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The Search for a New Revolution:
Leo Valiani and the Legacy of "Giustizia e Libertà"

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This paper will deal with two relevant issues in the intellectual history of twentieth-century Europe: 1) the relationship between socialism, antifascism and antitotalitarianism; 2) the possibilities of a democratic revolution in the midst of the Second World War. In order to analyse them, I will focus on Leo Valiani's biography and thought between 1939 and 1944, when he left the Communist Party and became a prominent figure of the "Partito d'Azione". A special attention will be paid to the ways in which Valiani's antitotalitarian and revolutionary socialism was tied to the complex legacies of the Italian antifascist group "Giustizia e Libertà".

Keywords: Antifascism, Socialism, Antitotalitarianism, Communism, "Giustizia e Libertà", Leo Valiani, "Partito d'Azione".

Antifascism, democracy, and revolution

Since the late 1980s, and especially the early 1990s, the crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the communist regimes in East Central Europe fostered the search for political cultures conciliating socialism and liberalism, antifascism and anti-totalitarianism. In particular, a harsh debate, stirred by the important but controversial work of the French historian François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion*, took place with regard to the relationships and contradictions between antifascism and communism, in France as elsewhere.¹ In Italy, in particular, the historical experiences of "Giustizia e Libertà"

¹ See, in particular, François FURET, *Le passé d'une illusion: essai sur l'idée communiste au XX siècle*, Paris: Laffont 1995. For a general reconstruction, see *Rethinking Antifascism. History, Memory and Politics: 1922 to the Present*, Hugo GARCIA, Marcel YUSTA, Xavier TABET, Christina CLIMACO (eds.), New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2016.

and of the "Partito d'Azione" and their long-term political and intellectual legacies have been placed at the core of important public debates and academic research. In the post-1989 context, these experiences and legacies turned out to be interesting from two standpoints: those arguing the identification of antifascism and democracy might emphasize its critiques of Stalin's regime and its search for alternative forms of communism; those reducing antifascism to anti-liberalism might stress its adherence to the Soviet myth and its relations with the communists.

Moreover, the deep crisis of the Italian political system, shaped by the post-war experience and shaken by the end of the Cold War, provoked an intense and highly divisive debate on antifascism and national identity. The tradition stemming from "Giustizia e Libertà" and the "Partito d'Azione" was perceived either as an opportunity for re-founding the Republican institutions on antifascist national bases, or as a threat to a more cohesive and post-ideological nation. In both cases, the real issue at stake was the complex relationship among antifascism, democracy, and the Italian national tradition.²

In order to rethink this set of issues, Valiani provides a case in point. In particular, I will focus on his complex relation with "Giustizia e Libertà" and its legacies in the time span between 1938 and 1944. My main hypothesis is that, even though Valiani did not take part in the group, the ideas of "Giustizia e Libertà" on socialism and revolution constituted a fundamental inspiration for his own critical rethinking of his previous Communist membership.

In spite of a growing historiography, the political biography of Leo Valiani continues to be highly problematic. As Andrea Ricciardi has rightly pointed out in his well-researched work on the political education of Valiani, it is hard to combine and integrate two radically different images of Valiani: on the one hand, the late Valiani, a bank manager, a self-taught researcher of history, a senator of the Italian Republic, quite mistrustful of the short-term policies of the democratic governments, but engaged in a long-term cultural battle for democracy; on the other hand, the young Valiani, a cosmopolitan revolutionary in conspiracy, in prison and in exile, embedded first in the Italian Communist Party, then in "Giustizia e Libertà" and the "Partito d'Azione".³ Obviously, it is possible to detect some continuity between the former and the latter, such as the ongoing dialogue with the political and intellectual legacy of "Giustizia e Libertà" and of the "Partito d'Azione", and the persistent

² For the main positions in the debate see Marco REVELLI, Giovanni DE LUNA, *Fascismo, antifascismo: le idee, le identità*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1995; Ernesto GALLI DELLA LOGGIA, *La morte della patria*, Roma-Bari: Laterza 1996; Claudio NOVELLI, *Il Partito d'Azione e gli italiani: moralità, politica e cittadinanza nella storia repubblicana*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 2000; Dino COFRANCESCO, *Sul gramscianesimo e dintorni*, Lungro di Cosenza: Marco, 2001; Antonio CARIOTI, *Maledetti azionisti: un caso di uso politico della storia*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2001.

