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Original scientific article**THE ROLE OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST
IN THE POLITICAL PROCESSES IN ITALY AND EUROPE (1945-1978)**Luka FILIPOVIC¹Institut za savremenu istoriju – Beograd,
Trg Nikole Pašića 11, 11.000 Beograd-Srbija
e-mail: filipovic.luka95@gmail.com**ABSTRACT:**

In three decades following the end of Second World War, Italian Communist Party managed to achieve and retain the position of the second most popular party in Italy, the most politically powerful party of Italian opposition, and, according to many contemporary analysts, the unprecedented influence on the Italian society, that hasn't been rivaled by any other political party in Italian history. At the same time, adoption of the new party ideology of Italian communist became the role model for the historical evolution of party ideologies of all other Marxist parties in the Mediterranean, which, coupled with the process of ever increasing prestige of Italian party among the European Marxists, made Italian Communist Party one of the most globally influential parties in both the „socialist world“ and countries of the Western Pact. This paper strives to summarize the social and political circumstances that led to the rapid rise of domestic and international influence of Italian Communist Party. In order to provide explanations to only few of the many factors that influenced the development of complex social and historical phenomenon that contributed to the previously stated outcome of many efforts made by Italian communists to increase their prestige abroad and their social status

¹ Luka Filipovic (1995), Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu završio je 2018. godine, masterirao 2019. godine, kada je upisao i doktorske studije sa temom „Evrokomunizam i Jugoslavija (1968-1980)“. Od 2019. godine zaposlen je kao istraživač pripravnik Instituta za savremenu istoriju u Beogradu, a 2021. godine ispunio je uslove za izbor u zvanje istraživača saradnika. Bavio se istraživanjem u oblastima istorije Jugoslavije, marksističkih partija Evrope, neoliberalizma, radničkih štrajkova i političkih sukoba u savremenoj Evropi. Na osnovu dosadašnjih istraživanja navedenih tema, objavio je više naučnih radova.

in Italy, this article will use contemporary historical sources as well as later studies from the fields of history, sociology and Marxist literature.

KEY WORDS: *Italian Communist Party, Second World War, Welfare state, democratic socialism, Eurocommunism.*

SAŽETAK:

Tokom više od tri decenije dugog perioda između završnih faza Drugog svetskog rata u Italiji i početka neoliberalnih reformi političke i društvene stvarnosti u državama Zapadne Evrope, Komunistička partija Italije uspjela je da dostigne zenit svoje političke moći, ali i uticaja na italijansko društvo. Istovremeno, usvajanje nove partijske ideologije italijanske partije, koja je na XII Kongresu KPI definisana kao demokratski socijalizam da bi dobnije bila označena kao evrokomunizam, uticala je na promene partijskih ideologija drugih marksističkih partija mediteranskih zemalja, koje su po uzoru na reforme partijskih politika italijanskih komunista izgradile svoje evrokomunističke modele. Ovaj pregledni rad će se baviti analizom razvoja društvenih i istorijskih okolnosti koje su pogodovale usponu političkog i društvenog uticaja italijanskih komunista, kao i različitih politika italijanske partije koje su bile usvojene sa ciljem da doprinesu zbližavanju italijanskih komunista sa drugim političkim partijama u Italiji, ali i sa drugim marksističkim partijama u zemljama Mediterana. Kako bi se lakše sagledali samo neki od mnogobrojnih faktora koji su uticali na istorijski razvoj društvene i političke uloge Komunističke partije Italije, podaci dobijeni analizom primarnih izvora iz Arhiva Jugoslavije upoređivaće se sa zaključcima kasnijih istraživanja iz oblasti istorije i sociologije.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *Komunistička Partija Italije, Drugi svetski rat, država blagostanja, demokratski socijalizam, evrokomunizam.*

***Antifascist movement and unification of the Italian far left
The rise of political and social influence of Italian Communist Party***

The constant struggle between the far right and far left ideologies, conducted in streets and battlefields as often as in the institutional and political arenas, was one of the defining features of social reality in Mediterranean states from the late XIX century until the neoliberalism became the dominant global ideology in the eighties (Hooper, 1993:8-25). Cycles during which the rise of far-right parties in popularity and political power provoked the rise of far-left parties in the same terms and *vice versa* repeated itself for more than a hundred years in nearly every country on the European shores of Mediterranean Sea (Mitrović, 2004: 69-89). From the political turmoil that followed the unification of Italy in 1871, until the end of so called years of lead (*anni di piombo*) in 1989, Italy was considered by many contemporaries to be the „European archetype“ for both violent and institutionalized clashes of far right and far left political parties. And, while Italian social and cultural trends influenced the rest of the South European countries, organizational structure and political practice of Italian fascists and communist became a role model for many far right and far left parties in Mediterranean (Adinolfi, 2012:607-621).

The turning point in historical evolution of ideologies represented by Marxist parties in Southern Europe came after the begging of an era latter known as the „*time of far right dictatorships in the Mediterranean*“ (Azzellini, 2009:1832-1864), which lasted from the early twenties until late seventies. Economic crises of mostly agricultural countries in South Europe was possibly made even worse by the „national fears“ that caused almost desperate attempts by the Mediterranean governments to modernize the means of production in order to keep up with the industrialized North, which at the same time created new social classes of „urban poor“ and proletariat with such syndical representation that, much like the progressive work legislation in the previously mentioned countries, existed on paper considerably more than it did in material reality (Berend, 2009:92-129). Ever increasing social inequalities were made even more apparent by the process of urbanization and development of the early mass media, followed by the raging conflict between modern and traditional cultural patterns, constituted a perfect social climate for already existing political animosities to escalate into conflicts of extreme ideologies (Stojanović, 2015:199). Political crises that followed the aftermath of the First World War in Italy further contributed to the mobilization

of Italian fascist, whose popularity was growing exponentially in political climate of „national disappointment” left by the results of Italian participation in WWI, but also in face of ever increasing fears of Italian middle and upper classes that far left ideas will „spill over” westwards from the Russian and German revolutions. Italian fascists became the first far right party of Europe to capitalize on social and political turmoil, but also on the effects of the „red scare”, thus setting the historical pattern for the rise of far right dictatorships in rest of the continent, and especially in Mediterranean countries (Mitrović, 2004: 69-89).

