in a direct contact with the Vietnamese.

⁴⁷⁵ Imperato, 'Aldo Moro e la guerra del Vietnam', pp. 423-446.

⁴⁷⁶ Sica, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam*, p. 22. In September 1965, Fanfani was elected President of the UN General Assembly, and this new position motivated him even more in working towards a settlement of the Vietnam issue. He used his UN position as a justification to manage the negotiation process with a high level of secrecy even in regard to the Italian government, giving only intermittent information to Italian Prime Minister Moro.

He, therefore, left for Warsaw, accompanied by his young aide Mario Primicerio, with 'a bit of money collected among friends and supporters'. There, he got a North Vietnamese visa, and he arrived at Hanoi on 8 November 1965. He was officially welcomed at the airport by a member of the Foreign Ministry, and two days later, he was received by Ho Chi Min, himself.⁴⁷⁷

According to La Pira, the meeting was cordial and fruitful. The aim of the trip was to open a dialogue between the parts. In particular La Pira hoped to convince the North Vietnamese to sit at a negotiating table with the United States without demanding the complete withdrawal of US troops as a precondition to the opening of negotiations (a precondition the Americans were not willing to accept). His hope was not entirely disappointed. Once back, he sent a message to Fanfani stating that 'the prior position of the North Vietnamese, asking for the immediate withdrawal of US troops as a precondition for the start of negotiations, has been superseded.' In turn, the North Vietnamese presented a reformulation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements provisions in 4 points as a basis for negotiation,, calling for the establishment of an immediate coalition government in Saigon, in which the National Liberation Front (NLF) would play a leading role. Fanfani rushed to communicate the results of the meeting to Johnson through a letter. US response, on December 4, stated that, although willing to open a dialogue, they were not willing to accept the reformulation of the 1954 Geneva agreements as a basis for negotiation, especially in the part that envisaged for leading role of the FLN in the

⁴⁷⁷ Mario Sica, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam*, pp. 44-45

future government. The American government also asked for a mutual cessation of all military activity, and not only a unilateral stop for the US troops. It is relevant to mention the two different positions emerged as a result of La Pira's mediation, as successive attempts at negotiations would revolve around this knot.⁴⁷⁸

For that which concerned the domestic implications in Italy, a news leak reported La Pira's mission to the press, raising a number of controversies. *La Nazione*, the newspaper led by Enrico Mattei, defined the mission as 'ridiculous', accusing La Pira of 'egocentricity and superficiality, and of having 'misunderstood the terms of the agreement'. The article also criticized Fanfani for supporting this 'diplomatic adventure'. Moderate newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera*, interpreted a speech by Prime Minister Moro, where he mentioned, 'Italy's duty of respect for itself and its allies', as a way to 'take distance' from the mission. Right wing political parties, meanwhile, asked for a parliamentary inquiry to clarify the 'nature of the mission' and 'eliminate misunderstandings'. Press and public comments were so critical, that French newspaper, *Le Monde*, asked why the Italians themselves did not recognize the validity of an initiative they deemed 'useful and positive'. American weekly magazine, *Newsweek*, went as far as to define La Pira's initiative as 'the most promising peace initiative ever seen for Vietnam'.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 51-54. For more details on La Pira trip to Hanoi see also M. Coppetti, G. Vaselli (eds.) *Giorgio La Pira, agente d'iddio, dal Rapporto Segreto di Kruscev al viaggio ad Hanoi* (Milano, 1978); A. Fanfani, *Giorgio La Pira, un profilo e 24 lettere*, (Milano, 1978).

⁴⁷⁹ Sica, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam*, pp. 68; 71.

Everything was complicated further by a dinner given by Fanfani, where both La Pira and Gianna Preda, a journalist of the right-wing magazine, *Il Borghese*, were present. Preda subsequently published an article in which she reported some of the informal dinner conversation with La Pira about President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk as if they were part of a formal interview.⁴⁸⁰ The general climate and the controversy that followed, led Fanfani to resign on 14 January 1966 to distance himself from the allegations of a lack of transparency and poor loyalty towards the allies. The crisis however did not last long, and in March 1966, following a new government reshuffle, Fanfani returned to his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Despite the resulting controversy, according to Mario Sica, the main collaborator of Ambassador D'Orlandi and author of the book, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam 1965-68. Operazione Marigold*, La Pira's mission had three important effects. The first was to identify the main obstacles to negotiations, namely the issues of the early withdrawal of US armed forces and the involvement of the FLN in subsequent government training arrangements. The second was to highlight the unwillingness of the Johnson administration to negotiate, and the third was to recognize Italy as a reliable interlocutor to the North Vietnamese. This last element was crucial in the unfolding of the Marigold operation.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ La Pira made ingenuous comments on Rusk and Johnson 'not having to understood properly' that they had no other chance but sign the peace with Vietnam. Gianna Preda, 'La Pira parla in libertà', *Il Borghese*, 30 Dec 1965, pp. 919-921.

⁴⁸¹ James Hershberg in his book *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace* wrote a detailed account of the international and geopolitical implications of the Marigold operation. In this section however, I will focus on the domestic implications of the operation through using Mario Sica's book, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam*. Sica not only makes extensive use of US and Italian archival sources, such as the diaries of D'Orlandi and Fanfani, but as the main collaborator of Ambassador D'Orlandi, he is able to give a real reconstruction of the

At the centre of the Marigold operation were three officials from the diplomatic missions of three different countries: the aforementioned Italian Ambassador Giovanni D'Orlandi; US Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge; and Polish delegate to the International Control Commission (ICC), Janusz Lewandowski.⁴⁸² The ICC, chaired by India with Poland and Canada as members, was created in 1954 to control and supervise the Geneva accords, and it had continued to exist despite the failure of the agreement's process. It had its headquarters in Saigon, thus allowing the presence in Vietnam of a diplomat from a Communist country who, if the situation warranted, could be in contact with Hanoi.⁴⁸³

The Marigold operation began when Lewandowski, back from a trip to Hanoi, arranged a visit with D'Orlandi in order to communicate Hanoi's availability 'to make some concessions in order to reach a compromise with the US.' These concessions consisted of a rewording of their previous proposals, including the renunciation of the claim that the NLF was to be the main representative of the Vietnamese people in negotiations, in favour of wording which called for the NLF was to 'participate in the

motives that guided D'Orlandi and Fanfani throughout the operation, as well as of the domestic implications as perceived by the two Italian protagonists.

⁴⁸² As Hershberg notes, 'the figure of Lewandowski is surrounded by 'an air of mystery'. George C. Herring, in his negotiating volume of the of the Pentagon Papers on Vietnam, quoted an ex-Hungarian diplomat who had defected to the United States, as calling him 'a high-ranking officer in Polish intelligence.' He also explains that 'subsequent accounts –until now- have failed to clarify his identity(...)or affiliations. In Saigon, he was known formally as Ambassador Lewandowski, Chief of the ICC Polish Delegation.' Hershberg, *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace* p. 72; George C. Herring (ed.) *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin, 1983).

⁴⁸³ Hershberg, *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace* p. 87. On the creation of the ICC see also Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*, (New York, 2012).

negotiations'. They also proposed replacing the term 'cessation' of bombing with 'suspension' of bombing, as a condition for starting the negotiations.⁴⁸⁴

To D'Orlandi's question as to why the choice of Italy as a mediator, Lewandowski replied that Hanoi thought France was not the right choice, given De Gaulle's recent anti-American drift. Furthermore, they preferred to float the proposal to the US at a higher level through Italian government, and in particular through Fanfani, rather than going through Ambassador Cabot Lodge. Mario Sica believes that the choice of Italy as a mediator, was related not only to Fanfani's previous attempt at seeking a peaceful settlement of the conflict through La Pira, but also to D'Orlandi's reputation with both sides as a discreet and balanced diplomat. Already in Saigon for four years by that time, he had cultivated good relationships with both the non-military members within the South Vietnamese government, and with Henry Cabot Lodge, with whom he had a relationship of trust and respect. D'Orlandi, emerges from a reading of his diary, as both strongly faithful to his US ally and also an attentive observer of the local reality, capable of analysis and of a deep understanding of the complexities and nuances of the Vietnam situation. He, therefore, was firmly convinced of the need of an immediate ceasefire, followed by a peace process supported by the allies and based on a dialogue between the Vietnamese that would include the NLF.⁴⁸⁵

As soon as D'Orlandi had communicated Lewandowski's message to Fanfani, he was encouraged to report everything to Cabot Lodge, and to continue this dialogue

⁴⁸⁴ Sica, *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam* p. 93.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

with Hanoi. Cabot Lodge for his part reported the proposal to Dean Rusk. The US government replied with scepticism on the grounds that permitting the NLF to participate in the negotiations could lead to giving them a prominent role in post-war Vietnamese politics, a scenario that Washington was determined to avoid. Nevertheless, they left Cabot Lodge and D'Orlandi the chance to continue probing the ground, in order not to interrupt the dialogue. This effort marked the beginning of a series of trilateral meetings between July and December 1966, between Lewandowski, D'Orlandi and Cabot, all under the shroud of absolute secrecy. Meeting minutes were not allowed, with each diplomat having to report orally to his government.⁴⁸⁶

Throughout these meetings, D'Orlandi worked extremely hard to bridge the two contrasting positions. On 1 and 2 December, following Lewandowski return from his last trip to Hanoi, there were two additional tripartite meetings, where the three discussed a hypothesis for a direct meeting between the US and the North Vietnamese government. Unfortunately, new US bombings in Hanoi between 1 and 13 December were interpreted by the North Vietnamese as a deliberate provocation. They, therefore, decided to interrupt the dialogue, thus marking the end of the Marigold operation. The bombings were defined by D'Orlandi and Fanfani as a clamorous mistake. According to Fanfani, without the bombing, the bilateral meeting would certainly have happened.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 134-35; 143, 166.

Without going into the details, which have been analysed in depth by James Hershberg in his book *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace*, the importance of this operation on the domestic front in Italy cannot be underestimated. On May 9, the Communist newspaper, *l'Unità*, published an article about the Lewandoski affair, mentioning the tripartite meetings and concluding that the attempt at peace had been interrupted by American bombings. This was a huge risk for Fanfani, given the secrecy of the operation and the lack of involvement of other members of the government. Even more problematic was the resignation of the Italian Ambassador to the United States, Sergio Fenoaltea, following Fanfani's statement on 27 April, inviting the US to suspend the bombing. He resigned on the grounds that Fanfani, in asking for a unilateral suspension, had not mentioned Hanoi's responsibilities. According to Sica, Fenoaltea was hoping to get the support of Moro and Saragat to open a government crisis. Instead they chose to support Fanfani and privilege the unity of the centre-left. Only a few days later, Edgardo Sogno, an Italian diplomat and popular exponent of the monarchist wing of the anti-fascist resistance in Italy, wrote an open letter to the Italian newspaper, *La Stampa*, defending Fenoaltea's choice and ridiculing Italian involvement in the peace negotiations in Vietnam. Sogno defined the whole operation as 'wishful', and a 'mere exercise of exhibitionism, denying that there had been actual contacts with Hanoi'.⁴⁸⁸

As with La Pira's mission, there was internal criticism, which accused the Marigold actors of amateurism and an excess of self-importance. However, as

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 183; 189-190.

Leopolo Nuti notes, the opposite was true. The Italian attempt to play a role in the search of a peaceful solution in Vietnam was not the only one of this period. The Vietnam War caused countless intermediation attempts and an endless number of sketched and never finished projects. These attempts came not only from countries like Britain, Sweden and Canada, which had a similar situation to Italy with a centre-left government caught between the support for their US ally and the growing uneasiness about the war, but also from most of the key actors of the international community.⁴⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Italian efforts stood out not only for their perseverance, but also for the quality of the outputs and for the appreciation shown by all of the actors involved in the negotiations. This was partly due to the personal characteristics of both D'Orlandi and Fanfani, and also to the relevance of Italian national interest at stake. In particular, D'Orlandi demonstrated deep analytical skills and the ability to compromise with Communist interlocutors, a result of the peculiar internal situation of Italy where the Communist party had always been a legitimate actor within the political arena. Nevertheless, he could have never accomplished this work without the full support of Fanfani. As Fanfani said lucidly, 'finding a settlement to this war, means finding an internal settlement for Italy. Vietnam is now the main issue undermining both the fragile internal consensus, as well as the stability of the government coalition on which the future of the country rests.'⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Herring, in his negotiating volumes of the Pentagon Papers, describes the controversy generated by the various peace initiative carried out by different countries during the Vietnam war. Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*.

⁴⁹⁰ Nuti afterword of Sica book *L'Italia e la pace in Vietnam*, pp. 251-255.

In terms of propaganda, given the relevance of Vietnam for the survival of the centre-left, between 1964 and 1966 USIA efforts were mainly directed at Italian government officials, particularly Socialists, with the goal of maintaining the unity of the centre-left government, seen by Johnson and his advisers as the 'only viable option' to weaken the PCI.⁴⁹¹ After one year of hammering propaganda to 'contain' the shock of Kennedy's assassination, and persuading the Italian government and public opinion of the new President's firm intention to support the centre-left government, the growing US involvement in Vietnam came as a rather unfortunate circumstance, right when Italian Socialists were starting to trust the new administration.

US propagandists, therefore, were instructed to give little emphasis in their outputs to the increasing commitment of the US in Southeast Asia, a situation that immediately led to contrasts between Radio Voice of America and the Administration. The contrast culminated in March 1965 with the resignation of Henry Loomis, the agency's veteran and highly celebrated director of Radio VOA. Loomis denounced the 'administration's excessive control over radio outputs on Vietnam'. He warned against the increasing restrictions, which risked reducing the

⁴⁹¹ Memorandum for the President from Dean Rusk, Dec 5, 1963, Folder Italy Moro Correspondence, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Country File, Special Head of State Correspondence.

credibility of the VOA for overseas audiences, thus lessening its ability to contribute to US national goals.⁴⁹²

At the public opinion level, sporadic anti-war protests began in Italy in the fall of 1965, with the Communist newspaper, *l'Unità*, exaggerating their scope by reporting 'numerous demonstrations in Italian cities, matching the marches of thousands of young people in the US.'⁴⁹³ At this stage, the protests in Italy mainly consisted of initiatives by Communist Party organizations, and the PSIUP (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity), recently born from a split of the leftist section of the PSI, opposed to Socialist cooperation with the DC and keener to cooperate with the Communists. The PSIUP became a haven for many young people dissatisfied with the traditional reformism of the PCI and PSI. With Communists still attracting more than a quarter of the electorate, the rising New Left, rather than replacing the Communists, were forming an alternative to the traditional leftist policies. As notes Valdo Spini, 'when defining the New Left in Italy, particular emphasis should be placed on the adjective 'new'.'

For this adjective not only indicates the rising wave of radical opposition which is developing in a new fashion, whether in its theoretical elaboration, in political practice, or in the social background of its participants, even though all these characteristics are definitely present in the Italian New Left. The adjective also indicates the presence of a strong 'Old Left' of

⁴⁹² Memorandum for the President from Carl T. Rowan, July 13, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, WHCF, Federal Government, box 314.

⁴⁹³ Memorandum for the President, Daily Reaction Report, Oct 18, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 5, box 74.

obvious Marxist and working-class derivation, with which the New Left must come to terms on two levels.⁴⁹⁴

The first level was the capillary presence of the 'Old Left' within Italian social fabric through political and trade union organizations. The second was the uneven stage of development reached by Italian Capitalism, particularly in the south, which was not of the kind to be found in mature Capitalist countries. Therefore, there was still 'a wide field of activity open to the traditional Left', and its concepts could hardly be entirely replace by 'the set of concepts directed essentially against mass consumption and critical of the welfare society' which formed the basis for the New Left of British and American derivation. The fight of the New Left in Italy was taking place on two fronts: 'on one side against the conservative forces and on the other against the traditional Left.'⁴⁹⁵

The Communist Party, for its part, tried to exploit both people's discontent for Italian backwardness as well as the New Left wave of protests against the Vietnam War, to enlarge its base of consensus in view of the 1968 elections. As previously mentioned, despite the economic progress of the previous decade, there was a long road still ahead to bring the benefits of a rapidly modernizing society to all sectors and classes in Italy. The PCI could thus rely on the evidence that the

⁴⁹⁴ Valdo Spini, 'The New Left in Italy', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1:2 (1972), p. 52.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

centre-left coalition had not produced the progress needed and therefore a more radical change was required.⁴⁹⁶

As Brogi notes, with the national elections approaching, 'American growing involvement in Vietnam came as a propaganda gift to the Italian Communists, who exploited it to regain ground both at the international and domestic level.' Internationally, with growing attention given to the ongoing struggle for independence in the third world on the part of the rising New Left, 'the escalation of the war in Vietnam offered the perfect opportunity to the PCI to reconcile the theme of capitalism and neocolonialism, with America as an aggressive imperialist power threatening world peace.'⁴⁹⁷

The process of internal renewal underway within the party, which included more moderate domestic politics, increasing criticism of Soviet politics, more support for European integration, and less confrontation towards NATO, combined with its traditional '*terzomodismo*' (Third Worldism) and egalitarian spirit, made the PCI increasingly attractive to people in the Western world and developing countries, regardless of their political allegiance. 'Never like in the sixties,' writes Brogi 'the convergence of anti-Americanism, pacifism and communism as an ideal, had such a grip on world public opinion at all levels.'⁴⁹⁸ It is important, however, to distinguish the international and domestic levels. In a long term perspective, the

⁴⁹⁶ Memo for the President, Daily Reaction Report, Further Thoughts on the Anti-War Marches, Oct 18, 1965, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol. 5, box 74.

⁴⁹⁷ Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 26.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 265.

anti-war movement did not mean that international Communism was close to victory, but rather that the Cold War was losing its psychological grip on the younger generations and elsewhere. As Silvio Pons notes, 'Vietnam was more important as a symbol of protest' for European youth, 'than as a means by which Communist-inspired movements could assert themselves. In reality, the (...) mobilization indirectly marked the collapse of the pillar sustaining Soviet mythologies - the loss of the revolutionary state's centrality as represented by the USSR.'⁴⁹⁹ On the domestic front, instead, in the short term, opposing the war allowed Italian Communists to find a point of contact with the student movement, with which, up to that point, there had been a relationship of mutual distrust, and with the Socialists. Vietnam thus represented for the Communist Party, 'the rallying point that apparently allowed them to bridge establishment and antiestablishment forces' and also 'the one and only issue capable of holding together the Italian left from an ideological and generational point of view.'⁵⁰⁰

1966-7: Explaining Vietnam to the Italian public

By the summer of 1966 the USIA was warning of a growing infiltration of student protests in Italy by communist front organizations. In a detailed memo, USIS Rome described 'suspiciously well-organized' demonstrations around the country and

⁴⁹⁹ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917-1991* (Oxford, 2014), p. 256.

