

# THE LANGUAGES OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS: SOME DESCRIPTIVE REMARKS (1921-1964)

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## **I. Totalitarian Language?**

The concept of ‘political language’ is extremely complex. Recently, the *Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics* explored the extraordinary richness of the problem, and updated us on the connection between the two fields.<sup>1</sup> Since political language is a set of forms of expression and communication typical of the political sphere, it is clear how many the variables of such a language might be. We must consider the diversity of the actors, the different places and circumstances of communication, as well as the means of communication itself: speeches, writings, images, gestures. The analysis of political language is particularly difficult, when dealing with the languages of communism.

The ‘communism’ referred to in this essay is a firmly structured political culture, with a massive presence in the twentieth century, divided into three different areas. First, it was a political ideology born from Marxism and forged by Lenin and Stalin in the processes of the formation of Bolshevism and Stalinism. Secondly, it was a long-standing social and economic model established in the Soviet Union and subsequently extended to countries with a communist regime. Lastly, it represented an international system

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<sup>1</sup> *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Bernhard Forchtner (London; New York: Routledge, 2018).

of communist parties often endowed with national roots but uniformed in a common Leninist culture, at least until the late 1960s and in many cases even beyond. The combination of these three elements can vary in time and space but in substance the communism referred to here cannot be separated from any of them.

This study focuses specifically on the language of Italian communists from the foundation of their party in 1921 to the death of Palmiro Togliatti, the party's main leader, in 1964. But the chronology is purely indicative: the research also examines texts and references prior to 1921 and after 1964. The language of the Italian Communists is very rich; the party emerged and developed in an environment of extreme social conflicts in which communication played a decisive role. As a means of communication aimed at recruitment and activism, called Agitation and Propaganda (hence the term *AgitProp*), it expressed itself in the different time periods of the party through a wide range of media: newspapers, magazines, illegal leaflets, rallies, organizational meetings, posters, images, gestures, songs, and collective protest actions.

My analysis, however, relies mainly on texts. First the writings of Togliatti, from the period 1919-1964, as well as some speeches, transcribed lessons, and letters published in two recent anthologies.<sup>2</sup> The availability of other texts in digital format also made the creation of a *corpus* possible: to those of Togliatti were added the political writings of Antonio Gramsci (1910-1926), then the anthology of the periodical *Quaderno dell'attivista* (1946-1954), and finally the texts of greetings sent by the Italian Communist Party (ICP) to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversaries of the October Revolution.<sup>3</sup> The *corpus* reaches 8 million and 688 thousand characters, contains over a million words (also recurring: *tokens*) and just under forty thousand different words (*types*). I have analyzed the texts from different points of view: corpus statistics, cultural analysis of political discourse, political rhetoric, and some aspects of the lexical dimension.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto and Giuseppe Vacca (Milano: Bompiani, 2014); Palmiro Togliatti, *La guerra di posizione in Italia. Epistolario 1944-1964*, ed. by Gianluca Fiocco and Maria Luisa Righi, introduction by Giuseppe Vacca (Torino: Einaudi, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Scritti politici I, Scritti politici II, Scritti politici III*, in <https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-g/antonio-gramsci/>, last accessed on 2 May 2019; the anthology *Il Quaderno dell'attivista. Ideologia, organizzazione e propaganda del PCI degli anni Cinquanta*, ed. by Marcello Flores (Milano: Mazzotta, 1976), and the texts of the greetings to the CPSU have been digitalized by the author.

<sup>4</sup> The texts have been reduced to TXT files. Statistical elaborations, concordances, word lists, tables, were made using the many features of the software *WordSmith Tools 7.0.0.126* by M. Scott; see here: <http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/downloads/>, last accessed on 2 May 2019. Seminal starting points, in this field, were Régine Robin, "Langage et ideologies", *Le Mouvement Social*, 85 (1973): 3-11, and Madeleine Réberieux, "Note de lecture de Régine Robin, Histoire et Linguistique", *Le Mouvement Social*, 85 (1973):

After the October Revolution, the language of international social democracy – which had been the dominant political language in public spaces during the preceding quarter century – faded. In its place, the language of communism became one of the world's most important political languages. At the same time, the language of fascism, with different rhythms and in different areas, experienced a strong growth. In the 'short century', words, communication techniques and propaganda were far more intertwined with political rites than in the previous century. These ideologies conquered large parts of the world not only to transform State machines and economies, but also to influence minds and create and consolidate consensus. Myths, symbols, public liturgies became part of everyday life. Clothing and gestures became elements of belonging; the color of the shirts and the movement of the hands and arms distinguished and often connected groups, associations and parties. These languages in their expressive complexity, were transformed into elements of identity.

At the same time, the expansion of mass communication techniques developed during World War I, created the foundations of modern propaganda. In the written and spoken languages many changes took place. In the climate of the 'European civil war', opposing but similar languages were created, jargons defined by political belonging and by contiguity with the propaganda: the Newspeak of Orwell or, according to a later expression, the *langue de bois*.<sup>5</sup> The totalitarian States attempted policies of linguistic engineering. In iconography and more generally in the visual arts both Nazism and Fascism, producers of grandiose artifacts, and Soviet socialist realism, sought to orientate the tastes of the public and to direct artistic production.<sup>6</sup>

A way to define all of these experiences is that of 'totalitarian language'. It is a language with a strong oratory vocation and an explicitly declamatory character, a triumphalistic and ideological language, repetitive and abstract. Moreover, a Manichean language typical of the parties in power and affirmed by the ministries is responsible for culture and propaganda both in Hitler's Germany and in the Communist countries.<sup>7</sup> The question of 'totalitarian languages' is very complex and therefore some clarifications and distinctions are necessary. First, we need to ask a question regarding the *history*

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155-157. See also Francesca Santulli, *Le parole del potere, il potere delle parole. Retorica e discorso politico* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> See the special issue of *Hermès*, "Les langues de bois", ed. by Joanna Nowicki, Michaël Oustinoff, and Anne-Marie Chartier, supervised by Bernard Valade, 58 (2010).

<sup>6</sup> See Franco Andreucci, "Dream Factory Communism. Il destino dei simboli e l'iconografia del potere", *Contemporanea*, 3 (2004): 505-515.

<sup>7</sup> See *Legacies of Totalitarian Language in the Discourse Culture of the Post-totalitarian Era*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Lanham: Lexington, 2011); and, especially, *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

of totalitarian language: what relationship is there in their genesis, between the Nazi language (the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*)<sup>8</sup> and the Stalinist *langue de bois*, that is two similar languages experimented by two different totalitarian systems? In other words, does totalitarian language correspond to expressive and communicative modalities typical of totalitarian systems (characterized by a single party, a charismatic leader, an official doctrine, political police and mass media) which were ‘invented’ and implemented by *Minculpops*, or does it constitute the point of arrival of a pre-existing language, only adapted to the new conditions? I agree with the implicit thesis present in the diaries of Victor Klemperer and thus favor the second hypothesis. The harshness, the radicalisms, the ideological accentuations, the fanaticism, typical of totalitarian language, have their roots both in the long formation of Leninism, and in the genetic process of Fascism, between the First World War and the immediate post-war period. The totalitarian systems made popular and systematic the new words and expressions, but their humus is that of war and revolution.

At the same time, the formula of totalitarian language is only one aspect of the complexity of political languages in the ‘age of extremes’. The language of the leaders, for example, is indicative of an extraordinary expressive universe; from Stalin’s language, with its pedagogical simplifications and doctrinal axioms, to the almost academic language of a cultured leader such as Togliatti. According to Michał Głowiński, totalitarian language does not tend to convince, but to indicate a canon of thought to listeners considered as passive; it has no personal character, but has the “impersonal” character of “correctness”; it has a foundation in polarizations and opposing formulations, in the recognition of the difference between ‘us’ and the enemy; it expresses value judgments and builds a certain vision of the world.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of totalitarian language, however, although it is used here as a key analytical tool, does not always work for the problems we are dealing with. Aimed at the role of parties in power, and in the character of public language in totalitarian systems, it risks undervaluing, not only the genetic dimension, but also the ‘party languages’. In fact, clear distinctions are needed between the language of the communists when they are opposition parties and the language of the communists in power. First of all, while the former have only their language, the latter also have – or may have – a linguistic policy, and an orientation that is reflected in administrative decisions, as in China and the Soviet Union. Ji Fengyuan outlined some points about “linguistic engineering” in Mao’s China during the Cultural Revolution and Bernard Comrie on the Russian language

<sup>8</sup> Victor Klemperer, *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, ed. by Elke Fröhlich (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Michał Głowiński, *Totalitarian Speech* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 97-99.

after the October Revolution.<sup>10</sup> But similar considerations can also be made regarding Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the concept of totalitarian language risks underestimating the expressive and linguistic peculiarities of large mass communist parties. In fact, the Italian Communist Party, the French one, and the German one in the Weimar years, which never reached power, all had a very rich cultural history intertwined with the presence of many intellectuals, writers and artists. These intellectuals to a certain extent, participated in the linguistic destinies of their parties and shared party propaganda jargon, but at the same time, from Berthold Brecht in Germany to Louis Aragon in France, to Italo Calvino in Italy, they also cultivated precious literary experiences.