What sets the Italian communist party apart from the French, Spanish and Greek parties is the fact that paramilitary forces comprised of Italian Marxists emerged victorious at the end of a long and brutal physical confrontation with their fascist counterparts (Delzell, 1975:21-40). Unlike the Spanish and Greek communists who suffered from the collective historical experience of defeat in civil wars in Spain (1936-1939) and Greece (1946-1949), Italian communist successfully participated in the late phases of the Second World War in Italy where they got the chance not only to relief their animosities towards the Fascists, that accumulated during more than two decades of political persecution under Mussolini`s regime, but also to demonstrate the military power of their Garibaldi brigades, whose numbers stood against the numbers of regular Italian division loyal to general Badoglio`s government in 5:1 ration by the end of the War (Acciai, 2019:50-72). And, unlike members of the French Communist Party, who were passed over for membership in De Gauls temporary administration despite their significant role in French Communist Resistance, Italian communists participated in every Italian government from the end of the War until 1948. Italian Communist Party, which started as relatively minor fraction that split of from the Italian Socialist Party in 1921, rose in popularity through the years of attempts by the fascist regime to silence any left wing opposition, and came out of the War as the largest, most well organized and politically powerful Marxist party in Western Europe (Brogi, 2018:134-157). Contemporary analysts from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia described the significance of the role that Italian communists played in the later years of Second World War for the communist rise in prestige and popularity in Italy with following words - „*Italian party entered the War as a band of political dissidents and outlaws, and left the battle field as the most powerful Marxist party on the western side of the Adriatic Sea*“ (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

Before the last phases of the Second World War in Italy, Italian left was comprised of a few larger and many smaller, even local parties and movements with different Marxist or anarchist ideologies, most of whom have formerly been a part of the Italian Socialist Party. During the military campaigns in the North of Italy or immediately after the War, almost all of the smaller parties of the Italian left have been either incorporated into the Italian Communist Party, or have formed close relations with the Italian communists (Marchini, 1966:47-79). Later historians described the Garibaldi brigades as „*the banner under which Italian communists united the Italian far left*“, and Italian communist have on a few occasions described to their Yugoslav counterparts the relations between PCI (*Partito Comunista Italiano*) and smaller parties of the Italian far left as „*being forged in war*“ (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). Later researches confirmed that shared historical experience of antifascist combat became one of the defining features of new political identity of the Italian far left, and played a significant role in nearly five decades long preservation of those close ties between the Italian communists and the rest of Italian leftists which set the Italian case apart from constant rivalry of left wing parties in most Western European countries. The end of Second World War in Italy left only two major political powers of the Italian left, Italian Communist Party and Italian Socialist Party, both of which alongside some minor left parties soon entered a coalition that, despite many ideological differences and some previous animosities of communist and socialist leadership, lasted until 1948 (Marchini, 1966:47-79). Some latter estimations claim that Italian left-wing coalition actually had around 50% of the public support at the high of its power immediately after the War, but the informal influences of United States and British governments in Italy never allowed the coalition to gain more than 40% of votes in Italian post war elections. Even if we disregard such claims as conspiracy theories, it still remains an undisputed fact that Italian left-wing coalition became the largest political force in Italy to fill the power vacuum that remained after the fall of the fascist regime (Zariski, 1962:372-390). It is also interesting to note that contemporary analysts from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were arguably more impressed by their own estimations of social influence that Italian socialist and communists had in many local communities than by the political power of the coalition (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). The greatest display of rising social importance of the Italian Communist Party came during those events that later became known as the „Red Spring“ of Europe, or *Rossa Primavera* in Italy (Sassoon, 1992:139-169).

Rossa Primavera
participation of Italian Communists in revolts, street wars and in
creation of welfare state in Europe

The end of the Second World War left many European countries with severely decreased population, destroyed industrial regions and infrastructure, broken financial systems and inflated currencies, weakened agricultural potential and millions of homeless who were migrating across the continent in search of basic means of survival. European working class, which played the crucial role in supporting the war efforts in both battlefields and factories was left impoverished and for the large part, unemployed (Berend, 2009:139-165). Many rural villages, whose agricultural production and manpower helped sustain all the major European powers in War, were either left with decimated population and production capacities or entirely abandoned. Even the new waves of art that appeared in post war Europe bear testament to collective trauma of war and subsequent economic depression, with paintings, novels and films depicting the feelings of fear, desperation, resentment and loss of purpose (Kesternich, 2012:2-44). Victorious or defeated, European countries left the War with broken economies and even more severely disintegrated societies, which contributed to the process of cementing the new global balance of power arguably even more than rising industrial, military and later, nuclear power of the United States and Soviet Union. Expected social and economic outcome of the War in Europe, and possibly, fear of consequential rise of Marxist parties to political power in Western European states, motivated Roosevelt administration to start planning US policies of financial aid towards European countries even before the War ended, but the projects of post war reconstruction haven't created fast and enough visible impact before the massive rebellions and strikes organized or supported by communist parties started in practically all major cities of Italy and France (Stojanović, 2015:199-240).

