A New „Generation“ of Democratic Politicians? Models of Political and Social Progress in Germany, France and Italy between Dictatorship and the Cold War

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The purpose of the International Workshop held in Rome from April 18th to 19th was to explore how the experience of autocratic governments informed the way in which politicians developed new policies in Germany, France and Italy after the Second World War. By asking whether a new „generation“ of leaders, who shared democratic ideas, acquired leading positions in these countries, the workshop aimed to explore models of political and social progress, as well as aspects of continuity and change after 1945. Beyond the national sphere, the participants considered the cross-national exchange, transfer, and collaboration.

After the welcome address by the director of the DHI, MICHAEL MATHEUS (Rome), JENS SPÄTH (Rome) explained the ideas behind the workshop by focusing on six key concepts: progress (following Werner Bedrich Löwenstein's concept that real progress exists in social fields as well); generation (emphasizing the concept of „Generation building“); democracies (connection of peace and republic); break or continuity after 1945, transition (citing Wolfgang Merkel's term „transformation of a system“); memory (following Stathis Kalyvas, Späth underlined elements of exclusion, inclusion, contestation and silence in collective memory and he agreed with Claus Leggewie in identifying the construction of European memory as a story of conflicts and violence); and finally identity and political culture. By mentioning the German „Institut für Zeitgeschichte“ (established 1949 in Munich), the Italian „Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia“ (established 1949 in Milan) and the French „Comité d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondial“ (established 1944), Späth gave representative examples of the attempt to create a new political culture in post-war Europe. Finally, he stressed the comparative and transnational character of the conference.

SEBASTIAN GEHRIG (Heidelberg/Cambridge) began the first panel, titled „Identity and Education“, by speaking about the influence of legal considerations on the German Identity after 1945 („Coping with the 'Provisional State'“). Gehrig explained how, in the immediate aftermath of the war, the Dönitz government highlighted continuity in the legal field. Legal experts expressed this continuity in order to give agency to Germans and to ensure that Germans maintained certain rights. The West German institutes were seen as legal successors of the pre-war state. Contradictory to the legal rhetoric of continuity, the domestic intellectual journals perceived 1945 as a break, wanting to build a „streitbare Demokratie“ (fortified democracy). Rather than being driven by generational motives, key players in court and politics acted according to their political beliefs. Following Gehrig, the legal sphere argued for a neutral democratic constitution, whereas the domestic sphere asked for a value driven constitution.

TANIA RUSCA (Genoa) then spoke about democratic education of pupils in Italy and Germany after 1945 by examining different primary school policies as well as several textbooks. She argued that, from 1943 onwards, the Southern part of Italy saw remarkably progressive approaches, which were geared towards enforcing political participation through education. But during the 1950s and the so-called „catholic activism“, the books were confiscated. Schools reverted to pre-war textbooks, and merely deleted propagandistic parts. Recent history, as well as explanations behind the change to a democracy and republic, was omitted. In Germany, the SWNCC 269 (Long range policy for German Re-education) and the so-called „Zook-report“ from 1947 enable us to understand how the American textbook commission was used as a re-education tool. Like in Italy, recent history was not included because educators felt insecure about how to interpret the most recent past.

The following discussion led to several

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questions concerning the relationship between the idea of responsible citizenship and Catholicism. Rusca stated that, in contrast to the liberal Italian tradition, which searched for self-governance, Catholicism aimed for self-control. Both Rusca and Gehrig were asked to clarify who was standing behind the laws / the textbooks. Rusca explained that, while it is difficult to identify individuals, in Germany teachers of the Weimar Republic had to resign whereas in Italy fascist teachers remained in office. Gehrig informed his audience that, especially in the German courts, there has been a battle between two schools of thought – the followers of Carl Schmid (strong state) and those of Rudolf Schmend (state built on society).

The next panel focused on the roles of intellectuals and elites. DOMINIK RIGOLL (Jena) illustrated why he had chosen his title „The original 45ers" (as opponents of the Nazis were called in the early post-war years). Focusing on Jean Améry and Eugen Kogon he examined how they considered themselves as people of the resistance. In their opinion to relegate the Nazis was not only a German but a European duty and thus the political events in France in 1945 deeply influenced them. Rigoll also illustrated how the „original 45ers" experienced the failure of their ideas in the 1950s, as well as the protest movements in 1968/69.

