



universität
wien

DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

The relation between the Italian leftist parties and the
conflict in the Middle East
The parliamentary left and the Israeli - Arab Palestinian
question

Verfasser

Nicola Seu

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Doktor der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 092 300

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt:

Politikwissenschaft

Betreuer:

Doz. tit. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Otmar Höll

Table of contents

Acknowledgments.....	5
Introduction.....	6
1) General Introduction	6
2) Methodology	12
3) Theory	18
From 1948 to 1967: The years between the establishment of te State of Israel and the outbreak of the Six-Day War.....	29
1) P.C.I.: The Italian Communist party.....	29
1a) After the Second World War.	29
1b) The war of Independence	34
1c) Slanski affair and doctor's plot.....	38
1d) From Suez crisis to the Six-Day War	41
2) The Socialist Parties	45
2a) The first years	45
2b) From Suez crisis to the Six-Day War	48
2c) Pietro Nenni	51
3) P.S.I. and P.C.I.: a comparison	53
From 1967 to 1989: The years of the discovery of the Palestinian question and of the higher interest of the Italian Leftist parties in the Middle Eastern conflict.	57
1) The Six-Day War	57
2) The P.C.I.: The Italian Communist Party	59
2a) The discovery of the Palestinian cause	59
2b) Further developments and the terrorism issue	66
2c) From the Yom Kippur War to Lebanon.....	72
2d) From "Peace in Galilee" to the Declaration of Independence.	81
2e) Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.....	94
2f) A 1967-89 survey on P.C.I.	103
3) The Socialist Parties.....	114

3a) on Israel's side.....	114
3b) Shifting to the Palestinian side.....	120
3c) Bettino Craxi: the first years of the secretariat	126
3d) Bettino Craxi: Years of the government	137
3e) Overview on the Italian socialists	144
4) Communists and socialists: differences and similarities	149
 From 1989 to the present days. The years of the end of ideologies and change of the parties' role in the Italian political scenario	152
1) From the fall of the Berlin wall to the Tangentopoli earthquake.....	152
2) From Tangentopoli onwards	160
- Pisapia's Milan administration	165
 Conclusion	167
 Acronyms	178
 Literature	179
- Books	179
- Documents	182
- Newspapers, journals, Encyclopedia	183
- Websites.....	184
- Interviews.....	185
- Lebenslauf	186

Acknowledgments

Zuallererst möchte ich Wien und seiner Universität einen großen Dank aussprechen, da hier sowohl der Abschluss meiner Studien möglich wurde, und ich hier mein Leben mit viel Erfahrung anreichern konnte. Viele Menschen standen mir stets zur Seite, es mir an Rat bedurfte. Darunter Herr Professor Höll, der immer zur Stell war, um meine Arbeit zu sichten und zu korrigieren.

Weiters möchte ich Laura Cuzzocrea danken, die mir immer mit Rat und Tat für Hilfestellungen zu meinen Texten zur Seite stand und Bearbeitungen erforderlich waren. Ein Dank gebührt auch Jannis Stouraitis für seine Unterstützung bei Dokumenten in deutscher Sprache, wobei sich wohl ohne seine Unterstützung mein Verständnis eher in Grenzen gehalten hätte.

Abschließend möchte ich Paco Major für ein erleuchtendes Gespräch danken, das mir half, das Doktorat psychisch auf gesunde Art und Weise zu durchschreiten.

Oltre ai ringraziamenti in Tedesco, sento di doverne fare anche in italiano. Inizialmente vorrei ringraziare la Regione Sardegna e il programma Master and Back dell'ex governatore Renato Soru che mi ha permesso di affrontare economicamente gli studi. Inoltre un posto special nei miei ricordi di questi anni di studio va alla comunità italiana a Vienna e in particolare al nutrito gruppo di amici e conoscenti sardi che mi hanno accompagnato in questa impresa, fra cui è doveroso citare Gianni e Daniel (Austriaco ma Sardo d'adozione), quest'ultimo per avermi aiutato con i documenti finali in tedesco e con i ringraziamenti.

Infine, un ringraziamento particolare va alla mia famiglia che come sempre non si è sottratta nel sostentamento, economico e non solo, della mia educazione universitaria.

Introduction

1) General Introduction

In the study of the relations between the Italian left and the conflict in the Middle East the first necessity is to clarify who are the participants involved. As for the Israeli-Arab and then also Palestinian conflicts problems of understanding should not be major. The conflict, that still today has not come to an end, and which opposes on the one hand the Jewish community that turned into the core of the Jewish state in 1948, and on the other hand the Arab populations and countries, has its roots into the presence, on a land of different cultural and social structures, of a growing immigration of firstly European Jews and then also African and Asian ones. Whichever opinion and side can be taken by anyone, the struggling entities are clearly identifiable on a racial and/or religious base.

Some difficulties come when the identification of leftist political thought in the new-born Italian republic has to be made. Firstly, it is important to remind the field of study of this dissertation, which will not undertake an investigation outside the parliament. Hence, all the extra-parliamentarian left formations that have a certain influence on the Italian public life especially in the sixties and seventies is not taken into consideration, but for the role they play toward and against the leftist parliamentary factions.

The question now is to define leftist parties. In this dissertation, the investigated political bodies are those whose roots can be found in the labour movement and in the socialist and Marxist tradition. Such approach has its rational explanation also in the socialist basis of the Zionist ideology that inspired the European Jewry in the process of colonization of the historical Palestine and eventually in the creation of the State of Israel. The Kibbutzim attempt of breakage with the

bourgeois tradition to experiment a socialist way of life¹ find no linkage even with the first social-liberal tradition of the republican party hence for this reason the P.R.I. is left out in this dissertation despite their self-proclaimed belonging to the left. The Republican Party has no Marxist background and no real socialist roots and finds its points of reference, especially for the international orientation, in Atlanticism, Liberal and Democratic Liberal speculation². The political body to refer to in this dissertation are fundamentally two. The P.C.I. and the socialist parties, which have a turbulent history of split and reunion, which continues today.

The communist party is the major opposition party in the history of the Italian republic and plays the main role in the shaping of the political thought for the Italian left. The most valuable characteristic of the P.C.I. is its connotation of being a party of mass. Being outlawed by the fascist regime, the communist party comes into the Italian democratic scenario with a vast popular consensus and with the important task to reshape its structure from a revolutionary anti-Fascist movement to a political entity able to play within democratic rules and to respond directly to its electorate and party members³.

As for the history of the socialist party, its main characterizing aspect in comparison with the communist party regards its fragmentation. Unless the P.C.I., a Leninist democratic centralist party⁴, the socialist ground shows splits and different apolitical guidelines since the end of the post war democratic era. For the sake of the dissertation, it is not necessary to look into the passages of the socialist party in detail, what is important to underline is the less dogmatic character of the party, and the opening to different political electorate. It can also be enlisted into non-leftist areas, as Pietro Nenni points out at the national congress speaking about the catholic electorate⁵. The relations with the communist party and milieu play a central role for the development of the socialist party, which shifts from being an ally in the first democratic elections in the Italian

¹ Brenner, p. 66.

² http://www.pri.it/new/documenti/statuto_pri.pdf

³ Scoppola, pp. 114-20.

⁴ Panebianco, p. 160.

⁵ Scoppola, p. 323.

republic⁶, to a more independent logic and to an active participation in the ruling of the State and eventually for the lead the government itself. However, throughout its entire history, the socialist party never repudiate its history of anti-Fascism, and profound linkage with the working class and leftist basis.

After having seen the composition of the Italian left in the Parliament, an outlook on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea is required. In the Italian colonial empire, two provinces in North Africa, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, are conquered by the Italian army in the second decade of 20th century and unified under the name of Libya by the fascist regime in 1934. In the Arab world the Italian influence does not cross Libyan borders, and the defeat in the Second World War forces Italy to leave the colonies and rearrange its politics in the Mediterranean Sea from a colonialist one, to an economical and commercial one⁷.

The great transformation consequent to the end of the Second World War, witnessing on the one hand the decolonization progress, and on the other the industrialization and transformation of the Italian society from a more rural one to a consume one, passes through the tight relations with the Arab lands, both for the necessity of raw materials, and also as a way out for the growing Italian industry. The majority of the petroleum and gas consumed in Italy come from counties like Libya and Algeria, and such feature has an enormous burden on the political choices of the Italian governments throughout the years after the war and the founding of Israel⁸. However, such matter is a concern of the ruling classes, and of the party that come into power and need to make the Italian state work. However, to what extent does the energetic needs and policy of Italy have an influence for the non-ruling parties?

The major opposition party all through the first Italian republic, the communist party, never comes to the governmental bureaus of the State, and the foreign relations are not an issue concerning the economy of the State or the energetic supplies for the country. Hence, which kind of

⁶<http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=18/04/1948&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

⁷ Lewis, p. 185.

⁸ Sachar, p. 248.

policy can a party reasonably free from direct accountability for the accomplishments or failures of the economic policy?

In the history of the Jewish and Israeli representation of values after 1948, the ideological elements have a growing development reaching the maximum emotional involvement in the seventies and eighties, but what is most spectacular concerns the mutation of Israel's face in the eyes of the leftist parties and political thought.

The Italian member of parliament Nirenstein unveils her vex about a distant past when on the eve of the establishment of Israel, the P.C.I. secretary Palmiro Togliatti stated the appreciation of his party about the: "*Great victory of anti-Imperialism*"⁹. Such a sentence nowadays would be even difficult to place in the mouth of any politician and does not represent any political body or thought in the leftist milieu. However, right after Israel's birth the major opposition party works actively in order to pressure the government for the recognition of the new-born state by the Italian government. Communist party member Terracini's point of order in the parliament, requiring explanation for the lacking acknowledgement¹⁰ seems to be incompatible with the same communist party position 20 years later.

To compare statements, what Togliatti says in 1948 clashes with what his successor at the helm of the party affirms about the Arab people fighting against the Israeli expansionist policy¹¹. To a better extent, the profound change in the communist party can be seen in the joint communication of the P.C.I. and the socialist Baath party after a meeting between the two parties. The Syrian party expresses its gratitude for P.C.I. solidarity for the Arab people struggle against the Israeli aggressive expansionist policy supported by imperialism and international Zionism¹².

Hard to believe, in the early nineties, when the secretary of former P.C.I., which turned shortly before into P.D.S., Achille Occhetto during a visit to Israel, reshapes the perception of Zionism

⁹ Nirenstein, p. 248.

¹⁰ L'Unità 26/5/1948

¹¹ L'Unità 13/5/1973

¹² L'Unità 12/7/1973

contesting the Italian leftist incapability of understanding it. The Jewish national movement turns now into a freedom ideology, which has its roots also in the labour movement, and the major fault of the Italian left is to have lost the memory of it. To have perceived Zionism as an enemy, a fundamentalist and racist thought, and not as a part of the same socialist origin, a movement for the rights of the Jewish people and for the path of the workers' rights¹³.

Such drastic and dramatic metamorphosis in the communist party is not alone in the leftist Italian milieu as a similar process, despite with a less noteworthy language and a different root and motivation, happens in the socialist party, or better said, parties, as previously highlighted.

Gaetano Arfè, chief director of the official press organ of the socialist party, gives a good example of the changing progress inside the socialist environment in Italy, when he writes right after the end of the Six-Day War a praising article of the socialist party which: *"once again moves on a line for the defence of the peace, committed to identify the real menacing dangers without responding to the logic of the power interests that once again clashes in the Middle East"*¹⁴. It seems clear the distance that separates the two major leftist Italian parties and the proclaimed political and ideological independence of the socialist whereas the communists are engulfed into a bigger and external logic. However not much time is needed to read on the pages of the same newspaper, from the pen of the same journalist quite a different approach on Israel. In December 1973, after a terrorist attack at the airport in Rome, Arfè blames the Israeli racist political short-sightedness for preventing the Palestinians to turn their movement into a real resistance one. Israel is now arrogant, imperialist and what bonded it to the socialist political thought belongs to the past¹⁵.

How is it possible? How can such radical positions appear in an after all short length of time? Is the change the result of a negligence complex within the Italian left of excessive friendship towards the Jews and Israel? Has the analytical power of analysis grown to the extent of shedding a light to

¹³ L'Unità 30/4/1991

¹⁴ Avanti! 18/6/1967

¹⁵ Avanti! 19/12/1973

what was before veiled¹⁶? It is seriously hard to believe that the colonialist nature of Israel could not be perceived before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, as it was not possible to be in the dark for it concerned the real nature of Zionism and the situation of the Palestinian victims. Yet in 1938, with the great Arab rebellion the future Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion states in front of the Mapai, a leftist worker political party, committee that: *“stating that the Arabs are the aggressors and the Jews those who defend themselves is halfway true. As for safety it is, but this is a political struggle, and politically the Jews are the aggressors, and the Arabs those who defend themselves”*¹⁷. The connotations of the State of Israel as a fighting, colonialist and aggressive entity could be conceived by the Italian political parties and could be a part of the debate right after the end of the Second World War, but it does not happen.

My intention is to give enough evidence to refute the ideological vision behind the conflict, which is the most widespread one, and to prove the historical and military events happened and happening outside the Italian borders as the real cornerstone for the swinging appreciation grade of the State of Israel and its policies within the Italian leftist parties. In addition to that, I intend to demonstrate that the importance of the conflict in the debate and strategies of the parties comes in relations to the international factors and to the space, the media dedicate to the Middle East. Moreover than all this, the level and profundity of the analysis are deeper and intense as the events develop outside the national borders and as other turbulent areas of the world, for instance Eastern Europe or South America, consume their burden of emotionality and lose their centrality in the Italian political debate.

¹⁶ Caffaz in Cingoli, pp. 71-7.

¹⁷ Morris, p. 837.

2) Methodology

Before giving an outlook about the literature and primary and secondary sources used in the dissertation, I consider essential to spend some words about the core issue that pushed me to research the issue. Having spent my entire academic life on the Middle East, and having spent my bachelor years in a biased environment in the university, I reached a different point of view about the matter after having spent abroad some years and having lived in the region, both in the Jewish State and in Arab countries. The seed of the investigation begins with my perception of manipulation of independent variables, that is to say, to an interpretation of objective factors to support theories responding to external interests. For instance, the recurring theme of the comparison between the Israeli policy towards the Arabs with the Nazi persecution of the Jews, or the attempt of exterminating the Arab population in Palestine clash evidently with the absence of the growing birth rate and inhabitants Arab number both in the territories and within the pre-1967 borders of the Jewish State. Such simple verification lacks raising the question of an independent variable as an independent fact, which should influence the observed variable, that is to say the perception of the aspects of the reality, suffers from being manipulated. Manipulation in this case must not be interpreted as a conscious modification of dates, but rather as a degree of importance of them concerning the dominating theory and analysis of the state of things. Numbers, just to make an example, about the Arab students in the Israeli universities, or the infrastructures built in the territories under the Israeli occupation are not given visibility in order to promote other dates suiting better the presumptions.

To this end, the qualitative analysis integrates the scientific investigation by means like observation, interviews, and introspection. The observation method, Piaget suggests, is among other possibilities is a methodological contribution although the assimilation of facts by the individuals

excludes the existence of pure fact, as the concept are subjective¹⁸. In my personal case, observation goes along with personal experiences in both realities, the Middle Eastern one and the Italian one.

Observation is inseparable from the interviews carried out about the topic. Even before the decision to undertake this research, my experience led me to tight relations with many active players, people of various extraction and different background. It is inappropriate to talk about interviews with these subjects only because the previous intention was not to turn the conversations into practical use, but the concrete does not differ much from proper interviews. My approach with the interviewed has always been, before and after the decision to write this dissertation, a half structured one, meaning that the first intent is to let the interviewed speak without too much of interference by the interviewer. It does not mean that no clear and specific questions are not made, but primarily the free flow of the speech has a privileged position among the priorities. To give an example, a testimony of the pre-1967 university feeling about the Jewish cause has been given to me by an elderly Israeli doctor who graduated in Italy, and who described with a touch of nostalgia the pro-Israeli environment he experienced during the Six-Day War time. In my time in Italy and Middle East, the chances to have such conversations have been very numerous, and in the limit of my possibilities, I exploited them all. Clearly, such conversations do not constitute scientific literature, but helped me in picturing better the emotions and feelings of the changing Italian widespread approach to the Israeli-Palestinian question.

When it was time to make interviews with the active participant some difficulties came, with the primary problem of reaching the persons of interest. For the Palestinian side luck did not help me much as every attempt to contact Palestinian ambassadors or activists remained unheard. My emails and phone calls to have a talk with anyone connected to the relations between the Palestinian community in Italy was unsuccessful.

For the Jewish community, among some refusal, the vice-presidents of the Milan and Turin communities have been kind enough to dedicate some of their time to me, as the president of

¹⁸ Crespi, p. 116.

CIPMO who gave me important information and reference points especially for the last 220 years of history. Finally, a special thank goes to Emanuele Fiano, P.D. deputy who outlined clearly how his party in the parliament approaches the question nowadays.

Before moving to the written literature, the introspective aspect has to be mentioned, although it is probably the less considered in draft of the work. As stated previously, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has a heavy emotional burden that might contaminates the perception of it, and to this mechanism, I am not exempt. The method of observation has been also turned to the phenomenon of the inside¹⁹, and to the personal and emotive participation to the conflict events and reports. The inner world of the author of this dissertation has been used, among many other method tools, as a reflex of what psychologically this conflict could have, and may have represented for the Italian public, a mass of individuals with direct familiar or cultural connections to the Middle Eastern reality.

The above mention material cannot be considered as the primary sources for the development of the dissertation, despite being important tools for a wider vision and more complete psychological understanding.

The primary sources for this dissertation are the two main official press organ of the two biggest leftist parties in Italy, *L'Unità* for the P.C.I. and *Avanti!* for the P.S.I. The two daily newspapers do not simply represent the parties' guidelines but are site of actual political debate, where the diverse souls and trends find their possibility of expression. In addition to the world news reports, on the pages of *L'Unità* and *Avanti!* deal frequently with political analysis and transcribes the communist and socialist leaders opinions and political acts. Things change with the end of world's separation in two blocks and when the P.C.I. turns into P.D.S. On the front page of *L'Unità* the stating writing of newspaper's official role disappears as it does in *Avanti!* when the bribe scandal in the early nineties leads to the end of the socialist party. As for the parties' politics, foundations, bulletins, and documents of the political congresses have been useful thanks also to the Nenni archive even if it

¹⁹ Enciclopedia Rizzoli-Larousse: Introspezione

must be said that not much is left outside the press official organs, which did a very detailed work granting every potential reader the possibility of following with the highest level of information. In addition to the daily press, other newspapers related to the leftist political thought have been useful for the sake of the dissertation. Magazines as *Mondo Operaio* or *Critica Sociale* were and are sites of deep political debate and discussion and have a long and representative history in the socialist party. Being the first created on Pietro Nenni's initiative and the second one even on Filippo Turati's initiative and are still existing as socialist inspired press organs though not related directly to a party. A magazine complementary to the daily organ for the communists was *Rinascita*, unlike the socialist papers is not issued anymore, as its purpose was to provide an ideological guideline to the communist movement, covering also cultural aspects.

A wonderful tool that saved me very long time researches and probably also a visit to the Italian capital city has been the internet. Not only for the results of the elections which are now accessible on the web sites of the Senate and Deputy Chamber, but also for the stenographic relations of all the important session of the Italian parliament which are now free and accessible on the internet. Internet has been also important to download documents such as UN resolutions and European statements, or entire works or summary of them like Lenin's, Marx's, or paper from the new left thinkers.

For the historical events taking place in the Middle East the Benny Morris book "*Righteous victims*" have been a big help to reconstruct the Israeli side, as well as it has been "*Palestinesi, genesi di una Nazione*" from Xavier Baron a good tool for the Palestinian developing movements and struggle path for the independence and for the homeland.

As for the previous works on this subject, some books deserve to be mentioned because of different reasons. Antonio Rubbi work has been enlightening for the reconstruction of the leftist parties' political involvement with the Arab countries and movement, and although it did not cover the Israeli counterpart fully it has helped chronologically. Fabrizio Molinari and Matteo di Figlia books provide a remarkably good overview for the Israeli and especially Jewish side, as the relation

with the leftist parties and thoughts regarding the Jewish Italian component is the real leitmotiv of their works.

The works of Italian political analysts such as Panebianco or Scoppola have been of the utmost importance to trace the nature of the Italian parties and their theoretical backgrounds. Especially Scoppola's "*La Repubblica dei Partiti*" deepens the mutating process and helped me to picture which kind of political theories could be applied to the turbulent path of the Italian left. As for the theory a more detailed outlook of the sources will be given in the next chapter, but the works of Marx about the Jewish Question²⁰ well explained and applied to the Italian society by Cingoli, as well as for the Marxist theory of Internationalism which are so important for the time-lapse before 1967.

To demonstrate the centrality of the political and military events as key factor in the shaping of the Italian leftist parties approach of the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian question, I decided to proceed dividing the time lapse into three parts demarcated by important events joined by the common characteristic of having happened not in Italy. The first period start with the establishment of the State of Israel and ends with the outbreak of the Six-Day War, such phase is characterized by a low level of interest by Italian media and public debate. The second period ends with the fall of the Berlin wall and the consequent collapse of the Soviet Union and throughout these years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reaches its highest level of ideological shove and cover most of the Italian efforts, both to the political and dialectical extent.

Political parties are here the real key centres and play their most relevant role for the perception of the Middle Eastern scene. The last one starts with the massive bribe scandal, which is consequent to the end of world division in two blocks. About this last feature, speculations and different conjecture are still ongoing in Italy and probably time will tell in some decades what really happened and, above all, why such massive scandal took place right after the end of the ideological separation between the communist and non-communist world. However, the major effect of the

²⁰ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question>

scandal has been a radical mutation of the structure of the Italian politics and the deep change of the role and perception of the parties as basis for the political metabolism and development.

In the comparison of the processes and difference of this three time lapses consist the base of my research and the attempt to solve the always problematic relations between the Italian left and the thorny Middle Eastern question.

3) Theory

The first significant contact between the leftist political philosophy and the topic of this dissertation can date back to Karl Marx and his “*On the Jewish Question*” in the half of the XIX century. Contesting the theory of his friend Bruno Bauer about the necessity of a secular state in order to put an end to religious struggles, Karl Marx speaks of a human emancipation, which is required to emancipate the human beings and not simply the State or the institutions. Historicizing of the religious phenomenon leads to an extent where, according to Marx, there are no differences between the different religions, as they all constitute worldly limitedness²¹. The political emancipation suggested by Bauer entails the separation of a Human Being into a Jew, or a Christian, and a citizen, which must be fought and annihilated by the State in the same way as for the private property²².

Such vision of the Jewish question denies the specificity of the Jewish people and religion, simplifying the diversity of the Jewish history and identity as a mere outcome of the bourgeois heritage. Although the Jewish plot to control the world by economic means is totally absent in Marx’s analysis, to a modern review the traces of the modern leftist anti-Semitism and rejection to understand the Jewish peculiarity have foundations in a approach to the Jewish question which does not contemplate the need of the Jewish people to be as such²³.

Marx’s interpretation is fundamentally economical. Judaism is perceived as a metaphor of capitalism²⁴, hence it is a legacy of the old world, a product of the injustice and, ultimately of the class struggle. The Jews do not constitute an external body to the society. In the most profound illuminist spirit, Marx goes in parallel with the French deputy Clemont Tonnerè in 1789, when

²¹ Marx, *Sulla questione ebraica*, p. 163.

²² Marx, *Sulla questione ebraica*, pp. 168-9.

²³ Rubinstein X.D., p. X

²⁴ Cingoli, p. 13

speaking to the assembly for the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen states that: *"We refuse everything to the Jews as nation, we grant everything as individuals. They do not constitute a political body, or an order. They are individually citizens"*²⁵.

Such basis merge into Gramsci internationalism theory, where Judaism and the Jewish question at-large do not disclose any specificity or national claim. Nation is nothing stable or definitive, but it is only a moment of economic and political organization of the people²⁶. Just like Karl Marx, the young Gramsci approach the issue in a historical materialist way perceiving the Jewish question as an economical phenomenon. Gramsci's analysis is naturally not restricted to the Jewish question but encompasses the whole world, including every society outside the western world or culture. The economic and political life of the States is, according to Gramsci, strictly controlled by the Anglo-American capitalism, by a sort of monopole in a regime of private property. The national State is dead, becoming a sphere of influence for foreign forces. The world is unified meaning it is controlled by a hierarchy that controls and disciplines in an authoritarian way every relation and movement. The world is in the hands of few tens of Anglo-Saxon bankers, industrialists, and owners²⁷.

The most important point in Gramsci's internationalism theory stems from the unification of the world and of the economic relations, leaving no room for other, non-materialist, features to play a role in the historical mechanisms. Nationalism, within Zionism and Jewish national claims are ascribable, as a political and economic doctrine is merely reduced to an encounter and/or clash of interests of the single categories of classes in order to preserve their privileges²⁸. People and cultures of very different backgrounds and histories see the world with the same lenses and pursue the same goals.

²⁵ Voghera, p. 113.

²⁶ Gramsci, *Scritti giovanili*, pp. 200-1.

²⁷ Gramsci, *Ordine Nuovo*, pp. 227-8.

²⁸ Gramsci, *Scritti Giovanili*, p. 159.

The question of the Palestinians is of course still not present in Gramsci's time, but even if it were no major difference would have been made. Egyptians, Indians, Chinese or Irish people, each one as a national complex, and all the people on earth as working class view in the duel Lenin-Churchill the struggle between the power that keeps them enslaved, and the power that can lay the conditions for their autonomy²⁹. Hence, National States are an institution to dismantle, a trick to turn attention away from the real emancipation. The liberal tradition is against the State, as it is the very idea of Internationalism whose purpose point at putting an end to the conflict by abolishing private property. In fact, the latter is the cause of the establishment of borders between countries, secessions, wars and of the constant conflicts between States³⁰. Private property encompasses every peculiarity of the history of humanity, including also the Jewish question.

Communism can and will only be international, in this sense the socialist and proletarian movement is against the State, because it is against the capitalist national states, because it is against the national economies, which find their nourishment in the National State. However, the international communism will destroy the National State, the State as a concrete form of human society will not be abolished. The National Socialist State, produced by the organized proletariat, will be set in order to integrate with the other Socialists State to reach the final goals of the International Communist, which will provide for any State, institution or individual with life and freedom fullness³¹.

In such perception, where the capitalist forces control the life of the countries, Gramsci develops an analysis about Italy and the Italian people, which, in my opinion, paves the way of the interpretation of the situation in the Palestine after the Second World War. Italy is a market of colonial exploitation, a sphere of influence, a land of capitulation, a dominion in the British sense of a land granted with half determination by the Empire of London. Italy can be everything but an independent and sovereign land. Italy needs a deep sacrifice, as profound as the ruling class closed

²⁹ Gramsci, Ordine nuovo, p. 264

³⁰ Gramsci, Ordine nuovo, p. 380.

³¹ Gramsci, Ordine nuovo, pp. 378-9.

out the country, to create again an historical independent personality³². The Italian situation described by Gramsci has no major differences from the Italian leftist thought analysis of Palestine under the British mandate; Italy can be seen as a metaphor of what the Middle East suffers under the British occupation.

The acknowledgment of National aspirations of both people living on the mandatory Palestine misleads from the real comprehension of the situation and of the cosmopolitan mission of the populations worldwide. In the latter purpose, cosmopolitanism, the Italian people, the working class, is the most nationally interested to a modern form of it. Collaboration to reconstruct the world economically is in the tradition of the Italian history, not to dominate it but to exist and develop as the Italian people.

Italian people's mission consist in restoring the roman and medieval cosmopolitanism with the most modern and advanced methods³³. Even to a very peculiar extent, while taking into consideration the roots and the aspiration of a delimited people, the Italian one, the leftist internationalist thought makes no distinctions and refuses to see the national and proletarian ambitions out of a worldly communitarian sense. The Italian modern cosmopolitanism does not represent only the traditional working person, but should become a modern cosmopolitanism granting the best working condition for the Italian workers, in any place of the earth they might live³⁴.

The unavailability to recognize any national aspiration as legitimate, and the levelling of the diverse cultures and populations of the Middle East to a common cosmopolitanism aimed at enfranchising the working people from the organized capitalism remains a cornerstone for the Italian leftist Internationalism up to the outcome of the Second World War when some significant changes occur. Historical tragic fact like the holocaust, or the common enemy and struggle against the persecutors of the Jews for the mere fact of being Jews on Italian soil, pushes the Italian left to a

³² Gramsci, *Ordine Nuovo*, pp. 262-3

³³ Gramsci, *quaderni dal carcere*, p. 1989.

³⁴ Gramsci, *quaderni dal carcere*, p. 1988.

reshaping of Gramsci's theories. Internationalism is not to question, the supreme goal of the revolution and of the union of world's populations continues, but previous debates on the non-recognizable nature of the Jewish people ceases to be carried out³⁵. Internationalism represents now the chance for the land of Palestine (here not to be confused with the present meaning of it, so to say a national State for the Arab Palestinian people) to break the chain of economic and cultural slavery of the British colonization and the agent capable of doing it is the Zionist movement, of socialist intents.

The evident contradiction, that sees the national Zionist movement as a tool for the liberation of another people, does not create too much of a problem for the leftist thinking. The purpose of a socialist, or even communist revolution can be carried out by a population, the Jewish one, well aware of the enemy, both capitalist and Nazi, and conscious of their history and suffering. Palestinians, which are by the end of the second world war not regarded as such, are supposed to benefit from the Zionist purposes, as the common goal of the populations leads to the enfranchisement from colonialist and imperialist forces.

Such political theory finds its limits and inadequateness right after the establishment of the State of Israel, but time is needed for the Italian left to realize it and to shift to different political approaches. Political events and stances, like the soviet anti-Semitism, or the common anti-fascist legacy play a big into the developing of an alternative theory in the Italian left, and when new form of leftist approaches beyond Internationalism appear outside the Italian borders, the leftist debate is late to adopt it. When conflicts break out between great powers and little and underdeveloped populations, the new leftist thinkers accept the inadequateness of Gramsci's Internationalism, despite never openly, to redesign the real essence of the revolutionary forces, and to turn upside down the nature of the Middle Eastern players.

The passage from an internationalist theory to the third-Worldism comes after the Six-Day War, but its existence dates back in the early sixties with the birth of the new left. The basis of such new

³⁵ Cingoli, p. 13.

theory are found in the Herbert Marcuse analysis of the democratic non-freedom and concept of marginality.

The advanced technological society, according to Marcuse, is subdued to the capitalistic power and consumes. It is conquered by a “democratic” domination of the industrial civilization. Technology has within itself the nature of a dominating ideology, which permeate everything, even the social classes and layer that historically have been fighting against it. Such democratic non-freedom is fully integrated and has absorbed also the revolutionary bodies, namely the working class. With the absorption of the working class in the system, it is unrealistic to believe that the revolution to overthrow the capitalist power can come from it.

So, who are the real player that can carry out a revolution? To fight the universal takeover of the industrial society, the research must lead towards the emarginated fringes of the societies, in everyone who has been not phagocytised by society. Persecuted, unemployed, rejected people are the real hope, as they have been living on the margins of society and have not been swallowed into it³⁶. The Jewish workers, the kibbutzim movement and all those socialist immigrants from Europe are now suddenly polluted and incapable of fighting for the good cause. Their mission failed because of the mere fact they are yet part of the system, even if they believe to be struggling to change it. To a wider extent, Israel itself holds a different role. Israel becomes a totalizing entity, both culturally and politically monolith embodying the Western Capitalist and Imperialist World, causing the rejection of the leftist thought worldwide³⁷, not just in Italy.

On the other hand, such new perception suits perfectly the Palestinians, which are for real the emarginated ones, the unrelated fringes of the world to rely on and moreover to take into consideration as an autonomous political actor. Already in 1960 the American sociologist Charles Mills realizes the need to reshape the Marxist approach to the realities of the third world and to approach them differently as he writes to the journal *New Leftist Review*: “*To be “Left” means to*

³⁶ Crespi, pp. 148-50.

³⁷ Rubinstein X.D., p XII.

*connect up cultural with political criticism, and both with demands and programmes. And it means all this inside every country of the world*³⁸”. The nationalist aspect of the third world countries and their political and ideological development is no longer ignored, and although it does not consist necessarily in the basis of the leftist political ideology, it is viewed and taken into serious consideration.

The most significant example is the Syrian political thinker Michele Aflaq and his founding ideology of the Baath party. Labelling himself as an Arab Socialist, Aflaq does not conceive socialism as it is in the western political thought, and formulate an Arab version of it. The core problem of the left in the west such as the role of the state or economic equality are of no greater importance for Aflaq which stresses on the contrary the creation of Arab individuals freed from enslavement and domination³⁹.

Despite criticizing some aspect of Marxism, the Baath ideology strongly supports revolution as the only mean to achieve the renaissance of the Arab nations, which are otherwise doomed to the oblivion⁴⁰. The political thought of Michele Aflaq is indeed wider than this and has many aspect of open contrast with the Marxist and more generally, with the leftist and New Leftist mainstream ideologies in Italy and in the west, however the acknowledgment of an independent political and ideological movement alongside with the military one is undisputable. The Arab Socialist Union develops a well-structured political thought not necessarily in accordance with the leftist thought but which indeed makes the leftist reconsider their internationalist positions.

As pointed out quite clearly by Noam Chomsky in the seventies, concepts like the end of racism, the full equality of people in front of the law, the struggle against capitalist, imperialist movements (including Zionism) and the active role of the Palestinian population in reaching such goals is something the Arab are sufficient to provide themselves⁴¹. It is finally clear now that even a

³⁸ <http://www.marxists.org/subject/humanism/mills-c-wright/letter-new-left.htm>

³⁹ Salem, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰ Salem, p. 62.

⁴¹ Chomsky, p. 73.

winning proletariat cannot impose happiness to any foreign people unless it brings to an end its own victory. In other words any people must find his own way to revolution, must find its own happiness. Revolutionary struggle cannot be exported but must arise on the spot⁴².

The change is indeed of the utmost significance for the Italian leftist thought. The western socialist push unveils its inappropriateness for a region that refuses it, and claims what in the internationalist ideology represents the deceive from the right purposes, and on the other hand population with no experience of class struggle and no Marxist background have their own way and forces to revolt properly without western socialist leads. All the hints for the collapse of the leftist ideology are already visible, but still throughout all the seventies ideology still plays an central role and the political and ideological thought remains strong and deep-rooted into the Italian political debate and approach to the Middle Eastern issue.

What brings to a radical change in the ideology of the leftist Italian milieu and of the whole world is the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union, as Fukuyama points out in his work at the beginning of the nineties. The traumatic events of the twentieth century formed the backdrop to a profound intellectual crisis as well⁴³, which has a slow growing impact on the socialist countries worldwide since the beginning of the eighties. From the first Chinese measure regarding the free growing and selling of their own food in 1980 to the failed *coup d'état* in Russia in August 1991, the communist ideology collapses under its inadequateness towards history⁴⁴. Fukuyama argues about the universal aspiration of democracy belonging to the entire world's people. The most advanced form of democracy respects the essential individual social ambitions of every single person, letting him/her affirming on the base of his/her capabilities and possibilities.

With the end of the communist bloc, such tendency becomes global aiming at conforming every other political system to the principles of liberal democracy. This trend is perceived as the ultimate goal of every people, because it arrives after the complete failure of political experiments such as

⁴² Chomsky, p. 93.

⁴³ Fukuyama, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Fukuyama, p. 26-8.

monocracy, oligarchy, or totalitarianism, which turned, into liberalism affirming their defeat⁴⁵. Summed up in a sentence Fukuyama asserts that: “*What is emerging victorious, in other words, is not so much liberal practice, as the liberal idea. That is to say, for a very large part of the world, there is now no ideology with pretensions to universality that is in a position to challenge liberal democracy, and no universal principle of legitimacy other than the sovereignty of the people*”⁴⁶.

Around ten years before Fukuyama’s essay, Italian thinkers like Gianni Vattimo on his work, “*Il Pensiero Debole*”⁴⁷, Norberto Bobbio or Dario Antiseri, discuss the admission of the end of the strong political thought. The most pertinent aspect of the weak thought concerns the crisis of the truth, meaning the lack of certainness about the opinions and ideologies that characterized the debate and development in the Italian political scene. Reasons for such phenomenon are to be found in the increasing complexity of the world knowledge, which makes more and more implausible the existence of a unique truth able to support the multiplicities. In addition to the diversification of the knowledge, a diversification of the sphere of existence occur. Each specific region or life sector has its own system of truth and specific logic⁴⁸. The natural development of diversification leads to relativism and relativist theories where reasoning has no certainness and anyone is entitled to think and believe anything among the various cultural universes⁴⁹.

What seems today to be the only point of convergence in the philosophical debate is the lack of unique, ultimate and normative foundation, the crisis of the grounds is now within the very concept of truth⁵⁰. The real problem of the truth in the weak thought concerns the impossibility to discern from a good truth to a bad truth; as such, distinction simply is no longer a subject of the philosophical speculation. Such awareness is the major conviction of the weak thought, and such awareness puts an end to the old concept and perceptions of ideologies⁵¹.

⁴⁵ Fukuyama, p. 39-55.

⁴⁶ Fukuyama, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Italian for “The Weak Thought”

⁴⁸ Vattimo in Antiseri, p. 26.

⁴⁹ Vattimo in Antiseri, p. 28.

⁵⁰ Vattimo, pp. 7-8.

⁵¹ Vattimo, p 9.

To equal conclusions come the Italian philosopher of law Norberto Bobbio who argues that time of the great philosophy has come to an end. The precise meaning of the end of the political thought concerns the lack of the presumption to possess the entire knowledge. In this moment, no philosophical recapture can answer the core question of the unique truth, of a sole code of knowledge guiding the political thinking⁵². The disappear of philosophy has, according to Bobbio, a religious connotation that has brought to the death of the unquestionable God. At the present time, we live in a transitional moment waiting for a coming of new faiths and new gods as the previous ones are now fake ones, divinities responsible of the abuse of reasoning and of its bloody consequences⁵³. Briefly, political theories are of no use for the Italian society, which seeks with other tools, mostly personal ways and interpretations, the answers to the great political questions.