³ Andrea RICCIARDI, *Leo Valiani: gli anni della formazione: tra socialismo, comunismo e rivoluzione democratica*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007, 7-16. For a general autobiographical account see Leo VALIANI, *Sessant'anni di avventure e battaglie. Riflessioni e ricordi raccolti da Massimo Pini*, Milano: Rizzoli 1983, and more recently, „Dal comunismo all'azionismo“, Interview to Leo Valiani by Anna Pala, *Annali dell'Istituto Ugo La Malfa*, 9 (1996), 219-255.

conception of the leading role of the élites, be they political or intellectual. However, the impatient and energetic commitment of Valiani to different revolutionary projects as different as the Stalinist communist and the radical democratic one between the mid-1920s and mid-1940s did somehow expire in the post-1945 decades, albeit in complex and twisted ways which cannot be the topic of this essay.

Born in 1909 in the cosmopolitan Fiume under the late Habsburg monarchy to a mixed national family, Valiani chose to be loyal to the Italian national tradition and identity.⁴ In the mid-1920s he became a communist, he was engaged in the antifascist fight, arrested two times and detained until 1936. After going into exile in Paris at the time of the Popular Fronts and personally experiencing the Spanish civil war, he came to terms with the Stalinist regime in the name of an alternative communist revolutionary perspective as early as in the late 1930s. At the same time, he had approached post-Rosselli's "Giustizia e Libertà" and the "Partito d'Azione", eventually supporting the perspective of a "democratic revolution" in the context of the Italian Resistance and of the Second World War.

Quite obviously, it has been (and in some respects it is still) tempting to connect the perspective of Valiani's "democratic revolution" with the post-1945 context and to interpret in this light his ambivalence between intransigent loyalty to the constitutional democratic framework and his radical critiques of the ruling class. However, what did Valiani mean by the term "democratic revolution" in the pre-1945 context of war? How did this perspective relate to its overall political and historical reflection and to the legacy of "Giustizia e Libertà"?

"Giustizia e Libertà" as a way out of communism

I will try to answer these questions, analysing Valiani's reflection on communism, socialism, democracy, and above all revolution between the late 1930s and the mid-1940s. My concern here has less to do with understanding *how* and *why* Valiani left the Communist Party and approached "Giustizia e Libertà", than with understanding in *which sense* and to *what extent* the legacy of "Giustizia e Libertà" might be used as a way out of communism. In order to do this, I will provide a brief outline of Valiani's relationship to the other members of "Giustizia e Libertà".

This group had been assembled in fall of 1929 by Carlo Rosselli, an economist actively engaged in renovating the Socialist political culture and in fighting the Fascist regime. His political perspective was shaped by a deep linkage with the nationalistic democratic tradition from the *Risorgimento* (in tune with his family environment), as well as by the personal experience of

⁴ See Angelo ARA, *Leo Valiani uomo e storico della Mitteleuropa* in ARA, *Fra Nazione e Impero. Trieste, gli Asburgo, la Mitteleuropa*, Milano: Garzanti, 2009, 553-623.

the Great war (albeit not on the frontline). His critical attitude towards the revolutionary socialism in the post-war turmoil was inspired by his elaboration of a liberal socialism, whose theoretical foundation was clarified over the course of the 1920s. His major book, that is *Socialismo liberale*, was written during his internment on the island of Lipari between 1927 and 1929. After fleeing from Lipari, he went into exile in Paris, where he founded "Giustizia e Libertà", alongside Emilio Lussu and Gaetano Salvemini, among others.⁵

Far from representing a unitary and coherent group, "Giustizia e Libertà" was a complex and contradictory organisation, acting as both an organised conspiratorial agent and a hub of wide intellectual networks. Its main target was the overturning of Mussolini's regime and the democratic renewal of the Italian political and social order. The political and intellectual research of "Giustizia e Libertà" was greatly enriched by the confrontation with the French culture. In particular, some of his members took part in the so-called "Décades de Pontigny", meetings among important European intellectuals organised by Paul Desjardins in an old abbey of Burgundy.⁶

However, in the mid-1930s, after the ascent of Hitler to power in Germany, "Giustizia e Libertà" was marked by radicalisation driven by the pressure of the mass experiences in the French and Spanish Popular Fronts. A class revolutionary language and perspective found a growing space in Rosselli's group, which had been founded on the rejection of the Marxist class tradition. The involvement of the Soviet Union and of the communist parties in the antifascist policies which represented the preliminary and fundamental position of the Popular Fronts, paved the way for a different attitude of "Giustizia e Libertà". Rosselli and other members of the group took active part in defence of the Spanish Republic after the military coup in July 1936. Availability to collaboration with the Italian communists, praise of the Soviet support to the Spanish Republic during the civil war, and exaltation of the Russian revolutionary experience aimed at strengthening the political strategy of "Giustizia e Libertà" in the context of the ideological polarisation of Europe between fascism and antifascism, but tended to decrease the critique of the Moscow trials and of the Stalinist Terror.⁷