⁵⁰⁰ Brogi, *Confronting America*, p. 265.

lamented an increasing number of students joining communist organizations such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS).⁵⁰¹

In view of this increasingly alarming situation, by the end of 1966 'explaining the US position on Vietnam to the Italian public' was identified as the main USIA objective in the country, along with that of 'reducing communist influence.'⁵⁰² The two objectives, as has emerged so far, were closely intertwined. The agency's emphasis shifted therefore from the government to public opinion and an impressive stream of material explaining the reasons for the US presence in Vietnam was disseminated in Italy by 1966 through any mean available: pamphlets, leaflets, magazines, radio and documentaries. *Why Vietnam*, a 30 minute feature film produced by the U.S. Defense Department, is a good example of the kind of material disseminated by US propagandists to 'explain' the war abroad. Beginning with LBJ 'having to answer a mother's difficult question of why her son had to serve in Vietnam, since it was so far away from the United States', the movie then offered a number of reasons for Americans to fight in 'defense of South Vietnamese from the poison of communism', through an extensive use of the Cold War rhetoric of freedom vs. slavery.⁵⁰³ This type of discourse characterized most of the USIA outputs on Vietnam between 1965 and 1966. As for the press, to

⁵⁰¹ Communist Front Organizations, 1967-1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 25, Folder USIA National Political Problems Affecting Public Opinion Overseas.

⁵⁰² Country Programs: West Europe, Special Europe, Soviet Union and East Europe, 1966, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

⁵⁰³ Johns Kays, 'A Critique of The U.S. Defence Department's Documentary: Why Vietnam?' *News Blaze*, April 12, 2009, <http://newsblaze.com/story/20090412110017kays.nb/topstory.html>. URL consulted on May 5, 2014.

balance the increasingly negative comments found in Italian newspapers, the agency's officers were also instructed to ensure the placement within Italian media of material aimed at putting the Vietnam issue 'in perspective', presenting the brutal actions carried out by the communist fighters against the helpless south. According to USIS Rome, during the first 20 days of July 1966 several influential Italian papers carried more than ten solid USIS-provided news-stories on Vietnam.⁵⁰⁴ Towards the end of the year, however, US propaganda proved to be ineffective at the levels of both government and public opinion. Protests escalated dramatically in Italy, and USIA warned about further slippage in government support, always limited, for American policy in Vietnam in view of mounting public opinion pressures on Prime Minister Moro to alter his position. 'The longer the struggle would continue with no signs of a settlement in sight', argued the Agency, 'the more disturbed socialists and public opinion would become, and the more difficult it would be for the government to maintain its position of comprehension for US policy in Southeast Asia.'⁵⁰⁵

To further complicate things, in October 1966 the two streams of Italian socialism, the PSI and the Italian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI), had joined forces giving birth to the Unified Socialist Party (PSU). With the 1968 elections approaching, the new unified party was concerned about adopting an electoral position sufficiently independent from the DC to hold their current voters. This

⁵⁰⁴ Vietnam and World Opinion, Analysis and Recommendations, USIA Office of Policy and Research, Aug 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks 1964-1967, box 34.

⁵⁰⁵ Memo for the President, Sep 7, 1966, National Security File, Italy, LBJ library, Papers of Lyndon Johnson President, 1963-1969, box 197, Folder Italy Memos 12/65 – 12/66 (1 of 2).

also serves to explain the growing stiffening in the PDSI's anti-war position on Vietnam.⁵⁰⁶

At the public opinion level, as noted an agency report in 1967, the problem in Italy was that 'far too many official statements on Vietnam were coming out too often, for any particular one to attract interest.' As shown by the poor results of the propagandistic hammering of the previous decade, the report suggested that US statements would have a greater psychological impact if they were better spaced.⁵⁰⁷ Already in the summer of 1966 the USIS post in Rome had declared its skepticism that 'any action could be taken which would have any effect on Communists, and in general, on other left-wing groups now critical of US policy'. It warned that 'the present flow of information from the agency to the government and the press is at such volume now that any marked increase might be counter-productive.'⁵⁰⁸

Italian public opinion, for its part, showed growing intolerance for any attempt at persuasion coming from abroad. Moreover, as a USIA study explained, typical cold war rhetoric emphasizing the 'North Vietnam aggression', and US role as a 'liberator', did not find a responsive audience in Italy: 'While the justification that we are in Vietnam to defend the vital position of the US in the free world seems to be more easily understood and accepted by the Germans, it finds instead a strongly

⁵⁰⁶ F. Rizzi, 'Dall'unificazione alla scissione socialista 1966-1969', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 3 (1973) 407-424.

⁵⁰⁷ Memo from the USIA Office of Research, (month not visible) 1967; NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Subject Files, 1953-2000, Research, Public Opinion 1960-1998, box 41

⁵⁰⁸ USIA Office of Policy and Research, Vietnam and World Opinion, Analysis and Recommendations, August 1966, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 34.

skeptical audience in Italy and France, probably due to the effectiveness of communist propaganda, combined with the traditional anti-Americanism which characterized the intellectual left in those countries'.⁵⁰⁹

As previously analyzed, the growing development and sophistication of the media in Italy in the sixties made it increasingly difficult for the agency to select the kind of information to project to the Italians. Also in the case of Vietnam, the emphasis shifted from distributing pre-confectioned news to providing background information useful to 'balance' sensitive events and 'put them in perspective'.⁵¹⁰ As USIA director Leonard Marks explained in 1967: 'The communication revolution has brought events in Southeast Asia into the daily television news programs where people are seeing, hearing and making judgments about the US and its policies. It is in the US interest that these judgments be based on accurate information.'⁵¹¹ The USIS press attaché in Rome, Harold Wright, and other local agency staff increased their contacts with local press agencies, editors and journalists to bring news, data and pictures about Vietnam in the attempt to balance negative comments. But the USIA was now becoming a hostage to events. As Loomis remarked at a meeting of the Public Relations Society of America in January 1970, '[b]y the sixties the USIA increasingly became a dependent variable. We were dependent on the facts of life . . . When Apollo actually got to the moon, of course it was a great story, and we couldn't have killed it if we tried. But if that

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Marks Speech at the Meeting on the Problem of International Communication, October 4, 1967, Folder Speech by Leonard Marks, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 21.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

thing had not made it to the moon, obviously the propaganda results would have been totally different. And that was terribly true when it came to Vietnam.’⁵¹²

In an attempt to find another way to ‘sell Vietnam’ while avoiding Cold War rhetoric, by 1967 the agency developed the theme of the ‘other war’. The aim was to emphasize the non-military aspects of the US presence in Vietnam and its constructive efforts in the South in such fields as rural development, education and social progress. ‘While foreign media give most space to the shooting war, bolstering the notion that this conflict is in all its aspects primarily an American show,’ explained a USIA policy program directive, ‘we should focus attention on the fact that the United States, and the Government of South Vietnam, are together making an unprecedented effort to build a nation in the midst of a shooting war.’⁵¹³ To promote the theme, a White House report on the progress in ‘the other war’ was released in February 1967 and distributed by the USIA to all posts. USIA headquarters also distributed abroad 180 slides for a lecture named ‘Behind the Crisis’, which described the economic and social progress achieved in Vietnam with US help. In the same month, 20,000 copies of the student edition of George K.

⁵¹² Talk by Henry Loomis to the Washington Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, Jan 20, 1970, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 37, NARA.

⁵¹³ ‘The Other War in Vietnam’, Policy Program Directive No. 11-2-67, February 1, 1967, USIA Office of Policy and Research, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 24.

Tanham's book, 'War Without Guns', were sent to USIS posts abroad, including Italy.⁵¹⁴

In general, even before the launch of the 'other war' theme, the idea was to downplay as much as possible the military aspects of the US presence in Vietnam. An Associated Press correspondent who drove south of Saigon in June 1966 to check reports of a battle, recalled that when he arrived he saw firing and clouds of green, red and blue smoke. "Take it easy man". said a young guy introducing himself as a USIS officer, "This isn't war, it's a movie set. We are not going to show cruel things like bodies!" He then explained that to 'sell Vietnam' abroad, they intended to minimize the brutality and emphasize the personal aspects of the war. 'Put more flags here!' he yelled to his assistant, 'we are showing to the people our struggle for freedom!'⁵¹⁵

Towards 1968: Rethinking American Public Diplomacy strategy

Besides the internal and external fractures and the unique image damage caused by the war, Vietnam also brought a dramatic redefinition of America's worldwide priorities that had a profound impact on US policy towards Italy, and consequently on public diplomacy strategy. With the escalation of the war, accusations of a lack of interest by America for its Italian ally increased while the deficit in the American

⁵¹⁴ 'The Other War: a Checklist', Policy Program Directive No. 11-2-67, February 1, 1967, US Information Agency Office of Policy and Research, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 24.

⁵¹⁵ 'Battle is Staged for USIS', Associated Press Report on Inaccurate Reporting of Vietnam News, June 7, 1966, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 34.

balance of payments was progressively aggravated by the conflict. This led to an intensification of Congressional pressure for troop withdrawals in Italy, which was strongly opposed by the Italian Government.⁵¹⁶ 'The communist control of about ¼ of the population', noted a Rome Embassy report, did not help. 'Certain USIS activities such as lectures, films or exhibits on the US role in Vietnam faced disruptive Communist opposition particularly in areas politically controlled by the PCI.'⁵¹⁷

Communist outputs exploited the climate of urgency and expectation in Italy for a further relaxation of cold war tensions, presenting Vietnam as one of the main obstacles to a more enlarged détente.⁵¹⁸ As PCI Secretary, Luigi Longo, stated during the XI Party Congress in Rome of January 1966, 'A change in the international situation in the direction of peace cannot be achieved without an end to American aggression in Vietnam'. Similar declarations were reported daily by the communist press, and printed on flyers and pamphlets to be distributed in factories and at universities.⁵¹⁹

Vietnam acted thus as an amplifier for the Italian malaise with regard to the United States as analyzed in the previous chapter and it forced changes in American public diplomacy. In 1967, the increasing anti-war protests and the

⁵¹⁶ USIA Area Notes, Western Europe and NTP, April 1967, Media Reaction Analysis, July-Sept, 1967, LBJ Library, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 38.

⁵¹⁷ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

⁵¹⁸ Lawson, The USIA during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 1.

⁵¹⁹ The XI Congress of the PCI Rome, Jan 25-31, 1966, From Am Embassy in Rome, March 1966, NARA, RG 59, Central Policy Files, Pol and Def, box, 2363, Folder Pol 12, 1-1-66.

growing restlessness of the Socialists within the government led the USIA to raise its annual budget which had been progressively cut in previous years. USIS Italy was allocated \$1,015,700 and had a staff complement of 17 American and 114 Italian positions.⁵²⁰ At the same time, evidence of the ineffectiveness of current strategies pushed the USIA to take a closer look at the composition of the anti-war movement in Italy, which in turn led to modification of the propaganda outputs.⁵²¹ It became increasingly clear that the opposition of youth and intellectuals to the US government, was balanced by a growing identification with the US anti-war movement, and more broadly, with American culture of dissent. The protests against the capitalist, materialistic and aggressive sides of US 'imperialism' were in fact accompanied by the discovery of the 'other America': the America of Dylan, Hendrix, Baez and Joplin; the America of counterculture, sexual liberation and the hippy movement; the America of the civil rights struggle, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. This America became the main point of reference for the Italian new left, and had a much stronger power of attraction for youth and intellectuals than the 'consensus' America projected by US propaganda in the 1950s. This ambivalence of the Italian left about America, if on the one hand complicating the USIA's role, on the other left room for other kinds of propaganda. This love-hate relationship with America was also reflected in the people's relationships with

⁵²⁰ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

⁵²¹ Memo for the President, Further Thoughts on the Anti-War Marches, October 18, 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of LBJ President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Agency File, USIA Vol 5, box 74.

USIS libraries and cultural centers in Italy. By the mid-sixties, these became targets of anti-war protests and violence because they represented visible signs of the US presence in Italy. The violence culminated with the aforementioned homemade bomb in the USIS office of Tor Pignattara in September 1966. At the same time, however, between 1965 and 1968, in addition to a growing number of left-wing intellectuals, the agency's posts attracted a rising number of students. 'Young people's attendance had never been so high' recalls Adalgisa Pedani, veteran USIS librarian in Florence: 'They attended the movie screenings, and requested many different books, from classics such as Thoreau and Whitman, to the more recent works of Ginsberg, Kerouac, Sinclair, and Friedan. If we did not have the requested titles, we would take note and order them. By the end of the sixties, classics of the American counterculture began crowding the shelves of our library'.⁵²²

Targeting Italian Youth

While, as previously noted, the agency was familiar with the Italian left-wing intelligentsia, there was a audience of which it was completely ignorant, and wherein the conflictual relationship with America manifested itself even more strongly, namely Italian youth. The rising student movement of the sixties, had been initially overlooked by USIS officers who had failed to grasp the importance of the phenomenon in Italy. As Wollemberg notes, 'US media failed to understand

⁵²² Adalgisa Pedani, Oral Interview, Florence, July 8, 2013.

or badly underrated the significance of the student movement', which by the second half of the sixties, 'was already surfacing as a new and important component of Italian society.' In fact, the movement was not just a protest against an antiquated university system, but was indeed a challenge to the entire Italian establishment.'⁵²³

In 1965, Olin Robinson, special assistant for the US Interagency Youth Committee, which had been created by Kennedy in 1961 to focus on youth abroad, visited Rome. He characterized the youth program in Italy as 'not the worst, but by no means the best of the European programs.'⁵²⁴ In a statement to the Youth Committee in March 1966, LBJ highlighted the potential influence of youth on government, given that they were in the forefront of recent events and protests. As evidence of the greater salience of the issue, LBJ appointed as heads of the Committee top level intellectuals and foreign service officers, such as Adam Yarmolinski, a liberal academic and the architect of several key programs under the Kennedy and Johnson's administrations, and later Foy Kohler, a career Foreign Service Officer and Johnson's chief speechwriter. Yarmolinski suggested strengthening the Rome youth program, underlining the importance of maintaining a 'steady flow of communication with the youth in time of crisis'.⁵²⁵

Robert Krill, a young diplomat and expert in communication, was appointed as youth officer in Rome. Great attention was given to the universities, as pivots of

⁵²³ Wollemborg, *Star, Stripes and American Tricolor*, p. 122.

⁵²⁴ Report of the Interagency Youth Committee, Nov 8, 1967, Chairman Foy Kohler, Ass secretary CU, Frankel, NARA, RG 59, Italy Switzerland 1946-72.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

the student movement, and USIS officers were instructed to strengthen their relationship with Italian universities within the 'American Studies Project'. This had been funded and supported by the agency since the mid-fifties to support the establishment of courses in American History and Literature in the main Italian universities.⁵²⁶ In 1967 and 1968 the USIA allocated \$20,000 to help pay salaries of Italian lecturers in American studies at Italian universities.⁵²⁷

Additional funding was diverted to organize courses and seminars on American history and civilization and to the Johns Hopkins center in Bologna founded in 1955 with substantial help from the USIA. 'The Bologna Centre' explain an embassy report in 1968 is highly regarded 'for its work in American Studies and in the training of both Italians and Americans in Atlantic Affairs.' Between 1966 and 1968 the agency granted to the centre around \$250,000 for teachers' salaries, scholarships and educational equipment and in 1967 cooperated with the Johns Hopkins Bologna center in organizing a seminar on American politics for forty young Italians.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ In the academic year 1954-55, three courses of American Literature were opened at the University of Rome, Florence and Venice and, in the academic year 1956-56 one of American History at the University of Florence. Followed courses in the main cities across Italy. The USIA would provide, depending on the university, either funding, of start up material and in several occasions, would also handle the selection of professors. In exchange, the university only needed to be willing to offer the new courses. Operations Advisory Service Report on USIS Italy, Sept 20 - Nov 16, 1956, NARA, RG 306, Inspection Reports and Related Records 1954-1962, Entry 1045, box 5. Tobia, *Adversiting America*, p. 252.

⁵²⁷ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

⁵²⁸ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3; USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 35.

The Fulbright educational exchange program was also regarded as an important tool to influence young students' views of America. In the spring of 1965, Yarmolinski warned against the temptation in any selective admissions procedure to exclude individuals who may appear 'troublesome, anti-American, and unattractive' but who may well possess leadership qualities. 'The program' he explained 'is concerned with potential leaders, not youth per se'. The criteria to select grant recipients should then be 'more political and less academic', focusing on students that may lack the highest formal academic qualifications but who possess 'charisma, original mind, and show promise of using them in positions of leadership.' Each USIS post abroad was thus asked to send a list of those young leaders' who were 'most likely to succeed,' in order to draw participants from those lists.⁵²⁹ This view went against Senator Fulbright's wishes. At the time of the creation of the USIA in 1953, he wanted his signature program to remain officially outside of agency control, to avoid the propagandistic label on an activity which he saw as bilateral and aimed at promoting mutual understanding. The program of academic exchanges, therefore, remained under the official control of the State Department, although often managed by USIS officers in the field.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Report of the Interagency Youth Committee, May 19, 1965, NARA, RG 59, Italy Switzerland 1946-72.

⁵³⁰ Between 1949 and 1967 grants were given to 3,019 among Italian students, teachers, specialists and professors to go to the United States and respectively to 2,593 Americans to go to Italy. Only in 1968 \$679,000 were allocated for the exchange program. Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3. For a more detailed account of the role of the Fulbright program within US cultural diplomacy see Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*.