The eighties appear to be marked by a heavy downfall of the ideological motivation, by a still living interest in politics but not necessarily bond to the party system logic⁵⁴. The political party, in this feature all of them, and not only the leftist ones, were of service for the ideologies as containers, whose role was to gather people around ideas. The incapability of reinterpreting themselves with something different, something not related to the ideological debate puts an end to them. With the lack of contents, the political parties can no longer be useful as containers and their life as workshop of political theories becomes progressively ineffectual.

In my personal point of view, the changing and mutation of the leftist political and philosophical thoughts about the Middle Eastern issue do have a utilitarian development for the Italian leftist parties. Despite the structural differences and diverse purposes of the communists and the socialists, the use of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict is at the service of the political contingencies of the political bodies. Throughout the course of history in the second half of the XX century, the focus of the international happenings leads the guidelines of the parties. In other words, the parties have very material needs depending on the requests and susceptibilities of their electorate. In order to give a

⁵² Bobbio, pp.164-75.

⁵³ Antiseri, p. 85.

⁵⁴ Scoppola, p. 395.

satisfying answer to a complex bulk of changing perceptions of a changing international scenario, the political bodies shift their attention on different realities, depending on public opinion mood. To a wider extent, it is correct to assume the inactivity of the Italian parties in creating a political independent theory and motivation capable of leading the opinion and of giving exhaustive responds. The action remains limited to a wise and rational observation of the flow of events and international consideration of the fact, and consequently to an adjustment of the parties' position according to their interests.

From 1948 to 1967: The years between the establishment of the State of Israel and the outbreak of the Six-Day War

1) P.C.I.: The Italian Communist party

1a) After the Second World War.

After the end of the Second World War, Italy, as many other countries in Europe, faces times of uncertainty where a new political system had to be built. Among many, which continued to survive and to operate in hiding during Mussolini's rule, the Italian Communist Party as an active part of CLN (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, association of political parties' opponents to Fascism and to the German occupation of Italy) begins to take freely part in the Italian political life⁵⁵.

Throughout the world and inside the national borders, the situation seems to be uncertain. The "dangerous years"⁵⁶ from the Nazi's downfall to the end of Korean War, the world witnesses civil wars (China and Greece), the end of colonialism and the division of Europe in two blocks. In Italy, a referendum on the 2nd of June 1946 ratifies the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the republic. On the same day, also political elections are held and, according to the results and to the peculiar situation, Alcide De Gasperi appoints a new government based on a large coalition with the primary duty to write a constitution for the new-born republic⁵⁷. 104 deputies come from P.C.I, and

⁵⁵ Chabod, p. 137.

⁵⁶ Hobsbawm, p. 286.

⁵⁷ Chabod, pp. 156-7.

it is the only moment in the history of the First Italian Republic (1946-1992) where the communists take part in the government⁵⁸.

In such a turbulent scenario, P.C.I. drives its attention to closer realities and the events taking place in Palestine are not of keen interest. Still we see in the pages of *L'Unità* a remarkable attention starting with 1946⁵⁹. At the beginning of 1946, Giancarlo Pajetta becomes the chief director of the Milanese branch of the newspaper, a notable detail because he will have an important role in the future relations between the Communist and the Palestinian freedom movements. Born in Turin, he spent his life as a militant communist, antifascist (he spent 12 years in jail for his political ideas) and lost one brother in a Nazi's concentration camp. He identified himself totally with the Jew's cause, as most of his party's comrades⁶⁰.

On the pages of their official newspaper, the communist seem to be worried about the steady anti-Semitism, quoting the case of Poland. A young American Jewish intellectual describes the situation of the Jew who survived the holocaust saying: "*they have no homeland, no name...and they go to Palestine. Modern weapons cannot stop them, nothing can*"⁶¹. On the pages of the same newspaper, we find the Great Mufti of Jerusalem portrayed as Nazi, the British on his side, and the flow of the refugees departing from Europe to reach Palestine is perceived as a further step towards the total defeat of Fascism and imperialism⁶². The enemy to defeat is the British policy in Palestine. The language encompasses words such as "Terrorism", "Oppression", and "Occupation" for the government of his Majesty, while "Resistance" and "Freedom" are the words used to describe what the Jewish community does⁶³.

The issues of the Arabs who are living in Palestine under the British mandate comes for the first time, at least officially, in July 1946. The communist journalist Riccardo Rubens attacks heavily the policy of London in an article on *L'Unità* accusing of being insensitive to the situation of the Jews

⁵⁸ http://www.senato.it/leg/-01/BGT/Schede/Governi/0032_M.htm

⁵⁹ Tas, p. 17-20.

⁶⁰ Tas, p. 16-7.

⁶¹ Tas, p. 20.

⁶² Tas, p 20-1.

⁶³ *L'Unità* 3/7/1946

in Europe, people with no home and no land. The author pushes further by criticizing harshly the narrowing of the permission for the refugees to immigrate in Palestine, and the prohibition for the Jews to acquire by purchasing Palestinian land. Such policies are clearly regarded as racist. On the same article, after having dealt with the Jewish issue, the author proceeds with an analysis of the Arab situation, asking himself then who the Arabs are. The picture of the situation is very clear. Arab society is a pre-modern one, where two big families, Hussein and Nashashid are in control of everything and own all the land. They are the typical big landowner afraid from the awakening of the masses and interested only in maintaining the status quo, their belongings and keeping the population in a obsequious submission. The threat to the hegemony of the *Effendi*⁶⁴ comes from a tangible improvement in the *fellah*⁶⁵'s life conditions. Such change is the outcome of the Jewish immigration, which, with its burden of modernity, technology and wealth is paving the way for a new Arab society, where lower classes can send their children to school, can have a vaccination and are not afraid of visiting a doctor. Even on a demographic perspective the Jewish immigration helps the Arabs, because if the Jews are indeed increasing numerically, so is the Arab population that, thanks to the innovations, decreased significantly its child mortality rate⁶⁶. By Rubens representation of the Palestinian conditions, it seems that what Theodor Herzl foresaw in his roman *Altneuland* came into reality. Local population benefits from the Jewish immigration⁶⁷.

The P.C.I. first approach is definitely a Marxist one, focusing its consideration on the imperialistic aspects of the situation. London is the Empire exploiting Arab masses to keep control over the natural resources, in this case oil, and the Jewish community is the element in opposition to it, fighting for freedom and emancipation of all people living in Palestine⁶⁸.

The Palestinian issue does not appear and P.C.I. refers to the natives as Arabs, not as Palestinians. However, they seem not to be involved much in the course of events as what is catching the

⁶⁴ Arabic for Mister, Sir, in this case referred to the powerful Palestinian families

⁶⁵ Arabic for peasant

⁶⁶ L'Unità 4/7/1946

⁶⁷ Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland: The Old-New Land*, WLC, 2009.

⁶⁸ Tas, p. 22-23.

attention is the fight against the British occupation. Space is given to Tel Aviv children throwing stones to the British soldiers, and an interview is reported where a young inhabitant affirms that: “*We are not fighting against the Arabs*”⁶⁹. At this time, P.C.I. regards the policy of London as a continuation of the Nazi plan; hence, the complexity of the entire situation is its fault. The Royal Army is accused of selling weapons to the Arabs, of acting as SS committing searches to the detriment of the Jews, of preventing the Jews to immigrate to their home, of obstructing the socialist Zionist project, concisely of being an imperialist, anti-Semite, evil power⁷⁰.

At the beginning of 1947, the Italian government goes through a serious crisis and a series of scandals, so that the interest for the Middle East decreases. Starting in February with the Republicans leaving the government, the crisis reaches its peak in May, when scandals of collusion between some deputies and the Sicilian Mafia come to light and when accuses are made public in the parliament towards members of the Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana, D.C.). On the 1st of June a new government is appointed by Alcide de Gasperi, P.C.I. is not within it.⁷¹

Despite this hot environment, P.C.I. continues to follow the events in the Middle East through his official newspaper, without changing its point of view, or rather increasing the blaming towards the British. The case of “*Exodus*” is a significant one. The 12th July 1947, a ship called *Exodus* sails off the port of Marseille in direction of Haifa with on board 4500 refugees. Being intercepted by the British police near the port of Gaza, a fight starts between the officers and some passengers, causing the death of three people and the wounding of twenty-eight. Internationally the case becomes a symbol of the tragedy of the Jews and of the insensitivity of the Brits⁷².

L’Unità tells in details the course of events picturing once again the British as Nazis, treating Jews as Hitler’s Germany did. The French communist newspaper *L’Humanité* calls the ship the “*Floating Auschwitz*”, similarly the Italian equivalent calls it the “*Floating Mauthausen*”⁷³.

⁶⁹ L’Unità 14/7/1946

⁷⁰ Tas, pp. 27-35.

⁷¹ Scoppola, pp. 114-148

⁷² Morris, p. 234

⁷³ L’Unità 3/8/1947

The Italian people feel empathy for the Exodus's Jews, but the government forbids any kind of public manifestation in support of the refugees forced to stay on the ship without having the possibility of disembarking. In the parliament, the communists take the chance to criticize government's policy (P.C.I. is not anymore in the government) accusing the minister of internal affairs of being "*afraid of the Arab threats and servant of the Arab terrorists*"⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ Tas, p. 42.

1b) The war of Independence

At the end of 1947, serious concern is shown for the upcoming events in British Palestine. In New York on 29th November 1947, the United Nation General Assembly votes resolution 181, dividing the Palestinian land into two separate States, one Arab, and one Jewish⁷⁵. In the region nevertheless, the Arab states enjoy already independence and have fully equipped armies, potentially hostile to the new Jewish entity⁷⁶. English are considered responsible of the growing tension, acting behind the scene and providing the Arabs with weapons. All the surrounding countries are ready to encircle the new entity and to fight in order to help their coreligionists in every possible way: morally, militarily, and economically. The Italian Communist party considers the Arabs not more than marionettes, while the real manipulator is his majesty's government. Arab armies are directed by British officers, as are Arab plans⁷⁷.

In addition to the United Kingdom, a new actor appears on the Near East scenario, the United States of America, and, as cousin European country, helps the Arabs in their fight against the Jews. The U.S.A. is accused of selling weapons to the Egyptians, and even of having implanted a weapons' factory on the land of the Nile⁷⁸.

The Anglo-American union is the worst enemy for peace. Besides leading the Arab project of fighting against the Jews, they are blamed of supporting the fascist dictatorships all over the Mediterranean basin⁷⁹.

Although the P.C.I. has clear ideas and a stable a firm opinion about the Middle Eastern state of affairs, the raising of the Jewish terrorism is not ignored. In the public debate and in the communist press, condemning words are dedicated to such terrorist organization such as *Irgun Zwai Leumi* or

⁷⁵ Morris, pp. 237-8.

⁷⁶ Martin, p. 153.

⁷⁷ L'Unità 11/10/1947.

⁷⁸ L'Unità 9/11/1947.

⁷⁹ L'Unità 18/1/1948.

Lohamei Herut Israel (Stern Gang). These organizations, despite their good cause, are viewed negatively and condemned as harmful to the democratic and socialist purposes of the Jewish cause. Moreover, they are a limited, almost irrelevant, number⁸⁰.

Jews remain the persecuted people all over the world as communist are in the Arab world, as firmly condemned by P.C.I., and all of them are victims of the imperialist policy of the Anglo-American empire. One of the most important feature of the Middle East, which will determinate many political and economic events all over the post-WW2 politics, appears now in the P.C.I. language: the oil. Anglo-American capitalism is de-facto ruling in the Middle East, and the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jews lays on American capitalists' will. "*Jews tossed into the sea for Middle Eastern oil*"⁸¹ such title appearing on L'Unità, pictures well P.C.I.'s approach.

On 14th May 1948, Ben Gurion declares in Tel Aviv the independence of Israel from the United Kingdom and the following day the British troops leave the Holy Land⁸². On the same day of Britain's departure, Egyptian aircrafts bombed Tel Aviv, initiating officially the first Arab-Israeli war, called by the Israelis "*Milkhemet Ha'atzma'ut*", that is War of Independence, and by the Arabs "*Al-Nakba*", the Catastrophe. In the following days the armies of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq and also a small military contingent from Saudi Arabia march toward the newborn Jewish State⁸³.

Through the pages of the official newspaper, P.C.I. describes clearly its position, London is responsible for the invasion against the Jewish community in Palestine, and the Soviet Union is fighting against the western imperial policy⁸⁴. The language is very clear before the outbreak of the war: "*The Arab invasion is guided by London*"⁸⁵, and after it: "*Four Arab armies attack the State of Israel*"⁸⁶.

⁸⁰ Tas, p. 43-52.

⁸¹ L'Unità 21/3/1948.

⁸² Gilbert, p. 186.

⁸³ Gilbert, p. 193.

⁸⁴ Tas, p. 58-62.

⁸⁵ L'Unità 7/5/1948

⁸⁶ L'Unità 16/5/1948.

Of a remarkable importance is the latter title of the official newspaper where states in capital letters “Stato d’Israele”, State of Israel. The acknowledgment of the State is an issue not only all over the world but also in Italy, where initially the government does not recognize it. Umberto Terracini, a deputy of P.C.I., signs a petition to the Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, and to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carlo Sforza, asking explanation for government’s behaviour⁸⁷. Such are the words :”...why you did not recognize the State of Israel? If you do not consider proceeding without any further delay to prevent that silence and passive attitude of the Italian Republic could be seen as an approval to the policy, which stimulates and keeps on sustaining the barbaric war of aggression, which disfigures Palestine among the disgust of the entire civilized world...⁸⁸”. This direct attack to the most important figures of the Republic is not a product of a single mind (considering also the Jewish origins of the deputy, but faithfully reflects P.C.I. attitudes and, to a wider extent, the communist view worldwide. USSR declares its endorsement to resolution 181 on 13th of October 1947, a month and two weeks before the voting in New York⁸⁹. The communist opinion about the Middle Eastern events is definite, and it follows the Soviet’s one.

The Jewish resistance is somehow seen as a romantic fight for their survival. Jews as few, not well equipped but full of an invincible spirit, struggling for the right cause against a heartless oppressor. During the course of May 1948, L’Unità publishes an ample range of articles about the war in Palestine, covering many aspects of it. In addition to British responsibilities, space is also given to Arabs’ condition, which is typical of an oppressed people. Arab leaders are under the orders of the British who provide them with everything needed for the war, while the population is sent to the front without preparation, to a, almost certain death⁹⁰.

In an interview to a Syrian soldier, the situation of the Arabs is portrayed well. He was called up for the army, told to go to war, and given an inadequate training. Sent to Palestine on the 9th of

⁸⁷ Ricciardi, p. 24.

⁸⁸ Tas, p. 74.

⁸⁹ Morris, p. 235.

⁹⁰ Tas, p. 67-70.

May, were captured the following day. Interviewed about the reasons why he was sent there, he did not know what to reply, adding he barely knew where Palestine was⁹¹.

For all the course of the first Arab-Israeli war, the position of the communist party does not change, the support to the Jewish cause remain the stronghold of its policy. The only effective changes can be seen in the interest given to the area's events. During 1948, Italy and Eastern Europe go through some serious happenings, like the attempt to kill Palmiro Togliatti, or the Tito's Yugoslavia issue, which shift attention from Palestine towards the other side of the Mediterranean Sea.

⁹¹ L'Unità 21/5/1948

1c) Slanski affair and doctor's plot

Contrary to what by the Italian communists believe, the Israeli forces is strong, well organized and numerically important hence, they won the war consolidating the existence of Israel. Besides all the territorial changes and consequences for the Arabs, one big actor disappears from the Middle Eastern scenario: Great Britain. This power vacuum leads to a different approach of the two big remaining powers, and, it affects the Italian communist point of view too. Soviet Union shift its area of influence towards the Arab states, and slowly becomes a substitute to the Americans. Egypt and Syria view the benefits of an alliance with the USSR and start to ask for financial and technological aid, coving them as necessities of breaking the chains of imperialism and colonialism⁹². P.C.I. begins to be concerned about the Arab population, and to foresee a possible tool of the socialist cause in the awakening Arab people. Jacoviello writes about manifestation in support of the communist cause, where young Arabs parade with red flags, portraits of Stalin in front of their fathers still covering their head with veils and old hats. For the first time Arabs are seen as discriminated, a minority of a State that makes differences among its citizens and Zionism is a form a racism. Still, the young Arabs are well concerned about their problem and about its solution that is inescapably through the class struggle and fight against imperialism⁹³

Two cases occur in biennium 1952-53, when for the first time a different light is shed on Israel raising also matters of anti-Semitism among the Italian Communists⁹⁴. Between 20th and 27th of November 1952, fourteen high executive of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party are prosecuted under the accuses of attempted assassination of President Gottwald, overthrowing the popular government, and restoring capitalism, and spying to the detriment of the communist world. In his act of accuse, the public prosecutor brings together all the Jewish organization in one single body,

⁹² Tas, p. 96.

⁹³ L'Unità 19/5/1950

⁹⁴ Tas, p. 110.

uniting America and Zionism, cosmopolites, bourgeois Jews and other enemies of the Czech people, involved in a great conspiracy against USSR⁹⁵. Rudolph Slanski is number two in Gottwald's government, one of the most influent member of the Czechoslovakian communist party, and the first accused person in the trial where he admits on the very first day the following statement :*"as the matter of facts, the whole world Zionist movement is the world of imperialism, moreover of the Americans"*⁹⁶. For the sake of this dissertation, it is not important to investigate the political reasons behind such policy, what matters is the peculiar anti-Jewish aspects of the trial, the continuous references to the Jewish origins of the defendants⁹⁷.

Few weeks later, an article published on the main Soviet newspaper denounces an "arrest of a bunch of saboteur doctors"⁹⁸ guilty of having poisoned important political figures and of organizing further assassinations. In the following days all the Soviet and communist media worldwide keep on condemning with heavy words the doctor's plot, and even if, unlike the Slanski affair, the charge is not directly to the Jewry, most of the accused doctors are Jews, and occasionally conspiracy, spying, and Jewish lobbies appear to be linked⁹⁹.

In Italy, such events cannot pass unmarked. The most urgent problem concerns the accuses of anti-Semitism to the Communists in Eastern Europe, and to banish any doubt, it is an Italian Jew, Sergio Segre, member of P.C.I., who clarify the position of his party of course through the pages of its official newspaper. The Americans are blamed for having shed a bad light on the Czechoslovakian trial, which is only judging facts and whose sense of honour and justice is not to put into discussion¹⁰⁰. At the end of the Slanki's trial, the U.S.A. make anti-Communist propaganda. The western press and radio say that the verdict is based upon the Jewish origins of the defendants but *"there cannot be anything more false than this"*¹⁰¹, Segre keeps on affirming and all

⁹⁵ Rapoport, p. 154.

⁹⁶ Gilboa, p. 269.

⁹⁷ Rapoport, p. 155.

⁹⁸ Pravda 13/1/1953

⁹⁹ Rapopot, pp. 168-178.

¹⁰⁰ L'Unità 14/11/1952

¹⁰¹ L'Unità 28/11/1952

over the end of 1952, the P.C.I. insists on its non-anti-Semitism. *“No fight against the Jews. Fight against the enemy of the human progress, against the defendants of the old world”¹⁰²*, and *“accused persons are found guilty because massive proof and evidence of their criminal acts, innocent people are not dragged in front of a trial”¹⁰³*, Boccacini writes on *L’Unità*.

As for the doctor’s plot few weeks later, P.C.I. maintain its usual lent of analysis. No doubt these monsters are guilty, but the Jewish origins of most of the doctors is irrelevant and P.C.I. is so confident about it that can afford to deal with such accuses with sarcasm adding that in USSR criminals are sent to justice, regardless religion, or race¹⁰⁴.

Maurizio Ferrara, a communist journalist who will be the chief director of *L’Unità*, makes his point on the official communist newspaper stating that there are different types of anti-Semitism and the Slanski and doctor’s plot cases are not among those while the execution of Mr and Mrs Rosenberg are a good example of Nazi infamy. The Rosenberg affair plays an important role. An innocent couple is accused of having delivered secret information to the soviet vice consul in New York. Put on trial, they are judged guilty in 1951, and consequently executed in 1953, during the years of McCarthyism¹⁰⁵. Indeed it has a worldwide echo and it is often used by the Italian communists to defend themselves from the accuses of being on Soviet side¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰² *L’Unità* 29/11/1952

¹⁰³ *Tas*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁴ *Tas*, p. 112-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Enciclopedia Rizzoli-Larousse*, Affare Rosenberg, Milano, Rizzoli editore, 1970.

¹⁰⁶ *Tas*, p. 114-6.

1d) From Suez crisis to the Six-Day War

On the fifth of March 1953, Josef Stalin dies in Moscow at the age of 73 signing the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. The old members of the Communist party and strict Stalin's collaborators are prosecuted, imprisoned, and in some cases executed. The accused doctors are freed and Soviet Union renews good relationships with Israel and the Jews, the anti-Semitic plots are dismissed. The de-Stalinization process slowly begins¹⁰⁷. P.C.I. does not seem to be worried about the changes on the other side of the Iron curtain and keeps following Communist Party of the Soviet Union's guidelines. Harsh criticism is given to the Arab dictators and specifically against Nasser who persecutes and arrests Egyptian citizens guilty of communism. The Egyptian leader is called a criminal, a fascist and communists' torturer¹⁰⁸ and such image is carried forward up to Nasser decision to swap cotton for weapons with Czechoslovakia¹⁰⁹. From this moment onward Egypt starts to shift its position to a more accommodating one for USSR. On the other side, Israel is perceived differently being "the strongest country in the Middle East thanks to the Anglo-American weapons' provision"¹¹⁰.

Some incidents happen on the borders between Israel and Syria or Egypt and to the question "Who is the aggressor?" *L'Unità* blames the Americans. Even if responsibilities on both sides are admitted, it is remarkable how both Israel and the Arab neighbouring countries are somehow portrayed as victims of a greater game played by the imperialist power, which works in order to prevent a peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue¹¹¹. Although Egypt is constantly moving more under the Soviet influence, the very moment of no return is 1956, when Moscow's government offer to finance the construction of Aswan dam with a very low rate of interest. Few weeks later, the

¹⁰⁷ Riasanoski, pp. 541-3.

¹⁰⁸ *L'Unità* 4/3/1954

¹⁰⁹ *L'Unità* 26/8/1955

¹¹⁰ *L'Unità* 24/11/1955

¹¹¹ Tas, p. 135.

US state department announces the withdrawal of the financial investment previously promised to the Egyptian government¹¹². Few weeks later, Nasser declares his intention to nationalize Suez Canal, the first step towards the Suez Crisis. On the 30th of October 1956, Israel attacks Egypt and this fact is commented by P.C.I. despite attention is almost entirely on the Hungarian revolution. London's government seems to be responsible for it because: "*tension between Arabs and Israelis is grown in the last two weeks consequently to the British tactic to push Iraqi troops to intervene in Jordan*"¹¹³. Israel is then provoked to do so, but if these are the purposes of Great Britain, an American aid is then requested and on this point nobody knows Washington intentions¹¹⁴. When the war is over, and Israel is asked to withdrawal from Sinai, P.C.I. position become clearer. The crisis is an French-English attempt of restoring colonialism and all the blame lays upon them, the U.S.A. are not involved and Israel is indeed responsible but its mistake is highly understandable even if its acting as a victim and its servile disposition to imperialism is despised¹¹⁵.

Of no big interest is the lapse of time between the end of the Suez Crisis and the prelude of the Six-Day war in May 1967. During these years, events that are more important catch the attention of the Italian political life, and the Historical Land of Palestine seems not to be a priority except for one case: Eichmann's trial. Eichmann, captured in Argentina by Mossad's agents and brought to Israel to be prosecuted, was one of the most important bureaucrats in the Third Reich, and one of the responsible for the planning of the final solution. Found guilty, he is executed in Ramla in May 1962, the only case of capital punishment in all Israel's history¹¹⁶. For many Italian communists, the memory of Hitler's Germany is still too fresh so the political debate is necessarily moved on this affair. Israel is fully supported and has the undisputable right of putting Eichmann on trial, not only

¹¹² Dougherty, James E, "The Aswan Decision in Perspective", *Political Science Quarterly* (The Academy of Political Science) **74** (1): 21–24.

¹¹³ L'Unità 30/10/1956

¹¹⁴ L'Unità 30/10/1956

¹¹⁵ Riccardi, pp. 125-7.

¹¹⁶ Gilbert, pp.336-7.

to make justice for his past deeds, but also to fight an anti-Semitism, which is still alive even in Adenauer's Germany whose government is partly against Israel's right to judge Eichmann¹¹⁷.

The communist deputy Terracini is visiting Israel at the beginning of May 1967, shortly before the outbreak of the Six-Day war. He writes an official report to his party explaining his point of view and suggesting P.C.I. political line. The situation is serious, signs of a coming war are very clear and they are a consequence of a pre-coordinated Arab initiative. Their intention is still of getting rid of Israel, to destroy it and the party must have a position about it. As it is known, Tyrants enslave the Arab masses and their attention is diverted from their terrible situation to the fight against the Jewish State. Although the party must be on workers side and must not forget it in its language and speeches, the recognition of Israel and the right to its existence cannot be brought into question¹¹⁸. Such relation arrives to the secretary of the P.C.I. in the middle of May and right after it seems to be widely adopted by the party in the following days. Israel existence is continuously supported even the imperialistic powers are using it as a tool for their plan of controlling the Middle East¹¹⁹. Now P.C.I. faces few problems, how to conciliate the support to Israel cause and the support to Arab masses, how to defend themselves from the accuses of anti-Semitism and at the same time affirming Israel's responsibilities. As for anti-Semitism, an article of the communist deputy Giancarlo Pajetta clarifies their ridiculousness and adding that it is still merely the old attempt to disrepute the communists¹²⁰. On the other hand, Maurizio Ferrara, who is now the chief director of L'Unità, attacks very heavily the Italian Press, and especially the socialist newspaper L'Avanti!, accusing them of having "*raging, racist campaign*" against the Arabs, outcome of their "*merciless and phony logic*"¹²¹. Heavy words.

To give a sign to the Italian Jewish community and public opinion, the Rome section of the P.C.I. sends a letter to Sergio Piperno, the chief of the Roman Jewish community to reassure P.C.I.

¹¹⁷ Di Figlia, p. 40.

¹¹⁸ Di Figlia, p. 59.

¹¹⁹ L'Unità 25/5/1967

¹²⁰ L'Unità 26/5/1967

¹²¹ L'Unità 28/5/1967

attitude towards the full recognition of Israel and its national sovereignty¹²². Similar words are repeated, few days later by the communist deputy Jacoviallo, who says that: “*for us (the communist party) the existence of Israel is not a matter of discussion*”¹²³

This duality keeps on going on up to the outbreak of the war when P.C.I. takes a firm and lucid position in support of Israel. “*Israel fights for his own existence*”¹²⁴ such words from Joseph Alsop, an expert on middle Eastern issues, are reported on l’Unità the following day to the outbreak of the war, not forgetting to remark that Israel shot first, but for a very understandable reason. In a letter to Eugenio Scalfari, a socialist member of Milan city council who will be deputy and co-founder of the well-known newspaper “la Repubblica”, Giancarlo Pajetta sums P.C.I. position: “*The destruction of the state of Israel is an absurd goal and it damages the Arab anti-imperialist struggle. Propaganda done around such project facilitates imperialists’ action*”¹²⁵.

¹²² Tas, p. 173.

¹²³ L’Unità 30/5/1967

¹²⁴ L’Unità 6/6/1967

¹²⁵ Tas, p. 178.

2) The Socialist Parties

2a) The first years

Despite not being in the first places on the list of priorities, the Italian Socialist Party (P.S.I., acronym of Partito Socialista Italiano) shows its interest for the events in the British Palestine right after the end of the Second World War on its official newspaper, *Avanti!*. The perception is the one of two different worlds, a new, dynamic one, coming from the modern ideas and activities of the Jewish community, and a second, static and old Arab society, stemming from tribal and archaic structures¹²⁶. To the Italian Socialist eyes: *“in 1946 the Jewish people is not only sharing the land with the Arabs: most important, it is the victim of the Nazi persecution asking the international community its right to reach its promise land and to have a State, after having suffered such extermination as Shoah was”*¹²⁷. Throughout 1947, P.S.I. follows with constancy the discussions and negotiations for Palestine partition, only few days before the proclamation of the independence of Israel, *Avanti!* gives full attention to it. A remarkable enthusiasm comes with the upcoming declaration and all the steps towards this event are shown on *Avanti!*¹²⁸. P.S.I. position, expressed by Max Latimer the columns of its official newspaper, is in support of the Israeli cause: Jews are the companions, the comrades of the fight against the Nazis, the victims of their persecutions. Israel is a progressive, European ad modern state, which will possibly do well to the feudal Arab societies¹²⁹.

After the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war, Mario Bellini explains clearly P.S.I. approach to the conflict and to its causers: *“It’s useless to try to find the reason of the war in the traditional hate*

¹²⁶ *Avanti!* 13/7/1946

¹²⁷ Tarquini, p. 165.

¹²⁸ *Avanti!* 13/5/1948

¹²⁹ Pacifici, p. 142.

between the Arabs and the Jews, the hostilities broke out because of England's refuse to let the Jews bring progress in the Middle East¹³⁰". Hence, England is responsible for what is taking place in Palestine, its interests and political dominating policy are the cause of "Hate". Although London's government carries most of the responsibilities, a share of blame is for the Arabs leaders who are pictured as greedy anti-Semite, anti-Socialist, anti-Progress, in a nutshell anti-everything that might free their people from their long-time enslaved condition¹³¹.

Internationally, P.S.I. views still in favour the Soviet Union, and finds in its mission, causes to support and share. *"Today Russia supports Israel for the same reason why England opposes it. Because being a young, progressive movement, it will destabilize the order upon whose the British base their predominance in the Middle East¹³²"*. Somehow, it is a naïve approach to the reality, and it eludes the complex matters of international power equilibriums, but it is based on genuine convictions.

Internally, P.S.I. party makes its voice clear when it comes to the official recognition of the State of Israel by the Italian government. The most important exponents of the party criticize harshly the government, whose P.S.I. is not a member anymore, for not recognizing immediately the newborn Jewish State¹³³.

Among the many reason of sympathy for the Israeli cause, with no doubt one of the most fascinating is the Kibbutz phenomenon. Kibbutz is a new Hebrew word, coming from the old Hebrew root of "group" or "cluster" and it is used to describe the communities established by the Jewish immigrants at the beginning of the XX century. On their arrival in Palestine, the newcomers settled in some areas of the country, mainly dry and uncultivated land, with the intention of developing it and making it productive. The first one was created in 1909 in Degania and by the

¹³⁰ Avanti! 3/6/1948

¹³¹ Avanti! 5/6/1948

¹³² Mondo Operaio 25/12/1948

¹³³ Tarquini, pp.165-8.

declaration of Independence, there were all over the country around 300 Kibbutz. In such communities goods are shared, there is no circulation of money and production is collective¹³⁴.

It is of no surprise that the Socialists all over the world find this experiment a base for socialism and for socialist economy. As for the Italians, Kibbutz is the proof of the supremacy of the cooperative system to the individualistic one and it can be easily seen by the marvellous work for the rescue of the dry land of Palestine, and its mission consists in replacing and taking over capitalism which is creeping into the economy of the country¹³⁵. Despite such enthusiastic and positive approach to the Israeli society, some hints of doubt and criticism are visible at the beginning of 1951. In a report to *Mondo Operaio*, the relations between Arabs and Jews are reported as well as the condition of the workers: *"Israel should start a new policy from the Ben Gurion's government...a new step can be the annulations of all the racial discriminations, which bring Arabs to the same level of the Afro-Americans...a further step is peace with the neighbouring countries...such changes can occur only if the workers take power as they took freedom, then cooperation of new forces in the Islamic world will transform the Middle East into a land of freedom instead of being a stronghold of the American imperialism"*¹³⁶.

Still P.S.I. judgement on Israel and Zionism remains positive up to 1956, a year full of crucial events and a turning point for the Italian Socialists.

¹³⁴ Enciclopedia rizzoli larouasse, Kibbutz

¹³⁵ *Mondo Operaio* 24/2/1951

¹³⁶ *Mondo Operaio* 3/3/1951

2b) From Suez crisis to the Six-Day War

The happenings in Sinai at the end of 1956 are overshadowed by the Hungarian revolution, which is, for many other Italian parties and also for the public opinion, perceived as much closer. P.S.I. does not seem to take into consideration Israel's role whereas Egypt is the first actor who is observed. Few months before the Anglo-French military operations, P.S.I. position is clear about the nationalization of the Suez Canal: *"No opposition to the nationalization of Suez Canal, full solidarity with the aspiration of the colonial people to release from the oppressive policy of colonialist powers, condemnation of any violence, requests for convincing and appropriate guarantees of international transit freedom of the Canal"*¹³⁷. Together with the support for the independence of Egypt, concern is expressed for the risk of Nasser's Egypt to become an aggressive, militarist, pan Arab country, instead of being anti-colonialist and neutralist.

With the outbreak of hostilities, London and Paris are reckoned as the organizer of an "act of banditry" and focusing mostly on the refusal from the US to support the invasion¹³⁸. Still, P.S.I. eyes look more towards Budapest than to the Middle East, and even after the turbulent end of 1956, Israel and its Arab neighbours are not in the first places of Socialists' ranking of priorities.

Interest for Israel and the Middle East returns with Eichmann trials and with a renewed strength for the anti-fascist common cause. Israel from that moment comes back to its original mission, and its origin as victim of the Nazi violence and attempt of annihilation of the Jewry. Israel becomes again a beacon of enlightenment and progress. Israel democracy is an example for the world, able to survive in a difficult region, among dictatorships and illiberal regimes¹³⁹. Full support is given to Israel even for the Palestinian refugees' problem, viewed as a direct consequence of the Arab anti-Israel policy, hence Israel carries no responsibilities as 250000 Arabs were granted with the

¹³⁷ Avanti! 8/8/1956

¹³⁸ Avanti! 1/11/1956

¹³⁹ Tarquini, p. 201.

citizenship and, moreover, Israel attempted at renewing peace talks with its neighbours¹⁴⁰. One exception has to be mentioned as it foresees a debate which will break out years later: *“The military regime of the state of Israel operate a nationalistic and basically racist policy, masking it with needs of national defence..... the progressive political entities of Israel are fighting against this “Arab Ghetto” proposing a new management and the end of the military government¹⁴¹”*.

In 1963, P.S.I. enters the government after almost 20 years of opposition. In the next years, the socialist party follows several divisions, alliances, unions and changes as well its name before coming back to its original one, P.S.I.¹⁴². Despite such political commotion, Socialists’ position towards Israel does not change much and keeps on standing with it, particularly on the Six-Day war eve, as it is shown on P.S.I. official newspaper: *“Israel has its right of existence, this right has been recognized by international society which let it be part of its own institutions. USSR has been the first to recognize de jure the existence of the new State: consequently no one has the authority to deprive Israel of its mean to exercise its right to live¹⁴³”*. Such words, are pronounce by the French Prime Minister, François Mitterrand on the eve of the war, and reported by the Socialist on their official newspaper to make clear how socialists’ position is equal and undivided. Many representatives of P.S.I. speak in these days using similar words and reasoning and they all defend the State of Israel, focusing mostly on its right of existence. Among these, it is worth quoting Bettino Craxi speech in Milan where he addresses his party following, approximately, its guidelines. Craxi views the pan-Arab fanatic ideology against Israel is absurd and racist and its goal are incompatible with the civilized world purposes. The problem has to be viewed in two perspectives, an international one with the involvement of the two superpowers, and a regional one, where mutual respect is needed for the good relations between Arab countries and Israel and, in the long run, to a full and just solution for the integrity of the Palestinian State¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁰ Avanti! 30/11/1963

¹⁴¹ Nuovo Mondo 25/3/1962

¹⁴² Scoppola, p. 347-350.

¹⁴³ Avanti! 30/5/1967

¹⁴⁴ Avanti! 3/6/1967

On the day of war's beginning, similarly to the Socialist group at the European Parliament in Brussels, the Italian Socialist Party, together with the Social Democrats Party (PSDI), issues the following statement: *"The direction of the unified PSI-PSDI, unanimous, in front of the outbreak of the hostilities in the Middle East and of the war declaration of all the Arab States against the State of Israel, which is now facing the greatest the worst crises of its turbulent existence and a threat of genocide, reassert, as already stated by party's secretariat since the 24th of May, the necessity of an initiative of the UN to re-establish a position that grants Israel safety for its borders and freedom of navigation. The direction wishes that the UN Security Council will not disappoint people's expectations, and advises on a meeting between USA and USSR, and hopes Europe will put an end to a lack of initiatives and political actions for peace which carries its responsibilities for the worsening of the situation¹⁴⁵."* On the pages of *Avanti!* Much space is given to the course of the war and the approach of the Socialist Party criticizes heavily government's position, which is prudent and equidistant. P.S.I. insists for a more active role for Italy, blaming the authorities of short memory and lack of collective responsibility. Of course, the Italian government has its reason for adopting such policy, which develops from a different approach to international balances, but for the socialists the country cannot ignore all those people who fought against Fascism and Nazism, as it would be like forgetting the atrocities and the consequences for the Jewish population¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ Deliberazione della Direzione del PSI-PSDI Unificati, Roma, 5 giugno 1967. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.

¹⁴⁶ *Avanti!* 8/6/1967

2c) Pietro Nenni

As already mentioned in chapter 2a, the Italian Socialist Party does not place the events in the historical Palestine on top of their priorities, at least up to Six-Day War. Pietro Nenni, whose active and full life has continuous connection with the fate of the Jews and of their country, represents a remarkable exception. Born near Ravenna in 1891 in his young age starts his political career being a strikes promoter and collaborating with Benito Mussolini's newspaper "Lotta di classe"¹⁴⁷. He fights in the First World War being severely wounded and sent back home in 1916 for convalescence. After the end of the war, Nenni becomes the chief director of Avanti, and opposes Fascism vehemently so that he is imprisoned more than once. He fights in the Spanish Civil War, returns to Italy and in 1943 he is arrested and interned in Ponza. He escapes coming immediately back to political life and promoting with Sandro Pertini, Giuseppe Saragat and Lelio Basso the unification of all the socialist entities in Italy. He is the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new-born Italian Republic¹⁴⁸. As well as his firm anti-Fascism, personal matters influences Pietro Nenni in his policy towards Israel and, on a large scale, towards the Jews. During the Italian Resistance Nenni meets many Jews in jail and experience their will to fight Fascism, and in addition to that, his daughter marries a member of the French Resistance and, arrested with her husband, she is deported to Auschwitz where she dies of typhus in 1943¹⁴⁹. From 1949 to 1963, Nenni is the P.S.I.'s secretary and, unlike his party, he follows personally all the events in Israel and in the Middle East taking the side of Israel more or less in every possible aspect.