Carlo Rosselli was murdered by a French terrorist unit ("La Cagoule"), on request from Mussolini's regime, in June 1937. Afterwards, the legacy of the

5 See Nicola TRANFAGLIA, *Carlo Rosselli e il sogno di una moderna democrazia sociale*, Milano: B. C. Dalai, 2010; Stanislao PUGLIESE, *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Antifascist Exile*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1999. However, the exile experience of Rosselli in the 1930s still requires further analyses. Some insights in Marco GERVASONI, *Carlo Rosselli, «Giustizia e Libertà» e «L'esprit des années Trente»*, in *Carlo e Nello Rosselli e l'antifascismo europeo*, Antonio BECHELLONI (ed.), Milano: Franco Angeli, 2001, 100-126.

6 See François CHAUBET, *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion, 2000.

7 I have developed some of these considerations in Marco BRESCIANI, "Guerra civile europea" o "era delle tirannie"? Il laboratorio/osservatorio di "Giustizia e Libertà" in *L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, Simone NERI SERNERI (ed.), Roma: Viella, 2016, 155-170. This is part of a book in progress: Marco BRESCIANI, *Imparare dal nemico. «Giustizia e Libertà» tra l'esilio e l'Italia*, Roma: Carocci, 2017 (tentative title).

founder of "Giustizia e Libertà", marked by the aforementioned contradictions, was at the core of heated discussions. At that time, Franco Venturi and Aldo Garosci embodied two diverging ways of coping with Carlo Rosselli's political thought. On the one hand, Venturi searched for a new communist Enlightenment, as opposed to Stalinist communism, while coming to terms with Marxism but claiming the political model of Leninism; on the other hand, Garosci aimed at social-liberalism, which was open to anti-totalitarian, libertarian and anti-statist perspectives, but more and more critical towards revolutionary violence.⁸

Valiani's increasingly critical (but clandestine) positions towards Stalinist communism were developed over the course of the Spanish Civil War. He was particularly fascinated by the revolutionary action of the masses, as opposed to the communist understanding of the political antifascist strategy of the Popular Front. His collaboration with *Que faire?* and *Le drapeau rouge* pushed him towards a secret opposition current within the Third International between 1936 and 1938. This environment aiming at a revolutionary and anti-Stalinist, Marxist and "democratic" communism overlapped in some spaces with the ideological perspectives of the group of "Giustizia e Libertà", despite deep differences.⁹ Not coincidentally, in 1938-1939 Valiani began meeting with Venturi and Garosci and talking to them about history and politics. The signature of the pact between Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in late August 1939 was a shock for all of them. The ruling committee of "Giustizia e Libertà", including Garosci and Venturi, decided not to openly denounce the "betrayal" of the USSR, in the newspaper "Giustizia e Libertà" in an article entitled "Crisis of an ideal".¹⁰ This was a dramatic, but quite ambiguous title because it was not clear whether it referred to antifascism or to communism, or to both of them. However, the movement confirmed its availability to collaborate with the communists critical towards the "revolutionary discipline", that is the rigid obedience to the Soviet policies.

As it is well known, Valiani decided to leave the Italian Communist Party after the pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany was signed. Nonetheless, he chose not to publicize his decision immediately, as the communist parties had been banned in France in late September 1939 and his militant comrades had been arrested. He was thus deported and detained to the Vernet camp: in that period, the Hungarian writer Arthur Koestler, who was leaving communism as well, became his reference point. During those months at the Vernet, he had the occasion for reading the manuscript

8 While Aldo Garosci is still waiting for his biographer, Franco Venturi has been object of several, important essays: for his biography, see in particular Adriano VIARENGO, *Franco Venturi tra politica e storia*, Roma: Carocci, 2014.

9 A particular focus on this aspect of Valiani's biography has been provided by David BIDUSSA, *La robustezza del filo. Leo Valiani tra storia e politica*, in *Leo Valiani tra politica e storia. Scritti di storia delle idee 1939-1956*, BIDUSSA (ed.), Milano: Feltrinelli 2008, 1-94, to be read alongside Edoardo TORTAROLO, "Leo Valiani: storia e politica", *Rivista storica italiana*, 1 (2010), 158-172.