The progressive radicalization of the protests pushed USIS officers to question the absence of a coordinated strategy to target youth in Italy. In November 1967, Marks became alarmed and called attention to the matter, wondering whether 'adequate plans were being made for targeting this group of dissident students.'⁵³¹ The problem, according to Kohler, was that the agency was acting more in response to things arising periodically, rather than in a coordinated way. The information produced on the youth issue was 'journalistic instead of scholarly, topical instead of interpretative.' Both CIA stations and USIS officers were instructed to give a new focus to youth and student reporting: 'More political reporting on trends and developments in the student world are needed' explained Kohler, 'because neither CIA stations nor embassies have been asked to give priority to reports of this kind. The communist syndrome, the tendency to concentrate on spotting potential agitators, prevails in reporting instead.'⁵³²

A great deal of attention had been given to counteracting communist infiltration within the student movement, although as a Rome embassy report noted in 1967, 'youth participation in the PCI's organized protests never reach significant peaks.'⁵³³ The reason was to be found in the growing distance between the newborn movement and the party, seen by the students as a part of that same traditional establishment which they were challenging. Once again, the PCI was

⁵³¹ Memo from Leonard Marks to Mr Weld, Nov 3, 1967, Director's Memo to Area and Media Directors, Aug– Dec 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 19.

⁵³² Interagency Youth Committee Report, Chairman Foy Kohler -Ass Secretary CU C. Frankel, Nov 8, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Italy Switzerland 1946-72.

⁵³³ Report from Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Continued Communist Campaign on Vietnam, August 4, 1966, NARA, RG 59, Central Policy Files 1964-1966, Political & Defense, box 2368.

victim of the dilemma of straddling 'two tracks' (*doppio binario*) that had characterized the party since the immediate post-war years. A legally recognized actor within Italian political system, the PCI always strove to represent antiestablishment forces – the workers class struggle – while at the same time seeking to protect its domestic image as a responsible, reasonable force that posed no threat to Italy's existing democratic institutions. This search for the middle ground, which often led it to occupy irreconcilable positions, prevented the party from embracing or even understanding the radicalism of the students' demands. The protests against Vietnam therefore became an expression of the aversion of the youth, as well as the workers, to the gradualism and reformism of the traditional left (PCI and PSI).⁵³⁴ In contrast, many Italian young people drew inspiration from the new left and the antiwar movement in America.⁵³⁴

Among the academics who were asked to further analyze the 'youth issue' was Charles Frankel, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and an expert on cultural diplomacy. He was named USIA Cultural Affairs Officer in 1965. In his report, he highlighted how the weakness was not so much in the strategy, as in the content: 'The youth function', explained Frankel, 'it is a radical function, and existing mechanism are not able to deal with it. We are asking the US government go beyond the traditional channel of activity. Communication with this group is a delicate matter. It requires knowledge of their language, their culture, their jargon.' According to Frankel, US public diplomats should have been more sensitive

⁵³⁴ On the ambivalence of PCI position in Italy see Piero Ignazi, *I partiti italiani* (Bologna, 1997).

to foreign contexts and sub-contexts, trying to tune its outreach selectively to each different target as much as possible. As regards young people, continued Frankel, the agency had so far been rather 'out of tune.' Following Frankel's suggestion, in a letter to all USIS officers in Europe, Marks explained, 'We need to refine our understanding of what we mean when we speak of youth, and of how to build into our program the desirable emphasis on reaching young people.'⁵³⁵

Up to that point, US propaganda on Vietnam mainly had been directed at emphasizing the relatively small number of dissidents, when compared to the majority of Americans supporting the Johnson Administration's policy.⁵³⁶ The agency disseminated the results of countless national polls showing US public opinion support for America's Vietnam policy. In general, news of the protests where barely reported by the USIA, while large space was given to themes such as the American educational system, sport, and stories of youth success in various fields, most of which had been produced by the agency in the previous decade.⁵³⁷ Adalgisa Pedani recalls that in the sixties, Italian USIS posts still held material contained in the 'Special Youth Packet' made by USIA in the Eisenhower era. A package entitled 'America Plays Ball', the agency contained a set of pictures of students playing tennis, football, and volleyball in college uniforms. In a burst of

⁵³⁵ Interagency Youth Committee Report, Chairman Foy Kohler -Assistant Secretary CU C. Frankel, Nov 8, 1967, NARA, RG 59, Italy Switzerland 1946-72; Letter from L. Marks to all USIS PAO, May 16, 1968, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Box 31.

⁵³⁶ USIA Office of Policy and Research, Vietnam and World Opinion, Analysis and Recommendations, August 1966, NARA.

⁵³⁷ Memo for the President from Leonard Marks, Weekly Report, Dec 14, 1966, Papers of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 33.

enthusiasm, the State Department even offered to send to the Rome office of USIS, a kit of sports equipment for baseball, basketball and American football. The officials in the field turned the offer down, explaining that it was 'unnecessary' in Italy, since the most popular sport in Italy was soccer, which required little equipment. In an article entitled, 'US Youngsters Run their Own Business', the agency celebrated the story of a 16 year old boy who started selling cakes on the street in front of his house and, in less than three years, ended up opening his own pastry shop.⁵³⁸

Not surprisingly, such outdated material hardly had any impact on Italian youth in the mid-1960s, and certainly did not divert attention from the escalation in Vietnam. US propaganda was projecting to Italian students a picture of America which not only no longer existed but which was also counterproductive as it presented a stable model of consensus society to a movement calling for revolution and change. As noted by USIA director Marks, not only had communist propaganda started much earlier to cultivate students abroad, but the pretended revolutionary aims of socialism, as well as Soviet rhetoric, though not reflecting reality, appeared more in accordance with students aspirations for change.⁵³⁹ 'We need sound and imaginative ideas for reaching these young people and show them the image of a free, dynamic and youthful nation,' wrote a USIS officer in Rome in July 1967, 'US

⁵³⁸ 'America Plays With Ball', 'US Youngsters Run their Own Business', USIS Special Youth Packet 1953-1954, USIA Press and Publication Service, NARA, RG 306, Feature Packets with Recurring Subjects, Entry A1-1003, box 1.

⁵³⁹ From Leonarda Marks to all American Diplomatic Posts, Generalizations on Student Unrest, July 1967, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, Director USIA, 1964-1967, box 27.

public diplomacy has ceased to reflect contemporary American society and our conservatism cuts us off from the younger, the more dynamic, and often the more influential elements in foreign countries. There is a ferment, a sense of widening horizons in art, communications and society itself that is tremendously exciting to doers and thinkers in every country in the world. America is where it's happening, but USIA is still living in the 50's'.⁵⁴⁰

Journalist Bruce J. Oudes of *The Washington Monthly* made the same point in 1970, when reviewing the output of the USIA outputs during the sixties:

Considered together, USIA products give one the profound and ironically accurate impression of a country that is trying too hard. The image is not of a nation that is mature, relaxed, confident, capable of taking care of itself and inspiring confidence in others- but rather of one that is young, nervous, uncertain, defensive . . . USIA's origin in times of war and cold war is doubtless responsible for the agency's curiously old-fashioned style. The 1960's passed unnoticed at the USIA . . . This gives the agency an antique flavor that is not without a certain charm. Where else but in USIA can you find officials who think that James Baldwin is too black to be read by Africans, and Norman Mailer too raw for Europeans?⁵⁴¹

Conscious of such a 'propaganda handicap', Marks demanded change, 'Whether it is music, arts and new demands in society, we must get with it', he noted: 'words and ideas are our tools and we must use today's advanced

⁵⁴⁰ Memo from Am Embassy in Rome to State Department, July 1967, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 35, NARA.

⁵⁴¹ Bruce J. Oudes, 'Great Windmachine. One way to lower our voices: Abolish the U.S. Information Agency', *The Washington Monthly*, June 1970, pp. 33-35.

vocabulary to appeal to the protestors, and not yesterday's classic speech.'⁵⁴² By 1967, USIS Rome Public Affairs Officer Gordon Edwin had replaced several of the retiring senior employees with young officers just starting their careers. They are 'more attuned' he explained 'to conducting information and cultural programs with the youth of Italy'. The agency also recruited young American students to come to Italy and talk about the US anti-war movement, to help put demonstrations 'in context'.⁵⁴³

And so, in 1967-8, news of US demonstrations, far from being played down by USIA, began to be presented as a sign of freedom and pluralism in America, as opposed to the rigidity and immobility of the Soviet regimes. The agency was instructed to show America 'exactly as it was', projecting the 'good together with the bad'. Anti-war protests, as well as the civil rights struggle, had to be reported 'without minimizing the numbers of participants.' The point was made of the right of free discussion in the US –even in the midst of war – in stark contrast with Soviet repression of dissent.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Marks observations on Public Diplomacy at the annual USIA honour awards ceremony, Nov 4, 1968, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files 1967-75, box 5, p. 7.

⁵⁴³ HR 92-184, Improved manpower Management, p. 17, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 35.

⁵⁴⁴ Marks observations on Public Diplomacy at the annual USIA honour awards ceremony, Nov 4, 1968, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Subject Files 1967-75, box 5.

Advertising American dissent

The USIA made this new approach quite explicit. Among the topics to be given emphasis in the media in 1968, the agency's global guidelines highlighted 'dissent and consensus, the capacity for change and growth out of conflict and tension, and the quest for improvement as well as the creative tensions produced by the need to adapt political and social mechanisms to accelerating demand'. Most importantly however, was 'the impact of new awareness, the irreverent and questioning youth, its new outlook, its moral energy.'⁵⁴⁵

US propagandists also began seeking 'unusual ways of getting US views across'. As an example, Joseph Steinbeck's letter from Vietnam in January 1967 was sent out to all European posts. Further, the USIA Motion Picture Service produced a documentary named "Nation of Dissenters" where images of the civil rights and student movements were accompanied by a narrator presenting dissent as 'the main contribution to national strength.'⁵⁴⁶ William Greaves, the same African American director who filmed the Negro Art Festival, was contracted by George Stevens, head of USIA Motion Picture Service, to help him producing movies more attuned to a youthful audience. 'They wanted to do a film showing in Cold War terms that America was friendly to dissent and very much a free society where people could speak their mind freely. So they asked me to do this film called Nation of Dissenters about people who challenge the authorities. I started working

⁵⁴⁵ USIA Worldwide Priority Themes, July 30, 1968, Basic USIA Guidelines, 9/1/65 – 11/5/68, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1968, box 24.

⁵⁴⁶ George Alexander, *Why We Make Movies*, p. 32.

on it, and it came to pass that when they realized that I was focusing on various popular dissent, they decided that they didn't really want that much dissent.'⁵⁴⁷ Greaves recalls that it took a long time to do the movie. They had to 'redefine the parameters of the original theme. The new theme was a middle ground one, not only focusing on dissent, but on 'what it means to be in a nation in which there was 'freedom of individual expression'.⁵⁴⁸ This story testifies to the constant tension within the USIA, on the one hand to tell America's story warts and all, including dissent in all its forms and, on the other, having to project, to the extent possible, a positive image of the United States. *Nation of Dissenters*, however, with its shooting of the protests and demonstrations across the country, although slightly downsized in its scope with respect to the initial intentions, still represented a good compromise between this two imperatives.

More emphasis was given to movies, not only to the classic Hollywood masterpieces, but also to symbols of the counterculture such as Hopper's *Easy Riders*, as well as documentaries such as *The March To Washington* produced by the agency in 1964. The agency also launched 'USA in Music' – a collection of recordings presenting a cross section of trends in contemporary American music, including pieces by Dylan and Joplin.⁵⁴⁹ Along with classic such as the National

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p 32.

⁵⁴⁹ Adalgisa Pedani, Oral Interview, July 8, 2013, Youth Activities in Italy 1967, From Mr. Stabler to Mr. Draper, Feb 15, 1967, NARA, RG 59 Italy Switzerland 1946-72.

Symphony Orchestra, the USIA and the State Department provided grants to perform in Italy to talented young and upcoming American musicians.⁵⁵⁰

The expression used in most USIA reports by 1967 was that of putting the anti-war movement, and more generally the internal contradictions and fractures that characterized the United States at the end of the sixties, 'into perspective'. As with the civil rights struggle, the idea was to present the Vietnam protests, as issues that were not limited to the US, but which were the concern of any democratic, dynamic country moving along its path of evolution towards a new and more inclusive equilibrium. America, as the model beacon of democracy for the 'free world', was only ahead in its process to find a new, better, internal balance. 'We must show the picture of America as a country of many racial origins, colors, and creeds' stated a USIA document, 'where traditional conflicts and irritations nowadays aggregated and found expression in the anti-war movement; but also in which such instances *could find expression precisely because America is a democratic country.*' It is therefore through institutional and democratic channels that America would resolve its issues and contradiction, both within and abroad, which inevitably required time. Only by 'telling it as it is', Marks explained, could the USIA hope to create a little understanding.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

⁵⁵¹ U.S. Information Agency Basic Guidance and Planning Paper n. 5, December 4, 1967, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Agency History Program Subject Files, Mission Statements, 1945-1967, Entry A1 1072, box 5, NARA, p. 4.

The US strategy of presenting America ‘warts and all’ was not always effective. In the summer of 1967, for instance, the agency assisted Italian director Alessandro Perrone in the production of a full-length feature film on Vietnam, *Vietnam, guerra senza fronte* (Vietnam, War without a Front). The film featured the famous Italian actor, Gigi Proietti, and was distributed by Dino De Laurentiis. Aiming at offering a ‘balanced view’ of the conflict, images were shown both of American air strikes and Vietcong guerrilla techniques. At the time of its release, however, the movie actually boomeranged against US propaganda interests. It was, in fact, especially well received within the extreme left Italian circles for portraying crude scenes of US bombings to the point that two years later it was shown in PCI circles around Italy.⁵⁵²

The ‘long 1968’

Vietnam and the image of America that came with it represented a moment of redefinition in Italy at the governmental level, particularly its left-leaning components, as well as among public opinion. This redefinition led to a change in strategy for American public diplomacy, which can now be summed up.

At the government level, it offered a chance for the Communists to break their political isolation, thwarting the main purpose for which the centre-left was

⁵⁵² Perrone, *Vietnam guerra senza fronte*,
<http://www.cinematografo.it/pls/cinematografo/consultazione.redirect?sch=23837>

created. Furthermore, it highlighted the ambiguous position of the Italian Socialist Party within the government, leading to its electoral debacle in 1968, and the start of its unrelenting decline. At the public opinion level, opposition to the war in Vietnam catalyzed all the different strands of the rising new left in Italy: the opposition to American capitalism, the discontent with the Italian government, and the 'gradualism' of the traditional left. This Italian new left, in turn, drew inspiration from its American counterpart, embracing its customs and practices, and thereby acting as a further carrier of Americanization in Italy.

The overall ambivalence of the Italian left towards America, the contradictions that Vietnam had revealed abroad, and the communication revolution together complicated the job of US public diplomats, while at the same time leaving some room open for new forms of propaganda. Initially, when the picture of the 'America of Consensus' that US propaganda had tirelessly projected in Italy throughout the previous decade clashed with the images of Vietnam, US public diplomats reacted defensively. This resulted in the indiscriminate dissemination of an excessive stream of material aimed at counteracting Communist propaganda and minimizing the war in Vietnam, as well as internal dissent.

During 1966, the agency gradually became aware of the ineffectiveness of a strategy that, while focusing on defending official American government policy, was actually leaving aside the 'other America' – the America of the anti-war movement and dissent, which had a much greater grip on, and even attraction for,

the Italian left. The agency therefore sought to project America for what it was, presenting US dissent as a means of showing the dynamism and pluralism of American society, as opposed to the rigidity of the communist system. Essentially, Vietnam, by causing a change in Italian public opinion and the image of America, led to a rethinking of the strategy for American public diplomacy, both in terms of target and content. During 1967 and 1968, US propagandists thus began to see the growing attraction among Italian youth and intellectuals for the American culture of dissent as an asset to sell America's image. The same had happened with the civil rights movement, which throughout the sixties intertwined with that antiwar movement, becoming two sides of the same coin. Both were presented as the façade of a pluralist and dynamic America that was advancing toward a new balance with the inevitable fractures and distortions that such a process produces.

In the long run, despite occasional setbacks, the strategy of 'showing the good together with the bad' seemed to be effective, because it offered the image abroad of a plural and democratic America which, as Brogi notes, proved culturally more appealing to the Italian left than the Soviet Union. US dissent therefore became one of the channels through which American culture was affirmed in Italy, particularly through youth and left-wing intellectuals, who acted simultaneously as target and vehicle for US propaganda. US public diplomats, for their part, were good in detecting these phenomena and using them to their advantage.

In the short run, however, two of the USIA's declared objectives at the time: generating understanding for US institutions and policies, particularly containing

criticism on the racial struggle and Vietnam, and ensuring retention of the centre-left government in the May 1968 elections, could not be considered to have been adequately achieved.

To hinder achievement of the first goal, a series of dreadful events drastically complicated the job of the USIA. On the night of 30 January 1968, as the administration was trying to convince the American people that the prospect of winning the war seemed finally to be possible, the infamous and unexpected Tet Offensive undermined, once for all, world confidence in America's war effort leading to Johnson's decision not run for a second term. Journalist Ronald Davis recalls that, when looking into LBJ eyes before his announcement he saw:

the unmistakable strain that the burden of office had inflicted upon him. Johnson had achieved his lifelong goal obtaining the Presidency, yet now, in the final months of his term in office, he knew that the legacy that he strove so hard to build had alluded him. The American that Lyndon Johnson had guided through the uncertain time following the events in Dallas was now beset by race riots, anti-war demonstrations and was grieving the loss of over twenty thousand servicemen in Southeast Asian land that few average citizens really understood.⁵⁵³

As writes Jeremi Suri in 'global revolution' 1968 was a moment when 'the entire world shook: Across cultures people of all generations recognized the significance of the moment.'⁵⁵⁴ In Italy, in the first months of 1968 the anti-war movement reached its peak linking itself more strongly to the workers movement.

⁵⁵³ Ronald F. Davis, *Witness for the Republic: Rethinking the Cold War Era* (Denver, 2006), p. 104.

⁵⁵⁴ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Power of Détente* (Cambridge MA, 2002), p. 164.

As confirmation of increased US alarm for the Italian situation, in January 1968 Johnson named as new Italian Ambassador Gardner Ackley, former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and expert in Italian matters thanks to his experiences of study and research in Italy in the fifties with the Fulbright program, and at the beginning of the sixties with a Ford Foundation grant.