His analysis of the happenings in the Middle East comes from his anti-Fascist view on the one hand, while on the other on the decolonization process. During the time of the first Arab-Israeli war, support for the latter is based on the colonialist policy of the British, as for the problem of the

¹⁴⁷ Italian for Class Struggle

¹⁴⁸ http://www.fondazionenenni.it/biografia_nenni.asp

¹⁴⁹ Di Figlia, p. 17.

Palestinian refugees; the Jewish state is not to blame. Even when the socialist party is not very keen for Israel, Nenni finds time and place to defend it shifting the attention to the Egyptian situation. As for the Hungarians oppressed by a tyrant, so the Egyptians cannot live in a democratic country. The interest of the Egyptian people is to be master in his home, and the interest of the world is to see Suez Canal operating and free of navigation for every country in the world¹⁵⁰.

In 1967, Nenni's position is of the utmost lucidity. During the electoral campaign for the administrative election in Sicily in June 1967, in a speech in Palermo, Sicily, he makes a parallel between the situation in Europe in the 30's and what is happening in the Middle East. Nenni believes that the world is facing the same danger, and the impotence and inactivity of the world can lead to the same mistakes. The egoism of who feels safe and far away from the battle fields are a serious threat to peace and for these reasons: *"we call upon every moral force of the nation against any defection, any indifference in front of what is not only for the surviving of the Israeli people from Pogroms and incinerators, but also for peace worldwide. We find simply our right way in our values of the Resistance and to the firm and radical condemn of anti-Semitism which was one of Resistance's greatest moments"*¹⁵¹.

Here Nenni gives a very remarkable orientation uniting the values of the Italian Resistance and the killing of the anti-fascists with the Shoah, making these two historical events parts of the same historical process, tightening the support for the Israeli cause in the Italian socialist area¹⁵².

¹⁵⁰ Zucaro, pp. 144-147.

¹⁵¹ L'Unità 10/6/1967

¹⁵² Di Figlia, p. 51.

3) P.S.I. and P.C.I.: a comparison

As already mention above, in the lapse of time between the end of the second world war and the six days war, the focus on the Middle Eastern events is not as intense as it is in the decades following 1967. Such approach associates the two most important leftist parties in Italy. Eastern Europe, Cuba, or the Korean War, just to mention a few, are of greater importance both for P.C.I. and for P.S.I.

Yet, it is still possible to come to interesting and remarkable conclusions. In the first years after the Second World War, when Israel is reaching its independence, both parties perceive the happenings as the cause and consequences of the British policy in the Middle East. To a Marxist point of view, it is easily recognizable the government of London as the imperialist bourgeoisie aiming at keeping the situation as it is in order to maintain its control over the land it exploits. Britain represents the old world, with his classist sight, preventing the masses from gaining the power they deserve, and from organizing a new society according to socialist principles. Throughout all these years, both P.C.I. and P.S.I. tend to analyse the event in the historical Palestine simply as a class struggle phenomenon. Proletarian internationalism is the answer to the developing events. The Jewish community is the oppressed class, struggling for freedom, survival, and moreover justice whereas British are, in Marxist terms, the capitalists which in this historical period are called imperialists afraid and responsible of the lack of emancipation of the Middle East¹⁵³. The leading spirit of the Italian left in these years derives clearly from Marx's Manifesto, whose motto "*Workers of all lands unite*" sums up their expectations¹⁵⁴. The experience of the Kibbutzim are

¹⁵³ Ricciardi, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴ Marx K. Engles F., p 152.

welcomed as a good example of the establishment of a socialist society and a model to refer to and to tie relations with¹⁵⁵

Of a remarkable importance is the role of the pre-existing Arab population in Palestine, which is regarded as politically and culturally undeveloped, a class without consciousness. In such scenario, the work of the Jewish community, highly educated, inspired by socialist ideals and conscious of its conditions, is of the utmost importance for the Arab population, which would be willing, happily and naturally, to accept the Jewish presence, to cooperate with it, and to work for the project of a socialist society. Arabs are not perceived as owners of an own project, will, idea for the future. They suffer from centuries of slavery, religious impositions, superstition that made the incapable of dealing with the world and of rebelling against the oppressor. In a nutshell, Arabs could only benefit from the Jewish presence.

This view indeed stems back from Marx's global analysis, which claims to investigate the entire structural and super structural order of the world¹⁵⁶. The concept is later developed by Lenin, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg who sums it in this statement: *"Imperialism is not the creation of one or any group of states. It is the product of a particular stage of ripeness in the world development of capital, an innately international condition, an indivisible whole, that is recognisable only in all its relations, and from which no nation can hold aloof at will"*¹⁵⁷.

The notable issue concerns here the language, where the evil word *"Imperialism"* substitutes the word *"Capitalism"*, but besides that it is obvious that cultural differences, backgrounds or any other difference between populations are reduced to Historical Materialism.

Despite the ideological aspects, the Communist party, making the first big difference between the two political entities, needs some more pragmatism. According to the messianic and inevitable transformation of the world's societies into socialist ones, P.C.I. in matters of foreign policies tended not to dissociate itself from the Moscow's guidelines. For the sake of the revolution and the

¹⁵⁵ Tarquini, pp. 174-82.

¹⁵⁶ Lukacs, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Rosa Luxemburg, "The Junius Pamphlet" 1915.

triumph of socialism, P.C.I. adopts on a larger scale what is on a national scale its Democratic Centralism, where to a freedom of discussion, follows a unity of action¹⁵⁸. The internal debate is always present in the P.C.I. but, for a higher purpose, the voice of the party is one, especially when it comes to matters of foreign policy. Hence it is comprehensible the statement issued by Palmiro Togliatti (Secretary of the Italian Communist Party from 1923-1924, 1930-1934 and then 1938-1964) who affirms right after the establishment of the State of Israel as follows :”*The State of Israel is a great achievement for the fight against imperialism*¹⁵⁹”. In these years, despite the unstoppable and evident decline of the United Kingdom as world power, the first aim of USSR is to shake down London’s influence in the Middle East. P.C.I., which is already the biggest and most organized communist party in a western country, feels the need to keep on the same path as its Soviet brother.

Here comes the first and probably most important difference between the two leftist parties: The Socialists do not have the need to feel attached to such international purpose. It is indeed keen on a worldwide socialism, but it does not see necessarily the Soviet Union as the great mother to refer to. A pluralism of voices are present since the early days of Israel, and although its existence is never to question, it is on the socialist sides that questions about the racial policy of Israel, or about the rights of the Arabs are raised, as highlighted in chapter 2 P.S.I. Anyway, still it is a matter of few voices out of the chore, which sounds homogeneous at least up to 1956. The Hungarian facts deepen the differences between the two parties distancing one from the other.

Another important similarity, with very little exceptions, concerns the language used to describe or to address the actors in the Middle East. Arabs are victims of their history, their ignorance, and of course of the British. Jews are the righteous fighters, people who, from being victims of the Nazi regime, now are struggling for the good purpose and the fair future of Palestine. The United Kingdom is the evil actor, intending to protect its own interest at the expense of the colonized populations. We will see how such speeches will disappear completely few years later while others

¹⁵⁸ http://csppcpr.altervista.org/libri/Lenin_-_Che_fare.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Nirenstein, p. 248.

will come into the political debate and will survive up to the present days. No mention of Palestine as an independent state or the Palestinians as people with an own specificity are observable during these years.

The last aspect to be investigated in this chapter is the past shared by Communist, Socialists and Jews. It is important to remind that in these years the concept of Zionism or Zionists have no negative meaning, on the contrary many of those fought in the Second World War against the Nazi even in Italy. The best example is the “*Brigata Ebraica*”, the Jewish Brigade famous for operations in Italy, which after helping in defeating the German occupiers returned or emigrated in Israel¹⁶⁰.

Being all of them the most persecuted during the Second World War, and sharing terrible destinies as hiding, being arrested and sent to concentration camps, executed in public places, a common line unites them all after the end of the war. Somehow concept as anti-Semitism, or anticommunism are conceived as one, and racial or ideological discrimination as the result of the same criminal politics. It is of no big exaggeration to imagine a communist who lost his friends at the end of the fascists feeling the same as a Jew who lost his family in a concentration camp. The defeated common enemy ties a union where the Jews remain the old good friends, whose future is still bond to the old comrades, and the duties of the latter is to protect them in order to prevent a new genocide to happen. Hence, we understand the full support in the eve of the Six Days War by all the leftist forces in Italy.

In conclusion, few points can be made. Almost full empathy for Israel by the leftist Italian forces, few differences between the two major parties, undoubted sympathy for the Jewish people. The Socialist and the Communist Parties are, up to 1967, going hand in hand about the Israel-Arab controversy¹⁶¹.

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.combattentiliberazione.it/la-brigata-ebraica-sulla-linea-gotica>

¹⁶¹ Molinari, p. 38.

From 1967 to 1989: The years of the discovery of the Palestinian question and of the higher interest of the Italian Leftist parties in the Middle Eastern conflict.

1) The Six-Day War

What is best known as the Six-Day War is probably the most astonishing military event in the history of humankind. On the 5th of June, after weeks of tension and political and military escalation, Israel shoots first against the Egyptian army and the war breaks out. The war ends on the 10th of June and in only six days Israel increases almost fourfold his territory, the entire Sinai (61000 km²), Gaza Stripe (636 km²), the West Bank and East Jerusalem (5700 km²) are in control of the Jewish State. The I.D.F. now is deployed over the Suez Canal, the Jordan River and the Golan Heights up to the “Tel Line”, almost 25 kilometres eastbound the old borders¹⁶². The world, the Middle East are deeply shocked, and the repercussions arrive naturally in Italy too, where the leftist area reacts in different ways.

In order to understand the consequences on the two major parties, it is necessary to take a step back and to see the political scenario before the war. While P.C.I. remains, generally, in line with Moscow’s policy, in the Socialist party the changing and its internal splits are taking place.

Starting in 1956, with the Hungarian revolution, P.S.I. begins to distance itself from the P.C.I. and the C.P.S.U. (The Communist Party of the Soviet Union) seeing the soviet invasion as unacceptable. In the following years, still on the international level, the presidency of J.F.Kennedy

¹⁶² Morris, p. 416.

diminishes the difference Socialists' foreign policy, helping them to find a common ground with the Christian Democrats to form a government¹⁶³.

In 1963, for the first time, a government of Centro-Sinistra (Center-Left) is to be formed and the socialists take part in it but some socialists' members do not give the trust vote and are expelled from the party¹⁶⁴. As already mentioned in the introduction, the socialist party goes through many changes, splits and reunions but the years right before and right after the Six-Day War are the most turbulent ones and it is in this scenario we have to understand the party's position.

¹⁶³ Tamburrano, p. 221.

¹⁶⁴ L'Unità 18/12/1963

2) P.C.I.: The Italian Communist party

2a) The discovery of the Palestinian cause

Although the communist party never questioned the Israel's right of self-defence and existence, a shift towards a pro-Arab, anti-American position is perceivable even before the outbreak of the war. In a very significant article on l'Unità 24/5/1967, the chief director writes on the first page an editorial "Dal Vietnam al Meditarreneo" (From Vietnam to the Mediterranean sea) where he outlines a framework of the upcoming conflict highlighting some features which are to be the guidelines of the communist policy in the post-war times. Three points are clearly identifiable. Firstly, the communist party remarks its opposition to the government forces, D.C. and P.S.U., which call for supporting Israel and the U.S.A.. Secondly, the American intervention in the Middle East is of no difference than the one in Southeast Asia, meaning an imperialist, aggressive and unjustifiable policy. Last but not least the community of intents with the Soviet Union whose voice is very clear on the matter, stating that any attack against the Arabs will face the firmest Soviet resistance¹⁶⁵.

Few days after the end of the war, the voice of the P.C.I. becomes unambiguous about the Six-Day war and about the reaction of the Israeli politicians unwilling to withdrawal to the previous borders. To a higher importance is the article of Jacoviello, on the same day, which asks himself to what extent a preventive war is justifiable in this time, where empires are not, and cannot be acceptable by the world's public opinion. Jacoviello goes even further, paving the way for what will be the main issues of future debate in the communist party. He accuses Israel of waging wars to impose its model over the Arab countries whose natural reaction cannot be other than aggressive words and intents. For the first time the reasons of the Arabs are taken into consideration, their need

¹⁶⁵ L'Unità 24/5/1967

to fight against the Israeli occupation and the blame is on Israel and its political class that is doing nothing to ease Arab frustration¹⁶⁶. Starting from now, these are the key factor discussed within the P.C.I. and, with very few exceptions; the party will keep a single guideline.

Among those standing out from the crowd, it might be interesting to view two different cases. Luciano Ascoli, an eminent jurist member of the party, critics openly his party's position, and after a visit in Israel in the late 1967, writes a detailed report contradicting the P.C.I. mainstream ideas. The pamphlet creates controversies to the extent that less than three years later, Ascoli takes again the pen in his hand and publishes a book "*Sinistra e questione ebraica. Antisionismo fase suprema dell'antisemitismo?*" (The left and the Jewish issue. Is anti-Zionism the supreme phase of anti-Semitism?) developing a theory of a latent anti-Semitism in P.C.I.¹⁶⁷.

The reaction of the party is very hard and, in addition a very harsh article on a communist newspaper "Rinascita" where his assumptions are torn to pieces, the Internal Political Office of P.C.I. rebukes him in a private meeting on 14th of July 1970¹⁶⁸.

The second case to be analysed refers to Umberto Terracini. Before the outbreak of the war, Terracini is in Israel, and in his report informs the party about the explosive atmosphere in the Middle East: "*The imminent war is a consequence of the initiative of the Arab countries which sees in the international tension the best moment to carry out their plan to annihilate the state of Israel...Such plan is the natural developing of the Arab nationalism and religious extremism, used by the leaders to distract the attention of their people from the real economic, social, and political problems...our party cannot remain silent but must speak out clearly and be explicit about our basic ideas, and the first of these is the acknowledge of Israel's right to existence*"¹⁶⁹.

Unlike his party, in the following months and years he keeps on having the same ideas and remains stuck to his position, standing against his own party. He even writes a letter to L'Unità

¹⁶⁶ L'Unità 13/6/1967

¹⁶⁷ Di Figlia, p. 59.

¹⁶⁸ Ricciardi, pp. 434-8.

¹⁶⁹ Di Figlia, p. 59.

where he criticizes directly his party anti-Israeli campaign and quotes several comrades, with their anti-Israeli sentences¹⁷⁰. Despite the harsh criticism, no open rebuke is directed towards Terracini and this is due, as Ricciardi points well in his book¹⁷¹, to the huge stature of Terracini, an anti-fascist, historical leader of the communist party who was appointed president of the Constituent Assembly of Italy¹⁷². The P.C.I. assembly simply does not find convenient to adopt a hard strategy as the one to Luciano Ascoli¹⁷³.

These two communist party members are of Jewish origins, but these details must not mislead to a fallacious conclusion where the Jewry inside the communist party is pro-Israel. On the contrary, due to the aftermath of the Six-Day War, a profound split takes place between the Jewish comrades who remain loyal to the party's guidelines and those, like Terracini who decide to wiggle out of them¹⁷⁴.

Beyond the internal controversy, important events happen in the Middle East, and new important actors begin to be known to the world and of course to the Italian political scenario. On the 21st of March 1968, the I.D.F. attacks the Jordan village of Karameh, where the Palestinian forces have their bases. The Jordanian army also intervenes with its tanks and at the end of the battle some Israeli soldiers are killed, some Palestinians flee and the Jordanians keep some Israeli armoured vehicles¹⁷⁵.

The episode, although the number of soldiers involved is low, becomes of the utmost importance for the Arab world. Firstly, it is perceived as the first victory over Israel. The Palestinian press pictures Karameh as a heroic victory and compares it with the Israeli victory of less than years before¹⁷⁶. The Palestinians are galvanized.

One personality comes out of this happening and becomes known all over the Arab world, and also worldwide: Yasser Arafat. From now on Palestine is indissolubly woven with the figure of Abu

¹⁷⁰ L'Unità 25/7/1969

¹⁷¹ Ricciardi, p. 439.

¹⁷² http://legislature.camera.it/chiosco.asp?cp=1&position=Assemblea%20Costituente\I%20Costituenti&content=altre_s_ezioni/assemblea_costituente/composizione/costituenti/framedeputato.asp?Deputato=1d28550

¹⁷³ Di Figlia, p. 60.

¹⁷⁴ Di Figlia, p. 60-1.

¹⁷⁵ Rubinstein, p. 58.

¹⁷⁶ Rubinstein, p. 59.

Ammar, his fighting name. He is the leader of the Palestinian freedom movement, and is appointed few month later as Executive Committee Chairmen of the P.L.O., Arafat becomes himself the Palestinian cause.

Also in Italy, for the first time, the name of Arafat is heard after the Karameh battle and, although initially not much of importance is given, the Communist party knows of him. Precisely in April 1968, at “Conferenza delle forze progressiste e antimperialistiche del Mediterraneo” (Mediterranean conference of the progressive and anti-imperialist forces) in Rome, Arafat is mentioned as it is the full support to the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people and their resistance against imperialism and oppression¹⁷⁷. To have a direct meeting between a representative of the P.C.I. and the maximum leader of the Palestinians, we have to wait up to the 22nd of December 1969, when Gian Carlo Pajetta, together with two exponents of his party, Romano Ledda and Pietro Secchia, meets in Amman Yasser Arafat¹⁷⁸. However, it is not the beginning of the official relations between the P.C.I. and the Palestinians. A waiting time of one year is needed for it, when a delegation from Al-Fatah, which was the biggest and most representative group in the P.L.O., participates in a meeting in Palermo and, thanks to this occasion, it has the chance to be welcomed in Rome by the chief of the communist party, Luigi Longo. The meeting is a great success and the first outcome is an invitation of a P.C.I. delegation for further meetings¹⁷⁹.

As Rubbi points out brilliantly in his memories, the results of such developments are essential for the Italian party to have a clear framework of the P.L.O. and of the Palestinian people.

As for first, the impression is of a strong and organized structure, both on the military and on the social-political side. The P.L.O. is able to attack Israel from the Jordanian territory and is very active in the refugee camps where it provides the Palestinians with basic needs.

¹⁷⁷ Rubbi, p. 15.

¹⁷⁸ Rubbi, p. 15-6.

¹⁷⁹ Rubbi, p. 15.

On the contrary, with what Golda Meir in a famous interview to the *Sunday Times* states about the Palestinians affirming that they simply do not exist¹⁸⁰, Pietro Secchia retorts contradicting the Israeli Prime minister. The Palestinians do exist, and how!, he writes in his notebook adding that their existence is evident by their enormous power they have in Jordan where they are a “State within the State”¹⁸¹.

The results of the first contacts are indeed positive. The P.L.O. with its leader Arafat manages to conquer the heart and soul of the communist party, and its cause, mission, rights are fully recognized and supported. They finally exist as an independent entity, separated from the other Arab countries and people, owing a peculiar story and goals.

Yet, an incompatible feature remains, without, apparently, a possible accommodation. In an interview to an Italian known journalist, the undisputed leader of the Palestinian cause, Yasser Arafat speaks about the impossibility of reaching an agreement with Israel. To the question if a peace is possible with the Zionists, he answers: *”No! We want the war, the victory. Peace for us means the destruction of Israel an nothing else. What you (Europeans and westerners) call peace is so for Israel and for the imperialists. For us it is injustice and shame. We will fight up to the victory. Decades if necessary, even generations*¹⁸².”

Obviously, with such premises, the right of existence of Israel that the P.C.I. never put into discussion is not something that they can agree on. More than this, it is an embarrassing situation for the communist in Italy. Such approach from the Palestinian side, along with accuses of anti-Semitism represent a thorn in the flesh for them, as it will be highlighted in the following chapters.

In the first three years after the Six-Day War, the communist party faces a new series of events, new actors comes into the scenario and old actors are changing their role. In February 1970, the first commission of the party gathers to discuss a long report from Gian Carlo Pajetta who analyses the situation in the whole Arab world pointing out the big differences of high number of countries and

¹⁸⁰ Sunday Times 15/6/1969

¹⁸¹ „Archivio Pietro Secchia“, quaderno 10, pag 565-70., Feltrinelli, Milano, 1978.

¹⁸² Fallaci, p. 131.

societies that just obtain their independence from the European colonialism. The detailed account, of a high interest indeed, divides the Arab countries in three big groups. The Gulf group, a bunch of medieval and feudal entities, a second one still under the influence of France or America (Marocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Jordan) and a third one (mentioned first in the report) encompassing all the countries with socialist experience or governments, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan and the two Yemen. For the sake of this dissertation, we will focus on the last one, which is the one involving Israel. Pajetta asserts that these countries, especially Egypt and Syria, have made severe mistakes during the Six-Day War, whose results are the unfriendliness of the western world, nevertheless these are the victims of the imperialistic and Zionist policies of the U.S.A. and Israel, aiming at overthrowing the progressive regimes of Syria and Egypt. The reporter does not forget the militarist and oppressive features of such regimes but ends its work stating that most probably from these countries “the path for a socialist development is the most mature to set forth¹⁸³”.

The consideration about Israel, the only non-Arab entity examined in the report is many-sided. As usual, the right to exist within safe borders is recognized and the UN resolution 242 is supported so Israel is required to return the territories occupied in 1967, but a new, different, and negative view of the ideology that guided the long way to the establishment of the country is given.

Zionism is no longer a romantic doctrine, which inspired the European Jewry and helped them to reserve their identity, and to survive the persecutions but rather an aggressive and colonialist thought. Pajetta adds immediately that a return to anti-Semitism is to be avoided by all means, but despite this warning, such new vision of the State of Israel could have effects on the P.C.I. political approach¹⁸⁴. Right after the meeting of the first commission, on the 17th of March of the same year, in a message sent to the Israeli communist party, P.C.I. supports the “*right collocation of the Israeli communist party in its fight against Zionism and against the aggressive Zionist policies of*

¹⁸³ Pajetta, p. 5-23

¹⁸⁴ Rubbi, p. 28.

*discrimination carried out by the ruling Israeli class*¹⁸⁵”. This episode marks a turning point in the political expression of the communist party, which previously paid much attention in order to avoid any anti-Zionist language or position widely utilized by the Arabs and the Palestinians¹⁸⁶.

Wide space is dedicated to the Palestinians, and to their resistance organization. Pajetta describes it as a vast and complex system of different groups of diverse ideology and political inspirations. There is, among them, a part which supports and carries out terrorists attacks, and Pajetta warns against them, but, in the end, the biggest part of the movement represented by Al-Fatah is a genuine expression of fight of national freedom. What were the impressions of Pietro Secchia few months earlier, at the time of the first travels and contacts in the Middle East, is now widely adopted. P.C.I. does not recognize the Palestinians as refugees but as people seeking their own land and the free use of their inalienable rights, and for such objectives the communist party gives its total support¹⁸⁷.

Since the beginning of the recognition from P.C.I. of the Palestinian cause, problems come out with no apparent and immediate solution. Not only, as mentioned before, the refuse of the P.L.O. to accept the right of Israel to exist, but also the territorial problem, and the means to obtain the independence of a sort of Palestinian State. The P.L.O. strategy and ideology does not match P.C.I.’s premises, and no agreement is visible.

The report terminates with specific critiques to the Italian government, incapable of having a neutral policy on the matter, and that permits the use of the American basis on the Italian soil. Moreover, understanding the importance of the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, Pajetta calls for a policy of good neighbourhood with the Arab countries and, as France did, for the opening in Italy of a diplomatic office of the legal delegation of the Palestinian movement¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁵ Documenti politici dal XII al XIII congresso, Atti 1972, p. 271.

¹⁸⁶ Rubbi, p. 28.

¹⁸⁷ Rubbi, p. 29.

¹⁸⁸ Pajetta, p. 98-100.

2a) Further developments and the terrorism issue

While the Italian leftist parties discuss about the Palestinian resistance, the situation in Jordan becomes gangrenous, the P.L.O. gains more and more control of the country and it is unclear who is really in charge. The escalation of the Jordanian-Palestinian crisis gives rise to the outbreak of a general attack in Amman and in other cities in the north against the Palestinian outpost. The battle lasts ten days with many casualties on the Palestinian side, and leads to the agreement between the two parts in Cairo, with the mediation of Gamal abd el-Nasser¹⁸⁹.

Although the events in September 1970 in Jordan are of a tremendous violence, the match is definitely over one year later, when the Fedayn lose totally control over Jordanian land and are forced to move to Lebanon¹⁹⁰.

The echo of what is called “Black September” is enormous. The Arab league isolates Jordan, and all over the Middle East, words of condemnation and guerrilla actions are not spared for the Hashemite kingdom. The wave of it arrives in Italy, where the communist party takes the side of the Palestinians. The political office of the P.C.I., right after the last attack against the Fedayn on 21st of July 1971, underlines the misfortune, tragedy, and heroism of the Palestinians, denounces the new aggression of King Hussein. *L’Unità*, on its first page, talks about the genocide to the detriment of the Palestinian refugees at the hand of the Jordanian regime¹⁹¹. In the following two years, the Palestinians suffer a terrible crisis not having any longer Jordan as a base, they need to move to another land and they are scattered again into different Arab countries. During this period it is recorded an increase of the activity of terrorism by the most extremists fringes of the P.L.O. Such violent episodes are not something new in the Palestinian agenda both inside the Palestine and outside the homeland. While the operations inside Israel can be reputed as internal business, not

¹⁸⁹ Baron, p. 186-209.

¹⁹⁰ Baron, p. 220.

¹⁹¹ *L’Unità* 22/7/1971

particularly disputed in the western world, some groups inside the P.L.O., and especially the P.F.L.P. guided by George Habash, that believe that any possible target related with the interests of the Zionist entity can be hit¹⁹². Hence, we witness in the two-year period 1968-9 a number of hijacking, including one concerning a EL-AL plane flying from Rome to Tel Aviv, plus attacks to Israeli embassies, and agencies outside Israel. The communist party asks Arafat to be accountable of such facts, and the only answer they receive from the leader is that Al-Fatah is contrary to operations in foreign lands. Of course, a similar answer does not satisfy the P.C.I. entourage¹⁹³, but at that moment terrorism is still not perceived as so central in the Palestinian political life.

After the Amman events, and the flee of the P.L.O. from Jordan, a recrudescence of terrorism brings it to the attention of the world, and from now on it simply cannot be ignored. Among the most shocking terrorist operations, carried out mostly, but not exclusively, on European soil, indeed the most shocking one is the massacre of the Israeli athletes in Munich, during the 1972 summer Olympic Games¹⁹⁴. The new-born group responsible of this killings is called “Black September”, and from 1971 and 1973 is accountable for several terroristic operation, some of these carried out also on Italian soil, as for example in Trieste in august 1972, the blowing of five cisterns of oil dispatched for Austria and West Germany. They explain this operation, which costs an amount of seven million dollar, with the Black September’s goal to hit anyone who supports Israel and its imperialistic regime¹⁹⁵.

In occasion of the massacre occurred in West Germany in September 1972, serious problems have to be faced by the Communist party, as such attacks do not belong to the main concepts of the P.C.I. political actions, and a burning debate inflames among the various political entities. Officially the party condemns immediately and firmly the use of such means but, as Maurizio Molinari points out in his work, *“P.C.I. distinguish itself from the other political forces justifying the attack with the*

¹⁹² Baron, p. 178.

¹⁹³ Rubbi, p. 28.

¹⁹⁴ Baron, p. 241.

¹⁹⁵ Baron, p. 241.

*desperation of the Palestinians*¹⁹⁶.” The latter statement is not entirely true as, officially, the Communist party, in the documents of their congress, “*Firmly condemns the terroristic act of Munich...condemns the use of terror as tool of political battle*¹⁹⁷”. Furthermore, on the day after the attack at the Fiumicino Airport in Rome in December 1973 which counts 30 casualties, the party “*states its scorn for the barbarous carnage...criminal acts like these must only have as goals the sabotage the reaching of a fair peace in the Middle East*¹⁹⁸.”

P.C.I. attitude towards this means of fighting, even for a cause their fully support, it is not of the most simple ones. In order to understand well why the communists condemn publicly and steady terrorism, a comprehension of the domestic political situation is needed. Italy finds itself in full of the “Anni di piombo” (Lead years), where factions from both the political extreme sides, left-wing, and right-wing, plan and carry out attacks all over the country. Moreover, the extra-parliamentarian sections call openly for the “*fair revolutionary violence*”, and for the fight against the institutions of the Republic. Italy lives in a constant fear and tension, and the population so as the electorate, is very sensitive about the matter. It is a short step to associate the Italian violence and terrorism with the Palestinian ones. P.C.I. needs to distance itself from who backs the armed fight as a legitimate political tool¹⁹⁹.

Yet, the push towards the Palestinian cause finds its own way more on the debate within the leftist political thoughts through the press, and, as for the communists, the simple condemnation of the attacks cannot mask the growing anti-Israeli tendency.

Maurizio Ferrara concludes an article with a significant query: “*It is not an aberration to ask ourselves if in the world of 1972 if it is not true that the reasons of the Jews persecuted for centuries are the same of the Palestinians today*²⁰⁰”. He goes even further when he writes about the Palestinian terrorism saying that the use of the hijackings matter is merely a tactic to create an anti-

¹⁹⁶ Molinari, p. 73.

¹⁹⁷ Documenti politici dal XIII al XIV congresso, Atti 1972-3, p. 82.

¹⁹⁸ Documenti politici dal XIII al XIV congresso, Atti 1972-3, p. 323.

¹⁹⁹ Rubbi, p 33.

²⁰⁰ L’Unità 17/9/2013

Arab, anti-Communist mood. To those who accuse the Arabs of Nazism, and the communists of silent connivance, Ferrara responds harshly, comparing the anti-Semite of the pre-war period are the pro-Semite of the present time. *“Such people, who defend the right of Israel to expel the Arabs from their own land, and to shut them into “Lagers”, must remember our common history when Nazis executed Jews and communists, but should also understand our position today which stands for the Arabs, and for their right to live on their own land*²⁰¹. At the end, he adds that this is also their way to protect the people of Israel from the Americans and from the hawkish politics of their government, but despite this last sentence, the solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and the justification for their means of fight leaps out. What is notable concerns the typology of language, in these years new concepts come out from the Middle East and words like occupation, resistance, or expressions of condemnation of Zionism, in all its different forms, become habitual in the leftist political speech.

In May 1973 in Bologna, a conference is held to promote the dialogue between the two parts involved in the conflict. The major Italian political forces, P.C.I., P.S.I., organize it and also D.C. and it is opened to delegations from Israel, and other countries, including of course a Palestinian delegation. Molinari tells about the absence of Israeli representatives, while all the Arabs countries and entities were present²⁰², de facto depriving the conference of objective validity. According to other witnesses, the conference hosts a good group of Israeli delegates, including two members of the Knesset, and few responsible of Israeli socialists’ movements. Even an ex-member of the Stern Gang²⁰³, an extremist terrorist right wing responsible of many bloody operation as, for instance, the Deir Yassin massacre where a number between 100 and 110 Palestinian civilians were killed, and many atrocities were committed against the Arab population²⁰⁴ takes part to the conference.

²⁰¹ Di Figlia, p. 112.

²⁰² Molinari, p. 73.

²⁰³ Rubbi, p. 45.

²⁰⁴ Morris, p. 264-7.

Wherever the truth is, the importance of the conference is what *L'Unità* calls the “Spirito di Bologna”, the Bologna spirit; a new approach of the situation in the historical Palestine is the outcome of Bologna. The conclusions of the conference lead to a political solution of the problem, and no mention of the armed fight is made. Israel must respect the UN resolution 242 and withdrawal from the occupied territories, paving the way to peace, the rights to self-determination for the Palestinian people have to be granted, and all the countries in the region, including Israel, must have the right to exist²⁰⁵. The major problem concerning the territorial issues is not discussed yet, but a final important stress is put upon Israel, and the withdrawal as a pre-condition to start the peace process. Such vision and requirements from the State of Israel will dominate the Italian public discussions for decades, and above all the disengagement from the occupied territories are a key point in the coming years political debate. Few weeks after the Bologna conference, the P.C.I. holds a seminar called “Questioni inerenti alla situazione in Medio Oriente” (Questions about the Middle Eastern situation) where the territorial issue is finally put through analysis, among other points such as the relations between the Communist party and the Palestinian resistance, and the contrast and risks within the P.L.O. itself. For the first time the question of a territory for an independent country populated by the Palestinian refugees leads to a “*State obtained by territorial operation which can be done through diplomacy*”²⁰⁶. It was still too early for the Palestinian leadership to consider positively a similar option, but in the Italian Communist Party, it takes shape.

The last noteworthy episode in 1973 is the first official visit of a P.C.I. delegation in Israel, led by the communist deputy and responsible of the political bureau Alfredo Reichlin, followed by other members of the party and a journalist from *L'Unità*. Previously contacts between the P.C.I. and the leftist Israeli parties occurred. Italian members visited Israel even though unofficially, but for this dissertation, it is of a certain importance to report the delegate of the Israeli communist party who one year earlier intervened in the twelfth congress of the P.C.I. stating that “*no people can accept to*

²⁰⁵ *L'Unità* 28/5/1973

²⁰⁶ Rubbi, p. 47.

*live in a country occupied by strangers without fighting*²⁰⁷”, and receiving an overwhelming applause.

The delegation visits many places in the country, participates to demonstrations for peace with Arabs and Jews (still the time of Shalom Achshav has to come, but such unions between the two major racial components of Israel start to shape themselves in these years), and also the chief of the Israeli parliament, where Reichlin has the chance to highlight the results of the Bologna conference and to query about the colonization of the territories. Despite the good intentions and the debate in the Knesset, only the Israeli communist party draws up a joined public notice about the recent distension between USA and USSR and the possible occasion of exploiting such calm in order to improve the prospective of peace in the Middle East. To reach this goal, the report says, it is *“necessary to implement the UN resolution 242 in all its aspects, the withdrawal of Israel, the acknowledgement of the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Arab States and the respect of the Palestinian national, legitimate rights including the self-determination one*²⁰⁸”.

²⁰⁷ Documenti politici dal XII al XIII congresso, Atti 1972, p. 484.

²⁰⁸ L'Unità 18/7/1973

2b) From the Yom Kippur War to Lebanon

On the 6th of October 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian armies open fire at Israel on the Golan Heights and on the Suez channel. The attack is a total surprise for the I.D.F., which is completely unprepared to face it and needs several days in order to reorganize itself and fight back successfully. Compared to the previous war, the motivations for this war are quite different on the Arab side. While the Six-Day War goal was to destroy the Jewish state, in the Yom Kippur war (called War of October by the Arabs) the main goal for the Egyptians is to set their army on the other side of the Suez channel, for the Syrians is to take back what they lost in 1967. Besides all that, a new feeling of self-esteem and trust is being searched, a war that can wash away the shame of six years before. A victory against Israel, which is considered by the Arabs and by the Israelis themselves virtually invincible²⁰⁹. The fighting last nineteen days, and eventually, on the territorial side nothing changes in Syria, while in Egypt the situation seems to be more complex. Egyptian troops are in the Sinai, but some Israeli counterparts manage to break into the Egyptian soil and to manage the very safety of the capital, Cairo. The U.S.A., with the important political action of its Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, and the Soviet Union initially, provide their allies with military equipment, but as the war goes on the Arab countries increase the price of oil of 70%. The two world powers impose the cease-fire and prevent Israel from reaching Cairo and Damascus and the spreading out of a crisis that would have encompassed the whole world²¹⁰.

Italy feels immediately the gravity of the situation, and along with Spain, refuses the Americans the use of their basis on Italian soil and calls for the end of the hostilities. Enrico Berlinguer, who replaced Longo as secretary of the Communist Party in 1972, speaks out clearly asking for

²⁰⁹ Morris, p. 488.

²¹⁰ Morris, p. 546-9.

respecting of everyone's right and calling for a joined action of the Europe to set a peace conference because all European economic and safety interests are menaced²¹¹.

The Yom Kippur War paves the way for significant changes in the Middle East in the upcoming years, leading to difficulties both in the inter-Arab relations and also internationally.

The process of bringing Yasser Arafat to the international acclamation of only and indisputable leader of the Palestinian people and cause reaches its top in 1974, 14 the of October to be precise, when one hundred and five states invite the P.L.O. as representative of the Palestinian people to participate to the general assembly about the Palestinian issue. A month later, Yasser Arafat gives at the United Nation his famous speech of the "gun and olive branch", gaining applauses and showing the world about the condition of his people²¹².

Such achievement is the result of internal developments in the Arab-Muslim world and within the P.L.O. In November 1973, in Algeria, Arafat is acclaimed as the only representative of the Palestinian people and few months later, in Lahore, in February 1974, the same title is being given by the Conference of the Islamic countries, cutting off King Hussein from any possible authority over the Palestinian people.

In this new atmosphere, a new meeting between a P.C.I. delegation and Arafat takes place in Beirut. The report at the end of the journey focuses on an aspect that was never considered before. The P.L.O. seems, in almost all its components, to be disposed to establish an independent Palestinian State in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip and the restoration of the natural rights of the refugees. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim remains to free the whole Palestine from the Zionist colonialism, the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state all over the historical Palestine. The communist party delegation views it with doubt and considers it not a true intention to move steps forwards a peace agreement, but rather a mere political calculation by Yasser Arafat²¹³.

²¹¹ Rubbi, p. 50-1.

²¹² Baron, p. 285.

²¹³ Rubbi, p. 55.

On the CNP held in Cairo in June 1974, what P.C.I. has heard in Beirut becomes the message of the Palestinian people heard worldwide. Although key question as the Israel's right of existence or peace are out of the question, The P.L.O. now opens to negotiations²¹⁴, and so times are ready to let the leader of the Palestinians speak at the U.N.

Meanwhile important events happen in Italy. In 1974, Nemer Hammad, a young guy born in Akko and forced to flee his city and to seek refuge in Lebanon, arrives in Rome as representative of the Palestinian in Italy, and he start immediately to interlace fruitful relations with all the Italian political parties and entities. He remains in Italy up to 2005²¹⁵.