10 Elisa SIGNORI, Marina TESORO, *Il verde e il rosso. Fernando Schiavetti e gli antifascisti nell'esilio fra repubblicanesimo e socialismo*, Le Monnier: Firenze 1987, 332-334.

of *Darkness at Noon* (in German). This manuscript, which was to become the most famous novel by Koestler, representing the Moscow trials a product of terror and lie, provided a fundamental push in critically rethinking Valiani's judgement on Stalin's regime.¹¹

At the time of the Nazi occupation of France, Valiani fled to Northern Africa, where he met Nicola Chiaromonte, an intellectual who had taken part in "Giustizia e Libertà", but who had been sceptical of Rosselli's political revolutionary perspective in the name of a radical anti-historicist and anti-Soviet position. In 1941, Valiani travelled to Mexico, where he was especially in connection with Victor Serge, a former Trotskyist revolutionary and writer, and Julian Gorkin, a Spanish revolutionary socialist and one of the leaders of the POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) during the Spanish civil war. Meanwhile, he kept up his relations with the Italian antifascist emigrants in the US collaborating with the *Quaderni Italiani*, published in Boston by the liberal-socialist Bruno Zevi. Most of his wartime essays dealt with socialism, communism, democracy and revolution, and they were rooted in, and were still influenced by, the Parisian conversation with Venturi and Garosci. However, his most organic work was the *Storia del socialismo nel secolo XX* (published in Mexico in 1943 and in Italy in 1945).

Socialism, war and tyrannies

The period spent in Mexico allowed Valiani to rethink the historical roots and the political perspectives of his engagement with communism. Valiani's "Foreword" directly connected his *Storia del socialismo nel secolo 20.* to the inspiration of Carlo Rosselli, who was defined as a "naturally born leader of revolutionary democracy". In Valiani's words, his book was an answer to the lack of "a serious ideological history of contemporary socialism", which Rosselli had already complained of in the late 1920s.¹² Quite obviously, Valiani's historical account of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century socialism greatly reached beyond the political and intellectual legacy of Rosselli. An anti-deterministic understanding of history and a voluntaristic critique of Marxism are all what he learned from the reading of *Socialisme libéral*.

The strength of will and the autonomy of the social process as opposed to the faith in the inevitable course of history, described in terms of the "dialectic of the opposites", were at the core of Valiani's analysis. Some main issues inspired and outlined the range of the reflection of Valiani, directly or

¹¹ See RICCIARDI, *Leo Valiani*, 184-270; Arthur KOESTLER, *Schiama della terra*, Afterword by Leo VALIANI, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983. On Koestler see M. SCAMMELL, *Arthur Koestler: the literary and political odyssey of a twentieth-century skeptical*, New York: Random House, 2009.

¹² Leo WEICZEN, *Storia del socialismo nel secolo 20.: 1900-1944: saggio critico*, Roma: Edizioni U 1945, 5. All translation from Italian are mine. For Valiani's reference see Carlo ROSSELLI, *Socialismo liberale*, Torino: Einaudi 1997, 15. Rosselli's book was originally published in French (Paris: Editions Valois, 1930).

indirectly questioning Benedetto Croce's idealism: 1) how can "Good" stem from "Evil"?; 2) does the "dialectic of the opposites" work in a context of extreme political polarisation?; 3) if the "critique of terrorism", finalised to limit its use and its range, is legitimate, can the cause of freedom make use of it in some exceptional circumstances?; 4) does "democracy" tend to eliminate catastrophes from history, or is this the straightest path to the civil war?

Valiani searched for a new European revolutionary tradition, by questioning the Marxist dialectic and by addressing the issue of the relationship between revolution and violence. For Valiani, the history of European socialism had been marked by a constant and structural contradiction between "totalitarianism" and "libertarianism". Libertarianism had found "more fertile" ground from the "ideological, ethical and also simply revolutionary" point of view, "totalitarianism" had imposed itself by "the necessity of the economic reconstruction and of the defence of the proletarian state". As a consequence, in order to free the movement for the emancipation of workers from the drastic alternative between "libertarianism" and "totalitarianism", it was necessary "first of all to re-heal the fracture with the liberal civilisation, entailed by Marxism".¹³

Valiani's retrospective accounts particularly stressed the importance of the French historian Elie Halévy and of his well-known book *L'ère des tyrannies*.¹⁴ Halévy was an influential scholar in the philosophy of British radicalism, in the English nineteenth century history, and in the history of European socialism.¹⁵ The analyses and the interpretations of Halévy, a personal friend of Carlo Rosselli in the 1930s, widely circulated within "Giustizia e Libertà".¹⁶ Particular attention was devoted to his conference paper delivered in November 1936 and entitled *L'ère des tyrannies*, which was collected in the essay collection *L'ère des tyrannies. Essais sur le socialisme et la guerre*, published posthumously in 1938. To be sure, Halévy provided Rosselli and the other members of "Giustizia e Libertà" with inspiring readings. Nevertheless, their trajectories were quite different, as those of the members of "Giustizia e Libertà" were above all the by-product of constantly self-correcting

¹³ WEICZEN, *Storia del socialismo nel secolo 20.*, 239.