Almost immediately after the War, massive street celebrations were replaced by a wave of demonstrations and strikes, many of which were led by the far left parties and syndicates, thus marking the begging of the events that became known as the „Red Spring“ of Europe. The first elections held after the War in France, Belgium and Italy resulted in communist parties losing by a landslide, but also claiming electoral fraud and starting a series of massive protests, which only increased the rising of „red scare“ in Western Europe, but also in the United States of America

(Brogi, 2018:134-157). Contemporary sources relate the tale of massive collective fear that arose from the perception of imminent Soviet expansion towards the West, possibly supported by the powerful Marxist parties and former communist resistance movements of the Western Europe, and both government propaganda and popular culture in the United States and other countries of soon to be Western Pact testify in favor of those analyses who claim that „red scare“ impacted almost every aspect of everyday life in postwar times (Michaels, 2019:19-32). Contrary to popular beliefs, Soviet armies were extremely depleted after the war, and Soviet Union didn't develop nuclear weapons until 1949 (Stojanović,2015:199-240), which may have caused the following case described by contemporary sources but later often overlooked, when the Soviet Party went as far as suggesting to French, Italian and Greek communist on more than one occasion that Soviet Union may not be in position to respond by military action should the armies of Western Allies attempt to put an end to protest rallies and revolts (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426). In France, the situation on the streets became so severe that United States and Great Britain threatened military intervention if the French Government keep being hesitant to use its own military potential to break the blockades of roads and factories held by nearly two million French workers in strike. In Greece, the fighting between the Nationalist and Communist resistance started after the liberation of Athens in 1944, and only continued with minor periods of peace until the Greek Civil War started in 1946, with United States and Great Britain sending military aid to the Nationalists while the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia supported forces of ELAS, military wing of the leftist coalition of EAM (Ristović, 2007:5-21). However, the situation was nowhere more frightening for the US and Britain than in Italy, where the Italian Communist Party organized mass demonstrations and strikes while at the same time participating in the post war government (Sassoon, 1992:139-169).

After the end of military operations in Europe, millions of war veterans returned home to find themselves without a job, and in Italy those men became the primary target for the recruitment efforts of both local gangs and paramilitary organizations of far right and far left parties which were searching for experienced fighters to continue the war of ideologies that started in the streets of Italy when the actual war in Europe ended (Stojanović,2015:199-240). The street fighting was becoming more and more severe, especially in the towns of the Italian South, until the clashes of far right and far left groups in Sicily resulted in members of far right and far left organizations joining the ranks of official Italian military and

police forces, thus destroying any resemblance of the formal line between the state institutions and the streets (Brogi, 2018:134-157). The informal war between the left and right wing members of the state institutions formally began when Sicilian mafia boss connected to the far right organizations, Salvatore Giuliano, conducted a massacre in Portella della Ginestra, when his men killed 11 and wounded many more peasants that were attending the communist rally. Communist leaders in Sicily declared traditional vengeance against Giuliano, and contracted help from unite of war veterans led by a partisan colonel Ugo Luka, who was suspected of having close ties with Italian Communist Party leader Luigi Longo, and who subsequently killed Giuliano in an ambush, thus starting a blood feud between the Sicilian mafia and the former partisans (Cerami, 2009:20-42). Simultaneously, Longo and many other leaders of Italian Communist Party became possible targets, and in some cases, victims of the attacks conducted by far right wing paramilitaries, who spent years searching to kill a mysterious „colonel Valerio“, a partisan commander that supervised trial and execution of Benito Mussolini. Seemingly endless series of retaliations soon spilled over the borders of Italy into America through the new waves of Italian immigration, where the fascist had the support of a powerful Genovese crime family from New York, whose boss Vito Genovese was a close friend of Musollini during the War, and the leftists were suspected of receiving the aid of former Lucky Luciano allies and Genovese rivals. While many of the events that took place in Italian streets after the war still remain shrouded in mystery and obscured by the imagination of popular culture books and movie authors to this day, they nevertheless speak in favor of those sociological thesis which described many phenomenon commonly attributed to the Italian mafia as being an integral cultural structure of the whole Italian society, transcending the borders of streets and remaining able to influence the structures of political parties and state institutions (Barzini, 2001, Sifakis, 2005).

Various forms of street violence and string of mutual retaliations by far left and far right paramilitary groups, coupled by strikes and massive demonstrations, contributed to the rise of collective feelings od insecurity in post war Italy, which then helped to further escalate the protests and street clashes, thus creating a seemingly endless circle (Ronchay, 1979:921-940). Italian communists later gave testimonies that, during their time in the post war governments, democratic Christians, socialists and other parties of Italian administration considered many possible ideas for implementing economic reforms that would be designed for the purpose

of decreasing the social inequalities, providing financial aid to the unemployed and making the services of healthcare and school systems in Italy more affordable (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). Simultaneously, similar plans have been designed by many governments of the Western European countries, who have in doing so created the first conceptions of future social policies that will, when implemented, mark the begging of an era in European History that would later be known as the time of the welfare state. To this day it remains a question of debates to which extent the „red scare“ influenced the Western governments to begin constantly expending those social policies that were already defined by the conclusions of the Breton-Woods conference, Marshall Plan and the report of Lord Beveridge (Stojanović, 2015:199-240). By expanding upon the mentioned plans, Western governments have effectively decided that introduction of Keynesian economic principles to the „*new world economic order*“ will not be sufficient to combat the consequences of rising social problems, and that the only way to combat the rising ideological competition will be to implement some of the policies that were until that point considered to be defining traits of socialist economic systems (Berend, 2009:139-165). Reforms like total employment, free healthcare, subsidizing of failing companies and business, welfare programs for poor and progressive taxation of economically privileged, governmental encouragement of syndicalisation and introduction of many housing projects were, in historical terms, unheard of on large scales in many Western countries by the time of the „Red Spring“. Later analyses commonly stated that administrations of the Western Pact states scored their first victory in the European front of the global struggle of ideological propaganda that became known as *battle for the souls* by introducing socialist policies to societies of capitalist countries (Brewer, 2015:91-109).