At the time of Ackley's arrival, the Rome Embassy prepared a detailed account of the Italian 'anomaly'. The report highlighted the unbalanced development of the country which, along with areas of high sophistication and development, saw areas with standards of living roughly comparable to those in developing world. 'Added to this,' explained the paper, 'is the factor that Italian opinion, within the government and elite circles, as well as in the public at large, tends to ambivalence and a feeling of insecurity.' The report also noted that 'many Italians doubt of American maturity for world leadership, citing Vietnam as an example.'⁵⁵⁵

In such a context, there followed in April the dramatic assassination of Martin Luther King and, only two month later, of Robert Kennedy. These events offered the world an image of America defeated both inside and out. As explains Ronald Davis 'for all those that lived through the events of the early Cold War he alone could rectify all that had transpired at home and abroad since that day in Dallas when everything was suddenly changed. For that multitude of Kennedy

⁵⁵⁵ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

supporters, RFK was the rightful heir to the lost throne.'⁵⁵⁶

Once again, as had happened with the John Kennedy assassination in 1963, the USIA found itself having to combat the image of violence as a structural element of American society. As Edward Bernays, P.R. and advertising guru, noted in 1970:

While. . .the American effort to improve the lot of its largest minority is unique and the progress to date should strengthen the public diplomat's hand. Vietnam is a greater challenge and information efforts must nevertheless continue, but its effectiveness will be limited until the peace returns. Nothing short of a miracle can cushion the shock of American lawlessness on other peoples. There is a universal understanding that society must protect itself against both mobs and criminals, and this American failure to do so is incomprehensible to other nations.⁵⁵⁷

Images of riots, violence, and military personnel armed for battle flooded Italian TV, with black people pouring on to the streets, as if driven by new, unrelenting impulses.⁵⁵⁸ In a letter to all USIS missions right after the death of Dr. King, Marks noted how the tragic death of MLK and the repercussions that followed brought in this wake special problems for the United States abroad:

I have followed the overseas reactions closely and realize the questions and attitudes that your audiences are expressing. I see our task here as an excellent illustration of the role of USIA. We must give a balanced accounting which involves both a debit and an asset side of the ledger. Since what reaches our foreign audience at a time such as this is apt to

⁵⁵⁶ Davis, *Witness for the Republic*, p. 102.

⁵⁵⁷ Edward L. Bernays and Burnet Hershey (eds.), *The Case for Reappraisal of U.S. Overseas Information Policies and Programs* (New York, 1970), pp. 5-6.

⁵⁵⁸ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 95.

be heavily weighted on the negative side, we have a special obligation to present the often overlooked factors that put the situation in full perspective.⁵⁵⁹

He then expressed satisfaction with the way USIA media fulfilled this obligation in the week that followed. 'While in no way minimizing the problems that the US faced in its cities in the days following the death of Dr. King', Mark ended, 'the media made clear that only a very small proportion of Negro Americans were involved in the disorders, that violence was confined to small pockets of large cities, and that the overwhelming majority of Americans, whatever color of their skins, demonstrated their respect for law and order.'⁵⁶⁰

Marks showed a little too much optimism. The message of law and order was not so 'clear' to the public abroad and in the summer of 1968 Italian and world opinion polls registered an alarming drop in the prestige of the United States. In July, the House of Representatives established a sub-committee chaired by Congressman Dante Fascell, charged with carrying out an in-depth study on the state of the USIA. The study resulted in a report 'The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy', which found that USIA activities were sadly lacking, suggesting that the agency needed 'new directions, new dimensions, new duties, and new

⁵⁵⁹ Letter from Marks to all PAO, April 12, 1968, LBJ Library, Paper of Leonard H. Marks, 1964-1967, box 28, Folder PAO Letters.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

emphases'.⁵⁶¹

The only 'propaganda gift' that served to distract, at least for a moment, the attention of world opinion from the United States came from the Soviets. On the night of 20–21 August, Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in reaction to the process of liberalization (the so called Prague Spring) initiated in January by reformist premier Alexander Dubcek. In Italy, such a brutal move was received with great dismay not only by the government, media and public opinion but also within the Communist Party. PCI Secretary General Luigi Longo, in his speech delivered at a meeting of the PCI Central Committee on 27 August, expressed 'grave dissent and disapproval' about the military intervention and declared it 'indispensable and urgent' for the five countries that intervened to accept the request made by Czech government for troop withdrawal in order to avoid a 'serious split in the international communist movement'. He also reaffirmed 'the right of autonomy and sovereignty' of the PCI in opposition to Brezhnev Doctrine about the limited sovereignty of its communist satellites enunciated by the Kremlin to justify the intervention.⁵⁶²

In terms of Communist propaganda, according to a USIA study, 'the voice of world Communism displayed a growing dissonance following the

⁵⁶¹ 'The Future of US Public Diplomacy', Congress, Dante Fascell Chairman. Reprinted in *The Case for Reappraisal*, Bernays and Burnet (eds.), USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 32, NARA.

⁵⁶² Translation from Italian Communist newspaper *l'Unità*: Longo's Report to the Italian Communist Party Central Committee on Czechoslovakia, Aug 28, 1968, NARA, RG 84, Italy US Embassy Rome, Unclassified Central Subject Files, 1964-197, box 4, Folder 1968: PoI. & Def.

Czech coup.’ Developments in Czechoslovakia played in fact a major role in the stepped-up volume and intensity of inter-party polemics. At the close of the quarter major Communist capitals had not even agreed to a common propaganda position on Vietnam peace discussions.⁵⁶³ In Italy, Communist media reaction to the events in revealed how far the drift toward diversity had progressed in the world communist movement. In the first half of 1968, PCI devoted increasing energies to defending national policies and programs continuing their long-standing campaign against US racism and American society, increasingly exploiting the US urban disorders that followed Dr. King assassination.’⁵⁶⁴

The United States, for its part, oscillated between the will to exploit the evidence of Soviet brutality to serve the cause of American propaganda, and the fear that an overly strong public opinion reaction would demand action from the United States, altering the cold war balance and definitively compromising the process of the détente.⁵⁶⁵ The American response was therefore one of calculated moderation, with USIA outputs denouncing the

⁵⁶³ USIA Research Service, Major Propaganda Developments in the Communist World, Quarterly Report, (Feb 1-April 30, 1968), May 31, 1968, NARA, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, Entry P 142, box 34, Folder R-18-48.

⁵⁶⁴ USIA Research Service, Major Propaganda Developments in the Communist World, Quarterly Report, (Feb 1-April 30, 1968), May 31, 1968, NARA, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, Entry P 142, box 34, Folder R-18-48.

⁵⁶⁵ From Am Embassy in Rome, Italian Public Opinion on Czechoslovakia, Sept 18, 1968, Nixon Library, RG 84, Italy, US Embassy Rome, Unclassified Central Subject Files, 1964-1975, Entry P 387, Folder Pol. Czechoslovakia. The poll (which results where unanimously against Soviet move) was commissioned by Italian newspaper *Il Tempo* and it was conducted by the ‘Milan International Centre for Market Research’ (CIRM). The sample was various in terms of age, sex, social class and political persuasions. According to *Il Tempo* it was the first time that CIRM encounters such one-sided results.

invasion but avoiding excessive hype, particularly in Italy, where the harsh reaction of the PCI to the invasion seemed to complete the fault line between the party and Moscow that emerged in 1964 with the Togliatti memorial. The fear of the Johnson administration, expressed in several reports from Ambassador Ackley as well as the CIA, was that the PCI would use the disagreement with Moscow to establish itself as a viable interlocutor of the Socialists and of the DC leftist wing.⁵⁶⁶

This eventuality became even more alarming in the light of the long awaited results of the 19 May 1968 election. These saw remarkable gains scored by the PCI (26.9% as opposed to 25.3% in the previous election); the DC voter remained stable and the reunified Socialists lost nearly a quarter of their electoral support. In giving press guidance to its officers, USIS Rome recommended that emphasis be put on the stability of the centre-left electorate, highlighting the increase (even if small) in votes, and the persistence of a majority in parliament. 'Pessimism will be picked up by the Italian press,' the report stated, 'and make the extreme left even more cocky.'⁵⁶⁷

No matter how the issue was presented, the results marked a setback for the second agency objective of ensuring the continuity of the centre-left government. In fact, the rebuff to the electoral expectations of the Socialists led them to reject a new coalition with the DC. The outcome was an 'all DC' (*monocolore*) minority

⁵⁶⁶ Western Europe, CIA Special Report, 25 Oct, 1968, doc. 144, FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. 12.

⁵⁶⁷ From USIS Rome to State Department, Press guidance on Italian Elections, 19 May 1968 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-69, IT Pol and Defense, box 2235.

government led by Giovanni Leone, a Catholic conservative and member of the DC since 1944. This formula, chosen to give the Socialists some time to regroup, did not last long enough to serve its purpose and in November led to another scission. Due to internal disagreement, it took more than one month for the newly designated Premier, Mariano Rumor, to form a new government, this time with the participation of the Socialists. In the United States, this difficulty in forming a government was interpreted as a further confirmation of the ineptitude of the centre-left in facing a domestic situation that was becoming more and more explosive. On 14 November, the major Italian trade unions proclaimed a national strike against pension reform, while in Turin clashes occurred between police and workers in front of the FIAT factory, the symbol of Italian industrialization.

The year 1968 therefore ended with the United States wracked by continuing violence over race and Vietnam and Italy still searching for the political stability that was a prime goal of American policy and USIA public diplomacy. With the victory of Richard Nixon in November 1968, the recently re-formed centre-left government would find a new interlocutor, different than the two previous Democratic administrations that had seen its birth.

Chapter 7

From Johnson to Nixon: The end of the centre-left and a conservative turn at USIA

From Johnson to Nixon: appearance and reality

Nixon's presidency opened with the promise of an honourable peace in Vietnam, and with the idea, subsequently formulated clearly by his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, former Harvard international relations professor, that the United States faced a new world, different from the immediate post war years. The bipolar confrontation now had to be redefined in a multi-polar world with rising powers such as Germany and Japan. In the new vision of Nixon and Kissinger, the east-west confrontation therefore lost its ideological tone as opposed to a realist response to Soviet interests.

The commitment to finding a solution in Vietnam as rapidly as possible, both to redeem Nixon's campaign and to remove the burden on the American economy and domestic politics, made Southeast Asia the top priority of the new administration. The need to focus United States resources on the Asian theatre left no alternative but to continue the process of détente with the Soviet Union initiated in the previous decade, notwithstanding the brutal repression of the Prague Spring. Nixon and Kissinger's intent was to persuade the Soviet Union, and later communist China, to cooperate in restraining tensions in Vietnam, as well as other third world theatres. To obtain USSR collaboration, the United States

government was able to exploit the willingness to open talks on the strategic arms limitation (SALT), expressed by the Kremlin during the previous administration (linkage policy).⁵⁶⁸ 'What I want to do', explained Nixon at a press conference on 27 January 1969 'is to see that we have strategic arms talks in a way and at a time that will promote, if possible, progress on outstanding political problems at the same time . . . in which the United States and the Soviet Union, acting together, can serve the cause of peace.'⁵⁶⁹

Within this framework of seeking a solution in Vietnam and continuing détente, maintaining the status quo in Western Europe was as vital as during the Johnson years. Nixon's broad goal in Western Europe, therefore, was perfectly aligned with that of the previous administration: supporting internal stability while trying to stem European malaise and intolerance for the perceived lack of attention on the part of the United States. To this end Nixon choose Europe as the destination of his first presidential trip in February 1969, which was highly propagandized by USIA. Among other things, the agency produced a package of fifteen-minute daily videotapes with accounts of the trip for use by European stations.⁵⁷⁰

In explaining his trip to Congress, Nixon said that he was going 'because several basic problems of NATO require(d) immediate attention' and 'past

⁵⁶⁸ See Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography*, (New York, 1992).

⁵⁶⁹ Richard Nixon 'The President's News Conference', January 27, 1969, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1942>.

⁵⁷⁰ USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 37, NARA.

administrations had not paid adequate attention to Europe.⁵⁷¹ In a press conference right before his departure, he stressed his willingness to listen rather than talk, and argued for a greater share of responsibility to be taken by America's European allies. Although already articulated by Johnson, this concept would become a mantra of US-European relations during the Nixon years. 'The future of the countries of the West can no longer be an exclusively American design' Nixon declared. 'It requires the best thought of Europeans and Americans alike.'⁵⁷²

With regard to Italy, the third stop of Nixon's European journey, the need to stem the irritation found in both government and public opinion was felt strongly by the US administration. Besides the widely analysed domestic issue of Vietnam, the most relevant heritage of the Johnson years was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which definitively extinguished Italian nuclear ambitions, and was interpreted by the government as a confirmation of the shift in US international priorities. Prime Minister Moro was frustrated by the way in which the Johnson administration had reached an agreement with Moscow on a sensitive matter concerning Italy, without adequate consultation with the Italian government, in a way that fuelled the PCI's anti-American propaganda.⁵⁷³ Nixon did not fail to notice this irritation, and in his speech to Congress observed the 'need for more

⁵⁷¹ Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant Buchanan to President Nixon, 19 Feb 1969, FRUS 1969-1976, Vol. I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, doc. 12.

⁵⁷² Richard Nixon 'Statement on the Forthcoming Visit to Western Europe', February 6, 1969, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2219>.

⁵⁷³ Sitting in parliament since 1966, the signature of the treaty had to wait until January 28, 1969, when PSI leader Nenni became Foreign Minister and pushed the government to sign. Nenni presented its decision as the contribution of the Socialists to international détente.

consultation in advance' as 'even in negotiating the NPT, the views of Western partners had not been given adequate consideration in the past.'⁵⁷⁴

With his Italian trip, Nixon intended to signal a dramatic shift from the supposed aloofness of the previous administration. 'I realized, before I came to this city, that there had been complaints in the past that there has not been enough consultation by the Government of the United States with your government on matters that involve our future peace and security,' Nixon remarked just before leaving Rome 'Whatever the validity of that complaint may have been in the past, I can assure you that there will be no problem in that respect in the future, because we have established, by this meeting, consultation on all the major issues with which we are concerned . . . (to) be sure that we move together toward our common objectives'.⁵⁷⁵

For the most part, however, Nixon's promises of mutual consultation were no more than a cosmetic move, as they had been during the Johnson years, to assuage Italian thirst for international prestige. As we shall see, the only real improvement was the increased consultation between the US and Italian governments on the Middle East. Otherwise the situation remained unchanged. In his memoirs, Kissinger archly noted how the significance of US governmental visits to Italy

⁵⁷⁴ Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant Buchanan to President Nixon, 19 Feb 1969, FRUS 1969-1976, Vol I., Foundations of Foreign Policy, doc. 12.

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Nixon 'Remarks on Departure from Rome', Feb 28, 1969, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2431>.

ended at the Rome airport, and were useful only to provide photographic proof that Italian leaders were actually consulted.⁵⁷⁶

On the Italian side, Nixon's visit coincided with a new government crisis in Italy. The all-DC cabinet of May 1968, led by Giovanni Leone lasted less than six months. A new centre-left coalition led by Mariano Rumor, with the renewed participation of the Socialists, was painfully constructed at the end of 1968. Meanwhile, student and worker protests grew in intensity. In December 1968, serious incidents occurred between striking farmers and police in Sicily, causing two deaths with several wounded. The occupations of universities and high schools in the main Italian cities that had started in the spring of 1968 spread nationally in the first months of 1969.⁵⁷⁷ At the time of Nixon's visit on 27-28 February 1969 the situation was therefore extremely tense. Between January and February, anti-American protests increased, and there followed clashes between students and neo-fascist movements, exacerbated by the announcement of the President's arrival. Former Ambassador Claire Booth Luce even suggested restraining Nixon in case he would be tempted to stop the car and shake the hands of the crowds.⁵⁷⁸

Indeed, on his arrival the President found a rather different climate from the one he had found in London, Paris and West Berlin. The atmosphere was that of an urban guerrilla war zone. The streets were empty, the police mobilized 12,000

⁵⁷⁶ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, (Boston, 1979), p. 101-102.

⁵⁷⁷ Mauro De Mauro, 'I contadini uccisi ad Avola volevano solo trecento lire in più', *L'Espresso*, 8 Dec 1968.

⁵⁷⁸ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 151.

men, and a large anti-American march was organized in Rome with the participation of members of PCI and PSIUP. The clashes between the police and protestors ended up with more than ten wounded, over three hundred people arrested, and the death of a student. In the midst of the protests, a neo-fascist group attacked the headquarters of the Radical Party (a libertarian, secularist party formed in 1955) displaying a banner of protest against Nixon. The scale of the incidents and the death of the student forced Nixon to cancel his press conference for that evening.⁵⁷⁹

The instability of the recently formed centre-left government seemed even more alarming because Italian communists were beginning to distance themselves from Moscow following the suppression of the Prague Spring in August 1968. The fear among US diplomats was that the PCI would exploit the crisis in Italy to establish itself as a moderate interlocutor from the government. Such fear was aggravated by the growing availability, not only of the Socialists with their leftist wing headed by De Martino invoking greater openness with the Communists, but also of a certain part of the DC headed by Moro with his '*strategia dell'attenzione*' (strategy of the attention). The '*strategia dell'attenzione*', indeed, invited Italian political forces to pay attention to ongoing changes within the Communist Party and to open a channel of dialogue.⁵⁸⁰ At the social level, it offered a chance for rapprochement with the student movement, which had always criticized the

⁵⁷⁹ Author and title not visible, *Paese Sera*, 28 Feb 1969.

⁵⁸⁰ Francesco Malgeri, *Storia della Democrazia cristiana: Dal Centro Sinistra a gli "Anni di Piombo" 1962-1978*, (Roma, 1989), pp. 50-52.

subordination of the PCI to Moscow, as well as with the workers. Ambassador Ackley noted that the critical reaction to the Soviet invasion had temporarily stopped the drain of Socialists from the Communist-led union CGIL.⁵⁸¹

The PCI itself was undergoing internal changes. The traditional democratic centrism that had characterized the party for years was now challenged by the younger leaders, most importantly Enrico Berlinguer, who was more openly critical of Moscow, moderate in foreign policy, and determined to open the party to the student movement, with which up to that time there had been a relationship of mutual distrust. Berlinguer, who was expected to succeed Luigi Longo at the head of the party, was from the beginning an object of great attention on the part of US government officers and media. Right after his designation as vice-secretary of the PCI on February 15, 1969, the *New York Times*, devoted him a long article describing him as a the 'aristocratic communist' taking over from Longo 'more and more responsibility for the day-to-day effort to subvert the Christian Democrat-Socialist coalition and construct a new left majority that would bring Communism to power in Italy'.⁵⁸²

On the eve of Nixon's trip in Italy, although still officially confirming the centre-left as the sole political option in Italy, the new Republican establishment was everything but unified in its support for this formula. Here was an important break from the Johnson years. Kissinger, in particular, showed great scepticism

⁵⁸¹ Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 33

⁵⁸² 'Aristocratic Communist: Enrico Berlinguer', Special to *The New York Times*, Feb 17, 1969, ProQuest NYT, Index p. 16.

towards the centre-left from the beginning. In his view they had not only failed to produce the needed reforms but, as highlighted by the growing internal polarization, favoured the merger of the Socialists and Christian Democrats at the centre, and dangerously isolated leftist and rightist forces, pushing them to radical extremes.