With the opening of a diplomatic office in Rome, Italy, *de facto*, recognizes the Palestinian cause, and the P.C.I. does not waste time in reminding its position about it in its XIV congress in March 1975, when Berlinguer repeats what is, and has been, P.C.I. guideline about the Middle Eastern issue. Safety for every actor in the region, rights of self-determination for the Palestinian, and respect of the U.N. resolution 242²¹⁶.

Later in the same year, an episode at the United Nation catches the attention of the world setting up controversies. On the 10th of November 1975 the general assembly adopts the resolution 3379, where “*determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination*”²¹⁷. The vote is promoted by a group of Arab and Muslim countries, and supported by the soviet bloc and particularly from USSR. Most of the western countries, including European ones and Italy, vote against the resolution²¹⁸.

In the pages of L'Unità, short after the resolution, an article titled “*Il nostro dissenso*”, (our disagreement) the communist party explains the reasons why such concept, Zionism is a form of racism, cannot be shared by P.C.I. The vote is considered “*Ideological*”, and it does not help the Arab cause, on the contrary, it alienates the possible sympathy in Europe, where the Palestinian can

²¹⁴ Baron, p. 310.

²¹⁵ Rubbi. p. 58.

²¹⁶ Documenti politici dal XIV al XV congresso, Vol I 1975-6, p. 450-9.

²¹⁷ <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/761C1063530766A7052566A2005B74D1>

²¹⁸ <http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=108V0691N26Y9.82&menu=search&aspect=power&npp=50&ipp=20&profile=voting&ri=&index=.VM&term=A/RES/3379%28XXX%29>

receive help from, but besides that, for principles reasons the idea of seeing Zionism as a form of discrimination is unacceptable. By the way, in the same article, Zionism is described as a conservative and reactionary ideology, a tool in the end of imperialism, which generate, at the end of the Israeli politicians, aggressive and discriminatory policies. Eventually, an incitement of careful consideration is directed to the Israelis. Such voted, although is wrong, reflects the terrible problems and situations of the people in the Middle East, and so it has to be evaluated²¹⁹.

The critics to Israel and its policy reach a higher level in occasion of the Operation Entebbe. The 27 of July 1976, a German-Palestinian commando hijacks a plane directed to Paris to the airport of Entebbe in Uganda. The majority of the passengers are Israeli and they are threatened to death if the hijackers' requests are not met. After few days of negotiations, the government of Jerusalem decides to intervene and to organize a mission to free all the hostages and bring them back home. The operation is a success, brilliantly carried out, but costs the life, besides the members of the commando, also to a number between 20 and 40 Ugandan soldiers²²⁰. Reactions worldwide are different, and while the Americans and the Europeans express their consideration, the African countries asks the public condemnation of the UN. Soviets and Arabs call it an act of aggression. Of the same opinion is the Italian communist party, which strongly condemns the operation for being a violation of the Ugandan sovereignty. Moreover, a group of Italian communist party members, (including Sergio Segre, of Jewish origins) presents a point of order to the Italian parliament requiring the government to take a stand against the western chorus of commendations and to join Kurt Waldheim (UN secretary) condemnations of the Entebbe operation²²¹.

While on the international scenario significant changes and the outbreak of an extremely complex series of clashes in Lebanon occur, the domestic politics in Italy become more and more tense, leaving to the Middle East events less time and space in the P.C.I. range of action. The administrative and regional elections in 1975, and the political elections in 1976 see a remarkable

²¹⁹ L'Unità 12/10/1975

²²⁰ Morris, p. 484-5.

²²¹ L'Unità 9/7/1976

increase of the Communist Party, gaining both in the Senate and in the deputies chamber more than 33% of the electorate's votes²²². For the first time in the republican history, the alliance for the birth of a government seems to be reached with the P.C.I.. For the sake of this dissertation, it is not relevant to survey all the political events that end with the death of Aldo Moro and with the peak and the descent of Italian terrorism, but it is necessary to keep in mind the heavy atmosphere and the fragility of the Italian political situation during those years.

Relations with the Palestinians are kept through meetings in the Middle East and in Europe, and with messages of friendships for their progresses as, for example, the first administrative vote in the West Bank. In a telegram to the new elected mayor of Nablus, the P.C.I. congratulates for *“success of the vote of the Palestinian people to the Unitarian Progressive Lists. Such success testifies unequivocally the will of the Arab Palestinian people to be free, independent, and master of its destiny”*²²³.

In these turbulent years, another two central happenings are going to be reason for further splits and contrast in the international community and in the Middle East: The outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, and the peace process between Egypt and Israel.

Lebanon, on the eve of the fifteen years long civil war, is a pacific multiconfessional country, enjoying one of the highest quality of life in the entire region. The flow of Palestinian fighters, expelled from Jordan in 1971 arrives in the country of the cedar trees destabilizing its internal equilibrium. The P.L.O. establishes its general quarter in Beirut and from the Lebanese capital city continues the struggle against Israel. The diverse components of the Lebanese society start to feel the presence of the Palestinians, which works as detonator for latent social, political and economic struggles²²⁴.

²²² <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=S&dtel=20/06/1976&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

²²³ Documenti politici dal XIV al XV congresso, Vol I 1975-6, p. 485-6.

²²⁴ Baron, p. 317.

Initially the P.C.I. tries to keep a benevolent neutrality, taking into consideration on the one hand the need of the Palestinians to find allies, backers, on the other hand to preserve the Lebanese sovereignty, menaced by the P.L.O., in which every component of the multicultural society must enjoy rights and safety²²⁵.

However, the neighbouring Syria, fearing the total victory of the Palestinians and the Muslim forces against the Christians and the other minorities, and that the war might affect the Syria itself, President Hafez Al-Assad invades Lebanon on the 31st of May 1976. The U.S.A., Israel, the Falangists (Lebanese Christians) and a part of the Arab World see with favour the Syrian military campaign in Lebanon, being them as well afraid of the same possible developments²²⁶.

The Soviet Union is indeed surprised and irritated by the Assad's move, but mainly because they are not informed in advance but besides this, no announcements come out of the Kremlin. Berlinguer, two days later on the 2nd of June, from Paris calls for the end of the shooting and ask for respect of the Lebanese independence and sovereignty, however no mention of the Syrian intervention is made yet. A clear and direct blame is upon Syria after the massacre of Tall Al-Zaatar, a Palestinian refugee camp, when the Maronite phalanges, with the inactive complicity of the Syrian Army, perpetrates a massacre against the civilians. Together with other European communist parties, the P.C.I. signs a petition to ask the Syrian army to leave Lebanon as soon as possible²²⁷. Seeing in the following weeks that the request remained unheard, and that the massacres continue, on the 12th of August, the secretary of the party delivers an appeal about "*The tragedy of the Lebanon and of the Palestinian resistance*". The requests are to stop immediately the bloodbath, the repression against the Palestinians, the withdrawal of the Syrian troops, and the beginning of negotiations otherwise "*in any moment the situation could turn into even more tragic events. In addition to the atrocities of a fifteen months civil war, whose symbol is the massacre of*

²²⁵ Rubbi, p. 69.

²²⁶ Morris, p. 626.

²²⁷ Rubbi, p. 70.

*the refugees' camp of Tall Al-Zaatar, we can likely see the menace of a true genocide against the Palestinian people and the dissolution of the Lebanese national entity*²²⁸.

While the Lebanese Inferno is mowing its victims, the peace negotiations between Sadat and Begin, under the supervision of the US president Jimmy Carter, come to an agreement. Despite many difficulties and mistrusts, and after a long and exhausting period of discussions, The president of Israel and his Egyptian counterpart sign in Camp David, on the 26th of March a peace agreement, which implements the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, the possibility for Israel to transit goods through the Suez channel and the mutual exchange of embassies²²⁹. Two years before, when the Egyptian president Sadat visits Israel and the Knesset, the western countries view very positively the initiative while Moscow criticises it harshly, mainly because the USSR understands, correctly indeed, its exclusion from the negotiations. On the other hand, the Italian communists take a very indefinite side, being prudent about it, without condemning what is, after all, a step toward peace and dialogue²³⁰.

On the Arab side, on the contrary, the independent and solitary strategy of Sadat leads to the collapse of any possible joined conference of all the Arab countries (an option supported also by the P.C.I.) which consider and condemn Egypt as a traitor, uninterested in the Palestinians' rights and cause. The main condemnation comes from Arafat who rejects the cooperation Begin-Sadat accusing the Egyptian president of having sold Jerusalem, and, even though temporarily, comes back to the hard line of no negotiations²³¹.

Indeed, it is not easy for the P.C.I. to wriggle out of such situation. The Arab refusal of Camp David brings the Italian communists to a dilemma with no way out. The contrasts come up during few visits of Gian Carlo Pajetta, as representative of the party, throughout the Middle East. The Syrians, including the president Assad, refuse to listen P.C.I. position about the Lebanese issue,

²²⁸ Documenti politici dal XIV al XV congresso, Vol I 1975-6, p. 459.

²²⁹ Morris, p. 607.

²³⁰ L'Unità 19/11/1977

²³¹ Baron, p. 357.

and on the contrary blame the Italians for supporting negotiations, which do not include the Palestinians. Likewise, in Baghdad, the general secretary of the Baath party, Munif Al-Razzaz, accuses them of being “*too soft*” with Zionism and imperialism. Concisely, the always-claimed position of the Italia communist party, which encompasses the acknowledgement of every entity’s rights, simply does not meet anyone’s favour²³².

When finally the peace treaty is signed, a change of position takes places in the Italian party, according to the severe condemnation of the C.P.S.U. In the XV congress of the Communist Party, that witness the participation of delegations from most Arabs countries, Berlinguer affirms that: “*to respond to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, we insist on the need for the area to find a pacific, global, and lasting peace, guaranteeing the security and integrity of every country and that recognizes the right of the Palestinians to have a State*”²³³. It is a firmer pro-Arab stand, even if probably it is not as much as the Arab delegations expected. In fact, as Rubbi tells in his memories, some problems comes up with the Egyptian delegates, and in order to keep everything quite, the Italians manage to find a trick to make an Italian Communist member look like an Iraqi delegate in order to find Arab-looking people to replace the other delegation while the Egyptian spokesman gives his speech²³⁴. Whether this story is true or not, it helps in understanding the tense climax in the congress.

At the end of 1979, in Italy takes place a conference for the “*Rights of the Palestinian people and the Peace in the Middle East*”, organized and supported by the main Italian political parties including, of course the communist one. The meeting, fully covered by the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, is a success. Forty delegations are invited and for the first time in Italy, Israelis and Palestinians sit at the same table²³⁵. As for the P.C.I., the chairman is Pajetta. The themes analysed and discussed during the meetings go from the occupation of the territories to the Palestinian right

²³² Rubbi, p. 86-91.

²³³ XV Congresso del P.C.I. p. 28.

²³⁴ Rubbi, p. 96.

²³⁵ La Repubblica 25/9/1979

of return and finally to the foreseen policy of the Israeli government of annexing parts of the West Bank or Golan Heights.

In this spirit, few months later, the European council gathers in Venice, reaching an agreement, and drawing a paper of thirteen point about the rights of the Palestinians²³⁶ and stating clearly, in the article number 8, that no changes of status for the city of Jerusalem can be accepted. The communist party lines up with the Venice declaration.

The declaration, and particularly the article number 8, intuites what would happen in Israel short after when Begin annexes Jerusalem and the Golan Heights (these sometime later)²³⁷, pushing the UN to adopt a resolution that considers invalid the annexation, and provoking in Italy a chorus of condemnations, that the communist party joins, even by an historical friend of Israel, Furio Colombo, who is now minister of foreign affairs²³⁸.

Meanwhile the situation in Lebanon embitters, creating the preconditions for a military intervention of Israel, which comes in June 1982, and aims at the annihilation of the P.L.O. as military formation, and its expulsion from the Lebanese soil. Before that, the P.C.I. condemns vehemently throughout the summer 1981 the Israeli interventions in the Lebanese civil war and the bombing of the suburbs of the capital city, Beirut. One last stand is taken by P.C.I. before the large-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon regarding the refusal of the American proposal of institution of a peacekeeping force in Southern Lebanon. It states: *“such intervention is outside the NATO, it would not be a request of the U.N. but rather of the government of Israel, U.S.A. and Egypt. An involvement like this would mean to back a solution of the Middle Eastern crisis, the one of Camp David, which is unilateral, rejected by both the Palestinians and the majority of the Arab countries. It would go against the orientation subscribed in Venice in June 1980*²³⁹.

²³⁶ https://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/venice_eng.htm

²³⁷ Morris, p. 611.

²³⁸ Camera dei deputati, atti parlamentari, 17/12/1981

²³⁹ Documenti politici dal XIV al XV congresso, Vol II 1975-6, p. 574.

2c) From “Peace in Galilee” to the Declaration of Independence.

In the morning of 6th of June 1982, the I.D.F. enters in Lebanon to reach Beirut and to annihilate Arafat and his fedayn. The operation, called “Peace in Galilee”, has a great cost in terms of military material, soldiers, and of course damages and victims²⁴⁰. The international community reacts loudly and mainly condemning the Israeli aggression as Italy does. Along with the governmental party, the Christian Democrats, P.S.I. and P.C.I. express their deepest concern for what is happening in Lebanon and ask the executive to call off the visit to Israel of the Italian foreign minister. The secretary of the communist party joins the day after the beginning of the Israeli campaign in Lebanon and defines it: *“an dangerous act of war by Begin’s government which menaces world peace”* and it ends calling for: *“the public opinion, the democratic parties, the Italian government, to intervene actively and properly to put an end to the Israeli invasion”*²⁴¹. Protests come also from the Jewish side, not only in Israel, which witnesses the biggest protests and demonstrations of its history (especially on the 25th of September, right after the massacres of Sabra and Shatila²⁴²), but also in Italy where one of the most reputable newspaper hosts a petition named *“Perché Israele si ritiri”* meaning why Israel should withdrawal. The critic to the government of Israel are unforgiving and the sense of shock and disgust is highly perceivable. Among the subscribers, many Italian eminent figures of the Italian leftist political thinking, and also many Italians of Jewish origins including the very much known writer Primo Levi²⁴³.

On the official press organ of P.C.I., words towards the Israeli government are of the utmost condemnation, and a new element emerges from the conflict. Savioli writes on the column of L’Unità: *“The ones who were persecuted yesterday are carrying out the same persecution to the*

²⁴⁰ Morris, p. 646-56.

²⁴¹ Rubbi, p. 110.

²⁴² Morris, p. 683.

²⁴³ Repubblica 16/6/1982

*detriment of another population in another time and continent. With rifles and bombs, they affirm their right not only to conquer someone else's territories, but also to deport, exile, and annihilate other people. We thought that such "right" was definitely abrogated in 1945, with the shutdown of Hitler's crematoriums. We were wrong. Survivors of the first final solution are dreaming on and actualizing a second one*²⁴⁴. For the first time, on the pages of L'Unità, a comparison between the Nazis and Israel is made. On the other hand, such steadiness against Israel is not the mainstream within the P.C.I. approach to the question, and comparisons with the Third Reich come only during extremely emotional moments, like the invasion of Lebanon. On the same newspaper, little afterwards, more accommodating and ample analysis about the Israeli reality find space, even about not strictly political features, find space, and we will talk about it later in the chapter.

In summer 1982, few very important and touching events happen in Italy, mainly in Rome. The 17th of June two representative of the P.L.O., Kamal Husain and Nazeyh Matar are shot dead in Rome²⁴⁵. P.L.O. blames Israel, but according to the Italian police, the people in charge are not traceable. Berlinguer attends the funeral, along with a massive participation of young Italian communists. Few days later, during a demonstration of the CGIL in which anti-Semite slogans are shouted, some unknown people dump a coffin in front of the Roman Jewish Temple²⁴⁶. Precisely right under the commemorative stone of the "Fosse Ardeatine", an important episode of the Nazi occupation of Italy when in 1944, the Nazi troupes, for retaliation to a partisan operation, massacred 355 civilians. The atmosphere is very tense, as such messages are clear: the Jews are more than linked to Israel, whose aggressive politics resembles the Nazi Germany²⁴⁷.

As the army leaded by Sharon approaches the capital of Lebanon, in Italy 351 deputies, all the leftist opposition, signs a petition with the request to the government of Spadolini, to recognize officially the P.L.O. On the 5th of August the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the Deputies

²⁴⁴ L'Unità 23/6/1982

²⁴⁵ http://www.palestine-encyclopedia.com/EPP/Chapter32_2of2.htm

²⁴⁶ Tagliacozzo, p. 525.

²⁴⁷ Di Figlia, p. 121.

Chamber approves a motion, presented by almost all the Italian political parties, (something very uncommon in the Italian political parties history) that commits the Italian government to prospectively recognize the P.L.O. officially, and to undertake initiatives to promote the mutual recognition between the P.L.O. and the State of Israel²⁴⁸.

The communist party through its secretary Berlinguer, assures to Nemer Hammad its commitment along with the democratic forces of the country, to intensify the cooperation in order to help the population of the refugee camps, victims of the Israeli bombings, and to stop the Israeli invasion and aggression. In addition, the finding a political solution for the integrity of Lebanon and for the Palestinian resistance is contemplated²⁴⁹.

Meanwhile in Lebanon the war goes on, and Arafat decides he has no choice rather than leaving Lebanon because the idea of remaining in Beirut to turn it into an “Arab Stalingrad” would be doomed to failure. Hence, an evacuation of around 15000 Palestinians, Syrians, kids and women, plus the chief families of the P.L.O. takes place in the last eleven days of August 1982²⁵⁰.

Arafat, which moves his head quarter to Tunis, plans a visit to Rome in the middle of September for the first time in his life. The Palestinian leader planned to visit Italy before this time, seeing in Italy a partner, which might have shown sympathy for the Palestinian cause, and, in addition to that, an encounter with the Pope has been always considered a necessity. Among all, the Italian communist party could have been almost surely a positive and fruitful initiative. Even if there have been previous telephonic contacts, only on the 15th of September the secretary of P.C.I. and the leader of P.L.O. meet personally for a brief and crowded meeting at the Excelsior Hotel in Rome at the presence of many other important Italian political leader such as Bettino Craxi (P.S.I.) and Ciriaco de Mita (D.C.).

Arafat’s visit lasts few days during which a series of meetings are held, and the highest and most prominent personalities pay him a visit, including John Paul the Second. There is also time to spend

²⁴⁸ http://www.camera.it/dati/leg08/lavori/Bollet/19820805_00_03.pdf#nav

²⁴⁹ Documenti politici dal XV al XVI congresso, Vol II , p. 879.

²⁵⁰ Morris, p. 671.

solely with the communist representatives in a Roman evening when the leader of the P.L.O. firstly and shortly meets Piero della Seta, a Italian communist of Jewish origins, and after some pleasantries, the meeting organized by the P.C.I. starts. Initially the intention was to set the discussion on the international situation, on possible and further agreement with Moscow, and on the purpose to push the Italian government to recognize the P.L.O., but the events in Lebanon cancel the original programme and the conference focuses on the Israeli crimes, and on the conditions of the Palestinians in Lebanon²⁵¹. Although the idea of discussing the P.C.I. proposals failed, and all the talk was directed to the Lebanese crisis, Berlinguer and his party support Arafat's request about a direct involvement of an Italian, French and American peacekeeping force to be sent to Lebanon to stop the Israeli massacres and to guarantee the population of West Beirut a peaceful life²⁵².

The political line adopted by the P.C.I. is to stick to Arafat and the P.L.O., considering him and his "Umbrella" organization the sole representative of the Palestinian people and cause, and on the other hand to promote diplomacy and distance itself from the more extremists branches pushing for an armed solution of the conflict. It is also necessary for the sake of the party's image, to establish the new and develop the old relations with the any Israeli political force, which might be indicatively wavelength. A good example is the MAPAM, whose leader in the eighties, Victor Shem Tov, in an interview to L'Unità propose that: *"Israel should negotiate with any Palestinian element which recognizes its right of existence and refuses terrorism. We have to negotiate with the enemy we face. A people dominating another people cannot be democratic and free. The occupation damages Israel hence its end is in the interest of both people. That is why it is urgent to find a solution for peace and for the territories. The more the occupation lasts, the more the nationalist elements, both on the Palestinian and Israeli side become stronger. In order to get out of this*

²⁵¹ Rubbi, p.126-8.

²⁵² L'Unità 16/9/1982

*vicious circle we need to develop a political process, paying the necessary price to have peace*²⁵³.

In these few words, the communist party finds an allay with its own ideas.

Such approach, surely moderate in the intentions of the party, meets serious challenges, as the atmosphere in Italy, as worldwide, is very tense on the Lebanese facts. An episode of intense gravity, few weeks after the massacres of Sabra and Shatila whose responsibilities have been attributed to Israel, shocks and embitters the relations between the Communist Party and the Jewish community and touching as well the sensibility of the Italian people. On the 9th of October, a Palestinian commando opens fire in front of the Roman synagogue causing several wounded and the death of the two years old Stefano Taché. Berlinguer sends a telegram to the Jewish community rabbi chief, Elio Toaff, to express his and his party condemnation for the brutal attack and the solidarity of every Italian communist²⁵⁴. As it will be in the next chapter widely highlighted, it will take some years to get over the Stefano Taché incident and to regain recover for the relations between the Jewish community and the Italian communists.

Internal problems do not stop the attempts of diplomacy in favour of the P.L.O. and its fight for the supremacy of the Palestinian freedom movement. On the 4th of November 1983 Berlinguer writes a letter to Assad asking to leave Arafat as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to reach a ceasefire to for the sake and the lives of the Palestinian people. The answer is an intensification of the fighting²⁵⁵. This is probably the last political attempt of Berlinguer to help for a solution of the Lebanese civil war as in June 1984 the secretary of the communist party dies. Among all the national leaders (including Giorgio Almirante, a former fascist and chief of M.S.I., Italian party of extreme right heir of the Fascist Party), important international communist leaders like the Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang and a young Michail Gorbačëv, also Yasser Arafat attends²⁵⁶.

²⁵³ L'Unità 24/10/1982

²⁵⁴ Documenti politici dal XV al XVI congresso, Vol II , p. 903.

²⁵⁵ Rubbi, p. 137.

²⁵⁶ <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1984/06/13/attese-roma-50-delegazioni.html?ref=search>

In an interview, the Palestinian leader tells that he is Rome to give his last salute to a personal friend who always supported in our difficult moments, adding that he is willing to challenge anybody in the field of peace, endorsing the diplomatic way of Berlinguer²⁵⁷. Indeed, he is speaking to a communist newspaper, but still it indicates a certain affinity and a unshakable sympathy for the Italian communist leader and his party.

The *Sigonella* crisis, which witnesses a dispute between the Italian government and the American government, is the governmental members, which do not include any communist, handle a key point in the history of the relations between Italy and the Middle Eastern conflict, but as it, it will be investigated later on in this dissertation. What it is important to report now, is the voice raised by Giorgio Napolitano, which is in these years the responsible for the foreign relations of the communist party. He affirms that terrorism cannot be fought violating the national legality²⁵⁸, de facto closing ranks with the government and supporting the hard line of the political independence of Bettino Craxi, the prime minister.

Few months later Napolitano becomes protagonists of the first official visit to Israel of the Italian communist party, an important act of independence and contrast with the guideline of Moscow. It is to be added that an attempt to find a diplomatic solution with the Soviet Union has been tried by Alessandro Natta, now secretary of the party after Berlinguer's death, which in a visit to Moscow talks about the relation between Israel and the Soviet Union and suggests Gorbačëv to reinstate normal diplomatic relations. Despite the firm intention to recognize the right to exist to Israel and the important links between the Soviet Union and the establishment of the country, the chief of C.P.S.U. retort that it all depends on the way Israel deals with Palestinians. In the P.C.I. congress later on in the same year, Natta himself declares that every form of terrorism is to be blamed, but at the same time, terrorists grow well under oppressive occupation like the Israeli one in the territories. The tragedy of the Jewish people, Natta continues, cannot be the justification for the politics of the

²⁵⁷ L'Unità 15/6/1984

²⁵⁸ <http://cinquantamila.corriere.it/storyTellerThread.php?threadId=crisisigonella>

Jewish State towards the Palestinians, but it is being understood that our recognition of Israel will never lack²⁵⁹. Basically, after renewing the condemnation of the Israeli politics, and the always firm Israel's right of existence, the P.C.I. remains in a position of allegiance with the Soviet Union, but at the same time has enough freedom of movement without openly breaking with Moscow.

Such is the political scenario when Napolitano, accompanied by Janicki Cingoli, flies to Moscow in October 1986. The first meeting of the Italian delegation is with the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, shortly before Prime Minister, and it occurs in a very pleasant atmosphere. Napolitano explains the point of view of his party, the necessity of an international involvement and of a conference, and the purpose of seeing a delegation representative of the Palestinians. The Italian delegation visits the Knesset, speaks with the deputies and meets the chiefs of the leftist parties in a positive and productive climate.

However the most significant moment in Israel is the speech at the Hebrew university of Jerusalem on the 27th of October in the "Il partito comunista italiano e il Medio Oriente" (the Italian communist party and the Middle East). In the long speech, every theme is discussed with certain abundance of details, starting with the history of the relations of the P.C.I. and its sustain to the birth of the State of Israel, its safety, the necessity of the international recognition. On the other hand, equally firm, he supports the creation of a safe, independent, Palestinian state and the solidarity with their right of self-determination. *"The P.C.I. always has tried to find a reasonable equilibrate standing in this conflict"* Napolitano says *"fighting intolerance, extremism, and fanaticism of all kind. We have to understand that fighting terrorism cannot be carried out in term of military action, retaliation, and violation of international laws"*. Before moving on other topics, Napolitano stresses his firm condemnation of terror, and his opposition to it, as always the Communist party did within Italy and also internationally. *"I am here to understand which glimmers of peace can be opened, and in which way the P.C.I. can be helpful. We are here because new wind is blowing internationally and the new possibilities, especially in the East-West*

²⁵⁹ L'Unità 1/8/1986

*framework, are coming up. My party is determined to do anything in its power in Italy, Europe, in the Italian and European left and internationally*²⁶⁰.

What is of remarkable attention comes right after the meetings with the Israeli institutions and representatives? An important number of Palestinian personalities such as lawyers, universities professors, mayors of the Palestinian cities, and the chief of one of the most reputable Arab newspaper, *Al-Quds*, and to them maintains the same language and proposes the same things. He stresses the international role in the Middle Eastern conflict: Israelis and Palestinians have to cooperate with every possible political force and entity willing to find a diplomatic. Hence a political, solution, and finds the P.L.O. as the only organization which can speak for the Palestinian people, its sole expression and its Leader, Arafat, a capable interlocutor, someone who can assume responsible and realistic positions.

For the first time the communist party speaks openly and officially to both actors in the Middle East, calling for both to take their on responsibilities, to stop playing isolation games and to sit to a negotiation table with the help and mediation of the international community. For the communist party from now on, such independent approach, with some variations, defines the common view on the conflict, the possible solutions, or activities to propose.

Interest and activities that keep on moving right after the important visit to Israel-Palestine, when, in the Lebanese chaos, new massacres are perpetrated to the detriment of the Palestinians. The P.C.I., responding to an invocation of Arafat, calls for the end of the killings and asking directly the Syrian government to cease any sustain or complicity with the anti-Palestinian forces in Lebanon²⁶¹.

P.C.I. international approach arises also within the national initiative for the Middle East. When the Prime Minister Craxi, in an Italian-Spanish meeting proposes a group of sustain for peace in the Mediterranean, and when Andreotti and Spadolini, internal affairs and defense ministers, ask to know the real intentions of such activities, and if Italian government's aim is to broaden the

²⁶⁰ Cingoli, p. 140-4.

²⁶¹ L'Unità 10/2/1987

platform, including other European countries in order to create a committee to prepare an international conference for peace in Middle East²⁶².

At the beginning of 1987, among the communist party raises the perception that the impasse in the Middle East cannot last longer. During the week of the International Socialist an Italian delegation takes the chance to accept, along with some members of the MAPAM, an invitation from Hanna Seniora, a Palestinian Christian the publisher of The Jerusalem Times and a co-Chief Executive Officer of the Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information, also a member of the Palestine National Council and the chairperson of the Palestinian-American Chamber of Commerce²⁶³.

The first days of the visit are spent in the occupied territories. The pictures they obtain is somehow shocking. The occupation shows a Palestinian population deprived of civil and political rights, the annexation of the territories is creeping and every days the settlements become bigger and more populated. The resources are consumed mostly by the Israeli settlers which count few thousand people among hundreds of thousands Palestinians. In addition to that, the military presence of the I.D.F. is perceivable all over the Palestinian villages and holy places. What impresses the most the Italian delegation is Gaza, a small-overpopulated stripe of land without basic facilities as schools or hospitals²⁶⁴.

Furthermore, in a survey carries out by the Palestinian newspaper al-Fajr showed a worrying reality on the desires and requests of the Palestinian people. Around 80% of them wants a Palestinian state on the whole of the historical Palestine, while only a mere 16,9% would be satisfied with a state within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For the majority the State must have an Islamic orientation. Only the 21,2% asks for a democratic state. The most important dates, ignored by the Israeli authorities and maybe also by a wide share of the Palestinian politicians, concern the concept Palestinians have about the use of violence and of armed fight. 83% considers violence as a part of the fight for the right of self-determination, 60%belives that armed fight is the

²⁶² L'Unità 25/1/1987

²⁶³ <http://www.pij.org/authors.php?id=137>

²⁶⁴ Rubbi, p. 176-8.

best solution of the problem. In addition to this half of the Palestinians declare of having been abused or members of their families have, and 84% complains about the lowering of the standard of living²⁶⁵.

A new and unexpected uprising shocks the Middle East on the 8th of December 1987, after two decades of Israeli occupation, the “*Intifada*”, an Arab word meaning shaking off. The particularity of this rebellion is the way it was carried out, which is not armed, but rather a sort of civil resistance. Strikes, shops shut down, violent protest with throwing of stones and Molotov bottles are the weapons of the Intifada²⁶⁶.

Before the outbreak of the Intifada, the Italian government plans a visit to Israel of the President of the Republic with the Foreign Minister. The P.C.I., after having condemned vehemently the repression in the territories, put an emphasis on the visit to Israel of two of the highest offices of the country. Napolitano points at the government stating that: “*the visit to Israel must represent a chance to reaffirm the point of view of the Italian commitment against the brutal repression in the occupied territories, for the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and for peace in the Middle East*”²⁶⁷. Francesco Cossiga (President of the Republic) and Giulio Andreotti (Foreign Minister) decide to plan the visit meeting first the Palestinian representatives and then the Israelis, and moreover stressing the necessity to put an end to the occupation and to improve the conditions of the people living in the occupied territories. The internal debate in the Italian political arena is harsh, many critics come from the Republicans and from parts of the government, and in this case, the P.C.I. applaud the behaviour of Cossiga and Andreotti²⁶⁸.

At the same time, Napolitano takes the opportunity to speak directly to the democratic forces in Israel reminding them the necessity to guarantee safety and prosperity to the people in the occupied territories and the summons of an international conference. Napolitano stresses the real issue at

²⁶⁵ Baron, p. 455.

²⁶⁶ Morris, p. 698.

²⁶⁷ L’Unità 19/12/1987

²⁶⁸ L’Unità 22/12/1987

stake, now is the civil prestige, and in the whole the future of the state of Israel concluding his speech with a positive view on the democratic, moderate voices: *“It is time now they (the democrats) make them heard loud and clear and that they prevail on the brutal and opportunist positions²⁶⁹”*. The good intention of the responsible of the P.C.I. foreign relations find an obstacle with Arafat himself granting a long interview to the Italian communist press criticizing Israel as a whole, without making any difference between the various political entities, questioning P.C.I.’s approach. Likud, MAPAM, Peres, Shamir, they are all the same thing in the eyes of Arafat²⁷⁰, exactly the opposite of what Napolitano is trying to show the Italian electorate, especially in the case of Shimon Peres who is, and always has been taken into serious consideration as representative of the moderate and democratic tendencies willing to come to a negotiation table.

The P.C.I. still continues with its moderate trend, on the one hand tying link with any political and non-political entity in Israel, and on the other hand condemning the Israeli politics in the territories. The first chance to do so comes with the visit of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in Rome in February 1988. To the visit, precedes in Rome, Piazza San Giovanni, a massive demonstration in support to the Intifada against the policy of occupation, at the presence of delegate from every Italian party and of two representative of Palestine and Israel. A young Piero Fassino, who will be later on a minister and key figure in the Italian political leftist scenario, writes on the official organ of the party that: “such demonstrations give the chance to Shamir to say that it is necessary to summon an international conference for peace that, in front of all the world, ratifies the right of two people to live together and in peace and safety²⁷¹. Exactly the same things, plus a firm condemnation of Israel’s government management of the Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, are repeated directly to Shamir by Natta at the conference at the Hilton hotel in Rome, but, with the disappointment of the P.C.I. secretary they remain unheard²⁷².

²⁶⁹ L’Unità 27/12/1987

²⁷⁰ L’Unità 30/1/1988

²⁷¹ L’Unità 14/2/1988

²⁷² Rubbi, p. 197-8.

While Israel persists in its position, creating around itself international isolation and preventing any possible step forward, important movements are registered in the Arab world, where King Hussein of Jordan in a long TV speech to the nation declares the cutting of any administrative and juridical ties with the West Bank implying the assignment of his role to the P.L.O.²⁷³.

Something moves also in the Kremlin. The new policy of Gorbačëv concerns also the Middle East and now the Soviet Union is willing to make openness to Israel. The secretary of the Soviet party hints at improvements with the Arab countries of Egypt and Syria, seeing in their role a necessity to consolidate the position of P.L.O. and views favourably the reinstatement of normal diplomatic relations with Israel, obviously within the beginning and the leading of an international conference²⁷⁴. Times are mature for the P.L.O. to take over totally and completely the guide of the Palestinian cause and to proclaim, according to the international law, and the UN resolutions 242, and 338, the birth of the State of Palestine. In Algiers, on the 15th of November 1988, Yasser Arafat reads the declaration of Independence, the constitution of the State of Palestine on the Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital city. Although it might be considered as ambiguous in certain points, the main message is the recognition of the right of Israel to exist, and the willingness to negotiate with the enemy²⁷⁵.

Among all the nations that immediately recognize the State of Palestine, there are no western European countries, and of course not Italy. On the contrary, with the western scepticism, the P.C.I. supports and congratulates immediately with Arafat, and sends right after the declaration Achille Occhetto, succeeded to Natta at the secretary of the party, to meet officially with the new head of state. Finally, for Italian communists the P.L.O. follows what the party has always been saying for years: the recognition of Israel, the right of self-determination of the Palestinian, and the way of negotiations to start the path toward peace. This is why a extremely hard criticism is expressed to the decision of the secretary of State of the U.S.A. to deny a visa to Arafat to go to the United

²⁷³ Baron, p. 470.

²⁷⁴ Pravda 31/3/1988

²⁷⁵ Baron, p. 470-3.

Nations to participate in the general assembly. The condemnations arrive from all over the world, and in Italy there are no political body willing to justify, or even able to understand, the decision of Schulz, and the government reacts incredulous to what it appears to them a non-sense. Napolitano, still in charge of the relations with the foreign countries, has very bitter words for the American behaviour: *“the decision to deny a visa to Arafat for the general assembly is so serious that we have difficulties even to believe any political explanation and we are pushed to think of the scenes behind it. Now, we Europeans must make our voice heard, as we may play a role now. The first reaction of the Italian government correspond to the gravity of the American decision and finds our complete support²⁷⁶”*.

In this historical moment, although the events in Middle East keep on going on, the attention about them is not as steady as it was before because important events, far from the historical Palestine, are about to happen and to change completely the geopolitical setting of the world and of Italy as well.

²⁷⁶ L'Unità 20/11/1988

2d) Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism

As previously mentioned in the chapter “Slanski Affair”, the communist party in Italy already in the early 50’s has to deal with accuses of anti-Semitism due to the condition of the Jewry in the Soviet Union and its discrimination policy against them.

Before the Six-Day War, in the political language and activity of the P.C.I. no anti-Semitic, or anti-Zionist hints can be registered, and towards the persecution of the Jews in the Soviet Union the attitude is usually quite aloof. An exception is the case of an anti-Semitic pamphlet which appears in 1964 in the Soviet Union and which pictures the Jews and Judaism as the summa of the, western and imperialists clichés. In a small column in the official press of the party, an open critic is directed to the contents, but on the other hand, the article ends with the improvement made in the Soviet Union in relations to the fight against anti-Semitism and generally against racism. Such episodes are viewed positively because they show the very limited number of the anti-Semitic episodes in the socialist countries and shed a light on laws of equality and justice in force in the USSR²⁷⁷. It has be added that the article is a very small one, and the problem and the accuses of Anti-Semitism in these years are not central in the debate within the leftist milieu. A different case occur in 1970 when a number of people are arrested with the accuse of hijacking a plane. The indicted are all of Jewish origins and previously many of them asked for a visa to Israel, a growing tendency in the soviet Jewry after the death of Stalin²⁷⁸. The communist party shows its doubts about the procedure but also unveils a not well-defined anti-Communist and anti-Soviet campaign carried out by Israel²⁷⁹. Please note no mentions of Semitism or of Jewish responsibilities are made in the articles.

²⁷⁷ L’Unità 15/12/1964

²⁷⁸ Riasanovsky, p. 558.

²⁷⁹ L’Unità 27-8/12/1970

After 1967 war, however, Zionism, the word representing the Jewish movement for the establishment of a Jewish state, acquires new meanings and a completely different way to perceive it spread in the Italian political debate.

For the communist party thought, Zionism ends to be the romantic awakening of the Jewish people who after centuries of oppression want firmly to fight for their own country and justice, but rather becomes aggressive, violent, and imperialistic moreover linked with the western and capitalist world. Zionism is a bourgeois, reactionary, nationalist ideology²⁸⁰, a perfect cocktail of what a genuine communist must fight with no hesitations.