Development of the welfare state policies was a continuous process that lasted for almost the entire period that Eric Hobsbawm referred to as „*the golden 30 years*“ , and communist parties of Europe played a large role in constant expansion of social policies in most of the Western European states (Hobsbawm, 2020:359-381). Improvement of working conditions and increase in working wages, coupled with the process of syndicalisation, strengthened the political position of syndicates closely connected with communist parties, but also the popularity of European Marxists who constantly campaigned for further development of social policies (Piketi, 2015). Then, strengthened communist parties and syndicates expended their demands for better working conditions and wages, better credits

for workers and more housing projects, more welfare programs, and more power of the syndicates to negotiate with companies and govern themselves without the influence of the state, which then caused the entire circle to be repeated numerous times (Goldthorpe and others, 1967:11-37). In Italian case, this process went so far that many local institutions of Italian Communist Party started organizing massive strikes and protests in many Italian cities as a response to seemingly minor issues like firing of a single worker or introducing a new school fee in one University. Also, Italian communists almost regularly demanded more Government subsidies for those syndicates whose leadership was comprised mainly of Italian Marxist, and larger participation of Italian communists in institutional system of funding the political parties, and then used the funds gained in this manner to, alongside with the Marxist syndicates, create a welfare programs of their own in many Italian local communities (Marchini, 1966). Such actions boosted the popularity and with it, the social influence of Italian communist so much that some democratic Christians and socialist during their meetings with the representatives of League of Communist of Yugoslavia on a few occasions humorously remarked „*We are the official Government, but it is the communists and their syndical allies who actually rule in half of the country.*“ (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

Global impact of welfare state on social and political changes and local consequences of Italian „economic miracle“

Two decades of nearly constant expansion of welfare state policies have caused considerable changes in social and political reality of the European continent. Policies of total employment, continuous increase of minimal and average wages, and improvement of working conditions and legislations created a „*new working class*“ in many countries of Western Europe (Hobsbawm, 2020:359-381). It is interesting to note that in early seventies a phenomenon that caused many debates among the Western intellectuals was the question of how, and to what extent have the European working class adopted not only cultural preferences, but ideological beliefs that were traditionally attributed to the middle class (Buttler and Rose, 1961:248-259). New collective feeling of social security created many new political and cultural phenomenon, some of which changed not only the social and cultural, but the ideological structures of United States of America and Western European countries and shaped them into forms we commonly known and recognize today.

Just like the process of constantly improving the working conditions and increasing wages created the politically powerful syndicates that then campaigned for further development of social policies that created their social and political influence, welfare programs, free healthcare and housing projects made possible the rise of new political movements with new social agenda (Goldthorpe and others, 1967:11-37). For example, completely free or affordable education made it possible for much larger numbers of students from working class families to access the university education in majority of the Western European countries, thus making the student body during university revolts in 1968 the largest in recorded history of many European faculties, and by large margin comprised from sons and daughters of working class parents (Baudelot, Establet, 2000).

Changes in social structure influenced the rise of new political agenda in United States and Western European countries and formation of new human rights movements. New social policies contributed in providing necessary level of economic independence that many women, African Americans and members of ethnic or religious minorities in the United States and Western Europe needed in order to personally engage in struggle for their rights, as well as in making affordable the education which helped many members of the previously mentioned groups to recognize and articulate many forms of oppression that had been socially normalized (Stojanović, 2015:199-240). It is also worth to note that, while in the Western World basic human rights for majority of the population it remained unofficially disregarded, Soviet Union was from the twenties onwards making significant efforts to enforce equal rights for women and people of color, to build social programs for ethnic and religious minorities and to legalize many individual and sexual liberties which were treated as criminal activities or mental illnesses in most countries of the „Free World“. Despite the fact that many progressive reforms in the Soviet Union failed to make a significant impact and many more were utterly abandoned during the Stalin era, and the fact that political freedoms practically did not exist under totalitarian regimes of Eastern Pact, the governments of Western Pact until the late sixties had to constantly worry about the fact that ideology of their global competitors promised considerably more social liberties than most progressive liberal and democratic capitalist parties did (Boffa, 1985). On the other hand, Marxist parties in the West not only campaigned for all the human rights that were still to become a part of legislative systems in many countries of Western Pact, but tried to expand on what Soviet reforms had achieved before

the so called „Stalinization“ of the Soviet Party ideology. Italian Communist Party campaigned for human rights during the fifties, especially for the rights of women in rural patriarchal communities, against the domestic and street violence in poor urban neighborhoods, and against the institutional discrimination of Southern Italians. At that time, all other political parties except the Italian Socialists haven't yet formally recognized the existence of those social inequalities that can renew themselves through cultural mechanisms, although still initially arriving from the inequalities in material reality. Human rights agenda of the Italian Communists later became the role model for the development of many party policies of the other Marxist parties in Mediterranean (AJ,SKJ,507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