Within this larger framework of communist culture, we will principally study the words of Togliatti and his party. The insistence on the ‘empirical’ character of this essay derives mainly from an awareness of the complexity of language analysis. Accordingly, this research has a loose broad structure, with occasional contributions from other disciplines. It is a history of language and a political history.

## II. The Language of the ICP: *Langue de bois* and the Lexicon of the Movement

The language of the ICP has a history, which includes both its genesis and its continuity. It was conceived in the fiery atmosphere of the Post-World War I period and followed the path indicated by Leninism during the years of the European civil war dominated by the dramatic opposition of fascism and communism. During the Cold War, the ICP developed the language of a party that aspired to power and proudly cultivated its own past. The party disappeared at the end of the 1980s although its rhetoric still survives in some political groups that identify with communism.

The language of the ICP retained the harshness and the evaluative intensity of its genetic moment for a long time: it came from an experience of splitting and breaking with a past where it was used to denounce ‘betrayal’ and ‘opportunism’. The years of the Comintern were crucial in its history. The leadership of the party, as a result of its for-

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<sup>10</sup> Ji Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering. Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Bernard Comrie, Gerald Stone, and Maria Polinsky, *The Russian Language in the Twentieth Century*, second ed. revised and expanded of *The Russian Language Since the Revolution*, ed. by Bernard Comrie and Gerald Stone (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Emilio Gentile, “Fascistese: The Religious dimensions of Political Language in Fascist Italy”, *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 59-82; Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabulär des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1998).

mation and generational characteristics, acquired a language of absolute opposition to fascism with total adherence to the canons of Leninism and Stalinism. The influence of Lenin and Stalin developed along two different chronological and thematic axes: that of Lenin between 1915 and the early 1920s on the themes of the struggle against social democracy, revolutionary violence and the fight against the State; and that of Stalin which was based on the extraordinary amplifying structure of the Communist International and spread the message of the class struggle through incessant propaganda.

The language of the ICP was, at the same time, *langue de bois* and political language. The difference is significant. In the first case it is a jargon, a poor and schematized language typical of internal communication. Luciano Bianciardi described the *langue de bois* of the ICP, when he wrote of “a lexicon, a syntax, a mimicry” used constantly by all the party officials, becoming a shared jargon.<sup>12</sup> Political language, on the other hand, aims to persuade and create a harmonious community, one which wants to share values and judgments.

We first wish to examine communist texts in terms of *lexical density*. It's possible to measure both the total number of full words contained in a text (*tokens*), and the number of words in their uniqueness (*types*).<sup>13</sup> The relationship between the two entities (*types/ tokens*), suitably corrected in order to provide comparable data between texts of different lengths, is the Standardized Type/Token Ratio (STTR) and offers a first indication of lexical density [Fig. 1].

The measurement of the STTR reveals that Gramsci, for instance, had the richest vocabulary, while the greetings from the ICP to the CPSU on the anniversaries of the October Revolution contained the poorest lexicon. Togliatti and the *Quaderno dell'Attivista* are closer to the average. Although some scholars argue that the STTR should be accompanied by other calculations to measure the originality, complexity and lexical richness, the literature recognizes unanimously the STTR as a good criterion of verification. A higher STTR value usually corresponds to a richer and more varied vocabulary and greater lexical density, while a lower value can mean a more repetitive text, and therefore easier to read. From this point of view, Togliatti's language differs slightly from the texts average, while the greetings to the CPSU showed a predictably pronounced lexical poverty.

<sup>12</sup> Luciano Bianciardi, *Il lavoro culturale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1964), 81.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Wetzel, *Types and Tokens: On Abstract Objects* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). In this research, the calculation proposed by WordSmith Tools 7.0 was used: “The standardised type/token ratio (STTR) is computed every *n* words as Wordlist goes through each text file. By default, *n* = 1,000. In other words the ratio is calculated for the first 1,000 running words, then calculated afresh for the next 1,000, and so on to the end of your text or corpus. A running average is computed, which means that you get an average type/token ratio based on consecutive 1,000-word chunks of text”. Cfr. [http://www.lexically.net/downloads/version7/HTML/type\\_token\\_ratio\\_proc.html](http://www.lexically.net/downloads/version7/HTML/type_token_ratio_proc.html), last accessed on 2 May 2019.

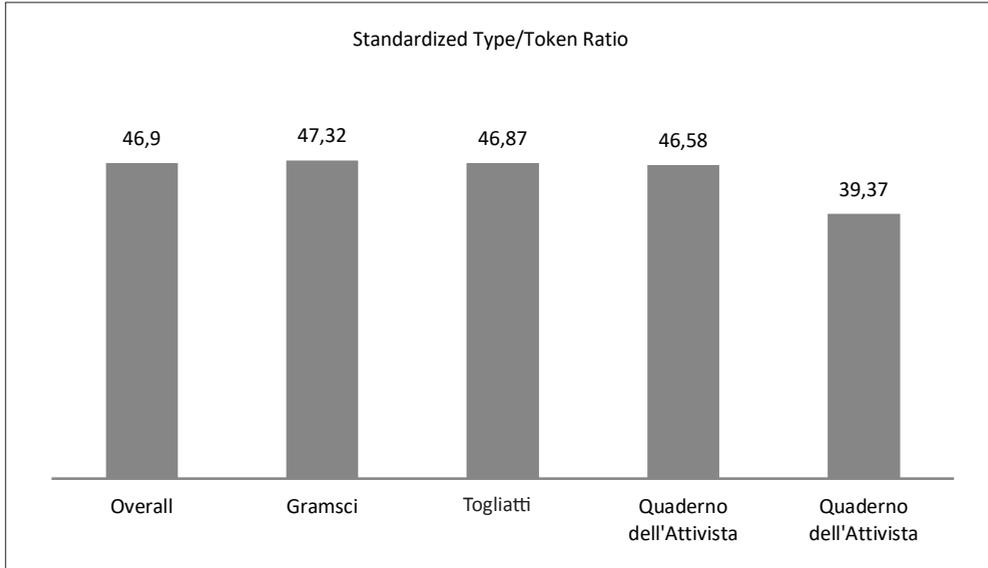


Fig. 1 – Gramsci, Togliatti and the ICP: Standardized Type/Token Ratio

An examination of the frequencies reveals a self-referential vocabulary of an exclusively political-organizational nature [Fig. 2].

The Italian communists inherited this language from Bolshevism, along with a strong vocation towards violence. The outcome of the Russian revolution convinced many revolutionaries in the rest of the world of the necessity of civil war for the realization of their goal. The old regime had to be swept away: the verbs used by Lenin in *State and Revolution* are very significant in this sense: “break”, “demolish”, “shatter”, “make it disappear from the face of the earth”, “blow up”. Indeed, the strong expressions used by Marx in the *Civil War in France* were, if possible, heightened and made even more extreme. Such language went hand-in-hand with the idea that society should be freed from “parasites”, which meant exploiters, and that this liberation had to take place with violence, even with terror. In addition to the bourgeoisie, Lenin identified a second enemy in the Socialist International which had not opposed the war. They were the “renegades”, the “opportunists”, the “traitors”, the “servants” or even the “lackeys” of the bourgeoisie.

WORD	FREQ.	%
PARTY	4,468	0.41
POLITICS	2,928	0.27
CLASS	2,739	0.25
FASCISM	2,401	0.22
STRUGGLE	2,303	0.21
MOVEMENT	2,196	0.20
MASSES	1,875	0.17

**Fig. 2 – Word frequencies in Italian Communist texts**

The young Italian socialists – Gramsci, Togliatti and many others – shared this language and made it their own. Gramsci, in one of his writings in December of 1919, exalts the fierce struggle against the petty bourgeoisie, “barrier of rotting humanity” and the raids against the “putrid and voracious locusts”, against an “abject, servile humanity of assassins and lackeys”.<sup>14</sup> The register was the same one used by Lenin a year before, when he wrote that it was necessary to “clean up the soil of Russia of any harmful insects, of the fleas who were the rascals; of the bugs who were the rich”.<sup>15</sup>

Such language emphasized a vocabulary of zoological abomination and dehumanization that would last for decades. Gustav Noske, a Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) leader was, in the words of Togliatti a “bloody dog”, while Mussolini was a “rabid dog”.<sup>16</sup> The model comes from Lenin, from the war and the revolution: sharks, spiders, leeches were among the most widespread metaphorical forms in that vocabulary.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Gramsci, “Gli avvenimenti del 2-3 dicembre 1919”, *L’Ordine Nuovo* (December 6-3, 1919, *Scritti politici*, vol. 2, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], “How to Organise Competition?”, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 26, September 1917-February 1918 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 404-415.