The State Department, led by William Pierce Rogers, who had served as Attorney General during the Eisenhower administration, still supported the centre-left government as the only possible way to maintain stability in Italy. He made this clear when welcoming Nixon's visit.

Prime minister Rumor represents the DC party, Italy's strongest political force and member of every Italian government in the post war period. Rumor is also a firm supporter of the center-left government and has staked his prestige in an effort to get the coalition parties together again. By offering him the courtesy to of a visit here, you would underscore your continuing support for both the DC and the center left coalition. I am convinced that Italy is sufficiently valuable to us to warrant this attention. I believe that the initiative would encourage pro-American forces in Italy at what may be a critical political juncture.⁵⁸³

But the State Department had limited influence on foreign policy. Kissinger was the man to whom Nixon listened and his skepticism about the centre-left would become theme of the new Administration's thinking on Italy. This debate was sharpened by the appointment of Socialist leader Pietro Nenni as Italy's Foreign Minister. It is worth analyzing briefly the main features of Nenni's policy as under

⁵⁸³ Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Files, Country Files, Europe, Folder Italy, Jan 31 69- Jan 70, Vol. I.

his ministry a series of contrasts emerged between American interests and Italian foreign policy choices that did not exist in the years of Johnson.

Nenni and the Italian socialist contribution to détente

The entry of 77 year old Socialist leader Pietro Nenni into the Rumor cabinet as Foreign Minister did not go unnoticed in the United States, triggering what Thomas Hughes of the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research (INR) called 'a spate of superficial and often nonsensical speculation in much of the press.'⁵⁸⁴ The fear was the possibility of an excessive leftward shift in Italian foreign policy. According to the INR analysis, however, Italian faith in the Atlantic Alliance was not at issue.⁵⁸⁵ The American Embassy in Rome was of the same opinion, quoting an interview for liberal newspaper, *La Stampa*, in which Nenni, referring to his previous opposition to NATO, said that what he visualized at that time was a kind of Swedish neutrality or a position of independence between the two blocs. Now he admitted that this would never be militarily or economically possible. The Embassy report also noted that Nenni's change of position was not recent as it had been developed in the mid-fifties.⁵⁸⁶ The desire to find a more independent

⁵⁸⁴ From the Office of Intelligence and Research (Thomas L. Hughes) to the Acting Secretary, The New Italian Center-Left Government –All Aboard!, Dec 13, 1968, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol. & Def., box 2236, Folder IT Pol. 15-1.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ From Am Embassy in Rome to Department of State, Dec 21, 1968, RG 84, Entry P 387, Italy US Embassy Rome, Unclassified Central Subject Files 1964-1975, Pol & Def, box 4, Folder Pol. 6 People Bio.

position with respect to the two blocs, however, was still alive in Nenni's view, and during his time as foreign minister, it found expression in his European policy. INR observed that Nenni's policy was expected to be 'somewhat more European-oriented and détente-directed than has been the case heretofore.'⁵⁸⁷

He surrounded himself with the best and the brightest Italian Europeanists such as Altiero Spinelli and Mario Zagari, who actively supported and promoted the integration process from the outset. They expressed their determination to reinforce the political aspects of the union by, on the one hand pushing for British entry, and on the other hand, through more frequent and effective mechanisms of consultation between the member States. Within the framework of the ongoing international détente, the goal was to build a stronger Europe able to have a greater bargaining power with respect to the United States and Soviet Union.⁵⁸⁸

Nixon, for his part, opted for a much less interventionist approach with regard to encouraging the European integration process than that of previous Democratic administrations. Indeed, according to the new Republican President, Kennedy and Johnson's active endorsement of a more integrated Europe ended up having the opposite effect of alienating France and reinforcing De Gaulle's position calling for a strong, independent Europe, free from American pressure. Nixon therefore, although expressing support for a stronger Europe, made clear that it was up to the individual European member states to engage in that direction. The

⁵⁸⁷ From the Office of Intelligence and Research (Thomas L. Hughes) to the Acting Secretary, The New Italian Center-Left Government –All Aboard!, Dec 13, 1968, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol. & Def., box 2236, Folder IT Pol. 15-1.

⁵⁸⁸ A. Spinelli, *Diario europeo*, p. 540.

United States, Nixon explained, would not meddle in dynamics that only concerned the Europeans.⁵⁸⁹ This softer approach favoured also a rapprochement between the United States and France, particularly when Georges Pompidou took over from De Gaulle as French President in June 1969. During his first meeting with the new French President, Nixon declared his intention to start a new course in the relations between the United States and Europe and therefore, France. 'US policies vis-à-vis France before 1969' said Nixon to Pompidou 'were wrong and disastrous'.⁵⁹⁰

This rapprochement was regarded with alarm in Italy for its potentially disruptive effects on European balance. Since the start of his mandate, therefore, Nenni worked hard to increase and reinforce the opportunity for consultation among members of the European Economic Community. He was particularly active in pushing the issue of British entry to the EEC, which had been downplayed in previous years to avoid a complete rupture with France. Nenni saw the presence of the UK as the only way to counterbalance French strength and achieve a strong and independent Europe, and, as a Socialist he felt a close affinity with Britain's Labour government. Now, in view of the internal turmoil within the recently unified PSU, Nenni sought closer links to British Labour to support the social-democratic stream of the party.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁹ 'La Conferenza Stampa di Nixon', *Relazioni Internazionali*, 15 March 1969, p. 201.

⁵⁹⁰ FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-15, Part 2, 311. Cfr in Luke A. Nichte, *Richard Nixon and Europe: The Reshaping of the Postwar Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 128.

⁵⁹¹ After the preparatory talks, between 22 and 29 April Saragat and Nenni went on an official trip to the United Kingdom where Nenni and British Foreign Minister Stewart signed a declaration of commitment to

American observers of the Italian situation feared that Nenni's search for a European alternative would end up being detrimental to US interests. Such fear was heightened by the new Europeanism shown by the PCI, particularly following the results of the Prague Spring. As Brogi has noted, this Europeanism reflected, at the domestic level, an attempt by the PCI to get parliament recognition, while at the international level, an effort to 'transform detente into a vehicle for European emancipation from both superpowers. With the US isolated in Western European public opinion, it was time,' according to the Italian Communists, 'to turn the European tide against NATO and in favour of true detente and true continental integration.'⁵⁹²

The convergence between Italian Socialist and Communist forces in their aspiration for a European third force worried US officials in Italy. Although according to the Embassy in Rome, Nenni's faith in the Atlantic Alliance was not at issue, there were 'positive indications that many influential Italians [were] suggesting that their country take a more independent "European" line. Such a

strengthening economic and political unity in Europe. Italian hopes for a privileged Anglo-Italian relationship, however, were soon overshadowed by the events of June 1969 when De Gaulle was replaced by Pompidou who finally broke the French government veto of British entry into the EEC. Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 50; 91-91. See also 'Dichiarazione politica anglo-italiana per la costruzione di un Europa unita', *Annuario di Politica Internazionale 1967-1971*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, p. 459.

⁵⁹² In 1969 the PCI became the first among Europe's communist parties to have its deputies appointed at the European parliament. Brogi, *Confronting America*, pp. 261-263.

trend would weaken the Atlantic Alliance and the American political and military position in Europe.’⁵⁹³

This embassy analysis identified the causes of this trend in the apparent rapprochement between US and USSR, which made NATO seem less essential for the security of Italy, given the perceived American lack of interest for Europe, which had been lamented since the mid-sixties.⁵⁹⁴ In this context, Italy increased its attempts to cultivate its own dimension of détente by the end of the decade, along with the French search for greater military autonomy through the *force de frappe* and the victory of Willy Brandt in Germany in October 1969-. Nenni, in particular, was determined to promote a strong Socialist contribution to international détente. In public speeches, he often referred to a ‘détente process that must not be limited to superpowers.’ A staunch advocate of disarmament measures, he opened his mandate as foreign minister with the ratification of the NPT on 28 January 1969.⁵⁹⁵

Despite Nenni’s determination in signing the treaty, as previously mentioned, the perception of the NPT among Italians remained that it was an agreement negotiated by the two superpowers sacrificing their allies. Well aware of these sentiments, Nixon, in response to the welcome remarks by the President of the Italian Republic, Saragat, on his arrival in Rome on 27 February, reaffirmed the

⁵⁹³ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Nenni Speech on Policy, June 13, 1969, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol & Def, box 2236, Folder IT. Pol. 15-1.

importance for the United States of consultation with its allies before making any steps toward détente. 'We shall be having discussions with the Soviet Union. But before we have such discussions with the other side we will have discussions and consultations with our allies on this side. . . Italy is playing a vital and constructive role in world affairs. That is why I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to have the wise counsel of your leaders.'⁵⁹⁶

In the framework of Nenni's search for greater autonomy for Italy in the international field, the most controversial issues, as testified to by the great number of reports and studies produced by the American Embassy and the State Department, were the recognition of the government of North Vietnam in Hanoi and the government of Communist China in Beijing. The two issues could not be considered separately. The possibility that Hanoi would be recognized by an ally of the United States and member of the Atlantic Alliance was, for obvious reasons, considered unthinkable by the US administration given the international situation at that time. Indeed, after the Swedish government's decision to re-establish diplomatic relations with the North Vietnam, the US Senate discussed the idea of breaking diplomatic relations with Sweden. Italy, as a non-neutral country, could only imagine the impact of such a decision on its own relationship with the United States.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Richard Nixon: 'Remarks on Arrival at the Airport in Rome', February 27, 1969, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2249>.

⁵⁹⁷ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 141.

In order, therefore, to contain the pressure to recognize Hanoi from the leftist stream of his party, Nenni pushed harder for the recognition of China. Given the internal tensions within the Socialist Party since its reunification in 1966, playing the 'Chinese card' was way for Nenni to find a compromise with the leftist faction led by Lombardi, and to approach anew that part of the electorate which had voted PCI in past elections without being hard-core communists. As Valerio Bosco noted, the idea of opening diplomatic relations with China did not appeal only to the left in Italy. Liberal newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, publicly endorsed Nenni's initiative with an editorial in January 1969 entitled 'Thaw in Beijing and Italy between the Two Chinas.'⁵⁹⁸

The Italian initiative for recognising Communist China came in fact during a period of rethinking within US administration of its relationship with Beijing. For Nixon and Kissinger there were issues of substance and timing. With the ongoing Paris negotiation for peace in Vietnam, the United States could not admit the entrance of Communist China within the United Nations at the expense of Taiwan Republic, an ally of the United States and anti-communist bastion in Asia. At Nenni's announcement of Italy's intention to proceed with China recognition, Nixon's response was therefore measured. After expressing his awareness that 'several countries – including primarily Italy among the major countries – have indicated an interest in changing their policy and possibly voting to admit

⁵⁹⁸ A. Cavallari, 'Disgelo a Pechino e L'Italia tra le due Cine', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 25 Jan, 1969, cfr. also in Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 53. On Nenni's China Policy see also G. Tamburrano, *Pietro Nenni*, (Rome, 1986), p. 350.

Communist China to the United Nations', the President stated firmly that United States policy 'at this time will be to continue to oppose Communist China's to the United Nations'. He then went on explaining the reasons, identifying above all the fact that 'Communist China continues to call for expelling the Republic of China from the United Nations. Until some changes occur on their side I see no immediate prospect of any change in our policy.'⁵⁹⁹ Nenni, for his part, persisted despite US opposition and proceeded to open relations with Beijing before the arrival of Nixon in Italy in February, in order to confront the US government with a *fait accompli*.

600

Another topic of discussion between the United States and Italian governments at the time of Nixon trip to Italy was the growing instability in the Middle East. The situation had now acquired even greater relevance in the eyes of the Americans, given the presence of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean as a result of the Six-Day War. Indeed, along with the friendship with Egypt and Syria, the nationalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-western Libyan revolution of August 1969 offered a further occasion for the Kremlin to expand its influence in the area. Through a vast propaganda campaign, Soviet media sought to convince world public opinion that Moscow had the 'right to a naval presence in the Mediterranean by virtue of being a Black Sea power.'⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Richard Nixon: 'The President's News Conference', January 27, 1969, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1942>.

⁶⁰⁰ Pietro Nenni, *I conti con la storia. Diari 1967-1971*, (Milan, 1983), p. 273.

⁶⁰¹ USIA Research Service, Communist Propaganda- Developments and Themes, Quarterly Report, (Nov-Dec, 1968), Feb 7, 1969, NARA, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, Entry P 142, box 34, Folder R-18-48.

Containing Soviet expansion in the area was therefore perceived as a top priority in Washington. Doing so required the strengthening of the southern flank of NATO (Spain, Greece and Italy). During 1969, therefore, Italy was seen more and more in the larger context of US Mediterranean strategy. This was made clear in a 1970 NSC report noting how 'Italian problems are largely internal, but are importantly affected by international events . . . Italian domestic situation can only be resolved in the context of a broader evolution in Europe as well as in the Mediterranean.' Conversely, Italian internal stability was paramount for implementing a coordinated response in the Middle East.⁶⁰²

The Italian government, for its part, was anxious to be recognised with the status of a Mediterranean power, as emerged in the meetings that Nixon held with Prime Minister Rumor and President Saragat during his trip. The first thing that Rumor asked Nixon was for greater consultation between the two countries on the matter. The INR report suggested that the President pander to the Italian 'Mare Nostrum Syndrome', as its extensive cultural and commercial ties to the area were now relevant to maintain western control of the area. The meeting was not without consequences. Italian From that time, as he recalled later, Ortona, the Italian

⁶⁰² From Martin Hillenbrand to Kissinger, US Policy on Italy and the North Mediterranean, Mar 30, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Institutional Files, Study Memorandums 1969-74, Box H-169 Folder NSSM 88, n. 4.

Ambassador in Washington, he was invited to the State Department on a weekly basis to exchange information and views on developments in the Middle East.⁶⁰³

By the summer of 1969, however, the most serious crisis of the centre-left so far, following the split of the recently reunified Socialist Party on 4 July, forced the United States to turn their attention to Italian domestic politics. This forced the new US administration into a reassessment of policy towards Italy between July and December 1969.⁶⁰⁴ At the same time, the structure of US public diplomacy was undergoing a process of redefinition.

Frank Shakespeare's USIA: putting 'the soft liners in a hell of a box!'

The inauguration of Richard Nixon coincided not only with the end of US backing for the centre-left formula in Italy and a gradual shift to the right of the political spectrum, but also with major change within the USIA. This serves as another marker for measuring the story of the Johnson era.

The main indicator of this change within USIA was the choice of Frank Shakespeare as the agency's new director. A former CBS executive who had served as a media adviser to the Nixon presidential campaign, he was also 'the first USIA chief to wear his political ideology prominently on his sleeve, displaying a deeply

⁶⁰³ Report from Thomas Hughes (INR) to Department of State, Italy Policy Toward the Middle East, Feb 14, 1969, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol & Def, box 2237; Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 166.

⁶⁰⁴ 'Center-Left Pact Pressed in Italy: But New Cabinet Is Likely to Have Different Makeup', Jul 13, 1969; *New York Times*, ProQuest NYT, Index p. 17.

conservative bent, with a dark view of the communist menace that anticipated Ronald Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as an evil empire by a decade.'⁶⁰⁵ *The Washington Evening Star* in July 1969 drew a humorous profile of the new director using his own quotes. 'Shakespeare's conception on communists: Everybody conceives them as humanitarians, like us. And it's simply not true. They're murderers. His view on coexistence: I don't think any such thing is possible. You can't coexist with men who are trying to enslave you. All that's happened in 20 years is that Americans have allowed themselves to be deceived by leftist elements in the press.'⁶⁰⁶ Mr Nixon was 'so taken with his sensitivity, his judgment, and his detachment', the article ended sarcastically, 'that he appointed him director of the USIA.'⁶⁰⁷

According to *Time* magazine, Shakespeare had 'little tolerance for negative thinking'; 'distressed by the apparent defeatism of his seasoned staffers' and 'trying to do something about it'. he wanted to 'remold USIA as a hard-sell exponent of US policies' and correct what he said had been for too long a 'liberal tilt to the agency's efforts.' Shakespeare, said *Time*, 'spent much time visiting USIA branches, where his tunnel-vision partisanship caused some friction, especially since many of the 10,000 members of USIA are liberal Democrats left from the previous administration. A widely respected information officer in one communist

⁶⁰⁵ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, pp. 108-109

⁶⁰⁶ Watching the Red Tide in Vienna, *Washington Evening Star*, 16 July 1969, p. A-22 USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 37, NARA.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

country was replaced for being too much the scholarly type and not enough the activist type. Shakespeare wanted gung-ho Kiwanis boosters in communist countries.⁶⁰⁸ Here is a reminder of the highly political colouration of the agency's work: a shift from one administration to another, especially if each was highly ideological in nature, could have large implications.

Joe McGinniss, in his book, *The Selling of the President 1968*, reported that Shakespeare, when told of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, exulted: 'What a break! This Czech thing is just perfect. It puts the soft liners in a hell of a box!' Kenneth Towery, a Pulitzer-prize winning conservative editor chosen as Shakespeare's assistant, when asked what USIA's role was with regard to the communists declared, 'I want to beat 'em down!'⁶⁰⁹

Along with Shakespeare, Nixon surrounded himself with figures such as Theodore Weintal of *Newsweek*, a former Polish diplomat and 'quintessential cold warrior', and William F. Buckley Jr., 'the guru of American mainstream conservatism'.⁶¹⁰ Nixon also appointed his campaign speech writer, William F. Gavin, as Assistant Director for Public Information.⁶¹¹ By contrast, as vice-director, Nixon and Shakespeare reached back to Henry Loomis, 'the experienced yet idealistic ex-director of the VOA; who had quit in 1965 amid a disagreement over

⁶⁰⁸ "Thinking Positive at USIA", *Time*, 5 Dec 1969, p. 40, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 37; Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968*, (New York, 1969).