MAUVE CARBONELL (Luxembourg) followed the career paths of the members of the High Authority of the ECSC, the first European supranational institution. She pointed out that, while the members belonged to a wide range of professions and political parties and played different roles in politics, they all belonged to the same generation („clé generationnelle") and were united by a strong anticommunism. According to Carbonell, they often characterized themselves as technical experts without regretting their nationalist past. However, the members of this „new West-European elite" were deeply marked by the war and its physical consequences and family concerns.

CHRISTIAN BLASBERG (Rome) then presented his research on „The failure of the 'New Liberals' in Italy after World War II – Political misperceptions and the 'missed leadership' of Nicolò Carandini." He argued that Carandini lost influence in his party due to the fact that he spent so much time in Britain and therefore was absent from decision-making processes within his party. Moreover, in 1946 he broke with Croce, who considered liberalism as the centre of all politics and superior to economic distinctions of left and right. Blasberg explained the disappointing performance of the Italian Liberal party with the fact that most of the pre-war politicians were unaware of the need of mass politics. As a result, after the 1948 election defeat, members migrated to Christian Democrats.

Asked during the following discussion how many '45ers he would identify, Rigoll stated that Kogon himself didn't employ the term, and that for him it was just a small group of people called on by the allies to reconstruct the country. Talking about the motivation of the members to work for the High Court, Carbonell assumed that most of them did not accept this position out of idealistic or ideological reasons but because of the personal and professional opportunities it provided. Answering to the question concerning the role of the superpowers, Blasberg stated that Italian liberals tried to promote a third way between the United States and the Soviet Union. Therefore, they counted on Great Britain as a strong middle power and mediator.

The first day of the workshop was concluded by a public keynote lecture held by ANDREAS WIRSCHING (Munich), titled „Towards a New Political Culture? Totalitarian Experience and Democratic reconstruction after 1945." He compared the post-war history of Germany, Italy and France focusing on three aspects: 1) the crucial role played by a generation of leaders that had its roots in the 19th century, 2) a trend to post-heroism, and 3) a trend to mass-culture. As Wirsching argued, numerous members of the generation of pre-war democrats got a second chance, such as Konrad Adenauer, Luigi Einaudi or Alcide De Gasperi. The Christian-democratic parties with their specific profile (reconciliation, Christian values, social-harmonistic concept, strong interventionist state for social security and anticommunism) gained power in Italy and Germany. Following Herfried Münkler, Wirsching stated that the heroic narra-

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tive lost its appeal after 1945. Germans regarded themselves as victims. It was only in the late 1960s that memory of German suffering began to fade, and that memory of the Holocaust entered the discourse. Italy and France likewise emphasized narratives of victimhood in order to avoid any confrontation with their own guilt. In his last point, Wirsching explained how the economic boom created a new kind of society and new forms of mass-culture, and how vacation and a surplus of time brought about a depoliticization of post-war societies. Wirsching summed up that Europeans' self-perception as victims helped them to overcome the war.

The second day of the workshop opened with a panel on „Socialist Politics and Memories“. BRIAN SHAEV (Pittsburgh) began with his talk about historiography written by French Socialists and German Social Democrats. He pointed out that there were „party memories“ in the SFIO as well as in the SPD that were distinct from national narratives and cultural memory. For the German SPD, he cited the ideas of Kurt Schumacher, who spread the opinion that, rather than the Weimar Constitution, the population had constituted a problem in pre-Nazi Germany, and that unemployment as well as the French invasion had caused the rise of Nazism. Shaev demonstrated how personal and generational memories shaped the debates within these parties as well as the contact between them.

JENS SPÄTH (Rome) compared life, theory and practice of „two difficult outsiders“ – Lelio Basso and Wilhelm Hoegner – by focusing on their ideas of antifascism and democracy. While the Italian Socialists collaborated closely with the communists, in Germany the antifascist frontline was replaced by anticommunism during the Cold War. Basso not only longed for a legal-political transformation of the Italian system, but also for a new social order to abolish fascist ideas. Hoegner likewise believed that it was insufficient to denazify society. He also emphasized the importance of remembering the National Socialist crimes. While Basso's plans for a united proletarian party failed, Hoegner, as Bavarian Prime Minister faced the task to control the application of the „Gesetz zur Befreiung von Nationalsozialismus und Militarismus“, fighting for a federal system, a democratic education of the youth and the construction of memorials.