<sup>16</sup> The first expression is from 1933, see “Sulla situazione tedesca”, *Lo Stato Operaio*, VII, 3 (March 1933), Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri, III, vol. 2 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1973), 178; the second from 1943, see “L’Italia e la guerra contro la Germania hitleriana”, Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Paolo Spriano, IV, vol. 1 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], “Comrade workers, forward to the last, decisive fight”, August 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28, July 1918-March 1919 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 56-57.

WORD	FREQ.	%
REVOLUTION	492	0,31
PROLETARIAT	443	0,28
AGAINST	440	0,28
PARTY	423	0,26
BOURGEOISIE	417	0,26
WAR	414	0,26
BOURGEOIS	409	0,26
STRUGGLE	365	0,23
CLASS	364	0,23
WORKERS	311	0,19
MARX	306	0,19
CAPITAL	275	0,17
MASSES	265	0,17
DEMOCRACY	248	0,16
CAPITALISM	245	0,15
POLITICS	245	0,15

**Fig. 3 – Lenin: Frequencies in 5 texts 1915-1920**

Gramsci and Togliatti began to use the language of Lenin, translated into Italian, a poor and direct language that first proposed the two parameters of violence and organization. On the basis of the five most popular texts by Lenin in the formative years of Gramsci and Togliatti,<sup>18</sup> a series of frequencies confirms this type of language [Fig. 3].

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], “Socialism and War. The Attitude of the R.S.D.L.P. Towards the War”, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 21 August 1914-December 1915 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 295-338; “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. A Popular Outline”, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol 22, December 1916-July 1916 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 185-304; “The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution”, *Collected*

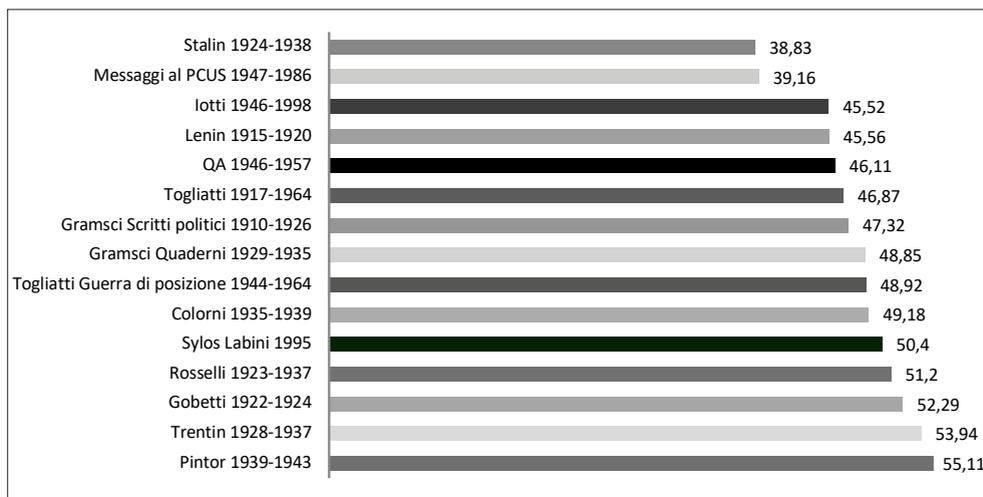


Fig. 4 – STTR in some Communist and Non-Communist texts

It was a relatively poor language, much poorer than other contemporary political languages. For example, some Italian writers who were antifascist, but not communist, show a richer lexicon and a more complex approach to politics. In their texts, there is more interest in ‘the history of men’ and ‘the reality of the world’ than in the ‘party’ organization,<sup>19</sup> as the following comparison clarifies [Fig. 4].

As we have observed, the two models that contributed most to the formation of the language of the ICP, were those of Lenin and Stalin. Between 1915 and 1920, the lexical density in Lenin’s texts (mean STTR 45.46) and those of Stalin (38.83) remained al-

*Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 25, June-September 1917 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 385-539; “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky”, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28, July 1918-March 1919 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 227-325; “‘Left Wing’ Communism – an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 31 April-December 1920 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 17-117.

<sup>19</sup> See the texts by Carlo Rosselli, *Socialismo liberale e altri scritti fra il 1923 e il 1937*, in *LIS, Lessico dell’Italiano scritto*, <http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/link-utili/banche-dati-dellitaliano-scritto-parlato>; by Piero Gobetti, *La rivoluzione liberale e altri scritti fra il 1922 e il 1924*, in *LIS, Lessico dell’Italiano scritto*, <http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/link-utili/banche-dati-dellitaliano-scritto-parlato>; Eugenio Colorni, *Scritti*, [https://www.liberliber.it/mediateca/libri/c/colorni/scritti/pdf/colorni\\_scritti.pdf](https://www.liberliber.it/mediateca/libri/c/colorni/scritti/pdf/colorni_scritti.pdf); Silvio Trentin, *Fascismo e democrazia*, <https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-t/silvio-trentin/fascismo-e-democrazia/>; Giaime Pintor, *Il sangue d’Europa: 1939-1943*, <https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-p/giaime-pintor/il-sangue-deuropa/>; Paolo Sylos Labini, *La crisi italiana*, <https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-s/paolo-sylos-labini/la-crisi-italiana/> (last accessed all the websites on 2 May 2019).

most unchanged. The first fifteen occurrences in the texts confirm the specialization and the narrowness of the vocabulary. The seven most common lemmas are: “State”, “party”, “revolution”, “proletariat”, “against”, “struggle”, “class”.

This language, largely modeled on that of the Communist International, became relatively standardized as a result of the international character of the organization and because of its communicative function between propaganda and party jargon. In the 1930s the language of communism took shape as an homologation of the key words, a universalization of the class lexicon, and an adherence to the discursive canons of Stalinism. Such a multi-functional language tended to produce consent and legitimation (thereby giving it a ritual value). It did so through complex rhetorical forms such as the metaphor but with simplifying argumentative methods together with a wide set of symbols (flags, songs, emblems, meetings).

We can try to penetrate the language of the Italian communists through some passages by examining the vocabulary, style and expressive typology. Let's start with the metaphor, a figure of speech that has strong evocative power and plays an important role in all totalitarian languages. In the communist language the most relevant metaphors come from the semantic fields of the war, disease, the human body, education and sea travel.<sup>20</sup> The organization of the party and its action corresponded to a real militarization of the expressive register: one is “militant” and one is active on a “front”; one “mobilizes” to conduct a “battle” in the context of a “class war”; one is “avant-garde”, one is a “soldier” of the “proletarian army”, etc. Gramsci himself, who criticized the military metaphors applied to the class struggle in 1917,<sup>21</sup> widely used them.

Although these metaphors are common in political language, Lenin's influence is decisive. Leninism, mediated by Stalinism, also provides the class of metaphors that tends to create a hierarchy, in particular that of the “teacher” (Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Gramsci, Togliatti) and of the “disciple” or even of the “school”. According to the *Quaderno dell'attivista*, the ICP was “educated by Gramsci and Togliatti, in the school of Lenin and Stalin”.

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<sup>20</sup> Andreas Musolff, “The Study of Metaphor as Part of Critical Discourse Analysis”, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9, 3 (2012): 301-310; Andreas Musolff, “Maritime Journey Metaphors in British and German Public Discourse: Transport Vessels of International Communication?”, *German as a Foreign Language*, 3 (2000), <http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2000/musolff.pdf>, last accessed on 2 May 2019. For a different class of metaphors, see also: Jonathan Charteris-Black, “Competition Metaphors and Ideology. Life as a Race”, *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Bernhard Forchtner (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 202-217.

<sup>21</sup> A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], “Analogie e metafore”, *Il Grido del Popolo*, XXII, 686 (15 September 1917), in Antonio Gramsci, *La Città futura. 1917-1918*, ed. by Sergio Caprioglio (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 464-466.

The class of seafaring metaphors also creates a hierarchy. Stalin (and after him Mao Zedong) is called the “great helmsman”, the Soviet Union the “beacon” of humanity. In Togliatti the maritime metaphors have a certain role, but only partly in relation to the totalitarian language. “Navigate” is a verb that pertains to the “old politics”, while at the same time “lighthouse” is often an attribute of the “new socialist world”.

Another class of metaphors regards friendship. From Lenin on, the “friends” and the “enemies” populate the communist universe. It is a universe characterized by a Manichean polarization. In addition to the celebration of the “Italo-Soviet” friendship, the *Quaderno dell'attivista* claims that Stalin “was the greatest friend of our freedom”. Togliatti speaks of the “friendship” of the Italian people with other countries, while “friendship” becomes “unshakable” when it is with the Soviet Union.