While the changes in social structures of the United States and Western Europe influenced the creation of new political agenda, the rise of human rights movements, and creation of many new leftist parties in the Western World, social changes in Italy not only strengthened the political position of the Italian Communist Party, but also motivated Italian communists to contemplate new ways to adapt their party ideology to the unique social and cultural circumstances of Italy and its many different regions. The late fifties in Italy became known as year of the „*Italian economic miracle*“ (Dragišić, 2019:41-59), when the long term consequences of the welfare state policies and implementation of Keynesian economic principles led to the unprecedented growth of both the industrial and tertiary sectors, which caused significant social changes in Italy. Spontaneous yet rapid industrialization of Italy during fifties far surpassed those results achieved by forced industrial development under Mussolini's regime and actually managed to put Italy among the great European industrial superpowers. Products of Italian industry, which was focused on both specialized or luxury products and on the items of mass consumption quickly found their way to the markets of the Western European states, while also finding consumers in Yugoslavia and countries of the so called „Third World“ (Mišić, 2008). Fast growth of Italian industrial export combined with the welfare state policies made possible an actual economic „trickle down“ to happen in Italy, when the ever growing middle class with constantly improving living standard increased the demand for domestic products of high quality, thus developing consumer culture in Italy which further influenced the rise of Italian tertiary economy. Keynesian principle of increasing the spending power of the ordinary people was proven to provide considerable results when Italian new working class increased spending on mass consumption items of domestic production and started stacking

up great varieties of products arriving from the local food industry, thus stimulating both agricultural and mass industrial production (Dragišić, 2019:41-59). Yugoslav diplomatic representatives in France at the time reported that Italian „economic miracle” has made Italy into an economic powerhouse of Europe, capable of surpassing the financial power of France and competing with the West Germany in the future, while at the same time constantly increasing the living standard of its population (DA, SISSP, F-35, 1968).

Simultaneously rapid industrialization and development of the commercial and tertiary economy in Italy caused the already started process of urbanization in Italy to gain even greater momentum, while housing and welfare projects of the Italian Government contributed to the further growth of Italian cities. Beside the newly adopted consumer culture, the Italian urbanization created many new social and cultural phenomenon, which inspired many new artistic waves and creation of the new popular culture in Italy, but also fundamentally changed the social structures of the Italian society (Lenti, 2014:185-204). Development of new working-class quarters within the Italian cities and creation of new administrative units in Italy contributed to the rise of political power and social influence of many local party committees of the Italian Communist Party. It is also worth to note that, according to analysts from the League of Communist of Yugoslavia, Italian Communist Party was the most socially engaged communist party of Europe, which could have been one of the factors that contributed to the fact that Italian communists became aware of the great social changes occurring in Italy much faster than Italian socialists and democratic Christians did. Ever since the late fifties, Italian Communist Party tried to adapt its party policies to new social and cultural circumstances in Italy, trying to provide answers for the new political questions that arose from the rapid changes in social reality. Subsequently, the new leadership of Italian Communist party led by Enrico Berlinguer started contemplating introduction of the new party ideology, which will try to provide answers for solving or at least understanding many new social and political problems that creators of the Bolshevik socialist model never encountered in their own historical era. Thus, creation of the welfare state policies in Italy and „Italian economic miracle” contributed in creating the new party ideology of Italian communists, soon to be known as democratic socialism (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

Italian Communist Party and the reinvention of democratic socialism in Europe

Adaptation of the party ideology to imperatives of the new social reality in Italy became a central question of debates waged by Italian communists on the pages of many newspapers and journals on Marxist theory published by the Italian Communist Party. During private conversations with members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Italian communist revealed to their Yugoslav counterparts that they fear the possible reaction of the powerful Soviet Party and other influential communist parties of the so called „Socialist World” if Italian communist decide to abandon their traditional attempts to apply bolshevism to the social and political circumstances of Italy and instead create a new ideology which will be from the very begging defined by complex social and political features of Italy and by unique historical circumstances of their development (AJ, KPR, I-3-a/44-34). Even though Italian Communists started contemplating the introduction of a new party ideology, which they called *Italian path to socialism* at the time, in the late fifties, or almost immediately after they became aware of the long lasting impacts of „Italian economic miracle”, dependence on financial aid and political support from Soviets prevented them from formally introducing the new party ideology they have already publicly discussed among themselves and with members of friendly communist parties. However, Italian communists already started reforming certain party policies from the early sixties, and they had subsequently through the following decade and alongside with Yugoslav communists supported almost every reformist fraction of other communist parties in Europe, a famous example being the one of Czechoslovakian reformists (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

Military intervention of the Eastern Pact countries in Czechoslovakia during the late summer of 1968 caused a split between the communist parties of Western Europe, who mostly supported Czechoslovakian reformists, and communists of Eastern Europe, that who defended Soviet Party from all the critics of their Western counterparts. However, the circumstances in contemporary times are almost never as simple as later historiography often portrays them, and the mere possibility of damaging relations with the Soviet Party nearly caused the internal split in the French Communist Party, but also deepened the already existing split in the Greek Communist Party (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-210-255, AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-728). Consequently, French communists were forced to abstain from criticism of Soviet