The following discussion concentrated on the cross-national relationship between the parties and their actors. Shaev stressed that top party officials met each other and that initially the SFIO and the SPD had also collaborated. However, their interests soon began to differ. Späth explained that, because he wrote about Rosa Luxemburg, Basso was mainly appreciated by the younger generation of German social democrats. Basso was well connected in Europe but less to the SPD, which he blamed for having made too many compromises.

The last section dealt with European socialist parties and their relationship to communism. Drawing an Italian-Polish comparison, JAN DE GRAAF (Portsmouth) took both sides of the iron curtain into consideration. Being communist-socialist parties, PSI and PPS were in a minority position in an international socialist movement increasingly dominated by anti-communism. De Graaf argued that the Polish remained conformist with rising communist dictatorship, both because they were interested in their own career and because they did not expect the Cold War to last for 40 years. In De Graaf's opinion, Poland wanted to survive the Cold War and keep relations to the West in order to rebuild an independent state after the Russian occupation.

ENRICO PUGLIESE (Reading) drew a comparison between French and Italian Socialist Parties and examined the New Internationalism between 1945 and 1957. French Socialists were fiercely anti-communist and had governmental power, whereas Italian Socialists were allied with the communist party and therefore systematically excluded from government; even so France and Italy built a unit during the „socialist international“ in 1947 (Zürich) and 1951 (Frankfurt/Main). The attempt to establish a new socialist democratic canon was accompanied by a critique of the creation of an integrated economic sphere and ultimately led to the building of three different fronts within the „socialist international“: the British, the Italian-French and the Scandinavian-German. Asked whether generational aspects mattered for the Italian Socialists, Pugliese stated that the PSI failed

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in constructing a new generation, a problem which, according to him, still affects the party today.

STEFFEN PRAUSER (Paris) closed the workshop stating that, while the papers informed the audience about connections between people and parties and between parties of different European countries, a lot of questions remained. He encouraged researchers to focus on the idea of continuity or break, on the „victim" discourse, the integration of collaborators and to stress the European dimension. He maintained that, while the question of social progress could have been stressed more strongly, the workshop gave a thorough overview over the different interests and problems of European parties and the influence of war experience on political actors. The conference proved how fruitful an international comparison of political and personal careers, democratic ideas and historical memory can be.

Conference Overview:

Michael Matheus (Rome): Welcome

Jens Späth (Rome): Introduction

Section I: „Identity and Education"

Chair: Steffen Prauser (Paris)

Sebastian Gehrig (Cambridge/Heidelberg): Coping with the 'Provisional State': The Road towards a legal and political West German Cold War home front, 1945-1960.

Tania Rusca (Genoa): (Re-) Founding a Democratic Generation. Primary School Policy and Textbooks in Italy and Germany after the Second World War (1945-60): A comparative View.

Section II: „Intellectuals and Élites"

Chair: Lutz Klinkhammer (Rome)

Dominik Rigoll (Jena): The „original 45ers" - Jean Améry and Eugen Kogon.

Mauve Carbonell (Luxembourg): The Influence of World War Two on the Career Paths of the European Elite: the Case of the Members of the High Authority of the ECSC 1952-1967.

Christian Blasberg (Rome): The failure of the „New Liberals" in Italy after World War II. Political misperceptions and the 'missed leadership' of Nicolò Carandini.

Andreas Wirsching (Munich): Towards a New Political Culture? Totalitarian Experience and Democratic Reconstruction after 1945.

Section III: „Socialist Politics and Memory"

Chair: Martin Baumeister (Munich)

Jens Späth (Rome): Two „Difficult Outsiders". Antifascism and Democracy in Lelio Basso and Wilhelm Hoeger.

Brian Shaev (Pittsburgh): Inheriting Horror. French Socialists, German Social Democrats, and the Fight for a Democratic, Peaceful Future, 1945-1960.

Section IV: „The Economic and International Affairs"

Chair: Jens Späth (Rome)

Jan De Graaf (Portsmouth): The 'Fellow-Travellers': Italian and Polish Socialists and the Justification of the United Front.

Enrico Pugliese (Reading): French and Italian Socialist Parties and the New Internationalism (1945-1957).

Steffen Prauser (Paris): Comments and Conclusions

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