These ideological metaphors, express systems of values and conceptions of the world. Of these, the naturalistic metaphor of “decomposition” (especially in Gramsci and Togliatti) and “putrefaction” (especially in Lenin and Stalin) is accompanied by ideological judgments on the degree of “maturation” of capitalist society and a series of dehumanizing metaphors. In this case as well, we can introduce a comparative framework that underlines some potentialities of the concept of totalitarianism. Both the Communists and the Nazis largely used dehumanizing metaphors to define the enemy. In her excellent book, Julie Cassiday offers a list of symbolic epithets which the Bolsheviks used to define their enemies:<sup>22</sup> “rotten corpse”, “insects”, “germs”. Anatoly Lunacharsky, for example, called the Revolutionary Socialists “stinking abscesses”, while Lenin, Togliatti and Hitler shared the use of another series of metaphors, concerning infections, sores and parasites.<sup>23</sup>

In the expressive dimension typical of languages aimed at convincing and advocating, communist rhetoric abounds in texts with a strong anaphoric emphasis. From March 1953 onwards, the use of anaphora became more frequent in the public language of the ICP. Emotionally touched by the death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 and the birthday of Togliatti on 26 March, the party at every level expressed its closeness as much to the departed leaders as to the living. Commemorating Stalin during the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Italian Communist Youth Federation, its secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, proclaimed “the solemn commitment” of the young Communists to embrace Stalin’s teaching by repeating the following formula ten times:

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<sup>22</sup> Julie A. Cassiday, *The Enemy On Trial: Early Soviet Courts On Stage and Screen* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Regarding “Parasit” and “parasitär” in the Nazi language, cfr. Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabulär des Nationalsozialismus, ad vocem*.

We take the solemn commitment to be faithful forever to the teachings that the dear and great Stalin has left us.

We take the solemn commitment to cultivate and educate in us those gifts of courage, [...] that Stalin possessed so high.

We take the solemn commitment to study without pause the works of the great masters of socialism, the immortal ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.<sup>24</sup>

While the language linked to the myth of Stalin is well known, the prose accompanying the creation of the myth of Togliatti is much less so. At the end of March 1953, on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of the Communist leader, Antonello Trombadori wielded strong ceremonial praise in front of the Central Committee of the party together with an impressive anaphoric emphasis:

If Gramsci, first Marxist-Leninist of Italy, historically had to be the man of the struggle [...], Togliatti, disciple of Stalin and continuator of Gramsci is the man [...].

If Gramsci, first Marxist and Leninist of Italy was the avenger of the working class [...] Togliatti, continuator of Gramsci and disciple of Stalin is the man [...].

If Gramsci, first Marxist and Leninist of Italy was the man of the consequent critique [...], Togliatti, continuator of Gramsci and disciple of Stalin is the man [...].<sup>25</sup>

In a similar vein, Trombadori went on:

I have known your face from afar, in rallies, in assemblies, in large gatherings of people [...].

I have known your face during the restricted meeting in your office of Secretary-General [...].

I have known your face in the free spacious air of our mountains [...].

I have known your face attacked by evil [...].

I have known your face immediately after the serious surgery [...].<sup>26</sup>

Communist rhetoric linked to the oral expression of the rally and to propaganda had a distinctive character in the anaphora. Togliatti, back in Italy after a long exile, addressed the Neapolitan people with an exemplary repetitive pattern:

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<sup>24</sup> Enrico Berlinguer, "Abbiamo perduto il nostro più grande amico", *Pattuglia*, VIII, 12 (22 March 1953), 5-6.

<sup>25</sup> Antonello Trombadori, "Il volto di Togliatti", *l'Unità* (28 March 1953).

<sup>26</sup> Trombadori, "Il volto di Togliatti".

Look at our Mezzogiorno which needs so many things,  
which needs [...]  
which needs [...]  
which needs [...]  
which needs [...]  
which needs [...].<sup>27</sup>

The complexity of the language of the ICP reflects the coexistence of various expressive tendencies, different narrative forms, and different communicative orientations. The language of the Party was not *Newspeak*, but it did share the canons of Stalinist language until the end of the 50s. It was not, like the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, the language of a mass fanaticism. Nonetheless the propaganda tools of the ICP urged and encouraged radical stances, Manichean distinctions of good and evil, total activism and absolute loyalty. The language of the ICP remained within the Stalinist canon. In the first place, as an ideological language, it required the use of intense evaluative adjectives, dramatic contrasts, and ‘merciless’ struggles. Moreover, it conformed to the international communist movement, where the circulation of words and lemmas formed an integral part of this internationalism. In addition, it experienced, like the subjects of which it was an expression (the party, the movement) and the cultures it represented (Marxism, communism) both the Stalinist radicalization and bureaucratization. Finally, as a tool of agitation and propaganda, the language of the ICP developed following a predictable and uniform rhetoric.

The language of the party deals with a problem of vocabulary, as in the case of “progressive democracy” and the meanings of the adjective “democratic”. At the same time, when the political language is used in closed and self-referential subjects, it becomes a problem of jargon. The “permanent revolution”, the “relative stabilization”, the “united front”, the “popular front”, the “democratic front”, as well as “the Italian way to socialism” are, at most, expressions difficult to understand outside the communist party environment.<sup>28</sup>

The deepest connotations of the language of communism refer to what it had in common with the traditions of the labor movement and socialism, with the addition, not without consequences, of the Soviet and Stalinist experience. It was, first of all, a language which preferred timeless ideals, programs without precise spatial and temporal

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<sup>27</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, “Discorso su Gramsci nei giorni della Liberazione”, speech given at the Teatro San Carlo di Napoli, 29 April 1945, *Scritti su Gramsci*, ed. by Guido Liguori (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2013), 115.

<sup>28</sup> See Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005), 42-54, 190-207.

determinations, such as democracy, socialism and freedom. In this ideological language there was a strong presence of a religious type of vocabulary (Eternal Glory to Stalin, Eternal Glory to Lenin, etc.).<sup>29</sup>

As a language of propaganda, the communist language abounds with slogans and mottos, which added new elements to a pre-existing tradition that went from ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’, to ‘working men of all countries, unite’. These slogans, as Lasswell and Jakobson noted, were authoritative, rich in key political symbols, and widely disseminated. They were the links between the party theorists, decision-makers, party militants and members of society.<sup>30</sup> As a party language, it reflects the dualistic foundation of communist culture based on the alternative between integral association and integral antagonism. The political action was defined by ‘fronts’ which in turn assumed a ‘global’ dimension. As the language of an international organization (the Comintern) and, after its dissolution, of the Soviet ‘system’, it was also the internationalist Esperanto shared by the ICP.

By the end of World War II and the emergence of post-war society, the party language already appeared solidly established. Formulas, stylistic elements and adjectives had grown up with Stalinism, and the ICP frequently appealed to that expressive heritage. The masses were always *broad*; the party’s struggle was *consequential*; its enemies had to be *unmasked*; the unity of the party was *full and unreserved*; the working class always taught *severe lessons* to its adversaries, while Leninism was, inevitably, the *flag of the struggle* of the working class.

An interesting and scarcely used source, the greetings sent by the ICP to the CPSU on the anniversary of the October Revolution, reveal similar patterns. These greetings constitute an incomplete corpus over a much longer period, between 1947 and 1986. Even though these messages were probably sent every year, the Communist newspaper published only 23 of them. After 1987, during the *perestroika*, greeting messages were no longer published by *l’Unità* and, probably, not even sent. The 23 messages always have the same sender and the same recipient (respectively the Central Committee of the ICP and the Central Committee of the CPSU), but have different characters and content. Their substance changes over time, and reflects the changes in the internal relations within the communist world. The greetings have, among their basic characteristics, a certain routine and predictability of form and content. In most cases, it is a communication between two subjects and, especially on the occasion of various

<sup>29</sup> Hans H. Reich, *Sprache und Politik. Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz des offiziellen Sprachgebrauchs der DDR* (München: Max Heueber Verlag, 1968), 253.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Visioni del comunismo. Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites e Bertram Wolfe fra politica e scienze sociali*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Andrea Mariuzzo (Milano: L’ornitorinco, 2010).

celebrations, verifies and measures mutual relations.<sup>31</sup> Greetings are almost always expressions or texts that respect strict formal norms. This may suggest on the one hand a certain textual poverty but on the other hand it was precisely the repetitive and ceremonial character of these greetings which could illuminate some aspects of mentalities and ideologies.

Considering the texts in their entirety, in a synchronic dimension, the higher frequencies are those of “party” (103), “peoples” (99), and “peace” (80). Terms of conflict, however, such as “force” (72), “struggle” (62), “revolution” (48) follow closely behind. The communist language is articulated around the party, the working class, the masses. The language employed presupposes and postulates organization and has a strong vocation to forms of rejection and opposition, such as those expressed by the preposition “against”. It defines a multiple enemy: imperialists, warmongers, bestial exploitation, tyranny, fascism, revisionism, but also “reactionary social democracy”: it is an ideologic and predictable language.