¹⁴ See Leo VALIANI, "Per Franco Venturi: una testimonianza," in VALIANI, *Testimoni del Novecento*, Firenze: Passigli, 1999, 339-340.

¹⁵ For the intellectual biography of Halévy see Michel BO BRANSEN, *Portrait d'Élie Halévy*, Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1978 and Myrna CHASE, *Elie Halévy: an Intellectual Biography*, New York: Columbia UP, 1980.

¹⁶ For Halévy's reception within "Giustizia e Libertà" (with special regard to Franco Venturi) see Franco VENTURI, *Carlo Rosselli e la cultura francese in Giustizia e Libertà nella lotta antifascista e nella storia d'Italia*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1978, 175-177; Edoardo TORTAROLO, "La rivolta e le riforme. Appunti per una biografia intellettuale di Franco Venturi (1914-1994)", *Studi settecenteschi*, XV (1995), 22-23; Ibid, "L'esilio della libertà. Franco Venturi e la cultura europea" and Roberto VIVARELLI, "Tra politica e storia: appunti sulla formazione di Franco Venturi negli anni dell'esilio (1931-1940)", in *Il coraggio della ragione. Franco Venturi intellettuale e storico cosmopolita*, Luciano GUERCI, Giuseppe RICUPERATI (eds.), Torino: Fondazione Einaudi, 1998, 99-101 and 389-391. On the basis of archival researches in Paris, I have provided a detailed analysis of the relationship between Halévy and Rosselli in Marco BRESCIANI, "Socialismo, antifascismo e tirannie. Note sull'amicizia tra Carlo Rosselli e Elie Halévy", *Studi storici*, 53, 3 (2012), 615-644 and Ibid, "Carlo Rosselli et les cultures françaises des années 1930: entre socialisme, antifascisme et tyrannies", with Diego DILETTOSO, *Mille-Neuf-Cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 31 (2013), 137-157.

research concerning socialism, communism, democracy and revolution in the dramatically changing contexts of the 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁷

In recent decades, especially since the mid-1990s, the figure and the research of Halévy have been at the core of a growing interest, following the important, but controversial work of François Furet. On the one hand, insofar as Halévy was interpreted as a liberal forerunner of the totalitarian theory, the divergence with the socialist revolutionary positions of "Giustizia e Libertà" was overestimated. On the other hand, insofar as Halévy was viewed as being an anti-liberal (or better, stated as anti-Manchesterian) critic of the market, his convergence with Rosselli, Venturi and other members of "Giustizia e Libertà" was overstressed.¹⁸ In different respects, these opposite positions miss some crucial points. On the one hand, in contrast to the classical Cold War theory of totalitarianism, Halévy's reflection on tyranny stemmed from an historical inquiry into socialism, and tyranny was understood as only one of its possible outcomes. On the other hand, in contrast to the position of "Giustizia e Libertà", Halévy's point of view, and despite his interest in liberal socialism, he was always mistrustful towards revolution.

The general interpretative framework of Valiani's history of socialism referred to Halévy as "one of the best historians of our time".¹⁹ Indeed, the French historian had highlighted what he considered as the basic contradiction or dilemma of European socialism, vacillating between trends towards emancipation and trends towards organisation. In Valiani's text, the opposition between "libertarianism" and "totalitarianism" seemed to be reminiscent of Halévy's. In Halévy's perception, the "world crisis of 1914-1918" had marked a real turning point. The twofold dynamics of war and revolution, taking place from 1905 to 1920, had radicalised the different currents of socialism, paving the way for both a revolutionary socialism which had led to the communist experiment, and an authoritarian socialism which had provided the basis for the Fascist experiments.²⁰ However, even though Valiani shared his historical

17 Much later, Valiani claimed to have attended the last course about the history of European Socialism: see Leo VALIANI, *Scritti di storia: movimento socialista e democrazia*, Milano: SugarCO, 1983, 198. However, a research on the students' list attending Halévy's courses provides no evidence of Valiani's participation (Ecole Normale Supérieure, rue d'Ulm, Paris, papiers Halévy).