Zionism distinguishes between Jews and Goyim and omitting the Palestinian people can be charged with racism. An attitude coming from a psychological complex of being surrounded by enemies. Easily understandable by the difficulties of the birth and establishment of the country and of the previous persecutions, the State of Israel develops tendencies of a right wing State. Israel is a foreign body among the Arab world, a Zionist entity (together with Occupied Palestine, is the most common expression in the Arab and Muslim world against the Jewish presence in Palestine, a way to deny the very right of existence and to refuse the acknowledgment of the State of Israel²⁸¹), an armed Ghetto, which chooses the use of the force instead dialogue and which loses the occasion to become a respectable national state, as legitimate as all the others²⁸².

The image of Zionism carries, among the new perception of Israel as a State and political entity, the dangerous risk of confusing anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism and consequently the difference between a Jew and an Israeli citizen might cease to exist. As De Felice points out: *“Anti-Zionism is born from a line of reasoning, an element of an ideology might stray into anti-Semitism and irrationality. The anti-Zionist speech has, as a consequence, the lack of differentiation between and Israeli and a Jew. Easily a textile trader of the ghetto of Rome, become in the collective imagination a potential Moshe Dayan, or at least an accomplice. Even if the Roman Jew does not agree with*

²⁸⁰ Massara, p. 15.

²⁸¹ Kirkpatrick, p. 7.

²⁸² L'Unità 13/6/1982

Israel's politics, and does not feel Israeli (notwithstanding possible and likely sympathies), in the very moment when the real or unreal Israeli characteristics are ascribed to every Jew in the world, it means the old anti-Semitism is back²⁸³”.

He risk and the danger is well understood by the P.C.I. and its strategy to fight back such possible slide into anti-Semitism is quite firm. The rejection and condemnation of any accuse of racism is rejected with harsh words and the extraneousness of the communist party reiterated at any possible occasion. P.C.I. pays big attention to the anti-Semitism avoiding to mix up with the most extremist, Fascist and even Nazi rhetoric²⁸⁴. Internationally, as we have already seen, P.C.I. raises his voice against the UN resolution, which declares Zionism a form of racism, but it is on the domestic politics that a wide range of examples can be found to prove the interest of the P.C.I. to distance itself from any racial judgment on the Jews.

In the far leftist press, the attacks and criticism to the politics of Israel are very unforgiving but, unlike the official communist position, combination between Hitler's Germany and Israel occur quite often. A good example is “*Paese Sera*”, a newspaper founded right after the second world war and very close to the Italian communist party²⁸⁵, where on the 3rd of March 1973 is published a letter from a reader full of extremely critical contents. The author claims to be someone who helped the Italian Jews during the WW2, and regrets now of doing so, as the same people he saved now are perpetrating the same crimes towards the innocent Palestinian people. Going even further, in his word Israel is rehabilitating Hitler and his final solution, because while Hitler respected Paris and Athens, Israel would have no hesitations to nuke Egypt Syria or Iraq²⁸⁶.

It is not just a voice in the wide leftist panorama, as similar stances on the matter appear on other leftist press such as “*Il Manifesto*”, “*Potere Operaio*” and “*Lotta Continua*”²⁸⁷ all of them attributable to a further leftist political area than the P.C.I. It shows well how the far leftist feelings

²⁸³ Di Nola, p. 33-4.

²⁸⁴ Di Nola, p. 34-5.

²⁸⁵ <http://www.paeserastory.it/>

²⁸⁶ Paese Sera 3/3/1973

²⁸⁷ Di Nola, p. 57.

about the Jews slide from the post-war comprehension and empathy, to an after 1967 period where the Jews are not anymore identifiable with the struggle against fascism, but become themselves fascists and oppressors.

As the atmosphere becomes more and more adversary to the Jews and Israel, the P.C.I. is an obvious target for those who fear a rebirth of anti-Semitism in Italy. Frequently in the non-leftist Italian press and in some cases in the press organs of the leftist parties themselves, the P.C.I. faces different kind of accuses linked to anti-Semitism. Rarely there is an open blame of being anti-Semite; more often, the critic concerns the violent criminalization of Israel and its politics, which leads to a simplification, which does not distinguish, between the policy of a country and the people living in it. The communist party is blamed for being silent in front of a growing tendency that confuses the right of the Palestinian people from the rising anti-Semitism in the leftist Italian milieu²⁸⁸. Normally the responses to such accuses are extremely violent and merciless, shifting occasionally into almost obscene language. A significant case concerns the aggressive exchange of opinions and accuses between “*Il Corriere della Sera*” and “*L’Unità*” in November 1972. In the latter appears on the first page an article titled “*Sporchi Mentitori*”, Italian for filthy liars. Answering to an article by Corriere’s chief Polito, who defines anti-Semitism in the P.C.I. a “scorching issue²⁸⁹”, the communist party defends itself by describing such accusers as full of hate and unable to construct evidence. Serves of the American and Israeli imperialists, they find anti-Semites who legitimately criticizes the criminal policy of Tel Aviv’s governors. It is just blackmail and these slanderers are no more than worms, and so must be considered²⁹⁰.

In the same article, in order to free themselves from the blame, quoting two eminent party’s comrades of Jewish origins, Umberto Terracini and Piero della Seta, whose words and previous intervention about the issue prove once again P.C.I. extraneousness from any anti-Semite involvement. The reference to communists of Jewish origins, critic to Israel’s government and of

²⁸⁸ Di Nola, p. 58.

²⁸⁹ Corriere della Sera 4-19/11/1972

²⁹⁰ L’Unità 19/11/1972

anti-Zionist tendencies, is a permanent feature. Taking as examples the two P.C.I.'s members, Terracini e della Seta, a number of activities and stances are visible on the anti-Semitism issue. As already mention in the previous chapter, Piero della Seta meets Yasser Arafat before the official meeting with the administration of the party with a touching hug and sweet words between a Jew and a Palestinian. Terracini, probably the most renowned Jewish communist in Italy, is very active on the subject and, along with condemning Israel for the occupation and for the lack of recognition of the Palestinian people, warns about the possible drift of anti-Zionism into anti-Semitism. "*Israel has attacked, Israel is the state of the Jews, the Jews are aggressors*" says Terracini complaining about the lack of activism from the persons in charge among his own party in order to make a clear distinction between Israel, Zionism and the Jewish people²⁹¹.

Indeed the guideline of the communist party is very careful about the terminology, nevertheless some episodes of critics which deviates into anti-Semite imagine occur as in the case of the communist section of Pisa issuing in 1969 a Manifesto with the slogan "*From the racist martyrdom to the imperialist assassination*" and a David Star²⁹². Despite this is not the only occurrence and other more or less clear messages of anti-Semitism appear in the leftist media, they are officially alien to the mainstream and to the guideline of the communist party. However, Terracini's warnings and worries are not hobbyhorse. Bearing in mind the complexity of separating the Jewish issue with Israel, and the impossibility of reminding the public P.C.I.'s rejection of racism any time the Middle Eastern situation is discussed, association between the Jews and the atrocity happening in Palestine are possibly deducible as the communist party seems to be driving on the edge of anti-Semitism. The line of the party is of merciless and fierce disapproval, and moreover represents one of the key point in the foreign politics. Hence, the combination of expressions like "Planes with the David Star bomb the Palestinians" or "the Jewish State occupy the Palestinian land" are likely to promote an

²⁹¹ La Stampa 18/11/1972

²⁹² Di Nola, p. 36.

image where the Jews, and not the Israeli, are responsible for what happens in the Middle East²⁹³. A clear and precise distinction come only when the accuses of anti-Semitism are directed to the party more frequently by the non-communist press, otherwise racist episodes towards Jews or Judaism are left unmarked, as happens with the remarkable case of the Russian Agency Novotni. The 12th of October the Soviet press agency issues an article with the firm of an unknown, in Italy, N. Rebrov, full of the most medieval Jewish stereotypes. The author traces a framework of Zionism linking it with the Israelite religion. Judaism, with its aversion to the Goyim, creates the nourishment for Zionism and for the State of Israel itself. Quoting some passages of the Torah, Rebrov pictures the Jews as a people full conscious of their mission to rule the world, and to lead the chosen people all over the other people of the world. As usual with such matters, Terracini takes care of it condemning the “*Pile of stupidities*” but not on the pages of the P.C.I.’s official organ which remain silent about the Novotni’s bulletin²⁹⁴.

The moment of the highest tension is 1982, with Sharon’s invasion of Lebanon and the consequent wave of protests against Israel in Italy, which, as already mentioned, shift occasionally into open anti-Semite displays. Right after the events in Lebanon, the critics to Zionism reach their peak. The ideology of Herzl and Moses Hess shows itself for what it is, a racist bulk of thoughts, responsible for the homeless Palestinian condition and carrying the original sin of having expelled a population from its homeland. Hence, anti-Zionism acquires good connotation for Israel itself, which because its Zionist stubbornness cannot be a normal, civilized country. In the political debate, the confusion among the various element, Jews, Zionism, Israel reigns. The extra-parliamentarian left, through the pen of Jewish author, describe Zionism as the wrong heir of the socialist Jewish movement of the XIX centuries in the Russian empire, to become the violent and racist entity embodied by Begin’s politics, hence a good Jew must condemn it, must dissociate

²⁹³ Di Nola, p. 56.

²⁹⁴ La Stampa 19/10/1972

him/herself from it, must in a nutshell be anti-Zionist²⁹⁵. In the P.C.I. press, as well the depiction of Israel leaves no space to compassionate opinions. In an article titled “*L’odio al potere*” (it. For “Hate in Power”), Polito writes: “*Begin believe in hate as indispensable nutriment for the fight, and his hate split into the enemy and into those who among the Jewish and Zionist ranks, do not accept his beliefs. Irgun recycled itself as a political party, with the name of Herut and waves always the same plan: the conquest of territories only temporarily put aside, the creation of a Greater Israel including the Palestinian territories, beyond Jordan River, the Sinai, and part of Syria and of Lebanon*”²⁹⁶. Israel’s prime minister is described as a terrorist and more than this, he is to blame for the rise of anti-Semitism. Begin and Sharon claim to be representative of the world Jewry and to be the legitimate defenders of the Jewish people and religion, not having of course the legitimacy. In doing so, “*Begin proposes the equation: critic to the Israeli government equals to the State of Israel equals anti-Semitism. No democratic citizen or more simply no reasonable person can endorse such nonsense. Not even a Jew, despite his/her likeness for the state of Israel, can tolerate it. Begin and Sharon are giving good reasons to the anti-Semites and to the newborn anti-Semitism. If Israel is the Jews, to fight Israel Jews can be the target. If this is Begin’s and Sharon’s logic, there are no worse anti-Semites in the world than them*”²⁹⁷.

The polemic along with the anti-Semite episodes in Rome effect the relations on the one hand between the Italian Jewish community and the leftist milieu, and on the other hand, hints of crises and annoyance occur also within the community itself arriving to episodes of violence against community members guilty of having an anti-Israeli approach²⁹⁸. However, it is on a different direction that the complaints of the Italian Jews go. As few years later in an interview to “*L’Unità*”, the chief rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff, tells about the feeling of loneliness of the Italian Jewry²⁹⁹. The institutions and the politicians remain silent in front of the reiterate warnings about possible attacks,

²⁹⁵ Il Manifesto 17/6/1982

²⁹⁶ L’Unità 13/6/1982

²⁹⁷ L’Unità 13/8/1982

²⁹⁸ Tagliacozzo, p. 519-48.

²⁹⁹ L’Unità 24/1/1991

and while the terrorists kill the young Stefano Taché, in the leftist area supporting the Palestinian cause seem to be more important than the unsafe situation of the Roman community.

Among the Italian Jewry the lacking voice against the episodes of anti-Semitism seem to find no other explanation but anti-Semitism itself. As well pointed out by a Italian communist of Jewish origins, Pietro Alatri, the anger of Jewish people in Italy against the political and labour union forces, and against the mass media is not without grounds. Although the Italian Jewry takes a critical position on the conduct of Israel's government, the effort in Italy to differentiate Jews from Israel and to condemn and take real action against the resurgent anti-Semitism. With the war in Lebanon, not only Israel is criminalized, but also the Jews in the Diaspora, and in the eyes of the Roman Jewry, this is unacceptable, this is anti-Semitism³⁰⁰.

The closure of the Jewish world towards the communist party is well perceived and, through the press, an attempt to mend the relations and to ease the situation is made. On the first page of the official press, the P.C.I. publishes a public notice titled "*Invito a ragionare*" (it for invitation to reason), in order to retort openly to the accusations of anti-Semitism from the Jewish community. More than that, to send also a message to a significant part of the Italian public opinion who sees non favourably the communist position on the matter and tend to link it with the terroristic expression in Italy and abroad. The article encourages to make the right distinction between what is the legitimate critics to Begin's politics, which is not only an Italian prerogative (The article reminds the 400000 Israelis who demonstrated in Tel Aviv few days before). On the other hand, nobody is entitled to identify every Jew with a State that carries out its politics, moves its army etc.etc. What happened in Rome (The Synagogue attack) should make us all meditate on the urgency of a fair peace in the Middle East³⁰¹.

Despite all the attempts to show the P.C.I. extraneous from any kind of racial involvement, the one who sees an insufficient stance against anti-Semitism in the year from the Six Day War to the

³⁰⁰ Rinascita 15/10/1982 p. 4.

³⁰¹ L'Unità 11/10/1982

fall of the Berlin wall is not far from reality. It does not mean that anti-Semitism is in these years a component of the political basis of the party, even if it cannot be excluded that some anti-Semite are party members (there is no evidence to support such a thesis). Anyhow, even if it comes out that sworn enemies of the Jewish people have the party card, they are not a product of the official, or unofficial, guideline of the party.

Right after the Six day War the Middle East start to play a protagonist role in the Italian public debate, and especially when the Palestinian cause enters in the political life, in 1972, every Italian political party must have a strategy to deal with it. For a sequence of causes, which will be analysed in the following chapters, the Italian leftist electorate develops, to different degrees, a certain sympathy for the Palestinian cause. The P.C.I. knows it and, along with this, is aware that any charge of anti-Semitism leads back to fascism and to enemies of the Second World War. The necessity to reject such accuses are very important for the majority of the Italians, which are in a whole moderate, and refuses to see racial causes in the Middle Eastern conflict. The communist party is a big one, counting millions of voters and almost two million card-carrying members. While the political bureau proceed with its own line, getting by in a complex environment, trying to mediate among the USSR without official relations with Israel, and prone to anti-Semitism, the internal electorate profit, and the firm stance to recognize Israel's existence, the discussion within the party and its members unfold often freely and only the most important and publicized episodes, and accuses can be discarded. On the other hand, the party feels threatened not too much from being charged of anti-Semitism for few reasons. A common recent history and enemies are good motivations to keep racist ideology far from communism in the public opinion, which is now growingly kind to the Palestinian issue and to the policy of Israel rather than anti-Semitism matters. This is why the P.C.I. tends to focus more on the current situation and to disclose its affinity to the new Jews, the Palestinians, instead of remaining cling to what is perceived as a mislead for the comprehension of the conflict and an obstacle for its solution.

2e) A 1967-89 survey on P.C.I.

According to French diplomats in duty in Italy, the Communist party is loyally following the pro-Arab line of the Soviet Union despite unwillingly³⁰². Not only the foreign diplomacy sees the trend in the Italian communist party and inside national borders, an eminent Italian P.C.I. member, of Jewish origins, warns about the submission of the western communist parties: *“Following constantly the foreign politics of the Soviet Union, the western communist parties embrace also the Moscow thesis also for what concerns the Middle East, but the anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist USSR approach become in the soviet press simply anti-Semitism. The western communist party do not reach such extents, but at the same time, they do not always manage to stop before it. The western communist parties try to respect the borders, and condemn the anti-Semite excess, but they shift on Israel an unexplainable hate because of the sole necessity to adapt to Moscow’s foreign politics”*³⁰³.

The content of the latter article are fundamentally correct, nevertheless it has not always been a perfect marriage between the Soviet Union and the P.C.I.

For obvious ideological reasons the Italian communists cannot distance themselves from Moscow, and in addition to this, the economical factor plays here a big role. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the C.P.S.U., inquiries have been conducted showing the tight ties between Moscow and the P.C.I.. Starting from the end of the Second World war and finishing with 1991, the Italian communist party has been constantly and illegally financed by the KGB and the C.P.S.U. for an amount of several million dollars³⁰⁴(nowadays the irregular or illegal funding of the whole of the Italian party during the First Republic 1945-1992 is now longer a mystery, but before the huge bribe scandal known as *“Tangentopoli”* which broke out in 1992, such consideration were deemed as rumours, despite being popular among the public opinion).

³⁰² Caviglia D., Cricco M., p. 19.

³⁰³ La Voce Repubblicana 10/11/1978

³⁰⁴ <http://www.unknown.it/materiale/mitrokhin.html>

Being so economically linked with Moscow, on the one hand, the P.C.I. needs to find a way to remain close to its bigger and stronger ally, and on the other hand, it must satisfy the needs of its peculiar situation of the Italian state of affairs and public opinion. As already seen in the previous chapter, the condemnation to the accuses of anti-Semitism to the P.C.I. and sometimes to the Soviet Union are firmly rejected, and in addition to it, another feature is remarkable to differentiate P.C.I. from C.P.S.U. While in the Soviet Union, after 1967, the issue of the right of Israel to exist find no significant space, leaving all the debate to the imperialist and aggressive Israel's policy (it is important to remind that the Soviet Union cuts any diplomatic relations after 1967), the P.C.I. stresses at any occasion the importance to recognize Israel as a State. Even more remarkable than that is the lack of any other detail or further specification. "*Israel has the right to exist*" is the sole concession to the Jewish State, and the only aspect that separates the P.C.I. from Moscow. A sign of the non-involvement with the anti-Semite Soviet Union, an acknowledgment that allows any critic, even the most extreme, towards the State of Israel, and on the other hand permit the P.C.I. to overlook any other need or right of the Jewish State, such as, for example, safety and borders.

Throughout all these years there are no serious frictions on the matter between the Soviets and the Italians, and, despite the above-mentioned differences, both parties follow a common line about the Middle East. On the pages of the official communist press, the policy of Moscow in the Middle East is reported constantly and accurately and similarities in the languages and contents are common and frequent with the ones of the P.C.I.³⁰⁵.

The first noteworthy moment of breaking away from the Soviet Union, occur in 1986 with the first visit of Giorgio Napolitano to Israel³⁰⁶. Before this occasion, the P.C.I. follows roughly the Soviet way of not having direct contacts with Israel, while on the other hand a steady relation with the Palestinians continue constantly. It must be said that the contacts with the Israeli leftist forces and especially with the communist party are frequent. A P.C.I. spokesman is send occasionally to

³⁰⁵ The articles with such terminology are several but here there are quoted only three for matter of space.
L'Unità 6/6/1982 – 23/6/1982 – 14/7/1982

³⁰⁶ Molinari, p. 125.

the conferences in Israel and sometimes comes back with good impression of the ongoing leftist political progresses, but such voices remain basically unheard. However, the attention paid to Israel's side is a pipsqueak compared to the strong consideration and cooperation built between the Palestinians and the P.C.I. The support to the Palestinian cause is absolute and indisputable, the political activity, within the real possibility of the Italian communist party (low to be honest, but it will be discussed up ahead) is punctual and hard working. A delegation of the most prominent personalities participates to every P.N.C., drafting detailed reports, and promoting political exchanges and mutual visits. The P.C.I. is the first political entity in Italy, which applies pressure to the government to recognize the P.L.O. and to open a diplomatic bureau in Italy. Since the awakening of the Palestinians and the consciousness of their conditions and of the gross injustice they suffer, the P.C.I. has no doubt which side to endorse primarily.

It does not mean there are no disagreements with the P.L.O., on the contrary the means of fight of the Palestinians create not a few problems for the Italian communists. The main difficulty is to deal with the conviction of the armed fight from the P.L.O. and with the ample use of terrorism. Especially during the 70's, P.C.I. finds its intention of a political solution with the purpose of the dismantlement of Israel through the armed fight irreconcilable. Moreover, the pro-Arab stance has other obstacles in the fragmented composition of the Arab world, where internal struggles threaten the very safety of the Palestinian ally, such as the cases of King Hussein of Jordan, or Hafez al-Assad, both willing to overthrow Arafat to take his place for the representation of the Palestinian people. Among the Middle Eastern tumultuousness, the P.C.I. play an insignificant, almost non-existent role, as Rubbi admits³⁰⁷. This is only ascribable to the P.C.I., in fact the political action of Italy in a whole restricts to a mere talking and official visits, as points out Giancarlo Lanutti: *"From the beginning of the year (1982) several official visit are taking place in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon; peace talks with Arab delegates in Rome, from resident Gemayel to Yasser Arafat*

³⁰⁷ Rubbi, p. 199.

*and Egyptian foreign minister Kamal Hassan Ali and even president Mubarak. Apparently the initiative seems to be a series of relevant actions, but it is not sufficient to make politics*³⁰⁸”.

If the Italian government is doing little in order to influence the flow of events in the Middle East, the P.C.I. can do even less, and all its political action finds its voice in the articles of its official press organ and in the condemnation of the Israeli occupation, its repression and crimes towards the Palestinians. P.C.I. high delegates are aware of their powerlessness to influence the course of things and in some cases, the hiding of their true thoughts is necessary. A good example is the confession of Gian Carlo Pajetta when, after the umpteenth and useless visit in the Middle East, says openly that the area is full of hypocrites and swindlers³⁰⁹. Such admission sums up the discouragement of the Italian communist, and the impossibility of reaching a common, serious and trustworthy point of view and political action with the Arabs. Hence, if the Italian communists know that nothing incisive can be done, a part from the open support of the Palestinian cause, in order to understand what the real role of the Middle Eastern conflict is for the P.C.I., the overlook must be pointed towards internal matters and not outside Italy.

If the collage of political forces, parties, groups and opinion on the methods of fighting Israel in the Arab world is of the utmost complexity, the Italian political milieu presents the a likewise intricacy giving the P.C.I. serious troubles.

With the Six Day War, a process of inversion and radical change of image start in Italy concerning the whole Middle East. On the one hand the Palestinians become suddenly a population asking legitimately their own country, on the other hand a revolution occur about the perception of Israel by the leftist Italian public.

Israel shifts from being a victim, which proudly fought for a country to a convict entirely chargeable of the sufferings of the Palestinians and of the political impasse of the region.

³⁰⁸ L'Unità 22/11/1982

³⁰⁹ Rubbi, p. 91.

Polito writes: *“The mere idea of a Palestinian State would have been considered anathema and rejected as a threat to the existence of Israel. If the resolution adopted by the UN after 1967, issued under the strong pressure of the Tel-Aviv - Washington Axis, is the only criterion to judge the reasonability of the P.L.O., that would mean the acceptance of the law of the strongest as the only legitimization of the State of Israel³¹⁰”*.

To an even more extreme extent, Israel is responsible for any happening concerning the Arab, or Muslim, world, and violent episodes like the terrorist attack to the synagogue in Istanbul in 1986 are occasion to hear the voices of some leftist public that link the Jewish victims of Istanbul with the Jewish oppressor in Palestine³¹¹. However it is important to state that this is not the official stance of the party, but it highlight on the general feeling among the readers, especially the most leftist ones that represent a delicate issue for the party (an analysis in depth is given afterwards in the chapter).

In the Italian political debate, every feature, which previously was linked to the Jews in a positive way, such as the resistance to the Germans, the anti-Fascism, or the racial persecution, becomes now new tools to be turned against Israel and the Jews³¹². This new tendency is particularly surprising for the leftist public opinion as the common history and common enemy was the main relation with the Jews. Israel now embodies the whole of the negativity connected to the handling of political power, losing, on the one hand any right which is not related to the mere existence, and on the other hand the qualities associated with the leftist political thought and experience. As for the right of existence, the P.C.I. finds sufficient to remind it, and adds no other grants for the State of Israel, as for example the security issue is scarcely considered. In a nutshell, the P.C.I. never make efforts to understand the reasons and the needs of Israel³¹³, and actually in the most emotive episodes, like the war in Lebanon, calls scornfully Israel’s security a mystification, a fake reason, an

³¹⁰ L’Unità 29/7/1982

³¹¹ L’Unità 7/9/1986

³¹² Di Figlia, p. 112.

³¹³ Rubbi, p. 43.

excuse not to take into consideration the real problems and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people³¹⁴. Besides these condemnations, the priorities are others. In an internal political debate, two columnists of *L'Unità* express their different positions about the Israeli safety issue bringing good reasons in long and detailed articles. It is interesting to note that despite the centralist nature of the party, a good level of discussion develops among party members, but what sums up the P.C.I. position can be seen in how the debate ends. Polito rebuke his comrade to “*the crucial battle of our party, our newspaper and all of us, against the Israeli aggressive expansionism*”³¹⁵, highlighting the real political soul of the Italian communism, which places the main goal before the differentiations of opinion and the contradictions.

In an article titled “*Se la Palestina diffonderà il virus della democrazia*” (Italian for If Palestine will spread the virus of democracy), the concept of Israel as a State with no democratic acquaintance is clear: “*Only the establishment of a Palestinian State as the P.L.O. promised in Algiers multiracial, multiparty, multi-faith, grounded on the full respect of Human Rights can finally contribute to spread the democratic virus in the Middle East*”³¹⁶. The concept here are quite remarkable because on the one hand Israel is deprived of any possible positivity, incapable of developing justice, and no longer representative of the democracy in the region, on the other hand it shows the other big change happening in the leftist thought.

If Israel carries the blame for the pace of the events in the Middle East, the Palestinians are free from any charge of responsibility. Their choices are not matter of discussion and, even in the most unwarranted displays, in profound contradiction with the guidelines of the communist, a sort of justification comes always up. In addition to the already mention question of the right of existence of Israel, always reiterated by the P.C.I. and denied by the P.L.O., the other main issue regards the use of terror and terrorist operations. This is not the proper dissertation to deepen the problem of terrorism in Italy but it is important to remind that Italy suffered tremendously the plague of

³¹⁴ L'Unità 7/8/1982

³¹⁵ L'Unità 3/8/1982

³¹⁶ L'Unità 25/4/1989

terrorism, both from the most extremist left and right wings from 1969 to 1984. The number of victims exceeds hundreds of people fallen into terrorist attacks, bombs, or assassination like in the most known case, the Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro³¹⁷. The Italian communist is always on the frontline to condemn and to dissociate itself from any form of terrorism. Berlinguer himself, following the abduction of Aldo Moro, in an article on the first page of L'Unità writes: *"Terrorism and violence aim at substituting the presence, participation and initiative, hence the growth of the political consciousness of the masses with a war lead by fanatics armed with guns and bolts. It is the greatest conquest of the people to be threatened"*³¹⁸. Such words are directed to the B.R. but also to the other terrorist organization in Italy and by then the P.C.I. tranquilizes its electorate about the democratic ways of the communism. Obviously any form of terror is to be blamed by the P.C.I. and not only the one operating in Italy.

In those years, a cooperation between the P.L.O. and the B.R. in Italy is not manifest, and to the most of the Italian people unknown, however a suspect about it hovers in the Italian public opinion and the P.C.I. is aware of it, and must take it into consideration. Further investigations prove the Italian terrorist organization and the P.L.O.³¹⁹.

The dealing method of the communist party about terrorism encompasses various features, from a never unequivocal condemnation of the attacks, to a reinterpretation of the motivations of the terrorists. Right after the massacre of Munich in 1972, the condemnation of the entire political bodies comes immediately and unanimous, and the communists make no exception apart from a sort of explanation of the terrorist attack with the desperation of the Palestinians³²⁰. Even when the attacks are carried out within the Italian borders, like in Rome in 1985, the P.C.I. explains it as: *"a phenomenon produced by a generation with the experience of death, hate, violence, disgust for life,*

³¹⁷ <http://www.vittimeterrorismo.it>

³¹⁸ L'Unità 19/3/1978

³¹⁹ http://archivioistorico.corriere.it/2003/marzo/07/Moretti_alla_Lioce_frente_arabo_co_0_030307001.shtml

³²⁰ Molinari, p. 73.

*refusal of any civil and human norm. The causes are deep, the solution lays in the restitution of the occupied territories, and in the respect of the existence of every State in the region*³²¹”.

To find other motivation of support for the Palestinian people, not rarely in the P.C.I.’ analysis abound the free interpretation of the Palestinian intentions or actions. Not only terrorism assumes the outline of a mere reaction to the Israeli occupation³²², but even the clearly declared goal of the P.L.O. to destroy the State of Israel is reconsidered and explained through a point of view more accommodating for the communist party. The P.L.O. groups do fight for the recognition, from the Israeli side, of their existence. The armed fight is the only possibility and this is not what frightens Israel, but rather the negotiation with their Palestinian counterpart³²³. To state if such free interpretation, which transgresses into the ignoring of the Palestinian will and stances, is the outcome of a political strategy or of an ideological passion is quite difficult, however the P.C.I. tends to control the pro-Palestinian enthusiasm when it come to the growing extremism of the extra-parliamentarian leftists groups.

In a growing percentage, the Israelis appear to be a prosecution of Nazi Germany in the Middle East, and the suffering undergone by the Jews and no more no less, the same ones they are perpetrating against the Palestinians. Especially on the pages of “*Il Manifesto*”, the language presents a terminology used to describe the Jews under the Nazis. Palestinians are “*Victims of Pogroms*” by the Israeli soldiers, “*deported*”, internalized in “*Lagers*”, and even subjected to the use of tear gas. Misrepresenting the ideas and thought of Primo Levi, who said that anyone is the Jew of someone else, the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis³²⁴.

Concerning the use of the word gas, in Italian the word “Gassati”, does not have a proper translation which can raises the strong emotions that it does in its original form. A word used in such contest has a big emotional burden.

³²¹ L’Unità 28/12/1985

³²² L’Unità 24/9/1982

³²³ L’Unità 6/12/1983

³²⁴ There are many articles with such terminology but here there are quoted only three for matter of space. *Il Manifesto* 15/12/1988 – 5/1/1989 – 13/1/1989

To an even more touching level, the Jews seem to have ignored their history, and not have learnt from their previous tragedies, as what is going in Palestine, is of no difference of what happened in Dachau³²⁵. Israeli generals like Sharon are compared with Kesserling, a German generalfeldmarschall known in Italy, because of his responsibility of massacres to the detriment of civilians.

Such extremism, along with the complete justification and incitement of terrorism, pushes the P.C.I. to adopt a guideline basically free from Nazi comparison and reference, even if in some cases in the official press some hints of the Israelis behaving like the Nazis can be perceived. However these are rare occasions, especially in the most intensive moments of war, and the P.C.I. members in charge of expressing the official position of the party never make comparisons as these.

Getting by among the pro-Palestinian guideline of the party, the directives from Moscow, the growing anti-Semitism in a part of the leftist public opinion meets with the primary necessity of a political party. The acquisition of new votes and the preservation of the old electorate, nevertheless a deep change occur not only in the perception of Israel and of the Jewish people, but also in the core of the message of the communism.

The internationalist idea, which illuminates the complexity of the Middle East for the first 20 years of life of Israel, seems to be light years far away in the 70's and 80's. Israel's role of exporter of democracy, human rights and, above all, cultural tools for the awakening of the Arab masses and for a joined fight against imperialism in all its forms, is completely wiped off and replaced by a Third-Worldism where external elements are seen as a disturb for the natural, democratic development of the autochthon societies. The Palestinian resistance is an occasion to fight Imperialism, a democratic potential coming from the core of the Arab land and culture³²⁶, with no need of foreign masters. The right stance for the Arabs now changes, from a teaching and corrective approach, aiming at eliminating the thousand-year old imposition of the classist and oppressive

³²⁵ Il Manifesto 31/3/1982

³²⁶ Di Figlia, p. 79.

culture, to a sustain and exaltation of their cultural authenticity, which is considered now as having all the necessary aspects to proceed into the right direction of a fair and just society. Palestinians are not simply victims, they are also self-sufficient, and the corruption, violence, terrorism are just a temporary deviances owing to the Israeli occupation and oppression.

As for the Jewish State, as previously seen, the opinions turn into a merciless criticism. Whatever Israel does, Israel is wrong because of what Israel is. The Jewish State carries all of the ingredients for shifting from being right to being tremendously wrong. Israel carries no more gifts for the indigenous people, but rather exercises an old form of colonialism under new clothes. The identification of the Jews with Israel stains the Jewish State with the accuse of racism, of discriminating the indigenous people, just like the Europeans did with the populations in Asia or Africa in the past, or like what the Americans do with South America and with other countries in the World. The Marxist axiom which annuls the Jews a people and at same time grant the single Jew with every right, is applicable to the State of Israel which is granted with the right of existence but is not recognized as a Jewish State. Jews simply do not exist and should not exist in communism, as a communist Jew has not reason to define him/herself as a Jew, but only has a communist³²⁷. The Jewish features of the countries are matter of racist accuses and incompatibility with the real message of communism and with the purposes of their struggle, hence the separation between Jews and Goyim, and the respect of their peculiarities are not anymore in the P.C.I. political agenda.

³²⁷ L'Unità 8/9/1982

3) The Socialist Parties

3a) On Israel's side

As mentioned previously, Pietro Nenni takes firmly Israel's side structuring his position on the common memory and fight during the Second World War, anti-fascism, resistance and the holocaust. Nenni distances himself from the biggest political forces on both fronts, the P.C.I. and the D.C. As for the latter, the accusations concern the creation of a "*moral vacuum*" of the Christian Democrats' government³²⁸. In response to the communists who are picturing Nenni as a representative of the "*old leftist interventionist line which ends up colluding with revisionism*"³²⁹, the socialist leader sets aside the same critics for the democrats.

Nenni tightens his position both internally with close relations with the Jewish Italian community, and on the other hand, with the open support of the state of Israel which reaches its peak with the official visit in the Jewish State in 1971. In that occasion the socialist leader (accompanied by a young Bettino Craxi) is warmly welcomed and sees the planting of a tree in the forest of martyrs in remembrance of her daughter Vittoria, died in Auschwitz³³⁰.

Nenni is, along with Ugo La Malfa of the P.R.I., considered the most prominent pro-Israeli Italian political leader and sets up a platform with the purpose of reconsolidate the Italian political scenario with the Atlantic pact, a possibility of compacting the West which suffers the fragmentation consequent of the war in Vietnam³³¹.

³²⁸ Nenni, pp. 77-8.

³²⁹ L'Unità 7/6/1967

³³⁰ Nenni, pp. 600.

³³¹ Di Figlia, pp. 52-3.

Nenni's initiative and speeches are fully backed up by his party, as stated by a deliberation of the socialist forces (without P.S.I.U.P.) on the eve of the Six-Day War³³². The socialist party not only support his most prominent leader, but adopt a guideline in full accordance with Nenni. Internationally the P.S.I. aligns itself with the Socialist International which expresses its serious concern little after the outbreak of the war and its support for the Israel defending itself from the aggressors. Furthermore, in prospect of a long-lasting peace, five necessary factors to be respected are mentioned: The right of Israel to exist, the acknowledgment of the legitimate right of the Arab people, the granting of the transit right in Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran for every nation, the necessity of finding a right solution for the refugees in the Middle East, and the creation of international tools for the peace-keeping of the region³³³. Even if the support of Israel is not an issue, the important key concerns start to appear, as the refugees' one which will play a very important role in the next future.

Three days before the Socialist International gives its statement, also the European Parliament Socialist Group states a similar declaration, adding the remarkable aspect of the Holocaust: *"25 years after the concentration camps era, no world power has the right to destroy the state of survivors or to menace the economical basis"*³³⁴.

A particular attention is given to the France socialist Francois Mitterrand whose word are reported on the official press organ of P.S.I. : *"Israel has the right to exist, this right has been granted by the international community...Nobody can be authorized to deprive Israel from exercising its right to exist"*³³⁵.

As for the internal politics, the socialists show their support by the action of many activists who join groups of friendship with Israel, participating to events in support of Israel. On the pages of *Avanti!*

³³² *Delibera della direzione del P.S.I.-P.S.D.I. unificati, 5/6/1967*. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.

³³³ *Risoluzione dell'Internazionale Socialista sulla crisi del Medio Oriente, Londra, 9 giugno 1967*. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.

³³⁴ *Riunione dell'ufficio di collegamento dei Partiti socialisti della Comunità Europea, Bruxelles, 5 giugno 1967*. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.

³³⁵ *Avanti! 30/5/1967*

such activities are openly proclaimed in all the major Italian cities. Moreover, the main aspect highlighted is the difference between the socialists and the far-leftist political entities and parties, specifically the P.C.. and the P.S.I.U.P., which are accused of following blindly Moscow's guidelines, and of being incapable of developing an independent political position³³⁶.

The critics towards the communist party reach a harsher and more detailed level, with an article of Michele Pellicani where, in addition to the subjection from USSR, the blaming refers to the support of criminal dictatorships like the Nasser's Egypt. Regimes like these are responsible of the repression not only of the dissidents, but also of the communists, hence the P.C.I., hoping and believing in a socialist future for those lands, is endorsing a kind totalitarianism which internally bans and prosecutes their own people³³⁷.

P.S.I. support for Israel's cause passes mainly through the opposition to P.C.I. attitude guilty of being incapable of making the right distinctions between who is the assailer and who is the assailed. *"We (the socialists) do not support a priori Israel or the Arab States. We felt close to Egypt when English and French troops set an aggression plan turned down by the steadiness of the USA as now we feel close to the State of Israel because we cannot encourage the attempt of destruction of a people who wants to live in a civil manner within its borders"*³³⁸. The article explains further how the real core of the problem, meaning the fight for survival of Israel, and the intention to annihilate a sovereign state, is simply ignored by the communists, and how the threat to peace laid by a dictator does not concern the political strategy of the P.C.I. which is keen on pleasing the Russians.

The opposition and the criticism directed to the P.C.I. and the non pro-Israel parties, including the D.C. and its government, continues throughout the war and after the end of it. Along with the opposition to P.C.I., the socialist stresses another two aspects. One concerns the democratic nature of the State of Israel: *"In the various Mediterranean dictatorships, from Spain to Greece, Israel is the only country enjoying democracy"*, then the blame goes to the action of the government, which

³³⁶ Molinari p. 38.