As universal messages, the texts recall the “peoples” and the “world”, but “Europe” is only mentioned in 1970. At the same time, within the lexical units, the context reveals a series of significant shifting of accent: the “peoples” of 1947, 1948, 1949 and later, until 1964, were “peoples” that the Soviet Union had saved from slavery and exploitation. These “peoples” were the object of a liberating action by the Soviet Union that had already happened. After 1965, the “peoples” became active and, even in the context of an era open from the October revolution that continued to dominate “the past, the present and the future”, they were sovereign agents in their own right. Beginning in the ’70s the “peoples” emerged as full actors of the political scene: “the peoples of Europe” bearers of special responsibilities, “Arab peoples”, “peoples who fought against imperialism” protagonists of an array of forces always led by the Soviet Union. “Peaceful coexistence” appears thirteen times and, like “imperialism”, is no longer used after 1975: two of the most relevant concepts of communist political culture leave without a word of farewell.

As in other cases, the party employs a self-referential vocabulary of a stable discourse characterized by “an evolution of the lexical universe in which the constant elements of the communist vocabulary move around”.<sup>32</sup> The changes, even relevant, develop slowly and hesitantly. Before the Soviet Union became a simple reference of international politics in 1986, the shift of emphasis is almost imperceptible. As late

<sup>31</sup> Alessandro Duranti, “Universal and Culture-Specific Properties of Greetings”, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 7, 1 (1997): 63-97. See also Paul Chilton, “Politeness, Politics and Diplomacy”, *Discourse & Society*, 1, 2 (1990): 201-224.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Benoît, “Le lexique communiste (1932-1946). Description d’une évolution”, *Mots*, III, 3 (1981): pp. 65-78.

as 1980, the message to the Soviet party is ‘warm’ and acknowledges the October revolution as the ‘fundamental stage’ in the liberation of humanity. From 1981, however, we see a progressive detachment of the ICP from the ideology of proletarian internationalism.

Compared to the years of the Communist International, with its language of oppositions and justifying arguments, the communist lexicon is more balanced in Italy after 1945. By the beginning of the 1980s, this lexicon assumes the character of an autonomous language, although its core remains that of communist linguistic identity. Above all, there are pairs of stereotypical words, characteristic of a ritual rhetoric based on repetitions. Nouns and adjectives are organized in a standardized sequence in the ceremonial form of propaganda messages [Fig. 5].

George Orwell’s observations on the ritual language of Communism, remain of extraordinary value here. He spoke of a “style of ceremony”, full of stereotypical expressions:

Napoleon was now never spoken of simply as “Napoleon”. He was always referred to in formal style as “our Leader, Comrade Napoleon”, and the pigs liked to invent for him such titles as Father of All Animals, Terror of Mankind, [...] and the like.<sup>33</sup>

Even the formal language of the messages of the ICP has a notable ceremonial component. It is a language that mainly looks within the party, prefers evaluative formulations along the friend/foe axis, is strongly marked by the terminology of the movement, and defines a collective identity. The identification mechanisms in the party and the formalization of language increasingly become the standard expression of a community. If the use of the personal pronoun and the possessive are signs of the role of individuals in political movements,<sup>34</sup> consider that in the political writings of Gramsci, until 1926, the relationship between the use of “our” and “my” is to the advantage of “our” for 5.7 times while in the political writings of Togliatti, until 1964, “our” is more used than “my” for 24.6 times. The expression “our party” replaces the personal pronoun in many writings of Togliatti and the Communist leaders. The party had become over time a strong and compact community and its linguistic identity shared the contradictions between the “negative integration” and the rich cultural exchanges with the society which surround-

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<sup>33</sup> George Orwell, *Animal farm*, illustrated by Joy Batchelor and John Halas (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1954), 102.

<sup>34</sup> The theme was frequently emphasized by Paola Desideri, *Teoria e prassi del discorso politico. Strategie persuasive e percorsi comunicativi* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984). See also Anna de Fina, “Pronominal choice. Identity and Solidarity in Political Discourse”, *Text. Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 15, 3 (1995): 379-410.

ed it.<sup>35</sup> The sophistication of the cultural journals of the party co-existed with the poverty of the language of propaganda, and the vocabulary of the leadership followed this same double track of poverty and richness.

1947	<i>commosso saluto</i> (emotional greeting), <i>baluardo invincibile</i> (invincible bulwark), <i>guida sapiente</i> (wise leadership), <i>forza imbattibile</i> (unbeatable strength), <i>grande capo</i> (great leader)
1948	<i>lotta instancabile</i> (tireless struggle), <i>grande amicizia</i> (great friendship), <i>lotta comune</i> (common struggle), <i>guida eroica</i> (heroic leadership), <i>grande rivoluzione</i> (great revolution)
1949	<i>saluto entusiastico</i> (enthusiastic greeting), <i>gloriosa rivoluzione</i> (glorious revolution), <i>sfruttamento bestiale</i> (bestial exploitation)
1954	<i>gloriosa rivoluzione</i> (glorious revolution), <i>contraddizioni profonde</i> (profound contradictions), <i>esempio luminoso</i> (luminous example), <i>bandiera invincibile</i> (invincible flag)
1957	<i>profonda commozione</i> (deep emotion), <i>conquiste storiche</i> (historical conquests), <i>potente movimento</i> (powerful movement), <i>guida rivoluzionaria</i> (revolutionary leadership)
1959	<i>fraterno saluto</i> (fraternal greeting), <i>grandiosi successi</i> (grandiose successes), <i>ardite iniziative</i> (daring initiatives), <i>glorioso anniversario</i> (glorious anniversary)
1962	<i>serena fermezza</i> (serene determination), <i>tempestiva azione</i> (timely action), <i>società nuova</i> (new society), <i>vittoriosi progressi</i> (victorious progress)
1963	<i>battaglia coerente</i> (coherent battle), <i>impetuoso movimento</i> (impetuous movement), <i>forza liberatrice</i> (liberating force), <i>valore universale</i> (universal value)
1964	<i>decisiva svolta</i> (decisive turning point), <i>grande simpatia</i> (great sympathy), <i>contributo irreversibile</i> (irreversible contribution), <i>valore universale</i> (universal value)
1965	<i>opera immane</i> (immense endeavor), <i>spinta aggressiva</i> (aggressive push), <i>coesistenza pacifica</i> (peaceful coexistence), <i>concezione rivoluzionaria</i> (revolutionary conception)
1968	<i>grande vittoria</i> (great victory), <i>eroica resistenza</i> (heroic resistance), <i>tappa nuova</i> (new stage), <i>nuovi successi</i> (new successes), <i>interesse comune</i> (common interest)
1970	<i>saluto fraterno</i> (fraternal greeting), <i>valore storico</i> (historical value), <i>rinnovato impegno</i> (renewed commitment), <i>reciproca autonomia</i> (reciprocal autonomy)

**Fig. 5 – Stereotypical pairs of words in the greetings from the ICP to the CPSU 1947-1970**

<sup>35</sup> See Günther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: a Study in Working-class Isolation and National Integration*, preface by Reinhard Bendix (Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1963).

### III. Some Observations on the Language of Togliatti

There are few studies on Togliatti's language, as Benedetta Baldi, co-author with Lodovico Franco acknowledges in their most recent work.<sup>36</sup> Baldi underlines the Manichean character of Togliatti's communist discourse in her description of the complex rhetoric of his speech in Modena commemorating the massacre of January 1950. Riccardo Gualdo, in an essay on political language in 2009, speaks about Togliatti's rhetoric as,

Calm but solemn in the repertoire of classical, literary and even religious quotations [with] argumentative techniques of forensic matrix [...] The architecture of its texts is firmly structured, attentive to the *dispositio* rather than to the *exornatio*; the style is lucid and sharp, didactic even in the scientific use of the lexicon.<sup>37</sup>

Giuseppe Antonelli instead, emphasizes the parataxis as the price paid by Togliatti to spoken Italian.<sup>38</sup> Ivano Paccagnella, in an interesting study on Togliatti's speeches at the Comintern's executive in 1926, points out the "legalistic" character of Togliatti's language and at the same time identifies some aspects of his rhetoric: a coherent logical reasoning, "anaphoric series of rhetorical questions with a forced response and an accentuation of the climax", "assuming antithetical positions in order to demonstrate their groundlessness" and a "calibrated use of the invective".<sup>39</sup> Finally, Enrico Paradisi underlines the large presence of adversatives to highlight the dialectical discursive modality (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) typical of Togliatti but also of other members of the communist leadership.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Benedetta Baldi and Ludovico Franco, "Pratiche di (de)legittimazione a confronto nei discorsi di Benito Mussolini e Palmiro Togliatti", *La delegittimazione politica nell'età contemporanea*, vol. 2, *Parole nemiche: teorie, pratiche e linguaggi*, ed. by Benedetta Baldi (Roma: Viella, 2017), 171-208. Similar remarks in Michele A. Cortelazzo, *Palmiro Togliatti: l'architetto dello schema logico*, [http://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua\\_italiana/speciali/PCI/Cortelazzo.html](http://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/speciali/PCI/Cortelazzo.html), last accessed on 2 May 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Riccardo Gualdo, "Il linguaggio politico", *Lingua e identità. Una storia sociale dell'italiano*, ed. by Pietro Trifone (Roma: Carocci, 2009), 235-262.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. Giuseppe Antonelli, "Italiano degli umili, italiano dei potenti", *La lingua nella storia d'Italia*, ed. by Luca Serianni (Roma: Società Dante Alighieri, 2002), 547-564.