18 The reference work is François FURET, *Le passé d'une illusion. L'idée communiste au XXe siècle*, Paris: Laffont, 1995. For samples from two opposite positions, see on the one hand Roberto VIVARELLI, *Elie Halévy e la guerra*, in *Elie Halévy e l'era delle tirannie*, Maurizio GRIFFO, Gaetano QUAGLIARIELLO (eds.) Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2001, 279-288 and Gaetano QUAGLIARIELLO, *Introduzione*, in E. HALÉVY, *L'era delle tirannie*, Roma: Ideazione, 1998; on the other hand, Michele BATTINI, *Utopia e tirannide. Scavi nell'archivio Halévy*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011.

19 In *Storia del socialismo nel secolo 20*. (page 239) Valiani explicitly mentioned only Elie HALÉVY, *The World Crisis of 1914-1918*, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1930; however, it is hard to imagine that he didn't know Elie HALÉVY, *L'ère des tyrannies. Etudes sur le socialisme et la guerre*, Paris: Gallimard, 1990 [1938], which had been discussed by Garosci and Venturi.

20 As I have shown in Marco BRESCIANI, "Elie Halévy e la crisi mondiale del 1914-1918" in Elie HALÉVY, *Perché scoppiò la Prima guerra mondiale*, Pisa: Della Porta Editori, 2014, 75-120, the two lectures belong to different political and intellectual period of Halévy's biography. For a different position see François FURET, *Préface* to E. HALÉVY, *Correspondance 1891-1937*, textes réunis et présentés par Henriette Guy-Loë et annotés par Monique Canto-Sperber, Vincent Duclert et Henriette Guy-Loë, Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1996, 50 and, more recently, Vincent DUCLERT, "Elie Halévy et la guerre" in Elie HALÉVY, *Correspondance et écrits de guerre*, Paris: A. Colin, 2014, 35-47.

pattern with Halévy's, the meaning and the implication of their approaches to socialism was quite different.

From the outset of the century Halévy had been a Republican in the French tradition, belonging to the field of the *Dreyfusards*. As a scholar he was interested in the historical experiences and theoretical premises of socialism, and of its different possible outcomes ("the Swiss universalised Republic" or "the caesarism"). However, after the outbreak of the Great War, and the more stable 1920s, especially after the early 1930s Halévy had become more and more sceptical, if not pessimistic towards the possible "democratic" outcome of socialism. On the one hand, his personal and intellectual ties with Carlo Rosselli allowed him to firmly keep his position within the antifascist politics. On the other hand, he increasingly questioned the historical plausibility and the theoretical consistency of liberal socialism, as he noted in the discussion following his lecture on *L'ère des tyrannies* in November 1936. He dramatically concluded that "liberal socialism in the West" could not, in his own words, "speak at the same time the language of Gladstone and that of Lenin".²¹

Far from being confined to the "West", understood mostly as France and Great Britain by Halévy, Valiani's conception of socialist history and politics was a truly European and a global one. His education in Habsburg and post-Habsburg Central Europe, his experiences in the Spanish Civil War and Mexican exile, as well as his membership in the international Communist movement and in the antifascist fight, made him familiar with the transnational and global practices and perspectives of socialism. As a consequence, Valiani firmly believed in the possibilities of liberal socialism refashioned in terms of the democratic revolution. In this regard, the real, dramatic experiences of the Second World War and of the Italian "Civil War" in 1943-1945 made Valiani's language more similar to Lenin's than to Gladstone's.

Revolution, civil war, and barbarism

Just after the fall of Mussolini's regime, in the summer of 1943, Valiani came back from Mexico to Italy and became one of the leaders of the "Partito d'Azione". This was a completely new political organisation, founded clandestinely by some liberal democrats such as Ugo La Malfa and Adolfo Tino in 1942. However, after the fall of Mussolini's regime in July 1943, socialists from "Giustizia e Libertà" such as Lussu, Venturi, Garosci (alongside Silvio Trentin and Vittorio Foa), were embedded within the "Partito d'Azione". Valiani hoped for the democratic revolution when the civil war broke out and intertwined with the international war between the German army and the Anglo-American one along the Italian peninsula in the fall of 1943. He sided with the socialist currents still linked to the inheritance of "Giustizia e Libertà", in contrast with the liberal-democratic currents. In this period he re-

21 HALÉVY, *L'ère des tyrannies*, 247.

defined himself as a former member of "Giustizia e Libertà".²²

Valiani wrote extensively during the wartime when he was engaged in the Resistance. Between 1943 and 1944 he published a number of essays in *Quaderni dell'Italia libera* and *Nuovi Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*. He kept on thinking about the problems he had confronted in the *Storia del socialismo nel secolo 20.*, but the different and more dramatic context of civil war shaped his reflections in new ways, emphasising the problem of violence. His "Note sulla rivoluzione democratica", published in *Nuovi Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* in May-June of 1944, was particularly interesting in this respect.