Party, and even to expel from the party those members of the reformist fraction who advocated for French Communist Party to abandon Bolshevik socialist model. In the case of the Greek and Spanish parties, Soviets were not only able to influence the split among the Greek and Spanish communists, but also to contribute in process of creating and financing new Greek and Spanish parties with close ties to the Soviet leadership (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 122/1-52-81). On the other hand, the Italian communists were almost unanimous in their harsh accusations of the Soviet Party for its authoritarianism, but also of Soviet Union for its imperialist doctrines, and of every Western European communist party that still hesitated to speak up against the Soviet actions in Czechoslovakia. Italian Communists displayed almost unprecedented unity for a European Marxist Party of the period, thus making impossible for the Soviets to gain enough supporters among the Italian Marxists to cause the split in Italian Party, as they have successfully achieved in case of many other parties of the European far left, even in the cases of formerly mentioned future Eurocommunist parties. Even though Soviets tried to threaten Italian Communists by cutting financial support for the Italian Communist Party, and even made some informal suggestions of possible retaliations against the Italian Party leadership during their visit to Moscow, Italian Communist remained firm in their decision to brake of not just from their dependence on Soviet state institutions and financial help, but also from the ideology of bolshevism. When League of Communists of Yugoslavia decided to provide financial aid to the Italian Party until the end of the conflict between Italian communist and the Soviets, the last cause for doubts among the Italian Marxists about changing the official party ideology of Italian Communist Party effectively disappeared (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

The congress of Italian Communist held in Bologna in late February of 1969 officially adopted the new party ideology of Italian Communist Party, naming it *democratic socialism* (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-429). Term democratic socialism arrived from the former name commonly used to describe party ideologies of the German revolutionary parties back in 1918 and also from the writings of Rosa Luxembourg who criticized one party dictatorship that was defined as necessary by Lenin, Trotsky and other Marxist theorists who created the founding ideas of the Bolshevik socialist model. Contrary to popular belief, however, Luxembourg did not passed judgment upon the concept of dictatorship of proletariat as one of the possible ways for transitioning from the capitalist reality to the Marxist utopia, but only claimed that one party dictatorship is bound, even with the right

intentions of its leaders, to become a „*dictatorship over the proletariat, instead of the proletarian dictatorship*” (Luxembourg, 2004:128-180). Also, contrary to conclusion of later analysts, Italian Communist Party never renounced the possibility of conducting a revolution in order to give administrative power of the national state to the working class, and conclusion of the congress in Bologna left opened the question of how exactly the proletarian society will be achieved in the end. However, Italian communists did suggest the constant evolution of welfare state social policies, combined by the evolution of political system brought upon by the constant changes of dominant social values, as one of the ways to transition from the capitalist reality to a new socialist society (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-427). Also, Italian communists determined that future socialist system will only be able to evolve into the Marxist utopia, as well as to escape the possibility of turning into the totalitarian state like was the case with Soviet Union, only if the future decision-making process of both Marxist parties and entire proletariat society adopts democratic values as its founding principles. Thus, Italian Marxists concluded that in order to serve as a model for the future changes in the party inter systems and policies of other parties, and also to represent a possible example for the future evolution of the entire social and political system, the Italian Communist Party first need to enforce democratization of its own party structures and decision making customs. The XII Congress of Italian Communist Party in Bologna thus adopted many guidelines for Italian Communists to define such party policies that would start and direct the process of democratization of the communist party, but also advocate for democratization of Italian political institutions, and even social relations in local communities (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-427).

In the prison works of former Italian communist party leader Antonio Gramsci, Italian Marxists, found inspiration for their thesis about the necessity to adapt party ideology of the Italian Communist Party to both historical circumstances and political traditions of Italy, and to social structures and unique cultural landscape of many Italian local regions (Femia, 1987:190-216). Following the historical development of many different social philosophies and socialist movements through many different European regions, Gramsci famously concluded that „*there is no magical formula*“, including the Bolshevik socialist model, that can provide universally applicable answers for the question of how to create an effective approach in order to influence the development of various societies, their values and dominant ideas in such a way that they will be able to form successful

Marxist movements and eventually, to transcend from the capitalist reality into socialist system that will lead them towards creation of Marxist utopia (Gramsci, 1995:2-47). More than three decades after Gramsci's death, conclusions of XII Congress of the Italian Communist Party quoted his thoughts before claiming that there can be no universal socialist model, but every Marxist party must make its own ideology based on social, cultural and political circumstances in which its members will operate. Subsequently, congress in Bologna declared the official beginning of the long and complex process of adopting constant changes in Italian party ideology in order to create such political practices of Italian Marxists that will provide answers to current political questions and ways to contribute in fulfilling the everyday needs of Italian workers and local communities (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-429). From the same conclusion Italian Marxists defined the rule that future party policies of Italian party will be focusing on immediate problems of Italian society or unique and historically inherited structural troubles of Italy instead on the idealistic and global imperatives advocated by the Soviets and other followers of bolshevism in the ranks of other European Marxist parties. Thus, introduction of the new Italian party ideology contributed in the subsequent process of further increasing the already very active role of Italian Communist Party in Italian society (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-390-426).

One of the many ways in which Italian communist tried to play an even more active social role, as well as to contribute to the process of democratization and decentralization of Italian Communist Party, was to reform the party committees in Italian local communities. The process of introducing the new Italian party system started by increasing the autonomy of local committees in order to make them capable of arriving at independent decisions about their own local policies and activities, and thus able to immediately react to changes in various circumstances or adapt their actions to unique social and political reality of their area. Yet, the previously mentioned reforms were just the first step in a long process of creating what Italian communist described as a „*direct democracy*”, and their Yugoslav counterparts as „*Italian experiment with self-governing*” (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). Documents that defined long term structural changes of the Italian party show that Italian communists envisioned decision making process in new party committees, comprised of numerous debates, discussions with the local population and democratic voting procedure, as a role model for the future mechanisms that will shape the future political system of self-governing local communities (AJ, SKJ,

507-IX, 48/I-429). Despite the fact that process of introducing new forms of direct democracy to party committees in Italian provinces took years, during the second half of the seventies many European sociologists and historians started studying the self-governing system of communist local committees in Italy. Remaining Eurocommunist parties later tried to apply their own forms of direct democracy in local party committees, with Greek and Spanish communist going as far as traveling to Italy on various occasions so that they can observe and study debates and voting in local committees of Italian communists, thus making the reforms of the Italian Communist Party yet again the model for the reformist policies of all other Marxist parties of the Mediterranean (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 122/1-81-160, AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-712-779). In the end, reforms of the Italian party provincial committees further improved connections that Italian communist had with local communities, thus significantly increasing already astonishing influence of the communist party in contemporary Italian society (Maccaferri, 2018:1-14).