³³⁷ Avanti! 31/5/1967

³³⁸ Avanti! 4/6/1967

is invited not to: *“cease to the temptation of unmasked negotiations. Israel deserves to have peace, not just a truce. Hence the right of asking direct negotiation with the Arabs³³⁹”*. During 1967, the socialists take part in the government, (Pietro Nenni is the vice Prime Minister, Giovanni Pieraccini is the minister of financial balance, Luigi Preti of P.S.D.I. is the minister of finance³⁴⁰ and their direct and clear stance for Israel creates quite of a problem for the government and for the main party usual political prudence. In a speech to the Camera dei Deputati, the socialist deputy Valerio Cattanei presents the official position of the P.S.I., rejecting all the accusation moved against his party, all the accusation of being racist against the Arabs (*Razzismo al contrario*, Racism backwards, as racism in Italy in this period is strictly identified with the Jews). A very important concept is made while the reasons for their strong support to Israel is pointed out: *“The motive for our attitude is the defence of Israel not as the Jewish State, but as a State called upon destruction, as our opinion about the politics of the Arabs so negative because in that precise moment, it was a policy of provocation to war³⁴¹”*. A very important speech, which states the separation made by the party from the mere fact of being Jewish, and the possible consequent justification of the Zionist policies, and the right of Israel to exist that, is unrelated to ideological (Zionism) or racial/religious (Jewish) matters. The State of Israel has the right to exist, flourish, and live in peace because its people, the same who fought with the C.L.N. and the Italian resistance against Hitler, worked and fought so hard for it: *“In these days, Nasser, who welcomed and hosted Nazi criminals and war advisors, is threatening of destruction Israel, being protected by the Soviets³⁴²”*.

As studied up to now, to the eyes of the socialists the aggressors are the Arab States, and Israel is merely defending its sacrosanct right of existence, however the concerns about the Arab people and the refugees are already perceivable. Socialist deputies remind often that the hostility to the Arab policy is limited to the decisions of the Arab leaders not to recognize Israel, but the sympathy and

³³⁹ Avanti! 14/6/1967

³⁴⁰ <http://www.governo.it/Governo/Governi/moro3.html>

³⁴¹ *Discorso pronunciato in occasione della dichiarazione di voto resa per il PSU dal compagno Venerio Cattani alla Camera, Roma, 31 luglio 1967. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.*

³⁴² Mondo Operaio 6/1967 p. 6

the support to the Arab renaissance is never lacking. In the same speech where the official position of the P.S.I. is given, Valerio Cattanei expresses the party stance towards the Arab people, reminding the previous standing up against the Anglo-French invasion in 1956, the continuous support of the independence of the Arab States and the transformation from their rural and feudal societies into democratic ones. Furthermore, the socialist party endorsed every initiative of the present and past government to support financially, and technologically the Arab States. Cattanei's party finally sees the Arab leaders policies harmful for the real interests of the Arab people, and for the sake of the region³⁴³

As pointed out by Bettino Craxi on the eve of the war, the Arab people are somehow victims of their leaders' propaganda and of the logic of the Moscow-Washington contrast: *"The mobilisation of the pan Arab fanaticism against Israel is fanatic and absurd. Their goals are unacceptable for the consciousness of the civilized world. The problem has an international dimension for the USA-USSR confrontation, a regional dimension for the relations between the Middle eastern actors and their mutual recognitions of their rights, which will eventually lead to an acknowledgment of the integrity of the Palestinian State"*³⁴⁴.

The Arab States are not entities to fight and to eradicate, but partners to deal with for the purpose of peace, as the party itself points out in deliberation of the P.S.U. at the end of the war. The requirements encompasses a range of actors and measures, which go from the intervention of the UN, to an halt to the weapons market to be sold to the Middle Eastern countries, to the necessity of the mutual understanding of all actors involved without the interference of the great powers. A basic prerequisite is, nevertheless, the recognition of Israel's right to exist³⁴⁵.

With the new war, and with its unexpected outcome, the question of the refugees begins to be an issue that can not be left out of the debates. The problem comes to the government before the Six-

³⁴³ *Discorso pronunciato in occasione della dichiarazione di voto resa per il PSU dal compagno Venerio Cattani alla Camera, Roma, 31 luglio 1967. Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 111 – Medio Oriente.*

³⁴⁴ *Avanti!* 3/6/1967

³⁴⁵ *Mondo Operaio*, 7/1967, Anno XX, n. 7.

Day War, when the commission of external affairs in 1965 proposes a bill to contribute with 200 million Liras to the U.N.R.W.A. The president of the commission in his speech describes the political and historical path, which led to such situation, but no mention of Israeli responsibilities is made: *“The creation of the State of Israel created inconvenience and agitation among the Arab population...a great Arab emigration took place outside the borders of Israel...Arabs are unwilling to absorb the refugees in their countries for the political purpose to cause problems for Israel...The refugees live now in terrible conditions*³⁴⁶”.

These words represent quite faithfully the Italian political ideas about the refugees’ problem as well as the socialist position which right after the end of the hostilities appears in a small article titled *“La questione dei profughi”*, Italian for the question of the refugees. The article stresses the political remorselessness of the Arab States, which for mere political interest left 600 thousand people without a land, deprived from their rights and with no possible and decent future. The blame is all on the Arabs³⁴⁷.

While on the political scenario the P.S.I and the P.S.D.I., united in the P.S.U. have a straight and coherent view, a first divergence which foresees the great questions of the future political choices, are suggested by a debate in a newspaper called *L’Espresso*: an organ unrelated to any political party but a clear orientation of western leftist values, among those the right of Israel to exist, and the refusal of any form of fascism, militarism (strong critics of the American war in Vietnam), and communist deviations. On the eve of the Six-Day War takes stance in accordance to Pietro Nenni and Ugo la Malfa, especially on matters like the holocaust and the common anti-Fascist memory³⁴⁸. When Israel decides to keep the territories conquered during the war, a dispute between the two founders breaks out. With its policy, Israel is risking to become a new Middle Eastern Prussia, and to move from being right to being wrong³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁶ <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg04/lavori/stencomm/03/Leg/Serie010/1965/0203/stenografico.pdf>

³⁴⁷ Avanti! 11/6/1967

³⁴⁸ L’Espresso 4/6/1967

³⁴⁹ L’Espresso 18/6/1967

This is just an episode, unconnected with any political party even less to the P.S.U., but it precedes what will be in the next few months the core of the debate around the Jewish state which will be perceived by those who consider it a victim no longer as such.

3b) Shifting to the Palestinian side

The Six-Day War sheds a light on the matter of the refugees bringing it, slowly but inescapably, to the attention of the international scenario and to the interest of the public opinion, from this moment onwards no political body has the possibility of not taking this aspect into serious consideration. As already seen, the Italian government deals with it already in 1965 but not with the idea of helping their goal of being considered as a political representative. Refugees are not yet considered as a political matter, but rather a humanitarian emergency to help financially. As a consequence of the defeat of the Arab countries in 1967, the charm of Gamal Abd al-Nasser decreases and the on the ashes of the Arab nationalism Yasser Arafat builds his image of the father of the Palestinian people which start to be perceived no more simply as Arabs³⁵⁰.

In the socialist milieu many begin to be sensitive to the issue and to take it into consideration in the political debate even if time is required before the full political acknowledgment comes. Initially the attention is focused on the Palestinian guerrilla fighters, accused of walking on a path of liberation war which is doomed to turn into a extermination war. Palestinians need to cease the armed struggle and to conquer the right of representation of the Palestinian people. Such right must pass through a political authority enable to run a country, to respect rules of civility and not bombing Israeli territory or hijacking planes³⁵¹. Palestinians do not have a political project and strategy and the terrorist attacks of the various Palestinian groups confirm it. However, the lack of political recognitions does not prevent the socialists to mention the refugees issue in every occasion related to Israel, as it happens during the visit to the Jewish State by a delegation of the P.S.I. in the early 1970. Quite remarkable are the contents of the official speech, when after singing the praises of the socialist basis of Israel, and having reaffirmed the undisputable right of Israel to exist, a

³⁵⁰ Rubinstein, pp. 37-53.

³⁵¹ Avanti! 13/9/1970

mention is made about the refugees: “*the acknowledgment of the their existence, and the necessity to a fair and quick solution to it, with the cooperation and solidarity of all the actors involved*”³⁵².

Inside the socialist party itself a political trend starts to shape itself on the idea of a deeper concern about the Palestinians, not only as refugees, but as the irreplaceable partner to build peace with. A key figure of it is the socialist deputy Riccardo Lombardi, an important socialist deputy, anti-fascist, and chief director of L’Avanti!³⁵³. In a speech in Palermo, in 1970, he states new ideas, new perceptions of the ongoing conflict which, momentarily remain belongings of the minority, but will embrace the majority of the party in the coming years. Along with the usual anti-block logic, which is later in this chapter discussed, concepts as “*degeneration of Zionism*”, or “*A common homeland for the Palestinian*”, and above all “*the birth of the Palestinian identity*” come out calling into question the core of the conflict. Along with that, the nature of the Palestinian struggle itself changes, being pictured no more as a result of Arab extremisms, but gains the highly regarded honour of struggle for self-dignity and respect³⁵⁴.

Even Pietro Nenni, who views in Israel and in its leaders a common socialist mission and whose deep sympathy and comprehension for the State of Israel never lacked throughout his entire life³⁵⁵, shows an approach which includes the Palestinians, even if is linked to the interests of Israel: “*The Palestinian refugees conquered by now a national individuality, and the solution to their problem is necessary for the safety of Israel and the Arab States borders*”³⁵⁶.

Still, the full and unquestionable recognition of the Palestinians as a political and national issue comes only in 1974, when the new element of the political Palestinians is fully recognized and analyzed.

³⁵² *Atti visita in Israele della delegazione del Partito Socialista italiano – PSI*, Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 81.

³⁵³ http://www.pertini.it/TURATI/a_lombardi.html

³⁵⁴ *Intervento dell’On. Riccardo Lombardi a Palermo*, Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 112.

³⁵⁵ Molinari, p. 76.

³⁵⁶ *Avanti!* 27/9/1970

Palestinian leaders are now a legitimate speakers, representing a not just refugees but people with a national identity and without a land. The political demand of the establishment of a Palestinian State is fair, and a dialogue based on mutual respect, and not on the precondition of the destruction of the state of Israel is now possible. With all the due prudence, figures like Arafat or Nayef Hawatmeh, who were not long before considered no more than fanatics, are now the possibility of finding a solution for the two populations, which must not have the approval of the superpowers and can lead to the creation of a temporary Palestinian State on the territories conquered by Israel in the Six-day War³⁵⁷.

1974 is an important year also for the P.L.O., which, as seen previously, receives the international recognition of representative of the Palestinian people with UN resolution 3236. However, Italy abstains for the 3236 resolution³⁵⁸, denoting the typical prudence, and the usual policy of developing the political discussions without necessarily turning it into political action. Somehow, such approach can be also ascribable to the Italian socialists, which try to get by among different trends in the party and governmental responsibilities.

Along with the change of consideration of the Palestinian movements and leaders, other important processes and different perspectives take place with the socialist environment in Italy. Before the election in 1968, critics arrive to Israel from some exponents of the most leftist trends of the socialist area, such as Lelio Basso, but not only. On the base of the discontent and doubt toward Israel is its territories policy³⁵⁹.

The 1968 political elections do not meet the expectations of the P.S.U.³⁶⁰, putting on the one hand, an end to the political experiment, and on the other to a fragmentation, which has repercussions on the Middle Eastern issue. Two tendencies come out, the first one, and initially the largest one, has a

³⁵⁷ Mondo Operaio 4/1974 pp.97-99

³⁵⁸ <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/B5B4720B8192FDE3852560DE004F3C47>

³⁵⁹ Molinari, p. 78.

³⁶⁰ <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=19/05/1968&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

pro-Israeli approach and considers the West Bank and the Gaza stripes as natural defence borders for the Jewish State.

A second trend, rejecting Israel keeping of the territories, leads some member of the P.S.I. to a dialogue with the communist party implying the relinquishment of the proverbial socialist non-aligned policy and giving reasons for internal debates and further divisions. The participation, for instance, of Riccardo Lombardo, to the conference in Palermo in 1970, organized by the P.C.I. and the P.S.I.U.P., baffles some socialist party members, who ask for a clear stance of the party on such initiatives not representing the whole of the party, and a statement clarifying the individual and strictly personal nature of Lombardo's participation³⁶¹.

However, Lombardo's initiative is to be followed by a growing number of socialists, which, unlike Lombardo are not keen on P.C.I. and superpowers logic, but on the other hand find reasons to question Israel's politics especially on the conquered territories. Critics reach harsh levels, and find space on *Avanti!* where Israel' politics is accused of being short-sighted, racist, arrogant, drugged by its own power and unwilling to sit down and dialogue with its Palestinian counterpart³⁶². The Middle Eastern question becomes one of the main reasons to internal debates for the socialist parties.

The majority trend, which remains as such for the first years after the Six-Day War, still sees Israel as a socialist country, somehow even more fascinating and praiseworthy being born from the nationalization of Judaism. Israel embodies the capability of balancing the tradition, with the socialist necessities of modernity. The right of existence must be granted so is the right of defence from those who are devoted to the destruction of the Jewish State³⁶³. What raises among the socialists a remarkable debate concerns the traits of the self-defence. Is keeping the territories a justifiable measure for a socialist country? On the base of this question the trend, represented by Riccardo Lombardi's views, develops a different approach on Israel's politics and furthermore, on

³⁶¹ Di Figlia, p. 83.

³⁶² *Avanti!* 5/3/1971

³⁶³ *Avanti!* 15/5/1968

its essential socialist quality. An attempt to answer this question is give already one year after the war when on the pages of “*Critica Sociale*” (an historical socialist newspaper, founded by one of the first and most prominent and important Italian socialist leaders but never affiliated to a political party³⁶⁴). “*If Israel wanted to keep the conquered territories, or even the sole West Bank, it would be forced to leave most of its socialist experience which the current ruling class brought from the Russian and Polish ghettos*”³⁶⁵”.

The very roots of Israel are questioned, so as the appropriateness with the core of the socialist ideas and goals.

Despite the different views about the Middle Eastern actors, when it comes to real political action the socialist party keeps its international and neutral guideline, combining the two trends on how the crisis should be faced and solved. Pietro Nenni himself, being the Minister of Foreign Affair in the early 1969, in front of Realpolitik necessities does not hesitate to drop his pro-Israel position in favour of a neutral one. This is mainly due to the violations of UN resolutions 242 and of other admonition of UN Security Council. Speaking in front of the deputies’ chamber, Nenni condemns Israel for: “*the grave responsibilities as the Israeli government agreed to a predetermined action to retaliate against terrorist operations, causing the destruction of twelve Lebanese passenger airplanes violating Lebanese air space*”³⁶⁶. The speech continues stressing the international condemnation of the operation by the UN, which the Lebanese referred to after the violation, and underlines the Italian efforts by summoning up in a meeting both the Israeli and the Lebanese ambassadors, to find the way to prevent from an escalation of the violence. Concluding with a defence speech for both parts, Nenni and the Italian government move on a equidistant line, calling for the international intervention, free from the Moscow-Washington contrast logic, able to understand both reasons and both wrongdoings.

³⁶⁴ <http://www.criticasociale.net>

³⁶⁵ Critica sociale 20/5/1968

³⁶⁶ http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg05/lavori/Bollet/19690109_00.pdf

Following such approach, a visit of a P.S.I. delegation to U.A.R., on the invitation of the Egyptian Arab Socialist Union, takes place in September 1970, short time after a similar visit to Israel. The visit produces positive outcomes, along with a joined statement of the two socialist bodies which endorses: *“the necessity to come to a political solution of the Middle eastern crisis based on the Un resolutions, especially resolution 242, 22nd November 1967³⁶⁷”*. The main goal of establishing a first contact with socialist Arab forces is reached, an important step toward a world previously considered hardly compatible that however has a common ground in the socialist values.

Nevertheless, the pro-Israeli trend loses gradually its motivations and leave space for the critics towards the Jewish State politics, reaching a peak right after the war of 1973, when the oil crisis affects Italian and European interests. The government enjoys the support of the socialist party and some P.S.I. members hold ministries, however the political situation is unstable, contrasts within the governmental coalitions are frequent, and Italy start to face an economic crisis, due also to the threatened interest in the Mediterranean sea.

The socialist party is stuck in the middle of the governmental responsibilities, which require a certain prudence and mediation capacity in order to protect the national interests, and on the other hand, the anti-American trend, rejecting US foreign politics, especially Vietnam, grows constantly. Repercussions are heavy also for Israel, increasingly associated with the American politics and interests and which now shares with the American big brother its negative features: *“Our firm belief of Israel’s right of existence does not prevent us from denouncing loudly the annexation policy stated with the Six-Day War and which seems to have embraced the whole Israeli ruling class. The original character of the country is altered and now acts of violence against civilians contributed to the isolation of the Jewish State in the world public opinion³⁶⁸”*.

The situation of the socialist party in the middle of the 70’s shows a gloomy framework. Nenni’s experiment of the P.S.U. fails paving the way for splits within the socialist milieu. Nenni believes

³⁶⁷ *Rapporto sulla visita nella RAU di una delegazione del PSI*, Fondazione Filippo Turati, Fondo PSI – Direzione Nazionale, Serie 11, Sottoserie 4, UA 39.

³⁶⁸ Mondo Operaio 10-11/1973

erroneously that under the Israeli cause, the western democrats could reunite after the complications of the Vietnamese war³⁶⁹, and the first results of the administrative elections in 1967 in Sicily give good hope to keep on this way. In 1968 Nenni's platform crashes under a number of votes much below the expectations. From that moment on to the political decline of Nenni's platform, a more leftist, anti-North Atlantic treaty, ready to criticize Israel and to keep distance from it raises and in few years period of time becomes the mainstream approach in the socialist milieu³⁷⁰. Israel and the Palestinians are now two different actors, embodying new values and not representing old ones. The political strength and unity of the socialists is now facing an unprecedented crisis, which will come out in the 1976 elections debacle, putting an end to the old party and starting a new era with Benedetto Craxi as general secretary.

³⁶⁹ Di Figlia, p. 53.

³⁷⁰ Molinari, p. 76.

3c) Bettino Craxi: the first years of the secretariat

Few days after the successful outcome of the operation Entebbe, an article of Lelio Basso, former socialist deputy, representative of the leftist trend of the socialist milieu, writes an article on the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* with a full burden of blame on Israel. The occupation of foreign land, the scattering of the Palestinian people plus the oppression of those who are left in Palestine, and the refusal of accepting UN resolutions are enough reasons to obnubilate any terrorists' accountability: *"Some said the outcome of the Entebbe operation is a triumph of civilization on violence. Which kind of violence is worse than Israel scoffing at any international commitment and keeps on living in a permanent state of violation?"*. In addition to that, Israel is pictured as racist, and responsible for the continuous arms race of the third world countries. The article ends with a wish for the Israeli people to find reasonableness again³⁷¹. Despite the merciless criticism of Israel's politics, what is remarkable of this approach concerns the total lack of common ground and past with the Israeli people. The holocaust, the resistance against the Germans, the common anti-Fascism belong to a forgotten past. Indeed Lelio Basso' position represents a minority trend, but he is somehow a precursor of what will be in less than a decade the main guidelines within the socialist party.

However, in 1976 the socialist party is facing other, and more pressing problems. The results of the political elections give a unpleasant picture for the socialist who, despite keeping a similar number of votes as the previous elections in 1972³⁷², the important growing of the two main parties, D.C. and P.C.I., leave the socialists as an influent actor in the political arena³⁷³. The unsolved crisis of the socialists, who has seen fractures and unsatisfactory electoral outcomes, the lack of political

³⁷¹ Corriere della Sera 7/7/1976

³⁷² <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=07/05/1972&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

³⁷³ <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=20/06/1976&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

identity and goals, and the constitution of a young leadership, brings to a irreparable fracture giving the chance for new leaders to take over the party secretaryship. An opportunity taken by Benedetto (Bettino) Craxi when he is elected in July 1976 as secretary of the P.S.I. during a well-known meeting at the Midas Hotel in Rome³⁷⁴.

Craxi's project for his party aims at challenging the excessive power and overwhelming presence of the two biggest parties, which are leaving little political room to the others by gaining its independence from the heritage of the years of cooperation with the D.C.. Starting from 1963, socialist forces participate to different government under the oppressive presence of the democrats, preventing any reform from happening³⁷⁵. The autonomy, meaning an independent politics developed freely from the East-West logic, is the glue that can unite the diverse trends of the party, a common base to rebuild the party from³⁷⁶. In order to make out of a P.S.I. a political force capable of ruling the country, Craxi needs also a guideline for the foreign policy. Starting from the autonomist socialist tradition, Craxi points at a strategy rejecting totally the logic of the two blocks, considered equally in order to stress better the socialist political distance from both of them³⁷⁷. As an alternative to the D.C.-P.C.I. duo, the new leader promotes the socialist European cooperation, being himself the vice president of the Socialist International, he intends to contrast Eurocommunism giving a democratic socialist alternative both to conservatism and to the logic of the East-West blocks³⁷⁸.

Short after the election at the Midas Hotel, Craxi gives a speech to the parliament in occasion of the trust vote for the new-born Andreotti government, clarifying in some important passages also the foreign policy intentions of his party: *"We care about political independence of our country...European unity must be seen in a perspective of an increasing importance of the European countries in the international scenario and in the Mediterranean...The Palestinian issue*

³⁷⁴ Musella, p. 94.

³⁷⁵ Musella, p. 93.

³⁷⁶ Musella, p. 94.

³⁷⁷ Quagliariello, p. 23.

³⁷⁸ Di Scala, pp. 308-309

is far from being solved and Palestinians and Lebanese people suffer from massacres...Arab countries are always on the edge of new outbreaks...Cyprus is an open wound...In such a dangerous situation we have to ask ourselves the role of Europe, which is low, almost inexistent. The short-range policies, the subordinate conditions and the risk of imperialistic interference can find an antidote in a new European consciousness...The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the core of the European defence, and so it must be without other significant alternatives...what we ask is a role of Italy not subaltern to its allies³⁷⁹”.

Very important of this passage is the reference to the Atlantic treaty, a condition that Craxi knows to be necessary to gain the trust of the Americans so as to have a wider range of foreign political initiative.

The first foreign issue is the Lebanese civil war, already ongoing since April 1975, and witnessing a large number of casualties. In the discussion in the parliament, the socialists speak through the mouth of Riccardo Lombardi, which focuses mainly on the Palestinian problem, being it the cause of every trouble in Lebanon. Short after Craxi confirm his party colleague position adding that: *“The Lebanese question is bond to the Palestinian one. We have to encourage those efforts aiming at guaranteeing on the one hand the rights of the Palestinians, and on the other the integrity of the other states of the region. The P.L.O. should drop some unrealistic approaches³⁸⁰”*. There is no doubt that the Palestinians are victims, and are exposed to violence and massacres, as repeated often also on the party press³⁸¹, but Nenni’s heritage of a strict bond to the State of Israel is not lacking. The malevolent attitudes toward Israel are labelled as ignorant and rude, so much that Craxi is considered also by the Italian Jewish community, the most reliable heir to Nenni’s sympathetic attitude. Beyond personal beliefs, it is reasonable to think that such double approach respond to the

³⁷⁹ Craxi, pp. 16-7

³⁸⁰ http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg07/lavori/Bollet/19760908_00.pdf

³⁸¹ Avanti! 4/8/1976

necessity of embracing the various trends in the socialist party, from the leftist pro-Palestinian, to the historical one, more sensible to Israel reasons³⁸².

Diversification of sympathies concerns not only the actors involved but also the strategy and procedures to apply in order to find a solution of the impasse and to put an end to the devastating conflict, as comes out after that the massacres of Tel al-Zaatar appears on the media. Positions suggesting a direct negotiation between the two parts, Israelis and Palestinians, in order to establish a micro-Palestinian State on the base of which move towards a wider peace process³⁸³, while others see in an intervention of the European union, without the superpowers, which should involve the totality of the Mediterranean States³⁸⁴. Out of the Lebanese question, Bettino Craxi makes clear and indisputable the political nature of the problem, and the necessity of recognizing the Palestinian right to an independent and sovereign State, and dumping definitely the refugees terminology which was still in use in the early 70s. There is still not a clear position about the P.L.O., its recognition as the only representative of the Palestinian people, and we have to wait until the end of 1977, as will be highlighted up ahead in the chapter, to see a political initiative in this direction.

Before that, at the beginning of 1977, Bettino Craxi accept an invitation of the representative of Israel's government to a visit, whose outcome are well described in an interview on the pages of *Avanti!* and seem to be not pessimist at all. *"Both in the Arab and Israeli area something is moving"* Craxi says *"and what before was considered a dead end, now shows important signal of chance. The Lebanese tragic experience is maybe the end of an era. The Israeli Labour party prepares for the congress, and coming elections and despite the growing right, the position of those who are capable of seeing a peace path are stronger"* (sadly both Lebanon and Israel will turn out in a very different way than the Italia socialist leader expected). The interview has time also for some important statements about the P.L.O. which is now incapable of a dialogue not having

³⁸² Molinari, p. 79-80

³⁸³ *Avanti!* 16/7/1976

³⁸⁴ *Mondo Operaio* 9/1976

rejected the purpose of destroying Israel. The P.L.O. still suffers from political lack of realism and until it changes this attitude, no negotiation will ever be possible³⁸⁵.

1977 is an important year for the Middle Eastern events and also for the socialist party dealing with them. Unlike Craxi predicted after the visit to Israel, the right wing coalition wins the election for the ninth Knesset, inflicting an historical defeat to the Labour party³⁸⁶. The discouragement within the socialist milieu is palpable. A long article and a pessimistic analysis appears on the pages of Critica Sociale, with a meaningful title "*Israele: la fine di un'era*" (Italian for Israel: the end of an epoch). The analyse, which is quite long and detailed, focuses the Begin character, depicted as danger, not just because of his past, but mainly because of his aggressive ideas and purposes (it must be said quite predictive). Then the view on the Palestinian and P.L.O. issue is considered: Begin and his entourage perceive them simply as terrorists, a tool in the hands of Arab Countries and of the Soviet Union, no national identity of the Palestinian is acknowledged. Finally, the very essence of Israel as a socialist State is questioned, as the results of the elections clearly point at a new economic policy of the Jewish State where the internationalist capitalist model is now substituting the old models. For all these reasons, it is suitable to talk about the end of an era and the beginning of a new one³⁸⁷.

Another event testifying the lack of unity of opinion in the socialist area come with the positive respond of Anwar Sadat to the American-Soviet joint communiqué and with his unilateral initiative, of course backed by the Carter administration, to negotiate with Israel, well represented by the historical visit to the Knesset on the 20th of November 1977³⁸⁸. Converging on the evident effect of excluding the Palestinians from the table of the negotiation and from the political affairs of the Middle East, the socialist find nevertheless different opinions about Sadat's initiative. From a very negative one, which accuses the Egyptian president of being under American authority³⁸⁹, to a

³⁸⁵ Avanti! 7/1/1977

³⁸⁶ http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res9.htm

³⁸⁷ Mondo Operaio 6/1977

³⁸⁸ Morris, pp. 562-564

³⁸⁹ Avanti! 18/1/1978

diffident view caused by the incapability of understanding the key role of the Palestinians in the peace process, which, without them, focuses only on national interests and does not meet its central issue³⁹⁰.

The party secretary keeps a cautious position, without burdening any actor with the blame, but supports openly Sadat and its brave initiative, which unfortunately finds the resistance of the Israeli government. Despite the criticism for the military operation in Lebanon, called an act of force against the use of reasons, Craxi insists on both sides to take their own responsibilities and, for the Palestinian to give up any idea of revolutionary war, and for the Israelis to recognize a Palestinian State as the only condition leading to peace³⁹¹. This last aspect is not raising questions for the Israelis, but also in Italy and in the P.S.I. itself the necessity to find a representative for the Palestinians start to be felt as impellent. Although the base of the party has been seeing in the P.L.O. and in Arafat the only plausible organization and leader, on an official level nothing has never been done. The path of time bringing the P.S.I., and the Italian government to recognize the P.L.O. as legitimate representative of the Palestinian people lasts more than 4 years. Starting from the first request presented to the chambers of deputies by Michele Achilli who speaking on behalf of his party calls for the recognition of the P.L.O. as the only true representative of the Palestinian people having in these last years proved it to the world with its dramatic struggle³⁹². Still this request is representative of only the leftist trend of the party, while the rest of it, the majority, does not fully agree and maintains a low profile. Again, in April 1980, during the session for the vote of trust of the second Cossiga Government, the possibility of opening an office for the P.L.O. in Italy, meaning its recognition is not taken into consideration raising discontent among the leftist trend of the party. The blame is on the opposition of the republicans, the third party of the government together with P.S.I. and D.C., the most pro-Israeli political party Italy has and ever had. However

³⁹⁰ Mondo Operaio 12/1977

³⁹¹ B. Craxi, *Uscire dalla crisi, costruire il futuro*. Relazione di Craxi al 41° Congresso del PSI, Torino, 29 marzo 1978. Fondazione Bettino Craxi, Fondo Bettino Craxi, Sezione I, Serie 2, Sottoserie 1, UA 2.

³⁹² <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg07/lavori/stenografici/sed0230/sed0230.pdf>

P.S.I. majority, and of course Craxi, remain quiet and keeps on temporizing³⁹³. The turning point of the socialist policy come at the end of 1981, when the Comitato Centrale Socialista (Central Socialist Committee) proposes a motion of the minority group “Sinistra per l’alternativa” (Left for the alternative), representing the leftist trend, for the legitimacy of the P.L.O. as guarantee of peace in the Middle East. Starting from the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian People and of its legitimate representative, the P.L.O., the motion wishes for a start of a stabilizing peace plan for the Mediterranean. The majority of the party abstains, giving a clear sign of their willingness of making the P.L.O. recognition step³⁹⁴. The occasion comes on the 5th of August 1982, when the Foreign Commission of the chambers of deputies approves a motion presented by P.S.I., D.C., P.C.I., P.R.I., P.S.D.I., P.L.I. asking the government: *“to work in the perspective of the official acknowledgment of the P.L.O., and to take the appropriate initiatives to foster the mutual, unequivocal, and simultaneous recognition between the P.L.O. and the State of Israel”*³⁹⁵.

Before reaching this important point, the P.S.I. and its secretary Craxi, deal with some happenings in the Middle East. On the one hand the party develops the firm belief that the P.L.O. is essential for any kind of negotiate and political move³⁹⁶, and on the other hand Israel military and unilateral decisions give a hard time to the socialist leader still to remain bond to Nenni’s legacy of friendship with the Jewish State.

One example is the decision of Begin’s government to annex the Golan Heights, going against the international community and the resolution 242. Speaking to the chambers of deputies, Craxi does not refrain from accusing the Tel Aviv of irresponsibility and defining the annexation an act against peace, against a negotiable solution, the only that can assure a stable and long-lasting peace³⁹⁷.

The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 gives the socialist party to show a common position both in the public debate, and in the parliamentary behaviour. On the pages of Avanti! right from the

³⁹³ Avanti! 7/5/1980

³⁹⁴ Avanti! 29/11/1981

³⁹⁵ http://www.camera.it/dati/leg08/lavori/Bollet/19820805_00_03.pdf

³⁹⁶ B. Craxi, *Pace sicurezza indipendenza*. Relazione al Comitato centrale, Roma, 27-28 novembre 1981, Fondazione Bettino Craxi, Fondo BettinoCraxi, Sezione I.

³⁹⁷ http://www.camera.it/dati/leg08/lavori/Seduta_comune/sed010/sed010.pdf

beginning of the military operations, accusing articles appear daily clarifying the position of the socialist party which is of an unambiguous condemn of Israel aggression, adding the request of an immediate withdrawal³⁹⁸. The evolution of the socialists in this occasion concerns the pressure made on the government in order to take measures to intervene in the Lebanese scenario. In a communicate through the pages of Avanti!, the direction of the party issues a communicate deploring Israel's aggression and asking the government to speak internationally to: *"demand the ceasefire, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops and to affirm the efficient role of the European community"*³⁹⁹.

Craxi does not hesitate to convert the political debate into political pressure on the government. While speaking to the chamber of deputies, not only condemns Israel aggressive attitude in any aspect, from the military one, to the annexation, or to the vision of a greater Israel, but demand also to the Prime Minister, Giovanni Spadolini, to take a stance against the aggression and even to cancel a previously planned visit to the State of Israel as a sign of protest⁴⁰⁰. Remarkably enough, in the political language of 1982 critics, the common memory of the Shoah does not seem to appear, and the usual calls for Israel's right of existence are replaced by the Palestinian ones, their sufferings, and their position of victims. Along with the continuous condemnation and blaming of Israel throughout the entire month of August 1982⁴⁰¹, a month when the military operations kept on going, the occasion for a first vis-à-vis with the P.L.O. leader Yasser Arafat approaches. As already seen previously in this dissertation the visit of P.L.O. leader to Rome is a success, and opens to positive development between Italy on the way of the possible official recognition of the Palestinian organization, as Nemer Hammad says to the pages of Avanti!⁴⁰². Craxi welcomes Arafat in a warm striking way, working toward a general recognition and approval of the figure of Arafat. When the famous Italian journalist Indro Montanelli asks about the reasons of such open support of the Palestinian leader,

³⁹⁸ Avanti! 9/6/1982

³⁹⁹ Avanti! 11/9/1982

⁴⁰⁰ <http://legislature.camera.it/dati/leg08/lavori/stenografici/sed0553/sed0553.pdf>

⁴⁰¹ Avanti! 5-20/8/1982

⁴⁰² Avanti! 11/9/1982

Craxi answers: *“We do see in the P.L.O. the necessary political counterpart for anyone willing to find a definitive solution to the conflict. I do not believe Arafat to be far from reasonable and realistic positions. It is a political issue, not a sentimental one. The cause of peace in the world needs a stable peace in the Middle East, and with the P.L.O. such peace is unachievable⁴⁰³”*.

In the interview, Craxi mentions also the attack to the Jewish community in those days, labelling them as savageries and referring to the non-involvement of the Palestinian leader. Craxi’s position, leaving aside Israel’s rights and necessities, raises the discontent among the Jewish community to the extent that socialist leaders are not welcomed in the funeral of Stefano Gay Taché, the young Jew assassinated in front of the Roman temple. Only thanks to the intervention of the chief Rabbi Toaff, Sandro Pertini, president of the Italian Republic, socialist, can attend the religious ceremony⁴⁰⁴.

In the time lapse between the events of summer-autumn 1982 and the first Craxi government, which begins on the 4th of august 1983, there are no remarkable events the P.S.I. deals with showing importance. Little interest is put upon the P.N.C. in Alger in 1983 with no remarkable parliamentary interventions, however few weeks after the Palestinian council, Craxi, in a couple of article on Avanti! gives an anticipation of what the foreign policy of his coming government is about to be. Taking the cue of the assassination of Sartawi Craxi outlines the framework of his foreign politics as Prime minister. Issam Sartawi position was very incline with Craxi, as he intended before his assassination, to lay on the negotiation table the issue of Israel’s right of existence⁴⁰⁵. The negotiation policy is backed up by the socialist leader, as written in columns of Avanti!, where also the European cooperation and financial aid is promoted as opposite of the military solutions⁴⁰⁶. As for the Palestinian exponent, killed by the Palestinian opposite faction of Abu Nidal, Craxi, aligning himself with his message, sings the praises of him: *“A messenger of*

⁴⁰³ Corriere Della Sera 8/10/1982

⁴⁰⁴ Il Manifesto 12/8/1982

⁴⁰⁵ Baron, p. 408.

⁴⁰⁶ Avanti! 10/4/1983

peace and moderation. Always on the frontline to defend the Palestinian rights with courage against the most extremist tendencies, he was convinced of the necessity of a political solution, of the necessity of dialogue, and because of this he was killed⁴⁰⁷”.

⁴⁰⁷ Avanti! 12/4/1983

3d) Bettino Craxi: Years of the government

On his first speech as Prime Minister to the chamber of deputies, Craxi finds time to restate his ideas for the foreign policy of internationalism and independence underlining that: *“our aim at solving peacefully the conflict, with respect of people’s and nations’ rights applies firstly for the Mediterranean region, where Italy will keep on exercising its influence to reduce tensions. Peace in the Middle East...remains the big betrayed hope that however must not be abandoned⁴⁰⁸”*. Few months later, the prudence and strategy of the socialist leader meet the conflicting stance of the socialist President of the Republic, Sandro Pertini, who on the usual speech on new year’s eve spends more than few words on the situation in Lebanon, a country he has visited few months before, and on the Middle East. The spirit of the speech is quite critical towards Israel reaffirming the right of the Palestinians to have a State but also the peacekeeping mission of the Italian army is questioned. Although the virtue and behaviour of the Italian task force is never put into discussion, the mission itself shows the potential involvement in a war, despite being local one, and if this is the case, the Italian soldiers should return home⁴⁰⁹. Pertini states that his thought does not intend to influence the government moves, but raises a couple of issue, one concerning the relations between the socialist party and the Jewish community and another on the foreign politics of the Craxi’s government. As for the Italian Jewish community, the words of Pertini appear to be a threat to the Italian Jewry, a definite step away from a party and one of the most reputable leader, which fought in the resistance and shared the same values. With that, along with the P.C.I. also the P.S.I. turns its back to Israel in order to welcome with open arms the P.L.O. and the Palestinians⁴¹⁰.

The other issue raised by Pertini’s speech concerns the delicate strategy to balance the free range of action of the government and the necessity to gain the trust of the Americans. To this end,

⁴⁰⁸ Craxi, p. 121.

⁴⁰⁹ http://www.quirinale.it/qnrw/statico/ex-presidenti/Pertini/documenti/per_disc_31dic_83.htm

⁴¹⁰ Molinari, p. 114.

Craxi's stance about the installation of Euromissiles remains positive. Already in 1979, during Cossiga's government, the P.S.I. accepted the decision to deploy the missiles on Italian soil⁴¹¹ however the real deployment remained on paper for four years when it became clear no further procrastination was possible. After consulting the major European heads of state, Craxi decides, not with internal troubles, to agree to the missiles deployment on Italian soil. Such decision, made in order to gain Reagan administration trust, is taken in a difficult moment, internally for the firm opposition of the P.C.I. and of a large part of the public opinion, but also the European side, the demonstration for peace and against the missiles increase, making Craxi's decision not a popular one, but achieves the expected result. Reagan has word of praise for Italy and for Craxi's government, which in return of the favour asks the Americans to take into account Italy's opinion for matter of common interest⁴¹². In order to keep the American administration close to Italy and to increase interest and attention towards Italy, Craxi refuses to consider the request for a disengagement from Lebanon, despite the growing violence and attacks against the foreign task forces. Right after the attack of the 23rd October 1983, when two suicidal commandos attack simultaneously the French and American bases leaving on the ground 241 Americans and 59 French soldiers. Craxi gives a speech to the parliament making clear that Italy intends to remain in Lebanon, and about it the French and America president have been already informed: "*Italy aims at keeping the commitment taken, its solidarity in a moment like this will not lack*"⁴¹³.