His conception was deeply rooted in a clear understanding of the "new kind of ideological war" which was the Second World War. The target of the conflict was the "unification of Europe" according to different and even opposed perspectives and methods: Nazi Germany had brought about "a European revolution" which represented a watershed all over the continent, from Paris to Moscow. Nevertheless, the increasingly likely catastrophic outcome of the new Nazi order might pave the way for a completely opposite revolution - a libertarian and federalist revolution. The "Partito d'Azione" had to carry out "the war of the popular vanguards" against Fascism and its collaborators, leading to the "creation of organs of mass self-government". This was the "democratic revolution" in the making. However, the possibility of transforming the action of the popular masses into new institutions depended on the context of the "global civil war".²³

Almost simultaneously, an essay published in *Quaderni dell'Italia libera* in 1944 and entitled "Il movimento operaio nella seconda guerra mondiale", shed some light on the possible means of this revolution. Valiani explained: "Barbarism has broken the bounds. Those who are still civil men must become barbarians themselves in order to fight barbarism to death and must thus drive the clarifying total war, rather than trying to avoid it, otherwise they must retire on the Aventine Mountain, providing gifts to the barbarians in order to be left in peace".²⁴ In this passage, Valiani implicitly referred to a well-known concept of Marx, according to whom it was necessary to fight "medieval barbarism" by "revolutionary barbarism". This precept, quite common in the Trotskyist movement when it was still close to Stalin, provided a clear justification for mass violence and total civil war.²⁵ Additionally, the use of historical analogy with the First World War turned out to be important, in order to grasp the possible development of the Second World War, which was not understandable

22 As for Valiani's role and positions in the "Partito d'Azione", see Giovanni DE LUNA, *Il Partito d'Azione*, 2nd edition, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1997.

23 FEDERICO [Leo Valiani], "Note sulla rivoluzione democratica", *Nuovi Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, May-June 1 (1944) 26-43.

24 FEDERICO [Leo Valiani], "Il movimento operaio nella seconda guerra mondiale", *Quaderni dell'Italia libera*, 33 (1944) 1-36.

25 See Andrea GRAZIOSI, *L'URSS di Lenin e Stalin. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1914-1945*, Bologna: Il Mulino 2007, 91-92. The problem of barbarism in connection with the problem of civil war has been focused on by Stathis KALYVAS, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2006, 52-86.

within the Marxist deterministic framework. According to Valiani, in 1917 the revolutionary break of masses "in which a barbarian regime had more and more tried to become barbarian", had brought about "an unexpected way out of the chaos".²⁶ "A nominally socialist order had been implemented, just where and when it seemed most unlikely to be implemented".²⁷

This kind of language had been quite unusual within "Giustizia e Libertà", and it was still so within the "Partito d'Azione". An exception had been embodied by the late Carlo Rosselli, when he highly radicalised his political position during the Spanish Civil War. In May of 1937, a few weeks before his murder, he said that it was "useless to invoke a polite fight" "during a cruel epoch". It was necessary "to fight" to "win", and "even only to survive". He argued that "the new society, like the creature, was born out of grief": "the transition to a superior stage of coexistence could happen just after having touched the bottom of degradation in everything".²⁸

Beginning in late 1935, with the preparation and the attack of Fascist Italy on Ethiopia, and more intensively from mid-1936, from the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Rosselli promoted a radical shift of the political perspective of "Giustizia e Libertà". In his last dialogue with Emilio Lussu, in late May 1937, Rosselli said that he would change the title of his book *Socialismo liberale*, published in exile in Paris in 1930, into *Comunismo liberale*.²⁹ This is the sort of ideological hybridisation which probably appealed to Valiani. It is thus not so surprising that in a letter to Umberto Calosso, in 1942 Garosci defined Valiani as a "liberal communist".³⁰ As Valiani said in his autobiographical memoir, *Tutte le strade conducono a Roma*, published in 1947: "What fascinated me in "Giustizia e Libertà", was its intellectual originality, its attempt at reconciling, in a higher synthesis, Marxism and the working-class movement with the great liberal philosophy of the nineteenth century".³¹ Later, in 1958, in his work *Questioni di storia del socialismo*, Valiani introduced a retrospective personal reflection. He explained that his "studies" had determined "the evolution of [his] own political ideas" even more than the other way around. The "antifascist conspiracy" had led him to "an extreme revolutionary tension, even in intellectual activity", but then he changed his mind thanks to the "current of Italian liberal socialism" alongside "the works of

26 FEDERICO [Leo Valiani], "Il movimento operaio nella seconda guerra mondiale", *Quaderni dell'Italia libera*, 1944.

27 Ibid.

28 CURZIO [Carlo Rosselli], *Primo Maggio*, "Giustizia e Libertà", April 30th, 1937, in Carlo ROSSELLI, *Scritti dell'esilio. II. Dallo scioglimento della Concentrazione antifascista alla guerra di Spagna (1934-1937)*, Torino: Einaudi, 1992, 512.