***Creating the united block of European Marxist parties
in cooperation between the Italian Communists and League of
Communists of Yugoslavia***

After adoption of the formal changes of their party ideology, at XII Congress of the Italian Communist Party in 1969, Italian Communists moved on to support the reformist fractions of other Marxist parties in the Mediterranean. League of Communists of Yugoslavia provided financial aid in the efforts of Italian communists to promote reformist policies among the European Marxists, and also contributed with its influence of European socialist and minor communist parties to the realization of those plans that leaderships of two parties started making even before the congress of Italian Communist Party in Bologna (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). Organization of the Greek communist congress in Ljubljana and Trieste became the first successful cooperation of Italian Communist Party and League of Communists of Yugoslavia conducted in order to insure the victory of the reformist fraction of the Greek communists in the elections held in two cities in Italy and Yugoslavia. Actions of Yugoslav and Italian communists in Ljubljana and Trieste also presented a symbolic retribution for the actions of the Soviet Party during the previous year, when Soviets famously used threats and violent means to contribute to the victory of conservative faction of Greek communists at the elections for members of local

committees of the Greek Party in exile that were held in capital cities of the Eastern Pact countries. Unlike their Soviet counterparts, Italian and Yugoslav communists just resorted only to subtle yet effective means of selectively financing the traveling costs of only those Greek communists that agreed with policies of the reformist faction. Congress in Ljubljana and Trieste further cemented the authority of the new party leadership of the Greek Interior Party, comprised mostly of members of the reformist fraction. Yet, cooperation of Italian and Yugoslav communist in supporting the Greek reformist only begun after the congresses of Italian and Greek party, and henceforth, Italian and Yugoslav communist cooperated in realization of many programs that were created in order to provide various sorts of aid to the Greek reformists. These programs included, among other actions, publishing the articles of authors from Greek reformist fraction in Italian and Yugoslav journals, financing and organizing the party rallies, study excursions, vacations and even medical treatment of the Greek reformists in Italy and Yugoslavia, and providing weapons to those Greek resistance movements that were close with the reformist fraction of the Greek Communist Party. Since Italian Party was at the same time, to some extent, financially dependent on aid it was receiving from SFR Yugoslavia, many of the previously stated actions were financed by League of Communist of Yugoslavia, but planned and executed by Italian Communists (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-712-779).

Italian and Yugoslav communists arranged very similar programs of aid to the Spanish reformists as they did in the case of Greek Communist Party, going as far as to use their influence on other communist and socialist parties to depose the leader of the conservative fraction of Spanish communists from the position he held in the International Council for Peace. During the split in Spanish Communist Party and later political transition in Spain, Italian and Yugoslav communist started talks with the Spanish reformists about the possibility of forming a larger block of reformist Marxist parties of Europe (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 122/1-81-160). Recruiting the Spanish communists to join the efforts of their Italian and Yugoslav counterparts was made somewhat easier by the fact that both current and previous General Secretaries of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo and Dolores Ibarruri had personal friendships with Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito, who made personal contribution in bringing Berlinguer and Carrillo closer together (AJ, KPR, I-3-a/110-7-19). After Carrillo and Ibarruri returned from exile in the long aftermath of Franco`s death in 1975, Spanish Communist Party started

putting to practice many reforms of party policies they have adopted years prior to the return of Spanish Communist Party to political stage of Spain, and soon after Spanish communists started referring to their party ideology as Eurocommunism. Decisions that Spanish Communist Party announced soon after the return of the party leadership from exile show that almost all the ideas that Spanish communists used to define their new party ideology came from the Italian definitions of democratic socialism contained in the resolutions of congress in Bologna. Italian Communist soon took up the term Eurocommunism, and, much to the surprise of Yugoslav, Italian and Spanish communists, so did their French counterparts. After the meeting of the General Secretaries of the Mediterranean communist parties in Madrid, in 1977, the term Eurocommunism officially became recognized by both Italian, French and Spanish communists and by contemporary European press as a term that defines the new ideology of the European reformist parties (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 122/1-81-160).

In the case of French Communist Party, the split from the Soviet Party was much harder than in cases of Spanish and Greek parties, both due to the long-standing ties of the conservative fraction of French communists with the Soviets, and because of the long-term effects of two decades long rivalry between the French and Italian parties. The revolt of the reformist fraction in the French communist party, coupled with the scandals implicating the roll of party leadership in negotiations between the Czechoslovakian and Soviet parties back in 1968, greatly contributed to the decision of the party leadership close to conservative fraction to resign in 1970, leaving the party in the hands of so called „moderate“ fraction led by Geogre Marchais and his associates (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-210-255). However, Marchais and new party leadership took years to fully accept the necessity of replacing the old party ideology, and consequently slowed down both the process of reforming the party policies, and development of closer relations with Italian, Yugoslav, Greek and Spanish communists. It is interesting to note that Italian and French party, despite their rivalries, had a developed cooperation for most part of the later XX century, but the French communists regularly abstained from joining most of those initiatives of European Marxist parties in which the Italian party played the leading role. Contemporary analysts claimed that it was exactly the hesitation to reform their party policies further that have influenced increasingly worrisome performances of the French communists in both local and parliamentary elections in France, and even more dangerous decline of the relations between French Communist Party and