<sup>39</sup> Ivano Paccagnella, "Retorica politica: gli interventi di Togliatti all'Internazionale nel 1926", *Attualità della retorica. Atti del I Convegno italo-tedesco (Bressanone, 1973)*, ed. by Rudolph Baehr *et al.* (Padova: Liviana, 1975), 169-186.

<sup>40</sup> Enrico Paradisi, "Il discorso comunista del secondo dopoguerra", *La Lingua italiana in movimento. Incontri del Centro di studi di grammatica italiana: Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 26 febbraio-4 giugno 1982* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 1982), 195-216.

All of these studies reflect the influence of Concetto Marchesi, author of an article of fervent praise of Togliatti in September 1948:

His oratory is classical, having a non-rhetorical but dialectical structure: in his eloquence the elements of ethos prevail over those of pathos; one can say of his rhetoric what has been said of the eloquence of Gaius Gracchus, who has the pallor, not the blush of indignation. [...] Togliatti is the master of that political eloquence that represents the perfect antithesis of the old comitial oratory which tends to make listeners a mass of reasoners rather than acclaimers.<sup>41</sup>

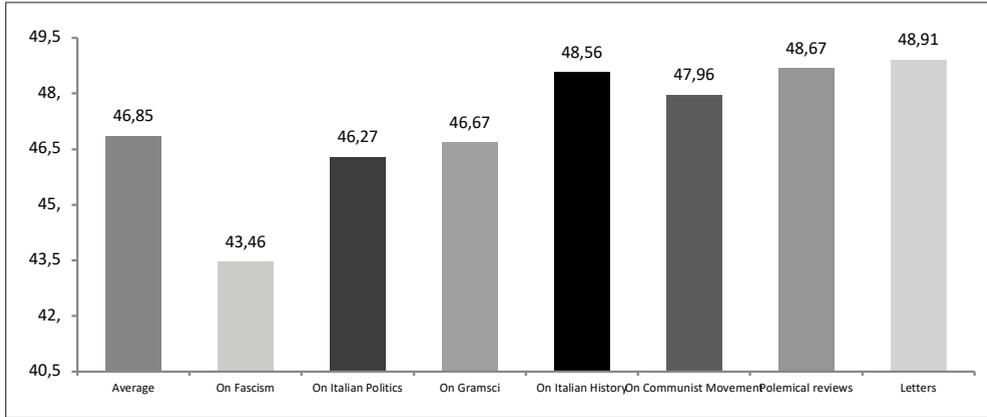
As a friend and great admirer of Togliatti and a leader himself of the ICP Marchesi is not necessarily an independent or trustworthy source. However, he captures at least a part of the truth. In fact, during the years of the affirmation of the ICP in post-1945 Italy, a widespread and shared esteem of the culture and language of Togliatti developed. He was capable of erudite quotations and scholarly discussions on the same level as the great intellectuals of his time – such as Benedetto Croce. The communist leader was a serious reader of the classics (Greek and Latin Literature, Italian and European literature, and the classics of philosophy, economics and political thought), and one of post-war Italy's most educated politicians. Even when his opinions were imbued with political poison – as in the controversies with Elio Vittorini, Massimo Mila, André Gide or Ignazio Silone – they reflected the learned language of twentieth century intellectuals. His speeches to the Constituent Assembly (1947) were among the most vivid examples of parliamentary rhetoric, while their logic and form were lucid and elegant. Togliatti employed a sophisticated language of university origin and journalistic intonation, influenced by literature. It was, and remains, a written language.

In the anthology *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione* by Togliatti, which constitutes the documentary base of this research,<sup>42</sup> the texts are arranged in six thematic sections: 1) Fascism, 2) Italy after 1945, 3) Gramsci, 4) The history of Italy, 5) The ICP and the Communist International, and 6) Polemical notes and reviews. The analysis of the texts in this order has a relevant limitation: the thematic sections include writings of different periods and of various genre, making the comparison impossible on a diachronic level [Fig. 6].

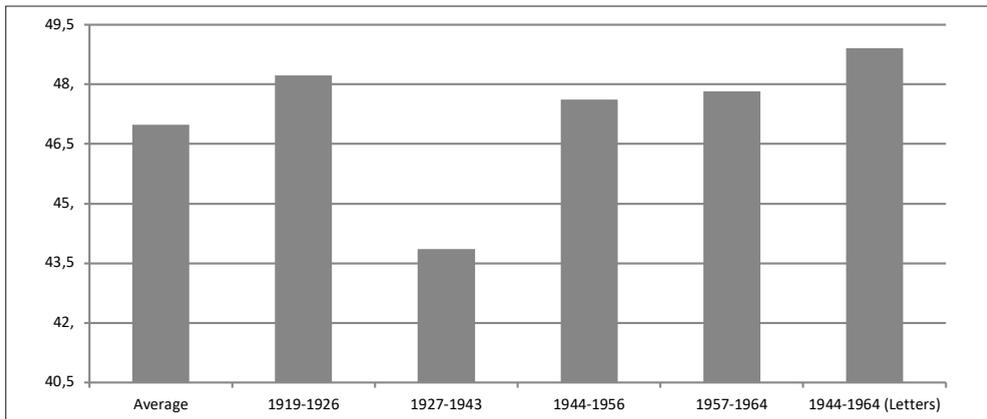
The writings on fascism have the poorest STTR, while those on the history of Italy, the polemic notes and the letters have the richest one. The first group includes texts between 1922 and 1941 with an exclusive party content, while the others have different characters and audiences. In fact, a chronological arrangement of the same texts would

<sup>41</sup> Concetto Marchesi, "Togliatti uomo di cultura e oratore", *l'Unità* (19 September 1948).

<sup>42</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*.



**Fig. 6 – STTR in Togliatti's texts according to the thematic order**



**Fig. 7 – STTR in Togliatti's texts according to the chronological order**

offer a much wider field of analysis showing the differences between one biographical period and another. The chronological partition I'm proposing here corresponds to relatively homogeneous periods in the life of Togliatti: 1) 1916-1926, when he was a journalist and experienced the first phases of his political career, 2) 1927-1943, when he was at the head of the party and in the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 3) 1943-1956, when he contributed to the construction of the ICP in postwar Italy and finally 4) 1956-1964 when his political activity as the leader of the ICP was dedicated to create a less Stalinist party after the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU [Fig. 7].

Togliatti's language has a certain initial richness, when he was a journalist with *Il Grido del Popolo* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, and his readings and the skills acquired during the years of his university studies translate into lively, rich, documented writings. The academic archaisms typical of his style in those years remain a part of Togliatti's prose. After 1927, during the period of Stalinist repressions and of the *langue de bois* of the Communist International, his vocabulary became severely contracted. Indeed, Togliatti paid a high price because of the simplification and the barbarization of the lexicon in the years between 1927 and 1943, and it became impossible for him to resume the richness of the previous years.

In the field of frequencies, Togliatti's language overlaps with the language of the ICP, and is articulated around the words of the party and of the movement [Fig. 8].