29 Emilio LUSSU, *Sul Partito d'Azione e gli altri*, Milano: Mursia, 1968, 38.

30 Letter of Aldo Garosci to Umberto Calosso, 1942, in TORTAROLO, *Leo Valiani: storia e politica*, 167.

31 Leo VALIANI, *Tutte le strade conducono a Roma: diario di un uomo nella guerra di un popolo*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995, 83. The autobiographical account of Valiani's participation in the Resistance, originally published in 1947, contained some forms of willingness, if not indulgence towards antifascist terrorism; in a new edition of 1983, these sentences were revised and corrected: see Luciano CANFORA, *La sentenza. Concetto Marchesi e Giovanni Gentile*, Palermo: Sellerio, 2005, 242-245.

the Western historians of the radical and Socialist ideas, such as Elie Halévy". He had "gradually deduced the conception of the history of contemporary socialism as a process which, after a violent egalitarian achievement at the beginning, [was] often unconsciously becoming an impulse of renewal of economic and social life".³²

As we have seen, when Valiani began to deal with the history of the European socialism in the early 1940s, he drew on Halévy's complex historical conception of socialism as being torn apart by deep contradictions between trends to authoritarian organisation and libertarian emancipation in the "era of tyrannies". As a consequence, he attempted to create an original synthesis between communism and liberalism. Afterwards, his ongoing reflection on Rosselli's legacy, alongside the liberal theoreticians of the Welfare state (from John M. Keynes to William Beveridge), contributed to clarifying the complex relations between liberalism and socialism. In the late 1950s, when the post-war reconstruction was transforming into a new period of affluence, Valiani had come to terms with the primacy of politics, legitimizing an integral revolutionary voluntarism. His political faith in liberal socialism was now converted to a social democratic perspective, prepared to overcome the major conflicts of the first half of the century.

In conclusion, the case study of Valiani demonstrates that European antifascism, far from being a unitary and coherent political and ideological phenomenon, as it was claimed in the post-1945 decades, was marked by deep dilemmas regarding the meanings of communism and socialism, democracy, liberalism, and revolution. The means and the scope of the fight against Mussolini's and Hitler's regimes, as well as the attitudes towards Stalin's regime were subject to different interpretations, tightly linked to the urgent need for action, within dramatic and continuously changing contexts. Valiani's exit from communism, officially following the signing of the pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union in 1939, reflected a gradual, difficult, and contradictory ideological shift in the period immediately before and throughout the Second World War. His perspective of the "democratic revolution" was in no way the inevitable outcome of his previous path through communism, but it was deeply connected to the European and Italian "Civil War" of 1943-1945. After 1945, when new institutions of constitutional democracy were built and the nation-states were restored in Western Europe, the meanings and implications of interwar and wartime political and intellectual experiments slowly, but completely changed, once again. The complex and contradictory legacies of "Giustizia e Libertà", radically re-thought in the post-war context, induced Valiani's political perspective to shift from the ideological and militant struggle for "democratic revolution" to the everyday institutional and cultural experience of democracy.

³² Leo VALIANI, *Questioni di storia del socialismo* 2nd edition, Torino: Einaudi, 1975, 22-23.

Sažetak

POTRAGA ZA NOVOM REVOLUCIJOM: LEO VALIANI I OSTAVŠTINA "GIUSTIZIA E LIBERTÀ"

Marco BRESCIANI

Ovaj rad bavi se dvjema relevantnim problemima u intelektualnoj povijesti Europe u 20. stoljeću: 1) veza između socijalizma, antifašizma i antitotalitarizma; 2) mogućnosti demokratske revolucije usred Drugog svjetskog rata. Kako bi se oni mogli analizirati, rad će se usmjeriti na biografiju Lea Valianija te njegovu misao između 1939. i 1944., kada napušta Komunističku partiju kako bi postao važni akter u Stranci akcije (Partito d'Azione). Posebna pažnja posvetit će se načinima na koje je Valianijev antitotalitaran i revolucionarni socijalizam povezan sa kompleksnim nasljeđem talijanske antifašističke grupacije "Giustizia e Libertà".