other French political parties, but also between the French Communists and other European Marxists. This caused French Communist Party to finally increase the speed at which it conducted the reforms of inner structures and policies of French Communist Party, but also to officially change the party ideology in the famous XXII Congress of the French Communists in 1976 (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 33/I-255-314). Yet, it is worth to remark that even after the French Communist Party joined other reformist parties of the Western Europe in adopting new party ideology, Italian Communist Party still remained the unofficial leader of the Eurocommunist parties, who were supported by League of Communists of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, Yugoslav Party never used the term Eurocommunism and only formally joined the reformist block after other reformist parties needed the show of support of the influential League of Communists of Yugoslavia to strengthen their positions during the disputes with Soviet Party that were renewed when the question of organizing new conference of European communist parties arose (AJ, KPR, I-2/68).

The reformist block of the communist parties of the Mediterranean finally gained its official name after the events of Berlin Conference of Marxist parties of Europe in 1976, which was the longest prepared conference of European left wing parties in postwar history, with various debates about the discussion subjects of the Berlin conference being waged for nearly two years. At first, Soviet Party which organized the conference along with Eastern German party didn't want to officially recognize the reformist block, nor to allow the question of reforming party policies of communist parties to become the central question during the planned discussions of the Berlin Conference, which led to a brief split between the Western and Eastern European parties (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). But after two years of going back and forth, and with the pressure to demonstrate their commitment to new terms of detente agreements, Soviets reluctantly agreed to various compromises with the „five party block“, then comprised of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia and Italian, French, Spanish and Greek parties, which was soon recognized both by participants of Berlin conference and by European media as the reformist block of the communist parties of Europe. However, the Berlin Conference itself never defined meaningful resolutions about further reforms of Marxist parties structures and ideologies, and kept its conclusions very generalized and „distant“ from the main issues that were discussed in informal meetings of European communist leaders gathered in Berlin. The real importance of the Berlin Conference became apparent only when the informal conversations

of Broz, Brezhnev and Berlinguer resulted in the leaderships of Yugoslav, Soviet and Italian party, despite the ideological differences, agreed to start the process of restoring the close relations between the Italian and Soviet communists, with Yugoslav Party acting as intermediate (AJ, KPR, I-2/68). After confirming its position as the leading party of the Eurocommunist parties of the Western Europe, and restoring the relations with Eastern European parties in the aftermath of Berlin conference in 1976, Italian Communist Party reached its zenith of international influence. Elections held in Italy in the same year resulted in Italian communists gaining almost 35% of the public support, which was even higher election result than those accomplished by Italian Marxists during the „Red Spring“ three decades earlier. Manly local administrations in Italian provinces came under governance or significant influence of the local committees of Italian communists, thus putting the Italian Communist Party at a historical hight of its social and political importance in Italy (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-513-556).

How democratic socialism almost became the state ideology of Italy?

Italian Communist Party reached the peak of its political and social influence in Italy at the time of the great political crises in Italy and many other Western European countries that will later be known as the „*crises of the last years of the welfare state in Europe*“ (Andry, 2019:93-134). Political crises in Italy was coupled by the rise of new terrorist organizations with both far right or far left ideological beliefs, which assured in a new era of street violence that soon became known as „the years of lead“ (*anni di piombo*) in Italy (Ronchay, 1979:921-940). Democratic Christians and socialists searched for a way to contain the effects of political crises and put an end to new waves of Italian terrorism, which resulted in former prime minister Aldo Moro coming up with a plan to form a coalition of the two ruling parties, democratic Christians and socialists with the minor parties of the Italian left, and to then make the new government form an unofficial alliance with the Italian Communist Party (Bartali, 2006). In this new political system, suggested even earlier by Enrico Berlinguer in his writings about the „*historical compromise*“ in Italy, Italian administration would be granting the communists a unofficial vote in every major government decisions and many new privileges to Italian Communist Party and its numerous local committees, but also to the working syndicates under communist influence, and in return, Italian communists would use their enormous social influence to strengthen the position of the new government, making it

stable and helping it combat the far left terrorist groups (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-513-556). Italian communist saw Moro's offer of a new „historical compromise” as a practical prove of their predictions that the policies of welfare state together with the democratization of communist party will be making way for changes not just of dominant social values and ideas, which will then cause the evolution of party ideology of other political parties towards Marxism, but of entire political and social systems. Contemporary sources show that Italian Communist Party planned to use its increased political power to slowly force changes of the future Italian administration, to create new welfare policies and change the local and central systems of government, while at the same time, further increasing its own reputation and social influence, and thus, in the end of a long term historical process, finally creating the necessary condition for democratic socialism to become the official state ideology of Italy (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-426-513). However, plans of the Italian communists were cut short when Moro was kidnapped in 1978, just as he was on his way to discuss the cooperation agreement between Democratic Christian Party and Communist Party of Italy, and later executed by the far left terrorist organization known as „Red Brigades” (*Brigate Rosse*) (Bartali, 2006). In years following the death of Moro, social and political influence of the Italian Communist Party started to slowly fade away, which, among other factors, opened way for the neoliberal economic reforms in Italy (Bifulco, 2011:265-284). In the early eighties, social and political role of the Italian Communist Party declined under the pressure of social changes caused by neoliberal reforms even faster than Italian Marxists rose to power during the welfare state era (AJ, SKJ, 507-IX, 48/I-513-556).

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