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*, p. 438; Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, p. 108.

⁶¹¹ USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 37; 'Thinking Positive at USIA', *Time*, Dec 5, 1969, p. 40, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 37.

the balance of comment in American broadcasts overseas.' Loomis was perhaps the only hard-core liberal selected by Shakespeare in view of his longstanding experience within the USIA.⁶¹²

Shakespeare quickly directed his attention to the ratio of liberal and conservative books in USIS libraries. He complained that most of the books were written by people like Galbraith and Schlesinger, and expressed his determination that USIA libraries should be 'ideologically balanced on the liberal and conservative sides'. Another conservative hired by Shakespeare was his friend, James Burnham, editor of the conservative magazine, *National Review*, who commissioned a report on the USIA book program. After analyzing over 10,000 titles listed in the agency's catalogue for overseas use, according to the *New York Times*, Burnham reached the conclusion that 'modern conservative writers (such as himself) were conspicuously underrepresented, and that the absence of conservative writers and books meant that an entire dimension of contemporary American life, a dimension which had been increasing in size, quality, and influence during the past decade, was virtually left out'. In addition to himself and Buckley, other under-represented writers including N. Stanton Evans, John Chamberlain and Whittaker Chambers, later famous for the Alger Hiss affair.⁶¹³

Turning his attention from libraries to television, Shakespeare told the annual conference of the Radio-Television News Directors Association in Detroit in

⁶¹² (Author and title not visible), *Baltimore Sun*, 16 March 1968, p. 12, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, NARA, RG 306, USIA Historical Collection, Box 37.

⁶¹³ *The New York Times*, Dec 8, 1969, p. 2, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 31, NARA.

September 1969 that, 'reporters and commentators entering television leaned to an excessively liberal point of view.' As examples, he pointed to 'critical broadcasts on the conduct of the Vietnam War and of Nixon's speeches' and he went as far as to suggest that a network might consider, 'a man's ideology before hiring him as a newsman.'⁶¹⁴

As his first step, in contrast with the noise of *The March*, Shakespeare's USIA answered with *The Silent Majority*. This fifteen-minute documentary framed Nixon's well known 3 November speech on the Vietnam war 'with contrasting images of political protest on one side, and ordinary decent Americans (including Nixon himself) on the other. . . Scenes included an interview with pollster George Gallup detailing evidence of public support for Nixon's policy.' Whereas Johnson's USIA had begun to project the contrasting, variegated and noisy world of American dissent, Nixon seemed willing to take it back to the quiet of consensus.⁶¹⁵

Former USIA Director Rowan, commented in the *Washington Post* that 'the advent of the Nixon administration and the USIA's new director Shakespeare, a former TV executive, a friend of the President and a self-declared political conservative, had added a new dimension to the agency's dilemma as to whether the information agency should speak to the world as the voice of the US or the

⁶¹⁴ 'USIA Chief Sees Ideology as Factor in TV Jobs', *The New York Times*, 23 Nov 1969, p. 47, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, NARA, RG 306, Historical Collection, Box 31; *The New York Times*, 14 Nov, 69, p. 25. USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 31, NARA.

⁶¹⁵ David Welch (ed.), *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age*, (London, 2012).

voice of the Nixon administration.’⁶¹⁶ This dilemma had, of course, already been present throughout the Johnson administration: LBJ was also accused of having chosen a close friend as the agency’s Director, of being intolerant of criticism, and of using the USIA as his own Press Office. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, in view of increasing protests, the agency began to discuss internal dissent more often, even if it also presented the situation with a ‘corrected’ viewpoint. *The Silent Majority* was therefore perceived by many as a sharp turn in the opposite direction. The movie, celebrating the ‘silent majority’ while deriding the ‘vocal minority’ of antiwar protest, seemed a major shift of target for the agency’s propaganda from youth and the new-left to the middle class. This new target group had become alarmed with the chaos and lawlessness which seemed to grip America, particularly after the killings of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

All of these changes took place within the context of USIA opinion polls which showed a dramatic drop in the prestige of the United States of America in public opinion abroad. This was certainly true of Italy. At the time of Nixon’s election, the Rome Embassy reported a ‘growing scepticism’ about American maturity for world leadership, citing Vietnam as an example. ‘They fail to appreciate America’s responsibilities as a world power, and they often express

⁶¹⁶ C. Rowan, ‘The Silent Majority Movie’, *Washington Post*, 30 Nov 69, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1975, RG 306, General Records of the USIA, Historical Collection, Box 37, NARA.

doubt that America will keep its European commitments in view of its involvement in Asia'.⁶¹⁷

The USIA's work in Italy was not, however, seriously affected by the budget cuts that the agency sustained during Shakespeare's first year. To simplify the selection process and in line with his more 'hard selling propaganda style', Shakespeare wanted to hire USIA officers from outside the foreign service, particularly in the media and advertising world.⁶¹⁸ But Italy, according to the State Department Bureau of European Affairs, remained along with Germany and France, one of the top priorities of the USIA program in Europe. 'Because of factors unique to Italy', the Bureau stated, 'the USIS program is crucial for the accomplishment of US foreign policy in this country'. Besides Rome, branch posts were therefore retained in Milan, Naples and Palermo while four senior Italian employees were assigned to field operations as Public Affairs Assistants in Trieste, Turin, Genoa and Florence Consulates.⁶¹⁹

During the first year since Nixon inauguration, USIA's priorities in Italy were similar to that it had over the first year of the Johnson administration: managing the transition from one president to the other and countering the impression of

⁶¹⁷ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3.

⁶¹⁸ Reduction of USIA Staff, Sep 30, 1969, White House Central Files, Subject Files, FG 230 United States Information Agency, Box 1, Folder 10/1/69 – 12/31/69.

⁶¹⁹ Briefing Book for the New Ambassador to Italy Gardner Ackley, Jan 1968, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of the Western European Affairs, Records Relating to Italy and Switzerland 1946-1972, Italy Briefing Book, Box, 13 Folder 1 of 3

lawlessness left by the killing of Martin Luther King and Bob Kennedy, and more generally, by the growing internal protests.

With regard to Italian political situation, instead, the dramatic change of attitude compared to the previous administration with regard to the centre-left formula was clear from the beginning of the Nixon presidency. If during the first year of Johnson's tenure USIA priority was to reassure Italian government officials and public opinion of the new administration support for the newborn centre-left, on which the US government at the time placed great expectations, the agency now operated in a context of strong internal polarization and disillusionment on the part of Nixon and Kissinger with the centre-left government.

Going back to the first objective of managing the transition from one administration to the other, although there was not a myth of Johnson to counter as had happened with Kennedy -on the contrary he ended his mandate severely weakened- introducing Nixon to the Italians it was not an easy task. Controversial character and unpopular among the new left and intellectual circles, his election was perceived in Italy as a victory of the right, ending up exacerbating the already highly polarized political situation.

Nixon: a triumph of the right?

Presenting Nixon to the Italians was an even more challenging job for the USIA than presenting Johnson had been. To complicate matters further Nixon was not particularly photogenic and did not look good on television with his 'grim and sour look', which he tried to improve by using makeup and face creams.⁶²⁰ What concerned the agency the most, however, was that in order to project the image of someone to a foreign audience, it is necessary to be clear on what that image was. Yet to grasp Nixon's character was a near impossible job, even for an American audience. Obsessed with his image, cold, rational and manipulative to the extreme, Nixon acted as his own spin doctor. As Jay Parini wrote in his review of David Greenberg's book on Nixon's image, 'The age of spin began in earnest when Richard Nixon sat in a television studio in New York on the evening of September 23, 1952, explaining to the largest audience ever assembled to hear a political speech that he was not a crook' (words he would use more explicitly in 1973 when referring to his role in Watergate and other scandals).⁶²¹

Greenberg describes a politician who throughout his long career had managed to constantly change and readapt his image, coming to mean many different things to many different publics. Different and even competing images of

⁶²⁰ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 103.

⁶²¹ 'Jay Parini, King of Spin', *The Guardian*, Oct 4, 2003, on-line version consulted on June 6, 2015.

Nixon existed in the minds of American people, to an extent probably unknown to any other president, due to Nixon's tinkering with his own image.⁶²²

The ambiguities of Nixon's character did not escape the notice of Italians. As Ortona noted, interpreting the view of many, 'Nixon is difficult to decipher: a political animal, watchful, plagued by insecurity; characterized by an excess of calculation and excess of caution. You cannot deny his experience, nor his imagination, intelligence, or manipulative skills. But he is absolutely unable to communicate warmth. He can only express cautious prudence'. These qualities are not particularly appealing to the Italian public.⁶²³

This made the USIA's job very difficult. The lack of available documents does not allow us to reconstruct the image of Nixon that the agency presented to the Italians. The only source available currently is a documentary produced in eight languages and dispatched to 112 countries including Italy. According to an *Evening Star* article from December 1968, Nixon is cast in the film as kind of a Horatio Alger character, climbing from a modest economic background to the highest office in the land. Portrayed while working hand in hand with the beloved Ike (Eisenhower) and later running for the Presidency, Nixon is described as 'an intellectual introvert not unlike president Wilson.'⁶²⁴

Reactions to the new President varied, of course, depending on political background. In December 1968, the editor of the fascist newspaper, *'Il Secolo'*,

⁶²² David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*, (New York, 2004).

⁶²³ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, pp. 102-103.

⁶²⁴ *The Evening Star*, Dec 9, 1968, NARA, RG 306, Subject files, motion pic 1946-66 White House Central Files, Subject Files, FG 230 United States Information Agency – Box 1, Folder 1/23/69 – 6/26/69.

indicated the newspaper's active endorsement of Nixon's candidacy for the Presidency, while the weekly satirical newspaper, *Il Picchio Verde*, later emblematically dubbed Nixon's re-election in 1972 as 'A triumph of the right'.⁶²⁵ Nixon was also well liked in Vatican circles, which appreciated his push toward the return to law and order and his appeal to the 'Silent Majority' which they saw as relevant also in Italy, badly shaken by protests. Nixon, for his part, was looking for support from the Church to sustain the DC and a return to moderation in Italy that he wished for. A number of Italian Catholics, later found to be involved with Italian Masonry, established relations with the White House. Among these was Archbishop Agostino Casaroli who expressed appreciation for Nixon's efforts to 'keep the Vatican informed on his major foreign policy initiatives'. In addition to the upper echelons of the Church, Nixon was also well-liked by Catholics in general. A letter from Elisabetta Pacelli Rossignani, sister of the Pope, expressed her contentment with Nixon's election, noting how it was 'extremely well received by Italians Catholics, many of which were involved in his campaign.' In an article titled 'Richard's Myth', Italian newspaper, *Momento Sera*, described the appreciation of his message of order and strength among middle class Italians of the centre-right who were tired of the protests, and which identified themselves with the silent majority which Nixon was championing in the United States.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ *Il Picchio Verde* was a right-wing weekly satirical newspaper directed by MSI congressman Orazio Santagati. The article was written on the occasion of Nixon re-election in 1972. Orazio Santagati, 'Nixon: Una Vittoria di Destra', *Il Picchio Verde*, 19 Nov 1972.

⁶²⁶ Along with Casaroli, entertaining correspondence with Nixon were also Cardinal-designate Luigi Raimondi (Apostolic Delegate to the US from 1969 to 1973) and Reverend Frank Gigliotti (a controversial

We can therefore see that the image of Nixon as a strong, solid president aiming to bring peace to Vietnam and restore domestic order was very much appreciated by parts of the Catholic middle class which leaned towards the centre-right in Italy. As for the rest of the public opinion, particularly the new left, Nixon remained either a mystery man or a sinister conservative.

Several initial choices he made did not help his image in Italy. The most important of these was the selection of Spiro Agnew, 'a mediocre unknown in the eyes of the Italians' as Vice President instead of the Italian-American John A. Volpe, who was widely believed to be the party's favourite candidate.⁶²⁷ In the attempt to make Agnew more familiar and likeable to the public, Shakespeare tasked the USIA film division to produce a short movie on Vice President Agnew. The film was directed by Bruce Herschensohn, a staunch Republican and author of a renowned USIA film on Kennedy, who was appointed by Shakespeare as the director of the agency's Motion Picture and Television Service. The fifteen-minute profile of Agnew, narrated by John Wayne and sent to all USIS posts abroad (Italy included), presented the Vice President 'as forthright and a foe of racial discrimination.'⁶²⁸ There is no indication in the documents of how it was received by the Italian

character who was a minister of the Presbyterian Church, a senior official of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), a member of the Garibaldi Lodge of New York and an agent of US intelligence, first with OSS and later the CIA where he was in charge of Italian affairs). Telegram from President's Special Assistant (Peter Flanagan) to Nixon, Nov, 1969; Letter from Reverend Gigliotti to the President, Oct 22, 1969 Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files (WHCF), Subject Files, Country File, Italy, Box 41.

⁶²⁷ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 102.

⁶²⁸ K. Osgood; B. C. Etheridge, *The United States and Public Diplomacy*, p. 275.

public, but the Italian press remained quite cold in its comments on the Vice President for the entire duration of his time in office.

Another wrong move in terms of gaining the support of Italian public opinion was the decision to replace Ambassador Ackley, a great connoisseur of Italian politics and culture and popular at both the official and public opinion levels, with Richard Martin, former Ambassador in Saigon and one of Nixon's right-hand men. Unknown to everyone in Italy and with no link to the country whatsoever, Martin did not even speak Italian and his excessive cautiousness and lack of transparency were disliked by both politicians and the public at large. Moro defined him the least 'likable of all Italian ambassadors so far' and the PCI asked for a parliamentary inquiry to investigate why Ackley had been replaced by him. One leftist newspaper launched a media campaign openly deploring such a conservative choice.⁶²⁹

USIA officers realised immediately that Nixon's promise to restore peace to Vietnam, was definitely key to winning over a larger part of the public opinion in Italy and elsewhere. At the beginning of October 1969 Nixon ordered a 'propaganda offensive. . . constantly repeating what the US had done in offering peace in Vietnam. . . Frank Shakespeare should be running this very, very strongly at USIA and, of course, we should continue to try to get it across in the columns to the extent that we have any influence in that direction.'⁶³⁰

⁶²⁹ Ortona, *Anni d'America*, p. 188.

⁶³⁰ From Nixon to Kissinger, Oct 1, 1969, White House Central Files, Subject Files, FG 230 United States Information Agency, Box 1, Folder 10/1/69 – 12/31/69.

But the effectiveness of USIA's Vietnam propaganda during the first year of the Nixon administration was limited by a reduction in USIA's policy making role. Despite Shakespeare being a trusted friend of Nixon, as was the case with Marks and Johnson, under his tenure the USIA did not reach the same level of integration within US foreign policy making structure as it had during the two previous administrations. Kissinger responded negatively to Shakespeare's request to attend NSC meetings, saying, 'I have carefully considered the question of attendance at the NSC meetings and have concluded that if I am to be able to use this forum effectively, I must limit the regular attendance to the statutory members of the Council. Frank Shakespeare will be invited to all meetings in which matters of particular concern to USIA are under discussion'.⁶³¹ Shakespeare, therefore, as noted by historian Nicholas Cull, 'found himself directing the USIA with less access to the decision-making process than any of his predecessors.' By cutting him out of NSC meetings in a moment in which the NSC, more than any other time in American history, had a crucial role in shaping government foreign policy, Kissinger ended the agency's 'hard-won policy and advisory role. . . The Nixon White House looked at the USIA as a general might to a faithful artillery unit, to deliver a consistent barrage in support of the broad objectives of US foreign policy, while Kissinger and Nixon swept around the battlefield like plumed hussars'⁶³²

⁶³¹ Memo From the President to Shakespeare, Feb 20, 1969, White House Central Files, Subject Files, FG 230 United States Information Agency, Box 1, Folder 1/23/69 – 6/26/69.

⁶³² Cull, *The Cold War and the USIA*, p. 294.

This lack of integration of the agency within the foreign policy making process limited its effectiveness in promulgating Nixon's most important goal, to end the Vietnam War. The Agency, says Cull, 'found itself alternately projecting news of successive peace initiatives and picking up the pieces as Nixon's latest military gambit spilled over into what world opinion considered unpardonable excess.' He was referring to the administration attempts to keep secret the bombing in Cambodia, which started in March 1969. 'Seeking to conceal the action from world opinion, briefing officers worked under orders to confirm that raids took place near the border and, if journalists pressed questions, to claim that any violation of the border would be investigated. The full story soon leaked out' and it was a serious blow in the face of foreign public opinion.⁶³³ The PR mess over Cambodia added to the USIA's problems in selling Nixon to Italian opinion.

The end of US support for the center-left formula

The most significant shift in US policy towards Italy in 1969 was to be found in attitudes towards the Italian left. The resignation of the Rumor, centre-left government in the summer of 1969 was read by centre-left sceptics such as Kissinger and Nixon as confirmation of the polarizing effect of such a formula on the Italian political system. Far from neutralizing the Communists through a

⁶³³ Ibid., p. 307.

program of reforms, the centre-left had strengthened the PCI by allowing it a monopoly on the opposition while at the same time weakening the Socialists, and thus heightening polarization between the DC and the Communists. The parallel softening of the Communist Party positions both in foreign and domestic policy, the increasing cooperation between Communists and Socialists at the level of local government in several regions, and the signs of opening coming from some leaders of the DC such as Moro were interpreted by a number of observers, both in Washington and Italy, as a dangerous reprise of the process that brought the Socialists into the government starting at the end of the fifties.⁶³⁴ As a consequence of the new government crisis, a quick INR study of 7 July envisioned either a turn to the centre-right, or the long heralded DC-Communist dialogue.⁶³⁵

The new administration's strong preference for the first option was evident in Martin's appointment as Ambassador. A fervent anti-communist, Martin was determined to use any means, open and clandestine, to avoid a PCI approach to the government. The choice of Martin reflected the belief of Nixon and particularly Kissinger that it was time to put an end to the centre-left experiment which had deprived the Italian political system of the necessary flexibility. They believed that this inflexibility led the system to radicalise, and offered the Communists a means

⁶³⁴ Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 305.