**Fig. 8 – Frequencies in Togliatti's texts**

	<b>1919-1926</b>	<b>1927-1943</b>	<b>1944-1956</b>	<b>1957-1964</b>	<b>1944-1964 (Letters)</b>
1	STATO (STATE)	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	LORO (THEY/ THEIR)	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTITO (PARTY)
2	ESSERE (TO BE)	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTITO (PARTY)	POLITICA (POLITICS/ POLITICAL)	NOSTRO (OUR)
3	LORO (THEY/ THEIR)	FASCISTA (FASCIST)	ESSERE (TO BE)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE)
4	CLASSE (CLASS)	MASSE (MASSES)	POLITICA (POLITICS/ POLITICAL)	STATO (STATE)	MODO (MODE)
5	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	STATO (STATE)	TUTTO (ALL)	ESSERE (TO BE)	FATTO (FACT/ DONE)
6	SUA (HER/HIS)	POLITICA (POLITICS/ POLITICAL)	TUTTI (ALL)	LORO (THEY/ THEIR)	NOSTRA (OUR)
7	MODO (WAY)	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	STATO (STATE)	MODO (WAY)	ESSERE (TO BE)
8	GUERRA (WAR)	BORGHESIA (BOURGEOISIE)	ITALIA (ITALY)	TUTTO (ALL)	POLITICA (POLITICS/ POLITICAL)

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	<b>1919-1926</b>	<b>1927-1943</b>	<b>1944-1956</b>	<b>1957-1964</b>	<b>1944-1964 (Letters)</b>
9	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE/WHY)	SUA (HIS/HER)	COSA (THING)
10	PARTE (SIDE/ PART)	CLASSE (CLASS)	MODO (MODE/ WAY)	QUALE (WHICH)	LORO (THEY/ THEIR)
11	QUALE (WHICH)	QUALE (WHICH)	QUALE (WHICH)	PARTE (SIDE/ PART)	PARTE (PART/ SIDE)
12	POLITICA (POLITICS/ POLITICAL)	ITALIA (ITALY)	PARTE (SIDE/ PART)	AZIONE (ACTION)	TUTTI (ALL)
13	TUTTO (ALL)	SUA (HER/HIS)	PAESE (COUNTRY)	CLASSE (CLASS)	STATO (STATE)
14	PUÒ (CAN)	ESSERE (TO BE)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	TUTTO (ALL)
15	TUTTI (ALL)	LORO (THEY/ THEIR)	NOSTRO (OUR)	TUTTI (ALL)	SEMPRE (ALWAYS)
16	CONTRO (AGAINST)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	SOLO (ONLY/ ALONE)
17	ITALIA (ITALY)	ORGANIZZAZIONE (ORGANIZATION)	SUA (HIS/HER)	SVILUPPO (DEVELOPMENT)	COSÍ (SO)
18	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	MASSA (MASS)	POPOLO (PEOPLE)	PERCHÉ (WHY/ BECAUSE)	PAESE (COUNTRY)
19	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTE (SIDE/ PART)	OGGI (TODAY)	PUÒ (CAN)	TU (YOU)
20	FATTO (FACT/ DONE)	TUTTI (ALL)	PRIMA (FIRST, BEFORE)	GRAMSCI	QUALE (WHICH)
21	OGGI (TODAY)	SITUAZIONE (SITUATION)	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	ERANO (WERE)	SUA (HIS/HER)
22	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE/WHY)	ITALIANO (ITALIAN)	LIBERTÀ (FREEDOM)	MASSE (MASSES)	GOVERNO (GOVERNMENT)
23	HANNO (THEY HAVE)	GRANDE (GREAT/BIG)	GRANDE (BIG, GREAT)	QUINDI (THEN/ THEREFORE)	COMPAGNI (COMRADES)
24	OPERAI (WORKERS)	PROBLEMA (PROBLEM)	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	NOSTRO (OUR)	COSE (THINGS)
25	BORGHESIA (BOURGEOISIE)	FATTO (FACT/ DONE)	QUANDO (WHEN)	GRANDE (GREAT/BIG)	MIA (MY)

**Fig. 9 – Concordance pattern list in Togliatti's texts**

<b>WORD</b>	<b>1919-1926</b>	<b>1927-1943</b>	<b>1944-1956</b>	<b>1957-1964</b>
LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)
	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)
	SOCIALE (SOCIAL)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)	LIBERATRICE (LIBARATOR)	IMMEDIATA (IMMEDIATE)
	ARMATA (ARMED)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)	ARMATA (ARMED)
	ECONOMICA (ECONOMIC)	APERTA (OPEN)	REALE (REAL)	RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)
		ARMATA (ARMED)	APERTA (OPEN)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)
		SPIETATA (RUTHLESS)	CONSEQUENTE (CONSEQUENT)	APERTA (OPEN)
		ACCANITA (TENACIOUS)	CONCRETA (CONCRETE)	STESSA (SAME)
		CONSEQUENTE (CONSEQUENT)	SENZA (WITHOUT)	EFFICACE (EFFECTIVE)
		EROICA (HEROIC)	POPOLARE (POPULAR)	VITTORIOSA (VICTORIOUS)
			PARTIGIANA (PARTISAN)	REALE (REAL)
			DEMOCRATICA (DEMOCRATIC)	SINDACALE (UNION)
			ARMATA (ARMED)	CONSEQUENTE (CONSEQUENT)
			TUTTI (ALL)	ANTICOMUNISTA (ANTICOMMUNIST)
			TUTTO (ALL)	ELETTORALE (ELECTORAL)
			SPIETATA (RUTHLESS)	INTRANSIGENTE (UNCOMPROMISING)
			SOCIALE (SOCIAL)	IDEOLOGICA (IDEOLOGICAL)

WORD	1919-1926	1927-1943	1944-1956	1957-1964
			SACRA (SACRED)	
			RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)	
			CONSAPEVOLE (AWARE)	
			COMUNE (COMMON)	
			CLANDESTINA (CLANDESTINE)	
			ELETTORALE (ELECTORAL)	
			NAZIONALE (NATIONAL)	
			INCESSANTE (INCESSANT)	
			IMMEDIATA (IMMEDIATE)	

In the first period, from 1919 to 1926, the word “party” is only in the 19<sup>th</sup> place, while it becomes the word most used in the following periods together with “politics”, “fascism” and “movement”. The word “freedom” appears only after 1944. Togliatti’s language is inextricably linked to organized political action. “Revolution” appears to be a significantly marginalized word. “Struggle” is a decisive word in the universe of Togliatti and the ICP. It is invariably a struggle “against” something and not “for” or to achieve something. The concept of “armed struggle”, has a certain continuity in Togliatti’s language: however the “armed struggle” is never an “anti-fascist armed struggle”. The “anti-fascist” struggle has in Togliatti the meaning of a complex political struggle, “mass struggle”, “unitary struggle”, “decisive struggle”, “consequent struggle”. The occurrences in which the “struggle” is “for” are often accompanied by the “Leninist” verbs, “to liquidate”, “destroy”, “overthrow” [Fig. 9].

The role of the word “class” is also very interesting: between 1919 and 1926 it is in 4<sup>th</sup> place in the vocabulary of Togliatti (with a frequency 0.26%), and reaches 0.27% during

the years of the Communist International. Its importance is substantially reduced over time and its meaning changes in the political discourse of the communist leader. In the first phase of postwar Italy the word reaches the bottom of a 0.14% frequency and in the last period it does not even reach 0.20%. In the first period, the constituent phase of the party, the expression “class” “struggle” is frequently accompanied by the dimension of “class” “consciousness”, which instead disappears in the lists of successive words. In the fascist period the words which most frequently accompany “class” are “struggle” and “against” showing a position characterized by isolation and by the conflictual politics of the party. Between 1943 and 1956, “class struggle”, “class party”, “class vanguard” are followed for the first time by “class unity”. Needless to say, the “class” is always the “working class”, while the “bourgeois class” is a term that falls into disuse being substituted by the term “bourgeoisie”. In the last period the lemma is accompanied by formulas that designate the change to which the “working class” would be subject: in the table of *patterns*, the most frequent formula is that of the “working class becoming a ruling class”.

The language of Togliatti is a refined language which has its own internal continuity. The speech on the death of Stalin in March 1953 shows two of the main qualities of Togliatti’s oral communication: the self-complacent, erudite and archaic character of the language, the literary references, the metaphors, the hyperboles and the repetitions.<sup>43</sup> But there are other coherences in the language of Togliatti that permit a wider reasoning regarding the characters and the genesis of the communist language. At the end of February 1951, returning from Moscow where he had been cared for after the automobile accident of the previous summer, Togliatti was welcomed by his comrades and interviewed by the journalists of the party newspaper *l’Unità*. We are in the acute phase of the fight against Tito and the ICP had expelled two leading figures, Aldo Cucchi and Valdo Magnani.

“Regarding the expulsion of the two renegades Magnani and Cucchi – *l’Unità* asked Togliatti –, do you have anything to say?”. “Nothing in particular”, replies Togliatti; and adds “Moreover, even in the mane of a noble racehorse you can always find two or three lice”.<sup>44</sup>

The issue of “lice” allows us to make some additional observations on the language of Togliatti in relation to the languages of totalitarianism. The metaphor of

<sup>43</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Un gigante del pensiero e dell’azione*, Speech at the Italian Parliament, 6 March 1953, *Opere*, vol. V (1944-1955), ed. by Luciano Gruppi (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984).