Such is the international political environment Craxi manages to exploit for the sake of his governmental policy whose goals are an action independent from the American influence. Although the Reagan Administration does not consider Arafat and the P.L.O. as possible counterpart for the negotiation⁴¹⁴, initially no major disapproval is moved toward the pro-Arab Craxi-Andreotti (The foreign Minister) approach. Starting from 1982, Craxi firmly believes in the Palestinian issue to be

⁴¹¹ Di Nolfo, p. 9.

⁴¹² Di Scala, p. 396.

⁴¹³ Craxi, pp. 158-9.

⁴¹⁴ Baron, pp. 667-70.

the core of the problems in the Middle East, and develops a sort of personal attachment to the Palestinians and to their history and condition. Moving further Craxi calls them: *“the most western people of the Arab world, most peaceful and moderate. There was and there is not a military solution for the Palestinian issue, there was no sense in the wars against Israel or in the P.L.O. armed struggle or in the terrorism of the most extremists group*⁴¹⁵”. The speech continues with the Israeli rights and responsibilities but what is remarkable here is the confidence in Arafat as a suitable leader for negotiations, hence the continuous support throughout the entire time of the socialist government. If on the one hand the socialist government knows that any negotiation is doomed to fail without the participation of Arafat and of the P.L.O., on the other hand the Palestinians need to accept negotiations, without an image of the Palestinian and Arab people as willing to dialogue, the Craxi’s plan also is doomed to fail. To this end, Craxi and Andreotti make a series of visits in the Arab world in order to promote the Palestinian cause and rights through negotiations. The main goal of these visits is to intervene in the P.L.O. itself to clean it from the most extremists fringes devoted uniquely to the armed struggle (as will be highlighted later, Craxi never disowned the Palestinian legitimacy of the armed struggle) as such option could only bring sufferings and no improvements for the peace process⁴¹⁶.

Secondly, in order to achieve a negotiating P.L.O., Craxi needs Arafat to accept the resolution 242, meaning peace for territories (foreseeing the future approach of the P.L.O. as today resolution 242 remains the base for any possible negotiation), and King Hussein to establish a trustworthy relation, as without Jordan a Palestinian State cannot come into the world. Finally yet importantly, Israel has to accept the P.L.O. as a valid counterpart and the United States not to interfere⁴¹⁷.

On 6th of December 1984, Craxi and Andreotti visit Arafat in his headquarter in Tunis, for the first time an Italian Prime Minister meets with the Palestinian leader as during the Arafat’s first visit to Rome, Giovanni Spadolini refuses to see him. Despite disagreements, the meeting is positive and

⁴¹⁵ <http://legislature.camera.it/dati/leg08/lavori/stenografici/sed0553/sed0553.pdf>

⁴¹⁶ Di Nolfo, p. 32.

⁴¹⁷ Di Nolfo, p. 33.

produces political improvements because Arafat accepts to present to the Italian government a “*pacchetto di proposte*” (Italian for set of proposals) to show his willingness to negotiate. On the pages of *Avanti!* Craxi warns about the mistake Italy would be to ignore the positive signals coming from the Middle East, where from the Arab side negotiate is more and more considered positively⁴¹⁸

Results come short after when the meeting with Arafat and Hussein takes place in Amman with the aim of setting an international conference including all the actors involved in the region to plan the establishment of a Palestinian State within a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation⁴¹⁹. Unfortunately with the Israeli Prime Minister Peres, which is visiting Rome almost in the same days as the conference in Amman, Craxi finds the first resistance and scepticism despite the same socialist origin of his Israeli colleague. A conference formula including some elements of the P.L.O. in the Jordanian delegation in order to negotiate peace does not disappoint Israel⁴²⁰, however, Shimon Peres declines the invitation because of Arafat’s unwillingness to reject terrorist activities and because such conference would just be a show considering the unilateral position of the Soviet Union⁴²¹.

Beyond successes and failures, such open and independent policy create an unexpected mood for the American administration, used to perceive Italy in the Mediterranean as a subdued and docile. The surprise and embarrassment of the Americans become increasingly disappointment reaching an open and dramatic clash in October 1985, with the Sigonella crisis affair⁴²² which is not going to be investigated in details in this dissertation but just run over to understand the situation. A commando of Palestinians who abducted an Italian ship, The *Achille Lauro*, responsible also for the killing of an old Jewish passenger of American citizenship, seek refuge in Egypt. The Egyptian authorities put them on a plane directed to Tunisia but before the arrival, they are forced to land on the military

⁴¹⁸ *Avanti!* 8/12/1984

⁴¹⁹ Di Nolfo, p. 33.

⁴²⁰ Di Nolfo, p. 34.

⁴²¹ *Avanti!* 19/2/1985

⁴²² Di Scala, p. 401.

base of Sigonella, Sicily. Craxi orders the Italian army to prevent the Americans from taking the Palestinians, assuring they would be taken to trial and judged in Italy. One Palestinian, Abu Abbas, is subsequently put into freedom and free to leave Italy without any judicial consequences. Such a firm stance against the American ally disorient the entire opposition and also part of the government leading the Minister of Defence, Giovanni Spadolini, to call for a governmental crisis in a speech to the chamber⁴²³. Besides the Republic Party, the communist opposition, along with other political forces, is forced to admit the political courage of who shortly before was considered submitted to the Americans⁴²⁴. Even the communist newspaper *L'Unità*, previously critic for the lack of independence in the Middle Eastern region⁴²⁵ changes its attitude into a positive one, softening criticism for a more positive portrait of the socialist leader⁴²⁶. The crisis with the United States subsides quite quickly and no major fractures remain between the two countries. Possibly, also because the Reagan administration prefers a socialist and anti-communist Prime minister instead of a Christian Democrat forced to take into consideration the P.C.I.⁴²⁷, however the media impact is enormous and the reputation of the government in the public opinion is very high. The President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, reject the government resignation consequent to the Republican Party call, and in two speech to the chamber, on the 4th⁴²⁸ and the 6th⁴²⁹ of November, Craxi clarifies the position of the government, defending its conduct and reaffirming the loyal relation with the U.S.A. What comes up as the most remarkable feature for the sake of this dissertation is the figure of Arafat, and the total identification of Craxi with the Palestinian cause. The leader of the P.L.O. is compared to Giuseppe Mazzini: “*A deeply religious man which in the torments of the exile planned the political assassinations*”. In the same speech, he reaffirm his contrariety to the armed struggle, stating nevertheless the legitimacy of it, raising in the chamber harsh protests. Israel is mentioned as

⁴²³ Molinari, pp.121-2.

⁴²⁴ http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg09/lavori/stenografici/sed0372/sed0372.pdf

⁴²⁵ *L'Unità* 17/9/1982

⁴²⁶ *L'Unità* 16/10/1985

⁴²⁷ Di Figlia, p. 146.

⁴²⁸ http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg09/lavori/stenografici/sed0371/sed0371.pdf

⁴²⁹ http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg09/lavori/stenografici/sed0373/sed0373.pdf

the old friend that lost the way, unable to take brave steps and to make acts of generosity, as its past should suggest doing.

These are the last important political action of the Craxi's government, as for the following important moment, the outbreak of the Intifada, the government is back in the hands of the D.C. despite some ministers officiated by socialist party members. On the same wave of the Sigonella crisis feeling, a communist-socialist interparliamentary group is created to: "*respect the civil and political rights of the international conventions and for self-determination of the Palestinian people as the essential condition for peace*"⁴³⁰. Critics from the socialist side are not lacking and words like brutal repression or apartheid become common in the media language⁴³¹. Craxi as well in a speech to the parliament repeats the condemnation of the Israeli repression and suggest the negotiation as the only possible solution, with the help and mediation of the European Union and the active role of Italy⁴³².

Starting from 1982, and more precisely from the events in Lebanon, the socialist party finds something uncommon for its previous experiences, unity. The various trends disappear and find one only guideline, the Craxi one, on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The opposition is reduced to something practically non-influential. It is however interesting to make few examples of it. During the military operation in Lebanon, one important voice of half criticism raises trying to make the Israeli position understood by the party. Giuliano Amato, which will be Prime Minister in the 90s, labels as brutal the action of the Israeli government but warn not to forget the continuous attacks to the Israeli villages and the extremism of the P.L.O.⁴³³. However, this voice remains an isolated one, and above all, will not repeat itself a second time. The only constant opposite voice in the P.S.I. comes from a Milanese member, Giorgio Gangi, of Jewish origins, a strict financial collaborator of Craxi, but a non-influential figure concerning the foreign policy of the party. His position is

⁴³⁰ Avanti! 22/12/1987

⁴³¹ Avanti! 21-22/12/1987

⁴³² Craxi, pp. 427-8.

⁴³³ Avanti! 18/6/1982

nevertheless very brave and firm refusing the P.L.O. as a legitimate counterpart and showing how criticism of Israel is turning into anti-Semitism⁴³⁴. His criticism appears in every important occasion, as for example in 1985, the only socialist voice, which disapproves the guideline of the party⁴³⁵. However the highest moment of contrast comes in 1988 when in an article on *Avanti!*, Gangi, embittered, verifies the lost tradition of having Jewish party members, having the P.S.I. got rid, more or less consciously, of every member of Jewish origins⁴³⁶. Gangi is very active denouncing the soul changing of his party, the death of Nenni's legacy also looking after a book with all the chapters from Nenni's diary about Israel, published by *Il Garofano Rosso*, a small publishing company in Milan⁴³⁷.

However, the diligence of Gangi is inversely proportional to the impact it has on the party, which is, in matters of foreign politics, homogeneous, compact, and opposite to Gangi's requests and complains. With such unity, the P.S.I. keeps on going after the end of the governmental experience, always reminding the importance of the Palestinian rights, the duties of Israel, and the necessity of a deeper role of Europe and Italy in the Middle East.

⁴³⁴ Critica Sociale 6/1982

⁴³⁵ *Avanti!* 17/11/1985

⁴³⁶ *Avanti!* 4/5/1988

⁴³⁷ <http://www.librinlinea.it/titolo/nenni-e-israele-nenni-pietro-gangi-gio/TO01077856>

3e) Overview on the Italian socialists

The time lapse running between the Six-Day war and the fall of the Berlin witnesses a peak in the socialist milieu followed by a crisis producing splits among the various socialist trends and eventually an unprecedented upswing and unity starting with the conference at the Midas Hotel in Rome.

As for the foreign politics and more specifically for the State of Israel, the socialists are strictly bond with the figure of Pietro Nenni. As already investigated in this dissertation, Nenni has diverse reasons to support fully the Israeli cause, from the political affinity, to episodes concerning his life and family. His political project to reunite and compact to various socialist and western soul under the common cause for the right of Israel to exists, founders little time after the war⁴³⁸. In point of fact, the Six-day War represents the peak of its policy, with good results in the Sicilian elections in June 1967 and the unanimous agreement to his vision of most of the leftist and secular political forces, but at the same time from that moment on, the decline becomes unstoppable. It is quite remarkable how the decline of the old socialist leader occurs at the same time of the growing of the leftist trend of the party, critical towards Israel. Up to that moment, the defence of Israel is one of the most peculiar feature of the socialist, which demarcates the borders with the P.C.I., but with the Nenni on the wane, new spaces remain empty giving the chance to the more communist-sympathetic trend of the party to fill them, using also the anti-Israeli trump card⁴³⁹. When the division inside the P.S.I. becomes impossible to avoid, and clearly on the one hand the trend Nenni-Craxi faces the leftist Lombardo-Manca one, also the old leader shifts to a more acceptable position for the majority of the party members and even without blaming Israel in any way, he recognizes the lack of a European and Italian political action. In addition to this, a first mention of the armed

⁴³⁸ Di Figlia, p. 53.

⁴³⁹ Molinari, p. 76.

struggle as inappropriate to solve the conflict is finally made⁴⁴⁰. However Nenni's time is definitely over, his ideal perception of Israel as a state of friends and comrades born out the tragedy of the Second World War simply does not appeal anymore as it used to. The changing world cannot be wholly understood by the old leader leaving to the young heir apparent the task to reshape the socialist party. Considering Nenni as his master, Bettino Craxi is initially a fervent supporter of the Jewish State, as he makes clear in the days of June 1967 when Israel is threatened of destruction⁴⁴¹. He also follows Nenni in the official visit to Israel in 1970, which turns to be a great success with a warm welcoming of the Israeli authorities and with a Nenni generous of flattering words for the Jewish State⁴⁴². Nevertheless, as the Realpolitik needs change, the P.S.I. leader manages to adapt to them successfully.

In order to understand the articulate political project Craxi has for his party is necessary to overview the perception of the socialist party and its history in post war Italy. The socialist milieu shows continuous splits and a chronic subjection to the two other bigger party. Up to the Hungarian revolution, P.S.I. lives under the wing of the P.C.I., after the tragic events in 1956, the shift is towards the D.C. with whom takes part in the government from 1963 to 1974. However, the political submission is evident. The socialist party does to have a clear independent political agenda and its disunity leads to a reality of provincialism, to the appearance of being unable to rule the country, to have the political qualification to be trusted by the electorate. The intentions of Craxi are to gain space between the two parties and to promote the P.S.I. as a governmental force, to make it a ruling party and not a dependent one on the other and bigger ones. The young leader knows that a common, clear, independent agenda for the foreign politics is absolutely necessary and senses that the growing concern about Israel and the keeping of the territories are the prelude of what will consume most of the energies in the Italian political debates in the late 70s and 80s.

⁴⁴⁰ Nenni, p. 305.

⁴⁴¹ Pillitteri, p. 271.

⁴⁴² Rubbi, p. 48.

To an active and intense public and political participation within the borders of the country, an immobility on the international level antagonizes. The American do not consider Italy much, not even for the Mediterranean issues, including the Arab-Israeli conflict on which Italy seems not to have any capability to intervene⁴⁴³. With such ambiguous and obscure policy whose D.C. governments are unwilling to take open stances pro or against any actor, Craxi plans new criterions and guidelines for his party in prospect of a more active P.S.I. role in the governmental actions. The refusal to side with one of the two blocks is a permanent feature in both the political language and policy, along with a staunch conviction of the role of Europe within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As for the situation in the Middle East, Craxi's approach has to get by on the one hand with the two previous features, and on the other hand with the events in the area and the repercussion on the Italian political debate, both public and governmental. Even in the most difficult situations, when taking Israel's side is a real hard stance, Craxi almost always reminds the right of Israel to exist and keeps always relations with the socialist environment in the Jewish State, but the Palestinians becomes growingly apparent, and the necessity to deal with them is unavoidable. Since the beginning Craxi aims at Arafat, as among the galaxy of Palestinian groups Arafat is not only the most representative of the Palestinian people, but also because is the most inclined to Craxi's conduct and the political figure who can be presented better to the Italian political scene. Craxi reports in any possible occasion to the parliament about the progresses of the peace process and negotiation having Arafat as a dialoguing counterpart⁴⁴⁴, despite knowing and admitting the little role Italy can play in the Middle East⁴⁴⁵.

What such policy shows is the clear use of foreign policy subdued to the inner one. "*Craxi has been always one of the few socialist which took care seriously of the foreign politics*", and keeping in mind Nenni's attention on the international affairs as important for the evolution of the inner ones, he shapes a new P.S.I. bailing it out of a reputation of being a short and narrow minded

⁴⁴³ Varsori, p. 34.

⁴⁴⁴ <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg09/lavori/stencomm/0910/Leg/Serie010/1985/0314/stenografico.pdf>

⁴⁴⁵ Avanti! 8/12/1984

party⁴⁴⁶. Such work on the socialist image helps to erode the approval of the P.C.I. and to offer a good substitute to the communist, like in 1985 when the Sigonella affair raises exponentially the consensus of the socialist leader and leave the communists, both the party and the media organs, quite embarrassed. Appealing to the national sense of pride, to the strong and striking behaviour, Craxi manages to satisfy some of his political necessities. Firstly the agreement about his actions embrace almost every political force in the parliament (excluding the P.R.I.) and in the public opinion reaching a level of popularity never achieved before, secondly all the accuses of submission to the American ally are washed away.

Neutrality, independence and international consideration are not the only aspect on which the P.S.I. works. A particular attention is given to the humanitarian nature of the Italian intervention, aimed at finding a non-military solution and also at helping materially the population living in a state of war, as for instance the peacekeeping force in Lebanon in the 80s, or even more important with the Palestinian population. The concern for the refugees, as they are called in a first moment, and for the Palestinians as an autonomous population, often shows a genuine care for the people, which grow, to the eyes of the Italian public opinion, more and more the qualities of the oppressed and innocent population. At the same time, Israel loses all the traits, which was previously acknowledge for. The common history, enemies and struggle with the socialist start to fade away right after the end of the Six-Day War, and the firm decision to keep the territories leads to a reconsideration to Israel as a whole. Values like anti-Fascism, resistance, or terrible memories and enemies line Nazism, or concentration camps far from being used for the sake of Israel, start to appear in the anti-Israeli language,⁴⁴⁷ although the official P.S.I. press and political language is always very accurate to avoid it. However, Craxi is always very careful about the use he can do of the public opinion waves to turn them into political consensus and eventually into votes, also because rationally no real results could be reached. To this end, the socialist politics towards the

⁴⁴⁶ Spiri, p. 67-8.

⁴⁴⁷ Tolomelli in *Antifascismo e Identità europea*, p. 390-4.

Middle East must be seen starting with 1976, when the path for a uniform party begins. The logic of the Middle Eastern events and decisions have only inner application, both to open up a window between the enormous power of the P.C.I. and D.C. However, Craxi's image is also to give the impression of a breakage with a past made of inactivity, obscurity and incapability of standing up and pursue goals, which Republican Italy never seemed to be able to seek.

4) Communists and socialists: differences and similarities

In these years, which are the most intense in the perception and in the inner debate about the Middle East, the two main leftist parties face similar problems, concerns and move along comparable guidelines. As abundantly stressed in the dissertation both parties have the clear awareness of the limitation of their political bodies in the possibility of influencing the events in the Middle East. Not just as mere political parties but also, the whole Italian range of options could not offer any available strategy to play a protagonist role. The Italian political action on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea does not aim at changing or even guiding the Arab-Israeli flow of events.

Hence, the first resemblance concerns the political use of the approach to the Israeli-Palestinian issue for purposes of inner politics. With the important exception of the Sigonella crisis, the debates, sympathies, the pro and against stances about the Middle East serve as tools to fight internally in the parliament, governments and mass media. In a nutshell, it is a matter of snatching votes from the opposite parties or attempting at not losing owns and according to this basic principle of political survival, the guideline are traced. It is remarkable to notice that time gap of the two parties to reach approximately the same position in the eighties.

In the socialist milieu, the process leading to a harsh condemnation of the aggressive Israeli politics is slower, and passes through the narrowing of Nenni's trend to the enlarging of the leftist one. While for the communist party the need to align itself with Moscow's position is undisputable, the major independence within the Italian socialists requires the flow of events to turn Israel's image from a socialist friendly nation to the opposite of it. If the communists do not need time to see the development after the Six-Day War, it is the decisions made in the government in Jerusalem to shape the political thought of the socialists. Nenni and his trend vision begins to become less

believable as Israel decides to keep territories, and to deny the Palestinians their right to be considered as political counterpart for negotiations.

However, this feature should not mislead to a common or even similar way to deal to the question in the Middle East. Communists and socialists trace the guideline of their approach on different bases. As for the communists, the shade of the bigger soviet brother de facto imposes the guideline, not only of course for the Middle East. As seen previously the conduct of the P.C.I. remains loyal to the Moscow one at least up to 1986, when Napolitano visits Israel, but within the party the real question of having policy about the Middle East free from the soviet diktats never assumes the characteristics of a big issue. The real problem of the dependency from the eastern bloc are bond to the accuses of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union which the party vehemently rejected. This is a problem the socialists never have to deal with as well as with the issue of terrorism.

The high rate of terrorism in Italy in the seventies, which includes also communist organizations, lays the problem for the P.C.I. to distance itself from any terroristic affiliation. The temptation to associate red terror to the Palestinian attacks all over Europe is strong for the opponents. The P.C.I. main guideline is to remain stick to the condemnation of the imperialistic Israeli conduct giving the impression to its electorate not to digressing into non-institutional bodies (To know if actually the P.C.I. had relations with such groups, or financed Palestinian fighting organizations is still matter of discussion for historians). However, even in from of dramatic facts like the massacre of Munich in 1972, the firm and strict condemnation is accompanied by an attempt not to justify it, but to research the psychological motivation leading to such extreme actions⁴⁴⁸. Palestinian are desperate, and question for the responsibility of their sorrow must be seek in order to understand the logic of history. The approach is indeed a Marxist one, where material condition shape the flow of events and can positively suit by the Italian communist opinion in these years.

Throughout his entire history the socialists never have to face founded accuses of anti-Semitism or aiding and abetting terrorism, with the exception of the veiled and unimportant critics in the 80s

⁴⁴⁸ Galluzzi, pp. 45-53.

mentioned previously. The basis of the P.S.I. has not concerns of defending its position or aligning to other political bodies, but to reform the party to make it able to rule the country. In order to do so, changes and transformations do not present particular problems. Craxi, which is the major and sole decisional figure in the socialist party starting from 1976, needs to find a good balance between the public opinion and national mood which shifts growingly towards pro-Palestinian positions, and on the other hand the international political necessities, something the P.C.I. never needs to take into serious consideration. Energetic policies, commercial relations, diplomacy between countries and every task a government is supposed to carry on are concerns for the P.S.I., unlike for the P.C.I.

This is probably the biggest difference about the Mediterranean policies of the two parties, where the communist party aims at strengthening and gaining internal consensus, the socialist, or better stated, Bettino Craxi, sees at carrying out the governmental issues of the country, trying to balance internal and foreign matters.

From 1989 to the present days. The years of the end of ideologies and change of the parties' role in the Italian political scenario

1) From the fall of the Berlin wall to the Tangentopoli earthquake

Even before the fall of the wall in Berlin, the communist party begins to face some internal problems and new challenges for the future. It not necessary to talk out the process, which leads to the reshaping of the P.C.I., but a little highlight about this, helps to understand better what the approach of the future ex-communist parties will be. Three days after the event in Germany, the new fresh elected secretary party Achille Occhetto, understanding the imminent collapse of the entire soviet bloc, calls a meeting of the communist party without any notice, in a location close to Bologna, named *Bolognina*, naming the meeting after it.

It is not the act of the P.C.I. dissolution, but the secretary lets the public and party comrades understand that such a change is possible and has to be coming in a not far future⁴⁴⁹. It will take a little more than a year to the end of the communist party and the birth of other political bodies, P.D.S. and R.C.⁴⁵⁰

Despite the enormous transformation in the communist party, the interest for the Middle East does not lack and to the first important event taking place after the revolutions in the Eastern Europe countries, the First Gulf War. Considering the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the war itself would not be much of an issue but the stance taken by Arafat to support the Iraqi leader raises complicated questions leading to a split inside the party. It is still disputable why Arafat makes such a decision,

⁴⁴⁹ L'Unità 13/11/1989

⁴⁵⁰ L'Unità 4/2/1991

maybe because wrong information he receives or maybe because of the clear support of the Palestinians in the territories for Saddam Hussein⁴⁵¹, the result of it creates an isolation for the Palestinian leader within the Arab world. For the P.C.I., the dilemma is how to stick to the Palestinian side, and condemn the invasion of Kuwait. In August 1990, the P.C.I. is called to vote in the parliament to participate to the embargo to Iraq proposed by the U.S.A. and the communist party prepares itself with a common position well explained by the secretary: *“The defeat of the aggressor (Saddam Hussein’s Iraq) is necessary to reaffirm the principle of legality in the international relations*⁴⁵²”. The guideline is clear to stay in the international community decisions, and to participate to the embargo to put an end to the aggression as soon as possible. At this moment, something unprecedented in the history of the communist party happens. A minority group presents a different paper with different requests about: *“a critic of the western policy in the Middle East which up to now has supported the worst Iraqi actions, which has chosen the worst allies, tolerated the worst violation of Israel and let all the UN resolution fall into a total state of impotency. We call for an international conference to find a fair and just solution for the Palestinian question*⁴⁵³”. These concerns are discussed in the Senate on the 22nd of August and in the Chamber on the 23rd of the same months, and the minority trend leaders in addition to state clear the different position, declare that their vote is dissociative, preferring the abstention in the final vote, which, by the way, approves the embargo motion⁴⁵⁴. This fact is definitely new, and marks a breakage with the past that will characterize the following years. Few weeks later, the same scenario appears for the vote on financing the Italian mission with the threats of voting against it by a minority trend. A solution is found eventually when the minority decides not to participate to the vote⁴⁵⁵.

⁴⁵¹ Baron, pp. 496-8.

⁴⁵² L’Unità 14/8/1990

⁴⁵³ L’Unità 19/8/1990

⁴⁵⁴ <http://storia.camera.it/cronologia/leg-repubblica-X#nav>

⁴⁵⁵ L’Unità 28/9/1990

In the majority of the P.C.I. is shared the common belief that the Palestinian cause does not benefit from supporting Saddam Hussein, and this is the question that the P.C.I. delegation asks Arafat during the meeting in Tunis at the beginning of September. As reported by Rubbi, Arafat has not real subjects to respond to the profound disagreement of the communist delegates. Somehow, he finds a justification in the mood of his people, adding that he cannot let Saddam Hussein replace him in the guide of the Palestinian people⁴⁵⁶.

Despite the Iraqi incident, the support to the Palestinian cause and the express disapproval of the Israeli occupation or military and police action continues as in the case of the killing of 18 Palestinians in the Temple Mount by the Israeli police. The condemnation of the P.C.I. and of the entire Italian political parties, with little exception, is explicit⁴⁵⁷.

1991 is a quite rich year for the communist party for a series of important events, which take place within the party, the country and also abroad. In January, the party is called to vote the UN resolution 678, about the beginning of military operation on Iraqi soil and almost in the same time, the party is holding a meeting for a deep reform of its body, which leads to the abandon of the name and to a change of the party management. In the parliamentary vote, another spilt characterizes the P.C.I., in its last moments of life. The opposition trend pushes for the rejection of the resolution, which is perceived as an American imposition, while the general secretary tries for a softer approach still being not involved in the resolution but asking for the abstention in order not to shed a too much negative light on a international resolution which, de facto, condemns a dictator. At the moment of the vote, however, a number of communist deputies, elected though in independent lists, vote in favour of the resolution⁴⁵⁸, enlarging the crisis of the old communist directions.

The last congress of the P.C.I. ends the third of February 1991 with the dissolution of the party and the birth of P.D.S., starting a new political course. What is, for the sake of this dissertation, very remarkable is the figure of Piero Fassino which becomes the new responsible of the international

⁴⁵⁶ Rubbi, p. 249-50.

⁴⁵⁷ L'Unità 9/9/1990

⁴⁵⁸ La Stampa 18/1/1991

affairs of the newborn party⁴⁵⁹. Fassino represents quite a different vision of the situation in the Middle East and above all a consideration of Israel counter to the past. About the days of the congress, Fassino writes that Occhetto's line tends to contain the differences of the various trends of the party trying to find an acceptable solution for everyone. The resolution approved asks for the calling back of the Italian navy but Fassino and Petruccioli, two representatives of the young trend of the party, disagree with the new secretary and during the vote they go out and do not participate in order not to interfere with the congress progresses⁴⁶⁰. However, the signs of the collapse of P.C.I. old guards are evident. In few years, the line of Fassino and his trend takes completely over, dictating the choices of the P.C.I. heirs.

The major tribulation of the transforming P.C.I. and its attempt to delay the military intervention do not stop the Italian action on the Gulf War, which are easily understandable by the public: The war will be quick and it is necessary to think about further developments and to possible use of them to engage negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians. Before the end of the war, Saddam Hussein's launches of Scud missiles give a good chance for the Italian left to cohere for Israel, taking unquestionably Tel Aviv side⁴⁶¹. Such approach does not leave the Palestinians forgotten and recalls Israel responsibilities of having no excuses to procrastinate peace talks, which now are possible because of the outcome of the war. Moreover, the usual remarks about the illegal occupation of land that Israel does not own are not missing⁴⁶².

Foreseeing that the United States administration would have exploited the wave of the victory, the now not anymore P.C.I. but P.D.S., supports the calling for an international conference to discuss a fair peace, solving every problem of the Middle East, firstly the tragedy of the Palestinian people with no homeland, and the guarantees of Israel's security⁴⁶³. The newborn P.D.S. has the necessity to reshape officially the relations with Israel, as for the Palestinians the need to a change seems

⁴⁵⁹ <http://www.partitodemocratico.it/utenti/profilo.htm?id=36>

⁴⁶⁰ Fassino, p. 232.

⁴⁶¹ L'Unità 23/1/1991

⁴⁶² L'Unità 18/2/1991

⁴⁶³ L'Unità 1/3/1991

superfluous, relations are good enough. The secretary decides an official visit to Israel as a sign of a new time of relations and fruitful future together.

The occasion comes few days after when the American President George Bush, addressing the congress lays on the table the Israeli-Palestinian issue, adding that the time to find a solution has come⁴⁶⁴. In the P.D.S., new management feels the need to make a clear step towards the new approach to the question as a whole and to the State of Israel. In spring 1991, the secretary visits Israel with a delegation of the party seeing both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. It is the first official act of the P.D.S. outside the national borders, and it is necessary to remind that the first visit as secretary of the P.C.I., Achille Occhetto made it to see Arafat after the 1988 CNP in Algiers⁴⁶⁵, the one of the declaration of independence. Times are now quite different and in the delegation accompanying the secretary in the Middle East, new figures like Fassino are substituting previous one of more pro-Palestinian side. Such visit can be considered as the definitive opening of the era of “Equidistanza”, Italian word meaning being equally far from a certain point or object, even if such word come into use later than 1991.

The visit is a success and paves the way to favourable view of the Madrid Conference, an event seen in a positive way by the press, despite the obvious irreconcilable positions. However, the mere fact of letting Israeli and Palestinian leaders, although the latter come as a part of the Jordanian delegation, is symbolically very important. By doing so, the real core of the problem, which has been considered as the cause of Middle Eastern instability and war, the existence of the State of Israel, is no longer a taboo⁴⁶⁶.

As for the party, the Madrid Conference represents a unique historical chance for the peace process and the P.D.S. and the guideline is to push towards such direction. At the beginning of September Occhetto writes personally to Arafat to ask him the participation to the conference as he

⁴⁶⁴ Morris, p. 761.

⁴⁶⁵ Rubbi, p. 214.

⁴⁶⁶ L'Unità 29/10/1991.

does personally in Rome with Shimon Peres and the Israeli ambassador in Italy. Such position is shared by the socialist party, which, together with the P.D.S. moves along the same line.

In a joint statement, the P.D.S. and the P.S.I. secretaries ask the leader of the P.L.O. to cooperate with the conference initiative, adding that the conditions created by the C.N.P. in Algiers, meaning the disposal to dialogue with Israel, help in contributing to the opening of a new page of peace in the tormented Middle East⁴⁶⁷.

At this point, an overview of the political action and eventually death of the P.S.I. is indispensable. The fall of the Berlin wall has no direct effect on the party, and no major changes can be registered. The socialist party has in the early nineties a member, Gianni de Michelis, as minister of foreign affairs and the guidelines are as usual, with the addition of the common line with the communist party and then P.D.S. The only, not very significant, discrepancy comes when the new minister shows his worries for the Iraqi war and for the illogic stance of the Palestinians, saying that the fall of Saddam Hussein marks the end of the P.C.I.-P.S.I. common line on the Middle Eastern issue⁴⁶⁸. On the other hand, Bettino Craxi, who continues to be in charge of the secretary of P.S.I., moves toward another direction highlighting the Palestinian side, which remains stuck to negotiation trend, trying not to emphasize Arafat's decisions. In the days of the beginning of the military operation, speaking to a session at the chamber of deputies, Craxi remembers the P.L.O. member Abu Iyad who lost his life in an attack carried out by Palestinian opponent for his efforts for peace⁴⁶⁹. Craxi still believes in the P.L.O. and his leader and unlike the most the political bodies remains convinced of the necessity of the P.L.O. for any peaceful developments in the region.

The P.S.I., as previously said, walks along with the government moderate stances on the Middle East, and plus does not suffer from the end of the east block and, on the contrary, the party seems to be increasing its political importance and space in the Italian scenario.

⁴⁶⁷ Rubbi, p. 271.

⁴⁶⁸ La Stampa 19/1/1991

⁴⁶⁹ <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg10/lavori/stenografici/sed0574/sed0574.pdf>

The condition seems to be very healthy for Bettino Craxi's party and no one could expect what the coming 1992 has to bring. What is known with the name of "*Tangentopoli*", which be loosely translated as city of bribes, is very crucial moment in the political Italian life starting in February 1992 with arrest of a local businessmen for paying a bribe of 7 million liras. This episode opens *Tangentopoli*, also known as "*Mani Pulite*", clean hands, which in a short lapse of time brings the most of the Italian major parties to the end. Such period is characterized by an intense work of the Italian magistrates and for a serious number of notices of investigation send to the representatives of the parties that ruled the country starting from the end of the Second World War. The only important political body whose most important figures are not significantly investigated by the magistrates is the P.D.S., hence is the only major party surviving the juridical operations. Craxi, probably the most hit by the judges, at the beginning of 1992 is busy with his political campaign, and feels to be the most probable candidate to run for the chair of Prime Minister⁴⁷⁰. When the election takes place, results show a slight loss of votes for the socialists and a bigger loss for the D.C. but they still have the numbers to form a coalition government not with Craxi as president, but with another socialist Giuliano Amato⁴⁷¹. It is now not necessary to investigate all the turbulent months after the outbreak of *Tangentopoli*, but its consequences shape the Italian political scenario and the role for the parties themselves irreparably. Many leaders are arrested, important figures linked with the parties, such as businessmen, bankers commit suicide, and the former prime minister Bettino Craxi not only misses the chance to sit back in Palazzo Chigi (the palace of the government seat), but decides to flee to Tunisia to spend the last years of his life. He never goes back to Italy, dies in Hammamet, where he is buried. To a simply comparison of votes between the political elections of 1992 and 1994⁴⁷², we notice that every political party is disappeared, with the exception of the P.D.S. The socialist party, together with D.C., vanishes and those members who

⁴⁷⁰ Corriere della Sera 7/2/1992

⁴⁷¹ <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=05/04/1992&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

⁴⁷² <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=27/03/1994&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

are not hit by the notices of investigation merge into other political bodies popping up to fill the void left by the old parties.

The political earthquake is differently interpreted by the public debate, diverse origins and causes are brought up, especially few years later. However, the indisputable consequence is a very different perception, trust and structures of the political parties, changing their role in the democratic decisional procedure that has characterized the entire republican Italian period.

2) From Tangentopoli onwards

The major operations of the magistrates does not correspond with the beginning of the corruption in Italy, however with it a new age of perception begins. Italians were aware of the grown level of illegality in the public life and administration, but now for the first time such way of doing has a clear face, a body of associations to refer to. The dissatisfaction grows among the Italian public constantly, as polls shows in 1992 and 1993. Among the diverse effects on the Italian republic, economical and juridical for instance, the one connected to this dissertation in the end of the so-called first republic and the beginning of the second republic⁴⁷³. The changes are significant and still time will have to tell exactly what and how it happened, but as for the Italian political parties, two major aspects concern directly this dissertation. In addition to the disappearance of the political bodies who ruled Italy for almost 50 years, the remaining parties and the new ones, such as Forza Italia or Alleanza Nazionale, do not represent politics as before. The first aspect concerns the loss of being the developers of the Italian politics. The old forms are outdated and the parties, despite their presences into the new ones, do not play a role into the social culture and its need of places, dialogues, and political rituals.

The second one, even more important than the first one, shows the end of the management of the parties as participation places to a form of widespread democracy⁴⁷⁴. Previously the parties have been the centre of the Italian political life, bodies where both the political guidelines were decided, and the representatives to send to enlist in the elections chosen. After Tangentopoli two new phenomenon, heavy breakages with the past appear. On the one hand, political figures, even very important ones, come from non-political milieus. Silvio Berlusconi, a businessperson that in two years becomes a central personality out of no political experience, represents the perfect example.

⁴⁷³ [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tangentopoli_\(Enciclopedia_Italiana\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tangentopoli_(Enciclopedia_Italiana))

⁴⁷⁴ http://www.sissco.it/fileadmin/user_upload/Attivita/Convegni/Italia_globalizzazione/POMBENI.pdf

Such change leads to a different perception of the party, which is no longer a place to grown politically in, rather a symbol under a charismatic leader. On the other hand, the lack of necessity of great ideological choice, making the decisional life of the party useless. Combining the parties turning into unnecessary bodies with their reputation of corrupted organizations, the Italian political life of the second republic has different tools to carry out its decisions⁴⁷⁵.

Another effect of the bride scandal is, temporarily, to take the focus off the Middle East, still the interest does not completely cease and to the important events, comments are not missing as for the election in 1992 in Israel, perceived widely in a positive way. Besides the Israeli election, the other processes at the early nineties are seen as the accomplishment of a strategy that the Italian left supported since the middle of the eighties. As Fassino claims about the Oslo peace talks: *“It is our great satisfaction because for this guideline of dialogue and coexistence the P.D.S., and formerly the P.C.I., fought for years creating in Italy a constant action intent on fostering the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue*^{476”}.

Despite the difficulties between the two parts, and the incidents and terrorist attacks on both sides, the Italian left seems to remain firmly stuck on the necessity of dialogue. Condemnations come to every violent attack throughout the nineties and the two thousands, and the Palestinian or Israeli voices against the peace process and the two people, two states solution are not taken into serious consideration, even when it comes to important figures like Edward Said⁴⁷⁷. The goal of exalting the peace process through negotiation comes first and along the outspoken support of it, even when it comes to financial aid to the Palestinians. This is one of the first concerns of the new management of the P.D.S., as the sensibility about the standards of living of the Palestinians remains a key factor in the leftist history in the Middle East. The support must not simply be restricted to moral, political or ideological matters, but shall improve the standard of life in the territories⁴⁷⁸.