⁶³⁵ From INR (Thomas Huges) to the Secretary, Italy: Somber Prospects for Stability and Reform, July 7, 1969, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol. & Def., box 2236, Folder IT Pol. 15-1.

of approaching the government through the collaboration at the local and trade union levels.⁶³⁶

As investigative journalist, Giancarlo Gatti, noted in his inquiry into the Nixon years in Italy, 'the love affair between the Socialists and the US administration was over'. A strong opponent of the opening to the left, and with scarce knowledge of Italian politics and culture, particularly compared to Ackeley, Martin's main *raison d'être* was to keep the forces of the left (the Socialists, and more obviously the Communists) away from the government, favouring the return of the centrist formula of the 1950s. 'Rather than an ambassador, he had the characteristics of a warrior,' writes Gatti after a round of interviews with former embassy and CIA officers. 'His philosophy of *divide and impera* fuelled resentment among embassy employees. He never called for group meetings, but would summon staff one at a time so that others would not know what they had spoken about. He always spoke in a very low voice, so as to force his audience to make enormous efforts to lean toward him with their heads and with their minds'.⁶³⁷

This created a disconnect between Martin, who followed Kissinger line, and the staffs of the American Embassy in Rome, the USIS, and the State Department, which still saw the centre-left as the one and only way to maintain stability in Italy. Commenting on Rumor's decision to form an all-DC cabinet, the INR noted that the decision was designed, as had happened after the May 1968 elections, 'to give the

⁶³⁶ Memo for the President, Appointment of Graham Martin as Ambassador to Italy, Oct 2, 1969, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Files, Country Files, Europe, Folder Italy, Jan 31 69- Jan 70, Vol. I.

⁶³⁷ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, p. 83.

bitterly divided socialist parties some additional time to heal their recent wounds' before another effort could be made to bring them back into a new centre-left coalition government. 'No sooner was Rumor's minority cabinet launched in August 1969', continued the report, 'than Italian wags immediately tagged it a 'seaside government' (*monocolore balneare*) with the cynical implication that it would last just long enough to allow Italian politicians a quiet August at the beach.' In the meantime, the *monocolore*, according its own and everybody else's diagnosis, was a terminal case'⁶³⁸

Unlike the Johnson administration, when the State Department, through Ambassador Reinhardt first and then Ackley, provided a clear line to the USIS officers in the field, which in turn had an advisory role for the US government, with the advent of Kissinger, under which the NSC gained greater influence in the development of US foreign policy at the expense of the State Department, and particularly with Martin's appointment, such clear sense of direction was lost. In addition, less emphasis was given to open propaganda operations, as Martin was much more interested in restoring covert operations. The divergence views between the new Ambassador, Nixon and Kissinger, on the one side, and the State Department, on the other, induced the new Republican establishment to find alternative channels to bring about their 'moderate turn' in Italy. Martin established frequent consultations with a series of characters that began

⁶³⁸ From the Office of Intelligence and Research to The Secretary of State, Italy: Government's Life Expectancy Improves, Oct 1, 1969, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Pol. & Def., box 2236, Folder IT Pol. 15-1.

gravitating around the American Embassy in Rome. Among these were Paul Marcinkus, an American, Roman Catholic archbishop and Secretary of the Roman Curia, Tom Biamonte, the FBI liaison officer at the Embassy, and Vito Miceli, the Chief of the Military Intelligence Service (SID), who was linked to the network of the subversive right in Italy.⁶³⁹

Two key figures with direct contact, not only with the American Embassy, but also with the White House, were Michele Sindona and Pierfrancesco Talenti. A Sicilian banker linked to the DC, the Vatican and the Mafia, Sindona gained control of a small bank in Milan, *La Banca Privata Finanziaria* in the early sixties. Two clients of the bank were the *Istituto Opere Religiose* (IOR), headed by Marcinkus, and the Continental Illinois National Bank, directed by David Kennedy, a friend of Marcinkus and Nixon's Treasury Secretary starting in January 1969. Sindona therefore had direct links to the White House.⁶⁴⁰

Another influential relationship was with Pier Talenti, an Italian businessman with American citizenship coming from a family of well-known builders (an entire neighbourhood in Rome carries their name), who supported the Nixon presidential campaign in Italy in 1968. A fervent anti-communist, he had a preferential channel of communication with the Nixon for the entire duration of the Presidency,

⁶³⁹ Miceli was arrested in 1974 for 'conspiracy against the state' during the investigation about the *Rosa dei Venti*, a clandestine group supposedly involved in the bombings and coup d'état plans known as the 'strategy of tension' (*strategia della tensione*) that characterized the period between 1969 and 1974. According to the report of the Pike Committee, established in 1975 by the US Congress to investigate illegal CIA activities, Kissinger had commissioned the CIA to allocate \$11 million to support right-wing forces, individuals, organizations and political parties, ahead of the next elections. Within this plan, Gen. Miceli was allocated \$800,000. CIA, *The Pike Report*, Spokesman Books for the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1977, pp. 194-195; Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, p. 85; Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 223.

⁶⁴⁰ Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, pp. 85-87.

illustrated by an intense exchange of correspondence in which Talenti continually warned Nixon about the risk of a Communist takeover in Italy. Later he was accused, without conclusive evidence, of being involved in the preparatory phase of the failed *coup d'état* allegedly planned for the night of 7 or 8 December 1970 by former fascist general Junio Valerio Borghese.⁶⁴¹

Describing himself as an 'American businessman residing in Italy, who can read loud and clear the Machiavellian Italian mind', Talenti acted as the liaison between the White House and the American Embassy by virtue of his direct channel to Nixon during the short period between Ackeley and Martin. On the occasion of the government crisis in the summer of 1969, Talenti sent Nixon an alarmist note on the possibility of a Communist takeover, and the deleterious effects this would have not only for Italy, but also for American prestige worldwide:

Italy is in its most dangerous political crisis. . . The poor Italian people today are on the verge of losing the freedom and good living for which they worked so hard. The immediate danger of a legal and overt takeover by the communists automatically creates the possibility of a violent takeover from the right. But a middle of the road democratic solution might still be possible if action is taken immediately by giving confidence and strengthening the many anti-communist leaders in the center parties who are looking to you for guidance. . . When Italy has gone communist what will happen to America's prestige worldwide, our American defense position in the Mediterranean and Europe, and the very large American business investment in Italy? *I hate to think that under your*

⁶⁴¹ Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, pp. 218, 223, 227, 231; Nixon Presidential Materials Project, Folders 3/1/71 to 1/172, Nixon Library, WHCF, Subject Files, Country File, Italy, Box 41, Folder 7/1/69 – 12/31/69.

*presidency for the first time in history a country like Italy could go communist by legal democratic process.*⁶⁴²

In his reply, Nixon expressed his 'personal concern for the future of democratic government in Italy', reassuring Talenti that he was keeping 'in very close touch with political developments in Italy, and that his administration was 'keenly aware of the problems and dangers cited in the letter.'⁶⁴³

What all these people around Nixon had in common was a fervent anti-communism and a substantial aversion for the centre-left, which was seen as a point of entrance for the PCI to the government. All they wanted was American support, financial and in terms of influence, to ensure the permanent exclusion of the Communists from the government, and facilitate a turn towards the center-right. They found in Martin and in the new Republican administration, a much more responsive interlocutor than the previous Democratic ones.

By the fall of 1969, the situation in Italy began to seriously deteriorate with a revival of both the student and labour agitations from every field of public life. The *Washington Post*, in an article titled 'Italy's Regime is under Attack', observed: 'striking metalworkers at Turin's FIAT factory throwing stones though windows, blocking trams and slashing tires and buses. Bank employees striking in Milan',

⁶⁴² Letter from Talenti to Nixon, July 19, 1969, Nixon Library, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files (WHCF), Subject Files, Country File, Italy, Box 41.

⁶⁴³ Letter from Nixon to Talenti, 14 Nov 1969 Nixon Library, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files (WHCF), Subject Files, Country File, Italy, Box 41.

while the 'nation's 40 or so newspapers were to be shut down by a strike.'⁶⁴⁴ The worst season of Italian protest, known as '*autunno caldo*' (hot autumn) had begun. The peak was reached with a general strike called for 17 November by the big three Italian labor unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL). Regarded as the most devastating nationwide mobilization in more than 20 years, 10 million workers stopped working for 24 hours to support demands for better public and private housing programs for low income families. The last minute government effort to pass with a wide-ranging housing bill failed to placate the protests. Italians were tired of 'weak and fragmentary attempts to confront a reality which required an entirely new policy'.⁶⁴⁵

The gulf between the people and their institutions seemed now unbridgeable, and it was clear that the Rumor government did not have the necessary strength to contain a situation that had now become explosive. It was as if all the structural problems that Italian governments had not addressed in the course of the decade had now come home to roost. Washington's main fear was that Italian Communists would exploit the protests to further destabilize the government and plunge the country into chaos.⁶⁴⁶ Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a foreign policy expert chosen by Kissinger to serve on the National Security Council staff, went even further by envisioning a forthcoming participation of the Communists in the government. 'We

⁶⁴⁴ Patrick O'Keefe, 'Italy's Regime Is Under Attack As Strike Disorders Grow', Nov 22 1969, *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, p. A8
Teachers On Strike In Italy, Dec 10 1969, *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, p. A23.

⁶⁴⁵ '1Day General Strike Brings Italy to a Halt', Nov 19, 1969, *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: p. C5.

⁶⁴⁶ Bosco, *L'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 138

need to think about the concrete possibility of Communists entering the Italian government one of these days' he warned. 'We must also consider what, if anything, we can do to prevent the contingency.'⁶⁴⁷

Kissinger, a keen observer of the Italian situation, although strongly adverse to any possible entry of the Communists into the government, was convinced that PCI participation was not something that would occur soon, but was an issue to face more in the medium-long run.⁶⁴⁸ Even leaving aside the Communists, the general feeling among US observers of Italy, including the media, USIS, State Department, and NSC, was that of a growing radicalization of the conflict both on the left and the right sides of the political spectrum, with the infiltration of the far left extra-parliamentary within the protests, as well as the growing violent actions by neo-fascist groups. Final confirmation that the situation had gotten out of hand came with the tragic terrorist attack of 12 December in Milan and Rome. Known as the 'Piazza Fontana Massacre' (*Strage di Piazza Fontana*), a bomb exploded at the headquarters of the National Agrarian Bank in Fontana Square causing 17 deaths and 88 wounded. The same afternoon, three more bombs were detonated in Rome and Milan, and another was found unexploded. 'Coming after three months of

⁶⁴⁷ Memo for Kissinger from Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Sep 15, 1969, Nixon Library, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Files, Country Files, Europe, Folder Italy, Jan 31 69- Jan 70, Vol. I.

⁶⁴⁸ In October 1969, Kissinger decided to form an Investigation Committee with members of the State Department and the National Security Council, to explore the consequences of a possible PCI entry into the government. As Bosco noted, although the committee report is still classified, Kissinger's decision to open an investigation confirms the relevance of the issue to the United States administration. Bosco, *l'Amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia*, p. 126.

mounting violence and social unrest, the explosions cast a blight of gloom over the entire country.’⁶⁴⁹

While the initial shock at what was unanimously perceived as a threat to democracy in the strongest terms seemed to revitalize the centre-left, leading to the first meeting of the main coalition parties since the government collapse in July, to Washington that was the ultimate proof that the centre-left formula had outlived its usefulness in Italy. Washington, for its part, with the conviction that the DC-Socialist collaboration was on its last legs, began studying other available alternatives.⁶⁵⁰

Between December 1969 and January 1970, the future of the Italian political system was the object of an in depth study by the NSC. Although the analysis of the Italian situation –highlighting the contrast between Italy’s rapid economic growth and its inadequate State structures- did not differ much from many other reports and studies written during the Johnson years, there were few relevant differences in the proposed approach to ‘influence developments in Italy in a positive direction.’ The NSC, along with a ‘softer option’, more similar to the one adopted by the previous administration, contemplated an ‘interventionist approach’ seeking to ‘reverse the drift to the left in Italian politics’ and bringing Italy back to the centrist formula of the 1950s.⁶⁵¹ The interventionist approach would involve,

⁶⁴⁹ ‘Italy Pushes Hunt for Bomb Killers’, Dec 16, 1969, *New York Times*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index p. 8.

⁶⁵⁰ ‘New Coalition Urged in Italy’, Dec 20, 1969, *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, p. A11.

⁶⁵¹ The softer approach involved a course of action which entailed maintaining the ‘psychological underpinning provided by US military presence’ (avoiding therefore further cuts to the already small force of 10,000 men), consulting publicly with the Italians on a broad range of international issues and intensifying

along with traditional diplomacy and coordination with the Church, supporting the DC and resuming 'covert assistance' to centre and centre-right forces, which had been interrupted by the end of the Johnson administration. The strongest advocate of the interventionist approach was Ambassador Martin, who saw in covert assistance the only way to bring about a moderate turn in Italy and prevent the left from entering the government.⁶⁵²

The sixties ended therefore with the transition between two profoundly different administrations of Johnson and Nixon, and with the traumatic bombing of December 1969 in Italy marking the peak of the hot autumn of protests and of the internal political polarization, and leading to a change in US policy towards Italy. Although during the first year of Nixon administration (which is the time period relevant for this analysis) the United States opted for a softer approach, involving the traditional instruments of state and public diplomacy, the hardline option still lurked in the wings. Ambassador Martin, increasingly impatient with the lack of resources to support the 'anti-communist forces' in Italy, presented Washington with increasingly alarmist scenarios and eventually decided to act regardless of the State Department. In a memorandum for Kissinger, Alexander M. Haig (Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs) noted, 'Graham Martin is very anxious to talk to you about our future policies in Italy, especially in the

the frequency of high level visits. Memo from Martin Hillenbrand to Kissinger, US Policy on Italy and the North Mediterranean, Mar 30, 1970, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Institutional Files, Study Memorandums 1969-74, Box H-169 Folder NSSM 88, n. 4, pp. 8-12.

⁶⁵² Memorandum for Kissinger from Gen. Alexander Haig, Nov 6 1970, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, NSC Files, Country Files, Europe, Folder Italy, Feb 70 – Jan 71, Vol. II.

covert area. . . He is also very frustrated by the reception his ideas have received in State, in that he feels we are on the verge of a second Chile in the Mediterranean and that some positive action now will preclude the debacle we are wrestling with in Latin America'.⁶⁵³

Like Martin, Nixon seemed not to disdain a right wing option. In a memo to Kissinger written a few weeks after the bombing, White House Staff Assistant, John Brown, recalled submitting to the President an article by Crosby Noyes, a journalist for the *Washington Star*, which lamented that 'while there [was] a good deal of talk about a Communist take-over in Italy, there was actually a 'far greater threat from the right', citing the 'strength of the neo-Fascist group' as a 'significant symptom.' On reading the article, wrote Brown, 'President Nixon noted that they [the neo-Fascists] could be the *lesser of two evils* and cautioned *not to let the State department push us left to avoid the right.*'⁶⁵⁴ Nothing of the sort could have been written by either Kennedy or Johnson. Here, at the very top, we can glimpse the profound effect of the change of administration on US policy towards Italy.

The end of the Johnson administration can be seen as the end of an era both for US-Italian relations and for US public diplomacy. It marked the definitive

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Memo for Kissinger from John R. Brown, Jan 20, 1970, Crosby Noyes's article in the *Washington Star* was written on Jan 8, 1970, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, White House Central Files (WHCF), Subject Files, Country File, Italy, Box 41, Folder 1/1/70 – 7/31/70 (*italic added*).

fading of the centre-left orthodoxy which had guided US policy towards Italy since the beginning of the decade. The expectation of reforms and modernization that had inspired the centre-left during the Kennedy years and, although resized, had persisted during Johnson's tenure, completely lost force with Nixon and Kissinger. The growing social unrest and the increasing polarization of the internal political situation, were seen by the republican administration as a consequence of the inability of the centre-left formula to secure stability and implement the needed reforms to meet social demands. Moreover, by merging Socialist and Christian-Democrats in one coalition, it had deprived the system of the necessary flexibility, left to the Communists the monopoly of the opposition and strengthen the extremes. The solution was a return to centrism, or if necessary, an opening to the right, as long as the Communists stayed out of the government.

Avoiding the entry of the Communists into the government sphere therefore monopolized most of the attention of the US government during the first year of Nixon's presidency. Despite the broader dynamics of the Cold War and the ongoing detente between USSR and the US, the Nixon administration was not ready for a corresponding easing of the DC-PCI tensions inside Italy, and efforts in Italy were increasingly directed at preventing possible Communist participation in government. As noted by Geir Lundestad, Kissinger, who 'had opposed even the 1963 opening to the Socialists, was adamant. He rejected the analogy to détente. To him there was a crucial difference between managing a conflict with

adversaries and including representatives of the adversary in an alliance of democracies.’⁶⁵⁵

In terms of public diplomacy, at a moment in time when the new American left had become extremely attractive to young Italians, Nixon’s election seemed to bring a sharp reversal to the liberal trend that had characterized the USIA and its staff since its creation in 1953. This was reinforced by the conservative turn championed by Shakespeare as the USIA’s new director, involving a hard-sell of the United States and US policies, instead of the late-Johnson era practice with regard to Italy of showing American dissent and appealing to the New Left. Yet overall, the role of the USIA was upstaged by not being granted a seat at the NSC which, under Nixon and Kissinger, overrode the State Department as the core of foreign policy elaboration, thus depriving the agency of both its advisory function and the possibility of acting on timely on news such as the bombing of Cambodia.

In Italy in particular, the situation was complicated by the appointment of Martin as ambassador. As the USIS offices were located at the Rome Embassy and at the various consulates in Florence, Milan, Naples and Palermo, the USIS staff had a direct relationship with the Ambassador who was in charge of providing guidelines for USIS action. Martin had little contact with either the embassy staff or USIS officials, and tended towards secrecy and conspiracy, preferring covert operations to open propaganda. In combination, Nixon, Shakespeare and Martin encapsulate the shift in 1969 away from the verities of the Johnson era.

⁶⁵⁵ Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe: From Empire by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 189.

Conclusion

To conclude, US-Italian relations during the Johnson administration are worthy of exploration, both from the point of view of American policy as well as public diplomacy. It was indeed a period of dramatic changes and transition for both countries, which saw the incubation of a number of process which would come of age in the next decade.