<sup>44</sup> “Dichiarazioni di Togliatti all’Unità sul soggiorno in URSS e sulla situazione italiana”, *l’Unità* (28 February 1951).

lice and, more generally, of parasites is shared by all the totalitarian languages of the twentieth century. In the language of Togliatti, as in that of Gramsci, the lemma is used prevalently in the definition of *parasitic* classes, *parasitic* economic entities (*parasitic* capitalism, *parasitic* rural bourgeoisie, etc.) and it is distributed relatively homogeneously in their lexicon. Andreas Musolff underlined how the metaphors linked to the semantic field of “parasites”, used in the political language dating from antiquity in a derogatory sense, increased dramatically after the French and American Revolution. In the twentieth century, they became part of the metaphorical armory of totalitarianisms defining enemy social entities.<sup>45</sup> Hitler’s anti-Semitism of *Mein Kampf* (1925) and the Leninist formulas of “social parasites” and “enemies of the people” are a clear example of this.<sup>46</sup>

In the summer of 1919, Togliatti shared the verbal radicalization of the post-war lexicon when he strongly criticized Piero Gobetti as a “cultural parasite” and explained in detail the meaning of that epithet:

[Gobetti] superficially clung to certain movements of ideas and serious men and is all bloated with what he had sucked here and there: I do not know and I can not qualify him in other words than as a parasite of culture.<sup>47</sup>

The “parasite” clings, sucks, swells. The expression has a considerable frequency also in Lenin between 1918 and 1919 (the “parasites”, the “weeds”, and the “parasites that suck blood”)<sup>48</sup>, and in Stalin in the *Principles of Leninism* (1924), when he denounces the “brutally parasitic” character of capitalism. In the case of Togliatti, however, the lemma “lice” shows very clearly how such a specific metaphor was born not in the years in which the totalitarian language of Stalinism was propagated, in the 1930s, but much earlier, in the post-war period. Togliatti, in fact, had used the same metaphor, with some slight differences in 1919 discussing the “degeneration” of Sorelism. “It is destiny

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<sup>45</sup> Andreas Musolff, “Metaphorical Parasites and “Parasitic” Metaphors. Semantic Exchanges between Political and Scientific Vocabularies”, *Journal of Language and Politics*, 13, 2 (2014): 218-233.

<sup>46</sup> Andreas Musolff, “What can Critical Metaphor Analysis Add to the Understanding of Racist Ideology? Recent Studies of Hitler’s Anti-Semitic Metaphors”, *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 2, 2 (2008): 1-10.

<sup>47</sup> p.t. [Palmiro Togliatti], “Parassiti della cultura”, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, I, 2 (15 May 1919), *Opere*, vol. I (1917-1926), ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1967), 27-29.

<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], “On the famine. A letter to the Workers of Petrograd”, 22 May 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 27, February-July 1918 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 391-398; Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], “Speech at the meeting at the former Michelson works”, 31 August 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 91.

– wrote Togliatti in *L'Ordine Nuovo* of November 1919 – that lice secretly lurk on the body of every giant”.<sup>49</sup>

In the context of the formation of totalitarian language, the Italian communist leader maintains a position partly influenced by his cultural formation, and in part distanced from the Stalinist canon. The 59 occurrences of the root “degener\*”, for example, never display the past participle (“degenerated”), but rather refer to a process, a transformation. The “degeneration” is predominantly *political*, it can be *reactionary* or *parliamentary* but there are no immediate echoes of the Zdanovist and Nazi canon of “degenerate art”.<sup>50</sup> Another family of metaphors concerns internal party struggles. “Deviation”, for example, is a widely diffused word in the texts by Lenin, by Stalin, and subsequently by Togliatti, meaning to stray far from the main road of Marxism. The word is at the origin of the ideology of “deviationism”. Also linked to internal struggles was the metaphor of the “mask” and the “unmasking” of spies and other enemies.

The term and the concept that best show the close relationship between Togliatti’s language and the language of the Communist International is that of the “turning point”. The theme is complex and many acute and conflicting judgments have been made about it. According to Ernesto Ragionieri, the concept of “turning point” is a key concept in the cultural world of Italian communists.<sup>51</sup> It corresponds to the voluntaristic components of the culture of Gramsci and Togliatti, and to the role of verbalization of the will to implement profound convictions and fulfill stringent commitments. The term also relates to an “activism” associated with the philosophical cultures that influenced young Communist intellectuals around the time of the Great War. The concept, and the term, would not simply define a “change of direction”, but, if anything, a change of direction correct and intensely desired. The hypothesis defines well an aspect of the cultural formation of Gramsci and Togliatti, but clashes with a significant fact. The word never occurs in the political writings of Gramsci or Togliatti before 1929. Out of the 13 occurrences in Gramsci’s political writings, 12 are the past participle of the verb “*svolgere*” (meaning carry out, not turn) and only the elections of 1919 are considered “a decisive turning point in the life of the Italian people”. Out of the 32 occurrences in Gramsci’s *Notebooks*, only one has the meaning of

<sup>49</sup> “La dittatura del proletariato di Agostino Lanzillo”, *L'Ordine nuovo*, I, 29 (6-13 December 1919).

<sup>50</sup> Regarding the Italian abstract avantgarde, however, Togliatti did not hesitate to use the Stalinist vocabulary (“scemenze”, “orrori”, “scarabocchi” – nonsense, horror, doodles); see “Segnalazioni. Prima mostra nazionale d’arte contemporanea. Alleanza della cultura. Bologna, 17 ottobre-5 novembre 1948”, *Rinascita*, V, 11 (November 1948).

<sup>51</sup> Ernesto Ragionieri, *La Terza Internazionale e il Partito comunista italiano. Saggi e discussioni*, preface by Franz Marek (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 270.

“change”.<sup>52</sup> In the writings of Togliatti, until 1926, the word “turning point” never appears. Afterwards, there are 79 occurrences and 23 of them are the past participle (of the verb “*svolgere*”, meaning carry out), while 56 are “radical turning”, “abrupt turning”, “great turning point”, “daring turn”, “Democratic turning point”, “turning point for renewal”, etc. For this reason, it is clear that the genesis or the underlining meaning of the word derives from the Stalinist formula of 1929. The word was used by many parties of the Communist International all over the world: for example in French “*Tournant*”, and in German “*Wendung*”. However, only in the ICP, which was a small party radicalized and characterized by furious internal struggles, did the word reach such lexical intensity. Until 1929 the term most used by Stalin was “*povorot*” (turn, curve, change), while the Soviet dictator defined 1929 as the “year of the great turning point” (“*god velikogo pereloma*”, where “*velikij perelom*” means “big turning point” and is a very strong term, indicating “breakthrough”).<sup>53</sup> Moreover Togliatti himself emphasized at the beginning of the 1930’s the exact meaning of the word “turning point”. For the Italian party, it was not simply a “*tournant*” towards the theory of social fascism, nor a “national-populist” political change as in Germany; but rather a strong and violent change of policy, in a climate of controversy, that led to the expulsion of five of the party’s main leaders (Angelo Tasca, Alfonso Leonetti, Pietro Tresso, Paolo Ravazzoli, and Ignazio Silone). Simply put, the “turning point” had been the symbol of the Stalinization of the ICP.<sup>54</sup> In an essay from 1942, Nathan Leites addressed the problem of the metalanguage of the Communist International in the face of its frequent changes in politics. According to Leites, the study of the language of the “turning points” found a relevant explanation in the fact that the doctrine of the Communist International was a particularly elaborate and dogmatic doctrine which had undergone numerous and profound variations. These changes in policy were accepted by affiliated parties with a very high degree of obedience.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “Il deperimento del ‘fatalismo’ e del ‘meccanicismo’ indica una grande svolta storica” (The decay of ‘fatalism’ and ‘mechanicism’ indicates a great historical turning point), Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 2, Q. 6(VIII)-11(XVIII), ed. by Istituto Gramsci and Valentino Gerratana (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 1395. See also Raul Mordenti, “‘Quaderni dal carcere’ di Antonio Gramsci”, *Letteratura Italiana Einaudi. Le Opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa, vol. IV/2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 72-80.

<sup>53</sup> See, regarding the 1929 “turning point” in USSR, Ettore Cinnella, *Ucraina. Il genocidio dimenticato 1932-1933* (Pisa: Della Porta Editori, 2015), 66-71.

<sup>54</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, *Necessità di una svolta* (8 January 1930), *Opere*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri, vol. III/1 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1973), 129-143.

<sup>55</sup> Nathan Leites, “Interaction: the Third International on Its Changes of Policy”, *Language of Politics. Studies in Quantitative Semantics*, ed. by Harold D. Lasswell, Nathan Leites, and associates (New York: George W. Stewart Publisher, 1949), 298-333.

#### **IV. Concluding Remarks**

In this essay I have discussed, documented, and demonstrated four points. Firstly, that the language of the ICP, although it must be distinguished from totalitarian languages, maintains a strong dependence on the language of the Comintern and the Soviet Union; secondly, that the radical characteristics of the communist language have their origin in the years following World War I and were amplified by the Comintern and the Soviet union; thirdly, that the language of Togliatti, despite its particular characteristics, can be identified with the language of the ICP; lastly, that the language of the ICP has the ceremonial character of the language of a closed community.

As it is sometimes said, when historians move on the terrain of other disciplines they risk breaking through entire corridors of already open doors; the same happens regarding the opposite path, from other disciplines to historiography. Precisely for this reason, the words of Régine Robin remain valid: “It is better to show what may seem evident, than simply to affirm it”.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Robin, “Langage et ideologies”, 11.