⁴⁷⁵ http://www.sissco.it/fileadmin/user_upload/Attivita/Convegni/Italia_globalizzazione/POMBENI.pdf

⁴⁷⁶ Bollettino Internazionale PDS, n 8, 1993.

⁴⁷⁷ Said, p. 236-78.

⁴⁷⁸ L'Unità 17/10/1993

Italy's history of aid aiding to the Palestinians dates back to the sixties, as we have seen. Since then, a financial aid within the EU has not been missing from the Italian government⁴⁷⁹, but with the exception of the P.S.I., no major leftist force has been in charge of the government up to 1996, when a coalition led by Romano Prodi brings former communists to the government. The scenario repeat itself ten years later when again a coalition led by Prodi wins the elections. During these years the conduct of the left, both while ruling and being in the opposition, and their leaders stick to a very neutral and peaceful approach, trying to promote negotiations even with the most belligerent factions, as the Prime Minister Prodi does with the Islamic Resistance in Gaza⁴⁸⁰. There are moments of friction with some Italian public opinion or with the Jewish community when the former communist D'Alema walks together in the bombed Beirut with exponents of the Hezbollah during the second Lebanese war⁴⁸¹, but such episodes do not really represent a breakage or an inversion of tendency. Even within the communist fraction which refused in 1991 the change of the name and direction, the attitude towards the conflict is generally comprehensive of both sides. When the Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinejād calls for the destruction of Israel, the only parliamentary conflicting voice to the demonstration in support of Israel comes from Fausto Bertinotti, leader of R.C., which justifies his position with the missing invitation to the Palestinian counterpart⁴⁸². A position however confirmed few years later while speaking to the Palestinian Parliament and asking the Palestinians to talk to the Israeli and to find a political solution, as well as reaffirming the support to the Palestinian people and cause⁴⁸³.

What comes out as the interesting factor of the years after the end of the East-West logic is the reconsideration of the actors involved in the Middle Eastern conflict that breaks out after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The crumbling away of the ideology represented by the collapse of the Soviet bloc has almost immediate repercussions on the communist party in Italy, as already seen for the vote

⁴⁷⁹ http://eeas.europa.eu/palestine/docs/ec_unrwa_factsheet_en.pdf

⁴⁸⁰ <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2007/08/13/aiutiamo-hamas-lavorare-per-la-pace.html>

⁴⁸¹ <http://www.repubblica.it/2006/08/sezioni/esteri/medio-oriente-15/dalema-hezbollah/dalema-hezbollah.html>

⁴⁸² http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2005/10_Ottobre/31/bertinotti.shtml

⁴⁸³ L'Unità 10/5/2007

about the Gulf War, and a similar official sanction of opinions appeals also for the Middle East. The party does not decide democratically as it used to be, but from now on, the multiplicity of judgment is not accountable to the guidelines of the party anymore. Out of this new political atmosphere, a different perception and approach to the Middle East comes, aiming primarily at every aspect considering Israel, while for the Palestinians not much of a change can be registered. Palestinians remain always, as they were, a population seeking for a land, deserving it by political non-violent means.

Yet at the end of 1989, in occasion of a peace demonstration in Jerusalem, the first hint of opening towards Israel are visible, despite the contents remain in favour of the Palestinians: *“The courage of the Palestinians cannot be ignored. Such courage leaves behind hatred to shake hand with the best Israeli forces looking truly for peace. Such courage breaches through the wall of incommunicability and hate which seems to be for a long time insurmountable⁴⁸⁴”*. In a short time frame the attitude toward Israel shifts from being a profoundly critical approach to a more investigative one, the complex and democratic aspects of the Jewish State come out to the light of a serene political debate. Israel appears now as a society with a lively internal discussion, about its destiny and identity, trying to solve the equation to combine the history of a religious people scattered outside its own land, and the shape of a modern, democratic country. The proud of the Israeli for their democratic institutions, which survived a constant state of war since the establishment of the state is, acknowledge, as is the sociologic basis of the society in relation to the pioneering Zionist movement. The identity shows multiple features, seeing a growing Israeli one, along with the ancient Jewish one⁴⁸⁵. Despite the accuracy or the veracity of the analysis, what really counts is the opening to a more human framework of the Jewish State, becoming more an entity to be understood rather than criminalized. The consequences of the new outlook reflects also to the peace process seen now as a manifold twine of actors, interests and responsibilities including

⁴⁸⁴ L’Unità 31/12/1989

⁴⁸⁵ L’Unità 14/1/1991

the neighbouring Arab states⁴⁸⁶, where before the Israeli policy in the region and especially in the territories was enough reason to have a satisfying overview of the situation.

Reconsidering Israel as a political and national entity goes side by side with a new perception of the common roots with the Italian Jewry and the common history, anti-Semitism, and the holocaust.

As seen abundantly in this dissertation, the P.C.I. always rejected vehemently and sometimes violently any accuse of anti-Semitism, marking it as mere propaganda, but now attention is driven again on the matter, and the invitation not to underestimate it comes into the language of the Italian left. The juxtaposition of words like Jew and Zionist, perceived as enemy, start now to show a racist implication, and the copious use of it in the past becomes a mistake not to be repeated in the future⁴⁸⁷.

The holocaust as well finds a new space and gets rid of the ideological burden. The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is a national one, and has no racial connotations; hence, the Nazi persecution cannot be compared with the conflict in the Middle East⁴⁸⁸. Finally, the greater tragedy of the nineteenth century does not suffer any longer from the I.D.F. military actions, and the decisions made by the Israeli government do not pay the price of the history of the Jewish population in Europe.

The opening to analysis free from ideological logic or party discipline impositions could only have the outcome of a fragmented left, where any position is equally legitimated, as pointed out by Iacoboni on la Stampa in the days of the operation Cast Lead: *“What does the Italian left think about the crisis in Gaza? If there was a left, an answer could be given”*. Every leader gives a different view on guilt and right, blaming one part of the other for missing recognition of Israel, or the excessive use of force, or the illegal occupation of land, which leads to sufferings of innocent people as the cause of all the trouble⁴⁸⁹. What seems to be clear and unquestionable is the loss of

⁴⁸⁶ L’Unità 3/11/1991

⁴⁸⁷ L’Unità 7/11/1992

⁴⁸⁸ L’Unità 22/5/1990

⁴⁸⁹ <http://www.lastampa.it/2009/01/04/blogs/arcitaliana/la-sinistra-italiana-hamas-e-la-crisi-di-gaza-bcvFXzmIubJ0ukfgwgRXVM/pagina.html>

identity of the Italian left, incapable of drawing a clear framework and a common guideline to be followed collectively. Moreover, inside the Italian left the need to refer to the party by the electorate or those who consider themselves as leftist subject, is missing. Having very different and incompatible positions and approaches about the Middle Eastern question does not consist anymore in reasons for a split or a breakage, anyone feels free to say and state whatever considered appropriate with no consequences for the sake of the membership political body⁴⁹⁰.

- Pisapia's Milan administration

An example of the official policy of what today is the heirs of the Italian leftist tradition comes from the municipality of Milan, where in 2011 Giuliano Pisapia, a former militant member of Democrazia Proletaria, a party of extreme left, is elected in the leftist coalition⁴⁹¹. The policy of the new administration is very sensitive to the Middle Eastern issues and also to the Jewish community in Milan. In addition to granting services to the Jewish community such as potentiating safety measures for the Jewish schools and setting an exposition of the Jewish culture in Milan⁴⁹², the new mayor of the richest Italian city plans an official visit to the Jewish State one year after his election. In the three days journey, the mayor of Milan and his delegation touch every possible aspect and pay a visit to every ethnical and political entity, from the Jewish secular side, visiting the Knesset and the Israeli hospitals, to the more religious places, like synagogues or to important sites for the Jewish people, like Yad veShem and the Wailing Wall. Palestinians as well are in the visit plan. Piasapia meets with important Palestinian leader as Mahmud Abbas and Salam Fayyad in Ramallah and also Siham Barghouti, the Palestinian Minister of Culture who harshly criticizes the Israeli

⁴⁹⁰ Cingoli, my interview.

⁴⁹¹ <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=G&dtel=15/05/2011&tpa=I&tpe=C&lev0=0&levsut0=0&lev1=3&levsut1=1&lev2=49&levsut2=2&lev3=1450&levsut3=3&ne1=3&ne2=49&ne3=491450&es0=S&es1=S&es2=S&es3=N&ms=S>

⁴⁹² Daniele Nahum, my interview.

occupation. Christian and Muslim religious people and holy sites come also into the visit package⁴⁹³.

The visit proceeds alongside with the leftist tradition opened in 1986, when Napolitano visited Israel and Palestine, breaking with a past that did not enlist Israel as a Middle Eastern legitimate entity. What Pisapia's visit shows represent the idea that every agent in the Middle East, Israeli a Palestinian, Secular and religious, has its rights and it is necessary to understand and grant them in order to reach a fair and just peace. Following such principles, the Milanese municipality organized also a fest for the Palestinians (raising also controversies for the big amount of money spent for the event), in order to balance the attention given to the Jewish community, and also in order to quiet the most extreme opposition which accuses the new city administration to be too keen to Israel⁴⁹⁴.

Pisapia's Milan is somehow the proof of the lack of ideology in the leftist milieu. What counts today consist in remaining on the widely acceptable stance, where everybody deserves equal attention and is equally right and wrong.

⁴⁹³ <http://www.ism-italia.org/wp-content/uploads/missione-pisapia%E2%80%8Cisraele-settembre-2012.pdf>

⁴⁹⁴ http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/12_agosto_4/comune-finanzia-festa-palestina-2111307901314.shtml

Conclusion

“We do not realize how we do not realize the consequences of this conflict⁴⁹⁵”, an Israeli general pronounces this sentence right after the astonishing outcome of the Six-Day War. The Israeli commander refers naturally to the Middle Eastern balances and to the enormous changes, his country needs to undertake in order to supply to the coming necessities both for the inner matters and internationally. What probably the general is not thinking about concerns the effect that the victory and the consequent keeping of the territories would have on the Italian political scenario. The outcomes of the 1967 war are evidently the most influential on the perception of the Jewish state and on the following changes of the leftist parties and political debate; however it is not the only case of foreign events shaping the Italian leftist consciousness about the Middle East. What is, in my opinion, a constant factor in the relations between the Italian leftist parties (all of them despite with significant differences) and the Middle Eastern players passes unquestionably not simply on the military and political happenings outside Italy, but also on the level of importance given by the national and international media. Economic decisions of the petroleum producing countries, military actions of the Jerusalem government, or diplomatic breakages determined in the Kremlin throughout decades influences the Italian leftist approach to the Middle Eastern issue so profoundly to reject old theories for the implementation of new ones, which are at a later stage again not responding satisfactorily to the contingency needs. As happened right after the end of the Second World War when the Marxist view of the Jewish question is obscured by the complexity of the Second World War outcomes, Israel assumes different profiles as the involvement in the Middle Eastern events grows into the Italian debate. Initially, when the establishment of the State of Israel is voted at the United Nations endorsed by the Soviet Union, the latter plays a role whose guidelines shape the parameter of the whole of the Italian left. In the perspective of the international peace, the

⁴⁹⁵ Sterpellone, p. 235.

assumption that the best guarantees are and will be assured by the work of Soviet Russia dates back from the early Gramsci's period⁴⁹⁶. It keeps on going all the way through the construction of the communist party, even more so after the end of the Second World War, with a winning Russia and the concrete possibility of an international victory of socialism. Moscow, having reached the status of the big socialist world power, is the inescapable passage for the labour international struggle against capitalism⁴⁹⁷. In this historical moment, differences between the socialist and the communist about the Middle East are inexistent. The logic stems from the lack of a national awareness of the issue, and from a firm consideration of a historical materialist vision where the struggle is against the United Kingdom, representing the Gramsci capitalist concentration in few hands of the entire private property⁴⁹⁸. The British are depicted as the most profound expression of the imperialist project of defending the old, feudal regime for private interests. The goal pursued is primarily not to exploit the resources of the occupied land, but rather to maintain local population in a state of ignorance and incapability of rebellion against the determined ruling class backed by the British Empire. Remarkably enough, Israeli does not occupy foreign land, to the contrary represents the occasion for the Arabs to grasp the burden of civilization, both social and technological, the British refuse to grant⁴⁹⁹. As in a historical materialist analysis the Arabs suffer from a difficult and underdeveloped condition, the Jews arrive in Palestinians pushed by difficult living condition and animated by a great socialist spirit which finds its most eloquent and commendable expression with the Kibbutzim phenomenon⁵⁰⁰. Such theoretical construct, heir of the Marxist critique of the Jewish question as a bourgeoisie legacy and of Gramsci international view, flattening the cultural and social peculiarities of the Middle Eastern populations to an economical and material question, could not live long and has almost immediately the first inconsistency.

⁴⁹⁶ Gramsci, *Scritti giovanili*, p. 186.

⁴⁹⁷ Gramsci, *Ordine nuovo*, p. 146.

⁴⁹⁸ Gramsci, *Ordine nuovo*, p. 227-8.

⁴⁹⁹ *Mondo Operaio* 25/12/1948

⁵⁰⁰ *Avanti!* 17/2/1951

As already showed previously, the Slanski and doctor's plot episodes in the Soviet Union shed a negative light on Israel which will never be fully rehabilitated by Moscow and consequently also for the P.C.I.⁵⁰¹, whereas the socialists develop another guideline and already in the early fifties hints the danger of a imperialist deviation of the new-born state. In the history of the Italian left 1956 is considered, in reason, to be the rupture between the P.C.I. and P.S.I. and the starting point of the socialist party on the way to a different political life ad goals. However, the breakage does not concern the vision on the Middle Eastern conflict, which remains still equal, despite having all the prerequisites for a drastic mutation of opinion. Two factors prevent a new and negative vision of Israel. Firstly the proximity of the common memory of the joint past and enemy, and secondly, and most importantly, the overshadow of the Egyptian crisis by the Hungarian facts happening approximately at the same time. It must be said that before June 1967 the Israel-Arab question does not cover much of the importance for the Italian debate. Only after the surprising outcome of the war, and the massive echo worldwide, the Italian leftist parties feel the need to reshape and to deepen all the issues, such as the nature of Israel and of the Jewish people, the national aspiration of the Palestinians, the failure of the socialist mission of Israel and the slow process to a more capitalist and western society. At this point, the old internationalist approach does not fulfil the holes left by the new reality, and a new different theoretical vision is needed to give new answers to a situation that cannot be satisfactorily explained anymore. What is significant to state here concerns the unchanged nature of Israel and of the refugees' problem. The tools to be informed about the colonialist nature of the Zionist movement were accessible before 1967, as in a shy way noticed a socialist delegation visiting Israel in 1941⁵⁰². The injustice suffered by the native population could easily find its proof with the refugee camps outside Israeli borders, as they will be noticed and made a central point for the leftist parties' debate. Hence, the lack of information is an

⁵⁰¹ Tas, p. 94.

⁵⁰² Avanti! 17/2/1951

option to discard, as is the changing of the nature of the Jewish State after 1967. Reasons for the upside-down perceptions of the Middle Eastern players lay somewhere else.

In the sixties a new perception of the leftist internationalism arise as the old conceptions are no longer not simply sufficient, but very inadequate to give proper answers to the changing world. As this process starts with the Vietnamese war and the different place the third world countries and people are taking, in Italy the parties feel the need to give innovative answers to their electorates. What is important to state is the utilitarian approach of the parties, which tend to care about their own strict business rather than follow ideological guidelines.

As for the P.C.I., the biggest opposition party in Italy has some peculiarities differing from any other one. The relation between the representatives and the electorate is very direct and internal to the party, unlike other parties, like for instance the D.C. where other bodies like the church are referring point for the voters developing a complex system inexistent for the communists. For such a party of mass, excessive detailed analysis and multiple positions are a luxury it cannot afford. The necessities of unity of the communist party pushes the party to give a pragmatic approach, which must not be out of line with the general opinion and interest⁵⁰³. For the sake of its unity, the P.C.I. needs to take into consideration the Italian political scenario, with a socialist milieu prone to splits and internal struggles, which are likely to transgress into the political debate within the communist party, and on the other hand, the Italian communists are strictly bond to the USSR interests and political moves⁵⁰⁴.

An unlike situation is faced by the socialist, which are not a party of mass and whose mechanisms and goals are dissimilar but which has, like the P.C.I. comparable needs. The socialist area is represented by multitude of parties which split, then get together and then split again for a quite long time until the Craxi era when all the socialist forces gather into the P.S.I., furthermore the structure of the socialist parties shows dissimilarities with the communists. In the socialist area, the

⁵⁰³ Scoppola, pp. 114-5.

⁵⁰⁴ Di Figlia, p. 56.

unity is always threatened by the political actions and thought of singular leaders and due to their ability or incapability of seizing the spirit of the time or of making the right choices. However the greatest difference, at least after the Hungarian revolution, concerns the goal of the socialists which, shifting away from the Soviet orbit, point to the participation to the government. To this end, the two parties must act differently responding to a diverse electorate, rival and allies. While, on the one hand, the communists are dealing with their electorate and they need to speak to them to keep them within the party guideline, the socialist message is opened to anyone, from the catholic world to the more leftist area, who is willing to cooperate and to negotiate with them. In a nutshell, the P.C.I. politics find no space outside its own party and works to maintain it and win votes, the Socialists look to create the condition to rule the country and not simply their own party. The Middle Eastern conflict must be contextualized within such framework, and having a clear overview of the problem and necessities of the two political bodies, their logic can be understood.

The P.C.I. cannot help but making out of the Middle Eastern conflict one of the most, in some years even the most important aspect of its foreign politics as it replaces other conflicts, like the Vietnamese one, and overwhelms the media and the public debate. After 1967, as Israel becomes worldwide something the Italian leftist public is not used to perceive, and on the other hand, the Palestinians suddenly come out of a region where there are only refugees and not a nation without a land, the P.C.I. develops a guideline according to the new international needs and the changing ideology of the Italian public. Important to remark, all this is due to internal necessities. Between the Six-Day War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communist party has the major necessity of taking a clear stance on the Israeli Palestinian conflict because of the international contingences. During these years the interest worldwide and the dramatic military events pushes the party not simply to take the side of the Palestinians, but also to reshape, profoundly the essence and the nature of the Middle Eastern players. Israel cannot be considered as it was previous 1967, a socialist inspired attempt to give a different perspective to a region imprisoned in pre-modern logics. The experiment fails in the eyes of the Italian leftist public opinion not because of the changing nature

of the Jewish State, but because of the political and military development. The further change in 1991, when the Palestinian issue is no longer as captivating as before and the end of USSR and its role as the great mother to refer to are development of such mutations. In such great reshaping of the figure of the Jewish State, also the Palestinians find a new space and become the new hope for the leftist values and aims. Due primarily to the new image that the Palestinian leaders, mainly Arafat, manage to give to the conflict and to the very essence of the former Arab people of Palestine, the Italian left find itself displaced with the previous conception. As Israel is not anymore the country of a promising future for the Arab population in need of getting rid of the old structures, the Palestinians are now demanding to be considered differently within the leftist debate. In the wake of the decolonization and the fight of the third world countries against the new forms of colonialism, first and foremost the Vietnamese, the Palestinians become one of the marginal realities doomed to achieve revolutionary goals. The failure of the working class revolution, which was supposed to embrace the local population In Asia and in the Third World countries, paves the way to opposite ideas where the imperialistic powers prevent the people from the decolonized countries to reach the completion of their aspirations. Palestinians are naturally among them, and their ambition to an independent land and to the end of the occupation now responds to a new growing Third-Worldism, which has, besides clear political and military figures, also political ideologists like Michelle Aflaq, which develop a new ideological course from the enfranchisement from the cultural and political colonialism from the western world⁵⁰⁵. The new outline about the Palestinians remains unaltered throughout all the required time despite the evident and contradictions that cannot be healed. For the sake of the unity of the party, the disillusion in front of the Arab and Palestinian world noticed by Pajetta during his innumerable visits in the region⁵⁰⁶ does not leave any mark in the party position. As Rubbi himself admits in his work, the party should

⁵⁰⁵ Salem, p. 62.

⁵⁰⁶ Rubbi, p. 91.

have done more to understand the needs and the positions of the Jewish State, especially in matter of security⁵⁰⁷.

The latter issue plays a significant role in the communist party as the connection between the security of the Jewish State and the armed struggle with terroristic operation of the Palestinians is easily linked to the Italian “Years of Lead” where red terrorism and violence is the main concern of the political debate. Such alleged commonality of means remains an uncomfortable heritage for the P.C.I. even after the end of communism, insomuch that still in 1994, when accuses from the Jerusalem post are addressed to the Italian left, the P.D.S. spokesman Piero Fassino answers promptly, stating that: “*The P.C.I. back then and now the P.D.S. have always fought against any kind of terrorism and extremism, nor any kind of equating Zionism with racism has been accepted and any anti-Israeli publication has even been supported of sponsored*”⁵⁰⁸.

The P.C.I. political action is, as already stated, entirely internal and issue concerning the governmental policies are not in its agenda. Such lack of priority allows the party to conduct a relative free internal campaign, as the subjection towards the Soviet Union does not have real chances to arise. For instance, as Luciano Tas points out quite clearly in the republican newspaper about the UN resolution on equating Zionism with racism: “*What if Enrico Berlinguer was the Italian Prime Minister? Which kind of instructions would he give to the Italian delegation? Would he dissociate Italy from the Soviet Union or would he follow his party discipline on an international level?*”⁵⁰⁹. The communist party never really develops a foreign policy according to a governmental level, but responding only to the necessities of the party. Such strategy is a luxury the socialist party cannot afford, as its pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian approach in the socialist debate has a fallout on the Italian government. Hence, the P.S.I. especially during the Craxi years develops an accurate policy in order to, on the international level, to ensure the pro-NATO Italian stance and the good relations with the Arab countries, which are vital for the energetic supplies, petroleum and gas. On

⁵⁰⁷ Rubbi, p. 43.

⁵⁰⁸ Unità 8/6/1994

⁵⁰⁹ La Voce Repubblicana 19/10/1975

the inner politics, the socialists, like the P.C.I., find unavoidable to reshape the very essence of their bonds with Israel and the Jewish people as the New Leftist world develops new conceptions and ideologies. When in the early eighties, during Arafat's visit in Rome, Craxi pointing at Berlinguer says that on the Palestinian issue they fully agree⁵¹⁰, he represents a widely shared sense in the Italian leftist milieu where the support of Palestine is an inescapable condition to gain the electorate consent.

Again in the late eighties the historical conditions and political events mutate the relations between the Middle Eastern conflict and the Italian leftist parties. While it is indeed true that since the beginning of the eighties the ideological motivations have repercussion on the political system which does not find necessarily in the parties its way of expression⁵¹¹, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent end of the East-West juxtaposition starts the process that in few years wipes off the political map all the political bodies that rules Italy for almost 50 years. The P.C.I. is forced to a dramatic transformation. To a deeper analysis, the end of the communism does not simply ratify the end of the P.C.I. but deprives the Italian parties of the political role they covered throughout the so-called First Republic. As already investigated previously, the parties' attribute of being the political workshops ceases to exist, but for the P.C.I. something more, profound happens. The function of the common ideology and political goals and the strict bond with Moscow help the P.C.I. to proceed unity in the course of the post war history, despite in the second half of the eighties the first important dissociations begin to be more and more evident. However, the diverse souls of the communist arena remain within the discipline of the party and its central democratic structure. Right after the common denominator, which is to say the Soviet Union, ceases to be the point of reference, the P.C.I. manifold voices find no reason stick to the common guidelines and explode in a multitude of position, which do not feel the need to be backed by a party⁵¹². The end of the PCUS turns out to be also the end of P.C.I. The first implementations of the end of the

⁵¹⁰ Rubbi, p. 125.

⁵¹¹ Scoppola, p. 395.

⁵¹² Craveri, p. 993.

ideological role of the P.C.I. come out already for the Gulf War vote at the parliament when the old guard of the party unwilling to drop the ideology of an entire life does not follow the common line.

As for the P.S.I., the bride scandal in the early nineties demolishes the socialist party and name to such a weighty extent, that no significant political body remains stuck to the P.S.I. legacy afterwards.

Progressively, as the institution of the P.C.I. stop to fulfil its task, goes through all the changes, the different opinions, trends and souls that were faithful to the unity values come out, and speak freely with anybody to refer to. In our last twenty years features like the accuses of anti-Semitism within the party, and always vehemently rejected, are critically reconsidered and disapproval and critique of the old Soviet heritage about the anti-Semite trends and judgments within the leftist milieu are no longer subjected to any important parliamentary entity. The parliament itself has been a witness of the most diverse initiatives within the heirs of the communist party. Although the change towards a more balanced approach to the Middle Eastern issue is perceivable not only by the level of the debate and the creation of a group promoted by deputies in support of Israel⁵¹³, the parties do not have a common guideline and cannot impose one.

What is left now from the end of the parties era concerns unsolved issues that the firm ideology and the discipline to the political parliamentary body was able to keep under control for decades. Among the most important of those, surely the Jewish question remains indeed puzzling for a leftist thought that faced a drastic change after 1967, when even the personal relations were liable to be reconsidered on the base of the Jewish belonging to a party member⁵¹⁴. A prolonged vision of the communist world where Jews cannot find a real placement simply because of the fact that communism does not accept the existence of a Jewish people, according to the Marxists analysis⁵¹⁵ clashes with what today is the mainstream of the leftist representation in the parliament. Even if the old party guidelines disappeared, still today the P.D. recognizes every specificity of the actor

⁵¹³ <http://www.sinistraperisraele.it/home2.asp?idtesto=1894&level=1>

⁵¹⁴ My interview Emanuele Amar Segre

⁵¹⁵ L'Unità 8/9/1982

involved, granting the Palestinian the right of an independent state similarly as to the Jewish people⁵¹⁶. Not only is the Jewish peculiarity ascribable to the unsolved issues within the leftist debate. Religious concerns about the growing Muslim presence on the Italian soil, which is most likely to grow in the coming years, are not faced on the basis of political conviction and the belief that sees the leftist thinking as guaranteeing of secularism is simply wrong, or maybe outdated. Islamic political thought may represent the ideological juxtaposition for the Western liberal dominating theory, having the Islamic religion all the political, moral and social features to challenge to the West⁵¹⁷. However, it is important to remind that nowadays the Muslim presence does not question the Italian political life in any major feature, least of all in the relation with the Middle East⁵¹⁸ (momentarily economic feature such as crisis and unemployment, are taking over any other aspect of the political life). When and if the Muslim growing population will be a problem, unlikely it will be treated by political means.

What seems to be undisputable, at least unless an epochal transformation occur, is the lacking role of the political parties for a new guideline in the Italian leftist milieu and electorate, which is now well accustomed and comfortable to choose its own political view with no need of turning to political bodies which nowadays appear to be useless.

The core motivation that pushed me into such research and investigation is the basic contradictions, both ideological and political, of the Italian leftist parties and the carious aspects of the Middle Eastern situation. Before the beginning of the researches, my intuitions lead to a core of relations not based on an ideological framework. Such perceptions were justified by a lack of coherence and intelligible ideas during the course of the progression of the historical facts. My intention to explain the nature of the relations should have passed through a historical review and examination of the facts, the acknowledgment of the parts and their rights or wrongs. My theory, concerning the mere utilitarian nature of the use of the conflict by the political parties, has been

⁵¹⁶ My interview Emanuele Fiano

⁵¹⁷ Fukuyama, p. 45-6.

⁵¹⁸ My interview Janicki Cingoli

demonstrated by the course of the historical events and the perception of them by the Italian public opinion. The mere ideological features follow a historical path, and from it find their nourishment and place in the Italian society. The parties' duty is to interpret them and use them for practical needs, and such feature is permanent in the development of the Italian leftist political life. Only considering the basic interests for the sake of the political parties, all the contradictions, changes, and inconsistencies of the leftist parties regarding the Middle Eastern conflict can be fully understood.

Acronyms

C.I.P.M.O. Centro Italiano per la Pace in Medio Oriente

C.L.N. Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale

C.P.S.U. The communist Party of the Soviet Union

D.C. Democrazia Cristiana

I.D.F. Israeli Defence Force

P.C.I. Partito Comunista Italiano

P.D.S. Partito Democratico della Sinistra

P.L.I. Partito Liberale Italiano

P.F.L.P. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

P.L.O. Palestine Liberation Organization

P.N.C. Palestinian National Council

P.R.I. Partito Repubblicano Italiano

P.S.I. Partito Socialista Italiano

P.S.I.U.P. Partito Socialista Italiano

P.S.U. Partito Socialista Unitario

R.C. Rifondazione Comunista

U.N.R.W.A. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Literature

Books

ANTISERI Dario, *Le ragioni del pensiero debole*, Edizioni Borla, Roma, 1993

BARON Xavier, *I Palestinesi*, Baldini&Castoldi, Milano, 2000

BRENNER Michael, *Breve Storia del Sionismo*, Edizioni Laterza, Bari, 2003.

BOBBIO Norberto, *Che cosa fanno oggi i filosofi?*, Bompiani, Milano, 1982.

CAVIGLIA Daniele, CRICCO Massimiliano, *La diplomazia italiana e gli equilibri mediterranei. La politica mediorientale dell'Italia dalla guerra dei Sei Giorni al conflitto dello Yom Kippur (1967-1973)*, Roma, Rubettino Editore, 2006.

CHABOD Federico, *l'Italia contemporanea*, Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1961.

CHOMSKY Noam, *Riflessioni sul Medio Oriente*, Einaudi, Torino, 1976.

CINGOLI Janicki, *Sinistra e questione ebraica*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1989.

CRAXI Bettino, *Discorsi Parlamentari 1969-1993*, Editrice La Terza, Bari, 2007.

CRAVERI Piero, *La Repubblica dal 1958 al 1992*, TEA, Milano, 1996.

CRESPI Franco, *Il pensiero sociologico*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002.

DE BERNARDI Alfredo, FERRARI Paolo, *Antifascismo e identità europea*, Carrocci Editore, Roma, 2004.

DI FIGLIA Matteo, *Israele e la Sinistra*, Roma, Donzelli Editore, 2012.

DI NOLA Alfonso M., *Antisemitismo in Italia 1962/1972*, Valecchi Editore, Firenze, 1973.

DI NOLFO Ennio, *La politica Estera Italiana negli Anni Ottanta*, Marsilio Editori, Venezia, 2007.

DI SCALA Spencer, *Da Nenni a Craxi. Il socialismo italiano visto dagli Usa*, Sugarco, Milano, 1991.

GALLUZZI Carlo, *La svolta. Gli anni cruciali del P.C.I.*, Sperling and Kupfer, Milano, 1983.

GILBERT Martin, *Israel: A history*, Black Swan, London, 1998.

GILBOA Yehoshua., *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry 1939-1953*, Boston, Little-Brown, 1971.

GRAMSCI Antonio, *L'Ordine nuovo, 1919-1920*, Einaudi, Torino, 1954.

GRAMSCI Antonio, *Quaderni dal carcere*, Einaudi, Torino, 1996.

GRAMSCI Antonio, *Scritti giovanili 1914-1918*, Einaudi, Torino, 1975.

FALLACI Oriana, *Intervista con la storia*, Rizzoli, Milano 1974.

FASSINO Piero, *Per Passione*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2003.

FUKUYAMA Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man*, The Free Press, New York, 1992.

HERZL Theodor, *Altneuland: The Old-New Land*, WLC, 2009.

KIRKPATRICK Jeane, *Legitimacy and Force: Natural and International Dimensions*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1988.

LEWIS Bernard, *La Costruzione del Medio Oriente*, Edizioni Laterza, Bari, 2003.

LUCAKS Georg, *Storia e coscienza di classe*, Sugar, Milano, 1970.

LUXEMBURG Rosa, "*The Junius Pamphlet*", 1915.

HOBBSBAWM J. Eric, *Il secolo Breve*, BUR, Milano, 2004.

MARX Karl, ENGELS Friedrich, *Il Manifesto del Partito comunista*, La terza, Bari, 1995.

MARX Karl, *Sulla questione ebraica*, in *Opere complete Vol III*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1968.

MASSARA Massimo, *Il marxismo e la questione ebraica*, Milano 1972.

MOLINARI Maurizio, *La sinistra e gli ebrei in Italia(1967-1993)*, Corbaccio, Milano, 1995.

MORRIS Bennis, *Vittime*, BUR, Milano, 2001.

MUSELLA Luigi, *Craxi*, Salerno Editrice, Roma, 2007.

NENNI Pietro, *I conti con la storia. Diari, 1967-1971*, Sugarco, Milano, 1983.

NIRENSTEIN Fiamma, *Israele siamo noi*, Rizzoli Editore, Milano, 2007.

PAJETTA Gian Carlo, *Socialismo e mondo arabo*, Editori Riuniti, Roma. 1970.

PANEBIANCO Angelo, *Modelli di Partito*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1989.

PILLITTERI Paolo, *Quando Benedetto divenne Bettino*, Spirali Edizioni, Milano, 2008.

- QUAGLIARIELLO Gaetano, *Bettino Craxi, il socialismo europeo e il sistema internazionale*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2006.
- RAPOPORT Louis, *La guerra segreta di Stalin contro gli ebrei*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1991.
- RIASANOVSKY Nicholas V., *Storia della Russia, dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Bompiani, Milano, 2001.
- RICCIARDI Luca, *Il «problema Israele». Diplomazia italiana e PCI di fronte allo Stato ebraico (1948-1973)*, Guerini e Associati, Milano, 2006.
- RUBBI Antonio, *In Palestina con Arafat*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1996
- RUBINSTEIN Danny, *Il mistero Arafat*, UTET, Torino, 2003
- RUBINSTEIN William David, *La sinistra, la destra, gli ebrei*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1986.
- SACHAR Howard Morley, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History*, Vintage Books, New York, 1998.
- SAID Edward, *La Questione Palestinese*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 2011.
- SALEM Paul, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1994.
- SCOPPOLA Pietro, *La repubblica dei partiti*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1991.
- SECCHIA Pietro, *Quaderni*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1978.
- SPIRI Andrea, *Bettino Craxi, il socialismo europeo e il sistema internazionale*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2006.
- TAGLIACOZZO Lina, *Cronaca di un'incomprensione. La svolta del 1982 nel discorso pubblico su ebrei e Israele*, in *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni. Vol II*, a cura di M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci, E. Traverso, UTET, Torino, 2010.
- TAMBURRANO Giuseppe, *Storia e cronaca del centro sinistra*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1990.
- TARQUINI Alessandra, *Ebraismo, sionismo e antisemitismo nella stampa socialista italiana. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento agli anni sessanta*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2007.

TAS Luciano, *Cartina rossa del Medio Oriente, la storia dello stato d'Israele raccontata dall'Unità*, Edizioni della voce, Roma, 1971.

VARSORI Antonio, *L'Italia nelle relazioni internazionali dal 1943 al 1992*, Laterza, Bari, 1998.

VATTIMO Gianni, *Il pensiero debole*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1983

VOGHERA Gadi Luzzato, *Il prezzo dell'eguaglianza*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1998.

ZUCARO Domenico, *I nodi della politica estera italiana*, Sugarco Edizioni, Milano, 1974.

Documents

Bollettino Internazionale del P.D.S.

Delibere della direzione del P.S.I.-P.S.D.I. unificati

Documenti politici dei congressi del Partito Comunista Italiano.

XV Congresso del P.C.I. Atti e risoluzioni, Editori riuniti, Roma, 1979.

Fondazione Nenni Archivi

Fondazione Bettino Craxi

Newspapers

La Voce Repubblicana

L'Unità

Mondo Nuovo

Avanti!

Pravda

Sunday Times

La Repubblica

Il Manifesto Indipendente

La Stampa

Journals

Critica Sociale

L'Espresso

Mondo Operaio

Political Science Quarterly

Rinascita

Encyclopedia

Enciclopedia Rizzoli-Larousse, Milano, Rizzoli editore, 1970.

Enciclopedia Treccani - online

Websites

www.camera.it

www.combattentiliberazione.it

www.corriere.it

www.criticasociale.net

[csppcpr.altervista.org/libri/LENIN - Che fare.pdf](http://csppcpr.altervista.org/libri/LENIN_-_Che_fare.pdf)

www.fondazionenenni.it

www.interno.it

www.ism-italia.org

www.knesset.gov.il

www.marxists.org

www.governo.it

www.paesesera.it

www.palestine-encyclopedia.com

www.partitodemocratico.it

www.pertini.it

www.pij.org

www.pri.it

www.quirinale.it

www.repubblica.it

www.sinistraperisraele.it

www.sissco.it

www.un.org

www.unita.it

www.treccani.it

www.vittimeterrorismo.it

Interviews

Emanuele Amar Segre, vice-president of the Jewish community of Turin, phone interview on 3/8/2012

Janiki Cingoli, chief director of CIPMO, Centro Italiano per la Pace in Medio Oriente (Italian centre for peace in Middle East) Phone interview on 13/9/2012

Daniele Nahum, vice-president of the Jewish community of Milan, phone interview on 19/9/2012

Emanuele Fiano, P.D. deputy, phone interview on 24/9/2012

Lebenslauf

Name: Nicola Seu

Matrikelnummer: a0201636

Ausbildung

- 2008 – 2014 Doktorat Studium der Politikwissenschaft an der Universität Wien
- 2008 Hebräisch Kurs an der Universität Haifa
- 2005 – 2006 Arabisch intensive Kurs an der D.E.A.C. (département d’enseignement de la langue arabe) in Kairo
- 2004 – 2005 Master Studium der Nahost Studium an der Universität London, SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies)
- 2002 – 2003 Auslandjahr an der Universität Wien
- 1997 – 2004 Studium der Fremdsprachen und Arabisches Kultur und Literatur an der Universität Sassari, Italien.

Berufliche Tätigkeiten

- 2008 – Heute Journalist von Nahost Politik und Kultur im L’Opinione, Politikzeitung, Mailand
- 2010 – 2013 Italienische Lehrer in VHS und BFI in Wien
- 2007 – 2008 Italienische Lehrer in Italienische Kultur Institut in Haifa
- 2005 – 2006 Italienische Lehrer in Italienische Kultur Institut in Kairo