While America's internal consensus broke down at all levels, bringing to the surface the contradictions and fractures of the widely propagandised *American dream*, Italy swiftly shifted from a prevalently agricultural to an industrialised society with all the social and cultural consequences that such a dramatic and rapid change entails. On top of this turbulence of two societies in motion was added the escalation of the war in Vietnam, which acted as a catalyst for social, political and cultural discontent in both the United States and Italy. Ultimately, growing budget constraints and international détente forced a change in US priorities.

Yet, despite the fact that there was a progressive shift in USIA resources towards the newly decolonized countries, which further intensified by 1965, Italy remained the second largest program in Western Europe for the entire duration of the Johnson administration. The strong USIA presence in the country was a result of the constant uncertainty that characterized the Italian political scene. Besides the Communist threat, a key issue was the fragility of democratic mechanisms in

Italy and the growing divisions within the government coalition itself which, combined with the increasing social restlessness, caused great concern in Washington, particularly in view of the 1968 elections. While this condition of constant instability, which beset Italy from the beginning of the post war years, kept US propaganda objectives substantially unchanged since the creation of the USIA in 1953, what changed during the Johnson years were the conditions in which the agency operated.

First of all, the centre-left government, considered a cornerstone of US-Italian relations throughout the Kennedy administration, progressively lost its original momentum during the Johnson years, soon proving to be unable to cope with its dual task of modernizing Italy while curbing Communist influence. Indeed, industrialization and economic development did not lead to the marginalization of the Italian Communist Party. In fact, the inequality generated the disorderly and rapid economic boom, combined with the government inability to adequate the country's structures to the newly achieved level of industrialization, helped the PCI to become more mainstream. This growing consensus was helped also by a process internal change which characterized the party increasingly by the mid sixties, progressively distancing itself from Soviet orthodoxy and shifting toward more moderate positions on domestic and foreign policy. This proved extremely dangerous for US propaganda, showing that communism was not only resilient but could be moderate and innovative. During the Johnson years, therefore, the

path that would eventually lead to Euro-communism in the seventies began to emerge through the progressive rapprochement of the PCI with the Italian government.

This trend proved threatening for US policy particularly in view of growing social frustration. Increasingly by the mid sixties, student movement merged with the workers to a degree unknown to the other western democracies, including France, which taken with the increasing political polarization of the period, all led to the 'season of terrorism' that would characterize the next decade.

This evident disarticulation between Italian economic and political as well as social development undermined the accepted liberal economic view that had guided US propaganda in Italy since the years of the Marshall Plan, premised on communism being a consequence of poverty and social unrest. This new understanding forced USIA officers into an internal debate on the underlying assumption of the agency's current operations. This debate took place within the framework of a general rethinking of the public diplomacy strategy of the USIA in Europe as a whole. Growing US budget constraints, combined with the flourishing of local media, raised the issue of whether it made sense to keep such an extensive propaganda apparatus in Europe. In Italy, the decision was not only made to maintain it, but after the first round of budget cuts at the agency which lasted until 1966, the budget was further increased, taking into account the importance of the

imminent 1968 elections. This additional budget represented yet another recognition of Italy's sensitivity in Washington's Cold War design.

Italy's relationship with the United States during the Johnson years, must be understood within the framework of the growing détente between the latter and the Soviet Union, which also had inevitable impact on US public diplomacy. If the progressive relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers initially made it seem that American propaganda in Western Europe was less vital, its consequences in Europe rendered it even more necessary. It produced two opposite effects. First, by removing the main glue that held the Atlantic Alliance together: fear, generated a process of centrifugal thrusts among the allies. Second, it fuelled the apprehension that the US, in its enthusiasm for détente, would be led to settle US -Soviet differences at the expense of Western Europe. The proposed plan for the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty, a major stamp of Johnson's foreign policy, was seen in Italy as a further confirmation of this fear. This situation pushed the Italian government to begin searching for its own version of détente, by seeking to expand its market in Eastern Europe and intensifying official visits there starting in 1964. Moreover, given the country's aforementioned permeability to the international context, it had inevitable repercussions for the PCI , whose new and more moderate domestic strategy could be seen as paralleling the relaxation of international tensions, thus gaining a new vitality from détente.

An additional concern for Washington was the sharp contrast in Italy between government activism along the traditional lines of reinforcing

transatlantic and European policy, and the minimal public awareness with regard to European integration and the role of NATO. USIA therefore invested a large amount of resources in counteracting this trend, based on the conviction that scarce public support could lead to a weakening of Italian government commitments for issues crucial to the survival of the western bloc. Agency officers advised the Johnson administration to exaggerate the importance attributed to Italy in the Euro-Atlantic framework, through purely cosmetic actions, such as allowing Italian leaders highly publicized time with the President. This strategy was seen as a useful tool to quench the Italian thirst for international prestige, while counteracting the disenchantment at perceived lack of attention by the United States. The USIA, therefore, served United States government policy by bridging the gap between the overt Europeanism and Atlanticism of the Italian government and the substantial indifference of the Italian people, while seeking to boost Italian support for the centre-left government by valorizing its international role.

In terms of the more general US public diplomacy objective of 'telling America's story to the Italians', US propagandists, particularly by the second half of the sixties, found themselves confronted with the issue of how to portray a dynamic society in transition to another society that was also in flux. In order to present to an increasingly restless audience, issues that the United States itself had not yet figured out, a more nuanced and flexible approach was needed. This issue brings us back to the research questions raised at the beginning of this

dissertation, to which we can now attempt to give an answer.

To what extent has there been a continuity in US public diplomacy strategy across presidential administrations, and particularly between the fifties and the sixties? How much was that change in strategy part of a coherent effort dictated from the top, and how much, instead, depended on the interaction among officials in the field and local actors? Ultimately, connected to the latter, is the issue of the multidimensionality of the 'Americanisation' process in Italy.

Brogi, in his thorough analysis of US overt and covert propaganda efforts to weaken the French and Italian Communist parties during the Cold War, identifies two distinct changes in US strategy toward Italy. The first occurred in the mid-fifties when 'after the failure of the economic/reformist approach of the early post-war years as well as of the aggressive repression of the first half of the 1950s,' the Eisenhower administration 'learned to project a more sophisticated image of itself'.⁶⁵⁶ The second came in 1961, with the advent of the Kennedy administration. Mistry and Nuti argue instead that changes in US political warfare strategy were not as sharp as Brogi describes them, but were more the result of inputs from the field and of 'protracted diplomatic and bureaucratic wrangling rather than the implementation of a coherent strategy decided from above.'⁶⁵⁷

With regard to public diplomacy, my analysis of USIA documents provides a middle ground between the two theses. It is true that by 1955 there

⁶⁵⁶ Brogi, *Confronting America*, 178-79.

⁶⁵⁷ H Diplo Roundtable Review, Vol. XIII, No. 16, p. 3.

is a distinct change in the agency's outputs towards a greater sophistication. Such change occurred both parallel to and as a consequence of a shift in the target of USIA propaganda from the mass of workers to Italian leaders, intellectuals, and more generally what the agency's officers referred to as 'Public Opinion Molders'. The new emphasis on the intellectuals required an elevation of the tone of its outputs in order to meet a more sophisticated audience. It is also true, however, that this shift in target was not solicited from the top, nor was it as sharp as Brogi describes it. Rather, it happened gradually, and was the result of pressures from the field. As analysed in this research, since 1953 USIS officers from various posts in Italy had been sending reports to the agency's headquarters in Washington and to the State Department lamenting the ineffectiveness of the strategy of appealing directly to the masses in Italy, and calling for a sharp curtailment in direct mass communications operations in Italy. These observations were then upheld by the Embassy in Rome, and found staunch supporters in both the new ambassador, Claire Booth Luce, and in Eisenhower's Special Advisor, C.D. Jackson.

With regard to the 1960s strategy's shift, in commenting on Brogi's work, Nuti argues that there is little evidence that the Kennedy, and later the Johnson administrations, 'willingly displayed greater flexibility' in dealing with the Communists, and generally with the situation of political, economic and social

instability that characterized Italy in that period.⁶⁵⁸ For what concerns the USIA, my analysis actually reveals a distinct shift in USIA strategy towards a greater flexibility. Indeed, not only had the US public diplomacy strategy in Italy in the sixties changed, but also the shift, far from being the consequence of a series of confused attempts and bureaucratic wrangling, was actually part of a planned broader change in the USIA's strategy in Western Europe, stemming from both a changing domestic and international environment and budget constraints widely analysed throughout this dissertation. Mass propaganda campaigns were curtailed and activities became even more selective with greater emphasis on reaching smaller but more influential target groups. The content of propaganda as well, shifted from a more self-celebrating, hard-selling tone to a greater emphasis on justifying and contextualizing US policies that were criticized abroad.

Areas of particular concern that emerged were civil rights and women's issues, as well as the more positive campaigns to present the Great Society and the Apollo project to the Italian public. Even in the latter two cases, the US propaganda message evolved from a more self-congratulatory tone to presenting them as achievements for all mankind.

With regard to Vietnam, an evolution in the agency's strategy is even more evident both in terms of content and target. My analysis shows that Vietnam represented a watershed not only in the perception of the United States by the

⁶⁵⁸ H Diplo Roundtable Review, Vol. XIII, No. 16, p. 15.

Italian public, but also in the way in which Washington communicated and projected itself to the Italian left and particularly to its new, rising element, the student movement. By the end of 1967 the US strategy moved from one aimed at downplaying news of the war and minimizing US internal anti-war protests to one where American propagandists began 'riding the wave' of Italian New Left attraction for American internal dissent, presenting the United States warts and all.

This shift was also linked to the much greater interdependence between propaganda and American government policy as a consequence of the communication revolution worldwide, which occurred in stark contrast to the fifties, when it was easier for the agency to select the kind of information to project to its foreign audiences. To use a metaphor of Dick Arndt, who served as a USIA officer for more than thirty years, during the fifties the USIA was often acting as a showcase, by seeking to reveal only those facts which placed the U.S. in a good light whereas now it had no choice but to act as a mirror. Whenever it tried to avoid this function, it was immediately accused of falling into a 'credibility gap.' This situation was particularly true in Italy, where widely-read leftist newspapers such as *l'Unità*, and *l'Avanti* never missed a chance to expose, often with exaggeration, any American policy or action that would embarrass the US government and open up it up to criticism.

Indeed, the aforementioned increasing development and sophistication of the local media led to dramatic change in USIA information strategy. US public diplomats had to shift from providing finished material to the local

media, to cooperating with them by providing background information useful to 'balance' sensitive news. Personal contacts between USIA officers in the field and editors of newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa* and *Il Messaggero* were therefore crucial to ensure access. Moreover, with the increasing spread of the television, the agency's contacts with RAI were also important, particularly through the close relationship between officers in the field and the director of RAI, Ettore Bernabei, as well as renowned journalists such as Mike Buongiorno and Pietro Forcella. Whether looking at television, radio, or newspapers, however, it can be stated that the Italian media never engaged in passive reception, but rather actively readapted American ideas for an Italian audience.

The way in which RAI and Italian newspapers filtered the US message before conveying it to the Italian public highlighted another crucial issue: the multidimensionality of the so-called Americanization process. This pattern was even more evident in the relationship with Italian intellectuals, particularly on the left wing. This dissertation has shown how a number of factors including the ineffectiveness in targeting the masses directly, growing budget cuts, and the aforementioned gap between economic and cultural development, made Italian intellectuals an increasingly primary target for US propaganda. This strategy allowed the agency to focus its resources on reaching a smaller group that, in view of its influence, could carry the American message to the wider public with greater effectiveness than if it

carried a US government label. In addition, the members of this group had a key role in furthering a cultural legitimization of the American model of capitalism through the positions taken in their magazines, books or academic writings, and their personal contacts with various levels of Italian society.

Indeed, the process of dialogue between the USIA and these Italian intellectuals was everything but unidirectional. On the contrary, by the mid-sixties, it was increasingly the Italian intellectuals themselves who showed their willingness to act as channels and mediators. They were motivated partly by a fascination with American modernity and its culture of dissent, and partly by a desire not to lose their privileged role within Italian society, which they felt was threatened by the rapid changes and social unrest.

In general, this dissertation has moved beyond the existing historiography which has not paid enough attention to the crucial role played by liberal and left-wing intellectuals, not only in encouraging a pragmatic reformist path in Italy both at the political and cultural levels, but also in infiltrating and modifying the Italian Communist Party from within. This left-wing network of pro-American intellectuals had two main implications for Italy. The first and more direct was to help spread and translate American values and vision in Italy by making them more 'digestible' to the people. The second consequence, less direct, was the longer-term infiltration of liberal ideas within the Italian Marxist left. The fervent anti-communism of these intellectuals, which was demonized in Italy in the fifties and early sixties, was in fact progressively assimilated by the PCI, to the point that

elements of this critique were used to build its new identity. Self-reinvention was perceived as necessary for the PCI because, with the widespread affirmation of consumerism, the party was losing its grip on the Italian people.

American propagandists, for their part, understood the symbiotic relation between intellectuals, culture and politics in Italy, and encouraged those influential figures who shared American vision of progress and society to communicate that message to the larger population. Unlike Britain, France and Germany, where civil society had already reached an advanced stage of development, intellectuals in Italy often acted as a substitute for the public sphere, a sort of pre-modern condition in which they were perceived as mediators between the masses and political reality. This explains why the main target of USIA propaganda shifted from the general public to the intellectuals slightly earlier in Italy than in other Western European countries.

Crucial, therefore, was the role of US officers in the field in shaping such strategies, often suggesting from below the direction to be taken. This was due partly to improvisation and lack of a clear direction which characterized US political warfare strategy and therefore public diplomacy in those years, and partly due to the delicate nature of operations dealing with influencing opinions and behaviour. By the nature of their jobs, which put them in daily contact with the local population, including government officials, journalists academics, students, and workers, US public and cultural diplomats were often

a step ahead of Washington in understanding and interpreting the current public opinion trends and perceptions.

My research, therefore, fits into the strand of historiography which challenges traditional assumptions of top-down policymaking, showing how this is shaped by a complex network of interactions between mid-level American officers and local figures. More importantly, it highlights the bilateral dimension of public diplomacy, where the understanding of US officers is actually shaped and influenced by these interactions as they seek to influence their interlocutors.

The great unresolved issue, as anticipated in the introduction, remains the question of reception, that is the difficulty of understanding how the foreign audience received American propaganda and whether it was effective. In Italy, as widely analysed in this dissertation, there is no doubt that liberal, progressive magazines such as *Il Mulino*, *Mondo Occidentale* and *Tempo Presente*, chairs in American history and literature in Italian universities, and the academic writings of Americanists such as Spini, Calamandrei, and Portelli all had a crucial role in telling America's story and conveying the US conception of modernization to the Italian public. The same is true for Hollywood movies, books of renowned US writers translated in Italian, student academic exchanges, concerts, exhibits, and certain TV shows adapted for the Italian audience. In all those outputs, the USIA had a role. It might be that without its involvement, the same number of magazines, courses in American

history, exhibits, book translations, and other media outputs would have been generated in Italy. However, the agency did contribute in several ways to facilitate this wide range of outputs and activities. They did so directly through producing them, as was the case with *Mondo Occidentale*, documentaries, and several other media outputs. They did so indirectly through offering funding and support to Italian initiatives, as was the case with *Il Mulino* and the program of translation of American books. And finally, they did so by giving the impulse and economic stimulus as was the case with the American Study Project, the creation of the John Hopkins University in Bologna, and with academic exchanges, concerts and exhibits.

Also in terms of Italian media outputs, although Italian liberal newspapers as well as RAI had their own agenda and did not passively accepted USIA inputs, this dissertation shows that there was a lively exchange of views and material between the agency's officers and the newspaper and local television staff. The relationship between the USIA and Italian editors, academics, intellectuals and more generally, opinion leaders did, therefore, have a role in helping spread American ideas to the Italian public.

The dramatic increase in the complexity of events in the mid-sixties, combined with the ubiquity of modern media, surpassed the ability of propaganda to divert Italian public opinion from events such as Vietnam and internal protests. As a counterbalance, however, the attraction of the Italian people for the American culture of dissent became, itself, a factor of influence.

As Brogi clearly analyses in his work, spontaneous diplomacy worked better than official channels as the outbreak of the civil right protests and the anti-war movement enhanced people's interest in America, showing abroad the dynamism of a changing society. At the same time, however, as highlighted by the USIA's Vietnam campaign, US public diplomacy drew new life through capitalizing on the attraction of the Italian public to US dissent.

Judging from the analysis of the first year of the Nixon administration (discussed in the final chapter), it would appear that this process had undergone a trend reversal. However, there were some surprises. Given the growing interdependence between policy and public diplomacy, it is possible that the perception of policies such as triangular diplomacy, and the end of the Vietnam War as a 'liberal' enterprise would overshadow Nixon's rhetoric in the eyes of Italian public opinion. As the European correspondent for the *Toledo Blade* noted:

If it is true that the USIA is thinking of leaning away from liberalism toward conservatism in the wording of the American message abroad, chances are that the costumers at the receiving end will not notice the change. . . . In international communications, very many things are relative, among them the meaning of liberalism and conservatism: Europeans came to pin a conservative label on president Johnson simply because they identified him with escalation in Vietnam. Others may now think President Nixon a liberal because he favors east-west negotiations and brings back fighting men. It would be difficult for European liberals to detect a liberal imbalance in the message of USIA in a given area. If the government policies reflected in the messages are perceived as liberal –as they were in the

Roosevelt era and seemed to be in the Kennedy days- then the message is too.⁶⁵⁹

This discrepancy between America's self-perception and the way in which America was perceived abroad, it is an interesting subject for further research in the field of public diplomacy. Particularly in the ensuing decade, the 1970s, when following the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, the United States experienced what President Jimmy Carter defined as a deep 'crisis of confidence'.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁹ 'USIA under the GOP. America's Message to the World: A Liberal-Conservative Balance?', *The Toledo Blade*, 8 Feb 1970, pp. 1-2. NARA, Historical Collection, USIA News Clippings, Murray Lawson History Card Files Series, 1953-1973.

⁶⁶⁰ On US self-perception crisis and the role of Public Diplomacy see Notaker, H., Scott Smith, G., Snyder, D., (eds.) *Reasserting America in the 1970s U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad*, (Manchester, 2016).

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